



A SINNER'S PRAYER

Owen D. Olbricht

God has not promised to grant the requests of those who are not Christians. Scripture reveals that there are prayers God will not respond to in a positive manner.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18).

"Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin" (Psalm 109:6-7).

"One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9).

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:12, quoted from Psalm 34:15-16).

In order to receive what we request, we must: (1) be God's people who are called by His name [2 Chronicles 7:14]; (2) ask in Jesus' name [John 14:13]; (3) ask in faith [James 1:6-7]; (4) ask for right things [James 4:3]; (5) keep God's commandments and do those things pleasing in His sight [1 John 3:22]; (6) ask according to His will [1 John 5:14].

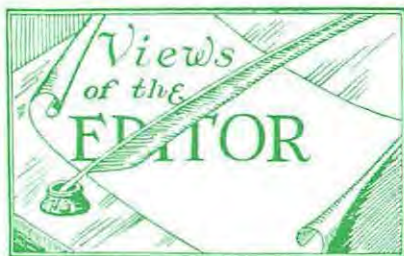
No non-Christians in this Christian age were ever told to pray for anything, much less told to pray to be saved, to be forgiven of their sins.

Bible examples. Sinners on the day of Pentecost were not told to pray to be forgiven. Peter, in Acts 2:21, quoted an Old Testament passage (Joel 2:32) which is a favorite of those who believe all one has to do to be saved, forgiven, is to "call" on God in prayer. "Call" comes from the Greek *epikaleo* which means to be given a name (Acts 1:23) or to make an appeal (Acts 7:59; 25:11-12; 26:32; 28:19). Those who simply *call*, "Lord, Lord," will not be saved but they must do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46).

When asked by the Jews, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), Peter missed a great opportunity to tell them that all they needed to do was pray, if prayer is what is meant by "call." Instead Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ in order to be forgiven (Acts 2:38). When Paul was found praying (Acts 9:11) he was told to be baptized and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). His appeal to be forgiven was to be made through his baptism. Cornelius, whose prayer had been heard, was commanded to be baptized (Acts 10:48).

No non-Christians were ever told to pray to be forgiven of their sins. In spite of this truth, today many religious groups instruct the lost to say "the sinner's prayer."

(Continued on page 23)



Volume 17 Number 3
July -September 2001

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is a quarterly publication of the Mabelvale Church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas and the Mountain Home Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

STAFF WRITERS

Bill Dillon
Guy F. Hester
M. W. Kiser
Max Miller
John T. Polk, II
Allen Webster

EDITOR

Dennis Gulledge

MAILING ADDRESSES

Contributions

P. O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AR 72103

Manuscripts

P. O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AR 72103

Web Site

www.cei.net/~mabelval

Editorial

NEITHER CATHOLIC, NOR PROTESTANT, NOR JEW, NOR...

Dennis Gulledge

The religious world of today is vastly different from the one in which I grew up. In 1958 *The Yearbook of American Churches* reported that a record 62% of all people in the United States were members of a church. Certain polls taken at the time revealed that 95% of Americans considered themselves Catholic, Protestant or Jew. A tract written years ago by brother Batsell Barrett Baxter was entitled *Neither Catholic, Nor Protestant, Nor*

Jew. It affirmed the value of simple New Testament Christianity. It argued that a person need be neither Catholic, nor Protestant, nor Jew in order to be pleasing to God. If brother Baxter were still living and were to write that tract today, he might title it, *Neither Catholic, Nor Protestant, Nor Jew, Nor...*

Today, our religious world has changed dramatically. There are thousands of religious cults and world religions dotting the landscape. The proliferation of new religions with at least some semblance to Christianity has never been greater than it is today. In our pluralistic society it is not unusual to find that standard religious fare has given way to seemingly countless new religions and spiritual fringe groups. Old-time cults like Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Christian Science and Seventh-Day Adventism maintain their grip on American society, and are growing around the world. A dear sister came to me recently being disturbed that a relative was involved with Branhamism.¹ You may go to yoga classes for relaxation purposes and find yourself in the middle of a religion. New Age gurus, Apocalyptic cults, Jesus cults, Eastern mystical imports and psychospiritual self-help cell groups have become increasingly popular with the dawning of the twenty-first century. Along with these new religions comes a new vocabulary and New World view to a public less than discerning. In growing numbers of hotels the Gideon's Bible now keeps company with other "sacred" volumes like, *Book of Mormon*, *Teachings of Buddha*, *Science and Health With Key To The Scriptures* (Christian Science), and *The Way to Happiness* (Church of Scientology).

The reaction to this state of religious discord is predictable. Some will question the validity of any and all religion—consigning religion itself to the junk heap. This conclusion is hardly justified. Others will go to the opposite extreme and affirm that all religions are right (at least in part). Many women's magazines today will tout the virtues of religion—whatever your choice! Still others will choose whatever seems good to them out of



all the religious systems with which they are familiar.

The question for us is how do we argue the case for New Testament Christianity vs. world religions? One answer is to show the genuineness of Christianity in contrast to false human systems. The Bible is clear in teaching that there is only "one faith" (Ephesians 4:5). That "one faith" has been "once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Also, we must be able to show the superiority of Jesus Christ over any other religious rival. When the inspired author of the book of Hebrews wanted to show the superiority of Christianity over Judaism he made a series of contrasts:

- ✓ Jesus Christ is superior to angels through whom the Law of Moses was given (Hebrews 1:5-2:18).
- ✓ Jesus Christ is greater than Moses and Joshua (Hebrews 3-4).
- ✓ Jesus' priesthood is greater than that of the Old Testament economy (Hebrews 5-7).

Another approach is to present Christianity as being proved true on the basis of its historical claims. Peter wrote, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Did Jesus Christ really live? Anyone who wishes to examine the evidence cannot deny the historical reality of Jesus. Philosophies of the East have little concern for historical verification of their own belief systems. One can be a Buddhist in good standing and deny that Buddha ever existed. Hinduism has no known founder, prophet, priest, king or doctrine. Yet, as Wayne Jackson has correctly stated, "The success of the religion of Jesus Christ can only be accounted for on the basis of the divine origin of the movement, and that supernatural origin is demonstrated by *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*."² We, as Christians, will have to be prepared to defend the existence of New Testament Christianity. To do so we will need a good understanding of apologetics.

CHRISTIANITY³ TEACHES A PERSONAL GOD

The God of heaven is an eternal, living Spirit (John 4:24). He is Creator [through Christ] and Sustainer of our universe (Acts 17:24; Colossians 1:16-17). In terms of character God is loving, merciful and just. He will punish sin (Romans 1:18), and reward the redeemed (2 Peter 3:9).

As Christians we have a personal relationship with God. We pray to him as "our Father" (Matthew 6:9). We are exalted as his children (Galatians 3:26-27). As such, we are his special people (1 Peter 2:9). We have this special relationship through Jesus Christ his Son and our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

There is nothing personal or personable about the gods of eastern mysticism. Buddhists make much of the fact that they claim to follow "one God" (Deuteronomy 6:4). They deny the idea of God in three persons as clearly taught in the New Testament (Acts 5:3-4, 9), because it connects the human Jesus with God. The Koran states, "So believe in Allah and His apostles and do not say, Three. Forebear and it shall be better for you. Allah is but one God" (*Sura* 4:171). Buddhism denies the existence of a personal God, period. Hinduism believes in one real being called *Brahma* (non-personal god above all others). It is also polytheistic, allowing for many lesser deities.

CHRISTIANITY HOLDS TO AN OBJECTIVE STANDARD OF TRUTH

According to the New Testament, truth is objective [it originates outside of man]. Truth is in God's word (John 17:17). Truth is in Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:7). As an objective standard, truth can be known (John 8:32), it can be believed (2 Thessalonians 2:12), and it can be obeyed (Romans 2:8). The gospel message regarding Jesus Christ is "the word of truth" (2 Corinthians 6:7). To the Christian truth is logical, systematic and consistent. "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). The Bible constitutes our all-sufficient and infallible guide in all matters of faith and practice in religion (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The cults disallow any *objective* standard of truth. To the Eastern mind truth is *subjective*, that is, it comes from within one's self by means of meditation, intuition or enlightenment. *Trancedentalism*, for example, teaches that truth is perceived through intuition and that all authority-based religion is to be rejected. To the Eastern mystic truth is neither logical nor consistent.

CHRISTIANITY OFFERS A SAVIOR FOR SIN

The Bible teaches that all responsible human beings are sinners (Romans 3:10, 23; 1 John 1:8-9).

Sin is demonstrated in a number of ways: sin is disbelief of reasonable evidence regarding things divine (John 16:9); sin is transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4); and, sin is going against what we know (from an understanding of God's will) to be right (James 4:17). Man is without the ability to save himself from his own sins (Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15).

In Eastern thought man does not sin, nor does he need a Savior. Karma, to the Hindu, takes the place of God's judgment. *Karma* is "The law of retributive justice...Karma represents the moral law of the universe by which all must be judged."⁴ In the New Age movement sin is merely ignorance of one's own inner potential and there is no transcendent God against whom we sin. New Ageism does not allow for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin (Romans 3:21-25), saying that the higher self is Christ within—that we become our own Christ! Weigh this against what Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). That statement is either true, or it isn't!

A vast multiculturalism has brought with it multiple doctrines endangering men's souls (1 John 4:1). We used to lament the fact that people were satisfied with that "old time religion" that was not Christ's religion. Nowadays, religion has a new face on it. Yet, salvation is still in Jesus Christ and only in him (Acts 4:12). Men still need to know that there is but one church (Colossians 1:18). We have challenges today in spreading the gospel in this country like we have never seen before. We clearly need to know what we believe and why we believe it!—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

ENDNOTES

¹Branhamism is the name of a cult based upon the beliefs of William Branham (1909-1965), a self-proclaimed healing prophet.

²Wayne Jackson, *Fortify Your Faith...In An Age Of Doubt* (Montgomery, Alabama: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1982), 22.

³We must recognize the distinction between what the world calls *Traditional Christianity* and the religion that Jesus Christ established. New Testament Christianity had its genesis with the establishment of the church of Christ on the first Pentecost day following the resurrection of Jesus

from the dead (Acts 2:1-47). The *saints, brethren, believers* and disciples were called *Christians* first at Antioch (Acts 11:26). The *Orthodox Christianity* that the world knows came as a result of a developing apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4) that culminated in the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodoxy and the Protestant Reformation spearheaded by Martin Luther. All Protestant denominations stem in some measure from Luther.

⁴Alvin J Schmidt, *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult*, s.v. "Karma."

MABELVALE CHURCH OF CHRIST
10820 MABELVALE WEST ROAD
P. O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (501) 455-2548
Office Fax (501) 407-0072
E-Mail: mabelval@cei.net
Web Site: www.cei.net/~mabelval

Dennis Gullledge, Evangelist

MOUNTAIN HOME CHURCH OF CHRIST
COLLEGE & NORTH STREETS
P. O. BOX 880
MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72654-0880

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (870) 425-4330
Office Fax (870) 425-8118
E-Mail: church@centurytel.net

Bill Dillon, Evangelist



THE BEHISTUN ROCK, AN OPEN DOOR TO THE PAST

Max R. Miller



This Behistun Rock looms up above a spring-fed pool of water on the old carven road from Ecbatana to Babylon. The rock is really the last peak (3,800 feet high) of a long, narrow range of mountains that skirt the Plains of Keneanshah on the East. The name Behistun Rock is derived from the village of Besitun located at its foot. High upon the face of the rock, perhaps five hundred feet above the level of the Plain, Darius I carved a large relief panel of human figures accompanied with columns of inscriptions. Travelers have known the presence of this mysterious scene for centuries. Many have sought but were unable to identify the figures.

It was described by one as "a city situated on a hill, where there is a pillar and statue of Semiramis, a mythical Assyria goddess." Ibn Hawkal, Arabian geographer of the tenth century, A. D., supposed the scene represented "a school house with master and the boys; in the schoolmaster's hand is an instrument like a strap wherewith to beat." Another, in the nineteenth century, thought that a winged figure of the monument was a cross, and that Darius and his officers and prisoners were the Twelve Apostles. Ker Porter identified the minor figures as "representatives of the Ten Tribes" standing before a "King of Assyria and of the Medes." He surmised the one with the "dunce cap" was of the priestly tribe of Levi.

The Persian Empire was consolidated by Cyrus the Great. His son, Cambyzes, followed him to the throne. Following Cambyzes, an imposter claimed

rightful title to the throne as a son of Cyrus---Smerdis (Skunka) by name. This Pseudo-Smerdis controlled the throne, ruling with power. At length, some of the principal nobles, convinced of the imposture, counseled together and discussed the measure proper to be adopted under the circumstances. However, nothing was done until the arrival at the Capitol of a personage felt by all to be the proper leader of the nation in the existing crisis. This was Darius I, or Darius the Great (522-486 B.C.), the son of Hystaspes. He was a prince of the blood royal, who stood in the direct line of succession, failing the issue of Cyrus. He was about thirty-eight years of age, a seasoned warrior and at a time in life suited for vigorous enterprises.

In the first years of his reign, he proved himself worthy of the crown by crushing rebellions that broke out in many parts of the wide realm of Persia. Elam, Babylonia, Media and Armenia revolted. A new false Smerdis arose. Darius fought nineteen battles to quell these agitations. From the Caucasus to the Indus "his armies had no stain on their glory," Aeschylus wrote. Darius then recorded for future ages the successes of his first years with the inscription on the lofty rock on the upper course of the River Choaspes. The inscription dates from approximately 516-515 B.C., the fifth or sixth year of his reign.

The early nineteenth century was the beginning of the scientific study of archaeology. The Rosetta Stone had been discovered in 1798 and Champollion (1790-1832) was able to decipher it before his early death. His achievement formally opened up the science of Egyptology. Scholars were now able to read Egyptian monumental inscriptions and reliefs from that time to the present. Egyptological studies have gone steadily forward. In Mesopotamia a similar situation developed in the decipherment of the Behistun Rock and the beginning of Assyriology.

There was a great deal of scientific inquiry among the English before the nineteenth century. There developed more than casual interest in the tales recently authenticated by scholars who traveled the ancient lands of Mesopotamia. It was an important turning point when the East India Company ordered their resident in Basrah to obtain specimens of inscribed brick that were discovered at Babylon. Specimens were sent, carefully packed, to London. These, with a small case of antiquities, for the moment, represented all the known remains of

Babylon and Assyria. They were the forerunners of the many hundreds of tons of antiquities, which were to reach Europe during the following century.

Claudius Rich, an English Archaeologist, and a few other European travelers, had seen and endeavored to copy some of the inscriptions, particularly those in the vicinity of Persepolis at the Tomb of Cyrus. Attention was directed to the inscriptions at Behistun. Investigation revealed the inscriptions were trilingual. The same cuneiform text was repeated in three different languages, the old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian. The Rosetta Stone with its parallel inscriptions in Greek and Egyptian hieroglyphs served as a clue for the decipherment of the Pharaonic pictographs. Now, the trilingual inscriptions in Persia were to fulfill something of the same role in deciphering the languages of the Behistun Monument.

Notable among these early archaeologists was an Englishman named Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810-1895). At the age of seventeen Rawlinson departed England for India. Aboard ship was a fellow-passenger, Sir John Malcomb, a soldier, diplomat and Oriental scholar of distinction. Lord Roberts suggests in an introduction to Rawlinson's biography, "It was, without doubt, an enormous advantage to the lad of seventeen to be so closely associated with the 'Historian of Persia,' whose tales of his battles with the Mahrattas and his experiences among the Persians probably fired Rawlinson's youthful imagination and gave that bent to his tastes which resulted in his subsequent choice of a career."

In 1835, Rawlinson was transferred to Kermanshah, Persia (within twenty-two miles of the rock), to reorganize and discipline the Shah's troops so as to restore them to that state of efficiency to which they had formally attained under the supervision of British officers. Rawlinson possessed great physical strength and stamina. On one occasion, when it was necessary to warn the British Ambassador at Teheran of dangers of the Russian agent at Hermit, Rawlinson rode seven hundred fifty miles in one hundred fifty consecutive hours. This was indicative of his determination to accomplish that which he set out to do. He worked on the translation of the message for a decade before he was able to publish it in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

Soon after his arrival in Kermanshah he began to survey the rock. He was soon aware that in a space

approximately twenty-five by fifty feet carved on the rock "worth more to history than any equal space in Asia," he was dealing not with one language, but with three, in the twelve hundred lines of inscriptions which he copied. The threefold Persian, Elamite and Babylonian--were written in cuneiform characters. Knowing modern Persian, Rawlinson was able to decipher the old Persian cuneiform. He centered his attention on the personal names--Darius, Xerxes and Hystaspes--much as the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone had been done in the demotic Egyptian portion of that monument.

On Rawlinson's examination of the face of the rock he found that the whole prepared area (about twelve hundred square feet) had been carefully smoothed and the unsound portion of the stone replaced with better material, embedded in lead. After this, the whole face had received a high polish which could only have been accomplished by mechanical means. After the figures and inscriptions had been cut, it was coated with a coat of hard, siliceous varnish to protect it. A mystery out of ancient times: How did they polish the face of the rock? What kind of "machinery" was used?

In 1835 Rawlinson began copying the Persian and Elamite inscriptions, without the help of ladders or ropes, simply by climbing down to the ledge beneath the panel. However, the intentional inaccessibility of the location chosen by Darius for the sculptures made the area to be reached in this way very small. In Rawlinson's return visits in later years, ropes and ladders had to be used to read the more remote panels. Even so, Babylonian inscriptions remained inaccessible until 1847, when a chance circumstance enabled Rawlinson to obtain "squeezes." He says:

At length, however, a wild Kurdish boy, who had come from a distance, volunteered to make the attempt, and I promised him considerable award if he succeeded, . . . so that it cannot be approached by any of the ordinary means of climbing. The boy's first move was to squeeze himself up a cleft in the rock a short distance to the left of the projecting mass. When he had ascended some distance above it, he drove a wooden peg firmly into the cleft, fastened a rope to this, and then endeavored to swing himself across to another cleft at some distance on the other side; but in this he failed owing to the projection of the rock. It then only remained for him to cross over the cleft by hanging on by his

toes and fingers to the slight inequalities on the bare precipice, and in this he succeeded, passing over a distance of twenty feet of almost smooth perpendicular rock in a manner which to a looker-on appeared quite miraculous. When he reached the second cleft, the real difficulties were over. He had brought a rope with him attached to the first peg, and now, driving in a second, he was able to swing himself right over the projecting mass of rock. Here with a short ladder he formed a swinging seat, like a painter's cradle, and fixed upon this seat, he took under my direction the paper cast of the Babylonian translation of the records of Darius.

The sculptured panel represents Darius himself, standing in judgment upon nine rebel chiefs. At the end of the row, the king is treading underfoot a figure representing the usurper, Smerdis, while two attendants, standing behind, and the god Ahuramazda in his winged disk complete the group.

The linguistic achievement deciphering the Behistun inscription, as great a feat of ancient philology and history as the discovery of radio, television or atomic fission in the realm of physics in our modern day, was an important event archaeologically. This event was destined to resurrect vanished nations of antiquity from the vast cemetery of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the grave of Earth's most ancient civilization, in which they have lain for millennia. Now enabled to read the innumerable inscribed clay tablets dug out of the mounds of buried cities, the scholar can reconstruct the story of the ancient past, make it live again and shed its light on the message and meaning of the Old Testament.

The magnitude of the discovery of deciphering cuneiform is increasing with every decade. Assyriology has become an important branch of research in every great university. The excavations of the last century, moreover, have brought to light great libraries of cuneiform literature. At Nineveh, two great libraries were unearthed which contained thousands of clay tablets. The library of Ashurbanipal (669-626 B. C.) containing some twenty-thousand tablets and constituting the main body of recovered literature dealing with the civilization of ancient Mesopotamia, its culture and achievements, provides a great mass of material illustrating innumerable aspects of Old Testament history. Understanding of those histories and cultures helps one relate to and understand the role God's people Israel had to these great nations of the past.

Among the tablets unearthed and sent to the British Museum from the royal palace and library of Ashurbanipal discovered at Nineveh by Howard Rassam in 1853, were Assyrian copies of the Babylonian creation and flood stories. The identification and decipherment of these particular tablets by George Smith in 1872 produced an archaeological sensation; but cuneiform literature was to prove a more far-reaching arm of biblical studies than even the most sanguine optimists of the day dared hope.

Not only in Babylonia, but elsewhere as well, large bodies of cuneiform literature were to be uncovered. The much-publicized Amarna Letters from Egypt, discovered in 1886 at Tell-el-Amarna, about 200 miles south of modern Cairo, furnishes examples. In its great library have been recovered hundreds of clay tablets in Akkadian cuneiform, the lingua franca of the day. These represent diplomatic correspondence of petty princes in Palestine in the fourteenth century B. C. with the Egyptian court at Amarna. Other important bodies of cuneiform literature have been retrieved from Boghaz-Reui and Kamsh in Asia Minor, from Susa in Elam (*Code of Hammurabi*), from Mari on the Middle Euphrates, from Ras Shamra and from other sites within and without Babylonia. -10726 Hwy. 59 W., Burlison, TN 38015.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In a departure from his assigned theme of church history, Max Miller has written an informative piece on one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of modern times. This great discovery unlocked the Assyrio-Babylonian system of cuneiform writing. -Dennis Gullede

GOOD THOUGHTS

When architect Frank Lloyd Wright was asked at age eighty-three which of his works he would select as his masterpiece, he replied, "My next one." ... You are not really successful until someone claims he sat beside you in school...If you really want to succeed, form the habit of doing the things that people who are failures don't like to do.

"Think on these things..." (Philippians 4:8).

THE DEVESTATING EFFECTS OF DIVORCE

Wayne Jackson



The marriage principles found in the Bible have a purpose—they are designed for our benefit.

Through the prophet Malachi, Jehovah God said to ancient Israel: "I hate divorce" (2:16, NASB). The Lord hates divorce because He loves people and divorce is devastating to humankind.

Man did not live one day upon this earth apart from the environment of a home. In fact, the very foundation of society is the home. Marriage is that divine union between a man and a woman who love one another, and who have welded their lives together "so long as they both shall live." It is the cement that holds society together.

Moreover, it is this very societal cohesiveness that facilitates the spread of the redemptive gospel of Jesus Christ. When the family structure disintegrates, a significant factor in the growth of Christian faith is missing, and the gospel of God is hindered. Those who encourage capricious, unauthorized divorce undermine the cause for which the Savior died.

Divorce, generally speaking, is a tremendous evil. In fact, it is so bad that Jesus Christ allows it (together with a subsequent remarriage) on *one* basis only—that of fornication (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Subsequent unions following divorce—for all parties other than the innocent victim of a marriage breached by fornication—constitute adulterous relationships.

The divorce problem has reached alarming proportions. In 1970 there were 4.3 million divorced people in America. By 1994 that number had more than quadrupled to a staggering 17.4 million. According to the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, the fairly recent phenomenon of "no-fault" divorce has significantly accelerated the plague of American divorce. The United States now leads the world in marriage break-up.

In a recently published book *Why Marriage Matters: Reasons to Believe in Marriage in Post-Modern Society* (Pinion Press, 1997), author Glenn T. Stanton has compiled a massive amount of evidence which reveals the shocking effect that divorce is

having in this country. This book is a survey of the most authoritative social science research published over the course of the last century. It demonstrates how first-time, life-long, monogamous marriage significantly improves the lives of adults, their children and the nation at large.

Consider some of the following factors:

1. Alcoholism is much more likely to be a problem among those who have been divorced than those who have not. Those divorced only once have almost twice the rate of alcoholism as those who have never been divorced. Folks divorced more than once are almost three times as likely to have drinking problems.
2. The suicide rate is almost three times higher among the divorced than among life-long spouses.
3. The National Institute of Mental Health advises that the divorced are about four times as likely to have problems with depression as are the never-divorced.
4. Studies have shown that the prevalence of suffering from any psychiatric disorder over a lifetime was significantly lower for those in stable marriages.
5. Statistical data have revealed that children of divorced parents are much more likely to drop out of school than children from one-time-married couples.
6. Children from broken homes are much more likely to have a difficult time obtaining and maintaining steady employment.
7. The children of divorced parents are more likely to become "teen parents," producing out-of-wedlock babies, than the children of life-long married parents.
8. The offspring of divorced parents are twenty to thirty percent more likely to have health problems, or to be injury-prone than youngsters whose original parents are still together.
9. The children of divorced parents are three times more likely to have emotional or behavioral problems than they will have if their biological parents stay together.

The evidence is all too clear. The Creator
(Continued on page 9)

THY WILL BE DONE

T. Pierce Brown



When the doctors told me I had a malignant tumor, I prayed about the matter, but it was only after I had prayed two or three times that I noticed something different in my prayers, that may be so insignificant and trivial that it is not worth mentioning. However, it may be more

significant than appears on the surface.

Up until this time, as I have prayed about others and their diseases, I would say something like this, "Bless Mrs. Smith that she may be recovered from her sickness. Thy will be done in all things." Often when others would pray, I notice that they would say something like, "Bless the doctors and nurses that wait on her, and bless all the means that are being used for her welfare. Thy will be done in all things." Of course, it is always appropriate for us to pray that God's will be done, whether we are praying for the patient or just for the "means that are being used."

However, I noticed something about my prayers that, after I had thought about it, pleased me. I did not say, "Lord cure me of whatever ails me, if it be thy will," which would have been a good prayer, I think. I said something like this, "Lord, thank you for your gracious promise that all things work together for good to those that love you. Thank you for allowing me to live the past sixty-five or seventy years as a co-worker with you, for your glory and for the good of humanity. Whatever my condition may be, do what is best for your glory and the good of others. Cure whatever ails me, or allow me to suffer, or even to die, or whatever else you choose, for I know you will do what is right and best."

I think it is possible that the prayer indicated some degree of spiritual growth. Of course, there should be some degree of spiritual growth in a person who has been preaching and writing for fifty-five or more years, but whether this is an indication of it, I do not know. However, my thought is this: It seems a little better to start with God and His Glory and

eventually to get to my personal wants than it does to start with my personal wants and eventually get to a willingness to let God's will be done. I think I discovered that I actually cared very little about my personal wants, for I came to a deeper awareness that if I put God first in my life, He would take care of my personal wants far better than I could, for I don't even know what is best for me or for God's cause. Of course, most of us like to think we can do more good for God's cause by living a healthy life than we can by not living a healthy life, or not living at all. But the truth is, we do not know. So the more quickly we can come to a deep awareness that God's promises are real, and He will always do what is right, and work things for good to those that love Him, the more personal happiness, joy, security and tranquility we will have.

At least, when I had prayed, I had a "peace that passeth understanding" (Philippians 4:7), and could rejoice with "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8), regardless of what the future holds, for I know who holds the future. If God's promises are true, that is all that really makes any difference. If God's promises are not true, nothing really makes any difference.—1068 Mitchell Avenue, Cookeville, TN 38501

THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF DIVORCE

Continued from page 8

knew what He was doing when He gave strict regulations for the preservation of the original family. In view of this, Christian parents will make every effort possible to keep their marriages intact. Moreover, they will instruct their children in the concept of the permanency of marriage as designed by God.—P.O. Box 55265, Stockton, CA 95205

Gospel Gazette Online
www.gospelgazette.com

THOU ART NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM

Allen Webster



"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our

God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question" (Mark 12:28-34).

Jesus could see right through people. They might hide behind pleasantries and smiles around each other, but not with Jesus. He knew all men (John 2:24-25). The Pharisees feigned sincerity; He called them hypocrites. Sadducees framed flattering questions; He saw the bait in the trap. Peter acted as if he had no fears; Jesus saw one who would soon fear a maiden's question.

Jesus, in this context, had been dealing with those far from the kingdom—the Pharisees by formality, the Sadducees by skepticism and arrogance, the publicans and sinners by vices, and the multitude by ignorance (cf., 11:15, 18, 27; 12:12, 13, 18, 28). No one had come honestly desiring to know the truth. They had all been sent home in shame. But He saw something different in this scribe. He was close to the border of the spiritual kingdom of God.

Who Was He? He was a *religious* man. He came asking Jesus a Bible question and evidenced a

love for God. The Ethiopian treasurer rode over a thousand miles to worship at a Jewish festival, but he, too, was in need of change (Acts 8:26-39). Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee of Pharisees, but found that religion, alone, could not please God (Galatians 1:14; 1 Timothy 1:12-16; Acts 26:9).

He was a *knowledgeable* man. Jesus had met many religious people who knew nearly nothing about the Bible. But this man was different. He had studied and showed great insight into the Old Covenant. Some today are diligent students, though outside of Christ. If they will obey what they learn, God will save them (John 7:17; 6:44-45; Acts 2:36-41; 8:26-39).

He was a *discreet* man. Discreteness (prudence) indicates sincerity. He was honest—but in error (Luke 8:15). Sincerity and integrity are necessary, but insufficient by themselves (Matthew 7:21-23; Acts 18:24-26). Saul was sincere when he was putting Christians to death (Acts 7:58; 23:1; 26:9; 1 Timothy 1:13). Cornelius was sincere but needed words whereby he and his house might be saved (Acts 11:14).

Where Was He? He was *near the kingdom*. Jesus presents the church as a city into which one might walk. This man was near the border or, as we would say, in the suburbs. One's proximity to the kingdom of God is not an estimate of feet or inches, but of faith and obedience.

He was outside. Being near the kingdom is not the same as being in it. One may come 99 miles of a 100 mile trip and never arrive. One can pay for years on a home, then default on the last payment, and not own it. The manslayer, pursued by the avenger of blood, could get within sight of the city of refuge, but if he paused and was overtaken, he would die as if he were far from safety (cf. Joshua 20:3).

He was *in danger*. A person "not far from the kingdom of God" is still lost, for he must be in the kingdom (or church, Matthew 16:18-19) to be saved (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 5:23; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Accountable people who are not in Christ's kingdom are in Satan's kingdom, for those are the only two places one can be on earth

(Continued on page 23)



THE CHURCH AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

J. W. McGarvey (1829-1911)

It is true, in one sense of the term, that we are indebted to the Church for the New Testament, and not to the New Testament for the Church. It is true, because the Church was in existence before the books composing the New Testament were written; because these books were written by apostles and evangelists who were members of the Church; because to members of the early Church we are indebted for our historical evidence of the canonicity of these books; and because the Church has preserved the New Testament from age to age.

On the other hand, there is a sense in which we are indebted to the New Testament for the Church. It was by means of the facts and truths embodied in the New Testament that the Church was brought into existence, and it is by means of the same facts and truths that its existence has been continued until this day. Had the New Testament writings been lost, the Church would long since have lost its identity. Everything good and true within the Church today has been derived from the New Testament, and this has been the case ever since the hearers of the original preachers passed away.

But in all the above there is nothing conceded to those who, in the Roman Catholic sense of the terms, are constantly reiterating the declaration that we are indebted to the Church for our New Testament. They mean that Protestants are indebted to the Roman Catholic Church for the New Testament, that this Church, by her councils, settled the canon of the New Testament by deciding between the genuine and the spurious books which claimed a place in the sacred list. The reader will recollect that this Romish pretense was put forward in the *Christian Quarterly* by the writer whose article on Ecclesiastical

Polity was recently reviewed in this paper. He went so far as to affirm that "even as late as A.D. 325, the Council of Nice was compelled to settle the canon, and decide between the genuine writings of the apostles, and the flood of spurious Acts, Gospels, and Epistles, which were everywhere circulating, and in many places accepted as parts of the Holy Scriptures." The writer betrays in this affirmation the same want of accuracy which marks his entire article. The fragmentary history of the Council of Nice which has come down to us, contains no account of any action at all on the subject. The question was not even brought before this Council. The Greek Council of Laodicea was the first Council of bishops which took any action at all on the canon, and it convened A.D. 363. This Council published among its decrees a catalogue of the canonical books as they are now received, with the exception of Revelation.

But it was not the authority of this or of subsequent councils that settled the canon for early Christians, or that enables modern scholars to distinguish the spurious from the genuine books of the New Testament. The canon had already been settled in the minds of the great mass of Christians, and catalogues of the genuine books had been published before the meeting of the Council of Laodicea, so that all this council did in the matter was to recognize the canon which was already received by the churches at large. The first of these catalogues was Origen's, published about A.D. 225; the second, that of Eusebius, A.D. 315; the third, that of Athanasius, A.D. 326; and the fourth that of Cyril of Jerusalem, A.D. 348. These catalogues, running back more than a hundred years beyond the action of the councils on the subject, show how utterly fabulous is the conception that to these councils we are indebted for the settlement of the canon.

The truth is that the student of the present generation has the same means of determining this question that were in possession of the bishops assembled in the council of Laodicea. The latter lived too late to know anything at all of the subject except through the testimony of those who lived within and near to the apostolic age. By the writings of those earlier disciples, called the Apostolic Fathers, the question was settled then, and by the same writings it is settled now. Indeed, Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius and Cyril, made out their catalogues on the authority

(Continued on page 13)

“EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN OF WATER” (JOHN 3:5) Part 2

William Boyd

In the previous article we reasoned from the text to show that the expression “born of water” is an expression of water baptism. In this article we present doctrinally parallel passages that teach the same thing. Each of these passages affirm in equivalent terms the ancient doctrine of baptism in water, in accordance with the teachings of the Spirit, is essential to the new birth and subsequent citizenship in the kingdom of God.

Titus 3:5

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

(From John 3:5 to Titus 3:5, that should be easy to remember). To be “generated” is to be “born,” and to be “regenerated” is literally, to be “born again.” The “washing of regeneration” is an equivalent expression to “born of water.” The “renewing of the Holy Ghost” is the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart of man in conversion, and is an equivalent expression to “born of the Spirit.” The word translated “washing” harkens back to the ceremonial washings in the laver associated with the services of the temple under the old covenant. In Hebrews 6:1-2 these washings are called “baptisms.” They are identified as “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” because they were types and figures of the substance of his doctrine. Under the new covenant the “washing of regeneration” is baptism for the remission of sins.

Ephesians 5:25-26

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

To see the doctrinal parallel between Ephesians 5:25-26 and John 3:3-5 one must only acknowledge that the means by which the Holy Spirit works on the heart of man is the word of God. The “renewing of the Spirit” in Titus 3:5 and the “birth of the Spirit” in John 3:5 is accomplished through the agency of “the word” in Ephesians 5:26. The sanctification and cleansing of Ephesians 5:25-26 is the regeneration and renewal of Titus 3:5, and the new birth of John 3:5. The church of Christ in Ephesians 5:25 is the saved in Titus 3:5 and the kingdom of God in John 3:5. The “washing of water” in Ephesians 5:26 is the “washing of regeneration” in Titus 3:5. This is baptism, and both passages are parallel to “born of water” in John 3:5.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...

Here we have the now familiar pattern. “By one Spirit” is the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart of man through the word of God; “are we all baptized” is the birth of water of John 3:5, and “into one body” is the entrance into the kingdom of God.

The “baptism” of 1 Corinthians 12:13 could not be the baptism of the Holy Spirit because that would make two baptisms. Ephesians 4:5 says there is “one baptism.” The baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised to the apostles, received on the day of Pentecost, and equipped the apostles with every spiritual gift. In fact, the contention of their division was the diversities of the gifts they had individually received (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The basis of their unity was not the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but the common acceptance of the teaching of the one Spirit that resulted in their all being baptized by the one baptism that put them all into the one body.

It is interesting to lay this passage along side

1 Corinthians 1:17 where Paul said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." It has been contended that since Paul was not sent to baptize that some of the Corinthians were made Christians without baptism. When Paul says that he was not sent "to baptize" it does not mean he could not baptize them because he did baptize Crispus, and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, and likely others (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). Neither does it mean they were not to be baptized because some of them had been baptized by Apollos and others by Cephas (1 Corinthians 1:12). It can not imply that some were saved without baptism because every one to whom Paul addressed this letter was a baptized person. They had not all been baptized by Paul, but according to 1 Corinthians 12:13 they had been "all baptized."

Acts 2:41

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

There it is again. They were "born of the Spirit" because "they gladly received the word." There were "born of water" because they were "baptized." They "entered the kingdom" because they were "added to them." That baptism was the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and they were added because they were being saved (Acts 2:47). Their salvation was their new birth.

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

Faith is the result of the work of the Spirit in the heart of man. Faith cometh by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). The word cometh of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). So "he that believeth" is born of the Spirit, "and is baptized" is born of water, and the subsequent salvation is seeing the kingdom of God. Jesus spoke in familiar figures to Nicodemus, but before he ascended into heaven he dropped the figures and used plain talk.

This list of passages is not exhaustive. With a little study, you could add more, and that without

surprise, because the teaching of John 3:3-5 is of necessity consistent with the teaching of Christ and the apostles elsewhere. When it comes to the new birth, innovative and ambiguous interpretations do not serve our Lord well. They can prejudice the seeker and cause them to miss their place in the kingdom. The "new birth" (John 3:3-5) puts one "in Christ" making them a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17) with "newness of life" (Romans 6:4) through baptism (Galatians 3:26-27 and Romans 6:3-5). It is no more difficult than that.—12900 Southridge Drive, Little Rock, AR 72212

THE CHURCH AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Continued from page 11

of those who lived before themselves, and the scholars of the present age can quote the very words of men who lived within the age of inspiration for the canonicity of twenty out of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. See an epitome of this evidence in Milligan's *Reason and Revelation*.

From this very brief statement of facts the reader can see the pretense of Romanists, and of shallow imitators of Romish writers, that Protestants are dependent on the testimony and authority of Roman Catholic Councils for the canon of the New Testament, is utterly baseless and shameless. It is so far from being true, that, instead of even listening to such evidence, the Protestant feels constrained to go back beyond the earliest of all the Ecumenical Councils, in order to find evidence on the subject that is worthy of the name.

We would be in a sorry predicament if we had to depend for our knowledge of this subject on a church which, by her councils of later date, has dared to pronounce cononical the very defective Latin translation of the Scripture, and to add to the canon of the Old Testament the Apocrypha, which even the Jews themselves never regarded as inspired. Let us be done with this driveling nonsense about our indebtedness to Rome. The debt which we owe to the old Mother of Harlots is one of a very different kind, and our Lord will pay it for us in his own good time.—*The Apostolic Times*, Lexington, Kentucky, May 15, 1873



Interesting Inquiries

"Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?" Acts 8:30

ARE WE REQUIRED TO "GO TO CHURCH?"

John T. Polk, II



Why do people require "going to church?" Can't I be a good Christian without just being in some particular building?

No. Only after Saul and Barnabas "assembled with the church" for a whole year did God call the disciples "Christians" in Antioch (Acts 11:26). "Christian" is a name for disciples of Christ who regularly assemble themselves to worship God. It is not a building that identifies one as a Christian, but the assembled Christians who identify a building! The "church of God at Corinth" was to "come together as a church...in one place...[that they might, jtpII] eat the Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 11:18, 20, 33). He gives further regulations for when "the whole church comes together in one place" (1 Corinthians 14:23,26). Jesus had said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). It is an unscriptural perversion of the name "Christian" to apply it to anyone who doesn't desire to be in the assembly of the saints. A purpose of assembling and the sin of neglecting it are discussed in Hebrews 10:24-27. The idea of being a Christian with little or no ambition to assemble with others of like precious faith may be denominational or sectarian in origin, but it certainly is not of Christ! When tragedies or injustices occur in America, spokespeople keep saying "We need to come together" to show support, but that's exactly what God has been demanding of His people all along! The difference is instead of "coming together" only for humanitarian purposes, God also requires "coming together" for Divine

purposes. The activity of "coming together" (New Testament Greek word *ekklesia* = "gathering, assembly") is an identifying quality of a "Christian."

God has always drawn a line between the "sacred" and the "profane" (Leviticus 10:8-11; Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23) and the concept of "worship" simply recognizes that distinction. Only specified sacrifices including animals could be offered to God under Moses' law (Leviticus 1-5) and only for the specified reasons. However, God realized not all animals were "sacred" (designated for sacrifice) and so He said, "you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, of the gazelle and the deer alike. Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it on the earth like water" (Deuteronomy 12:15-16). That which was "set aside" for sacrifice to God was to be reserved for that purpose alone (Deuteronomy 12:17-28)! In addition to life's regular activities, God demands some time be "set aside" and devoted only to Him. This has always been true since Paradise was disrupted by sin (Genesis 4:1-5; Leviticus 23; Hebrews 13:9-16). Sometimes this can be done individually (with Bible study and prayerful meditation, 1 Timothy 4:15), or with family (sometimes termed "devotionals," Acts 10:24,33), but certainly must also include fellow Christians (many say "going to church," Acts 12:5-12).

Worship is "a respectful bowing down, showing reverence toward" the one being worshipped. Hence, Abraham respectfully bowed to the angels who visited his house (Genesis 18:2); Jacob bows seven times in greeting Esau (Genesis 33:3,6,7); Joseph dreamed that his family would bow before him (Genesis 37:10; 42:6). Even though fellow humans may be respected, God demands some things must be done that are NOT to be offered to any but God. God called Moses from a burning and not burned-up bush, but when Moses approached He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). When Moses learned he was in God's presence, he "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:6). Moses was sent into Egypt with plagues to make Pharaoh's servants respectfully "bow down" to Moses, who represented his all-powerful God, (Exodus 11:8), so that the Israelites could "go three days' journey into the

wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God" (Exodus 3:18.). Moses had to demonstrate with his sandals that he revered God's presence. This was separate from Moses' daily walking with God (Numbers 12:3). So, today, Christians will set aside special times to demonstrate their reverence before the presence of God (Ephesians 2:14-18; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Peter 2:1-5).

Because worship may be offered to God, gods, or humans, it makes a difference to whom it is offered! Paul in Athens commented on their "objects of worship" but proceeded to explain that the God "is not far from each one of us," however, God should not be represented as other gods in "that the Divine Nature is [not] like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising" (Acts 17:27,29). Expecting Peter to come as a representative of God, "Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, 'Stand up, I myself am also a man.'" (Acts 10:25-26). Respect for God should not be expressed the same as respect for man. To those who felt men were gods Paul said, "We also are men with the same nature as you and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them" (Acts 14:15). Not even angels should receive our devotion, as John discovered (Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9). To people who would seek truth from an angel or protection from a guardian angel, the Holy Spirit said, "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Colossians 2:18). Today, a burning bush, physical structure, human person, or an angelic being does not represent God's presence. Though His power is seen in His created world (Romans 1:18-21; Isaiah 45:12,18), under Moses, He designated that His presence would be with the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 40). Now under Jesus Christ, He is with all those who assemble according to His New Testament rules (Matthew 18:20; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 16:1-2; Acts 20:7).

It was after sin entered the garden of Eden that "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God" (Genesis 3:8). Sin alienates souls from God, and since Eden, proper worship permits the penitent to approach Him. It is inconceivable to think of a sinner seeking God but

refusing to worship God! ALL worship since Eden, falls into either of these two categories, accepted by God or rejected by God. To approach God in worship always must be on His terms, not man's. Immediately after leaving Paradise, God distinguished between Cain and Abel's sacrifices (Genesis 4:1-5) because Abel offered his "by faith" (Hebrews 11:4) and Cain did not (Cf. 1 John 3:11-12). In Moses' law Israelites were banned from bowing down to carved images (Exodus 20:3-6; Deuteronomy 5:5-11) or adopting the religious rites of others who did not follow God (Deuteronomy 12:1-4). God reminds Christians of the sharply drawn difference between the Lord's supper and any others' religious ritual (1 Corinthians 10:14-22). The Holy Spirit also shows there is a difference between the only two elements for the Lord's Supper (cup and bread, CF Mark 14:22-25) and whatever is on the table for a common meal (1 Corinthians 10:25-27). Sinners, and Christians who sin, should seek every opportunity to worship God acceptably and not absent themselves from His assemblies like the first sinners on earth did!

God requires special times for Christians to observe special activities for a most special purpose. Repentance and baptism "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38) give access to Almighty God, and in worship opportunities God offers His helpful hand to those who ask.—John T. Polk II, 125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

THINK ABOUT IT

*The more of heaven in our lives,
the less of earth we covet.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*You have no interest in the church
if you have not invested anything in it.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

*The wise man in the storm prays to God,
not for safety from danger,
but for deliverance from fear.
It is the storm within that endangers him
not the storm without.*

THE MENACING INTERNET

Louis Rushmore

Varying degrees of pornographic manifestation have saturated public outlook through every form of media (e.g., books, magazines, the Internet, movies, music videos, television, live performances). "Nearly 900 theaters show X-rated films and more than 15,000 'adult' bookstores and video stores offer pornographic material, outnumbering McDonald's restaurants in the U.S. by a margin of at least three to one."¹ One immediate result of the widespread popularity of pornographic expression is that society rapidly becomes jaded by it, susceptible to, and often drawn to even more greatly depraved representations of it. Pornography is psychologically addictive.

In the technologically advanced age of the twenty-first century, the computer via the Internet provides the most pervasive source of pornography. How is computer pornography being used, and by whom? An unlimited trove of pornography on the Internet is readily available to any determined user. Therefore, unattended children—a bumper crop of whom are styled "latchkey children"—may well stumble upon or purposely pursue the most perverse examples of pornography on the planet. Researchers determined that the incidences of the most graphic pornography occur significantly more often on Internet sites over previous and more traditional outlets for pornography. Further, the frequency and ease with which even the most outrageous pornography can be obtained anonymously is greatly enhanced through the Internet. Civil law has been unable or unwilling to interfere to any great extent with Internet pornography, excepting successful prosecution of child pornographers (providers and consumers).

The Internet is not without its redeeming values. The Internet from its conception to the present remains a tremendous research tool. Also, the Internet is proving itself a viable storefront for the world and in many respects a cost-effective, capable replacement for "snail-mail." In 1993, an estimated fifteen million personal computers were connected to the Internet with an additional twenty-five percent being added every three months.

The Internet has evolved over the past twenty-five years from a U.S. Defense Department tool for assisting with scientific research to a commercially-oriented communications network. As a research tool, the Internet helps users to share information with minimal costs. One of the biggest benefits of using this network is that long distance charges do not apply. Until recently, these costs and others were absorbed by the U.S. National Science Foundation in its administration of the central "backbone" of the Internet.²

Among the good uses of the Internet are the Bible Correspondence courses, biblical articles and religious journals put thereon by the churches of Christ.³ Therefore, it is both irresponsible to ignore the dangers to the home posed by the Internet, or on the other hand, to completely dismiss the potential benefits that it offers.

Some search engines provide password protected *family filters* to screen most of the objectionable material from appearing on one's home computer (e.g., Alta Vista). Most Internet search engines provide sufficient definition of search *hits* to avoid opening pornographic pages. Finally, there are several commercial software packages that are specifically designed to prevent objectionable Internet material from reaching the computer screen.

The Internet itself is neither holy nor sinful, but has the propensity to be used for evil, good or morally indifferent purposes (e.g., gathering information, games, communication, etc.). The Internet is no different from any other aspect of life; Christians must "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness..." (2 Timothy 2:22).

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).

Endnotes

¹ Anderson, Kerby and Brown, Perry, "The Peril of
(Continued on page 19)

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL FATHER

Author Unknown

"A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father: 'Father, give me the portion of thy time, and thy attention, and thy companionship, and the counsel which falleth to me.'"

And he divided unto them his living, in that he paid the boy's bills and sent him to a select preparatory school, and dancing school, and to college, and tried to believe he was doing his full duty by the boy.

And not many days after, the father gathered all interests and aspirations and ambitions and took his journey into a far country, into a land of stocks and bonds and securities and other things which do not interest a boy: and there he wasted his precious opportunity of being a chum to his own son.

And when he had spent the very best of his life and had gained money, had failed to find satisfaction, there arose a mighty famine in his heart; and he began to be in want of sympathy and real companionship.

And he went and joined himself to one of the clubs of that country, and they elected him chairman of the house committee and president of the club and sent him to Congress; and he would fain have satisfied himself with the husks that other men did eat, and no man gave unto him any real friendship.

But when he came to himself he said: "How many men of my acquaintance have boys whom they understand and who understand them, who talk about their boys and associate with their boys and seem perfectly happy in the comradeship of their sons, and I perish here with heart hunger? I will arise and go to my son and will say to him: "Son, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight; I am no more worthy to be called thy father; make me as one of thy acquaintances."

And he arose and came to his son, and while he was yet afar off, his son saw him and was moved with astonishment, and instead of running and falling on his neck he drew back and was ill at ease.

And the father said unto him: "Son, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. I am no more worthy to be called thy father. Forgive me now and let me be your friend."

But the son said: "Not so. I wish it were possible, but it is too late. There was a time when I wanted to

know things, when I wanted companionship and counsel; but you were too busy. I got the information, and I got the companionship; but I got the wrong kind, and now, alas, I am wrecked in soul and body, and there is nothing you can do for me. It is too late, too late, too late."

Every boy has a right to more than food, clothes, and correction—yes he has an inalienable right to a real father. God pity the boy that is reared under the influence of a prodigal father!

*For the time when a boy is in danger
Of going a little bit wild
Is when he's too young to be married,
Too old to be known as a child;
A bird of the wild-grass thicket
Just out of the parent tree flown;
Too large to keep in the old nest,
Too small to have one of his own.
When desolate, 'mid his companions,
His soul is a stake to be won,
Tis then that the devil stands ready
To get a good place to catch on.*

A GREAT CHURCH

has a great **plan** for the future.

has great **faith** in God and His promises.

believes that **prayer** is very important.

has a great **willingness** to work in God's kingdom.

has a great spirit of **togetherness** in God's work.

has great **compassion** for the needs of others.

has a great **burden** and **vision** for souls.

has great **persistence** and will not be stopped.

has great **respect** for the Word of God.

**If you move please remember to
send us your change of address.**

CAN ONE BE SAVED OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?

(Ephesians 5:23-25)

M. W. Kiser



The question under consideration has long been one of dispute. The popular idea is that we are first saved, and then we join the church. This has led some to conclude that they can stay home, read their Bible, pray, live a good moral life, etc., and go to heaven without being a

member of the church. Is this true? I say the Bible says "no," and I base this on the following considerations:

I. THE CROSS OF CHRIST SAYS "NO."

- A. The cross of our Lord is directly related to the subject of the church.
 1. Acts 20:28.
 2. Ephesians 2:16.
- B. Did our Lord shed His precious blood to purchase a non-essential thing?
- C. We cannot separate the blood, the cross and the church!

II. THE DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE SAYS "NO."

- A. The church means "the called out" (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 7:24-27).

- B. The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18).
- C. The church is the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28; John 18:36).
- D. The church is the household of faith (Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 3:15; Romans 8:17)
- E. The church is the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:20-23).

III. THE PROPHET ISAIAH SAYS "NO."

- A. Isaiah prophesied that "salvation would be in Zion" (Isaiah 46:13; 2:2-3).
- B. The Hebrew writer identifies Zion with the church (Hebrews 12:22-23).
 1. "Which are written in heaven." Who are these? The church.
 2. If not written in heaven, then you are lost! (Revelation 20:15; 21:27).
- C. The prophet answered the question 2700 years ago!

IV. THE TYPOLOGY OF THE BIBLE SAYS "NO."

- A. The tabernacle is said to be a pattern of the church (Hebrews 3:4-6; 8:4-6).
 1. The "most holy place" was a type of heaven (Hebrews 9:24).
 2. The "holy place" was a type of the church.
 3. You could not get to the "most holy place" but one way (John 14:6).
- B. Christ is said to be our "high priest" (Hebrews 3:1).
 1. He is the "high priest over the house of God" (Hebrews 10:21)
 2. The "house of God" is the church (1 Timothy 3:15).
 3. He is now in God's presence for us [the church] (Hebrews 9:24; 7:25).
- C. Christ does not function as the high priest over the world!

V. THE PLAN OF SALVATION SAYS "NO."

- A. The Lord gave this plan before His ascension (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47).
 1. It was to bring salvation to the soul (Romans 6:16-18; 1 Peter 1:22).
 2. To disobey brings doom (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
- B. It was to preach with great results on Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41).
- C. Those who obeyed were added by the Lord to the church.
 1. This was an executive act...not something other members decided!
 2. There were no exceptions to the rule...no saved left outside!
 3. Thus it harmonizes scripture proving that the same process that saved one added them to the church (Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

My friend, Jesus is the only Savior (Acts 4:12). When He saves folks, He adds them to His church (Acts 2:47). Therefore, let none of us who are saved think we can do without membership in the church. Friend, we must conclude that the church is not a religious luxury, but a divine necessity for everyone's life.—104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

THE MENANCING INTERNET

Continued from page 16

Pornography," (Garland, TX: American Tract Society)

²[found on the Internet on January 11, 1999 at <http://www.queensu.ca/epu/mehta/mehta.htm>]

³<http://www/gospelgazette.com>

EDITOR'S NOTE: Brother Louis Rushmore has one of the finest gospel WebPages that I have seen. Admittedly, I am not an expert on such things but his *Gospel Gazette Online* is very attractively done and is full of good articles written by some of the finest writers among churches of Christ today. You will want to visit the many different departments including

the *Current Issue*, back issues in the *Archives*, *churches of Christ*, *Lauds* and *Links*, among others. I thank brother Rushmore for this excellent service for computer users who are seeking good web sites, and encourage you to find out for yourself what an excellent resource is available on your computer!—*Dennis Gullledge*

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST QUARTER

Juanita Keele	
Manchester, TN.....	10.00
Hafford & Loretta Garland	
Horse Cave, KY.....	25.00
Ira & Virginia Clark	
Millington, TN.....	50.00
Walter & Eathel Buckley	
Maynard, AR.....	25.00
Frank R. Williams	
Earlsboro, OK.....	20.00
Perry B. Cotham	
Grand Prarie, TX.....	20.00
E. D. Welch	
Crowell, TX	100.00
F.S. (Ed) Glover	
Trenton, TN.....	20.00
Westside Church of Christ	
Evansville, IN.....	100.00
Elizabeth Church of Christ	
Elizabeth, AR.....	50.00
Harrisburg Church of Christ	
Harrisburg, IL.....	50.00
Arlington Church of Christ	
McMinnville, TN.....	75.00
Mabelvale Church of Christ	
Mabelvale, AR.....	1,250.00
Mountain Home Church of Christ	
Mountain Home, AR.....	1,450.00



RESTORING THE WAYWARD

Guy F. Hester



God loved lost humanity so much that "he gave his only begotten Son" for us (John 3:16). Christ loved hateful, sinful man so much that he died for us, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "We know that we have passed from death

unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:14). If we love our brethren we will do all that we can to restore one if he is "overtaken in a fault."

God's Love For His Children. Nowhere is God's great love and concern for His children more clearly pictured than in Luke chapter fifteen. In this chapter God, our Heavenly Father, is pictured as a shepherd who would leave ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness and go in search of one who had strayed from the flock. He is like the woman who had ten silver coins and when one coin was lost she swept her house and sought diligently until the lost coin was found. He is like the father whose son left him to go into a far country, and when he came back rushed with outstretched loving arms to welcome him home. Since we are to be imitators or "followers of God, as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1), should we not have the same love and concern for our brethren who err?

This article concerns the work of "Restoring the Wayward." Our aim is that it will awaken us to our duty and give us God's plan for accomplishing this serious and important task.

The apostle Paul said, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). I am afraid that the command in this verse to restore wayward children of God is treated by too many as a suggestion. We are given no choice in the matter if we "are spiritual."

Brethren Have An Obligation. Faithful brethren have an obligation to brethren that sin. In all ages certain obligations have rested upon man's shoulders as a result of being brothers. When Cain killed Abel, God said unto Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?" (Genesis 4:9). Abraham suggested to Lot that there be no strife among their herdsmen, for, he said, "We be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). Joseph, in Genesis chapter forty-five, felt a special obligation to his brethren to rescue them from famine. The Psalmist declares in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The same is true of the church, we are brethren (Matthew 23:8). Because we are brethren, certain obligations rest upon us of a general nature.

Love The Brethren. We are to love the brethren (1 Peter 1:22). We are to "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). We are to "have the same care one for another" (1 Corinthians 12:25). Many are the general obligations such as these. Yet, God has placed upon the shoulders of faithful brethren a special duty toward brethren that sin.

The Process Of Getting Lost Ones To Return. Just how do we go about the process of getting the lost ones to return? What can we do as brethren as well as the whole congregation? We are to convert them from the error of their way (James 5:19-20). It seems that many think that "convert" only applies to alien sinners, but when brethren forsake the right ways of the Lord, they need to be converted. The Lord said to Peter, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). To convert means "to turn around," to get men to come back to the way of righteousness and holiness again.

We are to restore them to their first state (Galatians 6:1). "Restore" means to correct or mend. In Matthew 4:21, it is used with reference to mending nets. The Greeks used it with reference to the work of a surgeon setting a broken bone. When brethren sin

we are to correct them and get them to make amends for their faults.

We are to save brethren from the fire (Jude 23). Brethren who sin are lost! They are headed full speed down the road to eternal destruction in hell. We are to save them by "snatching them" (ASV) from their sin and destruction. Their condition is so serious that there is no time to waste. They are so near the fire of hell that there is only time to "snatch" them from the flames. They are "lingering on the brink of woe," and as Lot and his family lingered so that the angels had to "snatch" them by the hand and get them out of the city (Genesis 19:16), so we must snatch brethren who sin out of the fire.

This is indeed a most serious responsibility with very grave consequences if we fail to discharge it. Our failure will result in the sinner losing his soul and may result in our losing our own souls. It will likewise result in the church being polluted and corrupted and its influence greatly damaged.

Paul commanded the Corinthians to "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Then he said to them, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). Of Christ and the church, Paul said, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

God knew that it would be impossible for His children to live perfect lives in a world where they are surrounded daily with sin and temptations of every sort. The newborn Christian is spotless, cleansed of every sin by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Yet, temptations are so many, and the weaknesses of the flesh so universal, that those who live will make mistakes. This means that God's plan for saving man must, of necessity, include not only a way of securing the forgiveness of those sins one has committed before becoming a Christian, but also a means of securing forgiveness of those sins that will be committed after one becomes a Christian. Now God did not provide this "second law of pardon" to

encourage us to sin. Paul asked, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). Our loving Heavenly Father knew that we would sin and therefore by His loving grace provided a means of cleansing our purification.

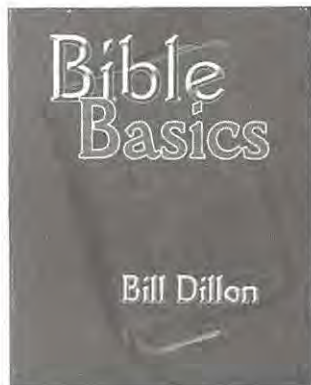
Continuous Faith is Necessary. When one becomes a Christian he or she is a babe in Christ and must continue to grow in faith and in the knowledge of the Lord (1 Peter 2:1-2). Paul suggested to the Colossians that they "continue in the faith grounded and settled" (Colossians 1:23). In the Ephesian letter he emphasizes that above all, Christians should take the shield of faith wherewith they are able to "Quench the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16). Christians are urged to: "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Hebrews 10:23). All this is commanded because "without faith it is impossible to please" God. So if the Christian should lose faith, it would not be possible for him to receive the forgiveness of sins committed after he became a Christian. However, just as faith alone is not sufficient for the alien sinner to receive the forgiveness of sins, it is not sufficient for the erring child of God to receive the forgiveness of his sins.

Repentance Is Necessary. God requires men to repent as often as they commit sin. Remission of sins never comes without repentance. Simon the Sorcerer was commanded to "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). It is not hard to see that repentance was a definite condition of his forgiveness. Jesus declared in reproving the church at Ephesus, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5). God's mercy delays our destruction that we may have time to repent (2 Peter 3:9). The sinner, and that means every sinner, must be moved by faith to repent before forgiveness is possible.

Confession Is Necessary. The alien sinner in becoming a Christian must confess faith in Jesus Christ. The erring child of God is required to confess the sin or sins he has committed in order to receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Forgiveness of sins is
(Continued on page 23)

“BIBLE BASICS”

Bill Dillon, author



Things that are basic are timeless and always important to us. We never really tire of the basics. Since basics are foundational we usually find ourselves going back to them. The basic teachings that have been preached by faithful evangelists since the day

the Lord's church was born are becoming more and more a rarity in modern pulpits.

How important is it to know and teach the Bible basics? Show me a preacher or teacher who has eliminated basic Bible truths from his lessons and I will show you one who rarely, if ever, stirs the waters of a baptistry. In fact, I will show you a person who is in doubt whether the Lord's church has any distinctive message for the world today.

Bill Dillon has written an excellent little book called, "Bible Basics." As the title suggests it contains material in the realm of basic Bible lessons. The author has a unique and insightful way of putting old truths into new robes. In this book, Bill Dillon takes the reader back to the Bible for a fresh look at some of the basic lessons to be found in the Sacred Volume. It contains chapters on the Bible, Jesus, the blood of Christ, the church of Christ, gambling, singing in worship, etc. This book will be extremely helpful in preparing short talks and devotionals.

You may order this book from The Cherry Tree Bookstore, 860 Highway 62 East, No. 10, Mountain Home, AR 72653. You may email them at cherrytree@centurytel.net. Or you may call them toll free at 1-800-882-4668. Price of the book is \$5.00, plus tax along with postage.—Dennis Gulledge, editor.

This paper originated in January 1985 as a work of sowing the seed of the Great Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since its beginning the *Gleaner* has been a teaching tool, a paper designed to inform and instruct in the simple gospel of Christ. It has never been the intent of the editors of this paper to enter into forums of debate among brethren, even though we recognize the value of public discussion of issues. There is a place for the airing out of problems among us, and there are plenty of papers willing to lend themselves to that purpose. The *Gospel Gleaner*, however, has not and will not enter into the fray.

We consider this to be one of the great strengths of the paper. There are some brethren who take issue with us in that direction and consider it to be no direction at all. To them you are not "cutting edge" unless you are cutting up those brethren with whom you disagree doctrinally. They glorify the very disposition that Paul condemns in Galatians 5:15. We will present the positive truths of heaven, and oppose whatever militates against the word of God and the good of man. We will not compromise, but neither will we hobby ride! We try to select and write material that is instructive and edifying, as well as timely to every reader.

In Volume 17, Number 1 of this paper I wrote an article asking; "Are Debates Still an Effective Method of Teaching?" (p. 15). The gist of the article was to point out the value of debating as a teaching medium. Liberals have tried to take debating away from us and substitute ecumenical meetings and dialogue. They know the effect that debating has on eradication of error.

That piece was written on the eve of the discussion between John T. Polk, II and Holger Neubauer over the issue of congregational withdrawal of fellowship. That debate was held at *Tennessee Bible College* on May 3-4. The reports that have come to us are that the discussion was conducted in an excellent spirit by both disputants and among all whom attended. For that we are glad. But, most of all it is our prayer that the New Testament teaching on the matter be revealed and obeyed. Those who are interested in the material presented may contact TBC for tapes of the discussion.—Editor.

A SINNER'S PRAYER

Continued from front page

The Sinner's Prayer. Almost all denominational groups close their writings or preaching by telling people that if they sincerely repeat the sinner's prayer, they are assured they will be forgiven. This prayer differs from group to group. It seems that if this were a requirement of God: (1) it would be the same prayer. (2) It would have been included in scripture by command or example.

The Book of Hope (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1998) author not given, p. 53, gives this prayer: "God, I'm sorry for my sins. Right now, I turn from my sins and ask you to forgive me. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die on the cross for my sins. Jesus, I ask you to come into my life and be my Lord, Savior, and Friend. Thank you for forgiving me and giving me eternal life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Following this the statement is made, "If you prayed this prayer and meant it, you can be sure God has forgiven you and received you into his family."

This prayer, and the promise concerning such a prayer are not found in the Bible. The promise was made by man, not by God; therefore, God is under no obligation to honor it.

Conclusion. Prayer is important in our relationship with God, but we should realize that only those prayers are heard that are according to God's will. Perhaps non-Christians' prayers are regarded when they ask for many varied helps and needs (Acts 10:31), but nowhere are they given instruction or assurance that their sins can be forgiven simply by saying a concocted "sinner's prayer." Salvation for the lost comes to those who hear God's word (Acts 11:14), believe, repent, confess and are baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10).—305 W. Maryland Avenue, Sherwood, AR 72120

RESTORING THE WAYWARD

Continued from page 21

conditional upon a confession of sins. So many times we hear, "If I have done anything wrong I want to be forgiven," instead of, "I have sinned, Father, forgive me." *To be continued.*—1925 County Highway 59, Haleyville, AL 35565

THOU ART NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM

Continued from page 10

(Colossians 1:13; Luke 11:18). The only time to which God binds Himself is now (2 Corinthians 6:2). Great things can be done in a short time, but now we have 10,080 fewer minutes than at this hour a week ago, and 524,162 fewer minutes of time than this day last year. It is dangerous to wait!

He was in a *place of decision*. The rich young ruler had been there (Matthew 19: 16-24), as Felix later would be (Acts 24:25). Agrippa, too, failed in the land of decision (Acts 26:28)

Why Was He There? It is *not* because it would not be worth it to enter. There he would find forgiveness (Revelation 1:5-6; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; John 3:5) and peace (Philippians 4:7). He would be a priest and commune with Christ (Revelation 1:5-6; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 10:16). From there he would have been delivered up to the Father at Christ's second coming (1 Corinthians 15:24), because his name would be enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).

It may have been some *stumbling* block that was keeping him out. It could have been a love for money (1 Timothy 6:10; Matthew 6:19-21), or a fear that others would object (John 12:42-43; Matthew 10:34-37; Luke 14:26). It might have been an inadequate sense of sin (self-righteousness) (cf., Isaiah 1:6; Matthew 20:28) or just procrastination (Hebrews 3:7-8; James 4:14; Luke 12:16-21). He had made great progress; all he needed was to take the final step. We know not what happened to him, but would like to think that he was one of the three thousand who were added to the kingdom on Pentecost (Acts 2:41).

You may be in the same position. Don't delay outside the camp (Hebrews 3:7-8)! Before George Washington crossed the Delaware, a Tory farmer gave the British general a note stating Washington's plan. Instead of reading it immediately, the British general placed it in his pocket. When he did read the note, he was a prisoner of war! Don't wait till you are a prisoner of the devil before thinking about obeying Christ. It is the first step that costs, it is the last step that pays.—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265



CAN'T SAY ENOUGH

I am glad to get your fine magazine, the *Gospel Gleaner*, and to know that you have recently been appointed editor. Your excellent paper, both in format and content is super-excellent. It is one of the best that comes across my desk. The print size is great and easy on the eye. Just can't say enough about it. Your staff writers also do a great job. Keep the magazine true to "the old paths." With you at the helm, I look forward to a long and profitable reception of your magazine. Bruce R. Curd, Marion, NC.

A REFERRAL

Johnny Polk told me about the publication that you print, the *Gospel Gleaner*, and suggested that I write and ask to be placed on your mailing list. I would appreciate receiving this publication very much. Kenneth P. Gossett, Clarksville, TN.

APPRECIATES GG

Hope all is going well with you and your good work. Appreciate your work with the *Gospel Gleaner*. Frank Chesser, Montgomery, AL.

A FINE PAPER WITH EVERY ISSUE

I am writing to thank you for your nice report you gave in the recent issue of the *Gleaner* of my interview. You did an excellent job in bringing it up to date. When I read it, I was highly pleased.

I left home last Saturday (July 7th) to go to Chattanooga, TN for a meeting with the White Oak church. James C. Watkins is the local preacher, and serves also as one of the elders. When I got to the

building Sunday morning he told me of your article and reproduced it and made it available to all the members. More copies were made as visitors came and as the meeting continued through Thursday night (12th). In this way your paper got a good advertising. You and the other writers produce a fine paper with every issue. I enjoy reading it. It has many fine articles each issue. Perry B. Cotham, Grand Prairie, TX.

APPRECIATED GG FROM IT'S BEGINNING

It was with great joy that I read the last issue of *Gospel Gleaner*, April-June 2001. I have received the paper from the beginning and have always appreciated it. However, the last issue must be one of the best. The articles were of great interest to me. The articles by John T. Polk, II and Max R. Miller stood out to me as one who has great interest in history. Then, your interview with Perry B. Cotham, whom I have appreciated through the years, was most refreshing to the spirit. I am glad that you are the new Editor of the paper. Of course, brother Bill Dillon did a great job with this paper. I am looking forward to the next issue. Frank R. Williams, Earlsboro, OK.

REMOVE OUR NAME

Please remove our name from the mailing list of the *Gospel Gleaner*. Ben F. Vick, Jr., Indianapolis, IN.

PICKED UP GG AT A LECTURESHIP

I was recently at a Lectureship and picked up a copy of *Gospel Gleaner*. I have enjoyed it very much. Please place my name on your mailing list. I am enclosing a small check to help with the postage. Thank you. Juanita Keele, Manchester, TN.

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK

I was given a copy of your paper (*Gospel Gleaner*) by a friend, and I enjoyed reading it very much. Keep up the good work defending and teaching God's word of truth. If it is not too great a burden I would like to be added to your amiling list. Todd Easterling, Fordyce, AR.

GOSPEL GLEANER
P. O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

Change Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mabelvale, AR
PERMIT NO. 4



THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM

Tom Moore

J. W. McGarvey once said, "I would esteem above every other gift that could be bestowed upon me as a preacher the power to adequately conceive what sin is and to adequately set it before the people." Why was this so vital to brother McGarvey? He knew of the horrible nature of sin. Sin, a transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4), has terrible consequences. Because of the end result of sin there is a great need for evangelism. To help us understand and appreciate the need for evangelism let us consider a few of the things that sin will do to us.

We need evangelism because sin separates. The Almighty, through Isaiah declared, "Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). Paul said that in sin we are afar off from God (Ephesians 2:13). Thus, sin separates man from God.

Sin also separates man from a better self. Paul exclaimed, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). Paul experienced this very plight, for he explains, "For the good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me"

(Romans 7:19-20). Sin will also divide a man from his family (Luke 12:49-53), and from his brethren (Romans 16:17-18).

Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). These divisions that can occur show us the need for evangelism.

We need evangelism because sin is seductive. Satan is very deceptive as is seen in the very beginning of time as he tempts Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1ff). The devil will try to snare us as a hidden trap tries to ensnare its prey (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Satan also has deceptive messengers who will try to lead us astray (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Sin itself is also deceptive. Paul said sin "beguiled" him (Romans 7:11), and is a deceiver (Titus 3:3). The Hebrew writer encouraged us to "Exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). We are constantly warned throughout the New Testament not to be deceived (Ephesians 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 John 3:7; et al.). We are deceived by sin when we say we have no sin (1 John 1:8-10). We are fooled by sin

(Continued on page 16)



Volume 17 Number 4
October - December 2001

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is a quarterly publication of the Mabelvale Church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas and the Mountain Home Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

STAFF WRITERS

Bill Dillon
Guy F. Hester
M. W. Kiser
Max Miller
John T. Polk, II
Allen Webster

EDITOR

Dennis Gulledge

MAILING ADDRESSES

Contributions

P. O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AR 72103

Manuscripts

P. O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AR 72103

Web Site

mabelvalechurchofchrist.org

Editorial

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

Dennis Gulledge

The recent best selling book, *The Prayer of Jabez*, written by Bruce Wilkinson, was the “surprise religious book” of the year 2000. It has sold over seven million copies. Every book writer would like to boast of such success. That success has spawned a marketing phenomenon that includes books for kids and teens, T-shirts, coffee mugs, a desk calendar, a study Bible, a devotional guide, a website and a reminder coin – all in the name of Jabez. This book, or any of its related merchandise, might very well be under your Christmas tree this year (given by some well-meaning friend or relative).

I realize that this book enjoys some popularity among our brethren. I see no problem with that as long as the reader is able to see past the hype surrounding the book, as well as the pseudo-promises and the false teachings of the author so as to derive some benefit from the commentary provided. The apostle John wrote, “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). The trouble is that the largest portion of the reading public is not so discerning.

All that the Bible tells us about Jabez is found in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, which reads, “And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.” This text is found in the midst of a long list of genealogies. 1 Chronicles chapters 1-10 cover genealogies and history from Adam to the death of Saul, king of Judah. 1 Chronicles chapters 11-29 cover the reign of David. The purpose of the Chronicles was to provide ancient genealogical material and to give the rank and order of the priests and Levites who were to resume their official activities upon the Jew’s return to the Promised Land after their captivity in Babylon. Certain historical events are interspersed in these genealogical records. The brief passage about Jabez is one of them.

What can we learn from a study of Jabez and his prayer? Hopefully much! Charles Hodge said that he has written two books on prayer, but his next book on prayer will include the prayer of Jabez. We should never get too old to learn. In regard to this Old Testament saint and his prayer let us notice,



THE MAN JABEZ (Vs. 9)

Jabez was one of the noble sons of the tribe of Judah (Vs. 1). Jabez certainly excelled many in his generation. He is not, however, the central figure of the book of Chronicles. That distinction belongs to David. Jabez is a man of small renown. Yet, much can be learned from God's faithful sons and daughters no matter how great or obscure they may be (Hebrews 11:32-40).

His mother named him Jabez, as she said, "Because I bare him with sorrow." Literally, his name means, "that which causes pain." Expositors love to speculate as to the reason for a mother so naming her son: Did she bring him into this world with an unusually difficult delivery? Was the time of his birth contemporary with the event of her widowhood (if such she was)? Was his name intended to denote some poverty and/or hardship in her life? It appears that the sorrow refers to unusual difficulty surrounding childbirth, rather than to any attendant circumstances of domestic trial: "Because I bore him in pain" (RSV); "Because of the pain he caused his mother during birth" (CIV).

Whatever the reason for his name we know that by comparison Jabez "was more honorable than his brethren." To his mother Jabez was associated with some particular sorrow. Sometimes where there is sorrow in earlier events, there will be great comfort in the sequel. At times we have to sow in tears before we can reap in joy.

The prayer of Jabez tells us something of the type of man he was. People who pray such prayers usually excel in character. From the heart of this honorable man his noble prayer is here recorded in a few words.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ (Vs. 10)

"Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed."

We often ask God to bless us when we pray. The word "indeed" suggests blessings that are truly blessings. Paul used the designation "indeed" to describe widows who were truly destitute, with no children or relatives to care for them (1 Timothy 5:3). There are many things for which people wish that might be more curses than real blessings, i.e., money, power, honor and success. Jabez wanted what God considered best for him – blessings

indeed!

"Enlarge my coast." Bear in mind that the Chronicles were written after Judah's captivity. The returning remnant found themselves back in the land of promise with land to be reclaimed (Cf., Deuteronomy 12:20; 19:8). We know nothing of the occasion surrounding Jabez's prayer, but rather than greed for more land it may have been a request for the recovery of acreage wrongfully taken from him.

It would be proper for Christians today to ask God to enlarge their "borders" in the figurative senses of service and activity in his church. Are you comfortable with the least amount of work and service that you can do? Ask the Lord to enlarge your borders! Take advantage of opportunities. Don't bury your talents! No one should be content with the spiritual status quo – there is so much to do, learn and enjoy. The fields of evangelism are white unto harvest!

"And that thine hand might be with me."

Jabez acknowledged the providence of God in his life (Ezra 7:9; Psalm 80:17). In our "enlightened" age men often want to shut God out of his own created sphere. Some people attribute all things to chance, fate or circumstance. Men sometimes boast that they can do well enough without God (Luke 12:16-21). The Old Testament Jews, as do faithful Christians today, typically believed in the personal God who created the universe and sustains it by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3).

"And that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." Jabez prayed that he might be able to face any evil and not be overcome by it. We are taught by Jesus Christ to pray in a similar fashion (Matthew 6:13; cf., James 1:14).

PROBLEMS

It is right for us to love the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. It would be wrong for us to make it more than it really is. Mr. Wilkinson calls the prayer of Jabez the "miracle of Jabez" (p. 90). He assures us that if we use the prayer Jabez we will see miracles happen (presumably after one has purchased his book). Mr. Wilkinson writes, "God will release His miraculous power in your life now" (p. 92). Miraculous powers were given to Jesus' disciples (Luke 10:1-17); his apostles (Matthew

10:1), and those upon whom the apostles laid their hands (Acts 8:5-6). Miracles were for the purpose of confirming the word of God (Mark 16:17). They were later eliminated with the completed revelation of God's will for man (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). There is nothing in the prayer of Jabez that offers miraculous power for God's people today.

The book promises to supernaturally change your life. Wilkinson writes, "Join me for that transformation. You will change your legacy and bring supernatural blessings wherever you go" (pp. 91-92). There is a transformation available to us today, but it is through the gospel and its application in our lives (2 Corinthians 3:18). There is nothing in the prayer of Jabez that offers such a transformation to God's people today.

People should not use this prayer as a mantra, ritual or ceremony. They should not put it into the realm of counting beads or another "Hail Mary." Mr. Wilkinson believes the strength of the prayer of Jabez lies in its rote repetition every day. He says he has prayed this prayer every day for thirty years (p. 11). Wilkinson has cast this petition into the same mold as the misnomered "Lord's prayer" (Matthew 6:9-13). Why would this not be vain repetition in prayer? (Matthew 6:7). The person who merely says the prayer of Jabez as a prescribed routine evidently misses the sentiment that it breathes and they fail to grasp the doctrines that it teaches. There is nothing in the prayer of Jabez that offers help through mere repetition.

Finally, the prayer of Jabez is not a prayer uttered through Jesus Christ, our heavenly mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). As spiritual priests in the church of Christ it is the chief function of all Christians to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). The prayer of Jabez is a petition in the typical Hebrew form during the Mosaic era. Jewish prayer usually covered five areas: (1) requests for blessings, whether temporal or spiritual [*"Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me"*], (2) deprecations of evil of every kind [*"and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me"*], (3) intercessions on behalf of others, (4) thanksgiving for blessings conferred upon us, and (5) praises to God. Mr. Wilkinson takes us to the wrong covenant to learn to pray (Hebrews 7:11; 8:7). In this he fails to handle aright the word of

truth by not recognizing the distinction between the covenants (2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 8:13). As children of God we have a heavenly Father to pray to and a loving Savior as our heavenly mediator.

The prayer of Jabez teaches us four truths: (1) God ought to be acknowledged as the source of our prosperity [physical and spiritual] (James 1:17), (2) God is the source of all our strength (Ephesians 6:10), (3) God is the only sufficient protector against sin – through his word (Psalm 119:11; Matthew 6:13), and, (4) God answers prayer (Matthew 6:6; 1 Peter 3:12). And, just as in the case of Jabez, James tells us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

May we appreciate the prayer of Jabez for what it is – a wonderfully instructive Old Testament petition. May we also avoid the mistake of taking this prayer beyond its proper context and meaning for our lives.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, Arkansas 72103.

CORRECTION

In my editorial last quarter the statement was made, "Buddhists make much of the fact that they claim to follow 'one God'..." (p. 3). That statement should have referenced the Muslims, not Buddhists. I apologize for the error. —Dennis Gulledge

MABELVALE CHURCH OF CHRIST
10820 MABELVALE WEST ROAD
P. O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (501) 455-2548
Office Fax (501) 407-0072
E-Mail: mabelval@cei.net
Web Site: mabelvalechurchofchrist.org

Dennis Gulledge, Evangelist



“WHOM DO MEN SAY THAT I THE SON OF MAN AM?”

Max R. Miller



“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:8-10).

Who is this Jesus? Lowly carpenter of Nazareth? Was He God? The only begotten Son of God? Was He really from heaven? Was He only a good man blessed of God in unusual ways? Was He a real flesh and blood human being, or a ghost-like phantom figure? Who was this Jesus of Nazareth? Throughout the Christian Age the true identity of this holy character has been a great controversy. To the wise men of the East and even Herod himself, Jesus, born at Bethlehem, was only an earthly king. Pontus Pilate asked of Him if He was a king, and received little for his inquiry. Controversy followed the man of Nazareth everywhere He went. Pharisees and Sadducees, strongest of the religious leaders of Israel, denied the true nature of Jesus. Rather than accept Him as King of the Jews and the only begotten Son of God, they crucified Him. These of New Testament times, passed on, others came and passed on, but the controversy about the person of Jesus Christ has continued until this day.

The Ebionites of the second century denied the divine nature of Jesus Christ. To them, Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary, who so completely fulfilled

the Jewish law that God chose Him to be the Messiah. He would come again to found a Messianic kingdom for the Jews. Along with them, the Docetists also denied the Lord's true nature. They deemed Him to be “only seemingly (*docetic*) human” (an apparition, ghost-like appearance). They taught that His body seemed to be flesh and blood. He seemed to suffer. His tears of pain and sorrows were apparent, not real. He appeared to be a man of flesh, bone and blood—but what seemed to be real was not real at all. Docetics denied His humanity.

We here give attention to an even more dangerous sect that denied the true nature of Jesus: the Gnostics. Gnosticism was pre-Christian in its origin, and was in existence before Christianity came into the world. The height of its influence was from about 135 to 160, though it continued a force long afterward. Gnosticism threatened to overwhelm the Christian faith, and brought the gravest crisis to the church since the Pauline battle for freedom from the law of Moses.

The term Gnosticism is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* (knowledge). Through mystic, supernatural knowledge Gnostics were brought to a true understanding of the universe, and were saved from the evil world of matter. By that mystic endowment of knowledge Gnostics attained to the realm of perfect Light. This knowledge and its source were superior to the Gospel of Christ. Sparks, or seeds of the Divine Being, fell from this transcendent realm of Light into the material universe, which is wholly evil, and dwelt in human bodies. Reawakened by knowledge, the divine element in humanity can return to its proper home in the transcendent spiritual realm of Light. The end and object of Gnosticism was to purify its followers from the corruption of matter, and to raise them to a higher order of being, suited only to those who were made perfect by knowledge.

Gnostics taught the existence of two Gods. One was the God of Light who sent Christ into the world; the other, the Demiurge, was the creator of the world of matter. All matter was evil. The Demiurge, the God of Biblical creation (Genesis 1:1-2) could not be the high and good God, the God of Light, but an inferior and imperfect being. Gnostics denied the divine spirit touched evil, material human flesh. Therefore, the person of Christ could not be a composition of material elements. To them, Christ was totally a spirit being, a subordinate spirit, one of the angels, that

emanated from the High God of Light. He had not come "in the flesh," but in ghost-like, Docetic appearance. Christ did, indeed, appear. He taught His disciples but as a heavenly being, not one of flesh and blood. Gnostics denied the humanity of Christ. The apostle Paul stated, in the face of rising Gnosticism, "For in him [Jesus Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). His compass of the ministry of Jesus Christ—from heaven—to earth—and back to the heavenly is stated fully: "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).

About the years A. D. 85-90, John writes his Gospel and his First Epistle. He begins his Gospel by stating clearly: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). His First Epistle begins with the testimony of an intimate bosom companion of Jesus who declared, we (John and other apostles) heard Him with our own ears, we have seen Him with our own eyes, and we have handled His fleshly body with our own hands (1 John 1:1-3).

John boldly incriminates those who deny that Christ came in the flesh as liars and antichrists. Hear him: "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1 John 4:3). "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2 John 7).

Furthermore, John in his writings, refutes the growing menaces of Gnosticism by identifying the true Light. John turns the word *light*, as misused by the Gnostics, against them and their heresy. Rather than Light being the god above the God of Creation, he shows the true Light is the God of Creation: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). John identifies Jesus, born of the virgin Mary,

conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit of God, as the Immanuel of prophecy (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:19-25). This Immanuel (God with us) is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead [deity] bodily" (Colossians 2:9). Jesus Christ said of Himself, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). Paul urged Timothy to keep the commandments "of our Lord Jesus Christ...Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto..." (1 Timothy 6:14-16).

The children of God walk in the light with the God of Light (1 John 1:5-7). There is no darkness in the God of the Apostles, neither is there darkness in the children of the true God of light. "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14-16). God's children are made to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light...delivered from the power of darkness...translated into the kingdom of his dear son" (Colossians 1:12-14). His children are a "chosen generation...called out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "Ye [Christians] are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). Paul praises the God of heaven "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness [who] hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). The children of God are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Ephesians 5:11).

The apostle Paul summed up the fullness of divinity in Jesus Christ as he wrote to the Philippian saints, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5-11).

Christians may ever be grateful for the God of love, who sent the light of His Son Jesus Christ to

seek and save the lost, delivering them from the captivity of Satan and darkness and giving them the light of life. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). The Holy Spirit in God's Holy Book reveals to us the truth and knowledge of Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh. This is He who gives life and light to His faithful disciples. For He "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9-10).—10726 Hwy 59 W., Burlison, TN 38015-7244

THE DIGNITY OF GOSPEL PREACHING

Ernest S. Underwood

The commission to the apostles was to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Following the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ this commission began to be put into action. The preaching of the gospel required courage, stamina, and an intense love for God and man. Those of the first century who were privileged to preach the gospel did it with great seriousness and dignity. The gospel is worthy of such solemnity. Those who treat the preaching of the gospel lightly or flippantly, and those who, being ashamed of the gospel, resort to stratagems, entertainment, and any other such drivel are not worthy of the privilege afforded them of proclaiming the precious gospel.

God's preachers have always treated the word entrusted to them with dignity and reverence. As one reads the book of Deuteronomy he is impressed with the solemnity with which Moses spoke again the Law that had been delivered to him. He did not need to use some sensational method to gain or hold the attention of those to whom he spoke. The words of Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, and other of the oral prophets portray the respect and honor in which they held both their

message and their mission. One cannot read the prophetic books of the Old Testament without the imprint being made upon his mind that these men of God held the word which they spoke and wrote, and the manner in which they spoke and wrote it, in great respect and dignity.

Is it not time in this century to return the dignity to the pulpits of the Lord's church? We cannot expect such respect and dignity from the denominational groups. By the very nature of the disrespect of such groups for the authority of God's word, we expect the "spectacular" and the Hollywood-type productions from them. Having abandoned the sacred truth, the sensational and dramatic is all they have with which to draw men to themselves. Dare we have so little respect for the sacredness of preaching that we would now follow them in desecrating our service to God?

The use by many congregations of the "high-powered" youth speakers who apparently know little of the word of God, and who resort to emotionalism and theatrics, speaks all too loudly of that congregation's lack of respect for the dignity of preaching. It shows that such congregations have no confidence in the power of the gospel to help their young people, thus they feel that they must secure the services of these speakers to "put a charge" in their young people. Preachers, if such can be called preachers, who allow themselves to be so used show themselves to be no more than hirelings. They show that the paycheck and the applause of men are their goals and gods.

May those of us who have the privilege of preaching discharge our responsibilities in a dignified manner worthy of the word of God. May those who sit in the pew demand such dignity from those who stand before them to preach and teach.—337 College Avenue, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

THE DIGNIFIED T. B. LARIMORE

"He seems ever conscious of the scaredness of his place and calling, and brings to his work a quiet, gentle dignity which impresses his hearers at once and imparts to them a portion of his own humility and prepares them to listen attentively to what he has to say" — *Smiles and Tears of Larimore and his Boys* (1889), p. 13.

SHRINES TO APOSTASY

John T. Polk II



If respect to God is acceptably shown, it must be according to His guidelines and regulations, not men's (Mark 7:6-8). It doesn't matter who the people are, or where or when they live, God has always made it clear what pleases Him. "But without faith it is impossible to please

Him" (Hebrews 11:6), thus God's word makes faith possible (Mark 11:22; John 17:20; 20:30-31). In every nation, those who please God are those who do His commandments (Acts 10:34-35; Revelation 22:14).

The Purpose Of A Shrine Does Matter.

One must remember that the tower of Babel was to be an impressive edifice designed only to "make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:1-9). "Babel" and "Babylon" have since always referred to their "confusion" of languages by which God scattered them over "all the earth." But note that "they ceased building the city." It is thus ever true that those who are determined to make a name for themselves through whatever means, and not give God the glory: 1) are opposed to God's purposes; 2) are destined for God's rejection; and 3) are living in "confusion" not cooperation with God's will (Cf., 1 Corinthians 14:33).

God gave a moveable location (a.k.a. "tabernacle") to which Israelites should come for worship under Moses' Law (Exodus 40:34-38), and every encampment in their wilderness wanderings had this as its center (Numbers 2:17). Not until King David did God reveal where His permanent place for worship was to be built, i.e., in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 7:1-11), and by whom, i.e., Solomon, who was David's son (1 Kings 8:14-21). Israel so corrupted themselves that God removed them from the "Promised Land" many years later, by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar who "burned the house of God" (2 Chronicles 36:15-21). After the ensuing seventy year exile, God restored the first of them to their land that they might rebuild the

Temple, which thing was accomplished under the leadership of Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:1-13; 6:14-18). Later the Temple was ruined again but rebuilt by Herod the Great who took forty-six years to finish it prior to Jesus birth (John 2:20). Though Jesus used this temple to observe Moses Law while He lived, He taught the Samaritan woman that Jerusalem would not continue to be God's center of worship (John 4:19-26). When Jesus cleansed the temple of its defilers, John shows readers that Jesus' body would be the new temple (John 2:13-22).

What Is God's "Shrine" Today? The church of Christ is Christ's spiritual body, for Paul wrote to "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Paul preached the "gospel" and many Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized to establish it (Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11). Their baptism had enabled them to be members of the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 18, 27), which is the church (1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18, 24). Christians (Acts 11:26; Matthew 28:18-20) are baptized believers who comprise the body of Christ, the church of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit—which are all one and the same (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:18-20).

God's Temple today is **not** a building made of brick and mortar, gold, silver, bronze or iron but is only His blood-bought church (Acts 20:28), the saved. Paul easily made this point to pagan idolaters when he said, God "does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things... Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising" (Acts 17:24-25, 29). Since "God is Spirit" (John 4:24), and "spirit does not have flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39), then there is no physical location that is the habitation of God. God has no fleshly body but He may use any physical body offered to Him for His purpose (Romans 6:11-14). There is physically no "Holy Land," "temple," "shrine," or "sanctuary" that

represents God's presence more than any other place.

The Church Is Not For Men's Glory. God did not want altars used to worship Him that in any way glorified men. He instructed Moses in Exodus 20:22-26, that altars of stone should not be hewn with men's tools lest it be profaned; and that steps going up to the altar not be used so as to expose the priest's nakedness. It should not be used for showing-off man's craftiness or as a stage for sensual entertainment. The artisans selected to make the tabernacle, furnishings, and priestly clothing at Sinai were miraculously gifted to accomplish their work for the glory of God (Exodus 31:1-11). Thus, the tabernacle service was not to show man's craftsmanship but God's work.

In the New Testament church, Paul worked "within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us...not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men's labors" (2 Corinthians 10:12-18). He tried to avoid adding to another man's preaching labors lest he appear to receive glory for greater work than his own. A Christian must not "[be] vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head...[or to] subject yourselves to regulations—Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle...according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Colossians 2:18-23). Either through the Old Law of Moses before Christ came, or now through the New Law of Jesus Christ and His church since His death and resurrection, it is clear that in serving God emphasis must always be on God's powerful plan to save sinners, Jesus Christ's peerless presentation of that plan, and the Holy Spirit's precise preservation of that plan. The emphasis should not be centered on the works of the saved ("Look what we have done"), the sacrifices of the worshipers ("Worship must entertain us"), or the beliefs of the church ("All must believe what we teach by mantras, rituals, ceremonies, catechisms, creeds, manuals, or disciplines"). Christians are to be liberated from devotion to an opulent, ornate church building; debasement by worldly, profane, idolatrous displays; the disgrace of "holy" seasons or services; or other ungodly distractions from the real spiritual

objectives of the church.

Shrines To Apostasy. Having this Bible truth before us, to what degree does one apostatize who turns buildings into "religious relics," "shrines," or "temples?" Those religions opposed to God may have such, and even name these edifices for living, dead, mythological or beautified personages. People who have been steeped in traditional, mystical, ritual, or material religions seek this recognition and thus there are temples or shrines to Buddha, Shiva, Diana, Apollo; mosques in memory of Muhammad; cathedrals to "Saint Paul," "Saint Peter," "Saint Mary," or "Saint John." One has but to walk through the historic church buildings of England (Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, or similar structures in Canterbury, Cambridge, York, or throughout England) to learn why its religion has died, for their buildings are memorials to men rather than God. Walls, pews, stones, plaques, steps, stained glass windows all are devoted to men and movements and not to God. England's church buildings have become mausoleums, museums, marketplaces, or manageries whose rituals are but funeral cosmetics for church corpses. They are headstones of human history rather than awesome altars for the Almighty!

It is sad, indeed, when any church of Christ adopts this deadly trait, and also "teaches men so" (Matthew 5:19). Leaders in apostasy always seem to point the finger of accusation at other apostates and say, "We're not like them." But they are. It matters not whether the direction of apostasy is to the "right" or to the "left" but only that it is "away from" Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 4:1—"depart from the faith"). Let us not divide over men's names, men's doctrines, men's buildings, or men's methods, but rather let us "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Our Lord prayed that it be so "that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21).—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

**"The effectual fervent prayer of a
righteous man availeth much"
(James 5:16).**

SERVING OTHERS

C. M. Pullias (1872-1962)



Until we learn that there are others in the world, we are not prepared to even start as Christians. The spirit and life of Christ was to serve, not to be served. Jesus pointedly said: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief

among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." It was this that endeared Jesus to men and makes his name so precious and adorable today. His personal touch and deep sympathy with the downcast and unfortunate, and his willingness to be identified with them by the service he rendered to them, make him illustrious through the ages. His teaching many may forget, and his miracles may no longer appeal to the tired and weary, but his gentle touch and tender service carry on.

It is not always clothes and food that people need. Jesus knew this, and, therefore, endeavored to supply the real need of sorrowing men. It is great to be able to supply food and raiment and other temporal wants of men, but human sympathy is what the people need most.

When Jesus ministered, he left tenderness and warmth that lingered still when years had come and gone. Often in our ministrations of mercy the immediate need is supplied, but that warmth and feeling of human sympathy and care are lacking. Sometimes the gospel is preached in an air that makes it as cold as steel. People frown on it as a cruel and hard taskmaster. The warmth of love and emotion is

lost in the super-effort of intellectuality and strained efforts at logic. The churches and preachers feel that they should be served instead of serving. They delight in the chief seats and exalted places. Jesus considered none of these things. These have always had a tendency to separate the pulpit from the pew. The preachers become an exclusive class, and must be ministered to by the people. This is in no sense the spirit of the Master. Not only so, but elders and deacons have come to take the same view of things. They are in the light of the Bible the servants of the church, but they have in many instances developed into a group of autocratic lords to rule with an iron hand over the heritage of the Lord. They have exclusive meetings and decide by majority vote the affairs of the whole church, while the congregation must obey. Such positions tickle the vanity of human beings to the extent that they render themselves unfit to carry on the Lord's work. Jesus said: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them. But it shall not be so among you."

Offices, with the honor and emoluments thereof, have never made the name of anyone dear to the hearts of the people, but rather his service of tenderness and love. There are no great ones in that sense in the church, but we are all brethren. The great one is the servant of all. The aristocracy in the kingdom of God, therefore is to go down on our knees in the most menial and humble service to the poor and needy. God told Abraham that he would bless him, but he also said: "Be thou a blessing." God blesses us now in order that we might be a blessing to others. Anyone who does not follow this course is headed for the rocks of destruction. Christ gave his life for the church, and it was bought with his precious blood. It was the divine decree that "the gates of hell" should "not prevail against it." It was "exalted above the hills" to be the great and only distributor of heaven's blessings among men. But we often see it with its bony fingers poked out as a street beggar asking alms of all passers-by. The complaint goes out that the church is not appreciated when the world does not respond. Instead of the church being a blessing, therefore, by supplying the needs of others, it is endeavoring to get them to supply its needs. Instead of helping the beggars, it turns out to be one. It should be adorned and attractive by reason of its good works and sweet service to others, instead of its worldly adornments, such as banquets, suppers, and

the like.

The multitudes followed Jesus for the loaves and fishes, and they still follow for the same reason. About all you hear now of church work is the supply of temporal wants. Spiritual needs of the people are lost under such rubbish. The church is to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth only in the point of such service. The church gives what the world cannot give when it functions properly. The world and worldly organizations can attend upon the benevolent and charitable needs of the people from a temporal and earthly standpoint, but are sadly lacking in spiritual help. The world can educate for time, but not for eternity. Any church or set of brethren who can only educate and train young men and women in schools or orphan homes for things of this life are wasting their time. The training and education for the life to come is the vital thing. There is a great need for education and training for useful citizenship, but a much greater for spiritual service.

It should be remembered that the fleshly mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. We are selfish naturally. How splendid it would be, therefore, if we could learn to "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"! Also, remember the passage that says: "Love seeketh not her own." This followed will make the church the most attractive institution in all the wide world, and people will flow into it from every nation under heaven. Why? Because it has something that the human heart needs and for which it yearns always.—From the book, *The Life And Works Of Charles Mitchell Pullias* (Gospel Advocate Co., 1948), pp. 153-155. [Photo from *Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons*, McQuiddy Printing Co., 1922] Used by permission.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

SAVED BY FAITH BUT NOT BY FAITH ONLY

Wendell Winkler

That one is saved by faith is clearly taught in the Sacred Text (John 3:16; 20:30-31; Acts 10:43; 16:31; Romans 5:1). However, one is not saved by faith only, separate and distinct from other works of

obedience. To illustrate, we live by breathing, but not by breathing only. We must eat, sleep and exercise. In like manner, we are saved by faith, but not by faith only (James 2:24). We must also repent (Luke 13:3), confess Christ (Matthew 10:32-33) and be baptized (Mark 16:16). If salvation is by faith only, the following would obtain:

1. **The sinner would be saved before calling on God.** "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" (Romans 10:14). This states that before one can call on the Lord he must have faith. But if one is justified at the point of faith only, then he would be saved before calling on the name of the Lord. Yet, Paul says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).
2. **The sinner could be saved without confession.** "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). Here are men believing, yet who would not confess Christ. Can those who thus believe but who will not confess Christ be saved? Christ said, if one fails to confess me before men, I will not confess him before my Father (Matthew 10:32-33).
3. **The sinner could be saved before coming to God...** "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). This verse plainly declares that before one comes to God he must believe. Therefore, if one is saved at the point of faith, separate from other acts of obedience, he would then be saved before he comes to God.

In view of these observations based on the Word of God, let us cease to hear, "Only believe and fall down by your radio, 'or' just believe and hold up your hand." —2704 Battlement Drive, N.E., Tuscaloosa, AL 35406

*A child may not inherit his
parents' talents but he will absorb
their values.*



Faith Fundamentals

"Add To Your Faith"

2 Peter 1:5

RESTORING THE WAYWARD — II

Guy F. Hester



In the first article on Restoring the Wayward (see the last issue of GG) we discussed the necessity of the recognition, repentance and the confession of sins in order to be forgiven and restored to the right relationship with God and the necessity of

those "which are spiritual" (Galatians 6:1) doing all that is within their power to bring about such restoration. We closed part one by pointing out the fact that the erring child of God is required to confess the sin or sins he has committed in order to receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Forgiveness of sins is conditional upon a confession of sins. So many times we hear, "If I have done anything wrong I want to be forgiven," instead of "I have sinned, Father, forgive me." We begin the second and final installment by discussing the person or persons to whom the confession of sins must be made.

To Whom Is Confession Made? Confession must always be made to God. Every sin one commits is a sin against God. Therefore, the Christian seeking forgiveness must always be acknowledged to the Heavenly Father.

Sometimes it is necessary that confession also be made to man. James gives this command in James 5:16, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." This clarifies the matter for us. Confession must always be made to God and must also be made to men

when men have been wronged. Sins of a public nature require a public confession but private sins require only a private confession. In every case the confession should be as public as the sin, no more so.

Some "big meeting" preachers urge every person who has committed any sin of any kind to come forward at the invitation and make a public confession. This helps them to be in greater demand for meetings. But if this is necessary to forgiveness of any and all sins, then everyone of us, including the preacher would have to go forward at every service... The principle is clear, if you have wronged one person, go to that person. If you have offended a group, go to them. If you have wronged the church, go before the church. If you have wronged a person at a distant place, go to that person. Correction is the purpose behind the confession, not humiliation. This procedure is the only way to make things right.

There is a practice that is becoming all too common among us, a person commits a sin while at congregation "A" and then he goes over to congregation "B" and makes his confession. This is totally out of order. To go before a congregation who are not even aware of the sin of which the individual is guilty and make confession is without reason or purpose. The whole purpose of the confession is to make right the wrong with those who have been wronged.

What Are We To Confess? There are some who contend that before one can be forgiven and restored to the Lord and His church that he must publicly name every sin of which he is guilty. Is that necessary or is it enough to say, "I have sinned and ask the forgiveness of God and the church?" David was guilty of a multitude of sins including adultery and murder. Notice what David said when he was confronted by Nathan: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Samuel 12:13).

When one goes before the church with a broken and contrite heart and confesses, "I have sinned;" God knows what he is guilty of and so do all others who are aware of his sin. There is no need to publicize the sin any farther than it is already known. When one thus confesses there should be prayer for his forgiveness (Acts 8:22). John said (1 John 2:1-2), "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate

with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Half Brothers! When is the sinner restored? The answer is obvious; the moment God forgives him of his sins! There are brethren who are advocating the idea that those who have repented are to be put on probation. That they are just “half brothers” and full fellowship cannot be extended. When God forgives He likewise forgets and so must we or else we cannot be forgiven. The Lord has taught us to pray: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). We must have the attitude of the father whose son left him to go into a far country, and when he came back rushed out with outstretched loving arms to welcome him home.

One final question, how long should we work to bring back the one who is lost? There are three reasons why Christians become lost. Some just wander intentionally off, as did the lost sheep and are lost by their own carelessness. Some become lost due to our carelessness as the coin was lost by the woman’s carelessness. Then others deliberately go away as did the lost boy. It is relatively easy to restore those who have just come back and the same is true of those who through their own carelessness become lost. But we must make sure that we have searched diligently, as did the shepherd and the woman of the parables. We must search until they are found and brought back. With those who have deliberately gone back into sin they first have to come to themselves as the boy in the hog pen did. But we should be watching, praying and anxiously waiting for them to come home. In my opinion this should be for as long as we live or until they have returned.—1925 County Highway 59, Haleyville, AL 35565



BEST SINGERS

Dan Jenkins

I keep hearing of some who think that we can really improve our singing in worship if we use microphones to amplify the voices of the best singers in the congregation. While at first this might sound like a good idea, everyone should be aware that in

place after place this practice has lead to this group becoming little more than a church choir. We often are blind when we start down roads that seem innocent. However, I have been thinking about just who are the “best singers” in the church. I know how we are using the term, but is it possible that God’s view of the “best singers” might be far different from ours? Could the following people be the best singers?

Sitting in an assembly is a lonely widow. The years have not been kind to her voice and it often cracks as she sings. She has served the Lord faithfully for many years. For more than forty years she has taught small children in Bible classes and seen many of them become leaders in the church. Her late husband had been a faithful elder who served even better because of her being a godly helpmeet. She had lifted his burdened spirit so many times. Listen to her sing. “To Christ be loyal and be true...” the melody which comes from her heart must make her one of the best singers in the church. In another part of the same auditorium a teenager sits. He did not grow up in the church and failed music in school. He comes from a broken home, but oh how deep his faith is! He has given up former ungodly friends and stands against the peer pressure that surrounds him. You may not like the “sour notes” but the melody from his soul is so encouraging. “O my God, I trust in Thee. Let me be not ashamed, let not my enemies triumph over me...” Is he one of the best signers?

Who else is there? There is a wife of an alcoholic husband who is doing all he can to destroy her faith and that of her children. Listen to her. “Be not dismayed what-e’er betide, God will take care of you.” Those who sing off-key and are monotone may be our best singers!

Maybe we should have another look at what we are doing.

“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also” (1 Corinthians 14:15).—4067 Leo Lane, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

*“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine:
but a broken spirit drieth the bones”
(Proverbs 17:22).*

QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE TWIN TOWER TERRORS

John T. Polk II



[1] Why did God destroy the World Trade Towers?

[2] If God forbids killing, why did this happen and

[3] isn't the United States wrong to "go after" the terrorists with war?
[brackets added, JTPH]

God did not destroy the WTC on September 11,

2001 (America's "9-11"), evil men did. Since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, sin has entered the world (Romans 5:12). The effects were immediate: Cain killed Abel because Abel obeyed God but Cain did not (Genesis 4:1-15).

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you (1 John 3:7-13, NKJV).

Ever since that beginning, All those who

follow the Devil and persecute the innocent and righteous are evil! Repenting and obeying Jesus Christ is their only hope for remedy (Luke 24:44-47). The battle between light and darkness, good and evil, righteous and ungodly is always fought out on Earth with humanity losing when it does not turn to God and Christ (John 3:19). Jesus said even evil men can give good gifts to their children, but they are still evil (Matthew 7:7-12)! Some "good deeds" do not wipe out or cure a heart given to the Devil (notice "evil" is most of the name). Only a good heart brings forth good things, and an evil heart brings forth evil things, certainly including one's words (Matthew 12:33-37). It is impossible for someone to hurl incendiary rhetoric against people without also being able to make them die by incendiary means! Such is the Devil's work, but Jesus Christ came to deliver anyone who would follow Him from participating in such (Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8).

Such horrific disasters should, instead cause all others to pause for moral reflection and re-evaluation.

There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:1-5, NKJV).

Jesus turned such disasters into occasions for the living to consider and repent of everything that keeps God out of their lives, because such grisliness can occur without the slightest warning. Never was Jesus clearer that "death-bed repentances" are not the way to go, but life-long repentance is.

Nearly every cell phone call made by those who died, whether from the planes or the buildings, ends with "I love you." When death was imminent they wanted to reassure their loved ones of their connection. Don't wait!! Every day, in every way, say, "I love you" to your husband or wife, children, Christian brethren, and above all, Almighty God. A frightening thought: what if some cell phones did not

have service at that moment? Some may have died without giving this necessary reassurance to someone who meant the most to them. Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21, NKJV). Obey the gospel of Christ and live for him, now (John 15:13-14; Mark 16:15-16; Romans 12:1-2). Let no day go by without telling and showing God and men that we love them.

We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 John 4:19-21, NKJV).

The 110-story Twin Towers became 5-story high rubble in 45 seconds, which should graphically remind everyone that this world itself and everything in it will end someday. The only lasting tribute to each human will be whether or not we have obeyed God (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Peter 3:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5).

The one ingredient missing from American's "bumper sticker ideology" since that barbarous attack in New York is an admission of ungodliness and contrition! The U.S. Courts, with some approval of Federal laws, have been on a course for decades of crowding God's Law from all law. Evolution denies God as Creator; Abortion, euthanasia, DNA replication abuse deny God as Life-Giver; divorce (with its consequent spouse/child abuses), "free sex" (with its myriad of consequent diseases), and homosexual perversions deny God as the Father who made us male/female, gave us marriage and family in which we should develop love, trust, respect, intimacy and stability. Always God gives those who "did not like to have God in their knowledge...over to a debased mind" (Romans 1:28, Cf., verses 18-32). The American Government has legally removed God from its people and now says, "God Bless America." Is this a command or a prayer? If it is a command, then this war may end the way godless Communist Russia ended when it fought this same Afghanistan! But if it is a prayer, then American Government Leaders should be on their knees confessing the sinful way this country has been led of late!

Jeremiah prophesied to a morally bankrupt

Judea. God said their problem had become "You refuse to be ashamed. Will you not from this time cry to Me" (3:3-4), and when their sins were made evident, "no one takes *it* to heart" (12:11). Now is the time to "Hear and give ear: Do not be proud, For the Lord has spoken" (13:15). The unrepentant are never ready for mass destruction, the impenitent are never completely victorious, and the penitent are the only ones truly blessed by God (Acts 17:30-31). The gospel of Jesus Christ, with its appeal and motive to repent, is the only solution for sinful hatred.

[2] Because evil men will not listen to God. God forbids "murders" and "slaughters" (Genesis 9:6; Matthew 15:16-20; Galatians 5:19-21), and those who refuse to obey His law are reduced to ungodly behavior (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

The Christian hears this law:

I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure (1 Timothy 5:21-22, NKJV).

A Christian recognizes that this pagan act was not committed by all Muslims, all Afghans, all whites, all foreigners, or all religious people, and therefore will not "rush to prejudgment."

Those who claim to be Islamic but stoop to such violence, have contradicted their own "prophet, Mohammed" and blaspheme their god, "Allah." Their bible, the *Qur'an* (meaning "thing read") teaches them to: "Fight for the sake of Allah those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. Allah does not love the aggressors. Kill them wherever you find them...Fight against them until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion reigns supreme. But if they mend their ways, fight none except the evil-doers." (*Qur'an, sura 2*).

- ❖ This means they should only fight against "those that fight against you" but those who planned the "Tower Terror" killed people who were not fighting against Muslim/Afghans;
- ❖ they should "not attack them first" but they made a "first strike" against non-aggressors;
- ❖ they should "kill them wherever you find them" but they passed by thousands of people to target some in certain planes and buildings;
- ❖ they should not stop "until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion reigns supreme" but they have not embarked on a genocide and only fought enough

to further some man's political power agenda.

- ❖ In short, those responsible for these actions have violated their own religious teaching and stand condemned even by Mohammed in their own bible! They do not heed either Jehovah God or "Allah" and have no promise of "heaven!"

[3] No. Right now, the United States Government is doing something as God decrees it should do!

For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil (Romans 13:4, NKJV).

All "civil government" exists solely by the authority and power of God (Romans 13:1-3; John 19:10-11). The government should not only "go after" the terrorists for this brutish behavior, but "death rows" also need to be cleaned out because "he does not bear the sword in vain" (Romans 13:4), unless "he" refuses to do God's bidding!

Christians, however, are to follow Jesus' teaching:

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:38-48, NKJV).

Personally, Christians must encourage a government in its effort to bear the sword as God

decrees, but at the same time continue to treat all men, even enemies, with love and compassion as always. Christians will find this is an open door to preaching the Gospel of Christ as never before in our lifetimes. Only God knows for sure what is in the future (James 4:13-17). Pray for all people that they may get ready to meet God.—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

THE NEED FOR EVANGELISM

Continued from front page

when we say that evil companionship does not corrupt good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33). We are deceived by sin when we think we can be hearers only and not doers of the word (James 1:22-25). Sin appears to be right when it is wrong (Proverbs 14:12). Sin appears to be beautiful when in reality it is ugly (Isaiah 1:5-6). The deceptive nature of sin emphasizes the need for evangelism.

We need evangelism because sin is shattering.

Sin will demolish your good name (Proverbs 22:1). Sin will destroy our bodies through such things as immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18-20) and alcohol (Proverbs 20:1). Sin will destroy us emotionally with inner conflicts (Romans 7:14-25) and guilt (Psalm 32:1-4). Sin will obliterate the church. Sin was destroying the church in Corinth and was ruining the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22). We need evangelism because of the powerfully destructive nature of sin.

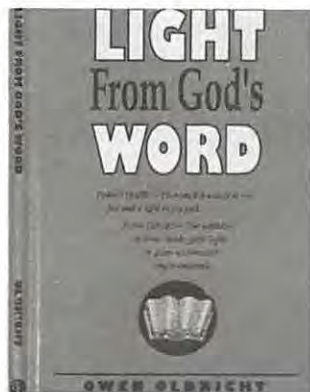
Evangelism is greatly needed in our day because of the horrible evils that sin can do. The separating, seductive, and shattering influence of sin must be stopped. It is the gospel message that has the power (Romans 1:16) to put an end to the destruction that sin will bring to our lives. "There is a message true and glad, for the sinner and the sad—Ring it out, ring it out!"—823 N. Main Street, Malvern, AR 72104

Gospel Gazette Online
www.gospelgazette.com

The Reader's Corner

"LIGHT FROM GOD'S WORD A BIBLE EXPOSITION"

Owen D. Olbricht, author



A simple but keen scholarly insight into understanding the Bible is given by Olbricht, the author of eight other books, seven workbooks, and five tracts, all of which are directed to a basic knowledge of God's Word. His contribution with this new study is one of the easiest ways for beginning Bible students to get a grasp on the entire Bible.

Arranged in thirteen chapters for class use in quarterly curriculums, the study covers in depth such subjects as covenants, law, commandments, forgiveness, new life, Sabbaths, and the Lord's Day.

Olbricht makes a clear explanation in the first chapter of the makeup of the Bible, a necessity for any accurate study, and then he proceeds to a study of covenants. His distinctions between covenants, law, commandments are unusual, but for the perceptive Bible student they are jewels.

He proceeds to show that Messianic covenants have been fulfilled in the New Covenant, and then gives a valuable series of comparisons and contrasts between the Old and New Covenants.

Olbricht's study of forgiveness in both Old and New Testaments is also unusual. He shows true forgiveness was present in the Old Testament based on the surety of the price yet to be paid by the death of Jesus. Keen insights into this subject are sorely needed today and Olbricht gives an accurate and concise study.

The exposition of the Sabbath law and the Lord's Day is worth the price of the book alone. In a religious culture that knows very little about such distinctions, teachers and preachers need to be ready to give answers. With the careful and full use of scriptures for each exposition, this book will aid any student to give those answers.

For the more serious student, the thirty-six listings in the Bibliography are priceless for further research. Cost of the book is \$8.00 (plus P & H). You may order from Gospel Light Publishing Company, 431 East Antioch, P.O. Box 38, Delight, AR 71940.—Reviewed by Roy H. Lanier, Jr., P. O. Box 2926, Lakeland, FL 33806

"STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN GROWTH"

Bill Dillon, author

This is the fourth book to come from the pen of Bill Dillon in recent years. In the tradition of his previous volume, *Bible Basics*, this book is geared toward a basic presentation of Bible truths. Sometimes, in our Bible study, there is a great need to get back to basics. A proper footing in simple Bible teaching prepares one for progress into the "meat" of God's word.



This book is 96 pages in length and contains twelve chapters. Each chapter is a sermon stressing a Christian's growth. Dillon deals with growth in several areas: **Bible Study** – "Why Study the Bible Anyway?" and, "Studying the Bible;" **Life** – "What is Your Life?" and "The Power of Christ to Change Lives;" **Character** – "Christ and Character;" **Trust** – "Trust in God;" **Perseverance** – "Be Not Weary in Well Doing." These are just a few areas of emphasis that this book gives the reader.

The sermons in this book were first preached on the radio program called "Word's of Life," sponsored by the College & North Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas, where brother Dillon is the faithful evangelist. Bill Dillon is very effective as a radio evangelist, and that quality carries over into his pulpit preaching, his evangelism (foreign and domestic) and his writing. You will enjoy reading this new book by Bill Dillon. Gospel preachers will find it an excellent source for their own sermon preparation. The lessons in this book are filled with useful information, and are more importantly, "true to the Book."

Bill Dillon dedicates this book to the loving
Continued on page 21

THREE THINGS WE CANNOT DO WITHOUT

(Hebrews 9:22; 11:6; 12:14)

M. W. Kiser



We could get along better without some things in life. We can even get along without some things that are needful. But, we are talking about three things that we must absolutely have in order to go to heaven. All three are found in Hebrews, and our English word "without" is

joined with them. What are they?

I. WE CANNOT DO WITHOUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS (9:22).

A. Blood atonement is taught throughout the Bible.

1. Necessary because of sin and justice. Can penalty be set aside?
2. As provided perfectly by God in Christ.
 - a. He was sinless; and also of the same nature. Not at fault.
 - b. He had the right and approved (John 10:18; Matthew 5:17).
 - c. He answered the demands and supplied the curse (Galatians 3:13).

3. Thus, leaving the sinner without an excuse (John 3:14-18).
- B. This doctrine is most repulsive to the "modernist."
 1. He has come to mock this precious truth because he mocks all that leads up to it (sin, immorality, resurrection, etc.).
 2. Without the efficacy of the shed blood of Jesus, Christianity has no cause to justify its continuance.
- C. How are our sins remitted through the blood?
 1. There must be faith in the blood (Romans 5:1, 9).
 2. Christ's blood and death are inseparable (Romans 5:8-10).
 3. Jesus shed his blood in His death (John 19:33-34).
 4. We are baptized into His death [active faith] (Romans 6:3-4).
 5. He then provides spiritual light to walk in (1 John 1:7).

II. WE CANNOT DO WITHOUT FAITH IN GOD (11:6).

A. That faith which is in God is of a two-fold character.

1. It accepts His divine existence.
 - a. This first declaration is not argued! (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1).
 - b. Opposite of Atheism, Agnosticism, Pantheism and Deism.
2. It places its trust in this divine being.
 - a. His works display His essential attributes.
 - b. His word declares His moral attributes.
 - c. His Son declared both categories (John 14:8-9).
- B. There is only one source of faith (Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31).
- C. Faith has only one way to exemplify itself. It must work!

- a. Obedience to moral commands (James 2:17, 20, 26; Ephesians 5:6).
- b. Obedience to positive commands (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

III. WE CANNOT DO WITHOUT HOLINESS OF LIFE (12:14).

- A. This has always been a requirement (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16; Titus 2:11-12).
- B. The text presses the need upon us in a most powerful way.
 1. The ERV uses the word "sanctification."
 2. People, places and things were set apart because God was there.
 3. We can never be holy apart from God; and the presence of God brings holiness into our lives.
- C. The text declares the wonderful benefit of holiness (Revelation 21:27).
 1. Implied in the positive, because of it we shall see the Lord.
 2. Would you be satisfied to carry your sins with you to heaven?
 3. What sort of place would heaven then be? "pigs in a parlor."

These are indispensable things in the believer's salvation and daily walk with God. We cannot talk about things to come without these things.—104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

IS IT OKAY NOW?

NOW that the President has called us to prayer.....

NOW that Congress has called us to prayer.....

NOW that our Governor has called us to prayer.....

NOW that the city Mayor has called us to prayer.....

NOW that the "liberal" media and most other branches of our American society have called us to prayer.....

AND NOW that our churches are assembling in special prayer.....

"Honorable" Justices of the Supreme Court, I have only one question.....Would it be okay to pray in our schools.....?? We ought always to pray and not to faint..."—Luke 18:1.

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST QUARTER

George L. Teel	
Paducah, KY	20.00
Richard & Peggy Arnold	
Manchester, TN.....	20.00
Ishmael & Virginia Wilson	
Belle, MO.....	15.00
Walter & Eathel Buckley	
Maynard, AR.....	25.00
Jimmy Clark	
Grand Prairie, TX.....	8.00
Johnny & Mindy Arnold	
Harrison, AR.....	20.00
Arlington Church of Christ	
McMinnville, TN.....	75.00
Wards Chapel Church of Christ	
Manchester, TN.....	25.00
Mabelvale Church of Christ	
Mabelvale, AR.....	1,250.00
Mountain Home Church of Christ	
Mountain Home, AR.....	1,450.00

MOUNTAIN HOME CHURCH OF CHRIST
COLLEGE & NORTH STREETS
P. O. BOX 880
MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72654-0880

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (870) 425-4330
 Office Fax (870) 425-8118
 E-Mail: church@centurytel.net

Bill Dillon, Evangelist

GOD BELIEVES IN YOU, TOO!

Allen Webster



God wants us to believe in Him (John 8:24). In fact, unless we have faith in His existence, we cannot be saved (Hebrews 11:6). We have faith in God, but He also has faith in us. Sometimes He believes more in us than we believe in ourselves.

GOD BELIEVED IN ABRAHAM. God said of this *father of the faithful*: "For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment..." (Genesis 18:19). Almighty God believed enough in Abraham to go out on a limb and say that his children and grandchildren would be trained in the way of truth. He was right! Isaac (his son), and Jacob (his grandson), believed in God and followed in the paths of Abraham. In fact, the nation of Israel—with minor lapses—continued in the faith that once rested in the bosom of their progenitor.

GOD BELIEVED IN JOB. Satan suspended his pursuit of mankind long enough to "report" before Jehovah (Job 1:6). "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (1:8). God issued a challenge to the old serpent by insisting he would have no success with Job. God believed in Job. He knew he would not let him down. And, Job withstood the worst onslaught of devilish torture recorded in the annals of Adam's race. He did not "curse God and die," as his wife had pled with him to do (2:9). God believed in Job, and Job believed in God.

GOD BELIEVED IN RAHAB. Rahab was not exactly a role model for kids (Joshua 2:1-6). She was the type of person that people whispered about, pointed at, and shunned. They would not have trusted her with their reputations, must less their children, or wallets. She had been a woman of loose morals and unflattering character. To put it frankly, she was a

prostitute (*harlot* Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25) [Some translate this as "innkeeper," but the word used in the New Testament (*porna*) means "prostitute."]. She had sold her body to men who passed through her city and stayed at her inn. During these pagan times, harlotry was often a part of worship. [Even after she ceased from this behavior, the reproach stuck to her name. Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6), though cleansed from leprosy, wore the reproach of it in his name as long as he lived; so Rahab the harlot, so called in the New Testament, though both her faith and her good works are praised. Even those that through grace have repented of the sins of their youth must expect to bear the reproach of them (Matthew Henry)]. Second, Rahab was a traitor. She betrayed her country by harboring its enemies. [Under normal conditions, we count traitors as the most despicable of criminals, but in Rahab's case, if she knew God had given Canaan to the Israelites, she could not have hindered them from possessing it. The higher duty to God suspends the lower duty to country and to family (cf. Acts 5:29)]. Third, Rahab was a liar. She said the spies had left when they were hiding on her roof. Some use this as an example of situation ethics (cf. Romans 3:8), but God never approves of lying (Proverbs 6:17; Ephesians 4:25). He could have protected the spies in a way that did not require sin. Rahab was accepted in spite of her lie, not because of it. Other Bible characters are complimented, though guilty of serious sins (e.g., David committed adultery, 2 Samuel 11). Many of those who are commended in Hebrews eleven are not praised for all they did (Abraham lied; Noah got drunk; Samson committed fornication). They are praised simply for some heroic act of faith. We may heartily commend an orator for eloquence, while earnestly opposing his ideas. Being a Canaanite she may not have been taught that lying was evil.

In spite of all this, God believed in Rahab. He pardoned her iniquity. He was willing to forget her previous life and forgive her falsehood regarding the spies. He saw something good in this "washed-up harlot." He believed she had changed and that there was something worthwhile about her. What God liked

about her was her faith and works. In Hebrews she is eulogized for her faith, and in James for her works. Remarkably, Rahab was eventually listed in the genealogy of God's Son (Matthew 1:5). God allowed this formerly loose woman to marry into Israel—His chosen, holy people—and become the mother of a child. Some writers speculate that Salmon (her husband) was one of the spies she befriended; if so, what a beautiful love story! Rahab became a princess in Israel and, more importantly, became a part of the line that ran from Abraham through King David to Jesus Christ. Matthew, in giving the Lord's genealogy, mentions only four women—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and implicitly, Bathsheba. Three of these have tainted names. Most people would be embarrassed to have harlots and adulteresses in their family tree and would certainly keep it "hush-hush." If it was in their power, they would never have allowed them to have been there in the first place. It was within God's power, but He believed in Rahab to the point that He put her in His family album!

GOD BELIEVED IN PETER. Peter cursed and swore that He did not know Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 26:72). After Jesus had been his friend, after he taught him for three years, even after Peter had boasted that he would *die* before he would *deny*, Peter blushed at a maiden's question. He pretended he had never met Jesus and backed that affirmation with profanity (which always disassociates one from Christ). Afterward, Peter wept as a penitent child. He was sorry for his failure. God could have given up on Peter. He could have found someone else to be the "apostle to the circumcision," but God still believed in Peter. And, when it came time to pick somebody to be the head spokesman for Christ on the inauguration of the church, God tapped Peter to be the one to deliver the stirring speech that launched the Gospel dispensation (Acts 2).

GOD BELIEVED IN SAUL. "...the Lord said...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Everybody else saw the church's worst enemy; God saw its greatest promoter. Others saw one who could dish out persecution; God saw one who could take it. They saw a blasphemer; God saw a preacher. They saw a murderer; God saw a missionary.

These instances show that God believes in us sometimes when others (or even ourselves) don't.

Those who faithfully serve and suffer for Him He will not only protect, but prefer, and will do for them more than they can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). God can use people who have made mistakes. We read of publicans and harlots entering into the kingdom, and not just tolerated, but welcomed (Matthew 21:31). Those on Pentecost had killed Jesus, but they became the first Christians (Acts 2). The Corinthians had been immoral, but God forgave them (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Believe in God. Let God believe in you.—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

READER'S CORNER

Continued from page 16

memory of two of his sons, Joey and Jeff. The fact that a man can write such a book on spiritual growth in the wake of such life-altering losses speaks volumes about the depth of character of the author.

Studies In Christian Growth was published by J. C. Choate Publications. It is available from The Cherry Tree Bookstore, Town East Center, Mountain Home, AR 72653. You may email them at cherrytree@centurytel.net, or call toll free at 1-800-882-4668. Cost of the book is \$6.00.—Reviewed by Dennis Gullledge, editor.

WHY READ GOOD BOOKS?

"But he says: 'I have the Bible to read, and that is better than any book of sermons.' If you will show us a man who reads nothing but the Bible, we will show you one who reads and understands very little of that. He who is anxious to understand the Bible will want to read, not only the Bible, but every thing else he can get that will help him to understand it."—T. W. Brents, *Gospel Sermons* (1891), p. iv.

THE QUALITIES OF LOVE

Paul Holland

Love is basic to human existence. It is basic to God: "God is love" (1 John 4:8, NKJV). We ought to understand love in order that we can love as God loves (1 John 4:20-21). Love is especially important for the Christian, because Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). What is it which Jesus expects out of His disciples that the world may recognize them as such?

First, God's love is accompanied by His rationality and volition. That is, God's love is not capricious nor whimsical. God's love is constant (1 Samuel 15:29; cf., Hebrews 13:8). Paul writes about the love of God: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8-10).

God's love took initiative to seek for man (Genesis 3:8-10). God did not wait for sinful man to come seeking Him, but like the shepherd who had ninety-nine sheep but left them to seek for the one (Matthew 18:12-14), God takes a personal interest in every single person.

Second, we see in the love of God the willingness to suffer, depicted in Jesus. Jesus had compassion on the sick (Matthew 14:14) and on the spiritually misguided (Matthew 9:36). At the death of Lazarus, moved by the tears of Mary, Jesus "groaned in the spirit and was troubled" (John 11:33). "Jesus wept" (John 11:35) speaks volumes about the love of God. Where there is no pity, compassion, sorrow or suffering over the woes of others, there is no real love.

Someone said, in words similar to these: *Could we with ink the ocean fill; were the whole sky of parchment made; were every blade of grass a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; to write the love of God above, would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.*

We understand that love disciplines (Hebrews 12:6). The parent who does little to discipline his or her own child does not understand the nature of love. At the same time, God's love motivates Him to continually forgive. Peter asked how often he should

forgive his sinning brother; Jesus said, "up to seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). If this is what God expects from man, would we not expect God to hold Himself to the same (yeah-higher) standard? That is, does not God lovingly forgive us of sin, sometimes the same sin, many times over? "Perhaps there is no other one thing which God does for us in this life which manifests the greatness of his unfailing love for us than this continual forgiveness of our unnecessary sins" (Roy Lanier, Sr., *The Timeless Trinity for the Ceaseless Centuries*, p. 76). Some find it hard to believe in the existence of God. Some Christians seem to find it hard to believe in the love and forgiveness of God! Is not one just as bad as the other?

From this understanding of the love of God, we learn how we need to imitate it (1 John 4:11). Let us briefly examine the love God expects from man: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7). The Bible says: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

Love "suffers long" and "is kind" represent the nature of God (Romans 2:4). "Suffering long" is self-control in the face of ill treatment by others. We picture Jesus in the midst of His trial, "when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten" (1 Peter 2:23). "Love is kind" is the opposite of that—it is blessing our enemies (cf., Matthew 5:44).

"Love does not envy" (cf., 1 Corinthians 3:3). The Corinthians had placed their loyalty in men (cf., 1 Corinthians 1:12-13) and this rivalry was threatening the unity of the church. Love recognizes there is no hierarchy in the church and therefore does not "envy" what another has. Love does not "parade itself." Have you seen Christians who feel they have to tell you how Christian they really are (cf., the Pharisee and Publican – Luke 18:9-14)?

Love is not "puffed up (literally)." It is not arrogant. (cf., 1 Corinthians 4:6). Love is not a "know-it-all." Neither does love "behave rudely" (cf.,

1 Corinthians 7:36). The idea is that there are certain standards of behavior, which are both proper and becoming of a Christian.

Love does not “seek his own.” In 1 Corinthians 10:24, 33, Paul told the Corinthians that liberty may motivate the Christian to limit his own freedom, “for the sake of the one who told you” (1 Corinthians 10:28). Rather, love “looks out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4). Love is “not provoked,” that is; it does not take offense easily when others misbehave.

Paul says love does not “think evil.” In marriage counseling, it is called “gunnysacking.” It means keeping a ledger of the wrongs someone has done to you. God “thinks no evil,” Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:19: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.” Love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.” Love does not gloat when bad things happen, even to bad people (cf., Proverbs 24:17). On the contrary, love “loves” to see positive behavior displayed – behavior fitting of the Gospel.

Finally, Paul lists four characteristics of love in rapid-fire sequence: love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” Notice Paul’s repetition of “all things.” Love is tenacious, in every situation, with any kind of people. Again, we have only to think of Jesus and all the struggles He endured, from relentless crowds to hypocrisy in His own ranks, to out-right hatred from His enemies. But the love of Christ “never failed.”

If we want to love “as Christ loved us,” we ought to replace the word “love” in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 with our own name. Where we fall short, we ought to try harder because “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7).—215 E. Main Street, Livingston, TN 38570

SEE US ON THE WEB

You can access this and several past issues of *Gospel Gleaner* on our website: mabelvalechurchofchrist.org. Our site has recently been improved. We hope that you will enjoy it.—Dennis Gulledge, Editor

A WARNING FROM THE PAST

The following incident in the life of Brother J. W. McGarvey was told by Brother Jesse P. Sewell. Although it happened almost one hundred years ago, these words of warning from the grand old man are still timely.

In January, 1902 or 1903, I was preaching for the Pearl and Bryan Streets Church in Dallas. Brother McGarvey, an old man at the time, was invited to speak at Central Christian Church in Dallas. We had three men in the Pearl and Bryan Streets who had graduated from the College of the Bible in Lexington under Brother McGarvey, and they were great admirers of him. They suggested that we invite Brother McGarvey to preach at Pearl and Bryan that night. We did so. I was just a boy of twenty-four or twenty-five then. I was sitting by the side of this old man on the front seat, waiting for service to begin. As we sat there talking, brother McGarvey said to me, “Brother Sewell, I want to say something to you, if you’ll accept it in the spirit in which I mean it.” I told him I’d appreciate anything he had to say to me. He said about these words, “You are on the right road, and whatever you do, don’t let anybody persuade you that you can successfully combat error by fellowshipping it and going along with it. I have tried. I believed at the start that was the only way to do it. I’ve never held membership in a congregation that uses instrumental music. I have, however, accepted invitations to preach without distinction between churches that use it and churches that didn’t. I’ve gone along with their papers and magazines and things of that sort. During all these years I have taught the truth as the New Testament teaches it to every young preacher who has passed through the *College of the Bible*. Yet, I do not know of more than six of those men who are preaching the truth today.” He said, “It won’t work.”

That experience has been an inspiration to me all the days of my life since. It has helped me when I was ever tempted to turn aside and go along with error to remember the warning of this great old man.—*Four State Gospel News*, July 2001.



A SOUND WORK

I have been sent a copy of your paper *Gospel Gleaner*. I wanted to thank you for producing sound work. Please send me a subscription of this work. I am the minister of Soldotna church of Christ and wouldn't mind receiving one for the congregation as well. Thank you again for your work, steadfastness and love for the Lord in truth. Tony Cloud, Soldotna, AK.

GG INTRODUCED TO ANOTHER

Please add brother Waymon Swain to your mailing list. He has been holding a meeting for us in Worthington, Indiana this week and it has been wonderful! He is staying with us and I introduced your paper to him and he would like to receive it. His name and address are given below. Thank you so much and keep up the outstanding work. Rich Rogers, Worthington, IN.

OUTSTANDING AND INFORMATIVE

I have just finished reading the latest edition of the *Gospel Gleaner*. As usual, it is outstanding; very informative. I appreciate the good work you do. May God continue to bless your efforts in His kingdom. Mike Jones, Andalusia, AL.

A GREAT PUBLICATION

I have a subscription to the *Gospel Gleaner*. I am currently in the process of moving from Kusan AB, ROK to Elgin AFB, Florida. Please update your files to reflect this address change. (P.S. *Gospel Gleaner* is a great publication. Keep up the wonderful work!) Anthony W. McClendon, TSgt, USAF.

WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE GG

I recently saw a copy of your GG – Volume 16, Number 1, Jan-March 2000. After reading it, I decided I would like to receive it on a regular basis. Would you please put me on your mailing list? Linda Terrell, Chicago, IL.

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

It is great to have access to such enlightening and enriching information in Christ's Church. This magazine *Gospel Gleaner* is a breath of fresh air in a world of disinformation. Please put me on the mailing list. Larry Brooks, West Monroe, LA.

REMOVE US

We would like to discontinue receiving the publication *Gospel Gleaner*. We shall appreciate your removing us from your mailing list. J. M. Scott, Paintsville, KY.

GG HAS MUCH BIBLE INFORMATION

Please put my name on your mailing list to receive the *Gospel Gleaner*. I picked up Volume 16 No. 3 at the Main St. Church of Christ in Malvern, AR December 24, 2000. The *Gleaner* that I picked up and have read has so much Bible information in it that I would like to read other editions. Enclosed is a small contribution to help defray mailing costs. Henrietta Vickers, Texarkana, AR.

GG IS A GREAT HELP

Grace and peace to you and all in the name of God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I received your last edition of the *Gospel Gleaner* Vol. 17 and I must say how grateful I am for you to remember me. The *Gospel Gleaner* is a great help to me in the ministry and I do wish to commend the men who are doing such a great work bringing out the truth. My family enjoys very much reading the lessons. Thank you so much for sending me copies and may God continue to bless your efforts. Mohamed Ally, Guyana, S. Africa.

GOSPEL GLEANER
P. O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

Change Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Mabelvale, AR
PERMIT NO. 4