Articles by William MacDonald

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True Scholarship

We are bombarded today with the opinions of self-styled scholars. However, not everything that calls itself scholarship is worthy of all acceptation.

Neither is everything that pridefully poses as intellectualism to be swallowed. The Gnostics presented themselves as “the knowing ones,” men who had superior knowledge. Yet the Apostle John told the believers that they did not need that kind of teacher. Scholarship without spirituality can be a curse (1 Cor. 1:19-21, 26-29; Col. 2:8; 1

Tim. 6:20-21). Combined with spirituality, it can be of untold value.

We don’t need the kind of scholarship that twists and distorts the Scriptures until, as Spurgeon said, there is not enough left to make soup for a sick grasshopper. For example, we don’t need the “experts”

to tell us that the Bible contains the word of God or becomes the Word of God in personal experience but is not itself the Word of God. We can do without the perverting of the Bible that teaches that the primary meaning of baptism is immersion, but that the word is never used in its primary sense in the New Testament. Or the finagling of God’s Word to teach that there is no difference between men and women as far as roles in the church and home are concerned. Or the nonsensical definition of headship as self-giving love and service within the relationship of mutual submission. Or that it does not really matter if Jesus actually rose from the dead; it’s the Easter faith that is important. Or that

there was a time in the life of Jesus when He did not know that He was the Messiah. As George Orwell said in a different context, “One has to belong to the intelligentsia to believe things like that: no ordinary man could be such a fool.” Time magazine added, “He had glimpsed something in ordinary folks that has endured in this difficult world.

It is called wisdom.”1

We should not blindly follow a man just because he is reputed to be a scholar. He may begin well, writing books defending the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Yet in order to be accepted by the intelligentsia, he may start making compromises and speak in tones of doubts and denial. All men and all their teachings must be constantly tested by the sacred Scriptures.

Those who would be scholars face the danger of pride of position. William Kelly writes: “There are no men less to be trusted than mere scholars, because, being scholars, they are naturally apt to be proud of their scholarship; and whatever we are proud of is the very thing in which God will humble us. Here is the mistake that Christians often make.

They very often overvalue the knowledge of a little Greek or less Hebrew. Depend upon it, that to know the English Bible well is far better than to know somewhat of Greek or Hebrew; and I have rarely found that knowing a little of these languages has any other effect ordinarily than to give a good deal of conceit. It enables persons, of course, to talk about knotty points, especially to those who do not understand them; but I do not think that it is profitable for either party.”2

In another place he says, “The assumption that because a man is a profound scholar, he is a safe expositor of Scripture, is a grave mistake.”3 And Vance Havner wrote, “Head knowledge is useful, but unless it is sanctified by the Holy Spirit, it can be the most dangerous thing in the world.”4 When will seminaries and Bible colleges learn that deep piety combined with the ability to teach the Word in a life-changing way is more important than advanced degrees that satisfy an accrediting agency?

When will we learn that God characteristically passes by the great people of the world and uses nobodies; “While Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness” (Luke

3:2). Havner expressed it well: “God does not always send His prophets through the conventional assembly line lest they come out wearing a stamp that does not become them. Fig pinching seems poor preparation for Amos, and Amaziah may view him with scorn. Micaiah was the odd number after four hundred false prophets bade Ahab and Jehoshaphat go up against Ramoth-gilead and prosper. The world hates the four-hundred-and-first prophets, as Joseph Parker said long ago. God’s hand often passes up the wise, mighty and noble for a Moody or a Billy Sunday... without benefit of theological training.”5

Dr.

Jowett said of Moody, “His excellency was in an earthen vessel, and many doctors of divinity have wondered at the strange association.

There were thousands of speakers more eloquent than Moody, but the treasure was not there in overwhelming glory. Moody may have been uneducated, untutored, and unskilled in public speaking, but when he spoke, the power of an unseen world seemed to fall upon the audience."6

Richard

Foster wrote in somewhat similar vein: "We think the position guarantees the power. Give someone a Ph.D., a professorship, and then he or she will be able to teach! But we all know people with Ph.D.'s and professorships who cannot teach worth a lick. The position does not guarantee that the power is there.... To the eye of faith, positions in the human order themselves are really powerless, ignorant of the way of God and the life of spiritual power. Throughout the Book of Acts, we see repeatedly the clash between powerless officials and official-less power. The authority of Peter, John, and the others was shocking to everyone because they had no human credentials of authority. They had no degrees, no titles of distinctions, no human authorization. Since their ability (power) came from God, human authorization was irrelevant."7

A. T. Robertson adds his testimony: "It must not be forgotten that Jesus chose His apostles from the unschooled fishermen and artisans of Galilee save Judas the Judean.

He passed by the rabbinical theological seminaries where religious impulse had died and thought had crystallized."8

Shortly before his death, A. W. Tozer wrote of the threat to the evangelical world from men who pose as scholars:

“In the Western world the enemy has forsworn violence. No more does he come at us with sword or stick, but he now comes smiling, bearing gifts. He raises his eyes to heaven and swears that he too believes in the faith of our fathers, but his real purpose is to destroy that faith, or at least modify it to such an extent that it is no longer the supernatural thing it once was. He comes in the name of philosophy or psychology or anthropology, and with sweet reasonableness urges us to rethink our historic position and be less rigid, more tolerant, and more broadly understanding.

“He speaks in the sacred jargon of academia, and many half-educated evangelicals run to fawn on him. He tosses scholarly degrees to the scrambling sons of the prophets, much like Rockefeller used to toss dimes to the children of peasants. The evangelicals, who with some justification have been accused of lacking true scholarship, now grab for such status symbols with shining eyes. When they get them they are scarcely able to believe their eyes. They walk about in a kind of ecstatic disbelief, as might the soloist of the neighborhood church choir if she were invited to sing at La Scala.”9

True scholars do not glory in their attainments or call attention to their academic degrees. Rather they lay all these things adoringly at the feet of the Saviour. And they gladly acknowledge, as godly saints have always done, that they are nothing but bondslaves of Jesus Christ who know nothing except as they ought.

Footnotes:

1 TIME Magazine, Nov. 19, 1984, p. 69.

2 Daniel's Seventy Weeks, Denver: Wilson Foundation, n.d., p. 13.

3 Isaiah, Oak Park, IL.: Bible Truth Publishers, 1978, p. 210.

4 Hearts Aflame, Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1952, p. 69.

5 Lord of What's Left, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982, p. 19.

6 Quoted in Herald of His Coming, Feb. 1989, p.1.

7 Money, Sex and Power, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985, pp. 215-216.

8 The Glory of the Ministry, N.Y.: Fleming H.Revell Co., 1911, p. 153.

9 Quoted in MASTERPIECE Magazine, Nov./Dec. 1990, p. 23./Dec. 1990, p. 23.

A Mess of Pottage

"Esau... for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Hebrews 12:16

It is often possible to barter life's best values for a momentary gratification of physical appetite.

That is what Esau did. He had come in from the field tired and hungry. At that moment Jacob was cooking a pot of red bean soup. When Esau asked for a bowl of the "red stuff," Jacob said, in effect, "Sure, I'll give you some if you'll sell me your birthright in return."

Now the birthright was a valuable privilege which belonged to the oldest son in a family. It was valuable because it gave him the place of eventual headship in the family or tribe and entitled him to a double portion of the inheritance.

But at that moment, Esau considered the birthright worthless. What good is a birthright, he thought, to a man who is as famished as I? His hunger seemed so overpowering that he was willing to give almost anything to satisfy it. In order to pacify a momentary appetite, he was willing to surrender something that was of enduring value. And so he made the awful bargain!

A similar drama is being reenacted almost daily.

Here is a man who has maintained a good testimony for years. He has the love of a fine family and the respect of his Christian fellowship. When he speaks, his words carry spiritual authority, and his service has the blessing of God upon it. He is a model believer.

But then comes the moment of fierce passion. It seems as if he is being consumed by the fires of sexual temptation. All of a sudden nothing seems so important as the satisfaction of this physical drive. He abandons the power of rational thought. He is willing to sacrifice everything for this illicit alliance.

And so he takes the insane plunge! For that moment of passion, he exchanges the honor of God, his own testimony, the esteem of his family, the respect of his friends and the power of a sterling Christian character. Or as Alexander Maclaren said, "He forgets his longings after righteousness; flings away the joys of divine communion; darkens his soul; ends his prosperity; brings down upon his head for all his remaining years a cataract of calamities; and makes his name and his religion a target for the barbed sarcasms of each succeeding generation of scoffers."

In the classic words of Scripture, he sells his birthright for a mess of pottage.

A New Year's Prayer

"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Ex. 12:2).

New Year's resolutions are good but fragile, that is, easily broken. New Year's prayers are better; they ascend to the throne of God and set answering wheels in motion. As we come to the beginning of another year, we would do well to make the following prayer requests our own:

Lord Jesus, I rededicate myself afresh to You today. I want You to take my life this coming year and use it for Your glory. "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

I pray that You will keep me from sin, from anything that will bring dishonor to Your Name.

Keep me teachable by the

Holy Spirit. I want to move forward for You. Don't let me settle in a rut.

May my motto this year be,

"He must increase; I must decrease." The glory must all be Yours. Help me not to touch it.

Teach me to make every decision a matter of prayer. I dread the thought of leaning on my own understanding.

"I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

May I die to the world and even to the approval or blame of loved ones or friends. Give me a single, pure desire to do the things that please Your heart.

Keep me from gossip and criticism of others. Rather help me to speak what is edifying and profitable.

Lead me to needy souls.

May I become a friend of sinners, as You are. Give me tears of compassion for the perishing.

"Let me look on the crowd as my Saviour did,

Till my eyes with tears grow dim.

Let me view with pity the wandering sheep,

And love them for love of Him."

Lord Jesus, keep me from becoming cold, bitter or cynical in spite of anything that may happen to me in the Christian life.

Guide me in my stewardship of money. Help me to be a good steward of everything You have entrusted to me.

Help me to remember moment by moment that my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. May this tremendous truth influence all my behavior.

And, Lord Jesus, I pray that this may be the year of Your return. I long to see Your face and to fall at Your feet in worship. During the coming year, may the blessed hope stay fresh in my heart, disengaging me from anything that would hold me here and keeping me on the tiptoes of expectancy. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

(from One

Day at a Time)

An Overview of Ecclesiastes

The Book of Ecclesiastes describes Solomon's search for the meaning of life, by his own unaided intellect and apart from divine revelation. His conclusion was that life is vanity and as futile as chasing the wind.

We know the book was written by Solomon because he was the only son of David who was king in Jerusalem, 1. 1. We do not know what period of his life he is describing.

The key to the book is the expression 'under the sun.' It occurs 29 times. Solomon tries to solve the riddle of life by his own wisdom and by his own observations. His conclusions are the same as you and I might draw if we did not have a Bible.

Two expressions confirm that the book represents man's wisdom under the sun. In 3. 18, Solomon said in his heart that men are like beasts. He said this in his heart. He is speaking from personal observation and not from divine wisdom. Then in 3. 21, he said, 'Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the beast, who goes down to the earth?' This is not divine revelation but human ignorance. He says that nobody knows. However, we know what happens at the time of death, because we have the Bible.

If this book contains nothing more than human wisdom, why did God allow it to be included in the Scriptures? Its purpose is to save us from walking the same dreary path of frustration, pessimism, and meaninglessness. If the wisest and richest man could not find fulfilment 'under the sun,' what chance do we have?

Because the findings are 'under the sun', some of them are true, some are half-true, and some are not true at all. Some are true, e.g. 'A good name is better than ointment', 7. 1a; 'For there is not a just man who does good and does not sin', 7. 20. Some are only half-true, e.g. 'And the day of death [is better] than the day of one's birth', 7. 1b. This is true only if the person is a believer. Some are not true at all, e.g., the earth does not abide forever, 1. 4; man does have an advantage over beasts, 3. 19; the dead do have knowledge, 9. 5; 'do not be overly righteous', 7. 16, is not good advice, God would never say that. On the contrary, He does say, 'My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin', 1 John 2. 1. In other words, don't sin at all.

The fact that there are untruths in the book does not affect its inspiration. The inspiration of the sacred word does not guarantee the truthfulness of what the devil says, Gen. 3. 4-5, or of what man says by his own wisdom. God said to Eliphaz, one of Job's friends, 'You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has', Job 42. 8. Yet, Eliphaz's words are in the Bible. The Lord gives a faithful record of what is said and done, and that record is inspired even if it records some of man's mistakes. He wanted those things to be in the word for our instruction and correction.

Solomon uses Elohim for the name of God in these twelve chapters, never the name Jehovah. Anyone can know that there is an Elohim, that is, a Mighty One. But the name Jehovah speaks of God in covenant relation with man. A fool can know that there is an Elohim, but only a believer can know Him as Jehovah.

The king tried to find fulfilment in education, pleasure, materialism, wealth, music, philosophy, status, and sex, 1. 17 - 2. 11, but concluded that life is meaningless and futile. The argument is that if the richest and wisest could not find fulfilment in these things, what chance do we have? 'For what can the man do who succeeds the king?' 2. 12.

In chapter 3. 1-8 he listed 28 activities of life, half of which seem to be active and the others counteractive. Usually the second member of each pair cancels the first. Fourteen minus fourteen equals zero.

This would seem to imply that life is a big zero. The king concluded that when it comes to dying, man has no advantage over a beast. They all go to the grave, 3. 18-22. Accumulating riches is folly; when a man dies, he leaves it all, perhaps to a son who is a fool. The son did not work hard for it, so he goes out and wastes it.

Mingled with some words of wisdom are many other expressions of pessimism. The struggle of life simply is not worth it.

The king covers most of the spectrum of human life. He tackles the main questions that plague mankind, and comes up with his own answers. Because God's ways and works are inscrutable, the best philosophy of life is to have a good time while you can. Solomon grieves over injustice, wickedness, and inequalities. The competitive spirit is vanity. Religion that is insincere is vanity. The insatiable desire for more is vanity. All is vanity.

Did Solomon ever get above the sun in this book? The jury is still out on that question. There is no agreement among students of the word. I don't think he did.

His closing advice for young people to remember their Creator is reinforced by a classic description of old age with its multiple infirmities, 12. 1-7. It is a masterpiece of symbolic literature. Jesus summarized the message of Ecclesiastes when He said, 'Whoever drinks of this water [the world] will thirst again', John 4. 13. Only God can fill the vacuum of the human heart. The way of fulfilment is to get above the sun where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

Heaven's Cure For Troubled Hearts

Video

Audio

VIDEO: Christ's Plan for the Church audio

At Such a Cost Thy Bride

At Such a Cost Thy Bride

William MacDonald

The author of this article was requested to prepare a paper on worship. At first glance, this might not seem to fulfil that purpose. In a letter which accompanied the article he writes, “In thinking about worship, the realization gripped me that it cannot be legislated but must be spontaneous. Therefore, I decided to try to set forth in this feeble way why I am a worshipper of the Lord Jesus.”—Ed.

Picture with me a prince living in regal splendour. His home is a palace. A retinue of servants waits on him tirelessly. His wealth is Incalculable. Luxury, comfort and ease are his daily fare. Nothing enters his life to sadden or discourage him. He has within his own power the ability to satisfy his every desire.

Nevertheless, strange to say, he has a need. He earnestly longs to have the companionship of one who will reign with him in the splendour of his coming kingdom. He seeks a bride to share his magnificence.

Now court protocol requires that he select a person of royal blood. Naturally he should consider her family background. Her health should be a factor also, as she will face an arduous schedule of duties. Her appearance will have to be such that he will be proud to have her enthroned beside him. She must be a person of impeccable manners, and it will be much to her benefit if she has a variety of talents.

The papers announce the startling news! It is scarcely credible! In utter disregard of protocol, the prince has chosen a “commoner” for his wife. Actually the press has withheld the details, but what really happened was this! The prince left his splendid home in the fashionable section of the capital, and went down to the very poorest quarter of the city. Needless to say, the papers could not use the term, but the place was what we might call “skid-row”.

It was there he found his future bride. To tell the truth, there was nothing about her to commend her to the prince. Her appearance was what you might expect of one dwelling in that unspeakable neighborhood. She was without talents that would commend her to royal society. He could not possibly have chosen her upon the basis of what he would receive in return.

Not only was she lacking in merit; it must be stated quite honestly that she had much of positive demerit about her. Her family tree did not bear inspection. Her own character was ignoble. Her health was sadly impaired by her sinful life. Her manners would have barred her from middle-class society, to say nothing of royalty.

Most surprising of all, when the prince began to woo her, she responded with bitter hatred. She insulted him, neglected him, and wounded him with her harsh words.

Would he then be repulsed? No, he persisted most graciously to win her to himself. Finally, his love and kindness broke her heart, and he began to prepare her for life in the palace.

In considering the prince’s unusual course of action, one can only conclude that his purpose was to find the most

unworthy person upon whom he could bestow his love, power, and wealth.

Of course, you know Who the Prince is, do you not? And the bride?

Wait! The illustration is sadly defective on two important scores.

First of all, this imaginary prince was a mere man—of the same human family as his bride, but the Prince of Heaven is God the Son. What human words can ever express what it meant for Him to become a man in order to seek and save His bride? We cannot even imagine what it would mean for us to become an ant in order to live in a colony of ants. Yet, that would not compare with the condescending stoop of the Saviour in becoming a man. Our illustration, consequently, fails to portray the marvel of the incarnation.

Even more important than this, the prince of our story did not have to pay for his bride. Yet the Prince of Glory paid for His bride with His own most precious blood. He actually died for her. For Him it meant the crown of thorns, the bitter gall — then the three hours of darkness in which He gave Himself for us.

No one else ever chose so unworthy a bride. No one else ever bought a bride so dearly. No one else ever raised such an unworthy person to such a dazzling height of dignity, wealth, and glory.

Oh, yes! We started out to discuss worship. What is worship? Worship is the emotion that wells up within your heart when you realize that the Son of God is the Eternal Lover of your soul, and that you are the

unworthy one whom He selected to be a part of His bride eternally.

Take therefore no thought for the morrow. Matt 6:34.

’Tis far the best to simply rest,

Care not about the morrow;

You may have grace for this day’s race,

But more you cannot borrow.

* * *

Oh, restless heart, that beats against your prison bars of circumstance, yearning for a wider sphere of usefulness, leave God to order all your days. Patience and trust in the dullness of the routine of life will be the best preparation for a courageous bearing of the stress and strain of the larger opportunity which God may some time offer to you.

Balanced Conversation

"Let there be no... silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting." Ephesians. 5:4 (RSV)

Excessive levity should be avoided because it inevitably results in a leakage of spiritual power.

The preacher deals with serious issues, with life and death, with time and eternity. He may deliver a masterpiece of a message, and yet if there is undue humor in it, people are apt to remember the jokes and forget the rest.

Oftentimes the power of a message can be dissipated by lighthearted conversation afterwards. A solemn Gospel appeal may result in the hush of eternity coming over a meeting. Yet when the people rise to leave, there is the buzz of social chatter.

People talk about the football scores or the business of the day.

Little wonder that the Holy Spirit is grieved and nothing happens for God.

Elders who are forever cracking jokes have little real spiritual impact on young people who look to them for inspiration.

They might think that their wit ingratiates them with the young, but the truth is that the latter feel a keen sense of disappointment and disillusionment.

A form of levity that is especially harmful is making puns on the Bible, using passages of Scripture to get a laugh rather than to change a life. Every time we pun on the

Bible, we lower its sense of authority in our own lives and in the lives of others.

This does not mean that a believer must be a gloomy Gus, without a trace of humor showing. It means rather that he should control his humor so that it will not cancel out his message.

Kierkegaard tells of the circus clown who ran into a town to cry out that the circus tent on the outskirts was on fire. The people listened to his cries and roared with laughter. He had been clowning so much that he had lost his credibility.

Charles Simeon kept a picture of Henry Martyn in his study. Wherever Simeon went in the room, it seemed that Martyn was following him with his eyes and saying, "Be earnest, be earnest; don't trifle, don't trifle." And Simeon would reply, "Yes, I will be in earnest; I will, I will be in earnest; I will not trifle, for souls are perishing, and Jesus is to be glorified."

Being a Spiritual Example

"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18:6

It would be difficult to imagine a more effective and foolproof method of drowning than this. The millstone here was not the small one that was operated by hand, but the great one that was turned by an ass. To have a millstone like that secured around one's neck would mean speedy and inescapable drowning.

At first we might be startled by the vehemence of the Savior's words. He seems to thunder out with unusual condemnation against the sin of offending a little one. What is it that provokes such anger?

Let us take an illustration! Here is a minister of the Gospel who has a constant line of people coming to him for counseling. Among them is a young person who is enslaved by some sexual sin. This young person needs help-desperately. He (or she) looks to the minister as one in whom he can have confidence, as one who will help him find the way of deliverance. But instead of that, the minister finds himself inflamed with passion, he makes improper advances, and soon he has led his counselee back into immorality. The young person is shattered by this betrayal of trust and is thoroughly disillusioned by the religious world. It may be that he is crippled spiritually for the rest of his life.

Or the offender may be a college professor who labors tirelessly to rob his students of whatever faith they may have.

By sowing doubts and denials, he undermines the authority of the Scriptures and attacks the Person of our Lord.

Again it may be a Christian whose behavior stumbles a young believer. Overstepping the fine line between liberty and license, he is seen engaging in some questionable activity. The young Christian interprets his behavior as acceptable Christian conduct and leaves the path of godly separation to plunge into a life of worldliness and compromise.

We should be solemnly warned by the words of the Savior that it is a tremendously serious thing to contribute to the ethical, moral or spiritual delinquency of a minor who belongs to Him.

Better to drown in literal water than to drown in a sea of guilt, disgrace and remorse for causing one of His little ones to fall into sin.

Bill's 10 Favorite Passages of Scripture

Romans 10:9

1 John 5:13

Romans 12:1-2

1 John 1:9

Proverbs 3:5-6

Psalms 30:5

Isaiah 49:4

Ephesians 4:11-13

Revelation 1:5-6

1 John 3:2

Bringing Forth Fruit

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24

One day some Greeks came to Philip with the noble request, "Sir, we would see Jesus!" But why did they want to see Him?

Perhaps they wanted to take Him back to Athens as a popular new philosopher. Or perhaps they wanted to save Him from crucifixion and death, which now seemed inevitable.

Jesus answered with one of the great laws of harvest: a kernel of grain must fall into the ground and die if it is to become productive. If He were to save Himself from death, He would abide alone. He would enjoy the glories of heaven by Himself; there would be no saved sinners there to share His glory. But if He died, He would provide a way of salvation by which many would enjoy eternal life. It was imperative for Him that He die a sacrificial death rather than live a comfortable life.

T. C. Ragland once said, "Of all plans of ensuring success, the most certain is Christ's own, becoming a grain of wheat, falling into the ground and dying. If we refuse to become grains of wheat... if we will neither sacrifice prospects, nor risk character, and property and health; nor, when we are called, relinquish home, and break family ties, for Christ's sake; then we shall abide alone. But if we wish to be fruitful, we must follow our Blessed Lord Himself, by becoming a corn of wheat, and dying, then we shall bring forth much fruit.

Years ago I read of a group of missionaries in

Africa who had labored tirelessly for years without seeing any lasting fruit for Cod. In desperation, they finally announced a conference where they would get before God in prayer and fasting. In the discussion that followed, one of the missionaries said, "I don't think we'll ever see blessing until a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies." Shortly afterward, that same missionary took sick and died. Then the harvest began - the blessing which he had predicted.

Samuel Zwemer wrote:

There is no gain but by a loss,

You cannot save but by a cross;

The corn of wheat to multiply

Must fall into the ground and die.

Wherever you ripe fields behold,

Waving to God their sheaves of gold,

Be sure some corn of wheat has died,

Some soul there has been crucified-

Someone has wrestled, wept and prayed,

And fought hell's legions undismayed.

Cold Formalism or Unconventional Ways

"... no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

But new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved." Luke 5:37-38

The bottles referred to here were actually containers made from the hides of animals. When these wineskins were new, they were pliable and somewhat elastic. But when they became old, they were stiff and inflexible. If new wine was placed in old skins, the fermenting action of the wine would build up too much pressure for the old wineskins to accommodate, and they would burst.

Here in Luke 5, Jesus uses this to illustrate the clash between Judaism and Christianity. He is saying that "the outmoded forms, ordinances, traditions and rituals of Judaism were too rigid to hold the joy, the exuberance and the energy of the new dispensation."

This chapter contains dramatic illustrations. In verses 18-21, we see four men tearing up the roof of a house in order to bring a paralyzed man to Jesus for healing. Their innovative, unconventional method is an illustration of the new wine. In verse 21, the scribes and Pharisees begin to find fault with Jesus; they are the old wineskins.

Again, in verses 27-29 we have Levi's enthusiastic response to Christ's call, and the banquet he held to introduce his friends to Jesus. That is the new wine. In

verse 30, the scribes and Pharisees grumble again. They are the old wine-skins.

We see this in all of life. People get set in traditional ways of doing things and find it hard to adjust to change.

The housewife has her own way of doing the dishes and finds it irritating to see someone else fumbling around in her sink. The husband has his own ideas as to how a car should be driven, and nearly loses his senses when wife or children drive.

But the great lesson for all of us is in the spiritual realm. We should be flexible enough to allow for the joy, the effervescence, the enthusiasm of the Christian faith, even if it comes in unconventional ways. We neither want nor need the stodginess and cold formalism of the Pharisees, who sat on the sidelines criticizing when God was working.

Complaining

"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." 1 Corinthians 10:10

The Israelites were chronic complainers as they trekked through the desert. They complained about the water supply.

They complained about the food supply. They complained about their leaders. When God gave them manna from heaven, they soon grew tired of it and longed for the leeks, onions and garlic of Egypt. Although there were no food markets or shoe stores in the wilderness, God provided an unfailing supply of groceries for forty years, and shoes that never wore out. Yet instead of being grateful for this miraculous provision, the Israelites complained without letup.

Times haven't changed. Men today complain about the weather: it's either too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry. They complain about the food, like lumpy gravy or burnt toast. They complain about their work and wages, then about unemployment when they have neither. They find fault with the government and its taxes, at the same time demanding ever-increasing benefits and services. They are unhappy with other people, with their car, with service in the restaurant. They complain about minor pains and aches, and wish they were taller, thinner, better looking. No matter how good God has been to them, they say, "What's He done for me lately?"

It must be a trial to God to have people like us on His hands. He has been so good to us, providing not only the

necessities of life, but luxuries which His own Son did not enjoy when He was here upon earth. We have good food, pure water, comfortable homes, clothes in abundance. We have sight, hearing, appetite, memory and so many other mercies that we take for granted. He has protected us, guided us and sustained us. Best of all, He has given us eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And what thanks does He receive? Too often He hears nothing but a tirade of complaints.

I had a friend in Chicago years ago who had a good answer when asked, "How are you?" He would always reply, "It would be a sin to complain." I often think of that when tempted to murmur.

It's a sin to complain. The antidote to complaining is thanksgiving.

When we remember all that the Lord has done for us, we realize that we have no reason to complain.

Contemporary Lies of the Devil

Contemporary Lies of the Devil

William MacDonald

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Christians now live in a world in which they are being constantly bombarded with the craziest, weirdest, and most unscriptural ideas that the twisted human mind has ever concocted. The advocates of these absurd winds of doctrine have become so vocal and strident that the voice of truth seems to be a squeak by comparison. These evil winds of doctrine have gained in velocity till they have become a tornado of Texan proportions. The gullible are easily taken in when they hear the grossest insanities being advocated by psychologists, sociologists, clerics, and other “experts.” Even for sober Christians it is hard not to be affected by all the perverted thinking that crowds the news media. Our only safety is in staying close to the Lord and in checking everything against the Word of God. Now let us turn to some specific examples.

Pre-marital Sex

Take premarital sex, for instance. It is no longer an issue, according to the experts. Nothing is right or wrong in itself. A thing is only wrong when it is not done in love. There are no absolutes in the realm of conduct; each one must set his own standards. Beside all that, it

is harmful to repress natural appetites. And so on and on and on. But what does the Bible say? It says, “Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13). Men can defy and disobey God’s Word, but they cannot escape the built-in consequences. “Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Homosexuality

Or take the gay liberation movement. Now we are told that sodomy should be legalized as long as it is carried on between consenting adults. What we used to think of as sexual perversion is not perversion at all. It is acceptable social behavior, and any discrimination against it is unloving, unamerican, and unchristian. It should not even bar a person from the sacred office of the ministry. But God’s pronouncements on the subject have not changed. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

Be not deceived: neither … effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind…shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9). “They which commit such things are worthy of death” (Romans 1:32). That is God’s judgment on the matter.

Abortion

Then think of how the public has been brainwashed on the subject of abortion. The popular opinion is that abortion should now be permitted generally, even in order to cancel an unwanted pregnancy. The idea that any abortion should be considered as murder is largely passe. The fact that many nurses have refused to assist

at any more abortions, because of what they have witnessed in the delivery room, receives scant attention in the news. People want freedom in this area, and they can always rationalize what they want. But thinking Christians are not deceived. They remember that David, in his magnificent Psalm 139, speaks of himself as a person when he was still in his mother's womb: "For Thou hast possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance was fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalm 139:13-16). Just suppose that David's mother had had an abortion!

Birth Control

Advocates of birth control have done such an effective job of "selling" the pill that many Christians meekly subscribe without qualms. They are terrorized with the fear of overpopulating the earth. We seldom hear a prophetic voice raised in opposition. The landslide is on, and it never occurs to many believers that the Biblical position could be any different from the world's position. But what about Genesis 1:28; 9:1: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"? What about Psalm 127:3, 5: "Children are an heritage from the LORD… Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them"? And what about 1 Corinthians 7:5: "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may

give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again”?

Women’s Lib

As if all these issues were not enough, our ears are now assaulted with mounting decibels of noisy trash concerning women’s lib and the equal rights amendment. God in His wisdom ordained a chain of command in the universe. The woman is subject to the man; the man is subject to Christ; Christ is subject to God (1 Corinthians 11:3). The fact that subjection does not mean inferiority is seen in Christ’s being subject to God the Father.

But modern woman rebels against any idea of subjection. In thus rebelling against God’s order, she only succeeds in making herself more miserable, more neurotic, and more unfulfilled.

Child’s Rights

Now the drive is on for a child’s rights amendment to the Constitution. It seems that children need to be protected from their parents. Actually they don’t need to be protected from their parents as much as from soft-headed militants who have nothing better to do than to advocate such idiocy. While the Bible does not condone child abuse, it does insist that only the rod of correction will drive naughtiness from a child’s heart (Proverbs 22:15). We don’t need a child’s rights amendment. We need to abandon permissiveness and return to the good, old-fashioned Bible way of rearing children, i.e., lovingly applying the board of education to the seat of learning.

Capital Punishment

With so much empty drivel being propagated, it is not surprising that capital punishment should come under attack too. Here again the Christian world has been mesmerized by the specious reasoning of hyperkinetic do-gooders. These reformers rush around, piously quoting Exodus 20:13, “Thou shalt not kill.” They can never get it into their heads that this refers to murder, and that capital punishment is not murder. They would be better advised to quote Genesis 9:6, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed”. In case someone argues that New Testament directives on love override this Old Testament command, he should refer to Romans 13:4, where Paul says that the ruler does not bear the sword in vain. Swords are not used to tickle or pamper offenders.

Divorce

As far as divorce is concerned, the avalanche is roaring down the mountain. For the most trivial reasons homes are broken, hearts are broken, and lives are broken. Even Christian people seem to be more guided by the civil law concerning divorce than by the law of God. But God is not mocked. He still hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), and His blessing cannot rest on any divorce that does not have Scriptural sanction. Divorce does not solve problems, but it does breed a litter of new ones.

Conclusion

We could go on with a long list of other contemporary lies of the devil. One of the stupidest is the dictum of some modern educators who say, “Children are basically good. We must start with that premise. If they go astray,

it is the fault of their environment.” But enough of that! If I go on, I will be tempted to join those who say, “Stop the world; I’m getting off.”

While we shouldn’t want to escape from the challenge of Christian encounter with the world, we certainly don’t want to succumb to the chill of our environment. We don’t want to be defiled by the ungodly movements that are crowding in on us from every side.

Our safety lies in judging everything by the standard of God’s Word and by rejecting out of hand everything that does not square with that standard. Paul put it well in 2 Corinthians 10:5 (Phillips): “Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defense that men erect against the true knowledge of God. We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ.”

De Profundis - Out of the Depths

"He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." Galatians 6:8

No one can sin and get away with it. The results of sin are not only inescapable, they are extremely bitter. Sin may look like a harmless kitty but it eventually devours like a pitiless lion.

The supposed glamour of sin receives wide coverage. We seldom hear the other side. Few leave behind a description of their downfall and subsequent misery.

One of Ireland's most brilliant authors did. This man began to dabble in unnatural vice. One thing led to another until he became embroiled in lawsuits and finally landed in prison, where he wrote the following:

"The gods had given me almost everything. I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring: I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art: I altered the minds of men and the colour of things: There was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder... I treated Art as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction: I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me:

I summoned up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram.

"Along with these things, I had things that were different. I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a flaneur, a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself

with the smaller natures and the meaner minds. I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths in search for new sensations. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. Desire, at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the housetops... I ended in horrible disgrace."

Developing the Graces of a Christ-Filled Life

"Moab bath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither bath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." Jeremiah 48:11

Jeremiah here takes an illustration from the art of wine-making to teach us that a life of ease does not produce strength of character.

Whenever wine is being fermented in casks or vats, lees or dregs settle to the bottom. If the wine is left undisturbed, it becomes unpalatable. So the vintner must pour out the wine from vessel to vessel, eliminating the dregs and impurities. When he does this, the wine develops strength, aroma, color and flavor.

Moab had lived a life of ease. He had never suffered the disruption of going into captivity. He had insulated himself from troubles, trials and privations. The result was that his life was flat and insipid. It lacked fragrance and piquancy.

What is true of wine is true of us also. We need disruption, opposition, difficulties and disturbances to rid us of impurities and to develop the graces of a Christ-filled life.

Our natural tendency is to protect ourselves from anything that would unsettle us. We strive unceasingly to nestle.

But God's will for us is that our lives should be a perpetual crisis of dependence on Him. He is forever stirring up the nest.

In her biography of Hudson Taylor, Mrs. Howard

Taylor wrote: "This life that was to be made a blessing the wide world over must pass through a very different process (i.e., different from being settled on his lees), including much of that emptying and re-emptying 'from vessel to vessel', so painful to the lower nature, from which we are being refined."

When we realize what the Divine Vintner is seeking to accomplish in our lives, it saves us from rebellion and teaches us submission and dependence. We learn to say:

Leave to His sovereign sway

To choose and to command;

So shalt thou wondering own His way,

How wise, how strong His hand.

Far, far above thy thought

His counsel shall appear,

When fully He the work hath wrought

That caused thy needless fear.

Discipleship

Discipleship

William MacDonald

True Christianity is an all-out commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Saviour is not looking for men and women who will give their spare evenings to Him — or their weekends — or their years of retirement. Rather, He seeks those who will give Him first place in their lives. “He looks today, as He has ever looked, not for crowds drifting aimlessly in His track, but for individual men and women whose undying allegiance will spring from their having recognized that He wants those who are prepared to follow the path of self-renunciation which He trod before them.” — H. A. Evan Hopkins.

Nothing less than unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice at Calvary. Love so amazing, so divine, could never be satisfied with less than our souls, our lives, our all.

The Lord Jesus made stringent demands on those who would be His disciples — demands that are all but overlooked in this day of luxury-living. Too often we look upon Christianity as an escape from hell and a guarantee of Heaven. Beyond that, we feel that we have every right to enjoy the best that this life has to offer. We know that there are those strong verses on discipleship in the Bible, but we have difficulty reconciling them with our ideas of what Christianity should be.

We can accept the fact that soldiers give their lives for patriotic reasons. We do not think it strange that Communists give their lives for political reasons. But that “blood, sweat and tears” should characterize the life of a follower of Christ somehow seems remote and hard to grasp.

And yet the words of the Lord Jesus are clear enough. There is scarcely any room for misunderstanding if we accept them at their face value. Here are the terms of discipleship as laid down by the Saviour of the world.

A Supreme Love for Jesus Christ

“If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26). This does not mean that we should ever have animosity or ill-will in our hearts toward our relatives, but it does mean that our love to Christ should be so great that all other loves are hatred by comparison. Actually the most difficult clause in this passage is the expression, “yea, and his own life also.” Self-love is one of the subbornest hindrances to discipleship. Not until we are willing to lay down our very lives for Him are we in the place where He wants us.

A Denial of Self

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself …” (Matt. 16:24). Denial of self is not the same as self-denial. The latter means foregoing certain foods, pleasures, or possessions. But denial of self means such complete submission to the lordship of Christ that self has no rights or authority at all. It means that self

abdicates the throne. It is expressed in the words of Henry Martyn, “Lord, let me have no will of my own, or consider my true happiness as depending in the smallest degree on anything that can befall me outwardly, but as consisting altogether in conformity to Thy will.”

“My glorious Victor, Prince divine, Clasp these surrendered hands in Thine, At length my will is all Thine own, Glad vassals of a Saviour’s throne.”

A Deliberate Choosing of The Cross

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross …” (Matt. 16:24). The cross is not some physical infirmity or mental anguish; these things are common to all men. The cross is a pathway that is deliberately chosen. It is “a path which so far as this world goes is one of dishonour and reproach” — C. A. Coats. The cross symbolizes the shame, persecution and abuse which the world heaped upon the Son of God, and which the world will heap on all who choose to stand against the tide. Any believer can avoid the cross simply by being conformed to the world and its ways.

A Life Spent in Following Christ

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). To understand what this means, one need simply ask himself, “What characterized the life of the Lord Jesus?” It was a life of obedience to the will of God. It was a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a life of unselfish service for others. It was a life of patience and longsuffering in the face of the gravest wrongs. It was a life of zeal, of expenditure, of self-control, of meekness, of kindness, of faithfulness and devotion. In order to be

His disciples, we must walk as He walked. We must exhibit the fruit of Christ-likeness (John 15:8).

A Fervent Love for All Who Belong to Christ

“By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). This is love that esteems others better than oneself. It is the love that covers a multitude of sins. It is the love that suffers long and is kind. It vaunts not itself and is not puffed up. It does not behave itself unseemly; seeks not its own, is not easily provoked; thinks no evil. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Without this love, discipleship would be a cold, legalistic asceticism.

An Unswerving Continuance in His Word

“If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed” (John 8:31). For real discipleship there must be continuance. It is easy enough to start well, to burst forth in a blaze of glory. But the test of reality is endurance to the end. Any man who looks back after putting his hand to the plow is not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Spasmodic obedience to the Scriptures will not do. Christ wants those who will follow Him in constant, unquestioning obedience.

“Keep me from turning back.

The handles of my plough with tears are wet,

The shears with rust are spoiled, and yet, and yet,

My God! My God! Keep me from turning back.”

A Forsaking of All to Follow Him

"So likewise, whosoever he be of, you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33). This is perhaps the most unpopular of all Christ's terms of discipleship, and may well prove to be the most unpopular verse in the Bible. Clever theologians can give you a thousand reasons why it does not mean what it says, but simple disciples drink it down like medicine, assuming that the Lord Jesus knew what He was saying. What is meant by forsaking all? It means an abandonment of all one's material possessions that are not absolutely essential and that could be used in the spread of the Gospel. The man who forsakes all does not become a shiftless loafer; he works hard to provide for the current necessities of his family and himself. But since the passion of his life is to advance the cause of Christ, he invests everything above current needs in the work of the Lord, and leaves the future with God. In seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he believes that he will never lack food and clothing. He cannot conscientiously hold on to surplus funds when souls are perishing for want of the Gospel. He does not want to waste his life accumulating riches that will fall into the devil's hands when Christ returns for His saints. He wants to obey the Lord's injunction against laying up treasure on earth. In forsaking all, he offers what he cannot keep anyway, and what he has ceased to love.

* * *

These, then, are the seven terms of Christian discipleship. They are clear and unequivocal. The writer realizes that in the act of setting them forth, he has condemned himself as an unprofitable servant. But shall

the truth of God be forever suppressed because of the failure of God's people? Is it not true that the message is always greater than the messenger; Is it not proper that God be true and every man a liar? Should we not say with an old worthy, "Thy will be done though in my own undoing."

Confessing our past failure, let us courageously face up to the claims of Christ upon us and seek henceforth to be true disciples of our glorious Lord.

"My Master, lead me to Thy door:

Pierce this now willing ear once more,

Thy bonds are freedom; let me stay

With Thee to toil, endure, obey."

Divorce and Remarriage

The whole subject of divorce and remarriage is one of the most vexing problems which the church faces today. Complicated cases are arising continually which would tax the wisdom of Solomon.

Of one thing we can be absolutely sure, namely, that divorce was never God's intention for man. His ideal is that a man and woman should remain married until the union is broken by death (Rom 7:1-3).

The

Lord Jesus taught this clearly. When the Pharisees asked Him if it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause, He replied:

"...Have ye not read, that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. So then, they are no more two, but one flesh.

Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt.

19:4-6)

See also Mark 10:2-9.

To further emphasize the fact that divorce is contrary to God' s will as a general rule, the Lord said:

"

Whoever divorces his wife,, and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is

divorced from her husband commits adultery." (Lk. 16:18)

This is repeated in Mark 10:11 and 12, but here it is broadened to include not only a man putting away his wife, but also a woman putting away her husband.

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

If these were the only verses in the Bible on the subject, then there would be no further need of discussion. It would be obvious that God does not permit divorce under any circumstances. But these are not the only verses in God's Word on this topic. The Savior Himself made an exception to the general rule.

In

Matthew 5:31, 32, for instance, He taught:

"

Furthermore it has been said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

But I say to you, that whoever divorces his wife, for any reason except sexual immorality; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

This clearly establishes the principle that divorce is permitted where the wife has been guilty of sexual immorality. But if a husband puts away his wife for any other reason, he causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries her commits adultery.

For example, if a man divorces his wife for incompatibility or for mental cruelty, he causes her to commit adultery. Also, any man who marries a woman who is divorced for incompatibility or mental cruelty thereby commits adultery—because the woman is not divorced on Scriptural grounds. It is not a valid divorce. The man would be marrying another man's wife.

The

Lord Jesus repeats this statement in Matthew 19:9:

"And

I say to you, Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Our conclusion thus far is that although divorce is not God's ideal, yet He does allow it in the case where one's partner has committed sexual immorality. This, of course, raises the question as to what is meant by sexual immorality.

Sexual immorality is any sexual intercourse outside of marriage. It includes illicit sex involving a single person, which in English usage is commonly called fornication. In the New Testament, the word porneia can refer to adultery, fornication or any other sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

When a spouse has been guilty of unfaithfulness, this does not mean that divorce is compulsory. It is permitted but not commanded. The offended party may show grace and forgiveness, and the original marriage may be continued. (Mt. 23:21-22)

But is sexual immorality the only Scriptural ground on which a divorce may be obtained? Some students of the Bible suggest that another ground is given in 1

Corinthians 7:12-16. This portion deals with the case where a believer is married to an unbeliever. (No doubt the believer was saved after marrying.) If the unbeliever is willing to remain with the Christian, then that is good because there is always the possibility of the unconverted person's being saved. If, however, the unbeliever leaves the Christian, the Scripture says that the latter "is not under bondage." Many interpret this to mean that the Christian is at liberty to obtain a divorce on the ground of desertion.

The difficulty with this passage is that the words "not under bondage"

are not very specific. While they may mean that a divorce is allowed, they do not clearly say so. Such Bible scholars as Ellicott, Darby, Grant, Hodge, and Jennings teach that divorce is permitted by 1

Corinthians 7:16, but many others feel that the verse deals only with separation and not divorce.

The question will arise, "What about people who were divorced before they were saved?" The answer is that Christ's teaching on divorce was addressed to professing believers. It does not deal with the question of what people were before conversion. Unlawful divorces contracted before the time of one's salvation should not exclude a person from the fellowship of the local church. Some of the Corinthian believers had formerly been fornicators, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, and other forms of sinners (1 Cor 6:9-10),

but they had been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God (1

Cor 6:11). Their past life did not bar them from full participation in the privileges of the local church.

A more difficult question concerns Christians who are divorced for reasons not allowed in the New Testament. Can they ever be received back into the fellowship of the local church? This raises the further question as to whether adultery is the state or condition in which they live, or if it describes the initial act. If such people are living in a state of adultery, then obviously they would have to repent and forsake their present partner. If, however, adultery only refers to the initial act, then presumably they could repent and be restored to fellowship.

In the matter of divorce, it seems that almost every case is different. The elders in a local church must investigate and deliberate in the fear of God and in obedience to His Word. When they take action in a godly manner, their decision is honored in heaven (Mt 18:18). The Christians should submit to the decision and not seek to defend the disciplined parties.

Another point that should be mentioned is this: God is a realist. He states the ideal in His Word concerning the marriage relationship, but He realizes that not all will attain the ideal. So He makes allowances for some things which He does not necessarily approve.

Also,

God’s remedy for these problems is never one that creates worse problems.

If, in order to untangle a marital snarl, men or women are forced into sin, or women and children are left homeless or penniless, the solution could be worse than the problem.

Remarriage

It is often contended that although divorce is permitted by the New Testament, yet remarriage is never contemplated.

Such a position is pointless. One of the main purposes of a Scriptural divorce is to permit remarriage. Otherwise separation would be sufficient.

It seems clear from the Lord's teaching in Matthew 5:31, 32, and 19:9, that if a person obtains a divorce on the ground of sexual immorality (or adultery), he is free to remarry. The expression "saving for the cause of "sexual immorality" permits both divorce and remarriage for that specific reason.

Conclusion

We conclude from the above study that God's ideal is that His people should continue in the married state until that state is broken by death. Divorce is not according to His will.

However, divorce is permitted when one partner in a marriage has been guilty of unfaithfulness. In such a case, the innocent party is free to remarry.

It is possible that the desertion of an unbelieving partner also constitutes grounds for divorce, but the Scripture is not sufficiently clear on this point that we can speak with finality.

In thinking of divorce, we dare not be more liberal than the Bible because this would only lead to a growing disrespect for the holy institution of

marriage. Yet we must not be more strict than God’s Word because this would amount to a limiting of the forgiving grace of God.

William MacDonald,

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Doctrinal Fads And Fancies

Doctrinal Fads And Fancies

William Macdonald

Mr. William MacDonald has travelled worldwide ministering the Word of God and is the author of dozens of booklets, Bible correspondence courses and books. He directs a Discipleship Intern Training Program at San Leandro, California.

The ease with which many evangelical Christians latch on to doctrinal novelties and absurdities is appalling. There seems to be an alarming failure to test teachings by the Word of God, to prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

If a book becomes a best-seller, that is taken as proof of its reliability. As they read it, people come across some new teaching and say, “Isn’t that wonderful! I never saw that in the Bible before.” It is possible that the reason they never saw it in the Bible before is because it isn’t there.

Let me list some of the questionable teachings that I have come across recently and test them to see if they are really Scriptural.

Love Yourself

A spate of books and articles has appeared on the general theme of loving oneself. The contention is that you’ll never be able to love others until first you have learned to love yourself.

Proponents of this teaching quote Matthew 19:19 as a proof-text, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” They say that we are commanded to love ourselves. But that is not what the verse says. It tells us to love our neighbor, for we already do love ourselves. The first half of the verse is a command; the second half is fact.

It seems strange to actively promote self-love when that is condemned as one of the signs of the last days: “… men shall be lovers of their own selves” (2 Tim. 3:2).

If you read the books on self-love carefully, you suspect that what is really meant is self-acceptance. But if that is what the authors mean, why don’t they say it? To use loving self as a synonym for self-acceptance only confuses people and sends them off on doctrinal tangents that harm rather than help.

No Confession for the Christian

At least two current best-selling authors espouse the view that the Christian never confesses his sins; he just thanks God that he has been forgiven. They fail to distinguish between judicial forgiveness and parental forgiveness. When we first believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we receive judicial forgiveness of all our sins. That means that the penalty has been paid by Christ and that the Judge, God, has forgiven them. We can thank God that we have been forgiven once for all as far as the penalty is concerned.

But when we sin in our daily lives, we need parental forgiveness, the forgiveness that restores us to fellowship with our Father. We do not receive this forgiveness until we have confessed and forsaken the sin. The teaching of “no confession” is in flat

contradiction to 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

“Aught … Any”

Writing under the caption “Aught…Any,” a prominent writer creates the distinct impression that we should forgive any sin that is committed against us by anyone. Does this mean that when a man runs off with another woman, his wife should phone them both and tell them she forgives them?

I think this teaching about forgiveness needs qualifying. As soon as someone has wronged me, I should forgive him in my heart. That leaves the matter between him and the Lord. But I do not administer forgiveness, that is, I do not tell him he has been forgiven until he repents (see Luke 17:3, “if he repent, forgive him”). To forgive a man before he repents would only encourage him in his wickedness.

“If it be Thy will …”

A popular book on prayer teaches that it betrays a lack of faith in our prayers when we say, “… if it be Thy will.” This seems to rule out any approach to God in prayer if we cannot do so in utter confidence of His will.

But what about the Lord Jesus when He prayed, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39)? What about the Apostle Paul when he wrote, “… I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit” (1 Cor. 16:7)? Or what about James’ words, “…ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:15)?

To eliminate the words “if it be Thy will” from our prayers puts us in the place of omniscient claimants rather than finite supplicants.

Praise God for Everything

A book with phenomenal sales directs Christians to praise God for everything, probably based on 1 Thessalonians 5:18: “In everything give thanks.” The author quotes himself as advising a woman whose husband was an alcoholic, “ I don’t care whether you stay with him or not … I just want you to thank God that your husband is like he is.” On another occasion, he said to a soldier whose wife was coming unglued, “I told Sue the solution to her problem and now I’ll tell you. I want you to kneel down and thank God that you’re going to Vietnam and that Sue is so upset that she is threatening to kill herself.”

There is a big difference between giving thanks in everything and giving thanks for everything. We are not expected to be thankful for any outbreak of sin, and yet in all the circumstances of life we can be thankful to God for Who He is and for what He has done for us.

“Submitting yourselves one to another …”

A final doctrinal misunderstanding is based on Ephesians 5:21: “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” This is used to teach the mutual submission of husbands and wives, an emphasis that is dear to the heart of Christian feminists. But is that what the verse means? Does it mean that husband and wife go round in circles of servile indecision with no one having the final word?

It seems to me that the following verses define the relationships in which submission is to be shown. Wives are to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22). Children are to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). Servants are to be obedient to their masters (Eph. 6:5).

Total submission of everyone to everyone else would result in a stalemate of inaction.

And so...

And so it goes. The books roll off the press, each one carrying its own new doctrinal fad. Many readers are carried about with these novel winds of doctrine, and the theological miasma deepens. The only hope is in getting back to a balanced view of the Scriptures.

Drugs, Demons, And Destruction

Drugs, Demons, And Destruction

William Macdonald

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ANYONE who keeps up with the daily news has noticed that the United States has been having an unusual spate of bizarre crimes during the past few years — weird, irrational crimes that seek to outdo one another in cruelty and barbarism. It is not just that innocent people are killed but that they are subjected to the most sadistic forms of torture and mutilation. Without any provocation whatever, they are treated as if they were sacrificial victims on the altar of some esoteric cult.

Paralleling the increase of these far-out murders has been the alarming rise in the use of hard drugs —LSD, heroin, cocaine, hashish, mescaline, peyote, etc. The parallel is not a coincidence. Those investigating the crimes often find evidence that points to the drug traffic. And the murderers turn out to be addicts more often than not.

The connection is very significant. Mind-expanding drugs have an ancient lure for people — “you shall be as gods.” These people want to leave the ugly realities of

this world and be transported into the realm of the transcendental. In taking these hard drugs, they open their being to the entrance of demons. Some converted addicts claim that it is impossible to get hooked on strong drugs without at the same time becoming demon-possessed. We must face the fact that we are witnessing a great outbreak of demonism in our day, and that it is closely connected with the drug traffic.

The goal of a demon is always to destroy. There is no exception to that rule. He will seek to destroy either the person he indwells, or use that person to destroy others. And this destruction is mindless in the extreme.

The police and the courts seek to handle the problem through prisons and rehabilitation programs. But demons are not awed by either. As soon as the prisoner gets out on parole, he is driven to further destruction.

We can scarcely expect the civil authorities to recognize the connection between drugs, demon-possession, and wholesale destruction. What happens in the spirit world is too intangible and speculative for textbooks on criminology. And so they muddle on pathetically with their futile solutions.

What Christians Should Know

But Christians should not be ignorant concerning the existence and work of demons. The Gospels abound with the stories of demoniacs, of their supernatural power, and of their destructive, irrational behaviour.

And Christians should be aware of a direct link between drugs and spiritism. In Galatians 5:20, for instance, the word “witchcraft” (KJV) or “socery” (NASB) comes from the Greek word pharmakia, which means “drugs.” The

witch doctor, with his drugs, potions, and spells, is an active agent for the demonic world. This explains the amazing powers he so often demonstrates, and the bondage in which he holds his subject.

Recognition of the link between drugs, demons, and destruction helps Christians understand what is happening to so many young people today. They start experimenting with drugs, then get hooked. When they come home, it is all but impossible to live with them. It seems that all the wires in their mind have become crossed. They are withdrawn, tormented souls. They act as if they have suffered irreversible brain damage. There is no purpose or direction to their lives. They move around like zombies — the walking dead. In a very real sense, they seem to have destroyed themselves.

Other Forms Of Occultism

Of course, drugs are only one link with the spirit world. Christians should be warned themselves and should teach their children to have nothing to do with other things that are the stock in trade of demonism. For instance:

· Fortune telling, use of the crystal ball, clairvoyance, palm reading, reading of tea leaves, the use of the ouija board (see Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

· Playing cards, Tarot cards, dice. Astrology, horoscopes, signs of the zodiac.

· Black magic, white magic.

· Yoga.

· Spiritistic seances, communicating with the dead, praying to the dead.

· Hypnotism.

· Water-divining.

· Non-Christian healers (such as the spiritistic healers of France).

· Transcendental Meditation, Hinduism, Hare Krishna, other eastern religions.

· Numerology, phrenology.

· Idols and images (see 1 Corinthians 10:19). Also pendants, medallions, and amulets.

· Moon or sun worship.

· Satan worship.

· Mental telepathy, ESP (extra sensory perception), Dejo Vu.

· Dominos, sticks, bones, when used for mystical purposes.

These things might seem quite innocent in themselves, but that is the devil's come-on. Many who have dabbled with them have been drawn into the world of spiritism and have become demon possessed.

Symptoms Of Demon Possession

The believer should know some of the characteristics of those who have become involved with demonism.

Usually there is a violent reaction against any mention of the Lord Jesus Christ. Occasionally a demon may take a patronizing attitude toward the Lord (Acts 16:17) but this is only a diversion and a deception.

There may be excessive drowsiness when the Word of God is read, or resistance to prayer or other spiritual exercises.

Often there is the ability to perform superhuman feats.

There may be a positive response to music with a jungle beat.

Suicidal tendencies are strong, especially at the time of the full moon. (Those who have been delivered find Psalm 121:6 a great source of comfort here.)

The demon-possessed person tends to be sadistic, enjoying cruel stories, beating himself, or practicing cruelties on others.

He also has morbid tendencies, frequenting cemeteries, etc.

He lives in bondage to fears and superstitions.

When we study the demoniacs in the Gospels, and find many of these symptoms, we are better able to understand what is happening around us today. And we are better able to distinguish between insanity and demon possession. An insane person is generally quite mild when a Christian worker reads the Bible or prays with him. The demon-possessed person can be expected to react violently at these times.

Can A Christian Be Demon Possessed?

The question inevitably arises, “Can a true believer ever be demon possessed?” Most of us would shoot down the mere suggestion by saying that a person could not be indwelt by the Holy Spirit and by an evil spirit at the same time. But perhaps it would be better to leave it an open question because if a believer takes hard drugs, or

engages in Transcendental Meditation, or takes up with any of the other spiritistic practices listed above, he cannot expect to escape the consequences of his choice. If he cannot become demon possessed, he can certainly become so oppressed and controlled that his condition is practically indistinguishable from actual possession.

What Can Be Done For The Victim?

One final question remains! What can be done for a person who has come under the power of the devil and his emissaries? The following steps are suggested.

First and foremost, everything should be centered on leading him to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He should make a complete written list of every contact he has ever had with drugs, fortune-telling, and all the other objects and activities listed above that are associated with spiritism.

In the presence of another witness, he should audibly renounce every such contact, and repudiate any agreement or promise he has made to Satan or to demons.

The Christian worker should pray, asking for the overcoming power of the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11) to protect the house and all present. Then he should command the demon(s) in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ to come out of the person.

The worker should insist that the person burn every last trace of all physical objects that were associated with his bondage to demons.

Finally, the Christian worker should claim in prayer the loosing of the person from the power of the devil, and then destroy the list.

It may require hours of agonizing prayer, hours of spiritual conflict with the foe before deliverance comes. It should be done by a mature Christian, not by a novice. The devil is not engaged in war games. The battle is real, and only those whose roots are deep in God should take on this demanding ministry.

The Danger Of Obsession

In closing, we would warn our readers against another danger, that is, the danger of becoming obsessed with this subject. If the devil can't lure Christians into the world of the occult, he will try to get them so occupied with this subject that they can't think or talk of anything else. Pretty soon they see demons lurking behind every lamppost, and blame demons for everything that happens in life. They become Johnny-one-notes, and their effectiveness in the service of the Lord is destroyed.

So we should be intelligent about the world of demons, we should be aware of the dangers, and yet we should not become so obsessed with the subject that we neglect the other great doctrines of the Word of God. We want to maintain the balance the Bible maintains, and then we will be balanced Christians.

Elders and the Retirement Trap

Elders and the Retirement Trap

William MacDonald

William MacDonald has traveled worldwide ministering the Word of God and has written dozens of books, booklets, and correspondence courses. Mr. MacDonald presently resides in California and directs a Discipleship Intern Training Program at San Leandro.

Robert began his business career with Matthew 6:33 as his motto. He was determined to seek first the kingdom of heaven. He was determined to spend time with his family and to serve actively in the local assembly.

His company had a pension plan, but that did not loom large on his horizon. He wouldn't retire for twenty-five years, and so the pension didn't affect his planning.

Ten years passed. He was diligently setting aside money for his children's education. Both his wife and he wanted the children to go to Beaton College or State University. On the spiritual side of things, Robert had a real shepherd's heart. People told him that he had the gift of pastor, and it was evident to all that the blessing of God was upon his ministry. But the time he could give to the assembly was limited. His heart was in the work of the Lord, but the corporation gobbled up the major portion of his time. He felt his contribution to the assembly was pathetic.

Fifteen years passed. Robert could see that there was a crisis of spiritual leadership in the assembly. Whenever the subject came up, the men engaged in all kinds of

rationalizations: “We feel that the assembly is doing fairly well … making more progress than most.”

“We should pray that the Lord will send along a promising young man to do the work. We could support him financially.”

“Others should do more. I am already contributing my share.”

“We cannot be expected to do more than arrange the meetings and distribute the funds. After all, we have families to take care of.”

Robert wanted to step in and give himself more wholeheartedly to the work. But only ten years remained till retirement. It seemed rather foolish to give up all the benefits he had earned during the past fifteen years. In a way, it was a trap. He was spending his life in work he didn’t really enjoy, and yet he couldn’t give it up to do what he most wanted to do.

Twenty years passed. Robert was named as an elder, but the appointment was really a fiction because he could not give the assembly the time that he should. Only five years to retirement and a good pension. Then a life of real usefulness and service at the Chapel.

Actually, under a new rule, Robert could retire at twenty years — at a reduced pension, of course. But a promotion was possibly in the works. If he could stick it out, the promotion would mean that his pension would be 15% higher. In the meantime, the saints in the assembly were facing all kinds of crises — broken homes, moral scandals, backsliding, financial irresponsibility, kids on drugs. They were like sheep without a shepherd. All the other elders were like

Robert — too busy. He felt so helpless. He wanted to quit and spend his time in the assembly. He could fill a real need at this time. He was tempted to quit his job, but his wife was anxious that he stay on for the higher pension, and so he did.

Twenty five years. The company threw a party and gave Robert the golden handshake. The whole ceremony seemed very empty to him. But he got his full pension, and ordinarily would have had quite a few years service for the Lord. But there was a worm in the apple. He had developed a slight tremor in his right hand. The doctor diagnosed it as Parkinson's disease. In the meantime the assembly muddled on pretty much the same as it had over the past years—no outreach, no systematic shepherding, no effective counselling, no consecutive teaching. Robert often wondered how he had allowed himself to be duped by the lure of a pension from doing the thing he most wanted to do—the work of a shepherd in the assembly.

Are we suggesting that all elders should resign from their secular jobs to spend full-time in the work? No! But most assemblies need more shepherding care than they are getting. And the problem could be partially solved if one or two specially gifted leaders gave themselves more fully to the work.

Jim is a practical example of how it can work out. He had been with an electronics firm for nineteen years. Six years to go to retirement. His family was now grown and through school. Through the years he had developed as a strong spiritual leader in the assembly. Now the brethren approach him and ask him to devote himself full-time to what he has been doing on a part time basis

for several years. They promise to contribute to his support as the Lord enables.

Only six years to retirement. Big decision to make. Tim goes before the Lord and yields himself to the will of God, whatever it might be. In making his surrender, he asks the Lord that three things might happen:

1. His wife should be willing. Up to now she has been reluctant, but not flatly opposed.

2. He should be able to sell his home and buy a smaller one. The large house is no longer necessary, now that the children are on their own.

3. He should have some assurance that the assembly is heartily in favor of such a move.

Miraculously Jim did not have to say anything to his wife. Jeanne approached him on the subject, and told him that she felt he should give himself to the work that was uppermost in his mind. She would be willing to make whatever sacrifices were necessary.

The house was sold a week after it went on the market (at a time when the market was unusually depressed). And a splendid small ranch style house became available within two blocks of the chapel.

When the matter was put before the entire assembly, the response was overwhelming favorable.

It was a new life for Jim—a new liberty, a new dynamic in his service, a new sense of achievement, and many tokens of the Lord's blessing. The assembly began to move forward.

Of course it doesn't always work that way. Dale was an ideal shepherd and he longed to be freed from secular

employment in order to care better for the local believers. But every time the subject came up Donna was adamantly opposed. She wanted him to get his pension and retire to a dream home in Sun City. She couldn't stand the thought of being "on the dole." Dale decided to broach the subject to her once more. That was in October. Her answer was still the same. Seven months later Donna was widowed—without a pension. It was as if the Lord were having the last word with her.

The time is late. We should be more motivated by the love of Christ than by the lure of a pension. We should realize that the work of an elder means far more to God than the mere clocking of time towards retirement. We should consider the local assembly to be more important than any corporation on the Big Board. We should remember that the care of God's sheep counts more with Him than retirement in Sun City.

Retirement is scarcely a worthy goal toward which to strive. And a pension should never be allowed to lure us away from what will really be important one hundred years from today.

Evangelism and Social Involvement

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." Matthew 4:23

A recurring problem among Christians is maintaining the proper balance between evangelism and social involvement. Evangelicals are often criticized for being too concerned with people's souls and not enough with their bodies. In other words, they don't spend enough time feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick and educating the illiterate.

To say anything against any of these ministries would be like criticizing motherhood. The Lord Jesus certainly was concerned with man's physical needs, and He taught His disciples to be concerned also. Historically, Christians have always been out in front in compassionate causes.

But as in so many other areas of life, it is a question of priorities. Which is more important, the temporal or the eternal? Judged on this basis, the Gospel is the main thing. Jesus intimated this when He said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe..." Doctrine comes before social involvement.

Some of man's most pressing social problems are the result of false religion. For example, there are people dying of starvation who won't kill a cow because they believe a relative may be reincarnated in the cow. When other nations send enormous shipments of grain, the rats eat more of it than the people, because no one will

kill the rats. These people are shackled by false religion and Christ is the answer to their problems.

In trying to strike the proper balance between evangelism and social service, there is always the danger of becoming so occupied with "coffee and doughnuts" that the Gospel is crowded out.

The history of Christian institutions is filled with such examples where the good has become the enemy of the best.

Certain forms of social involvement are questionable if not altogether "out." The Christian should never participate in revolutionary attempts to overthrow the government. It is doubtful that he should resort to political processes to right social injustices. Neither the Lord nor the apostles did. More can be accomplished through the spread of the Gospel than through legislation.

The Christian who forsakes all to follow

Christ, who sells all to give to the poor, who opens his heart and pocketbook whenever he sees a genuine case of need, need not have a guilty con-science over social unconcern.

Evangelistic Malpractice

There is a curious problem today in the evangelical [and fundamental] world — one that poses sobering questions for the church and for the individual believer. The problem in brief is this: a great army of personal soul-winners has been mobilized to reach the populace for Christ. They are earnest, zealous, enthusiastic, and persuasive. To their credit it must be said that they are on the job. And it is one of the phenomena of our times that they rack up an astounding number of conversions. Everything so far seems to be on the plus side.

But the problem is this: The conversions do not stick. The fruit does not remain. Six months later there is nothing to be seen for all the aggressive evangelism. The capsule technique of soul winning has produced stillbirths.

What lies at the back of all this malpractice in bringing souls to the birth? Strangely enough it begins with the valid determination to preach the pure gospel of the grace of God. We want to keep the message simple — uncluttered by any suggestion that man can ever earn or deserve eternal life. Justification is by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the law. Therefore, the message is "only believe."

From there the message is reduced to a concise formula. For instance, the evangelistic process is cut down to a few basic questions and answers, as follows:

"Do you believe you are a sinner?"

"Yes."

“Do you believe Christ died for sinners?”

“Yes.”

“Will you receive Him as your Savior?”

“Yes.”

“Then you are saved!”

“I am?”

“Yes, the Bible says you are saved.”

At first blush the method and the message might seem above criticism.

But on closer study we are forced to have second thoughts and to conclude that the gospel has been over-simplified.

The first fatal flaw is the missing emphasis on repentance.

There can be no true conversion without conviction of sin. It is one thing to agree that I am a sinner: it is quite another thing to experience the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Unless I have a Spirit-wrought consciousness of my utterly lost condition, I can never exercise saving faith. It is useless to tell unconvicted sinners to believe on Jesus — that message is only for those who know they are lost. We sugar-coat the gospel when we de-emphasize man’s fallen condition. With that kind of watered-down message, people receive the Word with joy instead of with deep contrition. They do not have deep roots, and though they might endure for a while, they soon give up all profession when persecution or trouble comes (Matt. 13:21). Many have forgotten that

the message is repentance toward God as well as faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

A second serious omission is a missing emphasis on the Lordship of Christ.

A light, jovial mental assent that Jesus is Savior misses the point.

Jesus is first Lord, then Savior. The New

Testament always places His Lordship before His Saviorhood. Do we present the full implication of His Lordship to people? He always did.

A third defect in the message is the tendency to keep the terms of discipleship hidden until a decision has been made for Jesus.

Our Lord never did this. The message He preached included the cross as well as the crown. “He never hid His scars to win disciples.” He revealed the worst along with the best, then told His listeners to count the cost. We popularize the message and promise fun.

The result of all this is that we have people believing without knowing what they believe. In many cases they have no doctrinal basis for their decision. They do not know the implication of commitment to Christ.

They have never experienced the mysterious, miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

And of course there are others who are talked into a profession because of the slick salesmanship techniques of the soul winner. Or some who want to please the affable, personable young man with the winning smile. And some who only want to get rid of this religious interloper who has intruded into their privacy. Satan

laughs when these conversions are triumphantly announced on earth.

I would like to raise several questions that might lead to some changes in the strategy of evangelism.

First of all, can we generally expect people to make an intelligent commitment to Christ the first time they hear the Gospel? Certainly, there is the exceptional case where a person has already been prepared by the Holy Spirit.

But generally speaking, the process involves sowing the seed, watering it, then sometime later reaping the harvest. In our mania for instant conversion, we have forgotten that conception, gestation, and birth do not occur on the same day.

A second question — can a capsule presentation of the gospel really do justice to so great a message?

As one who has written several gospel tracts, I confess to a certain sense of misgivings in even attempting to condense the good news into four small pages. Would we not be wise to give people the full presentation as it is found in the Gospels, or in the New Testament?

Thirdly, is all this pressure for decisions really Scriptural?

Where in the New Testament were people ever pressured into making a profession? The practice is justified by saying that if only one out of ten is genuine, it is worth it. But what about the other nine disillusioned, bitter, perhaps deceived; enroute to hell by a false profession?

And I must add this: Is all this boasting about conversions really accurate?

You've met the man who solemnly tells you of ten people he contacted that day and all of them were saved. A young doctor testified that every time he goes to a new city, he looks in the phone book for people with his last name. Then he calls them one by one and leads them through the four steps of salvation. Amazing enough, every one of them opens the door of his heart to Jesus. I don't want to doubt the honesty of people like this, but am I wrong in thinking that they are extremely naive? Where are all those people who are saved? They cannot be found.

What it all means is that we should seriously re-examine our streamlined capsule evangelism. We should be willing to spend time teaching the gospel, laying a solid doctrinal foundation for faith to rest on. We should stress the necessity for repentance — a complete about face with regard to sin. We should stress the full implication of the Lordship of Christ and the conditions of discipleship. We should explain what belief really involves. We should be willing to wait for the Holy Spirit to produce genuine conviction of sin.

If we do this, we'll have less astronomical figures of so-called conversions, but more genuine cases of spiritual rebirth.

Final Destiny

Final Destiny

Every thinking person must sooner or later wonder where he will go when he dies and where he will spend eternity. Take a few minutes to read this and you will find the answers.

What is your authority?

In seeking answers to life's most important questions, we must have some authority. The choice narrows down to two possibilities. It is either man's opinion or the Word of God. It's what people suppose or it's what God says.

In matters of vital and enduring significance, it must be an infallible authority. There must be no room for error. Human opinion certainly doesn't qualify here. Just as people's faces differ, so do their opinions.

Only the Bible, the Word of God, is infallible. It is truth (John 17:17). But how do we know?

·We know it by its fulfilled prophecies. There are over 60 prophecies concerning Christ alone that came true when He was on earth. In addition, there are hundreds of prophecies concerning Israel and the Gentile nations that have come to pass. The probability of all this happening by chance is too small to consider.

·At least 40 men in different countries, at different times, in three different languages, over a period of 1600 years penned the Sacred Word. They had no way of collaborating, yet the Bible has a unified theme. It tells

one consistent story. What other book can boast of such intelligent design?

·The Scriptures are unique in their power to transform the lives of people from sin and shame to decency and integrity.

·The words of the Bible are applicable to all times; they are as current as the hourly news broadcast.

·They have universal appeal; they speak to people of every race, tongue, tribe, and nation.

·They are inexhaustible, providing material for endless study, comfort, and guidance.

·Think of all the literature God's Word has prompted – Bible dictionaries, commentaries, concordances, poetry, and sermons. It has inspired great movements such as the abolition of slavery, civil rights, social justice; institutions such as hospitals, schools, orphanages, homes for the poor and aged; and world agencies to alleviate poverty and hunger. It has exerted a positive influence on human society wherever it has traveled.

·It is pure, exposing sin and warning against it. It does not stoop to popular culture but seeks to elevate it.

·It is a living book. Some people actually fear it, while others would die for it.

·The Bible claims to be inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). That means that the words are God's words. If they are not, then it is a fraud. But even its enemies do not accuse it of being a hoax.

·The Holy Bible has endured centuries of efforts to burn and banish it. Yet it has survived. When governments

forbid it, smugglers risk imprisonment and death to defy such edicts.

·No other book can compare with God's Word in the number of languages in which it speaks and the number of people who have read it.

·This amazing book records the life of a perfect Person. A mere man cannot write such an account. The French skeptic, Renan, said that it would take a Christ to invent a Christ.

In the literature of the ages, the Bible stands unparalleled and unique. Those who have experienced its transforming power in their lives are not likely to deny that it is the Word of the living God. Or, as someone has said, he who has felt the force of it is not likely to deny the source of it.

There is no risk in accepting the Bible as our final authority.

What does the Bible say about our destiny?

Now let us think about what the Bible says about death and the hereafter.

It says that death is certain. It is appointed to men to die once (Hebrews 9:27). Who can argue with that?

Every cemetery and funeral home bears silent testimony to that fact. Generations come and generations go. "Each one thinks that he will be eternal, and then that one becomes the missing face" (Will Houghton). Death is inescapable.

The Bible not only says that people must die. It adds in the verse just quoted but after this the judgment. Note the words after this. Death is not the end. There is a

hereafter. After death there is judgment and an eternity of endless suffering for those who are not ready to meet God. The Bible says and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

The Bible also tells us that there are only two places where a person can spend eternity – heaven or hell. The God who does not lie speaks of only these two destinies for the human race. A man or woman may choose not to believe this, but that does not alter the fact.

Since everyone must die, and since he will spend forever in heaven or hell, the most important thing in life is to know that he will have heaven as his address forever.

Is it possible to know, and if so, how?

Yes, it is possible to be positively sure.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

But first the bad news

Before we get to the how-to of eternal life, we have to talk about sin. What does that word mean and why is it important?

Sin is anything that falls short of the perfection of God (Romans 3:23). It means missing the mark.

It is not only doing wrong; it is failure to do what we know is right (James 4:17). This is known as sin of omission. Sin is lawlessness, the stubborn refusal to do God’s will (1 John 3:4).

When we have a bad conscience about doing something, yet go ahead and do it anyway, that is sin (Romans 14:23).

Finally, all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17).

The Bible is explicit and emphatic in declaring that everyone has sinned.

It says that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). It also says that there is not a just man upon earth who does good and does not sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

Let’s take a little test to see if you are an exception to the rule. Check the following lists to find out.

We begin with what mankind calls the grosser sins: fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, bestiality, murder, and idolatry. Multitudes will plead not guilty to any of these (until they remember that Jesus said that the man who looks on a woman with lust has committed adultery (Matthew 5:28) and the one who hates another person is a murderer) (Matthew 5:22).

We move on to drunkenness, drug addiction, abortion, child abuse, cruelty, witchcraft, swearing, and addiction to pornography. Do you still protest your total innocence?

If so, then check the following: coveting, lust, envy, jealousy, hatred, pride, selfishness, gossiping, lying, cheating, disrespect of parents, promise breaking, and unfaithfulness. Can you now raise your right hand and testify under oath that you have never committed any of the above? If so, check one more point. How about an impure thought life?

The awful truth is that we are not just one-time sinners but sinners by practice. We sin every day in thought, word, and deed. If you deny this, you deceive yourself (1 John 1:8) and make God a liar (1 John 1:10).

We are all depraved, that is, utterly sinful. We may not have committed every sin, but we are capable of doing it. And sin has affected every part of our being (Romans 3:13-18). What we are is a lot worse than anything we have ever done (Jeremiah 17:9).

No sinner can enter heaven (Revelation 21:27) unless his sins have been forgiven. If you have committed one sin, you are a sinner, and as a guilty sinner, you need to be saved.

A divine dilemma

But there is a problem. God is holy (Leviticus 19:2). He must always do what is right and proper. He cannot tolerate sin (Habakkuk 1:12-13) compromise with it, overlook it, or wink at it. His Word is clear that the soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4). God's law demands the death of the sinner. The debt must be paid. Sin's penalty must be endured.

Yet if we endure the penalty for our sins, we will be doomed and damned eternally.

The divine dilemma is this. God loves the sinner (John 3:16). He does not want anyone to perish (Ezekiel 18:32; 2 Peter 3:9). He wants him or her to spend eternity with Him in heaven. He didn't make hell for mankind, but for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). But He cannot allow a person to enter heaven while that person is still in his sins, that is, with sins still unforgiven. Nothing impure, wrong, or evil can ever enter there (Revelation

21:27). How then can God satisfy His love and still be righteous? How can He save sinners and still be holy?

There’s hope for the hopeless

The situation is not hopeless. God has found a way by which He can forgive our sins without compromising His justice (Romans 3:26).

He sent His beloved Son to the earth 2000 years ago to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). The Lord Jesus Christ went to the Cross of Calvary to die as our Substitute. That’s a key word – Substitute. He died in our place (Galatians 2:20). He died the death that we should have died (1 Corinthians 15:3). He paid the debt that we owed because of our sins. He endured the penalty that we should have endured (1 Peter 2:24: 3:18).

We never understand the Good News until we realize that Someone has died for us, and that Someone is no less than our Creator-God (John 1:1,3). Instead of the sheep dying for the Shepherd, the Shepherd died for the sheep. Instead of the creature dying for the Creator, the Creator died for His creatures.

But how do we know that Christ’s work as our Substitute was satisfactory to God the Father? We know it because He raised the Lord Jesus from the dead on the third day (Romans 4:25, 6:4; 1 Corinthians 15:4). This was positive proof that Christ finished the work necessary for our salvation and that God accepted it. If God hadn’t raised Him, His death wouldn’t have been different from any other person’s. Jesus was the first One to rise from the dead in a glorified body that would never die again.

This raises another question. If Christ died for all, then does it not follow logically that all are saved? No, it does not. The work of the Lord on the Cross is sufficient for the salvation of all, but it is only effective for those who accept Him as their Substitute. God is not in the business of taking people to heaven who don't want to be there. He cannot populate heaven with people who are still practicing sinners. What kind of a heaven would it be if it were inhabited by the world's worst perverts, murderers, and gangsters?

How not to be saved

Before we get to God's way by which a person can be sure of heaven, let's think of various false ways on which men and women are depending.

Most people think that salvation is by good works, by doing the best they can, by living a good life, or by good intentions. This is what most religions teach and most people in the world believe. The Bible says that this way seems right to people but it ends in death and doom (Proverbs 14:12). This is not the way to heaven. Salvation is not by meritorious works of any kind.

The Bible says that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). It doesn't say all our sins. It's all our good works that are like filthy rags. The Bible also says that it's not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us (Titus 3:5). It insists that salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:9).

It's not by baptism, church membership, putting money in the collection, or religious rituals. If salvation were by works like these, then Christ's death would have been unnecessary. He would have wasted His life if there was

some other way (Galatians 2:21). And if good works were the way of salvation, no one could ever know he was saved. He would never know if he had done enough good works or the right kind.

Mark Twain said that if salvation was by being good, your dog would go in and you would stay out.

A surprising number of people believe that they will get to heaven by keeping the Ten Commandments. Most of them cannot even recite the Ten Commandments, but they know that they are in the Bible and so that must be the way. What they don't know is that no one can keep these Commandments perfectly. God gave them in order to reveal sin (Romans 3:20), not to reveal salvation. They are God's standard to show us how far we fail.

Salvation is not by education, science, philosophy, psychology, materialism, reformation, or an improved environment.

Education teaches a sinner, but he only becomes an educated sinner.

Science can explore outer space but it cannot change a person's inner life.

Philosophy is man's wisdom. At the end of his life, American philosopher Bertrand Russell said,"Philosophy has proved a washout to me."

Psychology cannot explain human behavior, let alone change it.

Materialism may put food in the stomach but it can't save the soul.

Reformation may put new clothes on a person but it doesn't put a new person in the clothes.

That is why Jesus said, You must be born again (John 3:7).

Only one true way to heaven

God now offers salvation as a free gift to all who will repent of their sins and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 20:21). Let's think about those two words, repent and believe. They are like two sides of the same coin. We repent when we acknowledge our need of salvation. We believe when we accept God's way.

What does it mean to repent? An old Puritan said that repentance is the vomit of the soul. It means that you are repulsed by your sin because it is disgraceful and disgusting. You do an about face – turning to God and away from your sin (Isaiah 55:7).

What does it mean to believe? You do this by accepting Jesus Christ as your only hope for heaven. You say from your heart, "Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and unfit for heaven, but I believe You died for me on the Cross of Calvary, bearing the punishment that should have been mine. Now by a definite act of faith, I take You as my Lord and Savior, from now on to live for You."

To believe in Christ is to come to Him just as you are, in all your sin. An artist wanted to paint a picture of a prodigal son. One day he saw a beggar on the street and made an appointment for him to appear at the studio the next day. The beggar appeared, neatly dressed and clean shaved. The artist said, "I can't use you now. You should have come as the beggar that you really are."

To believe is to open the door to Him (Revelation 3:20). It is to put your whole weight on Him as you do when you sit on a chair.

Faith is like taking a parachute jump. You trust your life to that circular piece of nylon. It is like diving into the swimming pool. You commit yourself to the water without reservation. It is accepting a pardon. A pardon is only a piece of paper. To be effective, it must be accepted.

To believe in Christ is the most sane, sensible, rational thing that a person can do. What is more reasonable than believing in your Creator? There is nothing about Him that makes it impossible to believe in Him.

There is no risk in believing in Him. He is altogether trustworthy and His Word is the surest thing in the universe.

We must never forget the following great truths. Salvation is in a Person, and that Person is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:3). If you have Him, you are as saved as God can make you (1 John 5:12).

Christ is the way to heaven (John 14:6). He is the only Way (Acts 4:12). No amount of sin is too great for God's salvation (Hebrews 7:25).

Actually it's your sin that makes you eligible for salvation. Christ didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17).

It's your unworthiness that makes you a prime candidate for eternal life. The only people who go to heaven are sinners who don't deserve it but whom God has forgiven.

A key word of the gospel

This is a good place to stop and talk about grace, one of the key words of the Christian faith. Grace is the undeserved favor that God shows to those who deserve the very opposite. It is something you cannot earn or

merit. It's a free gift. The minute you try to earn or merit it, it becomes a debt. The apostle Paul makes this distinction when he writes: Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Romans 4:4-5). In another place he again distinguishes between grace and works: And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is not more work (Romans 11:6). It's not our merits that make us fit for heaven but the merits of Christ. That's why there are no degrees of fitness for heaven. There is no fitness beyond that which is found in Jesus.

Why some people don't trust Christ

It seems unreasonable. God wants to give salvation as a free gift to those who will accept His Son by faith, yet people refuse the invitation. Why? There are several reasons.

·In their colossal pride, they are ashamed of Jesus. Christ says to them, whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38).

·They are afraid of a violent reaction from their family. The Lord Jesus anticipated this when He said, He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me (Matthew 10:37). In other words, Christ must come first.

·They love their sins more than they love Christ. That is an irrational choice that will be regretted forever.

·They love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43).

·They are not as desperate as they should be. Eternal life is not their top priority.

·They are afraid that the cost is too high, that they would have to give up too much. They should consider the cost of not trusting Christ.

·They are afraid that they wouldn't be able to hold out. In their own strength, they would not be able. But when the Lord begins a work in a person's life, He holds that person in His mighty hands.

·They are too busy. When a Christian visited a businessman, the latter asked what he wanted. "Just to speak to you about your soul and where you will spend eternity."

"But can't you see that I'm busy?"

The Christian put out his hand to say goodbye and then said, "Suppose I had been death!"

Excuses, excuses, excuses

Well-worn excuses abound whenever the claims of Christ are presented to people.

Here are a few of them and the answers to them.

·"There are so many hypocrites in the church." The Lord doesn't ask you to believe in other people but in Him.

·"All the church wants is your money." Christ doesn't want your money; He wants your trust.

· "What about people who have never heard the Gospel?" The Judge of all the earth will do right (Genesis 18:25). The question now is not about the heathen. It's

about you who have heard the Gospel. What are you going to do with it?

·“Why does God allow so much evil in the world?” Through the atoning work of Christ, more glory has come to God and more blessing to man than if sin had never entered.

·“If Christians are right, why are there so few of them?” At the time of the flood, only the eight people who entered the ark were saved. All the rest perished in the water. It is not true that the majority is always right.

·“How can a God of love send people to hell?” People choose to go to hell by willfully refusing the offer of salvation.

·“Isn’t it narrow-minded to think there is only one way?” As mentioned already, if there was more than one way, then the Lord Jesus didn’t need to die. Why would He pay the greatest price if a lesser price would do?

·“It seems too easy.” It has to be easy if salvation is going to be available to all. Everyone can believe on Him, whereas not everyone could meet any other condition.

These are excuses. The problem is not in the mind; it’s in the will. Jesus made this clear when He said, You are not willing to come to me that ye might have life (John 5:40).

On another occasion He said to Jerusalem, How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, but you were not willing (Luke 13:34)!

The moment to decide

Christ invites you to repent, believe on Him, be born again, and find rest (Matthew 11:28).

Make no mistake about it, you are either for Christ or against Him (Matthew 12:30). If you are against Him, you take your place with mass murderers, terrorists, rapists, pedophiles, and other sexual deviants. Hardly a desirable circle of companions for eternity, is it?

Why you should trust Christ and be saved

Four compelling facts call for a positive response to the call of Christ:

Your present happiness depends on it.

Your forever welfare depends on it.

You have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

There is no risk.

Why you should do it now

The present moment is the only time of which you can be sure. God says that now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Life is uncertain. Every day people rise and go to work, little realizing that before evening they will have met God. Today some will leave Planet Earth due to a heart attack, an accident, or criminal assault. The possibilities of sudden death are legion.

The coming of the Lord is near. Jesus may come at any moment. Those who are saved will meet Him in the air and return with Him to the Father’s house in heaven (John 14:1-3). Those who are not saved will remain for a fearful time of judgment on the earth (Matthew 24:21) and a lost eternity (Revelation 20:14-15).

You've already kept Him standing outside the door for years. You don't treat others that way. Why do you treat your God like that? Let Him in.

God has made an unchangeable decree that every knee will bow to Jesus and every tongue will confess Him as Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). It is better to do it now voluntarily and be saved than to do it by compulsion later on and be lost eternally.

It is later than it has ever been before. A little boy counted off the chimes on the grandfather's clock when it struck on the hour in his grandmother's house. One day it was out of order and it chimed 13, 14, 15 times. The boy ran in to the kitchen and said, "Grandma, Grandma, it's later than it's ever been before." The day of opportunity is almost over.

Someday you will stand before God and the question will be "What did you do with my Son?" Your final destiny will depend on the answer. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him (John 3:36).

How can I know?

When you repent of your sins and trust the Lord Jesus as your Savior from sin it is important that you be well grounded in the assurance of salvation. How can you have utmost confidence that you are now saved?

The first way is through the Word of God. The Bible says that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (Romans 10:9). As soon as you have believed in Jesus as your undoubted

Lord and Savior, God says that you are saved. He cannot lie, deceive, or be deceived. If He says it, it is true.

Other evidences of salvation appear in the days that follow. You will have a new hatred of sin (Romans 7:24) and a new love of holiness (Romans 7:22) Although you will still commit acts of sin, you will not practice it (1 John 3:9). Sin will not have dominion over you (Romans 6:14) You will love the children of God (1 John 3:14) You will continue in the faith (1 John 2:19).

Some people have a dramatic conversion. They are filled with joy as they are released from the burden of their sins. With others it may be simply the quiet acceptance of God's gift without any outward signs or fanfare. In either case, a person should not base his assurance of salvation on feelings. They are too changeable and undependable. If Christ alone is your hope of heaven, you are saved whether you feel it or not. Facts are better than feelings.

What's next?

Baptism. Now that you are saved, you will want to obey the Lord in baptism. While it is not necessary for salvation, it is necessary for obedience (Matthew 28:19). In baptism, you publicly pledge your allegiance to Christ as your Lord and Savior. You identify yourself with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). Because He died as your Representative, you died with Him. Baptism is also a commitment to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). This means to live the baptized life as one who has died to sin.

There are other important steps in the Christian life.

Confession. You should learn to confess your sins directly to God as soon as you are conscious of them. When you do, you receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9). You received forgiveness from God the Judge for the penalty of sin when you trusted Christ. Now you receive parental forgiveness from God your Father.

Consecration. Begin each day by presenting your body a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1-2). This means that you exchange your will for His.

The Bible. To grow in the Christian life you must read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Bible. This is how you hear God speaking to you.

Prayer. In prayer you speak to your heavenly Father. It is good to pray at regular times and also whenever some special occasion arises.

Local church. As soon as possible you should associate with a Bible-believing church, one that accepts the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God. A New Testament church is one that is composed of saints, elders, and deacons (Philippians 1:1) and that meets for the apostles' doctrine (Bible teaching), fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42). Ask the Lord to lead you to the church of His choice.

Witness. Ask Him for opportunities to witness for Him. This means sharing the Gospel with unsaved relatives, neighbors, friends, and other acquaintances.

A final word

If you have read this far and are still unsaved, we make a final loving appeal to you. Come to Christ just as you are, believe that He died for you on the Cross, and accept Him as your Lord and Savior and your only right

to enter heaven. Then claim His promise: That If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:9-10).

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God Pays For What He Orders

"Not that I speak in respect of want..." Philippians 4:11

It is noteworthy that Paul never made his own financial needs known. His was a life of faith. He believed that God had called him into His service, and was utterly convinced that God pays for what He orders.

Should Christians today publicize their needs or beg for money? Here are a few considerations: There is no Scriptural justification for this practice. The apostles made known the needs of others, but never asked for money for themselves.

It seems more consistent with the life of faith to look to God alone. He will provide the needed funds for anything he wants us to do. When we see Him providing in just the right amount at just the right time, our faith is greatly strengthened. And He is greatly glorified when the provision is undeniably miraculous. On the other hand, He does not get the credit when we manipulate our own finances through clever fund-raising techniques.

By using appeals and solicitation, we can carry on works "for God" that might not be His will at all. Or we can perpetuate a work long after the Spirit has departed from it. But when we are dependent on His supernatural provision, we can continue only as long as He supplies.

High-pressure solicitation introduces a new way of measuring success in Christian work. The one who is most clever in public relations is the one who gets the most money. It may be that worthy works suffer because the fund campaigns siphon off the money.

This often gives rise to jealousy and disunity.

C. H. Mackintosh took a dim view of publicizing one's own personal needs. "To make known my wants, directly or indirectly, to a human being is departure from the life of faith, and a positive dishonor to God. It is actually betraying Him. It is tantamount to saying that God has failed me, and I must look to my fellow for help. It is forsaking the living fountain and turning to a broken cistern. It is placing the creature between my soul and God, thus robbing my soul of rich blessing, and God of the glory due to Him."

In similar vein, Corrie Ten Boom wrote in Tramp for the Lord, "I would much rather be a trusting child of a rich Father, than a beggar at the door of worldly men."

He Careth For You

"He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7

The Bible is fairly full of tokens of God's marvelous care for His people. During Israel's forty-year trek through the wilderness, they ate food from heaven (Ex. 16:4), had an unfailing supply of water (1 Cor. 10:4), and were equipped with shoes that never wore out (Deut. 29:5).

It is the same in our wilderness journey. To prove this, our Lord reminds us how His care for us is so much greater than His care for birds, flowers and animals. He speaks of sparrows, for instance. He provides their food (Matt. 6:26). Not one of them is forgotten before God (Luke 12:6). Not one falls to the ground without Him (Matt. 10:29), or, as H. A. Ironside said, "God attends the funeral of every sparrow."

The moral of the story, of course, is that we are of more value to Him than many sparrows (Matt. 10:31).

If He clothes the lilies of the field more beautifully than Solomon was ever attired, He will much more clothe us (Mt. 6:30). if He makes provision for the care of oxen, how much more will He care for our needs (1 Cor. 9:9).

As our High Priest, the Lord Jesus bears our names on His shoulders - the place of power. (Ex. 28:9-12) and on His breast - the place of affection (Ex. 28:1Z21). Also our names are engraved in the palms of His hands (Isa. 49:16), a fact that inevitably reminds us of the nail wounds He sustained for us at Calvary.

He knows the exact number of the hairs of our head (Mt. 10:30). He numbers our tossings at night and keeps count of our tears in His book (Psa. 56:8 RSV).

Whoever touches us, touches the apple of His eye (Zech. 2:8). No weapon formed against us can prosper (Isa. 54:17).

Whereas the heathen carry their gods on their shoulders (Isa. 46:7), our God carries His people (Isa. 46:4).

When we go through the waters, the rivers or the fire, He is with us (Isa. 43:2). In all our afflictions, He is afflicted (Isa. 63:9).

The One who guards us neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa. 121:3,4). Someone has called this characteristic of God "the divine insomnia".

The Good Shepherd who gave His life for us will not withhold any good from us (John 10:11; Psa. 84:11; Rom. 8:32).

He cares for us from the beginning of the year to the end (Deut. 11:12). He bears us even to old age (Isa 46:4). In fact He will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5). God really cares!

High-Sounding Nonsense

High-Sounding Nonsense

William MacDonald

This article is especially for Christian young people who are at school or college. Every day you may sit under the instruction of unregenerate men who have no love for your Saviour or your Bible. At first, you are sure that you will not be affected by their anti-Christian teachings, but then you become caught by what I call “the illusion of the classroom.” You begin to think: “This man must know what he is talking about. After all, he is a scholar.” From this, it is an easy step to the conclusion that the Christians are a fairly ignorant lot, the elders do not know what is going on, and your parents are definitely back numbers. And how can we know that the Bible is the Word of God anyway? Listen! The Apostle Paul has a message for you:

“Be careful that nobody spoils your faith through intellectualism of. highsounding-nonsense. Such stuff is at best founded on man’s ideas of the nature of the world and disregards Christ” (Col. 2: 8, Phillip’s translation).

The wise Christian is not taken in by the high-sounding nonsense of modern intellectualism. He is not terrified when he is called an obscurantist. He refuses to bow at the shrine of man’s wisdom. Instead, he realizes that in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and that since he has Christ he never needs to be ashamed of his faith. Because these teachers do not have Christ, he does not expect them to have the

divine insight possessed by the humblest believers. He can listen to their teachings and calmly appraise them in the light of God's Word. If he finds any instruction which is opposed to the Scriptures, he rejects it. He casts down human reasonings and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10.5).

He does not expect his Bible to agree with the changing findings of science. Indeed, he is glad that the Bible does not agree with the many unproved theories he studies. Otherwise the Bible would have to change as frequently as the textbooks.

Unfortunately, not all Christian young people have this maturity of judgment. They have an overweening reverence for human wisdom and knowledge, and they come by it honestly because they have been fed it by their parents since they could first use big words.

Off they go to college — and who is waiting for them but the devil himself? He uses the same tactic that he employed with Eve; he appeals to the mind. "You have such a brilliant intellect. You can go places in the world, but not so long as you are narrow enough to take the Bible literally. Now what you want to do is to put the Bible to the test of human reason. If it is not reasonable, it cannot be true. Just examine it objectively and tell me how you can know that the Bible is God's Word."

History repeats itself. Eve fell for this line, and many of her sons and daughters are falling for it, too: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11. 3).

Few things are more pathetic than a young believer who "goes intellectual." He loses the simplicity that is in Christ. The freshness of his early faith disappears. The Bible he once enjoyed no longer attracts him; he cannot read it without thinking of doubts and denials. He no longer has a song in his heart. As for witnessing for Christ, he has been stricken dumb like Zacharias, because he doubted the Word of the Lord. Too often he drifts away from Christian fellowship and wanders out into the darkness of a wasted life.

Is there anything a young Christian can do to guard against the peril of a spoiled faith?

First of all, he can obtain the Lord's guidance concerning the college he attends. In some he will find those who will help, in others he will find much opposition. Not all Christian young people can survive in an anti-Christian atmosphere, although a few succeed in emerging with a triumphant testimony.

Secondly, he should exercise prayerful discretion with regard to the courses he takes. If he thinks he can play with fire and not be burned, he "knows more than the Bible."

The Bible asks: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" (Prov. 6.27). And the answer is clearly "No!"

Thirdly, he should spend time each day in the Word of God. Most cases of college cancer occur when critical theories of the Bible occupy the time that the Bible should have.

Fourthly, he should keep himself pure. I am convinced that most cases of apostasy result from moral failure rather than from honest intellectual difficulties.

Fifthly, he should seek Christian companionship at college and help other believers in making Christ known.

Finally, he should pray constantly that God will keep him from the defilement and pollution of godless philosophies, and preserve him for a life of usefulness and fruitfulness for Himself.

I Like The Assemblies

I Like The Assemblies

William MacDonald

Mr. William MacDonald of San Leandro, California, is a widely known Bible teacher and the author of numerous books, booklets, tracts, and study articles.

Pardon me, but I just happen to like the assemblies. It seems almost counter-cultural to say something like that. The “in thing” is to badmouth them, to highlight all their faults and failures. There are plenty of critics who pontificate on what is wrong with the assemblies. Maybe it’s time for someone to step forward and say what is good about them. I’d like to be that person. Let me tell you why I like them.

I like the weekly remembrance of the Lord in the Breaking of Bread. For 50 years I have sought to remember the Lord every Sunday at the communion table, and it has never lost its charm for me. There is something special about a meeting where our beloved Lord is the sole attraction and the central object of worship. No wonder that when people leave an assembly for a different type of fellowship they invariably say, “I do miss the worship meeting.” It makes me sad that they ever left it.

The assembly has endeared itself to me because I have seen Ephesians 4:12 practiced as nowhere else. Gifts were given for building up the saints for the work of the ministry. I have seen unlettered men matured to the point where they preached the Gospel with convicting power. I have seen homespun men ministering to the

hearts of God's people and not just to their heads. I have seen devoted women finding fulfilment, not only in raising sons and daughters for God, but also in teaching other women and children, co-labouring with their husbands in support of their ministry, supporting the work of missionaries at home and abroad, visiting the sick and afflicted, and showing hospitality to saints and strangers alike. I have seen young men encouraged to exercise their gifts in a way that would never happen in the average church. Many prominent evangelical leaders give lip-service to Ephesians 4:12, and some even commend the assemblies for the way they practice it.

One of the glories of the assemblies is their steadfast refusal to divide an equal brotherhood into clergy and laity. To gather to the Person of Christ rather than to a charismatic preacher is divine both in principle and practice. The New Testament teaches a plurality of elders and never a one-man ministry. But assemblies who preach and practice this will always be speckled birds in the Christian community. There is a certain measure of reproach to being in an assembly of this type, and those who cast in their lot with the assemblies better be prepared to bear it.

I like the fact that each assembly is autonomous, responsible to the Lord alone. There is no headquarters on earth, no humanly ordained heirarchy, no organization coming between the Head and the body. This impedes the takeover of assemblies by liberalism, alien doctrines, or dictatorships.

The financial policies of the assemblies are commendable. It is extraordinary that in most fellowships, there is only one collection offering a week.

And yet that one offering taken without fanfare or begging helps support Christian ministries at home or abroad. Traditionally, full-time workers have looked to the Lord alone for the supply of their needs without publicizing those needs. The world cannot say of the assemblies what I say of Christendom in general, “All the church wants is your money.”

I appreciate the fact that the assemblies are willing to exercise godly discipline when it is called for, even if in doing so they may be limiting their chances of ever becoming megachurches. They are content to judge their fellowships, not by their size, but by the holiness of their members. The literature ministry of the assemblies has been outstanding. Perhaps this has been their main contribution to the evangelical scene. The writings of Darby, Kelly, Mackintosh, Vine, and a host of others have exerted a profound and beneficial influence throughout the world. Some years ago the librarian of a Christian college attempted to compile a bibliography of “Brethren” writers. He later despaired of ever finishing the project.

And mention must be made of the missionary movement associated with the assemblies, a movement that is all out of proportion to the number of local fellowships supporting it.

Other people have other reasons for liking the assemblies, some quite unexpected. For instance, a sister who recently came into fellowship after years of church-hopping said she was delighted to be in one with male leadership. That was a strange note to sound in a day of women’s lib.

Probably few groups engage in as much self-criticism as the assemblies. Frankly I feel it is grossly overdone, causing impressionable people to be unnecessarily disenchanted and turned away. Criticism comes best on the back of praise. It's time we balanced the two.

The foregoing does not mean that I am satisfied with the status quo. I recognize that there are areas in which we need to improve, such as evangelistic outreach and development of leadership in the assembly. While unalterably committed to Biblical principles, I recognize the need for changing methods from time to time. I agree that some of our people, including the young people, have legitimate concerns, and need to be heard.

But instead of calling out the wrecking crew, we need to roll up our sleeves and tackle the problems. Give us men who will show us how to do a constructive job rather than armchair generals who blackball the assemblies or bail out altogether. And those who draw their support from the assemblies should demonstrate a measure of loyalty and avoid any appearance of "biting the hand that feeds them."

If This Life Were All

If This Life Were All

William MacDonald

Did you ever stop to think how you would spend your life if you were sure there was nothing beyond the grave? If you could be absolutely certain that there was no resurrection, that there was no heaven or hell, how then would you use whatever remaining years you might have on earth?

Obviously you would conclude that because this is the only life there is, you should make the most of it and live it to the hilt.

You would have no thought of repentance toward God or of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because such faith would be useless if there were no resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:17).

You would probably choose a career that pays very well and yet demands as little of your time as possible.

You would want to take those fabulous vacations that are advertised in the magazines, and enjoy as many worldly pleasures as you could—music, art, drama, athletics, and society.

You would try to obtain the most fashionable home you could afford—the latest word in the “better homes” magazines and, of course, you would furnish it with the best in appliances and automatic gadgets. No expense would be too great.

You would cater to yourself as to automobiles. Doubtless you would want several—again with the most luxurious appointments.

You would lavish good clothes upon yourself. After all, you deserve the best, and if this life is all, why not enjoy it to the full?.

As to foods, you would eat the finest, being especially careful to patronize only the more expensive restaurants. To pay $4 or $5 for a meal would cause you no pang of conscience.

And perhaps you might not think so, but if you knew there were no resurrection, you would doubtless want the very best liquors with your meals. Overindulgence would be permissible.

You would cultivate the friendship of those who would help you get ahead in the world, and, in general, be interested in others only in so far as it was to your own advantage.

You would want to marry young and drink the cup of marital pleasure to the full. Love would be a matter of receiving, not giving.

You would try to set some money aside for your future retirement and, if possible, a little bank account to leave to your children.

Yes, you would want to do all this, and a lot more besides. “…if the dead rise not, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

Perhaps some will protest that they would still rather live the Christian life even if they knew that death ended it all. But the Scripture flatly refutes such a position when it says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ,

we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Apart from the sure knowledge of a resurrection, we should live selfishly and sinfully.

But does it not follow that because there is a resurrection, we cannot live in the manner outlined above? That is certainly the only logical conclusion.

Because there is life after death, we must repent of our sins and commit our lives unreservedly to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 17:30, 31).

Because the dead do rise, I cannot choose a lucrative and easy career. My career must be to glorify God and help my neighbour, and my job is only a means of accomplishing that end.

Luxurious vacations are seen as positively sinful when a world is perishing at our doors. And the pleasures of sin lose their appeal against the pleasure of doing God's will.

Expensive homes, wall-to-wall carpeting, costly furnishings and fixtures are seen to violate the role of pilgrimage which should mark Christ's disciples now.

The brilliant chrome-work of my several new cars would reproach me every time I thought of men perishing for want of the knowledge of the Saviour. "Some men have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:34).

Because the dead do rise, I cannot waste money on expensive food and clothing when there is such need among the Lord's servants.

In short, those who believe that this life is only "training time for reigning time" must live devotedly, unselfishly, yieldedly, dependently. They must look upon themselves

as stewards, using material things for the Lord's glory and for man's blessing. They must be willing to forego marriage, if that be the Lord's will, and to hold all human relationships in subordination to the Lordship of Christ. They must not lay up treasures upon the earth, but must rather sell all that they have and give to the poor, looking to the Lord continually for the supply of their needs.

The tragedy of Christianity to day is that those of us who profess to believe in the resurrection are living as if there were none. We are reigning as if we were kings instead of serving as slaves. We are spending selfishly instead of sending sacrificially. We are feasting instead of fasting, and parading instead of praying.

May the Lord awaken us before the resurrection we have always professed to believe in becomes a reality and we realize its solemn implications too late!

It's Time We Faced the Facts - Why is the Church Powerless?

Spiritually we are in a shocking condition. The status of many local fellowships is bad news, and deteriorating by the minute.

It is fairly well known that there have been scandalous cases of immorality involving even elders and full-time workers. Of course this type of news never gets into the magazines; there everything is sweetness and light. But the awful truth is that some respected spiritual leaders have fallen into gross sin in recent months and the only reaction seems to have been to hush up the whole thing, lest the word get out and our reputation be impaired.

We have been arrogant, and have not rather mourned (I Cor. 5:2).

And that isn’t all. We have become materialists to the core. Supposing that gain is godliness, we have degraded ourselves to the worship of money.

We have become more proud of the number of successful businessmen in our churches than of the number of men of God. The dollar has become our master. The claims of the businessworld have been given more place than the claims of Christ. The corporation counts more with us than the Church. Our condemnation is found in the words of Samuel Johnson, “The lust of gold, unfeeling and remorseless, is the last corruption of degenerate man.”

We have become a status-seeking people. We sacrifice everything for prestige jobs, prestige homes and

prestige cars. And we have prestige ambitions for our children.

Truth is that in our mad desire to see them successful and comfortable in the world, we are causing many of them to pass through the fire in this life and to suffer the pains of hell in the next.

Too often we are living double lives. Outwardly there is an appearance of piety and respectability.

But in business there are bribery, shady deals, dishonesty and numberless forms of compromise. And in our personal lives there are coldness, bitterness, strife gossip, back-biting and impurity. We are living a lie.

Many of our children have been involved in hard drugs, liquor, free love and sex-perversion. To say nothing of the many others who have become rebels and apostates. We have lived to see the fruit of our permissiveness and indulgence. But are we broken before the Lord?

We have become thoroughly worldly, living for the love of passing things. We have been enraptured victims of the idiot tube, and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Most willingly have we been poured into the mold of the world, its fashions, amusements and ideals.

The sin of prayerlessness has been all too apparent. In our abounding wealth and self-sufficiency, we have not had any strong inward necessity driving us to prayer. Many of our prayer meetings need closing down.

And finally there is our pride and impenitence. Rather than admit our low spiritual conditions, we endeavor to hide sin, to sweep it under the carpet where no one can see it. After all, we muse, time heals all things.

But does it? Are we getting away with it? Or are we reaping the fruit of our backsliding in more ways than we care to admit?

What about the broken homes, the divorces, the separations? What about the tears of heartbroken parents and children that cover the Lord's Table each Sunday morning? (See Malachi 2:13).

When will we realize that God is speaking to us through sickness and tragedy? It is true that there is always a certain amount of sickness, sorrow and accidents. But when they come in unusual volume, and under most unusual circumstances, we should not be insensible to the fact that the Lord is trying to get through to us.

Think of the number of believers who are spending small fortunes in psychiatric treatment. Once again we grant that a certain amount of such cases are to be expected. But when the trickle becomes a flood-tide, it might just be that God is saying something to us.

There are other results of our departure from God.

Many of our children hate their parents, and wish they were a million miles from home. The heavens are brass above our heads our canned prayers never seem to get through. God has punctured our bags with holes; we work, and scrimp and save, but never seem to get off the treadmill. Because we wouldn't tithe to the Lord, we tithe to the doctor, the dentist, and the garage mechanic.

We are suffering a famine of the Word of God. The ministry lacks unction. Too often it is a rehash of the obvious. How seldom in meetings are we conscious that

the Spirit of God has spoken to us in power? We live on a diet of pablum.

And don’t put all the blame on the preachers!

The worship meetings are often dead. Dull, awkward pauses are the fruit of prolonged occupation with the never-never land of TV. The evangelistic meetings are an exercise in futility – fishing in a bathtub where there are no fish.

Years pass without the conversion of one single person.

If we cannot see that God is dealing with us in all these judgments, what more can He do to wake us up? We are like the people in Isaiah 1, beaten from head to foot, yet still too dull, too obtuse to realize that God is speaking.

"Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evil doers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.

Why will you still be smitten that you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds; they are not pressed out, or bound up, or softened with oil.

Your country lies desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence aliens devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by aliens.

"And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city" (Isaiah 1:4-8

RSV).

We need some prophet, some man of God to lead us to repentance! That is the need of the hour—

TO REPENT – to break at the foot of the Cross and sob out the confession so hard to come by, “We have sinned.”

We need to repent in our individual lives to confess and forsake the sins that have brought us into this place of spiritual barrenness. We need to make right personal feuds and animosities, asking forgiveness from those we have wronged.

And we need to repent as assemblies of God’s people. Never in the memory of most of us has a meeting been called for the express purpose of repentance. And seldom in any of our meetings has confession ever been mentioned. But we need to do it. We desperately need to do it.

The time has come, O for spiritual leadership that will bring us to our knees quickly before we are consumed by God’s awful wrath! We need to eat the sin offering like Daniel, making the sins of others our own (Dan. 9:5). We need to lay hold of God’s promise in II Chron. 7:14, “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

It is time to seek the Lord. He is calling us, through the voice of Hosea:

“Return O

Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, “Take away all iniquity; accept

that which is good and we will render the fruit of our lips.” (Hosea 14:1,2

RSV).

We have been a proud people, boasting in our heritage of renowned evangelists and Bible teachers. We have claimed a special corner on scriptural knowledge and on church order. We have looked down our theological noses at other believers. Now the Lord has stained our pride. If we only knew it, our halo is shattered.

There is only one hope! “In returning and rest you shall be saved” (Isa. 30:1-5) The way to renewal and revival is to confess the awful truth about ourselves, to make right the wrongs of the past, to forsake our sins, and to get desperate with God about a perishing world and a powerless Church.

Judicial and Parental Forgiveness - What's the Difference?

Two different kinds of forgiveness are found in the Scriptures, and if we are going to be careful students of the Word, we must learn to distinguish them. We will call them judicial and parental forgiveness (though these names are not used in the Bible).

To put it very simply, judicial forgiveness is the forgiveness of a judge and parental forgiveness is the forgiveness of a father. The first term is taken from the courtroom and the second from the home.

First let us go to the courtroom. God is the Judge and sinful man is the person on trial. Man is guilty of sinning, and the penalty is eternal death. But the Lord Jesus appears and announces, “I will pay the penalty which man’s sins deserved; I will die as a Substitute for him!” This is what the Savior did on the Cross of Calvary. Now the Judge announces to sinful man, “If you will surrender to my Son as your Lord and Savior, I will forgive you.” As soon as the man puts his faith in the Savior, he receives judicial forgiveness of all his sins. He will never have to pay the punishment for them in hell, because Christ has paid it all. The forgiven sinner now enters into a new relationship: God is no longer his Judge; now He is his Father.

So now we move into the home for an illustration of parental forgiveness. God is the Father and the believer is the child. In an unguarded moment, the child commits an act of sin. Then what happens? Does God sentence the child to die for the sin? Of course not, because God

is no longer the Judge, but the Father! What does happen? Well, fellowship in the family is broken. The happy family spirit is gone. The child has not lost his salvation, but he has lost the joy of his salvation. Soon he may experience the discipline of his Father, designed to bring him back into fellowship. As soon as the child confesses his sin, he receives parental forgiveness.

Judicial forgiveness takes place once-for-all at the time of conversion; parental forgiveness takes place every time a believer confesses and forsakes his sin. This is what Jesus taught in John 13:8-10: we need the bath of regeneration only once to deliver us from the penalty of sins, but we need many cleansings throughout our Christian lives to give us parental forgiveness.

The difference between the two types of forgiveness may be summarized graphically as follows:

Judicial | Parental

The Person’s status | Sinner (Romans 3:23) | Child (1 John 3:2)

Relationship of God | Judge (Psalms 96:13) | Father (Galations 4:6)

Result of sin | Eternal Death (Romans 6:23) | Broken fellowship (1 John 1:6)

Role of Christ | Savior (1 Timothy 1:15) | High Priest and Advocate (Heb. 4:14-16; 1 John 2:1)

The Person's Need | Salvation (Acts 16:30) | Joy of salvation (Psalms 51:12)

Means of Forgiveness | Faith (Acts 16:31) | Confession (1 John 1:9)

Kind of Forgiveness | Judicial (Romans 8:1) | Parental (Luke 15:21, 22)

Consequence Averted | Hell (John 5:24) | Chastening (1 Cor. 11:31, 32), Loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:15)

Positive Result | New Relationship (John 1:12) | Renewed Fellowship (Psalms 32:5)

Frequency | Once – one bath of regeneration (John 13:10) | Many times – many cleansings (John 13:8)

From now on, when we come to verses that speak about the once-for-all forgiveness that is granted to us as sinners through the work of Christ, we will know that the subject is judicial forgiveness. The following illustrate this:

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Eph. 1:7). And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Eph. 4:32 RSV). And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all your trespasses (Col. 2:13).

However, there are other passages of Scripture that deal with parental forgiveness:

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14, 15). Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven (Luke 6:37). And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any,

that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses (Mark 11:25).

Notice that in two of these verses God is specificaly mentioned as Father; it is the Father's forgiveness that is involved. Notice also that our being forgiven depends on our willigness to forgive others. That is not true of judicial forgiveness; willingness to forgive others is not a condition of salvation. But it is true of parental forgiveness; our Father will not forgive us if we don't forgive one another.

In Matthew 18:23-25 Jesus told the story of a slave who had been forgiven 10,000 talents by the king. But that same slave wouldn't forgive one of his fellow-slaves 100 pence. The king was therefore angry with him and delivered him to the jailers till he paid all his debt. Jesus concluded the parable by saying "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Here again it is a matter of the Father's forgiveness. It is sin to have an unforgiving spirit, and God cannot forgive us parentally until we confess that sin and forsake it.

One of the thrills of Bible study is to see these basic distinctions and to be able to apply them in our daily reading. From now on when you come to the subject of forgiveness in the Word you should be able to say, "Oh, yes, that refers to judicial forgiveness, or else "that must refer to the Father's forgiveness of His child."

Leadership Kit

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Assembly Planting

In the courtyard of a hotel in Honolulu, I saw my first Banyan tree. As the branches of this tree grow out, they send down shoots that reach to the ground, take root, and form secondary trunks. I have always felt that this tree is a parable of ideal church growth. It pictures the way assemblies should multiply. As a local fellowship grows, it should send forth human "shoots" to take root in adjoining areas and form new assemblies.

This is the ideal, but unfortunately we don't live in an ideal world. While leaders generally pay lip service to church planting, they display a natural resistance to it whenever it becomes a live possibility. They parade their sixty theological reasons why, in their particular case, it is not a desirable option, or why the time is not yet ripe. They do not want to see the status quo disturbed when everything is going along so smoothly. They need all the help they can get. There is not sufficient qualified leadership for a new work. A hive-off would make it harder for the home church to meet its financial obligations. The children and young people in a new work would not have the same opportunities for fellowship with their own age groups as they would in a larger work. The leaders agree that they will encourage a new work some day -- but not yet.

Other evangelical churches are not deterred by these considerations, and they experience steady growth. Certainly the cults refuse to be held back by this conventional wisdom, and they charge ahead like gangbusters.

If we are to escape the indictment, "faithfulness without fruitfulness" or "truth without growth," we must not

listen to our hesitations, but must abandon our natural reluctance and determine before God to give ourselves to the ministry of assembly planting, whatever the cost may be.

How is a new assembly born? It should start with a heaven-sent vision placed on the heart of one or more believers. There should be a burden that will not go away, a persistent consciousness that God is leading. The Holy Spirit plants the idea and creates an answering desire in the hearts of His people.

The vision must be bathed in prayer. In this way we acknowledge our inability to make correct judgments and our absolute dependence on His wisdom. Christ, after all, is the Head of the assembly, and only the Head has the right to decide. As we pray, the vision comes more and more into focus. What was a general burden at first gradually becomes specific as to location, agenda, and leadership.

There must be strong, spiritual leadership. Without it, the work is liable to fall apart at an early stage. It is desirable to have what could be called a church planting team--at least two or three couples. Efforts by one man, working alone, have not had a good track record. The Lord Jesus worked with twelve disciples. Paul traveled with a team of men, planting assemblies. It seems to be a divine pattern.

If the new work is to be a hive-off from an existing assembly or assemblies, it is important to proceed with tact, love, and unity. Very often there is that natural hesitation and reluctance in existing assemblies to see valued members leave. Elders often fear what seems to be a threat to their numbers. It takes prayerful waiting

on the Lord to see Him incline the hearts of the leaders to extend the right hand of fellowship to the new work.

The church planting team will want to agree on certain basic issues and to adopt certain ground rules. For example, they will draw up a statement of faith. In addition, they might consider the following ground rules which one team agreed on:

There must be absolute unity on the fundamentals of the Christian faith. No deviation from these basic truths would be tolerated.

On secondary matters, the assembly would submit to the consensus of the fellowship.

The church planting team would not necessarily constitute the permanent leadership. They would serve for at least one year. At the end of that time, the assembly would meet to ascertain which men the Lord had raised up to be elders. There would then be a public recognition of this leadership and the church planting team would be dissolved.

When the assembly would grow in numbers to between 100 and 150, positive steps would then be taken toward the formation of another work.

No efforts would be made to grow by transfers from other assemblies or churches. Rather the goal would be to reach unsaved people, see them converted, baptized, discipled and brought into the fellowship.

A decision must be made with regard to location. New residential neighborhoods are ideal, but it is preferable not to locate in the front yard of an already-established evangelical church. At first, the assembly can meet in a home. Then, when it outgrows the home, it can move to

rented facilities or it can purchase or build a modest building. Sometimes zoning laws and parking regulations preclude home meetings. The leadership must weigh all the pros and cons.

The nature and order of meetings are generally fairly easy to decide. The team will take into account the centrality of worship, the importance of collective prayer, and the spiritual diet needed for the flock.

Just as there is joy when a baby is born, so there is a deep-seated ecstasy in connection with the planting of a new assembly. Believers experience a new warmth of fellowship, an enthusiasm in striving together to see the assembly grow, and a satisfaction in exercising gifts that are stifled in a larger church.

Just as human families rejoice when sons and daughters marry and start families of their own, so assemblies should rejoice when they are privileged to "parent" new works and to see them functioning as autonomous churches.

Assembly planting is the will of God. Blessed are those who work with Him in accomplishing His will!

Qualifications of Elders

An elder must be:

Blameless (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6, 7). He must be above reproach, both at home and away from home. He must not be open to justifiable accusations. It obviously does not mean that he must be sinless, but it may include the thought that when he does offend, he makes things right quickly by apology, confession and restitution.

Husband of one wife (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6). Does this mean that a man must be married? No. The emphasis is

on one wife, not a wife. Yet it cannot be denied that the experiences of married life equip a man to deal with the family problems of others better than if he were single.

Does it mean he must not remarry should his first wife die? Remarriage in such a case is not frowned on in the New Testament (Rom. 7:2, 3; 1 Cor. 7:39-, 1 Tim. 6:14).

Does it mean that a man must not be divorced under any circumstances? The exception clause in Matthew 19:9 allows for divorce when one partner has been guilty of immorality.

Does it mean that a man must not be remarried after divorce? If a man is divorced on Scriptural grounds, he is free to remarry. However, even if the man is really an innocent party, he must face the fact that there may be questions from time to time as to this irregularity in his married life. This is something he may have to live with.

Does it mean that he must not be a bigamist, a polygamist, or have concubines or lesser wives? Certainly these conditions would bar him from being an elder in a local assembly.

We can be sure that the general thrust of this requirement is that the man must be a faithful husband and have an exemplary married life.

Vigilant (KJV) better rendered "temperate" (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). He must be self-controlled, not only in regard to his appetite but in every area of life. He must be restrained, not indulgent; moderate, not extreme; alert, not sleeping.

Sober or sober-minded (I Tim. 3-2; Tit. 1:8). He must be serious about the issues of life and of eternity, given more to edifying others than to light, frothy

conversation. He must not be perpetually cracking jokes, but must be exhorting, teaching, guiding, comforting, warning and encouraging. He must be a sensible, mature man, not a spiritual featherweight. He must be prudent and sound in judgment, not characterized by levity and worldly-wisdom.

of good behavior (KJV) or orderly (I Tim. 3:2). The word "orderly" first requires that he be disciplined in his personal life, in the home, in business and in assembly life. It means that he is not careless or slipshod. He keeps appointments on time and does his work on schedule. He is neat and methodical, working systematically, not helter-skelter. It may also include the idea that he is dignified and respectable.

Given to hospitality (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). This means that an elder keeps "open house" for all, both saved and unsaved, and is always ready to provide spiritual and material help. In order for him to be hospitable, his wife must share his goals and be willing to spend herself in this important ministry.

Apt to teach (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). An elder must have a working knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, able to teach, to exhort, and to expose and rebuke false doctrine. He does not have to have the gift of teaching, but must be able to help people from the Word with their problems. As someone has said, "He must be able to communicate the Word to others in a non-threatening and objective manner." To be able to teach others, he must be teachable himself.

Not given to wine (I Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). He is not given to excess in this area but able to control his appetite. But there, is also the thought that he is not a brawler (RV)

and not quarrelsome over wine (RV, marg.). This qualification may seem superfluous in a country where many if not most Christians practice total abstinence, but we must remember that the Bible was written for all countries and all cultures.

No striker (I Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). This means exactly what it says -- that an elder does not hit other people. He is not pugnacious or combative. This requirement may forbid emotional as well as physical violence, but it does not forbid discipline of a man's children.

Not greedy of filthy lucre, that is, no lover of money (I Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2). An elder realizes that he is here for bigger business than to make money. For him the spiritual has a higher priority than the material. Money is not an end but a means to an end. He adopts a modest standard of living, so that everything above his needs and those of his family can be used for the Lord. He doesn't serve the Lord for pay, feeling it is better for the ministry to cost him than for it to make him rich.

Patient. or better, gentle (1 Tim. 3:3). An elder is meek and longsuffering. He does not cut down people with words, or treat them harshly. Rather he treats the flock as a good shepherd handles lambs.

Not a brawler, that is, not quarrelsome (I Tim. 3:3). If a man is contentious, argumentative, or quarrelsome, he is disqualified as an elder. A godly overseer doesn't go around with a chip on his shoulder. He is not always carrying on a debate with some fancied opponent. He is not a source of disunity among God's people.

One who rules well his own children (I Tim. 3:4. 5; Tit. 1:6). This does not mean than an elder must have children, but, once again, he will be better able to

handle family problems that arise in the assembly if he has raised children himself.

The elder's children must be believers and must be subject to his leadership in the home. This certainly applies to little children living at home, but it may also apply to grown children as well. The word used here for children is used for grown children in I Timothy 5:4 and Titus 1:6. It is disquieting how closely the Bible links parental training with the behavior of children (Prov. 22:6). If a man cannot rule his own family well, It is unlikely that he will be a suitable elder, since the same principles apply in each case (1 Tim. 3:5).

Not a novice (I Tim. 3:6). The peril of pushing new converts into places of spiritual leadership is evident from the tragic results that have followed. Pride and conceit make them easy prey, for the Devil’s trap. Just as a baby should crawl before he walks or talks, so should a believer have a normal spiritual growth. A man who has never had a spiritual childhood should never be an elder. There must be that training and seasoning that come from years of Bible study and experience in the things of God.

A good testimony from outsiders (1 Tim. 3:7). The elder must have a good reputation among unbelievers. In business and social contacts, his life must match his profession. He is disqualified if the unsaved have to say of him, "What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you say." Or if the Indian has to say, "Heap high talk -- heap low walk."

Not self-willed (Tit. 1:7). Since an elder is one among equals, he must be able to work cooperatively with others. If he is stubborn and inflexible on nonessentials,

if he always has to have his own way, he should eliminate himself from consideration as an elder. The elder must not be a dictator or a tyrant, lording it over God's heritage. A man who has always been boss in his own business may find it especially difficult to conquer self-will. Also those who have a pathological distaste for unanimous decisions must change if they are to be overseers.

Not soon angry (Tit. 1:7). An elder must not be quick-tempered, irritable or volatile. To put it in vernacular, he must not fly off the handle easily or have a short fuse.

A lover of good (Tit. i:8). This means that he must be a lover of good men, and of good in general. And of course, to love good is to do good.

Just (Tit. 1:8). A just man is one who can always be depended on to do what is right. He is honest, fair and impartial. With him there are no shady dealings, no under-the-counter transactions. People can trust him implicitly.

Holy (Tit. 1:8). Here the elder must be separated to God from sin and the world. His life must be one of moral purity and spiritual dedication to God. He must live in right relationship to the Lord.

Holding fast the faithful Word (Tit. 1:9). This means that he is unalterably committed to the inspiration and authority of the Sacred Scriptures, and that he defends the Word against false teachings.

NOTE: In this list of qualifications, nothing has been said about:

Academic degrees

Success In business

Scintillating personality

Financial wealth

Duties of an Elder

1. It is taken for granted that an elder must be in faithful attendance at the meetings of the assembly and thus aware of situations among the saints that might need his attention. He must be sensitive to needs and attempt to minister to these needs.

2. Together with the other elders, he should set goals and priorities for the assembly.

3. He should teach the Word of Truth.

4. He should carry on a counseling ministry, both with saved and unsaved. This should include pre-marital counseling when he is asked to perform a wedding ceremony.

5. He should be a tireless visitor, contacting the saints on a systematic basis, and also taking the gospel to the unconverted.

6. He should have a disciplined prayer life, interceding regularly for every family in the local fellowship.

7. Together with his wife, he should have an open house, showing hospitality as an integral part of his ministry.

8. He should be constantly seeking to recognize the gifts in the assembly and to provide outlets for the development of these gifts.

9. He must exercise watchfulness concerning those who might be growing cold or who might be in danger of falling into sin. He must also be watchful concerning the doctrine, making sure that the saints get a good,

balanced diet, free from error. Repetition of fundamental truths from time to time is desirable. Whenever necessary he must correct, reprove, rebuke, exhort, and exercise other forms of discipline.

10. He should be constantly training younger men for leadership.

11. He should serve as a conciliator when differences arise among the saints.

12. He should lead by the example of a godly life, and be available and approachable at any time of the day or night.

Recognition of Elders

Both the Bible and experience show the need for strong, spiritual leadership in any assembly. They also require that this leadership must be recognized, because if it is not recognized, how can it be obeyed?

Every ordered society is built on two pillars: authority and subjection to that authority. It is impossible to conceive of a disciplined, harmonious community that does not have these two elements. They must be found in the home, business, government, the military, and also in the church. Where they do not exist, there is anarchy, and no society can continue long under anarchy.

Christ Is the Head of the Church, and He has ordained that elders should serve as His under-shepherds. They do not run the Church. He does! But they should be men of such spiritual excellence that they can discern His will for the assembly at any particular time.

There is no question that in the early church, the elders were a clearly discernible body. When Paul was in

Miletus, he summoned the elders of the assembly in Ephesus to come to him (Acts 20:17). There was no indecisiveness, no mock-humility by men protesting that they were not spiritual enough. The elders came (v. 18).

It is true that in those days the apostles appointed elders. Some have reasoned from this that since we do not have apostles today, we cannot have elders. That is a misunderstanding. The reason the apostles ordained elders is that the New Testament was not in existence. The saints did not know the qualifications of elders. But the apostles knew and marked out those who met the qualifications. Today we have those qualifications clearly spelled out In the New Testament, and we can recognize those men who do the work and who fulfill the spiritual requirements.

Is it necessary to have a formal recognition of elders in the assembly? It may not be necessary for older, more mature saints, but it is necessary for younger ones and even for unsaved folks who may be attending.

Doubtless there are many methods by which elders can be recognized. In suggesting the following one, we are not claiming that it is the best -- only that it has been used with good results.

The first step is to select a mature, spiritual man to handle the process. He may be from within the assembly or from some other assembly. It is important that he himself is not seeking a place of leadership in the church. In other words, he is detached and impartial.

He is asked to minister to the entire assembly on the qualifications and work of elders. If this ministry is spread over a number of weeks, one session each week, it gives the believers plenty of time to prayerfully

consider the matter and saves them from hasty judgments.

In the first session, he explains the purpose and process. He is going to give in-depth teaching on the qualifications and work of elders. As he does so, the saints should be prayerfully deliberating within themselves as to whom the Lord has raised up to be elders in the assembly. It is not going to be an election, a popularity contest, or a question of personal preferences. They should individually wait on God for a revelation of His mind in the matter.

After the teaching sessions have concluded, they are to communicate to the teacher their conclusions. They may do this by letter, by phone, or by personal conversation. They are guaranteed that their decisions will be held in strictest confidence. If they wish to write anonymously, they may do so.

In teaching the qualifications of elders, it is important to emphasize that they are not unattainable. When rightly understood, they describe a man of sterling Christian character.

In tracing the work of an elder, it should be pointed out that a man should not be recognized unless he is already doing the work.

When the meetings are over and the Christians have submitted their considered judgment, the teacher collates the results. Usually a definite pattern will emerge. Some man or men will be clearly recognized as elders. In other cases, the result will be less conclusive.

The teacher then meets privately with those who have been definitely recognized by the assembly. He may ask

them if they wish to be officially recognized. If so, a preliminary announcement can be made to the assembly, announcing the names and allowing a week for any objections. Barring any major misgivings, the names of the elders can be announced.

What about future recognition of elders? The same process can be repeated, or the existing elders may decide when a person meets all the Scriptural requirements. But this procedure is only valid if the decision is one that the assembly would reach according to the foregoing process.

Church Growth

Any assembly that desires to grow must face this fact: between 80% and 90% of new converts are originally contacted by individual believers within the context of their daily lives, whether at work, at school, or in the neighborhood. This does not belittle other methods of evangelism, but it shows that personal, lifestyle evangelism towers above all others.

We should not be surprised. This was how the faith spread in the early days of the church. The Christians took the risen Savior's words seriously, "...you shall be witnesses to me' (Acts 1:8b). They "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). The world will never be evangelized in any other way.

We must abandon the common misconception that the believer's sole responsibility is to get the unsaved to attend the meetings so that the preacher can present the gospel and then lead them to Christ. Every believer should be doing the work of an evangelist. He should be able to present the way of salvation to his contacts. Then when he senses that the Holy Spirit has thoroughly

convicted them of sin, he should be able to lead them to Christ as their only hope for heaven.

This does not mean that our evangelism should be unrelated to the local assembly. While our main goal is to see people come to Christ, we also want to see them added to the fellowship. We bring the unsaved to the meetings to confirm the testimony we have already given to them. Or, if we have already pointed them to Christ, we bring them in order to see them discipled in accordance with the Great Commission.

An evangelistic assembly is a praying assembly. The place to start is in prayer. This is where the work is done. The saints must be desperate before God in fervent intercession for lost relatives, friends, and neighbors. No amount of programs and gimmicks will ever take the place of prayer. We are in a spiritual battle, and it must be fought with spiritual weapons.

An evangelistic assembly is a holy assembly. Effective witness cannot be divorced from sanctified lives. The fruit that a tree bears is a reflection of the condition of the tree itself. A healthy tree brings forth good fruit. Those who bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean.

An evangelistic assembly is a loving assembly. It has a warm, accepting atmosphere. It reaches out to strangers, to those who hurt, to those who have needs. It is people-oriented. It manifests its love by being hospitable. It is outgoing, not ingrown. It cares.

An evangelistic assembly is a united assembly. The saints are united in an enthusiasm to see souls saved. They are united in a common, prayerful expectancy. And they are united in a shared joy when people are converted.

We mentioned that the most effective way of making new contacts is through the daily witness of the believers. But there are other methods that should be mentioned. For instance, there is door-to-door visitation. This certainly makes the presence of the assembly known in any community. There are home Bible studies, which have been greatly used in laying a doctrinal foundation for those who later trust the Lord. There is campus evangelism, a good way to reach young people for the Lord and for the assembly. There is the ministry of literature; its possibilities are tremendous. There are special evangelistic crusades with an anointed gospel preacher. These have been wonderfully used in some places, and sadly ineffective in others. An assembly can advertise its meetings in the local paper. God has used this method to lead isolated individuals to the meetings. Then, of course, there are special programs, films, and musical events.

To break down the natural resistance toward attending an assembly for the first time, some fellowships have used less formal methods successfully: picnics, baseball or volleyball games, and hospitality in homes. By attending these, people get to know the local Christians and can more easily be induced to attend the meetings.

In order for believers to be enthusiastic about bringing their contacts to the meetings of the assembly, they must be assured that the ministry will be of a high spiritual quality. This fact should cause the elders to be much before the Lord concerning those whom they schedule to minister the Word. Christians will not bring their friends to hear a stumbling, rambling sermon. They want to be sure that there will be a bona fide

presentation of the gospel and that there will be solid teaching for those who are already believers.

Does this mean that the speakers must be seminary-trained men or those with advanced educational credentials? Not at all! Mere scholarship without deep spirituality can be a boring, deadening thing. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. A scholarly message might reach the head without ever getting down to the heart. What is needed is ministry empowered by the Holy Spirit, ministry with unction, ministry that produces conviction, contrition, conversion, and consecration. God very often uses homespun and untrained men for this work, so that the glory will be His, not man's.

There are few things as good for an assembly as to see souls saved on a regular basis. This produces ecstasy like that of a maternity ward. And it can be the experience of any assembly that is willing to devote itself to New Testament evangelism. But we must have a holy horror of going year after year without seeing any conversions. And we must be willing to use new methods where the old ones are proving singularly ineffective. We get what we go after in life. Let us go after souls.

One-on-One Discipleship

In the previous chapter, we talked about church growth through Spirit-led evangelism. Now the question is, "What are we going to do with the new converts? What Is the best way to assure their growth to spiritual maturity?"

A common approach is to encourage the new believer to faithfully attend all the meetings of the assembly and receive his instruction in this way. But this method has drawbacks. It is extremely slow; it usually has to extend

over many years. It is incomplete; there is no guarantee that all important subjects will be covered. It does not teach the convert how to engage in practical Christian work; it is all academic. Jesus not only taught doctrine; He took the disciples out and showed them how to do the work.

As soon as someone is saved, a spiritually mature believer should undertake the responsibility of discipline him. If the convert is a woman or girl, then an older sister should become the teacher (Tit. 2:3-5).

Rather than following the same stereotyped program for each person, the one doing the discipline should look to the Holy Spirit for individual guidance. Then he must ask himself. "What are the subjects that we should cover so that this convert will be a well-grounded and well-rounded believer?" The following might be a representative list: assurance of salvation; eternal security; baptism; worship and the Lord's Supper; daily quiet time; personal holiness; Bible study; prayer; guidance; Scripture memory; stewardship of time, talents, and money; personal evangelism. And all this should be supplemented by the consecutive, systematic study of the Scriptures themselves.

It is important to have a regular weekly appointment with the convert, lasting no less than an hour. Here the teacher not only covers the truth of believer's baptism but encourages the disciple to take this step of obedience. Here the teacher explains about the Breaking of Bread service and urges compliance with the Savior's request, “This do In remembrance of me." He teaches the baby Christian how to pray by praying with him. He shows him how to study the Bible, using

available helps (concordances, Bible dictionaries, commentaries, etc.). He guides him in the selection of books for his library. He answers questions that may arise. He gives help on personal problems. He commends every evidence of progress, and counsels concerning areas of Christian character that need attention.

When the teacher goes out witnessing, he takes the disciple with him. When he visits the sick, he takes the disciple with him. He opens his home, giving practical training in Christian marriage, the Christian home, and proper child training. As much as possible, he shares his life with the one he is seeking to train.

On-fire assemblies today know that it is important to give each new believer individual attention in addition to the training he receives in the meetings. It is costly, but it is effective. It is the method which the Lord used, and therefore it must be the best.

Leadership Training (The author of this article is concerned with personal discipline that is geared to raising up leaders in the local assembly. Elders should always make provision for men to share their ministry and eventually to be their successors.)

As important as gospel preaching is in the mission of the church, if we incline our vision no higher than seeing souls saved, of having as our ultimate goal the conversion of unbelievers to become faithful meeting-attenders, then we are guilty of short-sightedness and will eventually be faced with the prospect of a spiritually weak and impotent assembly.

We must set our sights on nothing less than the transformation of immature believers into leaders of the

church if we are to share the vision of the One who declared. "I will build my church." In fact, the key factor that insures the continuance of His living edifice is the raising up of spiritual leaders from generation to generation, a strategy that the Master Himself was busily engaged in when He uttered the preceding statement.

But if we are to share the vision of the Lord Jesus for church leadership, then we must also adopt His method if we hope to succeed. And His method was personal discipleship - the choice of certain men to be with Him. If the Savior Himself trained His men through three years of constant, personal attention, how can we expect to see effective leaders raised up by relying solely on Bible classes and pulpit ministry?

An illustration of the Lord's method is seen in His work with Peter. Study the occurrences of statements and questions, which He directed to Peter, and you will begin to catch glimpses into the personal relationship between Peter and his Lord. And you will see the Savior at work in the life of His disciple - confronting, challenging, encouraging, transforming a rough, untaught fisherman into a faithful shepherd of the flock of God. We can assume that the Savior's method was no different with the eleven other disciples. When the training was complete, He had raised up men who, when filled with the Holy Spirit, actually turned the world upside down.

Of course, we can think of objections to following this strategy in our own lives. It seems to us that greater numbers in the training relationship would produce greater dividends In the end. So we prefer to teach large classes and preach to hundreds, hoping to affect more

lives at one time. But the result too often is hundreds of shallow Christians. You cannot disciple crowds. Yet when considering the option of spending our time with one or two key men on a regular basis, we think within ourselves. “Why this waste?” and prefer to scatter our efforts across the masses. But this was not the Lord's approach to leaving a legacy of strong leaders.

Another difficulty to overcome in adopting our Lord's approach is the cost of transparency. We run the risk of being known by our disciple in a way that would never be true in a class or from a pulpit. The Lord did not shrink from that intimacy but allowed Himself to be seen, heard, and handled by twelve men every day for three years. When the time had ended, all except one had acquired the same selfless love for others that they had seen and experienced in Him.

This is not to imply that specially gifted and charismatic men cannot have a strong influence on the lives of others solely through ministry to the multitudes. But such men represent a small percentage of the body of Christ, and to expect this method to be the chief source of church leadership is both unrealistic and unscriptural. The result of this method will be a church that flourishes during the active ministry of one man and then dies away with his passing -- for want of faithful men to carry on in his place. Contrast this situation with the Lord's parting words to Peter (John 21:15) and those of Paul to Timothy (2 Tim 2:2).

Man-to-man discipleship does not require specially gifted or charismatic leaders to be effective. Its success depends on a Spirit-filled man who loves God, His Word

and His people, and is willing to open his life to another. Given this as the strategy, the tactics are simple.

Meet together often for Bible study and prayer.

Teach by example. Let the disciple see your godly life and your burden for people up close. Jesus did.

Teach through practical experience. Take your disciple with you when visiting the saints and witnessing to the unsaved, and afterwards explain what you did and why you did it. Jesus did.

Work on character. Think of the Lord constantly reminding Peter of his impulsiveness and self-confidence. What is it about your disciple that prevents the adjectives “holy and blameless” from being applied practically?

Exhort and encourage him in the Word, and pray for him. Jesus did.

If anyone had a vision for the growth of the church, It was the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for it. If we are to share that vision with Him in its fullest sense, that is, beyond seeing souls saved to the raising up of leaders of the flock who will be able to teach others also, then we must adopt His methods as our own. If the Son of God Himself found it necessary to concentrate on a few faithful men, how much more should we.

Rick Belles

Church Growth through Hospitality

Every believer should be interested in church growth, whether the church at large or his own local assembly. The Great Commission calls for the expansion of the body of Christ on earth.

There are many different methods that can be used in achieving this goal. No one method is the best. The Holy Spirit is sovereign and works according to His own good pleasure. Sometimes He is pleased to use a combination of approaches rather than any one.

Some methods are more difficult than others. Door-to-door canvassing, for instance, can be very difficult. This is partly due to the fact that the cults have antagonized the public and made it hard for evangelicals. Also, in some urban areas people are afraid to open their doors for strangers.

And some methods are less effective than others. Door-to-door work again! Believers have faithfully covered the area around their chapel several times with little or nothing to show for it.

Which brings me to my main point! Hospitality is a method that is highly successful, yet often overlooked. We work hard to get people inside the doors, yet treat them with cool neglect instead of capitalizing on our gains.

Let me run two scenarios past you!

Tom and Fran moved into the neighborhood recently. Sunday morning comes and they decide to look for a good church. So 10:45 a.m. finds them walking into the chapel, a bit intimidated. People are busy visiting in clutches. One man intercepts them, shakes hands and comments on the fine weather. They dodge between knots of people to find their way to seats -- toward the rear of the chapel. The service proceeds on schedule -- good singing, good message. Twelve o'clock. The closing prayer. The people rise to leave. Here and there some saints lean toward each other and whisper, "Who are

those strangers?" -- almost as if they were intruders. Others visit with their friends animatedly, catching up on the news of the week. Tom and Fran are almost at the door when an elder greets them, "Glad to have you with us today. Hope you'll come back." They leave and go to the local McDonald's for a hamburger.

Scenario #2. Euphoric over the birth of their first child, Ron and Ruth decide they should start going to church. They don't want their son to grow up as a heathen. They approach the door of the chapel apprehensively. An usher greets them warmly, explains about the nursery, and tells them that they will be invited out for dinner. They don’t know it but there is a standing rule in the assembly that all strangers will be invited out. Sure enough before the service even starts a pleasant couple introduces themselves and invites the newcomers home for a meal. Ron and Ruth are relaxed and feel a warmth about this church. This has never happened to them before.

At dinner the host gives thanks for the food. The conversation is low-key -- just a time to get acquainted. it turns out that both Ron and Ruth are from Christian backgrounds, but neither is a believer. The visit is profitable as an ice-breaker. The newcomers feel that they have found some caring people.

Question! Which couple is more likely to return?

Answer. Tom and Fran never came back. Ron and Ruth are saved now and in happy fellowship. The results speak for themselves.

Why are we so hesitant to entertain strangers when it has proved so rewarding in the past? Fear is probably one of the main reasons -- fear of the unknown, fear of a

new situation, fear of new people, fear of not knowing what to do or how to do it. And of course there is the fear of not knowing what to talk about, of not being "spiritual" enough, of not being able to witness effectively.

A second reason is that we have other plans for Sunday afternoon, and taking strangers home would interfere with those arrangements.

Then we think of the added work involved, getting the house immaculate, preparing a meal, then cleaning up afterward. And trying to entertain people at the same time.

Hospitality can be expensive, depending on the menu, and this may discourage those who have to operate on a limited budget.

A final reason for not showing hospitality. A chosen few in the assembly get saddled with the responsibility all the time. They are the only ones who do it and it gets old hat after a while.

In answer to the first objection, there is no real need to fear. We should just determine to be ourselves, to let people see us as we are. It is not necessary to force the gospel on them. The mere giving of thanks, a testimony shared, or verses read after the meal are enough.

It is true that if we are to be hospitable, it may interfere with our Sunday plans. We have to determine in advance that this is going to be one of our priority ministries.

Hospitality does involve work and inconvenience, but we should not offer to the Lord that which costs us nothing. And we should remember that what is done in His Name

is reckoned as being done for Himself. Imagine having Jesus home for Sunday dinner!

Hospitality need not be expensive. We don't have to cook up a fancy meal. A simple fare in pleasant company is all that matters.

But the ministry of hospitality should not be left to one or two in the assembly. If enough families take up the ministry, many strangers can be accommodated without burdening anyone.

Here are some practical pointers as to how some assemblies have grown through hospitality.

In one, the elders and their wives consistently Invite visitors to their home. 11 there aren't enough visitors, then they Invite some of the saints to whom they can minister In one way or another. Needless to say, the example of the elders speaks to the other believers.

Another assembly has an Angels' Committee. Each Sunday two couples are assigned to bring a casserole, salad, rolls and dessert. Ushers direct visitors to them for a meal in the chapel dining area after the morning service. The saints thus entertain angels unawares, giving rise to the name of their committee. Once again, if there aren't enough visitors, the hosts are free to invite guests from the chapel.

Many assemblies have a hostess who assigns visitors to particular Sundays. The emphasis is on reaching out to those who are in the service for the first time.

Most fellowships are careful to see that the visiting speaker is invited to someone's home for a meal. What they don't realize is that often the preacher would prefer

to relinquish this privilege if he could know that strangers were being taken care of.

If a family holds back for fear of not being able to carry on a profitable conversation, let them consider inviting the speaker along with strangers to handle this part of the ministry.

If Christians are afraid to invite strangers, they should know that very often visitors are equally afraid of entering a new situation. And visitors frequently cannot accept because they already have other plans. But the fact that they have been invited gives them a sense of warmth and acceptance.

Scores of people in assemblies today will testify that they were drawn, not by New Testament church order, or by the preaching, or by the teaching, but by the kind hospitality that was shown to them on their first visit.

Is it possible that in our frenetic attempts to promote church growth, we are overlooking one of the most obvious and successful methods?

Fundamentals and Secondary Issues

There are certain doctrines of the Christian faith which are absolutely fundamental. They are of first importance. As far as they are concerned, there can be no difference of opinion. Believers must be united on these great truths.

What Are the Fundamentals?

When we speak of the fundamentals, we are referring to the following:

The Inspiration of the Scriptures. The Bible is the Word of God.

The trinity. There Is one God, existing eternally In three Persons.

The deity of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is God.

The Incarnation. Jesus is also perfect Man.

His substitutionary death on Calvary, His burial, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.

The gospel. Salvation by grace, through faith. and apart from works.

The second advent. Christ is coming again. Though not all agree on the details of His return, the fact itself is a basic tenet of the faith.

The eternal punishment of the lost.

Now these doctrines are not negotiable–We are to earnestly contend for them. They are clearly taught in the Scriptures. They have been held by the evangelical, orthodox church down through the centuries. Conflicting views have been labeled heresies. Believers have been willing to die for these precious truths. We cannot have fellowship with those who deny the fundamentals.

Important Even though Not Fundamental

Richard Baxter's well-known formula is an oversimplification. He said:

In fundamentals, unity.

In secondary matters, liberty.

In all things, charity (or love).

This might create the impression that anything that is not fundamental is nonessential or unimportant. However. there is another classification that fits

between these two -- subjects that are not fundamental but are nonetheless important. Jesus implied such a distinction when He said to the Pharisees, "...ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith (Matt. 23:23). In other words, some parts of the law are "weightier" than others. But Jesus also reminded them that even the less weighty matters of the law require obedience: "...these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone."

So, In the New Testament, there are matters which are not fundamental but which require obedience. These are matters on which the Bible speaks. Some of them are described as commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14.37). We must not call them nonessentials or treat them as such.

These subjects Include baptism; divorce and remarriage; the outline of prophecy; women's head covering; women's public ministry in the church; the gifts of the Spirit; and the topics covered by the five points of Calvinism.

The problem is that Christians hold differing views on these matters. While there is only one right interpretation, believers do not agree as to what that interpretation is. Great and godly men do not see eye to eye. Let us look at some of these issues on which the Bible gives instruction and which are important. even though they have never been regarded as fundamentals of the faith.

Baptism

For those who practice believer's baptism by immersion, it is easy to forget that many Christians hold very

different views on the meaning and mode of baptism. Paul said, "There is…one baptism" (Eph. 4:4-5) but the many differences in Christendom today seem to deny it. The subject is important and every assembly should adopt a position that is consistent with all that the Bible teaches.

Divorce and Remarriage

Some say, "No divorce -- PERIOD!" Some say. "Divorce, but no remarriage." Others say, "Divorce for unfaithfulness but no remarriage." Still others say, "Divorce for unfaithfulness with freedom for the innocent party to remarry." Some say, "Divorce for desertion." There is no end to the different views. And it is doubtful that there will ever be unanimity.

Sooner or later, every local assembly must adopt a position on the subject in the fear of God, and adhere to that position. Individuals may hold other interpretations, but they must not press their views publicly or privately so as to cause division.

It should be added that even after an assembly adopts a position, the elders will still have to consider each case individually. Such complex situations arise today in the marriage relationship that no stated policy will cover every case.

The Outline of Prophecy

Some believers are premillennial, others postmillennial, and still other amillennial. Even among premillenniallists, there are three major views: the pretribulation rapture, mid-tribulation rapture, and post-tribulation rapture. There are problems connected with

every position. A person can hold any of these views and still be a good Christian.

It is proper that everyone knows what he believes and rejoices in it. But it is also proper that we remember there are godly, sincere believers who hold other views. These honest differences should not prevent us from breaking bread together. On the other hand, those who hold alternate views should respect the prophetic stance of an assembly, and not push their views, thereby causing dissension. When someone insists that everyone must agree with his minority view, there is bound to be trouble.

Women's Head Covering

On the one side are those who hold that Paul's instructions were just for the culture in which he lived. Others insist that they are the commandments of the Lord, that Paul bases them on the order and purpose of creation, and that they are “because of the angels," therefore, for all time. Questions arise whether the head covering is just for meetings of the church (and, if so, what is a meeting of the church?), what constitutes a proper covering, etc.?

If the elders of an assembly do not adopt a policy on the subject, there is bound to be confusion. They owe it to the saints to state clearly what they believe the Scriptures teach.

Women's Ministry

When may a woman sing or speak in a meeting of the church? The answers given today are too numerous to list. With a sincere desire to obey the Scriptures as closely as possible, elders should adopt a clear, united

position. These prayerful conclusions become the policy of the assembly.

The Sign Gifts

Another issue that holds the potential for trouble is the charismatic question. Tongues, healing, and prophecy seem to be the gifts around which most controversy has swirled. The differing viewpoints, even among charismatics themselves, are legion.

We can and must love Christians who disagree with us, but we must not allow the issue to cause division. Therefore, an assembly must decide what the Bible really teaches on this score. The elders have both a right and a responsibility to deal firmly with any who insist on teaching views that conflict and threaten the peace of the assembly.

Five-Point Calvinism

A five-point Calvinist believes in man's total depravity; God's unconditional election; limited atonement (i.e., only for the elect); irresistible grace; and the perseverance of the saints.' There are those who disagree. On the third point, for example, they insist that Christ's atonement was for all in its sufficiency and availability. Others insist that extreme Calvinism rules out man's free will.

Spiritually minded, soul-winning Christians are found on both sides of the issue. The fireworks begin when someone insists on pushing his own view where it is not welcome, or when he harps on one subject as if it were the only doctrine in the Bible. When silenced, he often leaves the assembly and influences others to leave with him.

The path of wisdom is to enjoy privately one's convictions on the subject but not to force them as if they represented the whole truth.

On all these subjects which are important though not fundamental, an assembly, under its leaders, should adopt a clearly stated position. This should be done after careful study and research, after much prayer and with a sincere desire to adhere as closely as possible to the Scriptures. If an assembly adopts a position that is not Scriptural, it is conceivable that some believers will want to withdraw. If so, they should do so graciously, and without seeking to draw others away with them.

Non-essential Issues

In addition to the first class of subjects (fundamentals) and the second class (important because taught in Scripture) there is a third class that can be clearly labeled as nonessential. When it comes to these matters, there will always be differing viewpoints, and there must be liberty to disagree without causing strife or division. Here the second line of Baxter's formula applies:

In secondary matters, liberty.

Among the non-essential issues are some on which the New Testament does not legislate specifically but which some people feel embody important principles: wine vs. grape juice at the Lord's Supper; one cup vs. individual cups; and the use of musical instruments.

There are other matters that are largely a matter of usage or tradition, such as the use of “Thou” and “Thee” in addressing God.

At least one question must be decided on its own merits, that is, the whole dispute as to the “best” Bible version.

Finally, there are matters of moral indifference. These include foods, drinks, and observance of days. They are nonessentials.

Now let us look at these various non-essential subjects and see how an assembly can handle them without conflict and division.

Wine vs. Grape Juice at the Lord's Supper

Let's face it! There are valid arguments on both sides. There is no question that when the Lord instituted the Supper, He used fermented wine and unleavened bread (grape juice did not come in until Pasteur developed pasteurization). But wine stumbles people who have a problem with alcohol, and we should never do anything that stumbles others (I Cor. 8:13). Also, there are many places in the world where wine is not available. After all, it is not the bread and wine that are important. We must get beyond them to the Lord Himself.

One Cup vs. Individual Cups

Again, there are two sides to the matter. On the one hand, one cup symbolizes the unity of the body of Christ. But as an assembly grows, it is not uncommon to use two, three, or even four cups. If four are valid, why not forty? The argument for individual cups rests largely on the danger of spreading disease through the common cup since wine does not have sufficient alcoholic content to kill germs. In any event, this is not a matter of fundamental importance. Rather it provides an opportunity to show love and consideration to those who disagree with us.

Use of Musical Instruments

Here again there must be liberty for an assembly to adopt its own policy. No major creed has ever considered instrumental accompaniment as a fundamental of the faith. We could paraphrase Paul's words without doing violence to them: "For in Christ Jesus neither does an organ avail anything nor the absence of an organ, but a new creation" (see Gal. 6:15).

Times of Meetings

Clearly the Lord has left the decision to the local assembly or its leaders. Sometimes changes must be made, depending on local circumstances. The best time for reaching the unsaved in one locality may not be the best time in another. Traditional times are not sacred. We must be ready to make changes, when they are indicated.

Thou vs. You

Many older Christians prefer to address God as "Thou" and "Thee" out of a sense of reverence. Younger believers prefer to use "You" out of a sense of intimacy but without any lack of reverence. It is not a Biblical problem. In the original language of the New Testament, there is no distinction between a formal "you" and a familiar one. But when the King James Version was published, people addressed one another as “thou” (singular) and “ye” (plural). Thus, Jesus is quoted In the King James Version as saying to Judas, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" -- certainly not the language of reverence.

What it boils down to is this: any assembly should be big enough to allow for both usages without creating a threatening atmosphere or driving people away.

Bible Versions

Considerable heat has been generated over this issue as a result of the proliferation of versions in recent years. Some believers sincerely believe that the truth of God is at stake. Others point out that the differences among the reputable versions are minor and do not affect any of the doctrines of the faith. As much as we might love any English version, we cannot insist that it is the only right one, because then none of the foreign language versions would be right.

Individual Christians should be allowed to have their favorite version. When speaking publicly, a person should announce the name of the one from which he is reading if it is not the one in common use. This is a simple courtesy.

Food, Drinks, and Days

There are matters of moral Indifference. These are actions that are neither right nor wrong in themselves. As mentioned above, they include foods, drinks, and observance of days. It is about these non-essential matters that Paul writes:

“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5b). He would not have said this about a fundamental of the faith; but in matters of moral indifference, there is liberty for everyone to be fully convinced in his own mind.

“All things are lawful unto me” (I Cor. 6:12; 10:23). This can only refer to areas or activities not prohibited by God's Word, areas such as food and drink.

“All things Indeed are pure” (Rom. 14:20b). "Unto the pure all things are pure" (Tit. 1:15). This cannot mean

all things absolutely, but all things that are neither right nor wrong in themselves.

"I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself" (Rom. 14:14a). The subject is foods. Under the Old Testament economy, certain foods were unclean. Under grace this distinction between clean and unclean no longer holds (Mark 7:19 NASB).

It should be clear that in these passages Paul is dealing with matters that are non-essential. He allows a difference of opinion among God's people, and yet it is often over these inconsequential matters that serious splits occur. We must learn to distinguish between what is central and what is peripheral.

Conclusion

Let us now summarize. Concerning the fundamentals, there must be unanimity in any Christian assembly.

Concerning matters that are Scripturally important, even though not fundamental. each assembly should adopt a position in the fear of God. Any contrary teaching, either public or private, that would create strife or division should not be allowed. If a person disagrees with the assembly position and feels he must leave out of faithfulness to the Lord, he should do so quietly and peaceably. Without seeking to draw others away with him.

Concerning the non-essential matters we have listed, there has to be a certain amount of give and take for the sake of unity and peace (Eph. 4:1-6). We may have strong convictions in these areas, but we must recognize that there are Christ-like souls who do not agree with

us. Because of this, we should avoid excessive dogmatism. Cromwell said, "I beseech you by the tender mercies of Christ to conceive it possible that you may be mistaken." When someone tried to nit-pick with Dr. Ironside on some nonessential matter, he would say, "Well, brother, when we get to heaven, one of us is going to be wrong--and perhaps it will be me." The fire Invariably went out, because Dr. Ironside did not add fuel to it (Prov. 26:20).

Leaving an assembly over a non-essential matter is never the ideal. There can be fellowship without total agreement on these topics. Where there is love and brokenness, prayer and patience, humility and forbearance, differences can be settled amicably. Believers can disagree without being disagreeable.

In all the topics we have discussed, an assembly should adopt a definite stance or policy. Failure to do so results in confusion. Believers generally want guidelines to follow. When the leadership adopts a position after much waiting on God, there is a sense in which their decision is ratified in heaven (cf. Matt. 16:19; 18:18), provided it does riot violate any Scriptural precept or principle.

The only times when it is better to leave is when a person is convinced that in staying he is being unfaithful to the Lord or unable to remain without disturbing the peace of the assembly. Even then the third line of Baxter's timeless formula applies--in everything, love.

Sample Statement of Doctrine

This assembly accepts the Bible as its divinely inspired authority in all matters. The following is what we believe the Bible teaches regarding the Christian faith.

Major Doctrines

The Bible. Every word in the original writings of the Holy Scriptures is inspired of God, authoritative and without error. The Bible is the only written revelation of God to man and is infallible (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; Prov. 30:5-6).

The Godhead. There is one God, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable (Exod. 34:6-7; Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28: 19; John 4:24; 10:30; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:8-12).

Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the eternal Son of God. He entered the human race miraculously by being born of a virgin. He did not sin and He could not sin. He died as a substitute for all the sins of the human race, was buried, rose bodily from the grave. and ascended to the Father's right hand, where He now ministers as our Great High Priest (Matt. 1:21-23; John 1:1, 14; Acts 1:9; Rom. 1:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:14-15; 7:25; 13:8; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).

The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts and converts the sinner. He regenerates, indwells, baptizes, and seals all true believers in Christ and empowers them to live a holy life (Matt. 28:19; John 16:8; Rom. 8:9-16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1: 12-14).

Man. Adam was created in the image and likeness of God and was an innocent being. He subsequently sinned, and as head of the human race he passed on a sinful nature to all mankind. All men are sinners by nature but also by practice. Apart from God's salvation man is lost eternally (Gen. 1:27; 9:6; Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1).

Sin. Sin is any violation of or disobedience to the revealed will of God. It is also a state, the absence of righteousness, or anything that falls short of the perfect glory of God. God has established that the penalty of sin is death (Isa. 53:6; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 3:23; Jas. 2:10; 4:17; Rev. 20:11-15).

Salvation. Without the shedding of the precious blood of Christ, there is no remission of sin. Salvation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and entirely apart from law-keeping or good works. It is entered into by all those who hear and understand the gospel, repent of their sins, and trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Lord and Savior (Mark 1:15; John 1:12-13; Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 15.1-4; Heb. 9:22).

The Assembly. The universal Church is made up or all true believers in the Lord Jesus from Pentecost to the Rapture. Each local assembly or church should be a miniature of the universal Church, expressing the great truths of the latter. The local assembly is made up of believers in the Lord Jesus who have been baptized following their conversion and who meet together for teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers, and evangelism. Christ is the head of each assembly and He entrusts leadership to the elders, men who are recognized as Christ's under-shepherds. Each assembly is also to have deacons to serve the practical needs of the assembly (Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:24-25, 30; Acts 6:3-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Heb. 13:17).

Ordinances. There are two Christian ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism by immersion signifies that the believer has died with Christ, has been

buried with Him, and has risen to walk in newness of life with Him. The Lord's Supper is a memorial feast at which believers worship the Lord and show forth His death until He comes again. In accordance with the early church, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated every Lord's day (Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 10:47-48; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:26).

Other Important Doctrines

Assurance and Security. All true believers can know that they are saved on the authority of the Word of God. Those who are in Christ are safe and secure for all eternity (John 10:28-29; Rom. 5:1; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Jn. 5:13).

Christian Life and Priorities. Christians are called to live a holy life. They are to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and as such, to live lives of service and testimony in the power of the Holy Spirit. This service includes ministry in the assembly and propagation of the gospel to the whole world. They are forbidden by Christ to lay up treasures on earth and are promised a reward in heaven for faithfulness in serving God on earth (Matt. 6:19-34; Mark 8:34-35; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; 1 Jn. 2:6).

Spiritual Gifts. Christ gives to each believer, at conversion, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, some gift or gifts to equip him to serve the Lord and edify other believers. Gifts are given by a sovereign act of God's Spirit and not in response to the desires or prayers of men. Some gifts were foundational, and the miraculous gifts, such as healing, miracles, tongues, and interpretation of tongues, were gifts given as a sign to the Jews during the transitional period as the church was being established. These foundational and

miraculous gifts ceased when their purposes were accomplished (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 14:22; 2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:20; 3:6; 4:11-12; Heb. 2:3-4).

Future Events. God has revealed different dispensations, or stewardships, with corresponding rules governing life and relationship with God. In every dispensation the way of salvation is by faith alone. The present dispensation is the age of grace. The church did not exist prior to this age, and does not take the place of Israel in the prophecies of Scripture. The personal, imminent return of the Lord Jesus to Rapture the Church will be followed in order by the tribulation. Christ's thousand-year reign on earth, and the eternal state of punishment for the unsaved and blessing for the saved (Matt. 24:21, 29-30; 25:46; Rom. 6:14; 1 Cor. 10:32; Eph. 3:2-6: Col. 1:25-27; 1 Thes. 4:13-18; 5:4-10; Heb. 7:18-19; Rev. 10:1-6).

Each believer in fellowship must be absolute agreement with the assembly on the MAJOR DOCTRINES in the doctrinal statement. In secondary matters nonessentials, or matters of moral indifference, there shall be liberty. However, those in fellowship who hold opposing views to the doctrinal statement of the assembly shall refrain from teaching their views either publicly or privately. No one shall be permitted to propagate views that are contrary to the doctrinal statement or that prove divisive.

A Sample Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage

God instituted marriage for the human race before the Fall (Gen. 2:18-25) and the Lord Jesus blessed the institution or marriage by performing His first miracle at a wedding (Jn. 2:1-11). Marriage should be held in honor

by all, and the marriage bed should be kept free from all defilement (Heb. 13:4 NASB).

God's will is that a person should have only one living partner in marriage (Eph. 5:33). The relationship should not be severed by man (Matt. 19-3-9), but should continue until the death of one partner (Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:39).

Divorce was never God's intention for His people. In fact, He hates unscriptural divorce (Mal. 2:16). However, under the law of Moses, divorce was permitted for almost any reason as long as a man gave his wife a certificate showing that she was put away legally (Deut. 24:1-4). This permission was granted because of the hardness or the people's hearts (Matt. 19:7, 8).

When Jesus came, He tightened the divorce law:

"I say unto you that every one who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matt. 5:32 NASB).

This means that marriage is indissoluble except when one partner is unfaithful. In that case, the innocent party is free to obtain a divorce. However, he does not have to obtain it; grace is able to triumph over his partner's sin. God is able to make even this work together for good (Rom. 8:28). But if the innocent party chooses to divorce his mate, he is free to remarry; otherwise a divorce would be no different than separation.

If an unbeliever deserts a believer. the believer is not under bondage (I Cor. 7:16). This may mean that desertion is also a Scriptural ground for divorce. We believe, however, that it assumes that the unbeliever

leaves to live in a sinful relationship, in which case the divorce would be permitted on the ground of unchastity (Matt. 6:32). In this instance, as in all instances, God's ideal is reconciliation.

Many people have already contracted unscriptural divorces and remarriages before their conversion. When they are born again, all such sins are covered by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7). The sins are forgiven and the new believer is expected to continue in whatever marriage relationship he is in at the time. If he is divorced without Scriptural cause and neither he nor his wife are remarried, he may be reconciled to his spouse or remain unmarried.

If a Christian is divorced for an unscriptural reason and then remarries, he commits adultery. This calls for his excommunication from the local church. Fellowship may also be denied to anyone who deliberately contracts an unscriptural divorce. However, even in such cases, if a man genuinely repents and confesses his sin. he is restored to fellowship with God and should be restored to fellowship with God's people.

Many complicated marital problems arise which are too involved to cover in a paper like this. Ultimately the elders will have to investigate thoroughly, try to hear all sides of the problem, then make a decision in the fear of God. The rest of the saints are obligated to abide by the decision of the elders and not create any disunity by taking sides against them.

Women's Role In the Church (The following is a sample position paper which may prove helpful to elders in formulating their own.)

The pertinent Scripture passages are: I Corinthians 11:3-16; 1 Corinthians 14:34-37 and I Timothy 2:11-14. From these passages we learn of two areas of submission:

Submission through Head Covering i. A woman should have her head covered when she prays or prophesies. Otherwise she dishonors her head (I Cor. 11:5, 13).

ii. The head covering in I Corinthians 11:5 is obviously a veil, not the woman's hair.

iii. The reasons for this practice transcend time and culture.

1. Order of creation (I Cor. 11:8).

2. Purpose of creation (I Cor. 11:9).

3. Onlooking angels (I Cor. 11:10).

Submission through Silence iv. She should keep silent in the assembly. She is to learn in silence. She is not to speak or ask questions (I Cor. 14:34. 35).

v. She should not teach or usurp authority over man (I Tim. 2:12).

vi. The reasons for this practice also transcend time and culture.

1. Order of creation (I Tim. 2:13).

2. Woman being deceived In the original sin (I Tim. 2:14).

We freely admit that there are difficulties in connection with the whole subject of women's place in the assembly. It is our desire to adhere as closely as possible to the Word of God; therefore, we have adopted the following

position, in the fear of the Lord, until He gives us further light on the subject.

Meetings of the Assembly

An assembly meeting is a gathering consisting of the saints, the elders. and the deacons (Phil. 1:1). convened for the apostles' doctrine (teaching), fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42). This would Include the following meetings of those In fellowship at this chapel:

Sun. 11:00 A.M. Bible Teaching

6:00 P.M. Lord's Supper

Wed. 7:00 P.M. Prayer Meeting

The following are not considered meetings of the assembly:

Sun. 9:30 A.M. Sunday, School & Bible Training Classes

Thur. 1:30 P.M. Home Evangelistic Bible Study.

Women's Silence

During those meetings which are meetings of the assembly, the women should remain silent (except in the case of a prayer when the participants are divided according to sex and the women pray in groups by themselves). If they have prayer requests. comments or announcements. they can ask their husbands to share them. Unmarried women or women whose husbands are not in attendance may ask any of the men in the assembly to share them.

During the meetings that are not meetings of the assembly, the women are allowed to participate in the

discussion and ask questions but not to lead men in prayer or teach men.

Sisters should be covered in all meetings, including those meetings that are not considered meetings of the assembly. In the meetings of the assembly it is presumed that they will be praying silently. In the non-assembly meetings, it is also likely that women will be praying silently when men are present, and may be teaching other women and children when men are not present. Visitors, both saved and unsaved, will often come to all these meetings uncovered. Hopefully, they will learn by the example of our sisters, and eventually through direct teaching from the Word.

Ministries for Women

While the Scriptures set some limits on the exercise or a woman's priesthood, there are ministries which are open to her. In the local assembly, these include silent prayer and worship (I Cor. I 1:5; 14:35); teaching and personal work with other women and children (Tit. 2:3-5); and hospitality (Heb. 13:2). There are ministries open to her outside the assembly but in conjunction with it. These include raising a family for God (1 Tim. 2:15); giving (Luke 8:3); colaboring with her husband in support of his ministry; engaging in projects for missionaries at home and abroad, and visiting the sick and the afflicted.

Summary

Once again we emphasize that there are situations that are not clearly spelled out in the Word of God. Our desire is to adhere as closely as possible to the Scriptures. Also. we believe it is important for all who are in fellowship in this assembly to follow a consistent

policy and thus avoid confusion. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40).

The Prayer Meeting

The prayer meeting was in progress. A few older saints had met for that purpose in an upper room of the chapel. But no one was praying. No one was saying a word. The silence was deafening. Then the stillness was broken by the slow, heavy clumping of footsteps on the stairs. A large black woman entered the room and sat down. Still no one prayed. Finally she couldn't stand it any longer. She lifted up her voice and prayed. "Lawd, ah knows this place is dead. You knows this place is dead. It's the deadest place either of us has been in for a long time." Then she rose and departed. After that there were no silent periods in that particular meeting. Perhaps she was an angel, sent to revive a dying prayer meeting, and a dying assembly.

There is no reason why a prayer meeting can't be meaningful, interesting and effective. And a meeting like this is guaranteed to be well-attended. Yet in many churches today the prayer meeting has been given up as a lost cause and replaced by a small group fellowship, a teaching service or a time of “sharing”.

Some of the factors that have contributed to the death of the prayer meeting are participation by only the same few people every week: predictable prayers; long, dull pauses; crowding out of prayer by other activities. How can we deal with these problems?

First we must humbly acknowledge that there is a problem and then be willing to make changes.

Generally speaking it is true that people enjoy a meeting when they have some part in it themselves. So our first goal is to Increase participation in the prayer meeting. How can we do this in a Scriptural manner? Suggestion: have the men break up in small groups and pray in one section of a fairly large room, and the women do the same in another area of the same room. Movable chairs are ideal for this arrangement; fixed pews are not.

In a meeting like this everyone has the opportunity to pray, and in small groups, people usually pray more than once.

But of course there has to be a good supply of fuel for prayer. This need not be a problem. The person opening the meeting asks for worship and praise items; prayer requests; answers to prayer; etc. The Christians know that they should come equipped with paper and pencil to write down these requests; there will be far too many to remember.

Preliminaries such as singing, announcements, etc. should be kept to a minimum. Prayer is the main thing. Even ministry of the Word could be advantageously planned for another time.

When the praying begins, there is a low, sacred sound of praise and petition filling the room, but no confusion. People hear only the prayers being offered in their own group.

The time will pass quickly. Young people will feel free to participate freely. Everyone will welcome the change.

The experience of multitudes is that prayer in a format like this is a joy and not just a duty. It is so stimulating that people don't want to stay away. There is a sense of

personal involvement, or sharing the joys and sorrows of others, and of seeing answers to prayer continually.

Privileges of Fellowship

In an Assembly

The promised presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 18:20).

The privilege of collective worship (The Lord's Supper-- I Cor. 11).

The privilege of collective prayer (Acts 2:42).

Instruction In the Word.

The blessing of serving with others:

Sunday School teaching

Gospel

Visitation

Tract work, etc.

The privilege of giving.

The privilege of fellowship.

The family tie in times of trial.

A worldwide fellowship.

Responsibilities of Fellowship

In the Assembly

Exercise one's own spiritual gift.

Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit.

Attend meetings faithfully.

Share in expenses and in fellowship with commended workers.

Pursue personal holiness.

Practice mutual help, exhortation and edification.

Love one another (I Pet. 4:8).

Share in the ministry of hospitality.

Share in work at the Chapel-- cleaning, etc.

Decently and in Order

The Public Meetings of the Assembly

In discussing the conduct of public meetings of the church, the Apostle Paul ends with this admonition: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). The NIV says to let them be done in a "fitting and orderly way." The NASB renders it, "properly and in an orderly manner."

Whatever the version, the meaning seems clear. The Spirit of God desires that our public meetings be such as to inspire a sense that “God is truly among you” (v. 25). We need to consider the one who occupies the place of the uninformed" (NKJV v. 16), not just the initiated ones. Certainly we do not wish unbelievers to come in, observe our services and say, "You are out of your mind" (v. 23). It is to be desired that "all things be done for edification" (v. 26), not confusion or boredom.

It may not be apparent to us who are familiar with the ways in which we conduct public meetings of the church that others sometimes do not find things being done "decently and in order." They think that we appear to be disorganized, haphazard, and casual to the point of disrespect to the Lord and Savior we seek to honor. If we have as our goal the retention of those who visit our meetings, especially those who are serious about God,

then we ought to consider how to improve things. In most instances, we cannot think of a Scripture that forbids such changes as we would suggest. However, I Corinthians 14:40 would seem to support the need for upgrading in a serious way how we do things.

Many disastrous occurrences or arrangements seem to be the product of a mindset which regards unplanned disorder and uncritical repetition as being somehow a matter of leaving it all to the Spirit. It. does not seem fair to blame God for the kind of things sometimes taking place. Another mistake is to assume that, in the name of giving opportunity for the development of gift, all the males of' the assembly be given a turn at almost everything. This really ignores whether there is any indication that they have such gift. If we take seriously I Corinthians 12 and like passages, it should he evident that not all brethren are public preachers. song-leaders or chairmen by divinely-given aptitude. Perhaps they could better serve in the areas of helps, service, mercy and hospitality-where there is a great lack.

In the interest of improving our public meetings. we offer the following checklist, which is only a partial one, for starters. Much could be said beyond these few suggestions.

Meetings

People come to church to sense the presence of God. Is this what is conveyed in your service? Or is it more like a luncheon club or public social hour? At times we sound like a convention of magpies.

Whether or not you consider the service to be devoted to "worship" -- there needs to be an atmosphere of reverence for God and awareness of Him when

Scriptures are read or expounded and when prayer is made. A reverential atmosphere is maintained when we hold latecomers at the door during these parts of the service.

Get your audience in their seats and quiet (hopefully) at the starting time. Encourage this in your bulletin. Pre-service music may help. Example by “regulars" is important. Good ushering is essential.

Discourage wandering up and down the aisles during preaching and praying. Seat late comers at the rear, parents with small children, or those needing to visit the restroom frequently, to sit it the back, not at the front or in the middle of a row. The church service is not a bus terminal. It is amazing how wanderlust and physical "urgency" assault people in one brief hour on Sunday.

Prayer -- Scripture Reading

Pray to God as though He has heard your prayer and make it one that needs His favorable response. Remember that it was the Pharisee who "prayed thus with himself" (Luke 18:11). Make sure listeners can hear and join in thought.

Be brief in prayer. Jesus condemned long public prayers, especially if they were to impress others.

Public Scripture readings also should be brief. People cannot retain and focus on too many thoughts or verses. Identify the main thought you are seeking to emphasize and relate it to the sermon to be preached.

Read the Word slowly, reverently, distinctly, with proper emphasis. The reader should look up at times to make eye contact with the audience. Have the people stand

and listen with respect (Neh. 8:5). The effect can be electric.

Announcements

These should be distinct, easily heard, enthusiastic, warm, friendly. The announcer should wear a coat and tie. He should look at his audience when talking -- not at his notes Know in advance the details, proper pronunciation of names, correct times, written on a single sheet -- NO last minute slips of paper, with indecipherable scribbling, should be accepted en route to the platform.

Be brief -- brief -- brief! Use "handouts" at the door for details. Signup sheets should be made available after the service, not during it.

Don't trivialize the service by trivial announcements.

Don't repeat previous announcements of routine meeting times. Don't read announcements already in the church bulletin. Refer the listeners to the bulletin.

Avoid jargon and in house' phrases, referring to speakers as "Bill" or "Joe" when they are unknown to the visitors.

Introduce the speaker properly with warm enthusiasm. Use his full name, say something about him and his subject of ministry or sermon title. It is a discourtesy not to present a speaker properly to his audience.

Never use slang, such as referring to men as “guys” or inviting visitors to “hang around” after a meeting. or using other undignified language. Speak with what is called "class” or good platform manners.

Ushers

Choose warm, friendly people who can greet visitors or others in a gracious way, making them feel welcome. Don't just assign people to handouts hymnbooks or bulletins. People sense when they are receiving a plastic smile and a mechanical handshake or greeting.

Guide people to their seats (true ushering), filling the front sections first. Rope off the back areas for late comers.

Wear a coat and tie--not casual dress.

Train those ushering in special sessions to emphasize how to improve their function. Have a regular, dependable crew who know what they are doing.

Music

The song-leader should be the most gifted person for this role. Variety here is not “the spice of life” but apt to be "the joke of the week."

Hymns should never be picked out at the last minute, any more than the song-leader. Match the hymns with the message, where possible. Be sure the audience knows the hymns, or arrange to teach them one at a time. Please do not ask for favorites from the audience. Consider the effect when either the songleader or the audience does not know the song.

Use a fresh, contemporary, Scriptural, inspiring hymn or chorus from time to time. That will require a survey and screening process beforehand.

Coordinate hymns ahead of time with your accompanist (where used) so that there is no mix-up.

Be careful in selecting soloists or groups for "special music." Not all of it is good. The service is not the

community "amateur hour." Make sure dress is neat and appropriate. Verify arrangements in advance; inquire on needed sound equipment.

Reduce the "between hymns chatter" or commentary. Stick to the main task. The song-leader is not chosen to be a “funny man”, cheerleader, or preacher. Bring reverence as well as spiritual vitality to our singing. The Scottish people excel at this as they sing the Psalms.

When preaching time must be abbreviated because of too many hymns or too many stanzas, there Is a miscarriage in proper emphasis. Fit the music into its agreed time frame.

Visitors

It says something when visitors come once and never return. What it says is not good!

Warmth, friendliness, love, and a welcoming atmosphere are the chief characteristics noted by visitors. This often is more important than the sermon itself.

Please get visitors' names, addresses, phone numbers, and the "contact" through whom they happened to visit. Make sure they are introduced to others. See that friendly people talk to them after the service.

Keep records of all visitors. Send a warm welcome letter and something about the assembly that is oriented to their needs or interest.

Call them on the telephone the same week they came. Visit in person as soon as possible. Invite them to a meal. Have a hospitality program for new comers, sporadic attendees and even neglected people in the assembly.

Is your assembly a "private club" or is it genuinely open to newcomers? How do you show this?

Have care for infants and smaller children at services. Let teams be varied so that all can hear the Word some of the time. Why let crying, restless children disturb the meeting for all? If mothers insist on bringing their children, seat them at the rear and encourage taking them out when they disturb the meeting.

Is your building neat and well-maintained? Are your restrooms neat and clean? Is there an adequate, highly-visible, attractive sign out front which is lighted at night? Is the yard well maintained? Is the parking adequate? Can the members park away from the chapel and leave the near places for visitors?

In Summary

Have the people who are the most fitted for a particular job be the ones who do it. This is Scriptural. Give instructions, using written materials such as this to emphasize the proper way to do things. Seek constantly to upgrade all of your functions. Nothing is too good in the service of the King. Pray and plan ahead. This can be more “of the Spirit” than last minute “confusion worse confounded.” Glorify God in your public services. That should be your first priority.

O. J. Gibson

Parachurch Organizations

PRO

Parachurch organizations carry on ministries that the church cannot do, or should be doing but is not, e.g., translation, publishing, radio, TV, prison work, evangelism, discipline. counseling, etc.

They reach vast segments of the population that are untouched by the churches.

Many people who are turned off by the church ("all the church wants is your money') can be effectively reached by parachurch ministries.

In missions, social services, evangelism and church planting, parachurch organizations have taken the lead.

Whereas the organized church often requires formalized training for its full-time workers, the parachurch organizations train lay persons and put them to work.

They provide ministry outlets that Christians do not find in local churches.

They provide honorable, salaried employment for some.

They are effectively bearing fruit. God is blessing them.

Churches tend to emphasize buildings more than missions.

Churches are inflexible, resistant to change. Parachurch organizations are an answer to this lack of flexibility.

CON

Parachurch organizations are unbiblical. They are nowhere found in the Acts or elsewhere in the New Testament. The church is God's unit on earth for propagating the faith. Everywhere the apostles went they planted churches. Everywhere we go we establish parachurch organizations.

Men and women are diverted from the local church. Preachers, teachers and leaders are taken away from their primary ministry and seated behind a desk as administrators.

Money is diverted from the local church, yet these organizations depend on the churches for their support.

People serving with a parachurch organization cannot carry out the Great Commission “teaching to observe all things” because they cannot declare the full counsels of God. In trying to relate to many different churches, they tend to weaken their doctrinal position.

There are many overlapping and competing ministries, with factions, jealousies and rivalries.

They are not accountable to anyone but themselves.

Some parachurch people tend to be antichurch.

Others who have a parachurch mentality often find it difficult to adapt to the fellowship of a local church and to function with the broad mix of people found in most congregations. They consider themselves (and often are) a select group of committed people.

They usurp functions and responsibilities that belong to the churches.

Instead of feeding converts into local churches, the organization tends to take the place of the church in the lives of the people.

Arguments Against Parachurch Organizations That May Be Equally True Of Churches They do not die easily but are often perpetuated after they have outlived their usefulness.

There is a danger of focusing on a charismatic leader, and of thus establishing a personality cult.

They do not meet the total needs of the people.

They are often characterized by competitive spirit, infighting, duplication of ministries. and divisions.

They are sometimes the result of a person's inability to work with others. In frustration he starts a work where he can be independent.

They promote professionalism, climbing up the corporate ladder, etc.

Learning in the Darkness

"And I will girt thee the treasures of darkness." Isaiah 45:3

When God made this promise to Cyrus, He was speaking of material treasures from lands of darkness that Cyrus would conquer. But we are not doing violence to the verse when we take it and apply it in a spiritual sense.

There are treasures that are discovered in the dark nights of life that are never found in days of unrelieved sunshine.

For instance, God can give songs in the darkest night (Job 35:10) that would never have been sung if life were completely devoid of trials. That is why the poet wrote:

And many a rapturous minstrel among those sons of Light

Will say of his sweetest music "I learned it in the night;"

And many a rolling anthem that fills the Father's home

Sobbed out its first rehearsal in the shade of a darkened room.

There is the darkness of what J. Stuart Holden calls "life's inexplicable mysteries - the calamities, the catastrophes, the sudden and unexpected experiences which have come into life, and which all our forethought has not been sufficient to ward off; and life is dark because of them - sorrow, loss, disappointment, injustice, misconception of motive, slander." These are often the things that make life dark.

Humanly speaking, none of us would choose this darkness, and yet its benefits are incalculable. Leslie Weatherhead wrote, "Like all men, I love and prefer the sunny uplands of experience, when health, happiness and success abound, but I have teamed far more about God and life and myself in the darkness of fear and failure than I have ever learned in the sunshine. There are such things as the treasures of darkness. The darkness, thank God, passes.

But what one learns in the darkness, one possesses for ever."

Let's Hear It for the Assemblies

There is a reasonable doubt whether any Christian fellowship suffers so much self-criticism as the assemblies.

They are not unlike the soldier who shoots himself in the leg, quite oblivious of the enemy who lurks outside. We are living on a “range” where, unlike the song, “seldom is heard an encouraging word.” And even more seldom a word of appreciation. Why is it that critics who have had a rich heritage in assemblies now turn and bite the hand that fed them? Why don’t they balance their faultfinding with gratitude? David J. Hesselgrave, a missionary-author, had his roots in the Pentecostal movement. He subsequently changed his church affiliation but had enough class to express public thanks for what the Pentecostal fellowship had meant to him. He wrote: “Although my present identification is not with that denomination, I have through the years counted some of my most committed family members and friends within that same communion of the Pentecostal movement. And I am happy to do so. For even though my affiliation has changed I still owe a debt to my Pentecostal upbringing that will never be fully repaid.”

In his early Christian life, Dr. Ironside was with the Salvation Army. Subsequently he left to fellowship in the assemblies. I have been told that throughout his ministry, he carried a Bible bound with red leather – red first and foremost for the blood of Christ, but also red for the Salvation Army. Then, of course, he went on to become pastor of Moody Church, but in all my contacts with him, I never heard him say a disloyal word about

the assemblies. He consistently encouraged me to continue to fellowship with them.

It is not that our fellowships are above criticism. It is not that we are in no great need of revival. Of course, we are. But can't we hear a word of appreciation for the monumental contribution that the assemblies have made to the evangelical movement, especially in the area of literature. Someone described the early Christians as a huddled flock whose only crime was Christ. When I think of the internal pummeling that many assembly Christians are taking today, I think of them as a huddled flock whose only crime is trying to stay as close to the Scriptures as possible. It is not only the assemblies as they are today. The attacks go back to the early assembly leaders.

The sharpest criticism is levelled against John Nelson Darby. Many of those who launch the attacks have, at the same time, glowing words of appreciation for a more modern assembly scholar who denied the inerrancy of the Scriptures. No one ever accused Darby of that! He knew that if the Bible contains error, it is not divinely inspired. Sure, we do not agree with everthing Darby taught. But doesn't he deserve a salute for his accomplishments? He tramped for months on end over the Wicklow mountains of Ireland and saw hundreds of Roman Catholics won to Christ. Then he moved to the Continent and ministered for twenty-six years without unpacking his suitcase. He often subsisted for days at a time on acorns and milk. New Testament assemblies were established wherever he went; he was an authentic church planter. One day he sat in a cheap Italian boarding house, cupped his chin in his hands, and sang, "Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow

Thee.” It was true. Darby translated the Bible into English, French, and German. One such translation would normally be considered a life-time work. His collected writings fill thirty-four volumes. His Synopsis of the Books of the Bible has been used far beyond the confines of the assemblies. And even some of his most ardent critics have been known to sing his hymns – songs of spiritual depth and worship. The entire evangelical world is indebted to him for his monumental contribution to the restoration of dispensational truth, the truth of the New Testament church, the pre-tribulation rapture, and the pre-millennial return of Christ. Does a man like that not deserve an occasional kind word along with the vilification that is heaped on him? It is time to fire the wrecking crew and call in the builders.

It is time to balance criticism with appreciation and gratitude. It is time to avoid the stigma of the saying, “If you can’t do, critique.” We should all remember Spurgeon’s words: “Blame comes best on the back of praise.”

Liar Deceiver Destroyer

"...we are not ignorant of his devices." 2 Corinthians 2:11

It is important to know the devices of our enemy, the Devil. Otherwise he is likely to take advantage of us.

We should know that he is a liar, and has been from the beginning. In fact, he is the father of lies (John 8:44). He lied to Eve by misrepresenting God, and he has been doing it ever since.

He is a deceiver (Rev. 20:10).

He mixes a little truth with error. He imitates or counterfeits everything that is of God. He poses as an angel of light and sends out his messengers as ministers of righteousness (2 Cor. 11:14,15). He deceives by using great Signs and lying wonders (2 Th. 2:9). He corrupts the minds of people (2 Cor. 11:3).

Satan is a murderous destroyer (John 8:44; 10:10).

His goal and the goal of all his demons is to destroy. There is no exception to that statement. As a raging lion, he goes about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). He persecutes God's people (Rev. 2:10) and destroys his own slaves through drugs, demonism, alcohol, immorality and related vices.

He is the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10).

The word "devil" (Gr. diabolos) means accuser or slanderer, and as his name is, so is he. All those who slander the brethren are doing the devil's work.

He sows discouragement. Paul warned the

Corinthians that if they did not forgive the repentant backslider, Satan might gain an advantage by plunging the brother into extreme discouragement (2 Cor. 2:7-11).

Just as Satan, speaking through Peter, sought to dissuade Jesus from going to the Cross (Mark 8:31-33), so he encourages Christians to spare themselves from the shame and suffering of cross bearing.

A favorite ploy of the Wicked One is to divide and conquer. He seeks to sow strife and discord among the saints, knowing that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Sad to say, he has been all too successful in this strategy.

He blinds the minds of unbelievers lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ should shine unto them and they should be saved (2 Cor. 4:4).

He blinds them by amusements, false religion, procrastination and pride. He occupies them with feelings rather than facts, and with themselves rather than Christ.

Finally, Satan attacks right after great spiritual victories or mountaintop experiences, when the danger of pride is greatest. He looks for a weak spot in our armor, and shoots straight for it.

The best defense against the Devil is to live in unclouded fellowship with the Lord, covered by the protective gear of a holy character.

Lord, Break Me!

“The brokenness of spirit which makes no resistance to the Father’s hand is a main element of fertility in souls wherein He works. It is not power He seeks from us, but weakness; not resistant force, but ‘yieldingness’ to Him. All power is His: His strength is perfected in weakness.” —Selected

Foreword

Thirty years after Andrew Murray wrote

Abide in Christ, he said:

I would like you to know that a minister or Christian author may often be led to say more than he has experienced. I had not then [when he wrote Abide in Christ] experienced all that I wrote of. I cannot say that I have experienced it all perfectly now.

Was it not in this same spirit that the Apostle Paul wrote:

Now that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own (Philippians 3:12).

I share the same sentiment with regard to the following article, Lord, Break Me! The burden of the Lord is on me to write these things. The truth is too sublime and too urgent to be withheld simply because I have failed to experience it in full. To whatever extent I have failed, I make the things I have written the aspiration of my heart.

William MacDonald

God Values Broken Things

Usually when something is broken, its value declines or disappears altogether. Broken dishes, broken bottles, broken mirrors are generally scrapped. Even a crack in furniture or a tear in cloth greatly reduces its resale value.

But it isn't that way in the spiritual realm. God puts a premium on broken things—especially on broken people. That is why we read such verses as:

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18).

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psalm 51:17).

God knows how to resist the proud and haughty, but He cannot resist a person who is humble and contrite.

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). There is something in our brokenness that appeals to His compassion and power.

And so part of His wonderful purpose for our lives is that we should be broken—broken in heart, broken in spirit, and broken even in body (II Corinthians 4:6-18).

Conversion A Form Of Brokenness

We are introduced to the breaking process prior to our conversion when the Holy Spirit begins His work of convicting us of sin. He must get us to the place where we are willing to confess we are lost, unworthy, deserving only of hell. We fight every step of the way. But He continues to wrestle with us until our pride is shattered, our boasting tongue is silenced and all

resistance gone. Lying at the foot of the Cross, we finally whisper, “Lord Jesus, save me!” The shrew has been tamed, the sinner has been mastered, the colt has been broken.

Yes, the colt has been broken. By nature the colt is a wild, lawless creature. At the merest suggestion of a bridle or a saddle, it will rear, bolt, leap and kick. It may be a beautiful, well-proportioned animal, but as long as it is unbroken, it is useless as far as service is concerned. But then comes the painful, prolonged process of bending the colt’s will so that it will submit to the harness. Once the colt’s will has been conquered by a higher will, the animal finds the real reason for its existence.

In this connection, it is good for us to remember that the Lord Jesus was a Carpenter in Nazareth, and as such He may have made wooden yokes. Someone has beautifully suggested that if there had been a sign over the door of His shop, it probably would have read, “My yokes fit well.” But the point for us is that our divine Lord is still a yoke maker. He says, Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:29, 30).

However, yokes are only for those who are broken and submissive. Our wills must be subdued and yielded before we can learn of Him. He was gentle and lowly in heart. We must become like Him, and only in so doing will we find rest for our hearts.

Elements Of Brokenness

But that brings us to the basic question, “What is meant by true brokenness? How does it manifest itself in a believer’s life? What are some of its basic elements?”

1. Repentance, Confession, Apology

Perhaps one of the first things we think of is a readiness to confess sin to God and to those we have wronged. The broken man is quick to repent. He does not try to sweep sin under the carpet. He does not try to forget it with the excuse, “Time heals all things.” He rushes into the presence of God and cries, “I have sinned.” Then he goes to whoever has been hurt by his actions and says, “I was wrong. I am sorry. I want you to forgive me.” If on the one hand he knows the scalding shame of having to apologize, on the other he knows the great release of having a clear conscience and of walking in the light.

True confession does not gloss over sin or blunt its reality. It is not like the unbroken matron who said with hauteur, “If I have done anything wrong, I am willing to be forgiven.” Genuine repentance says, “I have done wrong and I’m here to say that I’m sorry.”

David’s life was clouded by sin and failure, but the thing that endeared him to God’s heart was his deep penitence. In Psalms 32 and 51 we retrace with him his transgressions, sin and iniquity. We watch him during the time when he refused to repent; life then was physical, mental and spiritual misery. Nothing went right. It seemed that everything was out of joint. Finally he broke. He confessed and God forgave. Then the bells began to ring again and David recovered his song.

In the New Testament, Paul gives us an illustration of brokenness. It was at the time he appeared before the chief priests and Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. When he prefaced his remarks with a statement that he had always lived in good conscience, the high priest was infuriated and ordered that the prisoner be slapped on the mouth. The apostle snapped back, “God shall strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?” (Acts 23:3). The attendants were shocked by Paul’s scathing rebuke. Didn’t he know that he was speaking to the high priest? Actually the apostle did not know. Maybe Ananias was not wearing his official robes or occupying his usual seat. Or perhaps it was Paul’s weak eyesight again. Whatever the reason, he had not intentionally spoken evil of the duly constituted ruler. So he quickly apologized for his words, quoting Exodus 22:28, “You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.” The apostle had a low breaking point. He demonstrated his spiritual maturity by his readiness to say, “I was wrong. I am sorry.”

2. Restitution

Closely connected with this first aspect of brokenness is prompt restitution, wherever it is called for. If I have stolen, damaged or injured something, or if someone else has suffered loss because of my misbehavior, it is not enough to apologize. Justice demands that the loss be repaid. This applies to what happened before my conversion as well as to what happens afterwards.

After Zacchaeus had received the Lord Jesus, he remembered some of the crooked deals he had pulled as a tax-collector. It was a divine instinct that taught him

immediately that these wrongs must be made right. So he said to the Lord, "…if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." Here the "if" does not express any doubt or indecision. The idea is "in every case where I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." His determination to make restitution was a fruit of his conversion. The "fourfold" was a gauge of the vitality of his new life.

There are cases where it is impossible to make restitution. Perhaps records have been destroyed, or exacts amounts have been forgotten with the passing of time. God knows all about this. All He wants is that we pay back what we owe in every case where we can.

And this should always be done in the Name of the Lord Jesus. There is no glory for God in it if I just say, "I stole this. I am sorry. Now I want to pay you back." The action should be linked with a testimony for Christ, such as, "I have recently become a Christian through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has been speaking to me about some tools I stole from you five years ago. I have come to apologize and to return the tools." Every act of righteousness or kindness which a Christian does should be combined with a witness for the Savior so that He and not self gets the glory.

3. A Forgiving Spirit

A third element of brokenness is the willingness to forgive when we have been wronged. In many cases this takes as much grace as apologizing or making restitution.

Actually the New Testament is surprisingly explicit in laying down instructions for us in this manner of forgiving others.

First of all, whenever we have been wronged, we should immediately forgive the person in our hearts (Ephesians 4:32). We do not go to him yet and tell him he is forgiven, but in our hearts we have actually forgiven him.

The moment a man wrongs me, I must forgive him. Then my soul is free. If I hold the wrong against him, I sin against God, and against him and jeopardize my forgiveness with God. Whether the man repents, makes amends, asks my pardon or not, makes no difference. I have instantly forgiven him. He must face God with the wrong he has done, but that is his affair and God's and not mine, save that I should help him according to Matthew 18:15, etc. But whether this succeeds or not and before this even begins, I must forgive him (Lenski).

There are multitudes of little wrongs that can be forgiven and forgotten immediately. It is real victory when we can do it. "Love…does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people" (I Corinthians 13:7, J. B. Phillips). A Christian lady was once asked, "Don't you remember the mean thing that that catty woman said to you?" Her reply was, "I not only don't remember; I distinctly remember forgetting."

If the wrong is of a more serious nature and you do not feel it would be righteous to let it pass, then the next step is to go to the offender and speak to him about it (Matthew 18:15). If he repents, then you must forgive him. "And if he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him" (Luke 17:4). It is only right that we should be willing to forgive indefinitely. After all, we have been and are forgiven times without number.

Notice that you are not to go and tell everyone else about the offender's fault (that is what we almost invariably do). "Go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone." The obvious strategy is to keep these differences as confined as possible.

As soon as the offending brother confesses his sin, you tell him that he is forgiven. You have already forgiven him in your heart, but now you can administer forgiveness to him.

But suppose he refuses to repent. Then in accordance with Matthew 18:16, you "take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses."

If he refuses to listen to the two or three witnesses, then the matter should be taken to the local fellowship of Christians. The purpose in all this is not vindictiveness or punishment, but the restoration of the offending brother.

If this final effort fails, he is to be looked upon as a Gentile and a tax-collector. In other words, you no longer treat him as one who is in fellowship in the local church. Since he is not acting like a Christian, you accept him on his own ground. You count him as an unbeliever. But as soon as he repents, then you forgive him and full fellowship is restored.

God hates an unforgiving spirit, the determination to carry grudges to the grave, the unwillingness to let bygones be bygones. This is brought out forcefully in the parable of the debtor servant (Matthew 18:23-25). When he himself was bankrupt, he had been forgiven by the king a million dollars. But then he was unwilling to forgive a fellow servant a few dollars. The lesson is

clear. Since God forgave us when we were in debt over our heads, we should be willing to forgive others who owe us trifles.

4. Enduring Wrong Without Retaliating

But there are other aspects of brokenness. One is the humble spirit that suffers for doing right and does not retaliate. Here, of course, our Lord is the prime Example.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly (I Peter 2:23).We have all been called to this type of life.

For one is approved, if mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval (I Peter 2:19, 20).

In his book,

From Grace to Glory,1 Murdoch Campbell reminds us that John Wesley had a wife who made his life a trial of fire. For hours she would literally drag him around the room by his hair. And the founder of Methodism never uttered a harsh word to her.

Campbell also tells of "a godly Highland minister who was married to a similar woman. He sat one day in his room reading his Bible. The door opened and his wife entered. Her hand snatched the Book from him and threw it into the fire. He looked into her face and quietly made the remark, 'I never sat at a warmer fire.' It was an answer that turned away her wrath and marked the

beginning of a new and gracious life. His Jezebel became a Lydia. The thorn became a lily."

A great saint of God has said, "It is the mark of deepest and truest humility to see ourselves condemned without cause and to be silent under it. To be silent under insult and wrong is a very noble imitation of our Lord. 'Oh, my Lord, when I remember in how many ways Thou didst suffer, who in no way deserved it, I know not where my senses are when I am in such haste to defend and excuse myself. Is it possible I should desire anyone to speak any good of me or to think it, when so many ill things were thought and spoken of Thee?'" (

Living Patiently, J. Allen Blair, pp. 353, 4).

5. Repaying Evil With Good

An additional advance in the life of brokenness is not only to bear wrong patiently but to reward every wrong with a kindness.

Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. "…if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17, 20, 21).

Here I am always reminded of the elephant that was being driven down an Indian street by its owner. The man was carrying a sharp-pointed steel goad to keep the lumbering beast moving along. Then the owner lost his grip on the goad and it fell to the ground with a resounding clang. The long-suffering elephant turned around, picked up the goad with its trunk, and held it

out to the master. If elephants could be Christians, that elephant certainly was one.

6. Honoring Others Above Self

And then there is the brand of brokenness that esteems others better than one's self (Philippians 2:3). We see it illustrated in an incident from Abram's life (Genesis 13:1-13). He and Lot had come up from Egypt to the Negeb and then to Bethel with their families and possessions. Both men had extensive flocks and herds, and soon a quarrel developed between their hired hands over pasture land. It was at this point that Abram stepped in and said, in effect, "Look, Lot, we are not going to part company over a few bales of hay. You take whatever pasturage you want, and I'll take my animals somewhere else." So Lot chose the lush pasture lands in the valley of the Jordan—ominously close to Sodom. Big-hearted Abram moved farther into Canaan. And so an Old Testament saint, living on the other side of Pentecost, gave us a practical demonstration of what Paul meant when he said:

Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor (Romans 12:10).

7. Prompt Obedience

But this is not all. God wants us to be broken in accepting and obeying His will. The psalmist puts it concisely:

Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not keep with you (Psalm 32:9).

The tendency for a spirited horse is to jump the gun, whereas the mule symbolizes stubbornness and

intransigence. So we have the two dangers in connection with the will of God. It is possible to move on without clear direction, to run without being sent. And then again it is possible to willfully resist the clear guidance of the Lord.

Jonah, for example. There was no question as to what God wanted him to do. He was called to go and preach repentance to Nineveh. But he was not broken as yet. So he boarded a ship going in the opposite direction. Only after his nightmarish experience in the whale's belly was his will bent to obey. Then he went forth to prove that God's will is, after all, good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).We get a surprising picture of brokenness in the colt which Jesus rode into Jerusalem (Luke 19:29-35). Up to that time no man had ever ridden on that animal, and it could have been expected to vigorously resist any attempt to mount it. But when the Savior approached, it experienced a miracle of instant brokenness. The will of the colt became completely submissive to the will of its Creator.

It might be mixing metaphors to introduce clay in a discussion on brokenness, but the clay in the hands of a potter is an apt description of what a broken person is in the Lord's hands—pliable and responsive to the pressure of His fingers. And so the daily prayer of the submissive saint is:

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Thou art the Potter; I am the clay.

Mould me and make me after Thy will,

While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Search me and try me, Master, today!

Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me just now,

As in Thy presence humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Wounded and weary, help me, I pray!

Power—all power—surely is Thine!

Touch me and heal me, Savior divine!

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Hold o'er my being absolute sway!

Fill with Thy Spirit till all shall see

Christ only, always, living in me!

8. Death To Public Opinion

There are many other aspects of brokenness. For instance, we need to be brought to the place where we are dead to the world's applause or frowns. After W. P. Nicholson was saved, he came under the tutelage of a Salvation Army officer. One day the officer said to him, "If you mean business for God, wear this sign-board for a few hours in the center of town." On the board were lettered the words "DEAD TO PUBLIC OPINION." This experience had a profound effect on all Nicholson's life of fearless service for Christ.

9. Confessing Others' Sins As Our Own

We need to be so broken that we will confess the sins of God's people as our own. This is what Daniel did (Daniel 9:3-19). He was not personally guilty of most of the sins he catalogued. But he identified himself so closely with the nation of Israel that their sins became his sin. In this

he reminds us, of course, of the One who “took our sins and our sorrows and made them His very own.” And the lesson for us is that instead of criticizing other believers and pointing the accusing finger, we should confess their sins as if they were our own.

10. Keeping One’s Cool In The Crises

A final aspect of brokenness involves poise and equanimity in the crises of life. When an unavoidable delay occurs, the natural reaction is to fuss and fume. Interruptions to the regular routine often provoke annoyance and fretfulness. Mechanical breakdowns and accidents—how easily they upset us and even cause tempers to flare. Schedule changes and disappointments have a way of bringing out the worst that is in us. The frenzy, the ruffled feathers, the anger and the hysteria that all these things arouse are ruinous to the Christian testimony, to say the least. The way of brokenness is to keep one’s cool during these crises, knowing that God is overruling all the circumstances of life for His purposes. The flat tire may be a blessing in disguise, saving you from a crash farther down the expressway. The unexpected visitor who interrupts your service for the Lord may actually present a more important ministry that what you are doing. The accident, with all its suffering, inconvenience and expense, may bring you in touch with people who have been prepared by the Holy Spirit to receive the gospel. In all these circumstances, the Lord desires to see us react instantly with calmness instead of impatience, with brokenness instead of rebellion.

These then are a few examples of what is meant by brokenness. The list is suggestive but certainly not

exhaustive. As we walk in fellowship with the Lord, He will show us areas in our individual lives where we need to be broken at the foot of the Cross. And with each such revelation He will give the needed grace.

For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

What Brokenness Does Not Mean

Having seen what some of the elements of brokenness are, we should explain briefly what is not meant by the word. It does not mean that the person becomes a Mr. Milquetoast, a bland, spineless sort of jellyfish. It does not mean that he becomes a powerless cipher, exerting little influence on those around him. If anything, the reverse is true. Brokenness is one of the finest elements of a strong character. It doesn't take any discipline to be unbroken. But what self-control is required to be Christ-like when every natural instinct rebels against it!

Broken people are the ones with the most persuasive characters. They influence quietly by the irresistible force of an other-worldly example. It is a paradox, but there it is: "Thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm 18:35, A.V.). And they are capable of anger when occasion demands it. We see this in the life of our Lord. He drove the money changers out of the Temple with a scourge of small cords. But the important thing to see is that His anger flared not because of any wrong that was done to Him personally, but because His Father's house had been dishonored. As has been said, "He was a lion in God's cause but a lamb in His own." Many of the martyrs and reformers were truly broken but one would hardly say that they were weak or uninfluential.

The Generation Gap

One of the most difficult areas in which to exercise brokenness appears to be in the child-parent relationship. By some queer quirk of fallen human nature, we seem to be most unloving to those who are closest to us. Many Christian girls wage a constant battle within themselves because of the hostility they feel toward their mothers. And just as many Christian fellows are scarcely civil to their fathers most of the time. No one denies the existence of a generation gap; actually it is an enormous gulf. The younger people complain that their parents don't understand them, that they are repressive, that they are out of touch with the times, that they belong to the establishment. But in spite of it all, many youth feel guilt and shame that they cannot seem to rise above these attitudes and act like Christians for a change toward their folks. They realize it is colossal defeat that they can be so kind and personable to their peers and even to other adults and yet so cold and cutting at home. They hate themselves for often wishing their parents were dead, but to break and confess is a hard pill to swallow.

It was no accident that when God gave ten basic laws to the nation of Israel, one of them should deal with this difficult and delicate area of human relations:

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Exodus 20:12).

Paul repeats the command in the New Testament:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may be well with

you and that you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

To honor and obey one's parents means not only to do what they say, but to respect them, to be kind to them, and to care for them whenever necessary. Paul gives four reasons:

1. It is right

2. It is for the young people's own good

3. It is Scriptural

4. It promotes a full life.

But many fellows and girls have almost convinced themselves that while it may be possible in other cases, it simply isn't possible in theirs. THEIR parents are too overbearing, too square.

All that is needed, of course, is brokenness. What this will mean will be to go to the father or mother or both and say, "Look, I'm sorry that I've been such a heel in my relationships with you. I've never thanked you for all you have done for me, but I want to do it now. I want you to forgive me for the way I've built up walls of resistance between us. By God's help, I want things to be different in the future."

The timeless illustration of bridging the generation gap is the story of the prodigal son. At first the ingrate couldn't wait for his father to die; he wanted the inheritance right now. Well, he got it and went off to live it up. Then followed the late-night parties, the drinks, the carousing, the sex orgies and all the rest. But finally the money was gone and so were the friends. The wastrel was reduced to bare subsistence. He began to think of the servants at home who were living better

than he. What a fool he had been! He had left home full but now he goes back empty. He had left demanding justice but he returns pleading for mercy. He had left with head high but he crawls home broken.

“Dad,” he says, “I have sinned. Sinned against God and sinned against you. I don’t deserve to be your son…” He had planned to say more, to plead for a job as a servant. But by this time the father was issuing orders to the household. And then before long, the son was dressed in a new suit, had a handsome ring on one finger, had a new pair of shoes on, and was sitting down to a sumptuous dinner of roast veal and all the trimmings. The gap had been bridged by brokenness. But the son would never have known the father’s kiss if he had not first broken in repentance and confession.

Nothing will help to straighten out a person’s attitude of hostility like the humiliation of having to make such an apology. The next time he is tempted to show any act of unlove toward a parent, he will quickly remember the scalding shame of having to break, and this will act as a powerful deterrent.

The Marital Gap

Perhaps the second most difficult area in which to manifest real brokenness is in the husband-wife relationship. Once again it is a matter of acting unkindly toward those who are closest to us, while showing charm and courtesy to those we scarcely know. Too often we have to confess that we are devils at home and saints abroad.

The Bible is realistic in anticipating the possibility of tension in the marriage relationship. We think especially of Colossians 3:19:

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

The bitterness that can develop in a husband toward his wife is often so deep that he despairs of ever rising above it. Too often he simply gives up and seeks release through separation or divorce.

Take the case of Jano and Jinx. The first time they met, they both knew they were meant for each other. During the months that followed they were together at every opportunity. By the end of six months they were engaged, and the wedding was set for six months later. But as things turned out, they were married four months after their engagement.

The wedding went off with everyone playing his part in the little game quite well. And for the first year things went fairly smoothly. Then one day they had a violent quarrel and Jinx released all her suppressed disrespect of Jano for what had happened before their marriage. He repaid her in kind. The walls quivered and the windows bulged. After that it seemed that their marriage was in hopeless ruins. Jano found that the bitterness he felt toward his wife was greater than the love with which he had loved her (II Samuel 13:15).

Friends suggested that they see a Christian marriage counselor, and they did. But underneath they were as hard and unyielding as the bars of a castle.

Finally Jano applied for a divorce. But before the case came up in court, a Christian friend challenged him to

try the way of brokenness. And the friend's wife reached Jinx at the same time with the same message. Why not break before the Lord and before one another? Why not put the past under the blood of Christ and make a new start?

They did. It was the hardest thing that either had ever done. But they got together and made a complete confession. There was no hedging or self-vindication. It was as forthright a confession as one could wish for. Each one accepted responsibility for his part in their pre-marital sin. After tearful confession to the Lord, they covenanted never to reproach one another with this sin again. They claimed the promise of God that they had been forgiven (I John 1:9). They gladly forgave each other for everything. And each one decided that he must also forgive himself. When they rose from their knees, an enormous burden had been lifted. They realized that there would still be a period of adjustment, but the nuclear cloud of bitterness and strife had dissipated. And they realized the necessity for continual brokenness whenever future problems would arise in the home.

Months later Jano put down the evening paper and commented how strange it was that people would spend time and money at marriage counselors and psychiatrists, and try any form of expensive "treatment," but they would not try the way of brokenness. And yet without brokenness, the other things were largely ineffective.

God Wants Us All To Be Broken

But it is not only in the child-parent relationship or in the husband-wife relationship, but in all areas of our life the Lord wants us to be broken. He will wrestle with us

as He wrestled with Jacob at Peniel. He will try to break us of pride, of self-will, of an unforgiving spirit, of stubbornness, of gossip, of backbiting, of worldliness, of impurity, of temper, of every work of the flesh. He wants to change our name from Jacob to Israel, from cheat to prince, from powerless schemer to one who has power with God and man. He will wrestle with us till the breaking of the day and put our thigh out of joint. Then we will go through the rest of our life with the limp of a broken man whom God can use.

God wants us to be blameless. None of us is sinless but we can all be blameless. A blameless person is one who, when he does commit some wrong, is quick to make it right. He does not let the sun go down on his wrath. By confession and apology, he keeps the lines of communication open with God and with his fellow men. An elder in a local church must be blameless (I Timothy 3:2), but every Christian should be.

Think Of The Results

Think what it would mean in our individual lives, in our homes, in the local church and in the business world if we were all broken as we should be.

In our own lives it would mean greater power, greater happiness and better health. The men who have the greatest spiritual impact on others are those who are yoked with Christ in meekness and humility. They are the ones who find fulfillment and rest in serving Him. And what is good for us spiritually is good for our physical health as well. The British Medical Journal once reported that “there is not a tissue in the human body wholly removed from the spirit.” Dr. Paul Tournier tells of a patient who had had anemia for months. Then it

mysteriously disappeared and her blood was normal again. Investigation revealed that she had had a spiritual crisis, namely, she had forgiven a long-standing grudge. Yes, brokenness is good for the health.

Think of a home where the members keep short accounts with one another. Of course there are differences from time to time, but they are not allowed to build up steam in the boiler. The family has learned the holy art of kissing and making up. That is the kind of home where Jesus loves to be.

In the local assembly, brokenness is the road to revival. It is a fixed law in the spiritual realm that the tears of brokenness are the prelude to showers of blessing. We generally try everything else first—new building, new campaigns, new methods, but God is waiting for repentance and humiliation. When we repent the blessing will flow.

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (II Chronicles 7:14).

And think of the impact that Christians would have in the business world by exhibiting brokenness. Men of the world are not broken and they like to pit their strength against others who are like them. But they are nonplussed when they bump into someone who doesn’t react with anger, who admits wrong and apologizes, who exhibits the grace of the Lord Jesus. It is this supernatural kind of life that speaks loudest for Christ in the rough and tumble world of commerce today.

Lord, Break Me

Some years ago, in a missionary prayer meeting, I heard an earnest young believer pray, “Lord, break me!” The request jarred me. Up to that time in my life, I had never prayed that prayer. And I wasn’t sure I was ready to pray it even then. But those words, flowing hissing hot from the heart of that young disciple, awakened me to the tremendous need of brokenness in my own life. They created an awareness that this was a fantastically vital area in the spiritual realm. And now they have become the constant prayer of an aspiring heart:

LORD, BREAK ME!

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1 London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970, p. 149.

Love Not the World

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

The world is presented in the New Testament as a kingdom that is opposed to God. Satan is its ruler, and all nonbelievers are subjects. This kingdom makes its appeal to man through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. It is a society in which man tries to make himself happy without God, and in which the name of Christ is unwelcome. Dr. Gleason L. Archer Jr.

says that the world is "the organized system of rebellion, self-seeking and enmity toward God which characterizes the human race in opposition to God."

The world has its own amusements, politics, art, music, religion, thought-patterns and life-style. It seeks to force everyone to conform and hates those who refuse. This explains its hatred of the Lord Jesus.

Christ died to deliver us from the world. Now the world is crucified to us and we to it. It is positive treason for believers to love the world in any of its forms. In fact, the Apostle John says that those who love the world are the enemies of God.

Believers are not of the world, but they are sent into it to testify against it, to denounce its works as evil, and to preach salvation from it through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians are called to walk in separation from the world. In the past, this may have been too narrowly limited to dancing, theaters, smoking, drinking, card playing and gambling. But it includes much more. Much of what comes over the TV is worldly, appealing to the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. Pride is worldly, whether it be pride of titles, degrees, salary, heritage or a big name. Luxurious living is worldly, whether palatial homes, gourmet foods, attention-getting clothing and jewelry or prestige cars. So is a life of ease and pleasure, spent largely on travel cruises, shopping sprees, sports and recreation. Our ambitions for ourselves and for our children may be worldly, even while we appear to be spiritual and pious. Finally, sex outside of marriage is a form of worldliness.

The more devoted we are to the Savior and the more sold-out we are to Him, the less time we will have for worldly pleasures and amusements. C. Stacey Woods said, "The measure of our devotion to Christ is the measure of our separation from the world."

We are but strangers here, we do not crave

A home on earth, which gave Thee but a grave;

Thy cross has severed ties which bound us here,

Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere.

J.G. Deck

Marvelous Grace

Marvelous Grace - from an audio message October 29, 2006 - Bill MacDonald Romans Chapter 12:1-2. Jesus Christ Died For Us.

Oftentimes when we think of him we think of his humanity, don't we? But the Lord Jesus came down from heaven and took upon himself, upon God, something He never had before, that was humanity.

It is astounding really, astounding, nothing like it in the history of the universe.

But what really is astounding is that God in a body of flesh went to the cross of Calvary and died. That man hanging on the cross bound by nails feet and hands was God. Amazing! In fact I think it is a thought beyond all thought. Probably the greatest thought that has ever entered the human mind. True.

I tell you we're grappling with great truths when we come to the Word of God aren't we?

He didn't have to do it! He could have just brushed us off the table into Hell.

But in marvelous grace He decided to die for us anonymous nobodies, that's what we were.

We deserved eternal death. You know, the Lord Jesus was the only person in the universe who was qualified to be our Saviour.

He had to be God, he had to be man, He had to be willing.

The marvelous thing is that the God-man was willing to go to the cross and pour out his blood his life blood for you and for me. Wonderful wonderful Jesus. He paid too high a price. To vanquish for us every foe.

Consider these quotes by some great Saints: "You'll never appreciate Calvary, until it takes your breath away and becomes the most important thing in your life." And "From the beginning of time until now, and on into eternity, Calvary is the only thing that ever happened."

My friend, get yourself into that equation because He died for you, He died for me. The truth of what he did for us should leave us speechless, it strains the mind. Nothing could ever be as important as this.

Love so amazing so divine, demands our heart, our life, our all.

More audio here and here.

Mourning Over The Past

"How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel." 1 Samuel 16:1

There comes a time in life when we must stop mourning over the past and get on with the work of the present.

God had rejected Saul from being king. The action was final, irreversible. But Samuel had difficulty in accepting it. He had been closely associated with Saul and he now wept to see his hopes disappointed. He continued to mourn a loss that would never be retrieved. God said, in effect, "Quit mourning. Go out and anoint Saul's successor. My program has not failed. I have a better man than Saul to step onto the stage of Israel's history."

We would like to think that Samuel not only learned the lesson for himself but that he passed it on to David, who took Saul's place as king. At any rate, David showed that he had learned the lesson well. As long as his baby was dying, he fasted and mourned, hoping that God would spare the child. But when the infant died, he bathed, changed his clothes, went to the Tabernacle to worship, then ate a meal. To those who questioned his realism, he said, "Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23).

This has a voice for us in our Christian life and service. Sometime it may happen that a ministry might be wrenched away from us and given to someone else. We grieve over the death of an avenue of service.

It may be that a friendship or a partnership is severed, and that, as a result, life seems empty and flat. Or that

we have been cruelly disappointed by someone who was very dear to us. We mourn the death of a valued relationship.

Or it may be that some lifelong dream is shattered or some ambition is frustrated. We mourn the death of a noble aspiration or vision.

There is nothing wrong about mourning, but it should not be prolonged to the extent that it cripples our effectiveness in meeting the challenges of the hour. E. Stanley Jones said he made it a point to "recover within the hour" from the grief and blows of life. An hour may not be long enough for most of us, but we must not be forever inconsolable over circumstances that cannot be changed.

Obedience and Sacrifice

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22

God's instructions to King Saul were dear enough.

Slay the Amalekites and destroy all their possessions. All of them.

Don't take any spoil. But Saul spared King Agag and the choicest of the sheep, oxen, fatlings and lambs.

When Samuel met Saul in the morning at Gilgal,

Saul confidently announced that he had done exactly what the Lord commanded. But at that very moment, a barnyard choir began its oratorio-sheep bleating and oxen lowing. Very embarrassing!

Samuel wanted to know, of course, how the sheep were bleating if Saul had killed them all. The King then tried to cover his disobedience by blaming the people and by excusing them on religious grounds. He said, "The people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the Lord."

It was then he heard God's prophet thunder out the convicting words, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witch-craft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

Obedience is more important than rituals, sacrifices and offerings. I heard once of a family who treated their mother with cool contempt and disobedience during her lifetime. But when she died, they dressed her corpse in a

Dior original. A despicable and futile attempt to atone for years of rebellion and discourtesy!

We often hear people defending an unscriptural position or unscriptural associations on the ground that they can have a wider influence in this way. But God is not deceived by such specious rationalizations. He wants our obedience - He will take care of our sphere of influence. The truth is that when we are disobedient, our influence is negative. Only when we are walking in fellowship with the Lord can we exert a godly influence on others.

William Gurnall said, "Sacrifice without obedience is sacrilege." And it becomes even worse when we cloke our disobedience with some pious, religious excuse. God is not hoodwinked.

Should We Hire a Pastor?

While a salary is a suitable method of payment in most professions, there are peculiar dangers connected with it for those who minister the Word of God.

Doubtless it is for that reason that the idea of a salaried ministry is foreign to the New Testament. While the Lord Jesus taught quite definitely that “the laborer is worthy of his wages” (Luke 10:7) and Paul confirmed that “those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14), there is no suggestion that these men should receive a stipulated amount each month.

One of the potential problems is that those who control the salary can often control the preaching. It does not always happen that those who pay the piper insist on calling the tune, but it has happened and can happen. Those who hold the purse-strings may be very carnal, yet they can insist on suppressing any preaching that does not suit them.

It is also true that those who pay the salary can require certain standards of achievement. For example, they might require an increase in church membership, either through conversions or transfers from other churches. This might put a subtle pressure on the Lord’s servant to lower standards in order to increase numbers.

It is not in his power to produce true conversions: it is God who gives the increase. But he can produce shallow professions that look good in an annual report. Also he can speak softly on matters of discipline so as not to lose anyone.

Even apart from pressure from others, there is a temptation for the teacher to soft-pedal truths that might offend his congregation.

If the people are wealthy, he might not think it expedient to speak on “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth” (Matt. 6:19), or “Command those that are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim 6:17).

The preacher must be the Lord’s free man, free to declare the full counsels of God, free to be a mouthpiece of God, free to speak as the oracles of God. Anything that hinders this is a great tragedy in the work of the Lord.

In times of declension and apostasy, there is often a tendency for preachers to side with those who control his finances rather than to stand true to the great fundamental doctrines of the faith.

Concerning a denomination that is now riddled with liberalism and apostasy, David O. Beale writes, “There is a perennial ‘joke’

which pastors tell at each annual meeting: ‘If the Convention splits, I’m going with the Annuity Board!’ The Board does appear to be the ‘cement’ of the empire.” Financial considerations have a powerful way of taking priority over faithfulness to the Word of God.

A fixed salary could very possibly weaken the life of faith. The servant of the Lord should be an example to others of one who walks by faith and not by sight. His life should be a perpetual crisis of dependence on the Lord. G. H. Lang gave his testimony: “I have lived and

worked in happy fellowship with workers in the gospel in many lands through fifty years and am satisfied that a guaranteed or regular income, because it dispenses with direct and constant faith in God as to temporal supplies, is certainly a spiritual loss, not by any means a gain."

1 In the ecclesiastical world, it is not uncommon for men to shop around for bigger salaries. They mistake material advancement for the guidance of God. It is all too easy to conclude that the offer of an attractive salary is an indication of God's call.

In the Old Testament economy, a bondservant was worth twice as much as a hired servant (Deut. 15:18).

In other words, one who served because he belonged to his master was more valuable than one who worked for what he got out of it. Does this have a message for us today?

Of course, the question arises, "If not by a salary, how is a servant of the Lord to be supported?"

First of all, the believer must have absolute confidence that the Lord has called him to serve on a full time basis. This cannot be overemphasized. And he must not only be sure himself, but must have the confidence of his spiritual guides that he has received the divine tap on the shoulder. After all, no man is an adequate judge of his own gift.

Second, he must be thoroughly assured that, as Hudson Taylor said, "the Lord pays for what he orders." He can then step forth without any visible means of support, but with unwavering trust that the Lord will provide for his needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. That should certainly be sufficient.

But how will God do this? He will do it through His people. Someone has described the process as follows: “God can place an idea in a person’s mind. He can cause someone to feel a strong ‘urge’ or ‘conviction’ to do something. So when we pray for a certain amount of money, God can cause one person to reach for his check book and send that amount, or he can cause a dozen people to send odd fractions of that amount, causing the total to be exact. You may not believe that He does this, but I am simply saying that when I talk about praying for money, this is what I mean.”

This is the thrilling part of the life of faith - to see income increase as needs increase, and conversely to see income decline when it is not needed. And it serves as a valuable system of checks and balances: As long as I am doing the work of God, I know that He will supply, quite apart from any publicizing of needs on my part. If I am serving according to my own wisdom, I cannot expect Him to pay for what He has not ordered. Wrote Ray Williams in Echoes magazine, “I believe this is the way. If not, how could we rely on His guidance? If I say to myself, ‘I want to do this’ and say to my friends, ‘Can you provide the money to help me to do this job?’, I might want to do it and my friends might want to help me, but I would not know if it was the Lord’s will. If I only tell the Lord that I want to do this thing, and the finances to do it appears without anyone but the Lord knowing about it, then I know that this is the Lord’s will for me.”

2 Hear the testimony of Silas Fox: “In 1926, feeling that it would be better for me to look directly to the Lord for support, and be more free to take the calls that would come in for special meetings, I launched out, with a

wife, and five children, and to the glory of God, after a quarter of a century, can give testimony that without a mission to support me, and without a deputation secretary to make known our needs at home, and without appeals, or on my part taking up collections...and without having my name on any 'list,' yet the Lord has graciously, wonderfully, faithfully met all the needs for these twenty five years, and we praise Him, and in this give testimony in this way."

3 Finally, Dan Crawford adds his spiritual insight: "A society missionary friend expostulated with me as a married man not claiming a fixed salary - something sure was his idea. It was then that God spoke to me out of His Word. What settled the matter as to faith being the only definite thing was the following truth of God: 'The promise was by faith that it might be sure!' The only sure thing is faith!"

4 Footnotes

1. Anthony Norris Groves, p. 66.

2. Echoes Magazine, February 1984, p. 75.

3. The White Fox of Andhra, Donald S. Fox, p. 153.

4. Assembly Annals Magazine, June 1959.

Speaking Unadvisedly

"...he spake unadvisedly with his lips." Psalm 106:33

When the people of Israel grumbled about the lack of water at Kadesh, God told Moses that water would flow if he would speak to the rock. But Moses was fed up with the people by now, so he lashed out at them, saying, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of the rock?" Then he smote the rock twice with his rod. By his angry words and disobedient action, he misrepresented God to the people. The result was that he forfeited the privilege of leading the children of Israel into the promised land (Num. 20:1-13).

It is easy for a man of burning zeal to be intemperate with other believers. He is so self-disciplined whereas they need to be forever babied along. He is so knowledgeable and they so ignorant.

But what he must learn is that they are still

God's beloved people, and that the Lord will not tolerate any verbal abuse of them. It is one thing to preach the Word of God in such power that people are convicted and torn up. But it is quite another thing to scold them severely as an expression of personal irritation. This will cut a man off from God's best rewards.

When David's illustrious men are listed in 2 Samuel 23, there is one name that is conspicuous by its absence. It is the name of Joab, David's commander-in-chief. But why is his name missing? It has been suggested that the reason is that Joab used the sword on some of David's friends. If so, the incident is full of warning for us when

we are tempted to use our tongues as a sword on God's people.

When James and John, the sons of thunder, wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans, Jesus said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55).

How apropos the rebuke is to us when we speak unadvisedly with our lips to those who are His not only by creation (as the Samaritans were), but by redemption as well.

Tell Him His Fault

"...go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Matthew 18:15b Someone has done or said something which has offended you or bothered you in some way. The Bible says to go and tell him his fault, but you don't want to do it; it's too difficult.

So you start brooding about it. You begin rehearsing what he has done, how he was utterly in the wrong. When you should be working, your mind is going over all the details, and your gastric juices become sulphurous. When you should be sleeping, you resurrect the unpleasant incident, and the pressure builds up in the boiler. The Bible says to go and tell him his fault, but you just can't face up to it.

You try to think of some way in which you can get the message across to him anonymously. Or you hope that something will happen to shame him for what he has done. It doesn't happen. You know what you ought to do, but you dread the trauma of a face to face confrontation.

By this time, the ordeal is harming you a lot more than it is harming him. People can tell by your glum appearance that something is bothering you. When they talk to you, your mind is off in another hemisphere. Your work suffers because you are preoccupied. In general, you are too distracted to be effective. And the Bible still says, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." By a tremendous display of willpower, you have refrained from talking to anyone else about it, but finally the pressure becomes unbearable. You break down and tell one person—just for his prayer fellowship, of course. Instead of giving you the expected sympathy, he says,

"Why don't you go and talk to the one who has offended you?"

That does it! You decide to bite the bullet.

After rehearsing your speech, you obey the Word by telling him his fault. He takes it surprisingly well, is sorry that it has happened, and asks your forgiveness. The interview is terminated by prayer.

As you walk away a great load is lifted from your shoulders. Your stomach quits churning and your metabolism returns to normal. You kind of hate yourself for not having had the sense to obey the Scriptures more promptly.

That Unpopular Word—Discipline

That Unpopular Word—Discipline

William MacDonald

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Mr. MacDonald's article on the vital theme of discipline is reprinted from a past issue of "Help & Food" magazine which is no longer published.

Discipleship is discipline. No one will ever make progress in Christian discipleship until he has learned to train and control himself. The life that is unstructured and haphazard will never win. As a famous coach told his team, "You can't live soft all week and play tough on Saturday."

The trouble with our decadent society is that it is producing people who are soft. We don't want to hear about discipline, let alone to practice it. Freedom and permissiveness are our watchwords and consequently flabbiness is our character.

Discipline should begin in childhood. Parents who care will discipline their children to keep an orderly room, to keep themselves neat and clean, to work around the house, and to manage their own affairs. Those who learn discipline while they're young will find the rest of life much easier. Those who are allowed to do their own thing will be a burden to themselves and a pest to society.

We Christians ought to blush when we see how men and women of the world discipline themselves in order to achieve excellence. Athlete's don't gain distinction by drifting through life; they drive themselves, they train tirelessly and endlessly, they observe the rules. When Babe Didrikson Zaharias was asked, "How can I learn to hit a golf ball the way you do?" she replied, laughing:

"It's simple. First you hit a thousand golf balls. You hit them until your hands bleed and you can't hit any more. The next day you start all over again, and the next day, and the next. And, maybe a year later, you might be ready to go eighteen holes. After that you play every day until the time finally arrives when you know what you are doing when you hit the ball."

If a woman will discipline herself like that to hit a small, white ball across the landscape, how much more should Christians discipline themselves to be of maximum effectiveness in the service of Christ.

Think of how musicians train themselves. Someone asked Pederewski, the famous pianist, what the secret of his success was. He replied, "Practicing scales hour after hour, day after day, till these poor fingers were worn to the bone."

No author has ever produced a best seller without knowing something about discipline. Ernest Hemingway said that writing was an arduous ordeal for him, exhilarating, but demanding all of what he called his "juices." When he was writing a book, he was "totally consumed by it, and at the end of each day he would count the number of words he had written and enter them carefully in a log." He said:

“I’ve seen every sunrise of my life. I rise at first light, and I start by reading everything I have written to the point where I left off. That way I go through a book several hundred times, honing it until it gets an edge like the bullfighter’s sword. I rewrote the ending of A Farewell to Arms 39 times in manuscript and worked it over 30 times in proof, trying to get it right.”

The discipline of militant communism is proverbial. Nechayev, a Marxist of the last century, wrote:

“The revolutionary man is a consecrated man. He has neither his own interests nor concerns not feelings, no attachments not property, not even a name. All for him is absorbed in the single exclusive interest, in the one thought, in the one passion — revolution.”

Shame on us! Here we ate, holding up men and women of the world as examples to believers. It should be the reverse. Christians should be exhibit A of what disciplined lives should and can be. The world should be looking to believers to learn lessons of rugged, sinewy discipleship.

We need men and women like the Apostle Paul, who said.

“I run the race … with determination. I am no shadowboxer; I really fight! I am my body’s sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:26-27, Phillips).

We need men like Hudson Taylor and C. T. Studd who inured themselves to the rigors of the mission field by developing spiritual, moral, and physical muscle before they even left home.

But unfortunately what we find today is what Tozer called a soft breed of Christians who must be fed on a diet of harmless fun — delicate and brittle saints produced in religious hothouses. And what we find today is Christians who are satisfied with mediocrity in their lives and service for God, as if unaware of God's decree, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently" (Jeremiah 48:10 RV).

We desperately need a new breed of Christians who will exercise discipline in every area of their lives — such as:

· Prayer. Discipleship calls for a disciplined prayer life — not for bits and pieces of pious verbiage addressed to God intermittently when we feel like it, but for systematic, earnest supplication that knows where it's going and proceeds without distraction or mind-wandering. We need the discipline that meets with God at regular times, that knows how to agonize, to wrestle, to weep and to persevere. We need the discipline of a daily quiet time when our souls are fed from above and when we listen for God's direction for that day.

· Bible Study. Bible study takes plenty of discipline. There is no royal road, no easy way. In an age of instant foods, instant medicines, and instant dollars, it conies as a disappointment to learn that there is no such thing as instant Bible study. It requires time, application, reading, checking — in short, a lot of hard work. There is no use whining that we can't do it; the truth is that we don't want to do it. We can always do what we want to do — like watching TV or keeping up on the baseball scores.

· Time. The serious Christian learns to discipline himself in the use of his time. Every moment of life is precious.

Every opportunity for God should be seized. Whether it means purchasing an alarm clock or a seven-star diary, he will budget his time and fill his days with activities that will glorify God and bring blessing to others.

· Food. We need discipline in the matter of food consumption. Overeating is a form of drunkenness, and drunkenness is sin. How can a Christian pick a speck of cholesterol out of his brother's diet when he has tons of it in his own? The same discipline that can fast, and if necessary shed pounds of fat, can solve other problem areas in life. It is not unspiritual to go on a weight-watcher's diet; in fact, there may be times when it is the most spiritual thing to do.

· Sex. Self-control in the sex life is basic to a life of effective service. Without doubt the sex drive is one of the strongest in life. No one can master it in his own strength. But the tough-minded discipline learns to sublimate this drive, that is, to redirect the energy into fruitful service for the Lord. By avoiding the perils of oversleeping and overeating, by engaging in physical exercise, and by keeping busy for Christ, he exchanges guilt and defeat for confidence and victory.

· The Mind. Of course, to know victory in the area of sex, he will have to have his thought life under control. The mind is the fountain from which actions flow. The more we indulge a thought, the more we are likely to translate it into action. It is futile to pray for outward purity if we are enjoying a filthy thought-life. No Christian can feed on movies, TV, or Playboy magazine and make progress in divine things.

· Speech. One of the most difficult forms of discipline is that of our speech. In fact, James reminds us that no

man can tame the tongue (James 3:8). But God can, and He will. But not without our cooperation. We must forever resist the temptation to run off at the mouth, to have part in every conversation, to engage in idle, empty chatter. We should be more ready to hear than to speak. If we must speak, it should be worthwhile conversation, edifying, positive, constructive.

· Sleep. Discipline in the time devoted to sleep is needed. Frankly I am tired of young people who stay hinged to their beds till late in the morning, then loll around the rest of the day sipping Seven-Ups and laying plans for the evangelization of the world. These people are going nowhere fast. How long we sleep is as sure a gauge of our dedication as what we do with our spare time.

· Foreign Language Study. It is really sad that so few Christian young people have enough discipline to learn a foreign language well. This has had disastrous results on the mission field, and it makes the future outlook rather bleak.

· Letter Writing. Dare I mention letter writing? If you are average, you would rather take a beating than write a letter. Yet letter writing has always played and will always play a vital role in the Christian ministry. Suppose Paul and Peter had never disciplined themselves to write.

· Other areas. And that isn't all. Discipline is needed in the management of our finances, in the stewardship of our possessions, in our expenditures, in physical exercise, and in controlling the claims of our secular employment. These things will not work themselves out

automatically in our lives. They require our deliberate effort, under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was right when he said:

“I defy you to read the life of any saint that has ever adorned the life of the Church without seeing at once that the greatest characteristic in the life of that saint was discipline and order. Invariably it is the universal characteristic of all the outstanding men and women of God. Read about Henry Martyn, David Brainerd, Jonathan Edwards, the brothers Wesley and Whitfield — read their journals. It does not matter what branch of the Church they belonged to, they have all disciplined their lives and have insisted upon the need for this; and obviously it is something that is Scriptural and absolutely essential.”

That's a Good Question

Introduction

Nothing happens in life by chance. Everything is planned or permitted.

It was no chance that this booklet came into your hands.

It contains truths which, if accepted, could change the whole direction of your life. Not only that—it tells you how you can enjoy forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and the assurance of a home in heaven after this life is over.

The following pages answer questions that you may have been thinking. Certainly it answers questions that everyone should be asking.

Take a few minutes to read it carefully.

The last answer is the crucial one. If you take the action that is described, you will be forever grateful.

Guarantee

The Bible carries a guarantee with it. You'll find it in John 7:17. It's a promise from God that anyone who sincerely wants to know the truth will find it.

Put it to the test. Ask God to reveal Himself to you. Then as you read this booklet, pay particular attention to the Bible verses that are quoted.

The next few minutes could be the most important ones in your life. If you respond to God's message as found in His Word, you will be the possessor of eternal life.

What is the most important thing in life?

It's important to have health, but it's not of maximum importance, because some time in the normal course of events we will all have to die.

It's important to have money and possessions, but they are not enough. Some day we will have to leave them all behind.

It's important to have pleasure, but even that doesn't last forever.

In view of the shortness of time and the length of eternity, the most important thing is to know that our eternal destiny is safely assured. It is to know that our afterlife will be spelled H-E-A-V-E-N and not H-E-L-L.

Jesus asked this crucial question: "What {pb2}will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul" (Mark 8:36,37).

Why is there any problem? Why is there any question about it?

The problem is sin. Sin has separated man from God, has made him unfit for heaven, and has richly qualified him for hell.

The Bible says, 'Tour iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you" (Isaiah 59:2).

What is sin?

Sin is anything short of God's perfection. That is what God means when He says that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

It is doing what we know we should not do. “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17).

It is failing to do what we know we should do. “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

It is violating the conscience. ‘Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

It is self-will or lawlessness. It’s saying to {pb3}God, “Not Your will but mine be done.”

Not only are our thoughts, words, and deeds sinful, but our inner lives are sinful. In fact, what we are is a lot worse than anything we have ever done.

You make me feel guilty. Don’t you want me to have a good self image?

God wants you to feel guilty so you will be moved to take action. Only those who admit they are sick will go to a doctor for healing. Didn’t the Lord Jesus say, “Those who are well do not need a physician but those who are sick” (Luke 5:31)? Only those who acknowledge that they are sinners will go to Christ for salvation. What’s the use of having a good self image when you are sliding over the edge of a precipice?

If good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell, then what do I have to worry about?

The premise is wrong and therefore the conclusion is wrong.

The premise is wrong. It is not true that good people go to heaven. According to God’s {pb4}standard, there are

no good people. “For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin” (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

The only kind of people who go to heaven are sinners saved by grace.

Because the premise is wrong, the conclusion is wrong. If you are not saved by grace, you have plenty to worry about.

Do you mean to say I’m as bad as a lot of other people I know?

From your own standpoint, or from the standpoint of your relatives and friends, you may not be as bad as others. But those are not the standards that count. The Bible says that those who measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves among themselves are not wise (see 2 Corinthians 10:12). It is God’s standpoint that counts. In God’s sight we are guilty sinners.

If I keep the Ten Commandments and do the best I can, isn’t that enough?

First of all, you should realize what the Ten Commandments require: {pb5}

1. No other gods. The true God must have first place. This eliminates the mythical gods of the heathen but also such gods as money, sex, power, self. None of these can be on the throne of the life.

2. No idol. We usually think of idols as graven images, but this commandment also forbids worshiping such things as a car, house, wife, or children.

3. Don’t take the Name of the Lord in vain. This forbids testifying falsely when under oath but also rules out profanity and cursing.

4. Remember the Sabbath Day. We should set one day in seven apart for the worship and service of God.

5. Honor your father and mother. Don’t disobey them, treat them disrespectfully, or steal from them. It also involves caring for them and showing gratitude to them.

6. Don’t kill. Even if you have never actually killed someone, remember that we are all guilty of the murder of the Son of God. It was our sins that caused His death. Jesus taught that hatred and anger are murder in embryo (Matthew 5:21,22; 1 John 3:15). Certainly abortion is a current form of murder.

7. Don’t commit adultery. This forbids all sex outside of marriage. But Jesus also {pb6}taught that even the lustful look is adulterous (Matthew 5:28).

8. Don’t steal. Don’t take your neighbor’s property but also don’t rob God of service, worship, obedience, and glory.

9. Don’t lie. Don’t file false income tax returns. Don’t lie about your age. Don’t tell white lies or fibs. Don’t exaggerate or deceive.

10. Don’t covet. Coveting takes place in the mind, so this means “Have a pure thought life.” How is your thought life?

Jesus summarized the commandments by saying that we should love God with all our being and love our neighbor as our self.

No one, apart from the Lord Jesus, has ever kept them, or can keep them.

If we can't keep the Ten Commandments, why were they given?

They were given to convict us of the fact that we are sinners. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). It takes a straight line to reveal a crooked one. The commandments are God's straight line. We stand next to them and realize how crooked we are.

But they were never intended as a step {pb7}ladder to heaven. A mirror tells us our face needs washing, but the mirror doesn't clean it. A thermometer tells us we have a fever, but swallowing a thermometer doesn't cure a fever.

Isn't there any way I can atone or make up for my own sins?

There is no way.

Do you mean to say that I have been wrong in doing penance for my sins?

The word "penance" is not found in the Bible, neither is the idea found there.

The Bible tells us that all our righteousnesses (that is, all the best we have to offer) are no better than filthy rags (see Isaiah 64:6).

It is not penance that God wants, nor mere penitence, that is, sorrow for sin, nor remorse, but repentance.

What do you mean by repentance?

Repentance is a change of mind about sin, self, God, and Christ, which changes the attitude, {pb8}which changes the actions. It involves not just the mind but the conscience. It is the sinner's acknowledgment of his ungodliness, lostness, helplessness, and hopelessness, and his need of grace. It is an about face. It is taking sides with God against one's self.

It involves penitence, that is, sorrow for sin, but it is more than this. You can be sorry for sin and yet not turn away from it.

Isn't there some way I can earn or merit my salvation? That would please me very much.

That is why salvation by works is such a popular teaching. It is popular because it makes men think that they can be their own savior. It gives a place of honor to man's sinful nature.

But there is no way you can earn or deserve salvation. God says that we are saved by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8,9).

You keep saying that salvation is by grace. What do you mean by that?

Grace is God showing favor to those who don't deserve it, but who, in fact, deserve the {pb9}very opposite.

It is closely linked with the idea of a gift. You do not earn a gift. That would be wages. You receive a gift and say "thank you."

Grace and works cannot be mixed. It has to be one or the other.

Grace must be distinguished from justice. In justice, you get what you deserve. In grace you get favor that you don't deserve.

Then do I understand that you don't believe in good works?

As we have already noted, God's word teaches that we are not saved by good works, but once we are saved, we should be characterized by good works. Good works are not the cause, they are the effect; not the root but the fruit; not the origin but the result.

The first good work that anyone can do is to believe on Christ (John 6:29). From then on anything he does for the glory of God and for the good of others is a good work.

I was baptized when I was a baby. Isn't that enough?

Baptism saves no one, neither babies nor adults. {pb10}

There is not a single verse in the New Testament to support the baptism of babies. The only people who were baptized were those who had trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 2:41).

The teaching that baptism saves babies makes God an unjust Judge, condemning those who never had the chance to be baptized.

It makes water the Savior instead of Jesus.

If infants could be saved by a few drops of water, then why did the Lord Jesus have to die?

It simply doesn't work. Many who were baptized as infants have turned out to be adulterers, murderers, and other types of criminals.

Look! Put it to me simply. What do I need in order to be saved?

You need to be born again. Jesus said it tersely, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7). Unless a person is born again, he will never see or enter the kingdom of God. {pb11}

What do you mean by being born again?

The new birth is a marvelous, miraculous, supernatural work of God that takes place when a person repents of his sins and receives Jesus Christ by faith as Lord and Savior. Your first birth was physical; the new birth is spiritual.

You say that the only way to be saved is through faith in Christ. Isn't it narrow minded to think that there is only one way?

Then the Bible is narrow minded.

Jesus said that no one could come to God, the Father, except through Him (John 14:6).

Peter said that no one could be saved in any other way than through Christ (Acts 4:12).

And Paul wrote that there is no other foundation except Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Faith in Christ is the only way of salvation.

What does it mean to have faith or to believe?

It means to accept the Lord Jesus Christ alone as your only hope for heaven. You {pb12}renounce any idea of saving yourself or even having part in your own salvation and you place your full confidence in Him.

Various synonyms for believing are used in the Bible such as:

Receive. Enter the door. Open a door. Eat. Drink. Come or come home—like the prodigal son. Accept a gift. Look. Love. Confess. Hear. Touch—the hem of His garment. Accept an invitation: to a wedding or to a great feast. Follow.

Isn’t faith a leap in the dark?

No. Actually faith demands the surest evidence, and finds it in the word of God. There is nothing as certain as God’s word. His word is truth (John 17:17). To trust Him is the most sane, logical, reasonable thing a person can do. What is more reasonable than that the creature should trust his Creator? He cannot lie, deceive, or be deceived.

Isn’t the gospel too easy? too cheap?

It is easy to be saved—so easy that it is available to all.

It is cheap for the sinner—without money {pb13}and without price (Isaiah 55:1).

However, it wasn’t cheap for the Savior. He had to leave Heaven’s glory, come down to this jungle of sin, suffer, shed His precious blood, die a horrible death in order to purchase our pardon (1 Peter 2:24).

How can I tell if I have believed in the right way, if I have enough faith, or if I have the right kind of faith?

Faith is not the savior. Jesus is. True faith lays hold of Him.

It's not intellectual assent to facts but trust in a Person.

It's not the amount of faith but the Object of faith that matters.

You say that you don't have to do anything to be saved, that all you have to do is believe. Isn't that a contradiction?

It sounds like a contradiction but here is what is meant.

There is nothing meritorious that you have to do (or can do). You are not saved by good works, church membership, faithfulness in obeying the sacraments, giving to the poor, etc (Titus 3:5). {pb14}

Believing on Christ is not a meritorious work. You don't earn heaven by doing it, nor can you boast because you did it.

How can I know that I'll be able to hold out after I'm saved?

You will be no more able to keep yourself saved than you were to save yourself in the first place.

Christ not only saves but also keeps. When He begins a good work in you, He will finish it (Philippians 1:6; Jude 24).

If all you have to do Is believe, then can't you go out and live any way you want?

When you are saved, God changes your wants. You no longer want to sin. You lose your fierce appetite for sin. You don't want to go on in that which caused the death of your Savior. You have a love of holiness. The Bible says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). {pb15}

If I sin after I'm saved, don't I lose my salvation?

Jesus said that no sheep of His will ever perish (John 10:27-29).

All who are justified will one day be glorified (Romans 8:30b).

Salvation is a birth (John 3:3,5). A birth is final and unchangeable.

Salvation means eternal life (John 3:16,36). Eternal is forever.

Nothing can separate the believer from the love of God (Romans 8:38,39).

But I know a man who was saved, then he sinned and was lost. What do you have to say to that?

If he was genuinely saved, he couldn't be lost. If, however, he was only a false professor, then he could have experienced a sort of moral reformation. He may have turned over a new leaf, and then lapsed back into his old, sinful ways.

We must not base our doctrine on experience but only on the inspired word of God. The test must always be, "What does the Bible say?" {pb16}

You say that when a person is saved, he receives forgiveness of sins. But what about sins committed after he is saved?

When a person is saved, he receives forgiveness for all his sins as far as the penalty is concerned. When Jesus died, He died for all our sins, past, present, and future. At the time He died, they were all future. He died for them all. Now God, the Judge, cannot find any sins on the believer for which to punish him with eternal death because Jesus bore the punishment on the cross of Calvary. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Sins committed after salvation have several results:

• They break fellowship with God. This fellowship remains broken until the sin is confessed and forsaken. However, although fellowship is broken, relationship is not. Fellowship is a tender thread; relationship is an unbreakable chain.

• They break fellowship with our fellow believers.

• They hinder our prayers from being answered.

• They make service for Christ unfruitful, if not impossible. They seal our lips. {pb17}

• They bring dishonor and reproach on the Name of the Lord.

• They rob us of joy.

• They cast doubt on the reality of our conversion. J. I. Packer said, “The only proof of past conversion is present convert-edness.”

• They hinder spiritual growth.

• They invite God’s discipline.

The unbeliever receives judicial forgiveness of sins by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a once-for-all forgiveness.

The believer receives parental forgiveness by confession. It is something we need as long as we are in the body.

What happens if, after I’m saved, I die with unconfessed sins?

As explained above, the penalty of those sins has already been paid. God will not demand payment twice. So your eternal salvation is unaffected.

The fellowship that was broken by sins will be restored when you pass into the presence of the Lord. Unconfessed sins may result in a loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. {pb18}

You say that Christ died for all. Why then aren’t all saved?

The death of Christ was sufficient for all the sins of all people of all times. But it is only effective when a person receives Christ by faith.

God doesn’t save people against their will. He isn’t going to populate heaven with people who don’t want to be there.

If I trust Christ, will I have a great emotional experience?

Some do and some don't. To some, especially those saved from lives of deep sin, there is often a dramatic experience of deliverance. To others it may be the quiet acceptance of a divine offer. There is no question that salvation involves the emotions, but sometimes the emotional impact may not come until later, and even then, over a period of time.

How will I know it when I am saved?

First and foremost through the word of God. The Bible was written so that those who believe on the Name of the Son of God may know that they are saved (1 John 5:13). {pb19}

But there are also these evidences:

- A desire to obey the Lord.
- A love for Christians.
- A love of holiness.
- A hatred of sin.
- A love for the word of God.
- A love of prayer.
- A consciousness of God's guidance.
- A steadfast continuance in the faith.
- The witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- A desire to share the good news with others.

Don’t I have to clean up my act before I come to Jesus?

That is not the gospel. The more you try, the worse you will get.

What you need is not reformation but regeneration.

The dying thief couldn’t clean up his act and neither can you.

Jesus told about a man who tried to clean up his act. His house was cleaned and empty but he didn’t let the Savior in. His latter end was worse than his first (Matthew 12:43-45). {pb20}

Let not conscience make you linger,

Nor of fitness fondly dream;

All the fitness He requires

Is to feel your need of Him.

Come, you weary, heavy-laden,

Lost and ruined by the fall;

If you tarry till you’re better,

You will never come at all.

Isn’t it presumption for a person to say that he is saved?

If his salvation depended in any way on his own righteousness, then it would be presumption. But when a true believer says he is saved, he is not boasting. He is saying in effect, “I did all the sinning and Christ did all the saving.” He attributes his salvation to the grace of God and not to himself.

The greatest presumption is to call God a liar by not believing the testimony that He has given concerning His Son (1 John 5:10).

If you Christians are right, why are there so few of you?

The question assumes that the majority is usually or always right. This is not true. {pb21}

In the time of the flood, only eight people were right; the rest all perished.

At Calvary, the crowd was wrong; only a handful of fearful disciples were right.

Jesus said, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few that find it” (Matthew 7:13,14).

If God is all-powerful, why does He allow wars, tragedies, suffering, and sorrow?

All these things are the result of sin having entered the world. God is not the originator of any evil. All sickness, suffering, sorrow, and death come from the devil. God permits it, but then overrules it for His glory, for the good of His people, and for the outworking of His purposes.

If God is a God of love, how could He send people to hell?

First of all, God did not make hell for people. He made it for the devil and His angels. God does not want any human being to go to {pb22}hell. In order to prevent it,

He sent His Son to suffer, bleed and die on Calvary to provide a way of escape. If people refuse God's way of salvation, what alternative is there? In a real sense, the only people who go to hell are those who choose to—those who deliberately reject the free gift of everlasting life in heaven.

What bothers me is that there are so many hypocrites in the church.

It is important to remember that there is a difference between real Christians and nominal Christians, between those who only say they are Christians and those who show by their lives that they are true believers. There are hypocrites in politics but that doesn't stop people from voting. There are hypocrites in athletics but people still swarm to watch them. There are hypocrites in the entertainment world but that doesn't turn people off. There is counterfeit money but that doesn't cause anyone to refuse to have money. Men only counterfeit what is real and valuable. We do not try to excuse hypocrisy, but don't use it as an excuse for not being saved. God does not ask you to believe in Christians; He asks you to believe in Jesus. When you {pb23}become a Christian, be sure that you show the world what a genuine Christian should be.

I hesitate because I believe that all the church wants is your money.

Sometimes this is used as an excuse for not becoming a Christian. It is not a valid one. While it is true that certain churches, radio, and TV programs have become money-making rackets, that is not an accurate

representation of the true Christian faith. God doesn't want your money; He wants your full, confiding trust.

If I get saved, do I have to be baptized?

If you are truly converted, you should want to be baptized. Although it is not necessary for salvation, it is necessary for obedience. Because Jesus commanded it, it is very important (Matthew 28:19). It is one of the first ways you can make a confession of your faith to the world. If a person stubbornly refuses to be baptized, this refusal casts doubt on the reality of his conversion experience. Professing Christians who die unbaptized will be unbaptized for all eternity. {pb24}

If I get saved, do I have to turn my back on the faith I was brought up in?

If that faith denies the deity of Christ, or if it teaches salvation by works, or if it practices idolatry, or if it denies that the Bible is the word of God, yes, you will have to leave it. You will want to leave it, even if it causes conflict in your family.

Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36). Conversion often alienates relatives against the new believer.

However, that should not discourage you. Experience proves that when a new convert lives a consistent life before his family, they are eventually led to the Lord or at least become less hostile and more accepting.

The believer’s responsibility is to obey the Lord and leave the consequences to Him. He always rewards obedience. {pb25}

I feel that I should trust Christ, and yet I am afraid to do it. Can you tell me what is the trouble?

It could be one of several things.

It could be pride.

It could be that you are ashamed of Jesus.

It could be that you want your sins rather than Christ, that you want pleasure more than holiness.

It could be your love for some person who is an unbeliever.

It could be family pressure—fear of the reaction of your parents.

I’m afraid I will have to give up too much if I become a Christian. The cost is too high.

Have you ever considered the cost of not becoming a Christian?

I think I’ll put it off until later in life. Isn’t that OK?

You have forgotten two things. One is the uncertainty of life. The other is the possibility of the any-moment coming of the Lord. {pb26}

I admit that I could be killed suddenly in an accident, but what's that about the Lord's coming?

Jesus promised His followers that He would come again. No one knows the time; it could be today. There are many indications that it might be soon. At that time true believers will be caught away to heaven. Unbelievers who have heard the gospel and rejected it will have no more chance to be saved. They will pass into a time of terrible tribulation on earth and eventually into hell itself.

Are you talking about the end of the world?

No, there are several things that will happen before the end of the world. First, as already mentioned, Jesus will come and take the church home to heaven. Then after a period of intense trouble on earth He will return to set up His kingdom. That kingdom will last for 1000 years. At the end of the time, the world as we now know it will come to an end. It will be dissolved by fire. That will usher in the eternal state in which there will be new atmospheric and stellar heavens and a new earth. {pb27}

Ok, then, tell me once more, as simply as you can, how I can be saved and sure of it.

First, you must acknowledge before God that you are a guilty, lost sinner and that you deserve the punishment of eternal death.

Also you must abandon any idea of saving yourself or even contributing to your salvation by good character or good works of any kind.

Next you must believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died as a Substitute for you, paying the penalty that your sins deserved.

Finally, by a definite act of faith, you must receive Him as your exclusive Lord and Savior, your only hope for heaven.

When you do this in utter sincerity, you can know on the authority of God's word that you are saved for time and for eternity.

Here is God's promise: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

You have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Will you believe? Right now? {pb28}

At a fashionable gathering of prominent people, a young lady played and sang with such finesse and beauty that the audience rocked the hall with applause.

Afterwards a Christian named Caesar Malan thanked her for her singing. But then in extended conversation, he gracefully made a transition to her spiritual condition. She was indignant that he would even suggest that she was a sinner and that she needed to be saved. She did not respond well to the promise that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, could cleanse her from all sin. After a curt rebuke, she walked away from him.

That night she could not sleep. Malan's words echoed in her mind. At 2 A.M. she jumped out of bed, took a pencil and paper, and with tears streaming down her face, Charlotte Elliott wrote the well-known hymn, Just As I Am. It tells the story of how she came to Christ. {pb29}

Just as I Am

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, tho’ tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Hath broken ev’ry barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

—Charlotte Elliott

The Christian in Service

The Christian in Service

William MacDonald

Ed Beaver went to work for the Driver Corporation when he finished high school. He rapidly advanced from shipping clerk to order clerk to salesman and then to local sales manager.

Each promotion had been particularly welcome. Ed had married when he was twenty-two, and he and his wife now had three children. Increasing expenses in the home seemed to eat up the pay raises as fast as they came. No matter how much Ed made, they always had a hard time balancing the budget.

There were other problems. Each time the company advanced Ed to a higher position, it demanded more and more of his time. He found that he was having to work evenings and even some weekends, leaving less time for his wife and children. This resulted in tensions at home. His wife seemed short-tempered, and the children became rather difficult to manage.

Ed’s success in the business also affected his assembly life. He was a gifted Gospel preacher, and an acceptable Bible teacher. His first love was to be active in the work of the Lord, but his schedule was such that he could never be sure that he would be able to attend a meeting.

His own health hadn’t been too good. Competition in the industry kept him on his toes all the time. Pressure from the Sales Manager gnawed away at him incessantly. The sales quotas were being raised relentlessly. He had

almost had a nervous breakdown on two occasions. His ulcers flared up periodically, and his latest medical examination revealed some trouble with the heart. It bothered him to spend so much on doctor's bills that could have gone to the work of the Lord.

There were times when Ed seriously thought of changing jobs so that he could have more time for home and for the assembly. But there were heavy payments to be made on the home, the car and on insurance policies. Also there was the matter of the children's education to be considered.

Now he was faced with a big decision. The state sales manager, a veteran of forty years with the company, was being eased out; apparently he was not able to keep up with the younger men. The company wanted Ed to replace him. In fact, they were almost insistent. It would mean a sizable increase in pay, but it would also mean more responsibility, more pressure, and more time away from home. If Ed didn't accept the promotion there was always the possibility that the company would fire him.

Ed's dilemma is typical of the problem being faced by Christians in business life today.

Modern corporations expect to have first place in the lives of those who want to get ahead. They want the best of a man's time, talents and strength. They will extract the final ounce of blood, the last full measure of devotion. They will let him go when he can no longer come up to their expectations.

It is about time that believers did some re-thinking about this whole problem. We need to develop tough-mindedness in dealing with secular employers. We need

to maintain a proper sense of values, to hold things in their true perspective.

First of all, a man's job should never be allowed to assume first place in his life. Our calling in life is to serve the Lord; the job is simply a means of paying expenses. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness…" Matthew 6:33. The New Testament never suggests that we are called to be tentmakers, carpenters or plumbers. We are called to be worshippers and witnesses; all else is subordinate.

There comes a time in modern business life when a man must say to a corporation, "Thus far shall thy proud waves come and no farther." We must not assume that promotions and pay raises are always the will of God. Instead, they may be tests of our faithfulness to Him, temptations to lure us from the path of service to Him.

There comes a time when Ed Beaver might have to say to his boss, "Sir, the first thing in my life is to serve God. The second thing of importance is my family. Driver Corporation comes third. If I accept this promotion, I know it will mean giving more time to the company. I do not feel I can do that. I am making enough in my present position to support my family. I will continue to serve you faithfully and give you a full day of work for every day's pay. But I must have time for my local church and for my family."

This is what is meant by seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Those who do it will never lack the necessities of life. If the company fires Ed Beaver, the Lord has something better for him.

Then too, we should consider the whole problem of mortgaging our lives for fine homes, cars and insurance

policies. Many Christians have become slaves to a high standard of living, and their usefulness for God is seriously curtailed. It would be more honouring to the Lord to agree on a modest standard of living, and put everything above that into the work of the Lord.

The idea that every child must have a college education has become a fetish. Equally absurd is the notion that parents should provide full expenses in advance. The day will probably never come when a young person cannot earn most of his education by hard work and by scholarships. The education will mean more to him, and he will be the better man for having to work for it. Handing everything to children on a silver platter is not always a kindness.

If our Christian lives are to be effective for God, we must make decisions for Him. Instead of taking every advancement and salary increase that is offered, we must sometimes choose not to accept them.

Otherwise we will find ourselves in the position of giving our golden prime to the business world, and reserving the ashes of our heart for the Lord.

“I would not give the world my heart,

And then profess Thy love;

I would not feel my strength depart,

And then Thy service prove.

I would not with swift winged zeal

On the world’s errands go:

And labour up the heav’nly hill

With weary feet and slow.

O not for Thee my weak desires,
My poorer baser part!
O not for Thee my fading fires,
The ashes of my heart!
O choose me in my golden time
In my dear joys have part!
For Thee the glory of my prime,
The fulness of my heart.”

The Desire For Riches

"Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished." Proverbs 13:11

"You may have already won $100,000!" With this and similar come-ons, we are constantly barraged by the temptation to participate in some form of gambling. The housewife shopping in the supermarket is enticed by the latest sweepstakes. The average citizen is encouraged to send his name (together with a subscription for a magazine) to participate in an upcoming lottery involving millions. Or it may be a bingo contest in which you are almost assured of being a winner.

Then, of course, there are the more obvious forms of gambling - roulette, horse-racing, dog-racing, the numbers game, etc.

What does the Bible have to say about all this? Nothing good.

It says, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labor shall increase" (Prov. 13:11).

It says, "He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him" (Prov. 28:22).

It says, "Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay is the man who gains riches by unjust means. When his life is half gone, they will desert him, and in the end he will prove to be a fool" (Jer. 17:11 NIV).

While the Ten Commandments do not explicitly say,

"Thou shalt not gamble," they do say, "Thou shalt not covet" (Ex. 20:17), and what is gambling but a form of covetousness?

Gambling will always have an evil connotation for believers when they remember that Roman soldiers gambled for the Savior's seamless robe at the scene of His crucifixion.

Consider also the poverty and grief that chronic gamblers have brought to their families, the crimes that have been committed to recoup losses, and the evil associations frequently linked with gambling, and it will be seen that it should have no place in a Christian's life.

After reminding Timothy that the believer should be content with food and raiment, Paul warned that "they that will be (desire to be) rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9).

The Natural Man and the Things of God

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:

for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14

The natural man is the one who has never been born again. He does not have the Spirit of God. He is disinclined to receive spiritual truths because they sound like nonsense to him. But that is not all! He cannot understand spiritual truths because they can only be understood by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

This must be emphasized. It is not just that the unsaved man doesn't want to understand the things of God. He cannot understand them. He has a native incapacity for doing so.

This helps me in properly evaluating the scientists, philosophers and other professional people of the world. As long as they speak about mundane matters, I respect them as experts.

But as soon as they start intruding into the spiritual realm, I write them off as unqualified to speak with any authority.

I am not unduly surprised if some college professor or even some liberal clergyman grabs the headlines with doubts or denials concerning the Bible. I have come to expect that and disregard it. I realize that the

unregenerate have gone beyond their depth when they talk about the things of the Spirit of God.

F. W. Boreham likened the great men of science and philosophy to second-class passengers on an ocean liner, barred from the first-class promenade. "Scientists and philosophers - as such

- are, so to speak, 'second-class passengers,' and they must be kept on their own side of the barrier. They are not authorities on the Christian faith... The fact is that we have a faith which cannot be shocked by the contempt of second-class passengers, and which derives no real support from their corroboration and patronage."

Of course, there is the occasional scientist or philosopher who is a saint. In such a case, Boreham said, "I always discover a 'first-class ticket' peeping out of his pocket; and as I stroll the promenade in his delightful company, I no more think of him as a scientist than I think of Bunyan as a tinker. We are fellow passengers - first-class."

Said Robert G. Lee, "Men may be critical and scholarly and scientific, knowing all about rocks and molecules and gases, and yet be utterly incompetent to sit in judgment upon Christianity and the Bible."

The Perfect Judge

"...the judgment of God is according to truth." Romans 2:2

God is the only One in the universe who is perfectly qualified to judge. We can be everlastingly thankful that He has not entrusted the final judgment to us. Think of some of the disabilities under which an earthly judge works. It is impossible for him to be completely objective. He may be influenced by the prominence of the defendant or by his appearance. He may be influenced by bribes or by other more subtle considerations. He cannot always know if a witness is lying. Or if not lying, the witness may be withholding the truth. Or again, he may be shading the truth. Or finally, he may be sincere but inaccurate.

The judge cannot always know the motives of those with whom he deals - and it is important to establish motives in many legal cases.

Even the polygraph or lie detector can be fooled.

Hardened criminals can sometimes control their physiological reactions to guilt.

But God is the perfect Judge. He has absolute knowledge of all acts, thoughts and motives. He can judge the secrets of men's hearts. He knows all the truth; nothing can be withheld from Him. He is not a respecter of persons but treats each one impartially.

He knows the mental ability with which each one is endowed; an imbecile may not be as responsible as others for his actions. He knows the differing moral

strengths of His subjects; some may resist temptation more easily than others. He knows the differing privileges and opportunities each one has, and the extent to which a person sins against light. He detects sins of omission as easily as sins of commission, secret sins as easily as public scandal.

Therefore we need not fear that the heathen who has never heard the Gospel will be treated unjustly. Or that those who have suffered wrongfully through life will be unavenged. Or that wicked tyrants who have escaped in this life will go unpunished.

The Judge on the bench is a perfect Judge, and

His justice will be according to truth and therefore absolutely perfect.

The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ

"... no man knoweth the Son, but the Father." Matthew 11:27

There is deep mystery connected with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Part of the mystery is the combination of absolute deity and full humanity in one Person. There is the question, for instance, how One who has the attributes of God can at the same time have the limitations of finite Man. No mere man can comprehend the Person of Christ. Only God the Father understands.

Many of the most serious heresies that have racked the Church have centered on this subject. Heedless of their own frailty, men have occupied themselves with that which is too deep for them. Some have overemphasized the deity of our Lord at the expense of His humanity. Others have so stressed His humanity as to detract from His Godhood.

William Kelly once wrote, "The point where error comes in is as to the Son of God becoming a man; for it is the complex person of the Lord Jesus that exposes persons to break down fatally.

There are those, no doubt, who dare to deny His divine glory. But there is a far more subtle way in which the Lord Jesus is lowered; where, although He is owned to be divine, the manhood of the Lord is allowed to swamp His glory, and neutralize the confession of His person. Thus, one is soon perplexed, and one lets that which puts Him in association with us here below work so as to falsify that which He has in common with God Himself. There is but one simple safeguard that keeps the soul

right as to this, which is, that we do not venture to pry and never dare to discuss it, fearing to rush in human folly on holy ground, and feeling that on such ground as this we should be only worshipers.

Wherever this is forgotten by the soul, it will invariably be found that God is not with it - that He allows the self-confident one, who of himself ventures to speak of the Lord Jesus to prove his own folly. It is only by the Holy Ghost that he can know what is revealed about the Only-begotten."

A venerable servant of the Lord once advised his students to stick to the language of Scripture itself when discussing the dual nature of our Lord. It is when we inject our own ideas and speculations that errors creep in.

No man knows the Son. Only the Father knows Him.

The high myst'ries of His fame

The creature's grasp transcend.

The Father only - glorious claim-

The Son can comprehend.

Josiah Conder

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man .....

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death. " Proverb 14:12

Twice in the book of Proverbs (14:12 and 16:25) we learn that man's judgment as to the right way is not reliable. What seems right to him ends in disaster and death.

During World War II the Navy gave a vivid illustration of this to its flight personnel. It was trying to impress on them that when they were flying at high altitudes and did not use their oxygen, they could not trust their senses. A pilot was instructed to enter a decompression chamber and sit down at a table on which was a sheet of mathematical problems. Oxygen was withdrawn from the chamber to simulate high altitudes. When the air became less dense, the pilot was told to solve the problems. He was also told that no one had done so correctly so far.

The pilot would breeze through the problems with utmost confidence that he had beaten the system. The problems seemed easy, and he had every assurance that he would receive a perfect score.

There was no doubt in his mind about it.

But when oxygen was fed back into the chamber, and he emerged to have his paper corrected, he learned that his ability to solve problems had been seriously impaired by the lack of oxygen getting to his brain. The lesson was, of course, that if he flew at high altitudes without using

his oxygen, he wouldn't be able to trust his own judgment, and he would be inviting a crash.

Man's judgment has been seriously impaired by sin. He feels absolutely sure that the way to heaven is by doing the best he can. If you tell him that no one has ever been saved by good works, he still has every confidence that he will be the first to beat the system. He is certain that God would never turn him away from the gates of heaven.

But he is wrong, and if he persists in his lack of "spiritual oxygen", he will perish. His safety lies in trusting the Word of God rather than his own judgment. If he does so, he will repent of his sins and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Because God's Word is truth, those who believe it can be confident that they are following the right route.

Thoughts on Prayer

"If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it. " John 14:14

God answers prayer. He answers it exactly the same way we would if we had infinite wisdom, love and power. Sometimes He gives us what we want, sometimes He gives us something better, but always what we need. Sometimes He answers our prayers quickly; at other times He teaches us to wait patiently.

God answers prayer; sometimes when hearts are weak,

He gives the very gifts His children seek.

But often faith must learn a deeper rest,

And trust God's silence when He cannot speak;

For He whose name is love will send the best.

Stars may burn out, nor mountain walls endure,

But God is true, His promises are sure

To those who seek.

There are conditions to prayer. Often what seems like a blank check ("if ye ask anything") has conditions attached ("in My Name"). Individual prayer promises must be considered in the light of all other Scriptures on the subject.

There are mysteries to prayer. It is easy to think up all kinds of questions about the "whys" and "wherefores." But, for the most part, they are not edifying. It is better to pray and to see God work than to solve all the mysteries connected with prayer. I like what Archbishop Temple said: "When I pray, coincidences happen.

When I do not, they don't."

When we pray to God in the Name of the Lord

Jesus, it is just the same as if He were making those requests to the Father. This is what gives such significance and power to our prayers.

And this is why we never come closer to omnipotence than when we pray.

Of course, we will never be omnipotent, even in eternity. But when we pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus, we lay hold on infinite power.

The best prayer comes from a strong, inward necessity. This means that the more we are dependent on the Lord, the more effective our prayer life will be. When we pray, we see things happen that would never happen according to the laws of chance or probability. Our lives crackle with the supernatural. They become radioactive with the Holy Spirit. And when we touch other lives, something happens for God.

We should be like the saint who said, "I measure my influence by the number who need my prayers and the number who pray for me."

To What Should We Be Loyal

What do you think of the person who says, "My parents were members of this denomination. I was born in it. And I'll die in it."

"Oh," you say, "I think he's wrong to talk like that:" "Yes, but why is he wrong?"

"I suppose because he assumes his denomination is right and will always be right."

"Well, then, to what denomination or group should he be loyal?"

"I guess he shouldn't be loyal to any denomination, because no denomination is perfect."

"One final question. If he shouldn't be loyal to any denomination or group of Christians, to what should he be loyal?"

"He ought to be loyal to the Lord and to the principles of His Word."

Yes, of course! That is the only correct answer. It is a mistake to develop an undying loyalty to any Christian fellowship, no matter how scriptural it may be at the time.

Even suppose that you reject the whole idea of denominations. Suppose you meet with Christians who refuse any sectarian name. Suppose, for instance, that they speak of themselves by the innocuous name of "the assemblies." They seek to adhere to the teaching of the Word. Shouldn't you throw in your lot with them permanently and be loyal to them alone?

If you do, you will find yourself in a difficult position.

You are committed to a group that will almost inevitably change over the years. This has been the history of almost every Christian fellowship. Liberal tendencies creep in. Zeal and freshness give way to formalism. A denominational hierarchy develops. Soon you can write Ichabod over the whole thing-the glory has departed.

Then again, if you are loyal to a group of assemblies, the question always arises, "With which particular ones do you agree?" There are wide differences among any group of local churches, just as there are wide differences among individuals. Some are open, some are exclusive. Some are conservative, some are liberal. Some have a pastor who presides over the congregation, others repudiate a one-man ministry. No two assemblies are exactly alike.

So there is a real problem. To which assemblies are we to be loyal? Are we to blindly subscribe to all the assemblies that might be listed in a semi-official address book? It seems obvious that we cannot consistently do this. We must judge each individual assembly by the Word of God, as far as our own personal affiliation is concerned.

Here is another problem. If my loyalty is to a particular group of local churches, what is to be my attitude toward other Christian groups that might in some ways be closer to the New Testament pattern than mine is? How do I evaluate them? Do I simply wave them off by saying, "They are not among 'our' assemblies." Do I accept or reject them by whether their activities are reported in one of "our" magazines?

Then there is the matter of individual Christian workers "outside our circle." How do we evaluate them? Do we ask, "Has he been commended by one of 'the assemblies?" "Is he with us?" Or do we inquire if he is serving the Lord in accordance with the principles of the New Testament?

Certainly the easiest policy is to judge individuals or groups by whether or not they are "with us." This does not require spiritual exercise or discernment. But it is a false and dangerous basis of judgment. It supplants the Word of God as our final authority. It assumes a priori that "we" are correct in our position and that everyone else should conform to us. It leads to inconsistency, embarrassment and confusion.

Christians must be taught to test everything by the Scriptures. This is our only authority. The question is not, "How do we do it in 'our assemblies'?" but "What does the Bible teach about it?"

Our loyalty must be first, last and always to the Lord and to the principles of His Word. And we should never blindly assume that any group of believers has a monopoly on the truth, is adhering to the New Testament in its entirety, or is immune from drift and departure.

Every generation must guard against the danger of slipping into denominational, sectarian ways of thinking. Down through the centuries, there have been great movements of the Holy Spirit in which certain truths have been recovered out of the rubble of tradition, formalism and ritualism. The first generation, that is, those living at the time of these movements have been intelligent concerning the scriptural principles involved.

But then the second and third generations have tended to follow the system routinely because their parents were in it, and because they themselves were brought up in it. There has been a decline of true conviction and an increasing ignorance of the biblical basis of the pattern followed.

Thus the history of most spiritual movements has been aptly described in the word series: man… movement… machine… monument. At the outset there is a man, anointed in a special way by the Holy Spirit. As others are led into the truth, a movement develops. But by the second or third generation, people are following a system with sectarian, machine-like precision. Eventually nothing is left but a lifeless, denominational monument.

If you were to ask a sampling of Christians, "Why do you meet in church fellowship where you do?" how many do you think could give a clear, scriptural answer? Not many! There is widespread ignorance as to the truth of the New Testament church, and therefore a general lack of conviction on the subject. How can we have strong convictions about something we do not know or understand?

In a healthy New Testament assembly, those who are in fellowship know why they are there. They are not sermon-tasters or followers of men, but Christians who are well grounded in the truth of the gospel and of the Church. They are prepared to judge everything by the Word. They are not unalterably committed to any particular group of assemblies. If trends develop which are unbiblical and dishonoring to the Lord, they will

seek the leading of the Holy Spirit to the company of those who do meet in obedience to the Bible.

Let us examine some of the great truths concerning the assembly which are found in the New Testament and to which we should be loyal.

1. ### UNITY OF THE BODY

One of the most obvious truths is the unity of the body of Christ. There is only one body, one church, one assembly (Eph. 4:4).

Because this is true, all believers are responsible to bear witness to it. As we gather together, we should give practical expression to it. Nothing that we do or say should deny it.

Many Christians see quite clearly that sects and denominations are a denial of the truth of the one body (I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3). Sects create the impression that Christ is divided, and thus misrepresent the truth of God's Word. Many of us see this quite clearly and refuse such names as Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist or Episcopalian.

But we do not always see that any name that separates us from other members of the body is divisive and unscriptural. Even if we take a biblical name like brethren, for example, the minute we qualify it or capitalize it, we transgress. It is as wrong for some believers to identify themselves as Plymouth Brethren, United Brethren, Christian Brethren, Evangelical Brethren, Open Brethren or Exclusive Brethren as it is for others to call themselves Presbyterians or Pentecostals.

Brethren with a capital B implies that there are some believers who are not brethren, or that some are brethren in a distinctive way. We hear people ask, "Is he in the Brethren?" or they report sadly, "He left the Brethren."

The truth is, of course, that if he's saved, he's in the brethren, and he can't leave the brethren since the believer is eternally secure.

It is certainly right that we should gather to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, but the minute we speak of ourselves as "Christians gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone," meaning that we do and others don't, we have become a sect.

To speak of any particular group of Christians exclusively as "the Lord's people" betrays a sectarian attitude. It puts us in the same class as those in Corinth who said, "I am of Christ"-meaning that they were of Christ to the exclusion of all others (I Cor. 1:12).

Another way in which inconsistency appears is the habit of calling a particular gathering of Christians in a town "the assembly" in that town. Or speaking of states and cities where there are "no assemblies." Actually this is not accurate language. The assembly in any given town is made up of all true believers there. Within that town there may be several gatherings of Christians. In addition there may be some true Christians who are not associated with a local fellowship for one reason or another; they may be under discipline, for instance. All go to make up the assembly in the town, though all may not meet together in one place.

Someone will say, "Well, how can I distinguish my assembly from the other evangelical churches in

Hometown?" The answer is, "Instead of calling it 'the assembly' in Hometown, refer to it as the assembly that meets in the Bible Chapel at 5th and Pine." Then you have not denied the unity of the body.

We must never forget that we are Christians, believers, brethren, disciples and saints-and so are all who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. To deny this by any form of sectarianism, denominationalism or exclusivism is to deny the truth of the Bible and to be guilty of carnality and pride.

2. ### ALL BELIEVERS ARE MEMBERS

A second great truth for which we should stand is that all true believers are members of the body of Christ and therefore members of one another (I Cor. 12:12-26). This being so, it is necessary for us to recognize all Christians as our brothers and sisters.

It is not always easy to do this. Men have erected fences. People are more loyal to their own denomination than they are to the body of Christ. They do not recognize the unity of the Spirit.

But the trouble is not all with other people. Even in our own hearts, there is often the desire to be distinctive, to think of ourselves as having a cover on church truth or some other truth. We often find it difficult to befriend those who do not see exactly as we do. Instead of rejoicing when others are led into a certain measure of divine truth, we are apt to magnify the ways in which they are still different from us. And too frequently we quarrel most bitterly with those whose church order is strikingly similar to our own.

How then can we give practical expression to the truth that all genuine believers are members of the body of Christ?

First of all, we should love them because they belong to Christ (I John 4:11). The fact that they may differ with us in various areas of doctrine or practice should not prevent our loving them.

We should pray for them (I Sam. 12:23). This is a debt we owe to all men, especially those who are of the household of faith.

Third, we should seek to share with them the precious truths which God has shown us from the Word (II Tim. 2:2).

This does not mean that we should adopt a deliberate policy of sheep-stealing, that is, moving into other evangelical groups with the specific purpose of leading people out to "our own fellowship." Nowhere in the Bible are we called to this divisive ministry. Rather, in our individual contact with others and as led by the Holy Spirit, we should minister Christ to them as the gathering Center of His people. We should ""teach everyone we can, all that we know about Him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ" (Col. 1:28, Phillips).

Not only should we love other believers, and pray for them, and seek to edify them, but we should also learn from them (I Cor. 12:21). It is a mistake to think that we have all the truth and that we cannot benefit spiritually from those outside "our own fellowship." Every member has something to contribute to the rest of the body. Any man-made barriers that hinder believers from helping other believers are contrary to the will of God.

Also we should refrain from criticism, jealousy, gossiping, backbiting or judging (Luke 6:37). Each believer is a steward of the Lord. We are distinctly forbidden to judge others before the time, that is, before the Lord comes (I Cor. 4:5). Paul asks, 'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14:4). And when Peter became concerned about John's service for the Lord, Jesus said, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me" (John 21:22).

We should rejoice whenever Christ is preached, whether or not we agree with the methods and motives. Paul wrote to the Philippians: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will; the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice' (Phil. 1:15-18).

The fact that we thus recognize all true believers as members of the body does NOT mean that we will adopt their policies and practices. We are responsible to obey the Word of God as He has revealed it to us. We can love people without loving the system in which they are found and without becoming a part of it. As far as our own pathway is concerned, we must be uncompromisingly obedient to the Bible. As far as other believers are concerned, we should be patient and tolerant.

3. ### CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

A third important truth for which we must stand is that Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1: 18). This means that we must look to Him for direction and guidance in the affairs of the local assembly.

We all realize that the truth of Christ's headship is denied when a pope, for instance, claims to be head of the church on earth. But we must guard against the more subtle error of thinking that any of us has any right to manage the affairs of the assembly. It is so easy to give lip service to the Headship of Christ, and yet to maneuver, lobby and connive in a carnal way in order to get one's own way. Instead of waiting upon Him in fasting and prayer, we apply successful business methods and the wisdom of this world. All this is a practical denial of the Headship of Christ. If Christ is Head, then everything must be done under His guidance and control.

4. ### THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Then there is a fourth truth—the truth that all true believers are priests. InI Peter 2:5-9, we learn that we are holy priests and royal priests.

As holy priests we offer up spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ (v. 5). These sacrifices include:

• the sacrifice of our bodies (Rom. 12:1,2).

• the sacrifice of our praise (Heb. 13:15).

• the sacrifice of our possessions (Heb. 13:16).

As royal priests we show forth the excellencies of Him Who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9). This means that every believer is expected to witness for Christ, both by life and by the spoken word.

As holy priests we go into the sanctuary to worship. As royal priests we go out- into the world to testify.

The idea that worship and service are the functions of a special group known as priests or clergymen is foreign to the New Testament. All believers are priests and should be free to exercise their priestly functions.

5. ### NO ONE-MAN MINISTRY

There are some local churches that repudiate the clerical system, refusing to have what might be called a one-man ministry. And yet if you were to ask many of the Christians in those churches for a scriptural defense of their position, they would be hard put to give an answer. Why is it wrong to have a one-man ministry in the local assembly?

The first reason is because it is not found in the New Testament. The assemblies in apostolic times consisted of saints, bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1). The bishops, or elders, are always spoken of in the plural. Not one elder over a church, but several elders in each church. Bible historians agree that the clerical system arose in the second century; it was not found in the churches of the New Testament.

Secondly, the clerical system generally ignores the purpose for which the gifts of evangelist, pastor and teacher were given to the church. The function of these gifts is to build up the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). In other words, Christian service is not the function of any one class but the responsibility of all believers. It is only as each one fulfills his function that the body will develop and mature. The function of the gifts listed inEph. 4:11is to build up the saints to the point where

they are mature, functioning members of the body. Thus, these particular gifts are temporary aids, not permanent fixtures.

When one man is responsible for all the teaching and preaching in a local church, there is always the danger that people will gather to him, not to the Lord. If a man is especially gifted, people are drawn to his preaching. They attend because he is there. If he leaves for any reason, then they are apt to follow him, or if this is not possible, they often drift elsewhere, looking for another gifted man.

Christ should be the gathering Center of His people (Matt. 18:20). We should be drawn by His presence, not by a man. When believers see this and act upon it, the local assembly need not be shaken by the departure of any man. An assembly where Christians gather to Christ has strength, stability and solidarity.

And, of course, there are potential dangers when all or most of the teaching in a local church is done by one man. People tend to accept his word as authoritative. If they are not studying the Scriptures for themselves, they are not in a good position to discern error.

In addition, no one man is able to provide the diversity of ministry that is possible when the Holy Spirit has liberty to speak through several men. We must be concerned not only with ministry that is doctrinally accurate, but also with ministry that provides a balanced diet for the people of God. The scriptural injunction is, "Let the prophets speak two or three and let the others judge" (I Cor. 14:29).

A one-man ministry too often stifles the development of gift in a local church. There is not the same opportunity

for others to participate. Some ministers insist on confining most of the work to themselves; they resent anyone else's intruding into their office. But even where this is not the case even where ministers would like to see others participating-the very nature of the clerical system discourages the so-called layman from developing his God-given gifts.

When one man is salaried by the local congregation as preacher, there is often a subtle temptation to water down the message. It should not be so, but the fact is that by controlling a minister's salary, the congregation often cuts itself off from receiving the full counsel of God.

Now we recognize that there are many great men of God in the clerical system who preach the gospel faithfully, teach the Word, and seek to shepherd the sheep of Christ. And God is using them.

We also recognize that there are many "one-man ministers" who do not have the clerical spirit. They have a sincere desire to help the saints in every possible way, to lead by example, and not to lord it over God's heritage.

And we also realize that it is possible for someone who is not a clergyman to have the clerical spirit. InIII John 9-11, for example, we read of Diotrephes who acted as a tyrant in a local assembly.

But the fact remains that the clerical system is basically wrong and unscriptural. The world will never be evangelized in the way that God intended, and the church will never be built up according to the divine plan as long as the distinction between clergy and laity is maintained.

6. ### THE PRESIDENCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Another vital truth which each local assembly is obligated to maintain and practice is the presidency of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26). This means that the Holy Spirit is the Representative of Christ in the church on earth. He is the One Who should be allowed to lead the people of God in prayer, praise and worship. He should have liberty to speak through servants of His own choosing according to the spiritual needs of God's people.

InI Cor. 14:26, we have a picture of a meeting of the early church in which there was this freedom of the Spirit. "How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."

When the Spirit is thus free to lead, there will be spontaneity in teaching, preaching, worship and intercession.

Most of us realize that the ministry of the Holy Spirit has been greatly quenched by the introduction of ritual and liturgy. The use of printed prayers, of stereotyped messages for certain days of the "church calendar," of a prescribed order of service that must be followed without deviation-these things fetter the Holy Spirit in the meetings of the local church.

But we must guard against more subtle ways of quenching Him. For instance, we must guard against manmade rules in our worship meetings. In some places, there is an unwritten law that there must be no ministry before the breaking of bread. Or that the meeting must not go beyond a certain time. Or that in worshipping we

must not dwell on our own sins or unworthiness. Or that we must sit or stand when praying or singing. All such rules quench the spirit of spontaneous worship and lead to formalism.

We often make a man an offender for a word. Perhaps a young believer will express thanks to God for dying for him. Must he be rebuked for this? We all know that God, the Father did not die. And doubtless the young believer knows it too. But in the self-consciousness of taking part publicly, he is apt to express himself poorly. Should he be made ashamed of his first, faltering act of public worship? Is it not better to hear his sincere though faulty adoration than not to hear it at all?

Generally speaking we believe that the Holy Spirit will guide the worship of His people along a certain theme. But suppose a brother gives out a hymn that seems to be quite unrelated to this theme. Must he be embarrassed for this? Is it not better to sing the hymn and pray that as he matures sufficiently to discern the theme in the meeting, he will do so without losing any of his warmth and affection for the Lord?

Which reminds us of a certain preacher who was asked, "What would you do if some brother gave out a hymn that was obviously not in the Spirit?" He replied, "I'd sing it in the Spirit."

As we seek to give the Holy Spirit His proper place in the assembly, let us beware of rules that quench Him and that kill spontaneity and unaffected worship.

7. ### EACH ASSEMBLY INDEPENDENTLY RESPONSIBLE TO CHRIST

There is another principle in the Word of God that should guide us in connection with the assembly, namely that each assembly is independent and responsible only to Christ. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a denomination, a federation of churches, or a circle of fellowship. There is no headquarters on earth, exercising authority of any kind over local assemblies.

The headquarters of the church is where the Head is—in heaven.

Every local church should carefully avoid anything that might lead to centralized control on earth.

This centralization is the evil that has hastened the spread of modernism. The liberals have seized control of the denominational headquarters and of the seminaries. They knew that if they could control the headquarters, then eventually they could control all the churches.

The formation of a central group often comes from government pressure or from a desire to obtain certain benefits from the government. But then centralization makes it easy for totalitarian governments to suppress the church. If they capture a few denominational leaders, they can control the activities of the entire denomination.

God's will is that each assembly should be an independent unit, responsible directly to the Lord Jesus. This hinders the spread of error, and enables the church to go underground more easily in times of persecution.

8. ### THE ROLE OF THE GIFTS IN THE CHURCH

We have already touched briefly on the role of gifts in the Church. Actually every believer has some gift, some special function in the body of Christ. In addition there

are the special service gifts of evangelist, pastor and teacher (Eph. 4:11). The latter gifts were given to help all the saints find their gift and to exercise it. They were given to build up the saints for the work of the ministry, and thus for the building up of the body of Christ. From this it is clear that:

The work of the ministry is not for a special class of Christians but for all the people of God.

The work of the special gifts of Ephesians 4 is to build up Christians to the point where they can carry on by themselves, then to move on. In other words, the saints should not become perpetually dependent on such gifts. On the contrary these gifts should work themselves out of a job in the shortest possible time, then move on to new areas of opportunity. Just as parents begin right away to teach children to take care of themselves, so should these gifts teach the babes in Christ.

Now this raises a question: "How long should such a gift remain in a local assembly?" There is only one Possible answer to the question—as long as it takes to mature the saints to serve. Paul only stayed in Thessalonica "for three sabbath days" (Acts 17:2), yet left behind an indigenous assembly-self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. As far as the record is concerned, the longest that he stayed in any one place was the three years that he spent in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). It is not exactly a question of how long a man stays in one place, but rather what his purpose is. What is he trying to do? Is he trying to equip the saints to carry on by themselves?

In this regard, these gifts must guard against the natural tendency to nestle, to think of themselves as

having a lifetime appointment in any one place. (This is as true of foreign missionaries as of workers in the homeland.) They must keep themselves mobile. And they must also guard against another subtle danger, that is the feeling that the saints couldn't get along without them. When they are absent, the attendance drops; this makes them think that they must not leave. They are afraid that the whole assembly would go to pieces. It caters to pride to think that we are indispensable. And sometimes it wounds our pride to think that we are no longer needed in a particular place. Actually we should rejoice when that time arrives.

While speaking of gifts, there is something else that should be mentioned. In the New Testament, these gifts were charismatic, not professional. By this we mean that these gifts were men who were sovereignly endowed by the Holy Spirit without regard to training or occupation. For instance, the Spirit would reach down and equip a fisherman to be an evangelist. Or He might take a shepherd to teach His Word. Or He might fit a carpenter to exercise a pastoral ministry among the saints.

There is no suggestion in the New Testament that professional training can make a man a gift to the church. The idea that only men who have had formal schooling in the Word are qualified to minister is disgusting. Training can be helpful to a believer in getting a grasp of the Scriptures, but no amount of training can make a man an evangelist, a teacher or a pastor. And there is always the danger of professionalism. If the Scriptures are approached from a philosophical basis, then training can be a very deadening and dangerous thing.

9. ### THE LOCAL CHURCH

When is a local church a true New Testament Church? When most of the members are true believers? Even if only a minority are true believers? Wherever Christians are gathered in the Lord's Name? What qualifies a group to be considered a local assembly?

Actually the New Testament does not lay down hard and fast rules as to what an assembly is. It does state that where two or three are gathered in Christ's Name, He is in the midst (Matt. 18:20). And the Scriptures assume that those who compose the assembly are Christians, although it is also recognized that unbelievers are sometimes taken into the number unawares (Acts 20:29, 30). Also the New Testament seems to assume the presence of elders and deacons in the normal assembly (Phil. 1:1). But beyond that there is no final way for us to say that certain Christian groups are New Testament churches and that others are not. We can be grateful that we are not the judges in these cases.

If a group professes to be a Christian assembly, then it should manifest the truth of the church universal. It should be a miniature, a replica of the body of Christ. It should present a living portrayal of the church of the living God.

Now the situation among local churches in the world today is this. Some local assemblies depict the universal church very badly. Some do it more accurately. None does it perfectly. What you have is a wide range of churches with all different degrees of likeness to the universal church.

Some churches obviously have no right to be thought of as Christian assemblies. I am thinking of those liberal

churches, for instance, that deny all the fundamental doctrines of the faith.

But then we have a wide variety of other churches that do acknowledge Jesus Christ as only Lord and Savior. Some are more evangelical than others. Who can say where the line is that divides those that are N. T. churches from those that are not? We have to leave them with the Lord. Our responsibility is to build according to the pattern, that is, to give a true likeness of the church in our own local assembly.

Certainly no assembly has any reason for pride. If we could see ourselves as the Lord sees us, we would probably shrivel up and die. Spiritual pride is itself a denial of the truth that we are seeking to uphold.

CONCLUSION

To what should we be loyal? Once again we emphasize that we should be loyal to the Scriptures, not to any church system or circle of fellowship. In a day of drift, we must constantly test everything by the Bible and act accordingly.

And there will be a price to pay. It costs something to follow New Testament principles. There will be reproach from the world and opposition from other Christians. But our responsibility is clear. We must obey God and leave the consequences with Him.

True Discipleship

Foreword

This booklet is an attempt to set forth some principles of New Testament discipleship. Some of us have seen these principles in the Word for years, but somehow concluded that they were too extreme and impractical for the complicated age in which we live. And so we surrendered to the chill of our spiritual environment.

Then we met a group of young believers who set out to demonstrate that the Savior's terms of discipleship are not only highly practical but that they are the only terms which will ever result in the evangelization of the world.

We acknowledge our indebtedness to these young people for providing living examples of many of the truths set forth here.

To the extent that these truths are still beyond our own personal experience, we set forth as the aspirations of our heart.

—William MacDonald

Introduction

The pathway to true discipleship begins when a person is born again. It begins when the following events take place:

1. When a person realizes that he is sinful, lost, blind and naked before God.

2. When he acknowledges that he cannot save himself by good character or good works.

3. When he believes that the Lord Jesus Christ died as his Substitute on the Cross.

4. When by a definite decision of faith, he acknowledges Jesus Christ as his only Lord and Savior.

This is how a person becomes a Christian. It is important to emphasize this at the outset. Too many people think that you become a Christian by living a Christian life. NOT at all! You must first become a Christian before you can live the Christian life.

The life of discipleship outlined in the following pages is a supernatural life. We do not have the power in ourselves to live it. We need divine power. Only when we are born again do we receive the strength to live as Jesus taught.

Before reading any further, ask yourself the question, "Have I ever been born again? Have I become a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus?"

If you have not, receive Him now as your Lord and Savior. Then determine to obey Him in all that He has commanded, whatever the cost may be.

—William MacDonald

The Terms Of Discipleship

True Christianity is an all-out commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Savior is not looking for men and women who will give their spare evenings to Him—or their weekends—or their years of retirement. Rather He seeks those who will give Him first place in their lives. "He looks today, as He has ever looked, not for crowds drifting aimlessly in His track, but for individual men and women whose

undying allegiance will spring from their having recognized that He wants those who are prepared to follow the path of self-renunciation which He trod before them”1—H. A. Evan Hopkins.

Nothing less than unconditional surrender could ever be a fitting response to His sacrifice at Calvary. Love so amazing, so divine, could never be satisfied with less than our souls, our lives, our all.

The Lord Jesus made stringent demands on those who would be His disciples—demands that are all but overlooked in this day of luxury living. Too often we look upon Christianity as an escape from hell and a guarantee of heaven. Beyond that, we feel that we have every right to enjoy the best that this life has to offer. We know that there are those strong verses on discipleship in the Bible, but we have difficulty reconciling them with our ideas of what Christianity should be.

We can accept the fact that soldiers give their lives for patriotic reasons. We do not think it strange that Communists give their lives for political reasons. But that “blood, sweat and tears” should characterize the life of a follower of Christ somehow seems remote and hard to grasp.

And yet the words of the Lord Jesus are clear enough. There is scarcely any room for misunderstanding if we accept them at their face value. Here are the terms of discipleship as laid down by the Savior of the world:

1. A supreme love for Jesus Christ.

“If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my

disciple” (Luke 14:26). This does not mean that we should ever have animosity or ill-will in our hearts toward our relatives, but it does mean that our love to Christ should be so great that all other loves are hatred by comparison. Actually, the most difficult clause in this passage is the expression, “yea, and his own life also.” Self-love is one of the stubbornest hindrances to discipleship. Not until we are willing to lay down our very lives for Him are we in the place where He wants us.

2. A denial of self.

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself…” (Matthew 16:24). Denial of self is not the same as self-denial. The latter means foregoing certain foods, pleasures, or possessions. But denial of self means such complete submission to the lordship of Christ that self has no rights or authority at all. It means that self abdicates the throne. It is expressed in the words of Henry Martyn, “Lord, let me have no will of my own, or consider my true happiness as depending in the smallest degree on anything that can befall me outwardly, but as consisting altogether in conformity to Thy will.”

My glorious Victor, Prince divine,

Clasp these surrendered hands in Thine,

At length my will is all thine own,

Glad vassals of a Savior’s throne.

H. G. C. Moule

3. A deliberate choosing of the cross.

“If any man come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross…” (Matthew 16:24). The cross is not some physical infirmity or mental anguish; these things are common to all men. The cross is a pathway that is deliberately chosen. It is “a path which so far as this world goes is one of dishonor and reproach”—C. A. Coates. The cross symbolizes the shame, persecution and abuse which the world heaped upon the Son of God, and which the world will heap on all who choose to stand against the tide. Any believer can avoid the cross simply by being conformed to the world and its ways.

4. A life spent in following Christ.

“If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). To understand what this means, one need simply ask himself, “What characterized the life of the Lord Jesus?” It was a life of obedience to the will of God. It was a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a life of unselfish service for others. It was a life of patience and longsuffering in the face of the gravest wrongs. It was a life of zeal, of expenditure, of self-control, of meekness, of kindness, of faithfulness and of devotion (Galatians 5:22, 23). In order to be His disciples, we must walk as He walked. We must exhibit the fruit of Christ-likeness (John 15:8).

5. A fervent love for all who belong to Christ.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). This is the love that esteems others better than oneself. It is the love that suffers long and is kind. It vaunts not itself and is not puffed up. It does not behave itself unseemly; seeks not its own, is not easily provoked; thinks no evil. It

bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). Without this love, discipleship would be a cold, legalistic asceticism.

6. An unswerving continuance in His Word.

“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31). For real discipleship there must be continuance. It is easy enough to start well, to burst forth in a blaze of glory. But the test of reality is endurance to the end. Any man who looks back after putting his hand to the plow is not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Spasmodic obedience to the Scriptures will not do. Christ wants those who will follow Him in constant, unquestioning obedience.

Keep me from turning back.

The handles of my plough with tears are wet,

The shears with rust are spoiled, and yet, and yet,

My God! My God! Keep me from turning back.

7. A forsaking of all to follow Him.

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). This is perhaps the most unpopular of all Christ’s terms of discipleship, and may well prove to be the most unpopular verse in the Bible. Clever theologians can give you a thousand reasons why it does not mean what it says, but simple disciples drink it down eagerly, assuming that the Lord Jesus knew what He was saying. What is meant by forsaking all? It means an abandonment of all one’s material possessions that are not absolutely essential and that could be used in the spread of the gospel. The man who forsakes all does not become a shiftless loafer; he works hard to provide for

the current necessities of his family and himself. But since the passion of his life is to advance the cause of Christ, he invests everything above current needs in the work of the Lord and leaves the future with God. In seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he believes that he will never lack food and clothing. He cannot conscientiously hold on to surplus funds when souls are perishing for want of the gospel. He does not want to waste his life accumulating riches that will fall into the devil's hands when Christ returns for His saints. He wants to obey the Lord's injunction against laying up treasure on earth. In forsaking all, he offers what he cannot keep anyway, and what he has ceased to love.

These then are the seven terms of Christian discipleship. They are clear and unequivocal. The writer realizes that in the act of setting them forth, he has condemned himself as an unprofitable servant. But shall the truth of God be forever suppressed because of the failure of God's people? Is it not true that the message is always greater than the messenger? Is it not proper that God be true and every man a liar? Should we not say with an old worthy, "Thy will be done though in my own undoing."

Confessing our past failure, let us courageously face up to the claims of Christ upon us and seek henceforth to be true disciples of our glorious Lord.

My Master, lead me to Thy door:

Pierce this now willing ear once more,

Thy bonds are freedom; let me stay

With thee to toil, endure, obey.

H. G. C. Moule

Forsaking All

“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, one must forsake all. This is the unmistakable meaning of the words of the Savior. No matter how much we might object to such an “extreme” demand, no matter how much we might rebel against such an “impossible” and “unwise” policy, the fact remains that this is the Word of the Lord, and He means what He says.

At the outset, we should face these unbending truths:

1. Jesus did not make this demand of a certain, select class of Christian workers. He said, “Whosoever he be of you…”

2. He did not say that we must simply be willing to forsake all. He said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not…”

3. He did not say that we must forsake only a part of our wealth. He said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath…”

4. He did not say that a diluted form of discipleship would be possible for the man who holds on to his treasures. Jesus said, “…he cannot be my disciple.”

Actually, we should not be surprised at this absolute demand, as if it were the only such suggestion in the Bible.

Did Jesus not say:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break

through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven…" (Matthew 6:19, 20)?

As Wesley justly said, "To lay up treasure on earth is as plainly forbidden by our Master as adultery and murder."

Did Jesus not say:

"Sell that ye have, and give alms…" (Luke 12:33)?

Did He not instruct the rich young ruler:

"…sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Luke 18:22)?

If He did not mean exactly what He said, what then did He mean?

Was it not true of the believers in the early church that they "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:45)?

And has it not been true of many of God's saints down through the years that they literally forsook all to follow Jesus?

Anthony Norris Groves and his wife, early missionaries to Baghdad, became convinced that "they must cease to lay up treasure on earth, and that they should devote the whole of a very substantial income…to the Lord's service."1 Groves' convictions on this subject are set forth in his booklet, CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS.2

C. T. Studd "decided to give his entire fortune to Christ, and to take the golden opportunity offered him of doing what the rich young man had failed to do….It was simple obedience to the black and white statements of God's Word."3 After distributing thousands to the work of the

Lord, he reserved the equivalent of $9,588 for his new bride. She was not to be outdone by her husband. “Charlie,” she asked, “what did the Lord tell the rich young man to do?”

“Sell all,” he replied.

“Well then, we will start clear with the Lord at our wedding.” And off went the money to Christian missions.

The same spirit of devotedness animated Jim Elliot. He wrote in his diary:

“ ‘Father, let me be weak that I might lose my clutch on everything temporal. My life, my reputation, my possessions, Lord, let me loose the tension of the grasping hand. Even, Father, would I lose the love of fondling. How often I have released a grasp only to retain what I prized by “harmless” longing, the fondling touch. Rather, open my hand to receive the nail of Calvary, as Christ’s was opened—that I, releasing all, might be released, unleashed from all that binds me now. He thought Heaven, yea, equality with God, not a thing to be clutched at. So let me release my grasp.’ “4

Our infidel hearts tell us that it would be impossible to take he words of the Lord literally. If we forsook all, we would starve. After all, we must make provision for our own future and the future of our loved ones. If every Christian forsook all, then who would finance the work of the Lord? And if there were not some Christians who were wealthy, then how could the higher class of people ever be reached with the gospel? And so the arguments come pouring forth in quick succession—all to prove that the Lord Jesus could not have meant what He said.

The fact of the matter is that obedience to the Lord's command is the most sane and reasonable life and the one that yields the greatest joy. The witness of Scripture and of experience testifies that no one who lives sacrificially for Christ will ever suffer want. When a man obeys God, the Lord takes care of him.

The man who forsakes all to follow Christ is not a shiftless pauper who expects to be supported by his fellow Christians.

1. He is industrious. He works diligently for the supply of his current necessities and those of his family.

2. He is frugal. He lives as economically as possible so that everything above immediate needs can be put into the Lord's work.

3. He is foresighted. Instead of accumulating wealth on earth, he lays up his treasures in heaven.

4. He trusts God for the future. Instead of giving the best of his life to the building up of vast reserves for old-age security, he gives his best to the service of Christ and trusts Him for the future. He believes that if he seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he will never lack food and clothing (Matthew 6:33).

To him, it is unreasonable to accumulate wealth for a rainy day. He would argue as follows:

1. How can we conscientiously hoard extra funds when the money could be used right now for the salvation of souls? "…whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

“Again, consider the important command—Love thy neighbor as thyself (Leviticus 19:18). Can we, with any truth, be said to love that neighbor as ourselves, whom we allow to starve, when we have enough and to spare? May I not appeal to any who have experienced the joy of knowing the unspeakable gift of God, and ask—‘Would you exchange this knowledge…for a hundred worlds?’ Let us not then withhold the means by which others may obtain this sanctifying knowledge and heavenly consolation”—A. N. Groves.

2. If we really believe that Christ’s coming is imminent, we will want to put our money to use immediately. Otherwise we run the risk of having it fall into the devil’s hands—money that could have been used for eternal blessing.

3. How can we conscientiously pray to the Lord to provide finances for Christian work when we ourselves have money that we are not willing to use for this purpose? Forsaking all for Christ saves us from hypocrisy in prayer.

4. How can we teach the whole counsel of God to others if there are areas of truth, such as this, which we have failed to obey? Our lives in such a case would seal our lips.

5. Clever men of the world set aside abundant reserves for the future. This is not walking by faith but by sight. The Christian is called to a life of dependence on God. If he lays up treasures on earth, how is he different from the world and its ways?

The argument is frequently heard that we must provide for the future needs of our families; otherwise we are

worse than infidels. The following two verses are used to support this view:

…the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children (2 Corinthians 12:13).

But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

A careful study of these verses will show that they deal with CURRENT NECESSITIES and not with FUTURE CONTINGENCIES.

In the first verse, Paul is using irony. He is the parent, and the Corinthian's are his children. He did not burden them financially, although he had every right to do so as a servant of the Lord. After all, he was their father in the faith, and parents ordinarily provide for their children, not vice versa. It is not at all a question of parents' laying up for their children's future. The whole passage has to do with the supply of Paul's present needs, not his possible future necessities.

In 1 Timothy 5:8, the apostle is discussing the care of poor widows. He insists that their relatives are responsible to care for them. If there are no relatives or if they fail in their responsibility, then the local church should care for Christian widows. But here again the subject is present needs, not future necessities.

God's ideal is that the members of the body of Christ should care for the immediate needs of their fellow believers:

"It is a matter of share and share alike. At present your plenty should supply their need, and then at some future date their plenty may supply your need. In that way we

share with each other, as the Scripture says, He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack" (2 Corinthians 8:15, Phillips).

A Christian who feels he must provide for future needs faces the difficult problem of knowing how much will be enough. He therefore spends his life in pursuit of a fortune of some indefinite amount and forfeits the privilege of giving his best to the Lord Jesus Christ. He gets to the end of a wasted life and finds out that all his needs would have been provided anyway, if he had just lived wholeheartedly for the Savior.

If all Christians took the words of the Lord Jesus literally, there would be no lack of finances in the Lord's work. The gospel would go out with increased power and in increased volume. If any particular disciple faced a need, it would be the joy and privilege of other disciples to share whatever they might have.

To suggest that there must be wealthy Christians to reach the wealthy people of the world is absurd. Paul reached Caesar's household while he was a prisoner (Philippians 4:22). If we obey God, we can trust Him to arrange the details.

The example of the Lord Jesus should be conclusive in the matter. The servant is not above his Master. "It ill becomes the servant to seek to be rich, and great, and honored in this world where his Lord was poor, and mean, and despised"—George Muller.

"The sufferings of Christ included poverty, 2 Corinthians 8:9. Of course, poverty does not necessitate rags and dirt, but it does involve the lack of reserves and of the means to be luxurious…Some thirty years ago…Andrew Murray pointed out that the Lord and His apostles could

not have accomplished the work they had to do had they not been actually poor. He who would lift up another must descend, like the Samaritan, and the infinite majority of mankind always have been and still are poor”—A. N. Groves.

People plead that there are certain material possessions that are necessary for home life. That is true.

People plead that Christian businessmen must have a certain amount of capital to carry on a business today. That is true.

People plead that there are other material possessions, such as an automobile, which can be used for God’s glory. That too is true.

But beyond these legitimate necessities, the Christian should live frugally and sacrificially for the spread of the gospel. His motto should be, “Labor hard, consume little, give much—and all to Christ,” A. N. Groves.

Each of us stands responsible to God as to what it means to forsake all. One believer cannot legislate to another; each person must act as a result of his own exercise before the Lord. It is a tremendously personal matter.

If as a result of such exercise, the Lord should lead a believer to a degree of devotedness hitherto unknown, there is no room for personal pride. Any sacrifices we make are no sacrifices at all, when seen in the light of Calvary. Beside all this, we only give to the Lord what we cannot keep anyway and what we have ceased to love.

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose”—Jim Elliot.

Hindrances To Discipleship

Anyone who sets out to follow Christ can be sure that many escape routes will loom up before him. He will be given numerous opportunities to turn back. Other voices will call to him, offering to cut inches off the cross. Twelve legions of angels stand ready to deliver him from the path of self-renunciation and sacrifice.

This is remarkably illustrated in the account of three would-be disciples who allowed other voices to take precedence over the voice of Christ.

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” And Jesus said unto him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” And he said unto another, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Jesus said unto him, “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” And another also said, “Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.” And Jesus said unto him, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:57-62).

Three unnamed men came face to face with Jesus Christ. They felt an inner compulsion to follow Him. But they permitted something else to come between their souls and complete dedication to Him.

Mr. Too Quick

The first man has been called Mr. Too Quick. He enthusiastically volunteered to follow the Lord

anywhere. “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” No cost would be too great. No cross would be too heavy. No path would be too rough.

The Savior’s reply at first seems to have no connection with the willing-hearted offer of Mr. Too Quick. Jesus said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Actually the Lord’s answer was most appropriate. It was as if He said, “You claim to be willing to follow me anywhere, but are you willing to do without the material comforts of life? Foxes have more of this world’s comforts than I have. The birds have a nest they can call their own. But I am a homeless Wanderer in the world my hands have made. Are you willing to sacrifice the security of a home to follow me? Are you willing to forego the legitimate comforts of life in order to serve me devotedly?”

Apparently the man was not willing, because we hear no more of him in the Sacred Scriptures. His love for earthly conveniences was greater than his dedication to Christ!

Mr. Too Slow

The second man has been called Mr. Too Slow. He did not volunteer, like the first man; rather the Savior called him to be a follower. His reply was not an outright refusal. It was not that he was completely disinterested in the Lord. Rather there was something he wanted to do first. This was his great sin. He put his own claims above the claims of Christ. Notice his reply, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.”

Now it is perfectly legitimate for a son to show common respect to his parent. And if a father has died, it is certainly within the bounds of the Christian faith that he should be given a decent burial.

But the legitimate courtesies of life become positively sinful when they take priority over the interests of the Lord Jesus. The real ambition of this man's life is exposed by his naked request, "Lord,…me first…" The other words he spoke were mere camouflage to hide his underlying desire to put self first.

Apparently he did not realize that the words "Lord…me first" are a moral absurdity and impossibility. If Christ is Lord, then He must come first. If the personal pronoun "I" is on the throne, then Christ is no longer in control.

Mr. Too Slow had a job to accomplish, and he let this job have first place. It was therefore fitting that Jesus should say to him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." We might paraphrase His words as follows: "There are certain things which the spiritually dead can do just as well as believers. But there are other things in life which only a believer can do. See that you do not spend your life doing what an unconverted man could have done just as well. Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. But as for you —be indispensable. Let the main thrust of your life be to advance my cause on earth."

It seems that the price was too great for Mr. Too Slow to pay. He passes off the stage of time into a nameless silence.

If the first man illustrated material comforts as a hindrance to discipleship, the second might speak of a job or an occupation taking precedence over the main

reason for a Christian's existence. It is not that there is anything wrong in secular employment; God's will is that man should work in order to provide for his needs and those of his family. But the life of true discipleship demands that the kingdom of God and His righteousness be sought first; that a believer should not spend his life doing what the unregenerate could do as well, if not better; and that the function of a job is merely to provide for current necessities while the main vocation of the Christian is to preach the kingdom of God.

Mr. Too Easy

The third man has been called Mr. Too Easy. He resembled the first in that he volunteered to follow the Lord. But he resembled the second in that he used those contradictory words, "Lord,…me first…" He said, "

Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first bid them farewell, which are at home at my house."

Once again we must admit that, taken by itself, there was nothing basically wrong with his request. It is not contrary to God's law to show a loving interest in one's relatives or to observe the rules of etiquette when leaving them. What then was the point on which this man failed the test? It was this—he allowed the tender ties of nature to supersede the place of Christ.

And so with penetrating insight, the Lord Jesus said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." In other words, "My disciples are not made of such self-centered, flabby stuff as you have exhibited. I want those who are willing to renounce home ties, who will not be distracted by

sentimental relatives, who will put me above everyone else in their lives."

We are forced to conclude that Mr. Too Easy left Jesus and walked sadly down the road. His over-confident aspirations to be a disciple had dashed themselves to pieces on the rocks of congenial family bonds. Perhaps it was a weeping mother who sobbed, "You'll break your mother's heart if you leave me to go to the mission field." We do not know. All we know is that the Bible graciously refrains from giving the name of this faint-hearted fellow who, by turning back, missed the greatest opportunity of his life and earned the epitaph, "Not fit for the kingdom of God."

Summary

These then are three of the primary hindrances to true discipleship, illustrated by three men who were not willing to go all the way with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. Too Quick—the love of earthly comforts.

Mr. Too Slow—the precedence of a job or occupation.

Mr. Too Easy—the priority of tender family ties.

The Lord Jesus still calls, as He has ever called, for men and women to follow Him heroically and sacrificially.

The escape routes still present themselves saying with solicitous words, "Spare thyself! Be it far from thee!"

Few are willing to respond.

Jesus, I my cross have taken,

All to leave and follow Thee,

Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,

Thou from hence my all shalt be,

Perish ev’ry fond ambition,

All I’ve sought, or hoped, or known,

Yet how rich is my condition,

God and heav’n are still my own.

Let the world despise and leave me,

They have left my Saviour, too;

Human hearts and looks deceive me—

Thou art not, like them, untrue;

Oh! while Thou dost smile upon me,

God of wisdom, love, and might,

Foes may hate, and friends disown me,

Show Thy face, and all is bright.

—H. F. Lyte

Disciples Are Stewards

Read Luke 16:1-13

It was to the disciples that the parable of the unjust steward was spoken. In it, the Savior sets forth principles that apply to disciples of all time. After all, the disciples of Christ are essentially stewards, entrusted with the care of His property and His interests here on earth.

The parable bristles with difficulties. It seems to commend dishonesty and crookedness. But when understood in its proper light, it is laden with instruction of greatest importance.

The story in brief is this. A wealthy property owner had hired an employee to care for his business. In the course of time, the master learned that this employee was squandering his money. Immediately he demanded an audit of the books, then gave him notice that his employment would be terminated.

The employee realized that his future prospects were dismal. He was too old to do hard, physical labor, and he was ashamed to beg. So he hit upon a scheme that would assure him friends for the days ahead. He went to one of his master's accounts and asked, "How much do you owe my boss?" The answer was "Seven hundred and fifty gallons of oil." "Well," said the employee, "pay for half that amount and we'll call it even." He went to another of his employer's debtors and asked, "How much do you owe?" The customer replied, "Eight hundred bushels of wheat." "I see; well, you pay me six hundred and forty bushels, and we'll consider the account closed."

Even more shocking than the action of the dishonest employee is the comment that follows:

"And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely; for the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the children of light" (v. 8, Revised Version).

How are we to understand this apparent approval of dishonest business practices?

One thing is certain. Neither his lord nor our Lord commended such crookedness. It was this very thing that caused him to be dismissed in the first place. No righteous person could ever approve of such cheating

and unfaithfulness. Whatever else the parable teaches, it does not suggest that embezzlement is ever justified.

There is only one thing for which the unjust steward could be commended, that is, that he planned for the future. He took steps to insure that he would still have friends after his stewardship had ended. He acted for "then" instead of "now."

That is the point of the parable. Worldly people take forceful action to provide for the days ahead. The only future they are concerned about is their old age, their years of retirement. So they work diligently to make sure that they will be comfortably situated when they are no longer able to carry on gainful employment. No stone is left unturned in their quest for social security.

In this respect, the unsaved are wiser than Christians. However, in order to understand why, we must realize that the Christian's future is not on this earth but in heaven. This is the crucial point. The future for an unbeliever means the time between now and the grave. The future for a child of God means eternity with Christ.

The parable teaches then that the unregenerate are more wise and aggressive in preparing for their future on earth than Christians are for theirs in heaven.

With this background, the Lord Jesus presents the practical application of the lesson:

And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

The mammon of unrighteousness is money or other material possessions. We can use these things for winning souls to Christ. People won through our faithful

use of money are here called “friends.” A day is coming when we will fail (either die or be taken to heaven by Christ at the Rapture). Friends won through the wise use of our material possessions will then serve as a welcoming committee to receive us into the everlasting dwelling places.

This is the way in which wise stewards plan for the future—not by spending their little lives in a vain quest for security on earth; but in a passionate endeavor to be surrounded in heaven by friends who were won to Christ through their money. Money that was converted into Bibles, Testaments, scripture portions, tracts, and other Christian literature. Money that was used to support missionaries and other Christian workers. Money that helped to finance Christian radio programs and other worthy Christian activities. In short, money that was used for the spread of the gospel in any and every way. “The only way we can lay up our treasures in heaven is to put them into something that is going to heaven.”

When a Christian sees that his material possessions can be used in the salvation of precious souls, he loses his love for “things.” Luxury, wealth and material splendor turn sour in his stomach. He longs to see the mammon of unrighteousness converted by divine alchemy into worshippers of the Lamb forever and ever. He is captivated by the possibility of doing a work in human lives that will bring eternal glory to God and eternal blessing to the people themselves. He feels something of the thirst of Rutherford:

O if one soul from Anworth

Meets me at God’s right hand,

My heaven will be two heavens

In Immanuel's land.

Anne R. Cousin

To him all the diamonds, rubies and pearls, all the bank deposits, all the insurance policies, all the mansions, pleasure boats and magnificent cars are but mammon of unrighteousness. If used for self, they perish with the using, but if spent for Christ, they reap dividends throughout eternity.

The manner in which we deal with material things, the extent to which we grasp them is a test of our character. The Lord emphasizes this in verse 10:

The man who is dependable in a very small matter is dependable also in a large deal, the man who is dishonest in a very small matter is dishonest also in a large deal (Williams' Translation).

Here the very small matter is the stewardship of material things. Those who are dependable are the ones who use these things for the glory of God and the blessing of their fellow men. Those who are dishonest are the ones who use their possessions for comfort, luxurious living and selfish enjoyment. If a man cannot be trusted in a small matter (material things), how could he be trusted in a large deal (the stewardship of spiritual things). If a man is dishonest with the mammon of unrighteousness, how can he expect to be faithful as a minister of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1).

The Savior therefore presses the argument a step further:

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches (verse 11).

Earthly treasures are not true riches; their value is finite and temporal. Spiritual treasures are true riches; their value cannot be measured and will never end. Unless a man is dependable in his handling of material things, he cannot expect God to trust him with spiritual prosperity in this life or treasures in heaven.

Again the Lord extends the argument by saying:

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own (verse 12, Revised Version).

Material things are not our own; they belong to God. Everything that we possess is a sacred stewardship from God. All that can be called our own are the fruits of our diligent study and service here, and the rewards of faithful stewardship there. If we have not proved dependable in handling God's property, then we cannot expect to enter into the deep truths of God's Word in this life, or to be rewarded in the next.

With climactic emphasis, the Lord then summarized the teaching of the entire parable:

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (verse 13).

There cannot be divided allegiance. A disciple cannot live for two worlds. A steward either loves God or loves mammon. If he loves mammon, he hates God.

And, mind you, this was written to disciples, not to the unsaved.

Zeal

A disciple can be forgiven if he does not have great mental ability. He can be forgiven also if he does not display outstanding physical prowess. But no disciple can be excused if he does not have zeal. If his heart is not aflame with a red-hot passion for the Savior, he stands condemned.

After all, Christians are followers of the One Who said, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (John 2:17). Their Savior was consumed with a passion for God and for His interests. There is no room in His train for half-hearted followers.

The Lord Jesus lived in a state of spiritual tension. This is indicated by His words, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished” (Luke 12:50). And again by His memorable utterance, “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

The zeal of John the Baptist was attested by the Lord when He said, “He was a burning and a shining light” (John 5:35).

The apostle Paul was a zealot. Someone has tried to capture the fervency of his life in the following sketch:

He is a man without the care of making friends, without the hope or desire of worldly good, without the apprehension of worldly loss, without the care of life, without the fear of death. He is a man of no rank, country or condition. A man of one thought—the Gospel

of Christ. A man of one purpose—the glory of God. A fool, and content to be reckoned a fool for Christ. Let him be called enthusiast, fanatic, babbler or any other outlandish nondescript the world may choose to denominate him. But still let him be nondescript. As soon as they call him trader, householder, citizen, man of wealth, man of the world, man of learning, or even man of common sense, it is all over with his character. He must speak or he must die, and though he should die, he will speak. He has no rest but hastens over land and sea, over rocks and trackless deserts. He cries aloud and spares not, and will not be hindered. In the prisons, he lifts up his voice, and in the tempests of the ocean, he is not silent. Before awful councils and throned kings, he witnesses in behalf of the truth. Nothing can quench his voice but death, and even in the article of death, before the knife has severed his head from his body, he speaks, he prays, he testifies, he confesses, he beseeches, he wars, and at length he blesses the cruel people.

Other men of God have shown this same burning desire to please God.

C. T. Studd once wrote:

Some want to live within the sound

Of church or chapel bell.

I want to run a rescue shop

Within a yard of hell.

And, incidentally, it was an article written by an atheist that spurred Studd to all-out dedication to Christ. The article was as follows:

If I firmly believed, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences

destiny in another, then religion would mean to me everything. I would cast away earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought, and my last image before sleep sank me into unconsciousness. I should labor in its cause alone. I would take thought for the morrow of Eternity alone. I would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences would never stay my hand, or seal my lips. Earth, its joys and its griefs, would occupy no moment of my thoughts. I would strive to look upon Eternity alone, and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlastingly miserable. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my text would be, WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN IF HE GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?

John Wesley was a man of zeal. He said, “Give me a hundred men who love God with all their hearts, and fear nothing but sin, and I will move the world.”

Jim Elliot, martyr of Ecuador, was a torch of fire for Jesus Christ. One day, as he was meditating on the words, “He maketh his ministers a flame of fire” (Hebrews 1:7), he wrote in his diary:

Am I ignitable? God deliver me from the dread asbestos of “other things.” Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be a flame. But flame is transient, often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul—short life? In me there dwells the Spirit of the Great Short-Lived, Whose zeal for God’s house consumed Him. “Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.”

The last line is quoted from a fervent poem of Amy Carmichael. It is little wonder that Jim Elliot drew inspiration from it:

From prayer that asks that I may be

Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee,

From fearing when I should aspire,

From faltering when I should climb higher,

From silken self, O Captain, free

Thy soldier who would follow Thee.

From subtle love of softening things,

From easy choices, weakenings;

Not thus are spirits fortified,

Not this way went the Crucified,

From all that dims Thy Calvary,

O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that leads the way,

The faith that nothing can dismay,

The hope no disappointments tire,

The passion that will burn like fire,

Let me not sink to be a clod:

Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.

The disgrace of the church in the twentieth century is that more zeal is evident among Communists and cultists than among Christians.

In 1903, one man with seventeen followers began his attack on the world. His name was Lenin. By 1918, the

number had increased to forty thousand, and with that forty thousand, he gained control of the one hundred sixty million people of Russia. And the movement has gone on and now controls over one-third of the world's population. However much one might be opposed to their principles, one cannot help admiring their zeal.

Many Christians felt strongly rebuked when Billy Graham first read the following letter, written by an American college student who had been converted to communism in Mexico. The purpose of the letter was to explain to his fiancÃƒ©e why he must break off their engagement:

We Communists have a high casualty rate. We're the ones who get shot and hung and lynched and tarred and feathered and jailed and slandered, and ridiculed and fired from our jobs, and in every other way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive. We Communists don't have the time or the money for many movies, or concerts, or T-bone steaks, or decent homes and new cars. We've been described as fanatics. We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor, THE STRUGGLE FOR WORLD COMMUNISM.

We Communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money could buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definite purpose in life. We subordinate our petty, personal selves into a great movement of humanity, and if our personal lives seem hard, or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that each of us

in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind. There is one thing in which I am in dead earnest and that is the Communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife and mistress, my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. Its hold on me grows, not lessens as time goes on. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas, and actions according to how they affect the Communist cause and by their attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideas and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad.

If Communists can be as dedicated as this for their cause, how much more should Christians pour themselves out in loving, glad devotion for their glorious Lord. Surely if the Lord Jesus is worth anything, He is worth everything. "If the Christian faith is worth believing in at all, it is worth believing in heroically"—Findlay.

If God has really done something in Christ on which the salvation of the world depends, and if He has made it known, then it is a Christian duty to be intolerant of everything which ignores, denies, or explains it away—James Denney.

God wants men who are completely turned over to the control of the Holy Spirit. These men will appear to others as if they were drunk with wine, but those who know better will realize that they are driven on by "a deep, enormous, haunting, never-sated thirst for God."

Let every would-be disciple take to heart the necessity of zeal in his life. Let him aspire to fulfill the description given by Bishop Ryle:1

A zealous man in religion is pre-eminently a man of one thing. It is not enough to say that he is earnest, hearty, uncompromising, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent in spirit. He only sees one thing, he cares for one thing, he lives for one thing, he is swallowed up in one thing; and that one thing is to please God. Whether he lives, or whether he dies—whether he has health, or whether he has sickness, —whether he rich or whether he is poor,—whether he pleases man, or whether he gives offence, —whether he is thought wise, or whether he is thought foolish—whether he gets blame, or whether he gets praise—whether he gets honor, or whether he gets shame—for all this the zealous man cares nothing at all. He burns for one thing; and that one thing is to please God, and to advance God's glory. If he is consumed in the very burning, he cares not for it—he is content. He feels that, like a lamp, he is made to burn; and if consumed in burning, he has but done the work for which God appointed him. Such an one will always find a sphere for his zeal. If he cannot preach, and work, and give money, he will cry, and sigh, and pray. Yes: if he is only a pauper, on a perpetual bed of sickness, he will make the wheels of sin around him drive heavily, by continually interceding against it. If he cannot fight in the valley with Joshua, he will do the work of Moses, Aaron, and Hur, on the hill (Exodus 17:9-13). If he is cut off from working himself, he will give the Lord no rest till help is raised up from another quarter, and the work is done. This is what I mean when I speak of "zeal" in religion.

Faith

There can be no true discipleship without profound and unquestioning faith in the living God. He who would do exploits for God must first trust Him implicitly. “All God’s giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them”—Hudson Taylor.

Now true faith is always based upon some promise of God, some portion of His Word. This is important. The believer first reads or hears some promise of the Lord. The Holy Spirit takes that promise and applies it to his heart and conscience in a very personal way. The Christian becomes aware that God has spoken to him directly. With utter confidence in the trustworthiness of the One Who has promised, he reckons the promise as sure as if it were already fulfilled, even though, humanly speaking, it is impossible.

Or perhaps it is a commandment rather than a promise. To faith, there is no difference. If God commands, He enables. If He bids Peter to walk on the water, Peter can be sure that the needed power will be given (Matthew 14:28). If He commands us to preach the gospel to every creature, we can be sure of the needed grace (Mark 16:15).

Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man’s power ends. “The province of faith begins where probabilities cease and where sight and sense fail”—George Muller.

Faith says, “If ‘impossible’ is the only objection, it can be done!”

“Faith brings God into the scene, and therefore it knows absolutely nothing of difficulties—yea, it laughs at impossibilities. In the judgment of faith, God is the grand answer to every question—the grand solution of every difficulty. It refers all to Him; and hence it matters not in the least to faith whether it be six hundred thousand (dollars) or six hundred million; it knows that God is all-sufficient. It finds all its resources in Him. Unbelief says, ‘

How can such and such things be?’ It is full of ‘Hows’; but faith has one great answer to ten thousand ‘hows,’ and that answer is, God”—C. H. Mackintosh.

Humanly speaking, it was impossible for Abraham and Sarah to have a child. But God had promised, and to Abraham there was only one impossibility—that God could lie.

(He) against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, “So shall thy seed be.” And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Romans 4:18-21).

Faith, mighty faith the promise sees

And looks to God alone;

Laughs at impossibilities

And cries, “It shall be done!”

Our God is the God Who specializes in impossibilities (Luke 1:37). There is nothing too hard for Him (Genesis 18:14). “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

Faith claims His promise, “All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23), and exults with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

Doubt sees the obstacles—

Faith sees the way!

Doubt sees the darkest night—

Faith sees the day!

Doubt dreads to take a step—

Faith soars on high,

Doubt questions, “Who believes?”

Faith answers, “I!”

Because faith deals with the supernatural and the divine, it does not always seem to be “reasonable.” It was not using “common sense” for Abraham to go out, not knowing where he was going, but simply obeying God’s command (Hebrews 11:8). It was not “shrewd” of Joshua to attack Jericho without death-dealing weapons (Joshua 6:1-20). Men of the world would scoff at such “insanity.” But it worked!

Actually, faith is most reasonable. What is more reasonable than that a creature should trust his Creator? Is it insane to believe in One Who can neither lie nor fail nor err? To trust God is the most sensible, sane, rational thing that a man can do. It is no leap in

the dark. Faith demands the surest evidence and finds it in God's unfailing Word. No one has ever trusted Him in vain; no one ever will. Faith in the Lord involves no risk whatever.

Faith truly glorifies God; it gives Him His proper place as the One Who is completely trustworthy. On the other hand, unbelief dishonors God; it charges Him with lying (1 John 5:10). It limits the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 78:41).

Faith gives man his proper place also—as a humble suppliant, bowed in the dust before the sovereign Lord of all.

Faith is opposed to sight. Paul reminded us that "we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). To walk by sight means to have visible means of support, to have adequate reserves for the future, to employ human cleverness in insuring against unseen risks. The walk of faith is the very opposite; it is a moment by moment reliance on God alone. It is a perpetual crisis of dependence on the Lord. The flesh shrinks from a position of complete dependence on an unseen God. It seeks to provide a cushion against possible losses. If it cannot see where it is going, it is apt to suffer complete nervous collapse. But faith steps forward in obedience to the Word of God, rises above circumstances, and trusts the Lord for the supply of all needs.

Any disciple who determines to walk by faith can be sure that his faith will be tested. Sooner or later, he will be brought to the end of his human resources. In his extremity, he will be tempted to appeal to his fellow men. If he is really trusting the Lord, he will look to God alone.

“To make known my wants, directly or indirectly, to a human being, is departure from the life of faith, and a positive dishonor to God. It is actually betraying Him. It is tantamount to saying that God has failed me, and I must look to my fellow for help. It is forsaking the living fountain and turning to a broken cistern. It is placing the creature between my soul and God, thus robbing my soul of rich blessing, and God of the glory due to Him”—C. H. Mackintosh.

The normal attitude of a disciple is to desire an increase in his faith (Luke 17:5). He has already trusted Christ for salvation. Now he seeks to extend the areas of his life which are submitted to the Lord’s control. As he faces sickness, trials, tragedies, and bereavements, he comes to know God in a new and more intimate way, and his faith is strengthened. He proves the truth of the promise, “Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord” (Hosea 6:3). The more he finds God to be trustworthy, the more anxious he is to trust Him for greater things.

Since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, the disciple’s desire should be to saturate himself in the Scriptures—to read them, study them, memorize them, meditate upon them day and night. They are his chart and compass, his guide and comfort, his lamp and light.

In the life of faith, there is always room for advancement. When we read of what has been accomplished through faith, we realize that we are like little children, playing at the edge of a boundless ocean. The exploits of faith are given in Hebrews 11. They rise to a magnificent crescendo in verses 32-40:

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

One final word! We have already mentioned that a disciple who walks by faith will doubtless be considered a dreamer or a fanatic by men of the world or even by other Christians. But it is good to remember that “the faith that enables one to ‘walk with God’ enables him also to attach the proper values to the thoughts of men”—C. H. Mackintosh.

Prayer

The only completely satisfactory book that has ever been written on the subject of prayer is the Bible. All other

treatments leave us with a feeling that there are depths that have not been reached and heights that have not been scaled. In this booklet, we cannot hope to improve on the efforts of others. All we can do is to summarize some of the important principles of prayer, especially as they have to do with the subject of Christian discipleship.

1. The best prayer comes from a strong inward necessity. We have all proved this to be true. When our lives are serene and placid, our prayers are apt to be dull and listless. When we reach a crisis, a moment of danger, a serious illness, or a heavy bereavement, then our prayers are fervent and vital. Someone has said that "the arrow that is to enter heaven must be launched from a bow fully bent." A sense of urgency, of helplessness, of conscious need is the womb from which the best prayers are born.

Unfortunately, we spend most of our lives trying to cushion ourselves from necessities. By the use of clever business methods, we provide comfortable reserves against every imaginable contingency. Through sheer human cleverness, we reach the stage where we are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. Then we wonder why our prayer life is shallow and lifeless and why no fire falls from heaven. If we truly walked by faith instead of by sight, then our prayer life would be revolutionized.

2. One of the conditions of successful prayer is that we must "draw near with a true heart" (Hebrews 10:22). This means that we must be genuine and sincere before the Lord. There must be no hypocrisy. If we are to meet this condition, then we will never ask God to do

something when we have it in our own power to do it. For instance, we will never ask Him to raise up a certain amount of money for a Christian project if we ourselves have surplus funds that could be used in this way. God is not mocked. He does not answer prayers if He has already given us the answer, and we are not willing to use it.

In the same connection, we should not pray for the Lord to send others on His errands if we are not willing to go ourselves. Thousands of prayers have been uttered in behalf of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. But if all who prayed had been willing to be used of the Lord in reaching these people, then perhaps the history of Christian missions would have been more encouraging.

3. Prayer should be simple, believing and unquestioning. It is all too possible to become absorbed with the theological problems connected with prayer. This serves only to dull the spiritual senses. It is better to pray than to solve all the mysteries connected with prayer. Let the doctors of divinity spin their theories concerning prayer. But let the simple believer storm the gates of heaven with childlike trust. It was Augustine who said, “The unlearned take heaven by force, and we with all our learning rise not above flesh and blood.”

I know not by what methods rare,

But this I know—God answers prayer.

I know not when He sends the word

That tells us fervent prayer is heard;

I know it cometh soon or late,

Therefore we need to pray and wait.

I know not if the blessing sought

Will come in just the guise I thought.

I leave my prayers with Him alone,

Whose will is wiser than my own.

—Lola C. Henson

4. For true power in prayer, hold nothing back. Be surrendered to Christ. Go all out for Him. Forsake all to follow the Savior. The type of devotion that crowns Christ Lord of all is the kind that He loves to honor.

5. God seems to place a special value on prayer when it costs us something. Those who rise early in the morning enjoy fellowship with the One Who likewise arose early to receive His instructions for the day from His Father. Likewise, those who are in such deadly earnest that they are willing to pray through the night enjoy a power with God that cannot be denied. Prayer that costs nothing is worth nothing; it is simply a by-product of a cheap Christianity.

The New Testament often links prayer with fasting. Abstinence from food can be a valuable aid in spiritual exercises. From the human side, it promotes clarity, concentration and keenness. From the divine standpoint, it seems that the Lord is especially willing to answer prayer when we put that prayer before our necessary food.

6. Avoid selfish prayers. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3). The primary burden of our prayers should be the interests of the Lord. First we should pray, “Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in

heaven." Then we may add, "Give us this day our daily bread."

7. We should honor God with great requests because He is a great God. "Let us have faith to expect great things from God.

Thou art coming to a King,

Large petitions with thee bring

For His love and power are such

Thou canst never ask too much.

—John Newton

How often have we grieved the Lord by expecting so little of Him. We have been content with such scanty triumphs, with such poor attainments, with such feeble longings after higher things, that we have not impressed those around us with the thought that our God is a great God. We have not glorified Him in the eyes of men who know Him not by lives that arrested attention and awakened inquiry as to the power by which they were sustained. Too often it has not been said of us, as was said of the apostle, 'They glorified God in me'"—E. W. Moore.

8. In praying, we should first make sure we are in the will of God. Then we should pray, believing that He will hear and answer. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14, 15).

To pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus means to pray in His will. When we truly pray in His Name, it is the same

as if He were actually uttering the request to God, His Father. “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13, 14). “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you” (John 16:23). “Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:19, 20).“To ask, ‘In His Name,’ means to be taken by the hand and led to prayer by Him; it means, may I say, His kneeling by our side and His desires flowing through our heart. That is what it means. ‘In His Name.’ His Name is what He is, His nature, and therefore to pray in the Name of Christ must mean to pray according to His blessed will. Can I pray for evil in the Name of the Son of God? What I pray for should really be an expression of His nature. Can I do that in prayer? Prayer should breathe the power of the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ, the desires of Christ in us and for us. The Lord teach us more and more to pray in His Name. We should not think of closing a prayer, without the very words: ‘In the blessed Name of our Lord,’ but then the whole supplication should be infiltrated by, permeated by the blessed Name of Jesus—all according to that Name”—Samuel Ridout.

9. If our prayer life is to be truly effective, we must keep short accounts with God. By that, we mean that sin must be confessed and forsaken as soon as we are conscious it has entered into our lives. “If I regard iniquity in my

heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). We must abide in Christ. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). The person who abides in Christ stays so close to Him that he is filled with a knowledge of the Lord's will. He can thus pray intelligently and be assured of answers. Again, the abiding life demands that we obey His commandments. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22). A right state of soul is necessary if our prayers are to be heard and answered (1 John 3:20).

10. We should not only pray at certain stated times during the day; we should develop the attitude of prayer, so that we look to the Lord as we are walking along the street, driving in a car, working at a desk, or serving in the home. Nehemiah is a classic example of this spontaneous type of prayer (Nehemiah 2:4b). It is a good thing to "dwell in the secret place of the most High" instead of making occasional visits there.

11. Finally, our prayers should be specific. It is only as we pray for definite matters that we can see definite answers.

Prayer is a marvelous privilege. By this means, we can, as Hudson Taylor said, learn to move man through God. "What ministries are in our hands for working miracles in the wonder realm of prayer! We can take sunshine into cold and sullen places. We can light the lamp of hope in the prison-house of despondency. We can loose the chains from the prisoner's limbs. We can take gleams and thoughts of home into the far country. We

can carry heavenly cordials to the spiritually faint, even though they are laboring beyond the seas. Miracles in response to prayer!”—J. H. Jowett.

To this, a writer named Wenham adds his testimony: “Preaching is a rare gift; prayer is a rarer one. Preaching, like a sword, is a weapon to use at close quarters; those far off cannot be reached by it. Prayer, like a breechloader, has longer range, and under some circumstances is even more effective.”

Lord, what a change within us one short hour

Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make,

What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,

What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;

We rise, and all the distant and the near

Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;

We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!

Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,

Or others, that we are not always strong,

That we are ever overborne with care,

That we should ever weak or heartless be,

Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,

And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?

—Trench

Warfare

One could scarcely read the New Testament even casually without realizing that the figure of warfare is often used to describe Christ's program on earth. True Christianity is far removed from the hurdy-gurdy entertainment of modern Christendom. It is not to be confused with the luxury-living and pleasure-seeking that are so rampant today. Rather, it is a struggle to the death, an unceasing conflict against the forces of hell. No disciple is worth his salt who does not realize that the battle is drawn and that there is no turning back.

In war, there must be unity. It is no time for petty bickering, for partisan jealousies, for divided loyalties. No house divided against itself can stand. Therefore, the soldiers of Christ must be united. The way to unity is through humility. This is clearly taught in Philippians 2. It is impossible to have strife with a truly humble man. It takes two to make a fight. "Only by pride cometh contention." Where there is no pride, there is no room for contention.

War demands austerity and sacrificial living. In wars of any consequence, there is invariably a vast system of rationing. It is high time that Christians realized that we are at war and that expenditures must be cut to a minimum so that as much of our resources as possible can be thrown into the struggle.

Not many see this as clearly as a young disciple named R_____ M_____. In 1960, he was president of the freshman class of a Christian school. During his term, it was proposed that expenditures be made for the usual class parties, jackets, and a class gift. Rather than approve such expenditures which did not contribute

directly to the furtherance of the gospel, R_____ M_____ resigned from his post as president. The following letter was distributed to his fellow classmen on the day his resignation was announced:

Dear Classmates:

Since the matters of class parties, jackets, and the class gift have been brought before the Cabinet, I, as the president of the class have been considering the Christian attitude toward these areas.

I think we would find the greatest joy for our own selves in giving ourselves, our money, and our time entirely for Christ and for others, thus finding the reality of His Words: 'He who loses his life for My sake will find it.'

For Christians to spend their money and time on things that do not result in a definite witness to the unbeliever or for the building up of His children in Him would seem to be inconsistent with the facts that 7000 people die daily from starvation and over half the world has never heard of man's only Hope.

How much more glory we could give to God by helping to spread the Gospel to the other 60% of the world who have never heard of Jesus Christ or even in many neighboring homes instead of coming together in a little clique by ourselves, limiting our social well-roundedness to those of like mind, and wasting money and time for our own pleasure.

Since I am aware of specific needs and opportunities where finances can be used to such great advantage to the glory of Jesus Christ and for helping my neighbor here and abroad, it is impossible for me to allow class funds to be spent unnecessarily on ourselves. If I were

one of those who are in so great a need, as I know of so many to be in, I would want those who have the ability to do all that they could to supply me with the Gospel and with my material needs.

“And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.”

“But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?”

Therefore it is with love and prayer, that you might see the Lord Jesus giving His all (2 Corinthians 8:9), that I hereby submit to you my resignation as president of the class of ’63.

In Him with you,

R_____ M_____

War demands suffering. If young men today are willing to lay down their lives for their country, how much more willing should Christians be to lose their lives for Christ’s sake and the gospel. A faith that costs nothing is worth nothing. If the Lord Jesus means anything to us at all, He should mean everything to us, and no considerations of personal safety or immunity from suffering should deter us in our service for Him.

When the apostle Paul sought to defend his apostleship against the attacks of his small-souled critics, he did not point to his family background or his education or his worldly attainments. Rather, he pointed to his sufferings for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the

Jews five times received I, forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

In delivering his noble challenge to son Timothy, he urged, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

War demands implicit obedience. A true soldier will follow the orders of his superior without questions and without delay. It is preposterous to think that Christ could be satisfied with anything less. As Creator and Redeemer, He has every right to expect that those who follow Him into battle will obey His orders promptly and completely.

War demands skill in the use of weapons. A Christian's weapons are prayer and the Word of God. He must give himself to fervent, believing, persevering prayer. Only thus can the strongholds of the enemy be pulled down. Then, too, he must be proficient in the use of the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The enemy will do everything in his power to trick him into dropping this sword. He will cast doubts upon the inspiration of the Scriptures. He will point to alleged contradictions. He will bring opposing arguments from science and

philosophy and human traditions. But the soldier of Christ must stand his ground, proving the effectiveness of his weapon by using it in season and out of season.

The weapons of the Christian warfare seem ridiculous to the man of the world. The plan that proved effective against Jericho would be ridiculed by military leaders today. Gideon's insignificant army would evoke only ridicule. And what shall we say of David's slingshot, of Shamgar's ox-goad, and of God's paltry army of fools down through the centuries? The spiritual mind knows that God is not on the side of the biggest battalions, but rather that He loves to take the weak and poor and despised things of this world and glorify Himself through them.

War demands a knowledge of the enemy and of his strategy. So it is in the Christian warfare. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). We know that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14, 15). A trained Christian soldier knows that his bitterest opposition will not come from the drunkard, or the common thief, or the harlot, but rather from professed ministers of religion. It was the religious leaders who nailed the Christ of God to the cross. It was religious leaders who persecuted the early church. Paul met his most savage attacks from the hands of those who professed to be God's servants. So it has been down through the years. Satan's ministers are transformed as

the ministers of righteousness. They speak religious language, they wear religious clothes, and they act with an affected piety, but their hearts are filled with hatred for Christ and for the gospel.

War demands undistractedness. “Every one who serves as a soldier avoids becoming entangled in the affairs of civil life, so that he may satisfy the officer who enlisted him” (2 Timothy 2:4, Weymouth). The disciple of Christ learns to be intolerant of anything that might stand between his soul and complete devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is ruthless without being offensive, firm without being discourteous. But he has one passion and one passion alone. Everything else must be brought into captivity.

War demands courage in the face of danger. “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore…” (Ephesians 6:13, 14a). It has often been pointed out that the armor of the Christian soldier in Ephesians 6:13-18 makes no provision for retreat. Why retreat? If “we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,” if no one can be successfully against us because God is for us, if victory is assured before we ever start to fight, how can we ever think of turning back?

What though I stand with the winners,

Or perish with those that fall?

Only the cowards are sinners,

Fighting the fight is all.

Strong is my foe, who advances,

Snapped is my blade, O Lord;

See their proud banners and lances—

But spare me the stub of a sword.

—quoted by Amy Carmichael

World Dominion

God has called us to world dominion. It was never His intention that we should be “born a man and die a grocer.” It was not His purpose that we spend our lives as “minor officials in transient enterprises.”

When He originally created man, the Lord gave him dominion over the earth. He crowned him with glory and honor and put all things in subjection under his feet. Man was clothed with dignity and sovereignty—just slightly lower than that of the angels.

When he sinned, Adam forfeited much of the dominion that had been his by divine decree. Instead of exercising undisputed sway, he ruled unsteadily over an uncertain realm.

In the gospel, there is a sense in which we can regain dominion. It is not now a matter of control over snarling dogs or poisonous snakes—rather, it is claiming the heathen for our possession. “True imperialism is empire by moral and spiritual sovereignty; allurement and dominion by the fascinating radiance of a pure and sanctified life”—J. H. Jowett.

Actually, this dignity of the Christian calling is something that Adam never knew. We are partners with God in the world’s redemption. “This is our errand—to anoint men in the Name of the Lord to royalty of life, to sovereignty over self, to service for the realm”—Dinsdale T. Young.

The tragedy of much of life today is the failure to appreciate our high calling. We are content to spend our years "hugging the subordinate," or "majoring in minors." We creep instead of fly. We are slaves instead of kings. Few have the vision of claiming countries for Christ.

Spurgeon was an exception. He wrote the following dynamic message to his son:

I should not like you, if meant by God to be a missionary, to die a millionaire.

I should not like it, were you fitted to be a missionary, that you should drivel down to a king.

What are all your kings, all your nobles, all your diadems, when you put them together, compared with the dignity of winning souls to Christ, with the special honor of building for Christ, not on another man's foundation, but preaching Christ's Gospel in regions far beyond?

Another exception was John Mott, well-known missionary statesman. When President Coolidge asked him to serve as ambassador to Japan, Mott replied, "Mr. President, since God called me to be an ambassador of His, my ears have been deaf to all other calls."

Billy Graham tells of a third exception. "When the Standard Oil Company was looking in the Far East for a man, they chose a missionary to be their representative. They offered him ten thousand, and he turned it down; twenty-five thousand, and he turned it down; fifty thousand, and he turned it down. They said, 'What's wrong?' He said, 'Your price is all right, but your job is too small. God has called me to be a missionary.'"

The Christian's calling is the noblest of all, and if we realize it, our lives will take on new loftiness. We will no longer speak of ourselves as "called to be a plumber" or "called to be a physicist" or "called to be a dentist." Rather, we will see ourselves as "called to be an apostle"—and all these other things as mere means of livelihood.

We will see ourselves called to preach the gospel to every creature, to make disciples of all nations, to evangelize the world.

An immense task, you say? Immense, yes—but not impossible. The enormity of the task is indicated by the following graphic view of the world in miniature:

If in our imagination we could compress the present population of the world—now in excess of three billion people—into a group of a thousand persons living in a single town, the following is the picture of contrasts we would then vividly see.

Sixty persons would represent the U.S. population; all others would be represented by 940. The 60 Americans would have 35% of the total income of the entire town; the 940 would share the other 65%.

Thirty-six of the Americans in the town would be (professing) Christian church members; and 24 would not. In the town as a whole, about 290 would be (professing) Christians and 710 would not. At least 80 persons in the whole town would be believing Communists and 370 would be under Communist domination. Possibly 70 in the whole town would be (professing) Protestant Christians.

Three hundred and three persons in the whole town would be white; 697 would be non-white. The 60 Americans would have an average life expectancy of 70 years; all the other 940 would average under 40.

The Americans would have 15 Ã,½ times as much per person as all the rest on an average. They would produce 16% of the town's total food supply, eat up all but 1 Ã,½% of that total supply and keep most of it for their future use in expensive storage equipment. When it is remembered that most of the 940 non-Americans in the town would always be hungry and never know quite when they would get enough to eat, the situation created by this disparity in food supply and the existence of vast reserves becomes fairly apparent, particularly in view of the fact that the Americans already eat 72% above the optimum food requirements. They could actually save money by giving away excess food because of the cost of storing it, but they think that would be a dangerous "give-away program of soft-headed do gooders."

The 60 Americans would have, of the town's total supply, 12 times as much electric power as all the rest, 22 times as much coal, 21 times as much petroleum, 50 times as much steel and 50 times as much in general equipment.

The lowest income groups among the 60 Americans would be better off than the average in much of the rest of the town. Literally most of the non-American people in the town would be poor, hungry, sick and ignorant. Almost half would not be able to read or write. More than half would never have heard of Christ or what he stood for. But very soon more than half would be hearing

about Karl Marx. (Words in parentheses have been added).

—Harry Smith Leiper

How then is the world going to be reached for Christ with the gospel in our generation? The answer—only by men and women who love God with all their hearts and who love their neighbors as themselves. It is only the devotion and dedication that spring from an undying love that will ever accomplish the task.

Those who are constrained by the love of Christ will count no sacrifice too great to make for Him. They will do because of love to Him what they would never do for worldly gain. They will not count their lives dear unto themselves. They will spend and be spent if only men might not perish for want of the gospel.

Lord Crucified, give me a heart like Thine!

Teach me to love the dying souls of men—

And keep my heart in closest touch with Thee;

And give me love—pure Calvary's Love

To bring the lost to Thee.

—James A. Stewart

Unless love is the motive, the cause is hopeless. It profits nothing. The ministry then becomes nothing more than sounding brass or clanging cymbals. But when love is the guiding star, when men go forth aflame with devotion to Christ, no power on earth can stop the onward sweep of the gospel.

Picture then a band of disciples, utterly sold out to Jesus Christ, driven by the love of Christ, traversing land and

sea as heralds of a glorious message, tirelessly pressing on to new areas, finding in every life they meet a soul for whom Christ died, and coveting each one as a worshipper of the Savior throughout eternity. What method do these otherworldly men adopt in making Christ known?

The New Testament seems to present two principal methods of reaching the world with the gospel. The first is by public proclamation; the second is by private discipling.

As for the first, it was used commonly by the Lord Jesus and by His disciples. Wherever people were gathered together, there was an opportunity for preaching the good news. Thus we find gospel meetings in the market places, in prisons, in the synagogues, on the beaches, and by the banks of rivers. The urgency and superlative character of the message made it unthinkable to limit it to conventional meeting places.

The second method of propagating the Christian faith is by private discipling of individuals. This is the method which the Lord Jesus used in the training of the twelve. He called this little band of men that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth. Day after day, He instructed them in the truth of God. He set before them the task to which they were appointed. He forewarned them in detail of the dangers and difficulties they would encounter. He took them into the private counsels of God and made them partners with Him in the glorious, yet arduous, divine plan. Then he sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they launched forth to tell the world of a risen, ascended, glorified Savior. The effectiveness

of this method is seen in the fact that the band of disciples, reduced to eleven by the defection of the traitor, turned the world upside down for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul not only practiced this method himself but urged it on Timothy as well. “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). The first step is the careful and prayerful selection of faithful men. The second is the imparting to them of the glorious vision. The third is the sending forth of these men to make disciples of others (Matthew 28:19, ASV).

To those who lust for numbers and crave huge crowds, this method will seem dull and tedious. But God knows what He is doing, and His methods are the best methods. More can be accomplished for God by a few dedicated disciples than by a great army of self-satisfied religionists.

As these disciples go forth in the Name of Christ, they follow certain basic principles which are outlined in God’s Word. First of all, they are as wise as serpents, yet as harmless as doves. They draw on the resources of the Godhead for wisdom in the difficult path they have to tread. At the same time, they are meek and lowly in their contacts with their fellow men. None need fear physical violence from them; men need only to fear their prayers and their unquenchable witness.

These disciples keep themselves free from the politics of this world. They do not consider themselves as called to battle against any form of government or political ideology. They can operate under any form of

government and be loyal to that government up to the point where they are required to compromise their testimony or deny their Lord. Then they refuse to obey and submit to the consequences. But they never conspire against a human government or engage in revolutionary tactics. Did not the Lord say, “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight?” These men are ambassadors of a heavenly country and thus pass through this world as pilgrims and strangers.

They are absolutely honest in all their dealings. They avoid subterfuge of all kinds. Their “yes” means yes, and their “no” means no. They refuse to adopt the popular lie that the end justifies the means. Under no circumstances will they do evil that good may come. Each one is an embodied conscience who would rather die than sin.

Another principle invariably followed by these men is that they anchor their work to the local church. They go out into the harvest field of the world to win converts to the Lord Jesus, but then they lead these converts into the fellowship of a local church where they can be strengthened and built up in their most holy faith. True disciples realize that the local church is God’s unit on earth for propagating the faith and that the best and most enduring work is built along these lines.

Disciples are wise to avoid entangling alliances of every kind. They steadfastly refuse to allow their movements to be dictated by any human organization. They receive their marching orders directly from headquarters in heaven. This does not mean that they operate without the confidence and commendation of Christians in their

local church. On the contrary, they look upon such commendation as a confirmation of God's call to service. But they insist on the necessity of serving Christ in obedience to His Word and to His guidance for them.

Finally, these disciples avoid publicity. They try to keep themselves in the background. Their purpose is to glorify Christ and to make Him known. They are not seeking great things for themselves. Neither do they want to reveal their strategy to the enemy. So they work on quietly and unostentatiously, oblivious of man's praise or blame. They know that "heaven will be the best and safest place to learn the results of their labor."

Discipleship And Marriage

"There are some eunuchs…which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matthew 19:12).

One of the major questions to be faced by every disciple is whether God has called him to married life or to celibacy. This is entirely a matter of individual guidance from the Lord. No one can legislate for another, and to interfere in such a vital sphere is a perilous business.

The general teaching of the Word of God is that marriage was instituted by God for the human race, with several purposes in mind:

1. It was ordained for companionship and pleasure. God saw that "it is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

2. It was designed for the procreation of the race. This is indicated by the Lord's command, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

3. It was arranged for the preservation of purity in the family and in society. “To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife” (1 Corinthians 7:2).

There is nothing in the Word of God to suggest that marriage is incompatible with a life of purity, devotion and service for Christ. Rather we are reminded that “marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled” (Hebrews 13:4a). The record stands that “whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing” (Proverbs 18:22). The Preacher’s words can often be applied to marriage, “Two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9), particularly if the two are joined together in service for the Lord. The increased effectiveness of united action is suggested by Deuteronomy 32:30, where one chases a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.

And yet—although marriage is God’s will for the race in general, it is not necessarily His will for every individual. While it may be looked upon as an inalienable right, the disciple of the Lord Jesus may choose to forego that right in order to give himself more undistractedly to the service of Christ.

The Lord Jesus noted that in His kingdom there would be those who would become, as it were, eunuchs for His sake:

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it (Matthew 19:12).

This is definitely a voluntary vow which a person takes as a result of two factors:

1. A sense of the guidance of God to be unmarried.

2. A desire to give himself more wholly to the work of the Lord without the added responsibilities of family life.

There must be the conviction of divine call (1 Corinthians 7:7b). Only by this can the disciple be assured that the Lord will give the needed grace for continence.

Secondly, it must be voluntary. Wherever celibacy is a matter of ecclesiastical compulsion, the danger of impurity and immorality is great.

The apostle Paul emphasized the fact that an unmarried person can often give himself more fully to the King's business:

He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife (1 Corinthians 7:32, 33).

For that reason, he expressed the wish that the unmarried and widow should remain as he was, that is, unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:7, 8).

Even for those who were already married, the apostle insisted that the shortness of the time demanded that everything should be subordinated to the great task of making Christ known:

But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away (1 Corinthians 7:29-31).

This certainly does not mean that a man should repudiate his home responsibilities, abandon his wife and children, and sally forth as a missionary. But it does mean that he should not live for the pleasures and satisfactions of home life. He should not use his wife and children as excuses for giving Christ second place.

C. T. Studd was fearful that his fiancÃƒ©e might become so occupied with him that the Lord Jesus would not have first place in her life. To avoid this, he composed a verse for her to recite daily:

Jesus, I love Thee,

Thou art to me,

Dearer than Charlie

Ever could be.

The Communists have learned to subordinate family matters to the one great task of conquering mankind for their cause. Gordon Arnold Lonsdale is an example. After he was captured in England as a Russian spy in 1960, police found a letter from his wife and a six-page reply. His wife wrote, “How unjust is life. I fully understand you are working and this is your duty and you love your work and try to do all this very conscientiously. Nevertheless my reasoning is somehow narrow-minded in a female fashion, and I suffer dreadfully. Write to me how you love me, and maybe I will feel better.”

Lonsdale replied, in part: “All I am going to say is that I myself have only one life and not an easy one at that. All I want is to spend my life so that looking at it, there will be no shame in looking back…I am 39 shortly; is there much left?”1

“The time is short,” wrote Paul, “it remaineth that…they that have wives be as though they had none…”

The tragedy is that hasty or misguided marriage has often been the devil’s tool to sidetrack a young disciple from a pathway of maximum usefulness for Christ. Many aspiring pioneers have forfeited careers of undivided service for Him at the marriage altar.

Marriage may be a bitter enemy of fulfilling Christ’s will that all should hear of Him. “Marriage is God-given. But when it becomes a barrier to God’s will it is misused. We could name many—both men and women—who have had a definite call to the foreign field and never got there because associates held them back…Nothing—not even the God-given blessing of a life mate—must hinder God’s purpose for one’s life…Today souls die without Christ because loved ones have taken priority over God’s will.”2

It is perhaps especially true in the case of pioneer workers that a life of celibacy is preferable. “Men and women of the vanguard may need to deny themselves even the necessities of life to say nothing of its softer though perfectly legitimate pleasures. The duty of such is to endure hardness, to be good soldiers, unencumbered by the things of this life, athletes unentangled by any weight…It is a vocation, a calling, and an ordination to special service.”3

For those who hear this call and answer, there is the preferred reward. “Believe me,” said Jesus, “when I tell you that…every man who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or land for my sake will receive it all back many times over, and will inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:28, 29—Phillips).

Counting The Cost

The Lord Jesus never tried to coax men into a glib profession of faith. Neither did He seek to attract a large following by preaching a popular message.

In fact, whenever people began to swarm after Him, He would turn to them and sift them by setting forth the sternest terms of discipleship.

On one of these occasions, our Lord warned those who would follow Him that they should first count the cost. He said:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, “This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace (Luke 14:28-32).

Here He likened the Christian life to a building operation and to a war.

It is sheer folly to start building a tower, He said, unless you are sure you have enough funds to complete it. Otherwise, the unfinished structure will stand as a monument to your lack of foresight.

How true! It is one thing to make a decision for Christ in the warm emotion of a mass evangelistic rally. But it is quite another thing to deny one’s self, and take up the

cross daily, and follow Christ. Although it costs nothing to become a Christian, it costs plenty to be a consistent believer walking in a path of sacrifice, separation and suffering for Christ's sake. It is one thing to begin the Christian race well, but it is quite another thing to slug it out, day after day, through fair weather and foul, through prosperity and adversity, through joy and through grief.

A critical world is watching. By some strange instinct, it realizes that the Christian life deserves everything or nothing. When it sees an out-and-out Christian, it may sneer, and scoff and ridicule—yet inwardly, it has deep respect for the man who recklessly abandons himself to Christ. But when it sees a half-hearted Christian, it has nothing but contempt. It begins to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish. He made a big commotion when he was converted, but now he's very much like the rest of us. He started out at high speed, but now he's spinning his wheels."

And so the Savior said, "You had better count the cost!"

His second illustration concerned a king who was about to declare war on another. Would it not be sensible for him first to figure whether his 10,000 soldiers would be able to defeat the enemy's army amounting to twice that amount? How absurd it would be if he should declare war first, then reconsider when the armies were marching toward each other. The only thing left would be to hoist the white flag, and to send out a surrender team, abjectly crawling in the dust, and meekly asking for terms of peace.

It is no exaggeration to liken the Christian life to war. There are the fierce enemies—the world, the flesh and

the devil. There are discouragements, bloodshed, and suffering. There are the long weary hours of vigil, and the yearning for the light of day. There are tears and toil and testings. And there is daily death.

Anyone who sets out to follow Christ should remember Gethsemane, Gabbatha, and Golgotha. And then he should count the cost. It is either an absolute commitment to Christ, or a sniveling surrender with all that that means of disgrace and degradation.

With these two illustrations, the Lord Jesus warned His hearers against any impulsive decisions to be His disciples. He could promise them persecution, tribulation and distress. They should first count the cost!

And what is the cost? The next verse answers the question:

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

The cost is “everything”—all a man has and is. It meant this for the Savior; it cannot mean less for those who will follow Him. If He Who was rich beyond all description voluntarily became poor, shall His disciples win the crown by some less costly means?

Then the Lord Jesus concluded His discourse with this summation:

Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, therewith shall it be seasoned? (Luke 14:34)

In Bible times, it seems that people did not have pure salt, such as we have on our tables today. Their salt had various impurities, such as sand, etc. It was somehow possible for the salt to lose its saltiness; the residue was insipid and worthless. It could not be used either as soil

or fertilizer. At times it was used to make a footpath. Thus it was “good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matthew 5:13).

The application of the illustration is clear. There is one main purpose of the Christian’s existence—to glorify God by a life that is utterly poured out for Him. The Christian may lose his savor by laying up treasures on earth, by catering to his own comfort and pleasure, by trying to make a name for himself in the world, by prostituting his life and talents on the unworthy world.

If the believer misses the central goal of his existence, then he has missed everything. He is neither utilitarian nor ornamental. His fate is, like the savorless salt, to be trampled under foot of men—by their derision, and contempt and scorn.

The final words are these:

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Often when our Lord had uttered some hard saying, He added these words. It is as if He knew that all men would not receive them. He knew that some would try to explain them away, to dull the sharp edge of His cutting demands.

But He knew also that there would be open hearts, young and old, who would bow to His claims as being worthy of Himself.

So He left the door open! “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Those who hear are the ones who count the cost and still say:

I have decided to follow Jesus,

Tho’ no one joins me, still I will follow,

The world behind me, the Cross before me,

No turning back, no turning back.

The Shadow Of Martyrdom

When a man is truly committed to Jesus Christ, it seems to be a matter of no importance to him whether he lives or dies. All that matters is that the Lord be glorified.

As you read THE TRIUMPH OF JOHN AND BETTY STAM, you will find a note repeated throughout the book —"that…Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

The same undertone is found in the writings of Jim Elliot. While still a student at Wheaton College, he wrote in his diary, "I am ready to die for the Aucas."

At yet another time, he wrote, "Father, take my life, yea, my blood if Thou wilt, and consume it with Thine enveloping fire. I would not save it for it is not mine to save. Have it, Lord, have it all. Pour out my life as an oblation for the world. Blood is only of value as it flows before Thine altar."

It seems that many of God's heroes reached this same place in their dealings with God. They realized that "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). They were willing to be that corn of wheat.

This attitude is exactly what the Savior taught His disciples, "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24).

The more we think of it, the more reasonable it seems.

First of all, our lives do not belong to us anyway. They belong to the One Who valued us with the cost of His precious blood. Can we selfishly cling to that which is Another's? C. T. Studd answered the question for himself:

I had known about Jesus dying for me, but I never understood that if He died for me, then I didn't belong to myself. Redemption means buying back, so that if I belong to Him, either I had to be a thief and keep what wasn't mine, or else I had to give up everything to God. When I came to see that Jesus Christ had died for me, it didn't seem hard to give up all for Him.

Secondly, we are all going to die anyway if the Lord does not come in the meantime. Would it be a greater tragedy to die in the service of the King or as a mere accident statistic? Was Jim Elliot not right when he said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Thirdly, it is unanswerable logic that if the Lord Jesus died for us, the least we could do would be to die for Him. If the servant is not above his master, what right do we have to go to heaven more comfortably than the Lord Jesus did? It was this consideration that prompted Studd to say, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

Finally, it is criminal to hug our lives when through their reckless abandonment eternal blessing might flow to our fellow men. Men often offer their lives in the interests of medical research. Others die to rescue loved ones from blazing buildings. Still others die in battle to save their

country from enemy powers. What are the lives of men worth to us? Can we say with F. W. H. Myers:

Only like souls I see the folks thereunder,

Bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings,

Sharing their one hope with an empty wonder,

Sadly contented with a show of things.

Then with a rush the intolerable craving

Shivers throughout me like a trumpet call—

Oh, to save these! To perish for their saving,

Die for their life, be offered for them all.

Not all are required to lay down their lives as martyrs. The stake, the spear, the guillotine are reserved for a select few, relatively speaking. But each of us can have the martyr spirit, the martyr zeal, the martyr devotion. Each of us can live as those who have already abandoned their lives to Christ.

Come ill, come well, the cross, the crown,

The rainbow and the thunder;

I fling my soul and body down

For God to plow them under.

The Rewards Of True Discipleship

A life that is abandoned to the Lord Jesus has its own deep reward. There is a joy and pleasure in following Christ that is life in its truest sense.

The Savior repeatedly said, “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” In fact, this saying of His is found in the four Gospels more frequently than almost

anything else He said (see Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25). Why is it repeated so often? Is it not because it sets forth one of the most fundamental principles of the Christian life, namely, that life hugged for self is life lost, but life poured out for Him is life found, saved, enjoyed, and kept for eternity?

To be a half-hearted Christian can only insure a miserable existence. To be out and out for Him is the surest way of enjoying His best.

To be a true disciple is to be a bondslave of Jesus Christ and to find that His service is perfect freedom. There is liberty in the step of all who can say, “I love my Master; I will not go out free.”

The disciple is not bogged down by petty affairs or by passing things. He is concerned with eternal matters, and, like Hudson Taylor, enjoys the luxury of having few things to care for.

He may be unknown, and yet he is well known. Though constantly dying, yet he persistently lives. He is chastened but not killed. Even in sorrow, he is rejoicing. Although poor himself, he makes many rich. He himself has nothing, yet he possesses all things (2 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

And if it can be said that the life of true discipleship is the most spiritually satisfying life in this world, it can be said with equal certainty that it will be the most rewarded in the age to come. “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matthew 16:27).

Therefore, the truly blessed man in time and in eternity is the one who can say with Borden of Yale, “Lord Jesus, I take hands off, as far as my life is concerned. I put Thee on the throne in my heart. Change, cleanse, use me as Thou shalt choose.”

He Was Not Willing

‘He was not willing that any should perish;’

Jesus enthroned in the glory above,

Saw our poor fallen world, pitied our sorrows,

Poured out His life for us, wonderful love!

Perishing, perishing! Thronging our pathway,

Hearts break with burdens too heavy to bear:

Jesus would save, but there’s no one to tell them,

No one to lift them from sin and despair.

‘He was not willing that any should perish:’

Clothed in our flesh with its sorrow and pain,

Came He to seek the lost, comfort the mourner,

Heal the heart broken by sorrow and shame.

Perishing, perishing! Harvest is passing,

Reapers are few and the night draweth near:

Jesus is calling thee, haste to the reaping,

Thou shalt have souls, precious souls for thy hire.

Plenty for pleasure, but little for Jesus;

Time for the world with its troubles and toys,

No time for Jesus’ work, feeding the hungry,

Lifting lost souls to eternity's joys.

Perishing, perishing! Hark, how they call us;

Bring us your Savior, oh, tell us of Him!

We are so weary, so heavily laden,

And with long weeping our eyes have grown dim.

'He was not willing that any should perish;'

Am I His follower, and can I live

Longer at ease with a soul going downward,

Lost for the lack of the help I might give?

Perishing, perishing! Thou wast not willing;

Master, forgive, and inspire us anew;

Banish our worldliness, help us to ever

Live with eternity's values in view.

—Lucy R. Meyer

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True Worship

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18

The Bible teaches that we become like what we worship. That important insight is found in today's text. Let's break it down this way:

But we all - that is, all true believers; with open or unveiled face - sin causes a veil between our faces and the Lord. When we confess and forsake the sin, we have an open or unveiled face; beholding as in a glass - the glass or mirror is the Word of God, in which we behold the glory of the Lord - meaning His moral excellence. In the Bible we gaze upon the perfection of His character, the beauty of all His works and ways; are changed into the same image - we become like Him. We are changed by beholding. The more we are occupied with Him, the more like Him we become.

This change is from glory to glory - from one degree of glory to another. The change does not take place all at once.

It is a process that continues as long as we behold Him. The transformation of our character is effected even as by the Spirit of the Lord - the Holy Spirit produces likeness to Christ in all those who gaze by faith upon the Savior as He is revealed in the Bible.

In The Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, it wasn't

Mr. Gathergold or General Blood and Thunder or Old Stony Phiz or the poet, but Ernest - who, gazing in quiet meditation on the Great Stone Face, eventually came to resemble it.

I heard once of a man who went daily to a

Buddhist temple and sat with legs akimbo and arms folded, gazing upon the green statue. It was said that after years of this meditation, he actually came to resemble the Buddha. Whether that is true, I don't know, but I do know that reverent occupation with the Son of God produces moral resemblance to Him.

The way to holiness is through gazing upon the

Lord Jesus. It is not ordinarily possible to think of Christ and of sin at the same time. During those moments when we are taken up with Him, we are most free from sin. Our goal then should be to increase the percentage of our time when we are beholding Him.

What Kind of Unity?

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me." John 17:21

Twice in His great high priestly prayer, our Lord prayed that His people might be one (verses 21 and 22, 23).

This prayer for unity has been seized as Scriptural support for the ecumenical movement - a great organizational union of all professing Christian churches. Unfortunately this ecumenical unity is achieved through abandoning or reinterpreting fundamental Christian doctrines.

As Malcolm Muggeridge wrote, "By one of our time's larger ironies, ecumenicalism is triumphant just when there is nothing to be ecumenical about; the various religious bodies are likely to fin d it easy to join together only because, believing little, they correspondingly differ about little."

Is this the kind of unity that the Lord Jesus was praying for in John 17? We think not. He said that the unity He had in mind would result in the world's believing that God had sent Him. It is extremely doubtful that any external federation would have this effect.

The Lord defined the unity He had in mind when He said, "... as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." He also said, "... even as we are one, I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." What unity does the Father and Son share which we can also have a part in? Not the fact of their common deity; we can never share in that. I would

suggest that the Lord Jesus was referring to a unity based on common moral likeness.

He was praying that believers might be one in exhibiting the character of God and of Christ to the world. This would mean lives of righteousness, holiness, grace, love, purity, longsuffering, self-control, meekness, joy and generosity. Ronald Sider suggests in Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger that the unity for which Christ prayed was manifested when the early Christians shared freely with one another whenever there was need. They had a true spirit of koinonia or community. "Jesus' prayer that the loving unity of His followers would be so striking that it would convince the world that He had come from the rather has been answered - at least once! It happened in the Jerusalem church. The unusual quality of their life together gave power to the apostolic preaching" (see Acts 2:45-47; 4:32-35).

Such unity today would have a profound impression on the world. As Christians presented a united testimony in radiating the life of the Lord Jesus, unbelievers would be convicted of their own sinfulness and would thirst for the living water. Today's tragedy is that many Christians are scarcely distinguishable from their worldly neighbors. Under such circumstances, there is little inducement for unbelievers to be converted.

What's In a Name?

"... the maid that is of the land of Israel." 2 Kings 5:4

A person doesn't have to be known by name in order to accomplish great exploits for God. In fact, some of the people in the Bible who won immortal fame are not identified by their names.

There were the three men who brought water to David from the well of Bethlehem (2 Sam. 23:13-17).

David considered this act of devotion so remarkable that he would not drink the water but poured it out as a holy offering. But the men are unnamed.

We do not know the name of the great woman of Shunem (2 Ki. 4:8-17) but she will always be remembered for building a prophet's chamber for Elisha.

It was an anonymous Jewish maid whose advice sent Naaman to Elisha to be healed of leprosy (2 Ki. 5:3-14). God knows her name, and that is all that matters.

Who was the woman who anointed the head of Jesus (Mt.26:6-13)?

Matthew does not give her name, but her fame is announced in the words of our Lord, "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (v. 13).

The poor widow who cast her two mites into the treasury is another of "God's unknowns" (Luke 21:2). She illustrates the truth that it's wonderful how much you can do for God if you don't care who gets the credit.

Then, of course, there was the lad who gave his five loaves and two fishes to the Lord and saw them multiplied so that they fed 5000 men plus women and children (John 6:9). We don't know his name but what he did will never be forgotten.

A final illustration! Paul sent two brothers to

Corinth with Titus in connection with a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. He does not give their names but he eulogizes them as messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 8:23).

As Gray looked at the tombstones of obscure people in a country churchyard, he wrote:

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,

And waste its sweetness in the desert air.

With God, however, nothing is wasted. He knows the names of all those who serve Him anonymously, and He will reward in a manner that is worthy of Himself.

When Tolerance is Sin

Tolerance can be a virtue, but it can also betray an inexcusable weakness of character. We admire the person who tolerates differences where no great issue is at stake. He allows for a variety of preferences, methods and unimportant viewpoints. He would rather be killed for a sheep than for a lamb.

But there is another tolerance that is despicable. This is the willingness to remain silent when God's name is blasphemed or when Christ is dishonoured. It is the treachery of silence when truth is on the scaffold. It is the unwillingness to speak out against evil.

Tolerance that condones deceit and unrighteousness is sin.

Those who think that Jesus was always tolerant should read Matthew 23, a denunciation of hypocrisy. This passage proves forever that our Lord was capable of scathing indignation at the pretence of religious leaders. Or they should read Revelation 2:20 where He condemned the church in Thyatira for tolerating a woman teacher named Jezebel.

Paul too was intolerant of evil. He even mentioned names, something that is considered unacceptable in evangelical circles today. He delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:20). He didn't hesitate to single out Hymenaeus and Philetus as false teachers (2 Timothy 2:17) and he denounced Alexander the coppersmith by name for his evil behaviour (2

Timothy 4:14).

John also had the courage to name Diotrephes as one who loved to have the pre-eminence (3 John 9).

It seems that the church today has lost its capacity for godly intolerance. As Robert G Lee said ‘We live in a world of invertebrate theology, jellyfish morality, seesaw religion, India rubber convictions, somersault philosophy that tells us what we already know in words which we do not understand’.

The writings of William Barclay are another case in point. Barclay denies the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the miracles of Jesus and His substitutionary atonement. He believes in the eventual salvation of all mankind. Yet his books are sold in the majority of Christian bookstores. He is widely quoted by prominent evangelical leaders. And multitudes of Christians study his books on the specious excuse that ‘they contain such valuable background information’. The fact that he is a heretic, a blasphemer and a deceiver is not important. Neither, apparently, is the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A missionary to India was right on target when he wrote

‘Toleration has become so tolerant that evil is included in that tolerance. We are in danger of becoming "moral cows in our plump comfortableness"’.

It is an ungodly tolerance that has allowed so many pulpits in America to be filled with "false apostles and deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ". Detecting a resemblance to conditions in Elijah’s day, J Sidlow Baxter writes ‘Such are the people who today, with sickly kindness, will tolerate teachers of errors in our pulpits because they are such smooth-mannered and amiable gentlemen. They would rather

allow error to be preached and souls to be deceived than hurt the preacher's feelings. Let Baal be worshipped rather than drought come! Let the cancer kill its victim rather than the cruel surgeon use the knife!…The best thing that could happen to some so-called Christian ministers of today is that they should be denounced in God's name by their hearers'.

It is a sinful tolerance [1] that refuses to castigate a false church system that leads millions to eternal destruction with its perverted gospel. [2] That honours its head as a great evangelist at the same time that he is condemning evangelicals as wolves. [3] That labels God's prophets as divisive when they denounce its idolatry, its mariolatry and its other heresies. [4] That sends converts back into its deadening clutches.

What has happened to the church of the martyrs?

We have an enormous craving for popularity. This is the stuff of which false prophets are made. We have a desire to avoid unpleasantness at all cost. A desire like this keeps us from confronting, from intervening when we should.

We have a distaste for being different. We find it easier to move along with the crowd, to drift with the tide. It is all too easy to remain silent when we are in an adverse theological climate. We are 'slaves who dare not to be right with two or three'.

We have lost the capacity for being angry. We are not easily enough disturbed. We are in the sorry state of having no capacity for indignation. We are experts at putting off decisiveness simply because we don't want to act.

Sometimes we are too blinded by friendship to stand against wrong. When a Christian spoke out against E J Carnell's book 'The Case For Orthodoxy' because it argued against the inspiration of the Scriptures, a friend of the author said 'Well you do not know him personally as I do. He is a gracious gentleman, a godly man'.

Jay Adams was right when he said 'In some circles, the fear of controversy is so great that preachers and congregations following after them will settle for peace at any cost - even the cost of the truth - God's truth. The idea is that peace is all- important.

Peace is a biblical ideal…but so is purity. The peace of the church may never be bought at the price of the purity of the church. The price is too dear'.

Ecumenism and catholicity are two great buzzwords today. Let's all get together. Don't do or say anything to rock the boat. Doctrine divides, they say. What we need is unity.

What we really need is to contend earnestly for the faith in a day when it is being attacked, diluted and denied. We will be tolerant in matters of indifference but intolerant of departure from the truth of God. With Luther, 'Here we stand. We can do no other'.

Where is Your Treasure?

“Lay not up…treasures upon earth…lay up…treasures in heaven…for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

The heart is where the treasure is. It can be in a safe-deposit box! Or it can be in heaven! But it cannot be in both places.

Someone has said, “A Christian either leaves his wealth or goes to it!”

The Lord Jesus forbade His followers to lay up treasures on earth. He wanted their hearts to be in heaven.

And yet this teaching of Christ seems radical and extreme to us today. Could He really have meant that? Doesn’t common sense teach us that we should make adequate provision for our old age? Doesn’t He expect us to be prudent and to set aside reserves for a rainy day? To care for our loved ones?

These are serious questions, which should be faced squarely and honestly by all who profess to be followers of Christ.

What are the answers? What does the Bible teach with regard to wealth in the life of the believer? Is it wrong to build up a personal fortune? What is a Christian standard of living?

Diligent In Business

First of all, we can all agree that the Bible does not prohibit making money. The Apostle Paul worked as a tentmaker to provide his personal needs (Acts 18:1-3; 2

Thessalonians 3:8). He taught the Thessalonians that if a man was unwilling to work, then he should be allowed to go hungry (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Without question the Biblical emphasis is that a man should work diligently for the supply of his needs and the needs of his family.

Can we say, then, that a believer should make as much money as possible? No, such a statement would have to be qualified. He may make as much as possible, but with these reservations:

1. His work should not be allowed to take precedence over the things of the Lord. His paramount obligation is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Worship and service should not suffer because of the pressure of business.

2. His family obligations must not be neglected (1 Timothy 5:8). Ordinarily the more money a man makes, the less time he has for his wife and children. He cannot compensate for this by lavishing luxury and wealth on them; this only adds to their spiritual and moral decay. They need the companionship and guidance of a godly husband and father far more than they need a bulging bank account.

3. His money should be made in a business that is reputable (Proverbs 10:16). This should go without saying. It's questionable for a Christian to give his time to the production, distribution or advertising of commodities that endanger health or contribute to the lowering of morals. Neither should a Christian spend his life entertaining people who are on the highway to hell. Work should be constructive and for the common good.

4. Then too the believer should be sure that he is making his money honestly (Proverbs 20:17). His

business may be reputable enough but his methods may be crooked, for instance.

(a) Falsifying income tax returns (Proverbs 12:22).

(b) Cheating on weights and measures (Proverbs 11:1).

(c) Bribing local inspectors (Proverbs 17:23).

(d) Advertising differences in products when no such differences exist (Proverbs 20:6).

(e) Fudging on expense accounts (Proverbs 13:5).

(f) Speculating in the market or on the stock exchange—just another form of gambling (Proverbs 13:11).

(g) Paying inadequate wages to employees (Proverbs 22:16). It is against this latter abuse that James cries out, “Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath” (James 5:4).

5. The Christian may make as much money as he can without imperiling his own health. His body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). He should not squander his health in the acquisition of wealth.

6. Finally, the Christian may make as much as he can without becoming covetous. He must never become a slave to mammon (Matthew 6:24). It is proper to make money but not to love it (Psalms 62:10).

To summarize, then, a Christian may earn as much as he can as long as he gives God first place, fulfills his family obligations, works constructively, deals honestly, guards his health and avoids covetousness.

To Have But Not To Hold

The next question we must face is this: “Is it wrong to hoard money?” As far as the New Testament is concerned the answer is an emphatic Yes.

The Bible condemns no one for being rich. A person may receive an inheritance and become rich overnight. But it does have a lot to say about what we do with our riches.

Here is what the Bible teaches.

1. First of all, we are stewards of God (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2). That means that all we have belongs to Him, not to ourselves. Our responsibility is to use His money for His glory. The idea that 90% is for us to spend while the other 10% is the Lord’s portion is a misconception of New Testament stewardship. It all belongs to the Lord.

2. The second point is that we are to be content with food and clothing. “And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content” (1 Timothy 6:8). Here the word for raiment means a covering or roofing. It can refer to any kind of shelter or clothing. So the verse says we should be satisfied with the necessities of life—food, clothing and housing. And in making allowance for roofing, the Lord here permits us to have more than He had when He was here; He had no place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20).

The Christian who owns a business will of course need fixed capital and working capital to carry on. He must be able to purchase raw materials, pay his employees, and meet the other financial demands that come to him day by day. Nothing in the Bible prohibits a Christian in business from having the funds necessary to operate.

3. Next we should live as economically as possible, avoiding waste of every kind. After Jesus had fed the five thousand, He told the disciples to gather up the food that was left over (John 6:12). His example teaches us to conserve wherever possible.

We buy so many unnecessary things. Especially at Christmas time, we spend a small fortune on worthless gifts that soon make their way to the attic or storeroom where they do no one any good.

We buy expensive things when cheaper items would often do just as well. (It is not always true that the cheaper item is the better buy. We must weigh price, quality, time saved, etc.).

We must discipline ourselves to resist the temptation to buy everything we want. And we must develop the habit of living frugally for the Son of Man's sake.

4. Everything above our necessities is to be put to work for the Lord (1 Timothy 6:8). Remember! It all belongs to Him. We are His stewards. Our business is to advance His cause on earth to the best of our ability.

It will immediately be objected that to plunge everything above food, clothing and housing into the work of the Lord is foolhardy, improvident, shortsighted.

Well, we have the record of one person who did it. She was a widow, and she cast her two mites into the treasury. Jesus did not reproach her. He said, "Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all (the rich): for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had" (Luke 21:3, 4).

5. We are forbidden to lay up treasures on earth. The words of Scripture are plain and unmistakable.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

As far as most of us are concerned, these verses might just as well not be in the Bible. We believe Jesus spoke them. We believe they are divinely inspired. But we do not think that they apply to us. We do not obey them. And so as far as we are concerned, it is the same as if our Lord never spoke them.Yet the truth remains that it is SIN to lay up treasures on earth. It is directly contrary to the Word of God. What we call prudence and foresight is actually rebellion and iniquity.

And it is still true that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. Dr. Johnson was once taken on a tour of a luxurious estate. He went through the mansion and over the well-kept grounds. Then he turned to his friends and said, “These are the things that make it hard to die.”

6. Finally we are to trust God for the future. God calls His people to a life of faith, to a life of dependence on Himself. He teaches us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). By the story of the manna, He teaches us to look to Him day by day for the supply of our needs (Exodus 16:14-22).

He Himself is to be our security; we should not lean on the broken reeds of this world.

This, then, is our Lord's will for his people—that we should realize that we are stewards and that all we have belongs to Him; that we should be content with the necessities of life; that we should live as economically as possible; that we should put everything above our needs into the work of the Lord; that we should not lay up treasures on earth; and that we should trust Him for the future.

What's The Harm In It?

But why is it wrong for a Christian to accumulate wealth, to hoard riches?

1. First of all, it's wrong because the Bible says so (Matthew 6:19); that should be sufficient reason. Why was it wrong for Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Because God said so. That should settle the matter for every one of us.

2. But it is also wrong because it overlooks the vast spiritual need of the world today (Proverbs 24:11, 12). Millions of men and women, boys and girls have never heard the gospel of the grace of God. Millions do not have a Bible, or good gospel literature. Millions are dying without God, without Christ, without hope.

It is a form of spiritual fratricide to have the means of spreading the gospel and not to use them (Ezekiel 33:6).

And it testifies loudly to a singular lack of God's love in the heart of the hoarder. For "whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17).

When two starving lepers in the Old Testament stumbled across a great supply of food, they satisfied their own hunger, then ran to share their find with others (2 Kings 7:9). Should Christians under grace show less compassion than lepers under law?

3. Third, it's wrong to stockpile money because it is callous to the enormous physical needs of the world (Proverbs 3:27, 28; 11:26). The rich man in Luke 16 was quite unconcerned about the beggar at his gate. If he had just gone to his window and pulled aside the drape, he would have seen a genuine case of need, a worthy object on which to spend some of his money. But he didn't care.

The world is full of Lazaruses. They are lying at our gates. And Jesus is saying to us, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).If we refuse to hear Him now, perhaps one day we will hear Him say to us, "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink…inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matthew 25:42, 45).

4. It is wrong for a Christian to lay up treasures on earth because it causes the enemies of God to blaspheme (Romans 2:24). It provoked Voltaire to say, "When it comes to money, all men are of the same religion."

Many unsaved people are familiar with the teaching of Jesus. They know He taught that we should love our neighbor. They see the glaring inconsistency when those who profess to follow Jesus indulge in magnificent homes, luxurious cars, epicurean foods, and costly clothes.

It is time the church woke up! Speak to educated young people from all over the world! Hear their criticisms of Christianity! They are not opposed to the ethics of Jesus, but they are violently opposed to the wealth of the church and of Christians in a world of grinding poverty.

Someone once said that when the golden slippers climb the staircase, the hob-nailed boots are not far behind. Let the church listen!

5. But we are not only concerned with the effect on unbelievers. We think of the effect on young Christians as well.

They watch the example of their elders. More important than anything we can say is the way we live. Our sense of values is shown not so much by the stirring missionary message we give on Sunday, but by the goal we pursue on Monday through Friday.

Young people judge the reality of our pilgrimage by the assessed valuation of our “tent.” They are not impressed by impassioned appeals for funds for the work of God by those who could meet the need with one stroke of the pen.

If our lives are spent in the accumulation of wealth, we must not be surprised if young people follow our example. And may we never forget the warning of the Lord Jesus, “It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones” (Luke 17:1, 2).

6. Another reason why it is sinful to accumulate wealth is because it robs God (Malachi 3:8). We have already

seen that all we have belongs to Him. If we can't use it directly in the advancement of His interests, we should at least turn it over to those who can. To keep it laid up in a napkin is inexcusable (Luke 19:20-26).

7. Failure to obey the Lord in the matter of financial stewardship closes portions of the Bible to us (Matthew 6:22, 23). We become blind to passages that are quite simple on the face of them.

It is a strange twist of fallen nature but it is true. "The further removed a study is from the personal centre of our lives and responsibilities—as for example in Physics and Mathematics—the less will the sinful warpings of our nature affect our conclusion. The nearer a study brings us to our personal responsibility to our Creator the more does our sinful nature seek to blind our minds to truths which we do not want to believe and to encourage us to cling to some hypothesis which looks like relieving us of that responsibility."1And in that connection Harrington C. Lees once wrote:

The most sensitive part of civilized man is his pocket, and one of the fiercest fights a preacher has to wage is when his preaching touches the pockets of his hearers.

Passages on self-denial have little seeming relevance when we are living at ease in Zion. And certainly we cannot effectively teach passages which we have not obeyed ourselves.

So one of the curses of disobedience in this, as in all areas, is a mutilated Bible (Matthew 13:14, 15).

8. The amassing of riches makes the life of faith practically impossible. Why? Because it is almost

impossible to have riches and not trust in them. The man with money doesn't know how much he depends on it.

The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit (Proverbs 18:11).He depends on money to solve all his problems, to give him present enjoyment and future security. If he were to lose it all suddenly, his props and crutches would be gone and he would be in a state of panic.

The truth is that we would rather trust in a bank balance which we can see than a God Whom we can't see. The thought of having no one or nothing but God to trust is sufficient to bring on a nervous collapse.

Left in His hands, we do not feel that we should be safe; whereas if we had our fortune in our own hands, and were secured against chances and changes by a few comfortable securities, we should feel safe enough. This feeling is, surely, very general; we are all of us in danger of slipping into this form of unquiet distrust in the fatherly providence of God—Samuel Cox.

God's will is that our lives should be "a perpetual crisis of dependence on Him." We defeat His will in our lives when we lay up treasures on earth.

The life of faith is the only life that has true security. "… It is of faith…to the end the promise might be sure" (Romans 4:16).

Because nothing is as sure as the promise of God, it follows that the life of faith is the worry-free life. Nervous and emotional disorders arise from materialism, not from walking with God by faith.

The life of faith is the only life that gives all the glory to God. When we walk by sight, we are glorifying human ingenuity and cleverness.

The life of faith speaks loudly to unbelievers and to other Christians. It testifies to all that there is a God in heaven Who answers prayer.

Faith is the opposite of sight; when you can see, you can't trust.

To hoard wealth makes the life of faith impossible.

The life of faith does not follow automatically when a person becomes a Christian. It requires deliberate action on his part. This is especially true in an affluent society. The believer must put himself in a position where he is compelled to trust God. He can do this by selling all that he has and giving to the poor. It is only as he gets rid of his reserves and other false supports that he can truly launch out into the deep.

9. Not only so, it is dishonoring to our Lord to reign as kings in a world where He is still rejected and where His servants are being persecuted. Paul pictured the Corinthians as sitting in the most expensive seats at the stadium with crowns on their heads and wearing the finest of clothes. At the same time, he pictured the apostles in the arena, ready to be devoured by the wild beasts.

Oh, I know you are rich and flourishing! You've been living like kings, haven't you, while we've been away? I would to God that you were really kings in God's sight so that we might reign with you.

I sometimes think that God means us, the messengers, to appear last in the procession of mankind, like the men

who are to die in the arena. For indeed we are made a public spectacle before the angels of Heaven and the eyes of men. We are looked upon as fools, for Christ's sake, but you are wise in the Christian faith. We are considered weak, but you have become strong: you have found honor, we little but contempt. Up to this very hour we are hungry and thirsty, ill clad, knocked about and practically homeless. We still have to work for our living by manual labor. Men curse us, but we return a blessing: they make our lives miserable, but we take it patiently. They ruin our reputations, but we go on trying to win them for God. We are the world's rubbish, the scum of the earth, yes, up to this very day (1 Corinthians 4:8-13, Phillips).

The Corinthians were reigning as kings before Christ Himself was crowned. At coronation services, it is a mark of grave disrespect for lesser figures to put on their tiaras before the monarch is crowned.

10. To amass a fortune is directly contrary to the example of the Lord Jesus. He was infinitely rich, yet He voluntarily became poor in order to enrich us through His poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In the original language of the New Testament, there are two words which are translated poor. One word means the condition of a workingman who has nothing beyond the essentials of life. The other means destitute or devoid of wealth. It is this second word that Paul uses to describe the Lord Jesus.

How many of us are willing to follow Jesus all the way?

11. Another evil of riches is that they are detrimental to the prayer life. Where every material need is provided, why pray?

More serious is the sham of asking God to do things when we can do them ourselves. For instance, how often do we as believers ask God to provide funds for certain projects when we ourselves could provide the money without delay. Oftentimes the Lord's own money is not available to Him.

12. Finally, it is wrong for Christians to accumulate wealth because it might encourage others to become Christians with the hope of becoming rich.

The poverty of the early believers was an asset, not a liability:

A religion which turned the world upside-down, while its first preachers were all poor men must needs have been from heaven. If the Apostles had possessed money to give their hearers, or been followed by armies to frighten them, an infidel might well deny that there was anything wonderful in their success. But the poverty of our Lord's disciples cut away such arguments from beneath the infidel's feet. With a doctrine most unpalatable to the natural heart, with nothing whatever to bribe or compel obedience—a few lowly Galileans shook the world, and changed the face of the Roman empire. Only one thing can account for this. The Gospel of Christ, which these men proclaimed, was the truth of God—J. C. Ryle.

Gilmour of Mongolia once wrote:

If I go among them rich, they will be continually begging and perhaps regard me more as a source of gifts than anything else. If I go with nothing but the Gospel, there will be nothing to distract their attention from the unspeakable gift.

Peter and John met a lame beggar at the gate of the temple. When he asked them for a handout, Peter said, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6).

Perhaps some will say that preachers should be poor, but not necessarily all Christians. But where does the Bible teach a different economic standard for preachers and for others, for missionaries and for folks at home?

The Case For Frozen Assets

So much then for the reasons why it is wrong for a Christian to hoard wealth. Now we must turn to the arguments which are commonly used to justify believers who have saved money to provide for their future and the future of their families.

1. The first argument runs something like this: It is only reasonable that we should set aside money for our old age. What is going to happen to us when we are no longer able to work? We should always anticipate the rainy day. God expects us to use common sense.

This reasoning sounds convincing but it is not the language of faith. Reserves are crutches and props which become a substitute for trust in the Lord. We can’t trust when we can see.

Once we decide to provide for our future, we run into these problems. How much will be enough? How long will we live? Will there be a depression? Will there be inflation? Will we have heavy medical bills?

It is impossible to know how much will be enough. Therefore we spend our lives amassing wealth to provide for a few short years of retirement. In the

meantime, God has been robbed and our own life has been spent in seeking security where it cannot be found.

How much better it is to work diligently for our current necessities, serve the Lord to the maximum extent, put everything above present needs into the work of the Lord, and trust Him for the future. To those who put Him first, he has promised…all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:33).And to the Philippians who were using the Lord's money for the spread of the truth, Paul wrote:My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).There is unspeakable tragedy in the current philosophy of giving one's life to the acquisition of wealth with the hope of giving one's retirement to the Lord. It means giving the best of our life to a corporation, then giving the fag end to Jesus. And even then, the fag end is so uncertain. Often it is finished before we get the Bible dusted off.

It seems like common sense to provide for the rainy day. But the truth of the matter was well stated by Cameron Thompson: "God pours out His choicest blessings on those who are anxious that nothing shall stick to their hands. Individuals who value the rainy day above the present agony of the world will get no blessing from God."

2. A second argument used to justify laying up treasures on earth is based on 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

"In this passage, Paul is dealing with the care of widows in the church. He states that the Christian relatives of a

widow are responsible to care for her. If she has no relatives to do this, then the church should care for her.

But the important thing to see is that Paul isn't speaking about laying aside funds to support the widow sometime in the future. Rather he is speaking of her current needs. Christians should take care of destitute relatives day by day; if they don't, this is a practical denial of the Christian faith which teaches love and generosity. Even unbelievers look after their own people. A believer who doesn't is therefore worse than unbelievers.

The verse says nothing about reserves, endowments, or investment portfolios. It deals with current necessities, not future obligations.

3. The third argument is closely related to the second. Many Christian parents feel that it is a part of their responsibility to leave a sizeable inheritance to their children. They feel that that is part of what is meant by providing for one's own (1 Timothy 5:8). It doesn't make any difference whether the children are believers or not; the deep desire is there to leave them a respectable nest egg.

2 Corinthians 12:14 is sometimes used to teach that parents should save money so that they can leave it to their children. The passage reads:…for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

The immediate context is dealing with the subject of Paul's financial support. He had not taken any money from the Corinthians, but had been supported by gifts from other churches while he was preaching at Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:7, 8). Now he was ready to go back to Corinth again, but he assured them that he would not be

burdensome to them (12:14), that is, he would not depend on any financial assistance from them. He was not interested in their material possessions but in their spiritual welfare.

It is at this point he adds, "…for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."

The Corinthians were the children and Paul was the parent (1 Corinthians 4:15). He was saying to them—obviously in irony—that they should not support him; rather he should support them. He said it in irony, because they actually should have contributed to his support (1 Corinthians 9:11, 14), but he had chosen to forego this right in their case.

The important thing to see is that this passage has nothing to do with storing up reserves for the future. That was not the issue at all. It was a matter of current needs, and Paul was saying, "After all—children don't generally support their parents; it's the parents who provide for the children."

Certainly the practice of building up an inheritance for one's children finds no support in the New Testament. The greatest legacy which parents can leave is a spiritual one, but preoccupation with making money is the very thing that hinders the provision of this inheritance.

And think of the evils that have arisen from the financial legacies that Christians have left.

a. Many young people have been ruined spiritually by having wealth suddenly thrust upon them. They have

become intoxicated with materialism and pleasure, and spoiled for the service of Christ.

b. Then think of the conflicts that have arisen in otherwise peaceful families as a result of wills and estates. Sister has become jealous of sister, and brother of brother. Bitter quarrels have continued throughout the rest of life.

A family quarrel over an inheritance is recorded in Luke 12:13, 14. Jesus refused to become involved in it; He hadn't come to earth for that kind of work. But He took time to issue a stern warning against covetousness to the unhappy man who wasn't named in the will.

c. Then we have this situation. Parents work hard all their lives to be able to leave something to the children. Later they become aged and infirm, a care to their family. And the ungrateful children can hardly wait for their parents to die in order to get their hands on the money.

d. Money left to unsaved children or to a Christian son or daughter married to an unbeliever has often made its way to a false church and has been used for the suppression of the gospel rather than for its propagation. Think of it! The money of believers used to fight the Truth!

e. And then we must think of the enormous amounts of money that go to the government in inheritance taxes, and to lawyers for legal fees. All this could have been used in the salvation of souls.

f. Some Christians try to avoid some of these griefs by leaving their money to Christian organizations. But there is no guarantee that the money will ever get to

those organizations. Wills are constantly being contested and broken. And even apart from that, the practice of leaving your money lacks Scriptural support. There is no assurance that the organizations will still be true to the Lord and His Word by the time the will is probated.

Believers will not be rewarded for what they leave in a will. The minute they die, the money ceases to be theirs; it becomes the property of their estate.

Men heap up riches and do not know who will gather them (Psalm 39:6). The only way to be sure that your money is used for the Lord is to give while you live. And this is the only way to obtain a future reward.

We say we believe in the imminent return of the Lord Jesus. Then we should realize that the nearer we approach His coming, the less value our material possessions have. When He does come, our wealth will have no value for us or for the work of God. So the best thing is to put our possessions to work for Jesus NOW.

4. But then this argument arises: “If everyone put everything above a modest living into the work of the Lord, how would we live? Someone must stand by the stuff!”

How would we live? The answer is, “More by faith and less by sight!”

There is no use arguing that it wouldn’t work because it did work in the early days of the church.

And all that believe were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need (Acts 2:44, 45).

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need (Acts 4:34, 35).

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul taught that our material possessions should be fluid, not frozen. Whenever we are aware of a genuine need, our funds should flow to meet that need. Then if we ourselves are ever in need, funds would likewise flow to us. In this way, there would be a constant equalizing among God's people.

For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack (2 Corinthians 8:13-15).In other words, if any person has really lived devotedly for the Lord and has been faithful in the stewardship of his possessions, other believers should be willing and happy to share with him if the need ever arises.

If we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that the thought of being dependent on others is repugnant to us. We are proud of our independence. But is this not a manifestation of the self-life and not of the life of the Lord Jesus in us?

Paul's instructions for the care of widows in 1 Timothy 5:3-13 presupposes a church where the love of God is shed abroad in human hearts, where the saints exercise

mutual care for one another, and where money flows freely wherever true needs exist.

And if it be contended that though it worked in the early days of the church, it wouldn't work today, the answer is simply this. It is working today. There are Christians who are living this life of faith. And there is a power and attractiveness about their lives that cannot be denied.

5. But someone will object, "Didn't Paul say, 'I know how to be abased and I know how to abound'" (Philippians 4:12)? The questioner obviously pictures the abased Paul wandering across a trackless desert, hungry, thirsty, weary, ill-clothed and ill-shod. But then the abounding Paul is seen as a bronzed young man climbing out of his convertible chariot at some seaside resort, clothed in the latest fashions from Palm Springs, and luxuriating for two weeks on the American plan. In other words, he could rough it or he could live high.

But that is not exactly what Paul is saying in the letter to Philippi. We must remember that that letter was written from PRISON, not from a seaside resort. And writing from prison, he said But I have all, and ABOUND: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you…(Philippians 4:18).

We would think that imprisonment would be on the ABASED side of the ledger, but Paul put it on the ABOUNDING side. Therefore, it is not right for us to use Philippians 4:12 to justify lives of wealth and luxury. That is not what the verse teaches.

6. Well, then what about the verse that says that God has given us richly all things to enjoy? (1 Timothy 6:17). This is quoted often as Scriptural proof that the believer should enjoy "the good things of life" which means that

it is all right for him to indulge in the latest and the best. His slogan is “Nothing too good for the people of God.”

But he forgets the context once again. Notice how the verse begins: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches…” In other words, far from being an excuse for self-indulgence, the words are found in a passage which sounds a solemn charge to the rich.

Well, what does it mean, that God has given us richly all things to enjoy? It means that He has not given us these things to hoard; He wants us to ENJOY them by sharing them with others. This is clear from the two verses that follow:

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:18, 19).

Enjoyment of riches is not found in possessing them but in using them for the glory of God and for the good of others.

7. Then we are often reminded that Abraham was a rich man (Genesis 13:2), and yet he was called a friend of God (James 2:23). This is, of course, true, but we must remember that Abraham lived in the Old Testament period where material prosperity was promised to those who obeyed the Lord. Riches were a sign of God’s blessing.

Is this true in the dispensation of the grace of God? It would be more accurate to say that adversity is the blessing of this period.

In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31), Old Testament standards were reversed. The rich man was condemned because he failed to use his wealth for others but hoarded it for himself.

8. But then are we not taught to learn lessons from the ant?

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest (Proverbs 6:6-8).

Does this not show that the ant makes provision for its future, and are we not told to imitate it in this respect? Yes, but the important thing to remember is that while the ant's future is on this earth, the Christian's future is in heaven. The believer is a pilgrim and a stranger here; his home is above. And he should be laying up treasure for his future.

But as far as his life here is concerned, he is forbidden to take anxious thought for tomorrow—what he will eat or what he will wear (Matthew 6:25). Rather he is told to imitate the birds, which never build storage barns next to their nests; yet our heavenly Father feeds them. And the argument is that if God cares for sparrows, how much more does He care for us!

9. A final argument is that someone must be rich to reach the rich. The Christians in the first years of the church did not realize this. "History relates that the early Christians, many of them, were so eager to carry Christ's gospel everywhere that they even hired themselves out as servants or sold themselves as slaves, that they might be admitted into the homes of the rich and great among the heathen, to live there, and thus

have opportunity to tell in those homes of the love of Jesus and His salvation" (from COME YE APART by J. R. Miller).

What Does The Bible Say?

Now we have discussed the principal arguments that are used to justify Christians living in riches in a world where demoralizing poverty prevails.

In striking contrast to these few, weak arguments are the many portions of the Word which warn us of the perils of riches.

1. "A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him" (Proverbs 28:20, 22).The frantic quest for material riches is a pursuit unworthy of one who was created in the image and after the likeness of God.

2. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).God and money are here presented as two masters whose interests are so opposed that it is impossible to serve both. This strikes a death-blow at the desire to live for two worlds, to be rich now and be rich then, to enjoy wealth below and be rewarded for it above. Jesus said you can't have both; you must choose one or the other.

3. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich

man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:23-26).

I wonder if we consider these words of Jesus seriously enough. He did not say it was difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God; He said it was humanly impossible.

Some explain the needle's eye as a smaller door in the city gate. A camel had to stoop low to get through it. But the needle spoken of here is a sewing needle, and no camel can get through its eye.

Only a special miracle of divine power can enable a rich man to enter the kingdom. Why then do we strive so hard to defend that which is such a hindrance to man's eternal welfare?

4. "But woe unto you that are rich! For ye have received your consolation" (Luke 6:24).Here the holy Son of God pronounced a woe upon rich people. The word can only be taken literally here. It cannot mean anything but rich. Why then do we seek to bless whom God has not blessed?

5. "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:33, 34).These words were spoken to the disciples (see verse 22). We try to avoid them by saying that they were not intended for us. But why not? In resisting such verses, we are only resisting a blessing.

How utterly in keeping with this age of grace it is for us to sell our prized possessions—our diamonds and other jewelry, our original paintings, our antique furniture, our sterling silver, our stamp collections—and put the proceeds to work in the salvation of souls throughout the world.

Where is our heart? Is it in the vault of the local bank? Or is it in heaven?

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

6. “Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich” (Luke 18:22, 23).We are constantly told that the rich young ruler was a special case, that by no stretch of the imagination was the command to sell all intended for everyone. Even if that were so, the teaching is not substantially different from what is found in the passage we have just considered (Luke 12:33, 34).

7. “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Timothy 6:6-11).Paul warned

that those who covet money pierce themselves through with many sorrows. What are the sorrows that he referred to?

(a.) First is the worry that invariably accompanies wealth. “The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep” (Ecclesiastes 5:12). The riches that are supposed to bring security actually bring the opposite—constant fear of theft, or declines in the stock market or of inflation, etc.

(b.) Second is the sorrow of seeing one’s children ruined spiritually by an over-abundance of material things. Few children of wealthy Christian parents are going on for the Lord.

(c.) Then there is the bitterness of having riches fail you when you need them most.

(d.) The rich person never knows how many friends he has. This may seem to be contradicted by Proverbs 14:20 which says, “The poor is hated even of his own neighbor: but the rich hath many friends.” But are they true friends—or are they just playing the part for selfish reasons?

(e.) Riches inevitably fail to satisfy the heart of man (Ecclesiastes 2:8, 11), but create an incessant craving for more (Ecclesiastes 4:8; 5:10).

(f.) Finally wealth often has adverse effects on a person’s character, producing pride (Proverbs 28:11) and rough manners (Proverbs 18:23; James 2:5-7), for example.

Matthew Henry reminds us, “The Hebrew word for riches signifies ‘heavy’; and riches are a burden—a burden of care in getting them, a burden of fear in

keeping them, a burden of temptation, a burden of sorrow, and a burden accounting for them at last."

8. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).In these verses, we are told "to charge them that are rich…" Yet how many servants of God fulfill this commission? How many of us have ever charged the rich? Most of us have never even heard a message on this verse. Yet there probably was never a time when this revolutionary message was more needed.

In order to preach the message, we must first of all be obedient to it ourselves. If we are living by sight instead of by faith, we cannot tell others not to lay up treasures on earth. The life seals the lips.

God is looking for men of the prophetic breed who will fearlessly speak His word in spite of consequences. Men like Amos who cried out:

Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring and let us drink. The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the Lord (Amos 4:1-3).

Or men like Haggai who thundered:

Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? (Haggai 1:4).

Of course, the prophets were never popular. Their presence was an embarrassment to their contemporaries. They were pressurized financially and ostracized socially. At times they were persecuted, and if nothing else would silence them, they were killed. It didn't matter; they would rather speak the truth than live a lie.

Materialism and wealth are hindering the flow of spiritual power in the church today. Revival will never come while believers are reigning as kings. Who will arise and call God's people back to lives of faith and of sacrifice?

Who will show people how to lay hold on life that is life indeed (1 Timothy 6:19)? "The only real life is to live in the light of eternity—to use all we possess for the promotion of God's glory and with an eye to the everlasting mansions. This, and only this is life in earnest"—C. H. Mackintosh.

9. "But (let) the rich (rejoice), in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof faileth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways" (James 1:10, 11).The rich man is not told to rejoice in his riches, but in anything that brings him low. Why is this? Because riches are perishable as the grass whereas spiritual experiences and lessons are of eternal value.

10. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are

corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you" (James 5:1-6).

Here the Spirit of God cries out against the hoarding of wealth (verse 3), against making money by failure to pay fair wages (verse 4), against luxurious living (verse 5), and against taking advantage of innocent people who are helpless to resist (verse 6).It is needless to argue whether these verses were written to believers or unbelievers. If the shoe fits, we should put it on!

11. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:17-19).

This is the Lord's closing message to the churches, His cutting words to the church of the Laodiceans. They really don't need exposition. We know what they mean.

And we know that they have a particular application to ourselves. All they need is our obedience.

A Warning To The Lazy!

There is always a danger that a paper like this might be used as an excuse for indolence. Someone with a decided aversion for work might read it and say, “That is what I’ve always believed.”

Well, this message is not for the shiftless or for those who feel the world (or the church) owes them a living. God has a different message for people like that: “Get out of bed and go to work” (see 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12).

This message is for people who are serious, industrious, hard working. Those who diligently provide for the present needs of their families, and who live first and foremost for the interests of the Lord Jesus can trust God for the future.

A Warning Against Judging!

There is another danger to be avoided. It is the danger of condemning individuals because of their material possessions. We must not judge others, or question their devotedness to the Lord.

It is one thing to declare the principles of the Word of God on the subject of riches. It is quite another thing to go through a Christian’s home, take a quick mental inventory of his net worth, then wave an accusing finger at him.

We are responsible to hear what God says, then to make the application in our own lives. The current needs of a large family will obviously be greater than those of a single person.

We cannot tell anyone else what it is going to mean for him to be obedient to the Lord's commands. As stewards, each of us must give account to God for ourselves, not for others.

So may the Lord deliver us from a harsh, critical, censorious spirit toward other individuals!

Conclusion

It seems clear from the Word of God that believers should be satisfied with food, clothing and housing; that they should be industrious in providing these current needs for their families; and that everything in excess should go into the work of God. They should not try to provide for their own future security, but should trust the Lord for this. The great aim of their life should be to serve the Lord Jesus Christ; everything else should be subordinated to this.

This is the life that is taught in the Gospels, practiced in the Acts and expounded in the Epistles. The prime example is the Lord Jesus Himself.

But the question may arise, "How can I make this practical in my own life? What should I do?"

1. The first thing to do is to give ourselves to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5). When He has us, then it is sure He has our possessions.

2. Then as the Lord puts his finger on various areas of our lives, we should respond immediately. Perhaps He will create an uneasiness in our hearts about eating in expensive restaurants? Or about spending money on expensive sports equipment? As we look at that late-model, high priced car, He may show us the possibility of getting a more modest car and putting the difference

into the spread of the gospel. He might revolutionize our clothes closet, in order to clothe many with God's robe of righteousness. A change to less-demanding employment might be indicated. We might lose our love for that expensive home and think of moving to less-pretentious quarters.

When God begins to speak to us about these matters, we will know it. It will be so clear that to refuse will be positive disobedience.

3. The third thing is this: "Whatsoever He saith to you, do it!" (John 2:5). Friends may misunderstand you. Relatives may reproach you. There will be repercussions. Only follow Jesus, and leave the consequences to Him.

4. Put everything above current needs to work for God. Pray for guidance. Ask Him to show you where you should send it. He will!

May the Lord permit us to see in our lives and in our generation a return to this kind of Christian devotedness. As John Wesley once prayed:

Oh that God would give me the thing which I long for! That before I go hence and am no more seen, I may see a people wholly devoted to God, crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them. A people truly given up to God in body, soul and substance! How cheerfully would I then say, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

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1 (Quoted in CREATION REVEALED by Frederick A. Filby. London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 1964, p. 126.)

Which is Greater

"... whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?" Matthew 23:17

The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day taught that if a man swore by the Temple, he wasn't necessarily obligated to do what he promised. But if he swore by the gold of the Temple, then that was a different story. He was bound by that oath. They made the same false distinction between swearing by the altar and swearing by the sacrifice on it. The former oath could be broken; the latter was binding.

The Lord told them that their sense of values was completely twisted. It is the Temple that gives the gold special value, and it is the altar that sets apart the sacrifice in a special way.

The Temple was the dwelling place of Cod on earth. The highest honor that any gold could have was to be used in that dwelling. Its connection with the House of God set it apart in a unique way. So it was with the altar and the sacrifice on it. The altar was an integral part of the divine service. No animal could be more highly honored than to be sacrificed on the altar. If animals could have ambitions, they would have all aimed for that destiny.

A tourist bought an inexpensive amber necklace in a second-hand shop in Paris. He became curious when he had to pay heavy customs in New York. He went to a jeweler to have it appraised and was offered $25,000. A second jeweler offered $35,000. When he asked why it was so valuable, the jeweler put it under a magnifying glass. The tourist read, "From Napoleon Bonaparte to

Josephine." It was the name of Napoleon that made the necklace so valuable.

The application should be clear. In ourselves we are nothing and can do nothing. It is our association with the Lord and with His service that sets us apart in a special way. As Spurgeon said, "Your connection with Calvary is the most wonderful thing about you."

You may have an unusually brilliant mind. That is something to be thankful for. But remember this. It is only as that mind is used for the Lord Jesus Christ that it ever reaches its highest destiny. It is Christ that sanctifies your intellect.

You may have talents for which the world is willing to pay a high price You may even think that the Church is too insignificant forthem. But it is the Church that sanctifies your talents, and not your talents that sanctify the Church.

You may have bundles of money. You can hoard it, spend it on self-indulgence, or use it for the Kingdom. The greatest use to which it can be put is to spend it in furthering the cause of Christ. It is the Kingdom that sanctifies your wealth, not vice versa.

Who Can Be Trusted

"Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Isaiah 2:22

When we give a man or woman the place in our life that only God should have, we are in for a bitter disappointment. We will soon learn that the best of men are men at best. Although they might have some very fine qualities, yet they still have feet of iron and clay. This may sound like cynicism, but it is not. It is realism.

When the invaders were threatening Jerusalem, the people of Judah looked to Egypt for deliverance. Isaiah denounced them for this misplaced trust, saying, "Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh King of Egypt to all that trust in him"(Isa. 36:6).

And Jeremiah said later, under similar circumstances, "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17:5).

The psalmist showed genuine insight on this subject when he wrote, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes" (Psa. 118:8,9).

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

Of course, we must realize that there is a certain sense in which we have to trust one another. What would a marriage be, for instance, without a certain measure of trust and respect? In business life, the use of checks as money is based on a system of mutual trust. We trust doctors to diagnose and prescribe properly. We trust the labels on cans and packages in the food market.

It would be almost impossible to live in any society without some confidence in our fellows.

The danger comes when we trust man to do what only God can do, when we take the Lord off the throne and put man on it. Anyone who displaces God in our affections, who takes His place as our confidence, who usurps any of His prerogatives in our lives - that one is certain to disappoint us bitterly. We will realize too late that man is not worthy of our trust.

William Barclay

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William MacDonald

Are His Writings Dependable ?

Mr. William MacDonald has traveled worldwide ministering the Word of God and is the author of dozens of booklets, Bible correspondence courses and books. He presently resides in California and directs a Discipleship Intern Training Program at San Leandro.

While Mr. MacDonald’s current article is much longer than those generally published in FOCUS, the editor felt because of the article’s nature and importance that it should be published in its entirety rather than in two installments.

William Barclay is one of the most enigmatical writers on the religious scene today. At one moment can delight you with his scintillating comments on the Scripture. Then in the next breath he will shock you with his unabashed heresy. He has a special gift of speaking out of both corners of his mouth. At first you are ready to welcome him warmly into the evangelical fold, but on further reading you begin to wonder if he accepts any of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

It cannot be denied that he serves up vast amounts of helpful background material for the serious Bible student. And his word studies are unforgettable. But there is death in the pot! Interspersed with all that is appealing and attractive is the poison of modernism and of higher criticism.

If we were to use the methods of the higher critics, we could easily prove that his books were written by two or even three different men — Barclay, Deutero-Barclay and Trito-Barclay. The books are lavishly sprinkled with contradictions and inconsistencies. He changes his stance from moment to moment.

Evangelical preachers make increasing reference to Barclay's works. Evangelical writers now quote him without apology. Evangelical bookstores stock his books side by side with those of the great fundamental stalwarts. Increasingly William Barclay's writings are finding acceptance in conservative circles. If Christians knew what he really believes about Christ's miracles, about the Resurrection, about the life hereafter, it is doubtful that they would be so meekly tolerant.

One of Barclay's major works is The Daily Study Bible, a commentary, in 17 volumes, on the whole New Testament. This set is published by The Saint Andrew Press in Edinburgh and by Westminister Press in Philadelphia. If you read these books you will find out what Barclay really believes about inspiration, about the Person of Christ, about the miracles, about the way of salvation, and about other important Biblical truths.

Inspiration

Barclay believes that some books of the New Testament are more accurate than others. He says, for instance, that Mark's gospel is more reliable than Matthew's. "Mark's gospel is the earliest gospel, and is therefore the nearest thing we will ever have to an actual report of all that Jesus said and did" (Matt., Vol. 1, p. 204). Again he writes, "Mark is the earliest gospel, and therefore Mark's version is most likely to be strictly

accurate" (Matt., Vol. 1, p. 393). With regard to the cursing of the fig tree, recorded in Matthew and Mark, he says, "From the existence of these two versions of the story, it is quite clear that some development has taken place; and, since Mark's is the earliest gospel, it is equally clear that his version must be nearer to the actual historical facts" (Matt., Vol. II, p. 227).

In the same manner, he bluntly states that Paul's true teaching on marriage is to be found in Ephesians 5 and not in 1 Cor. 7: "If we are to be fair to Paul. it is from this Chapter (Eph. 5) that we will draw his teaching on marriage and not from his earlier letter to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 7 contains crisis and emergency regulations at a time when Paul thought that the world had only days to exist. Ephesians gives us Paul's view of marriage as part of the permanent situation of the Christian life … It is just possible that the Corinthians passage was coloured by Paul's personal experience" (Eph., pp. 204, 205).

There is no doubt in Barclay's mind that some of the New Testament writers were subject to error in what they wrote. Thus, with regard to the Lord's statement that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, he says, "Matthew understood wrongly the point of what Jesus said; and in so doing he made a strange mistake; for Jesus was not in the heart of the earth for three nights, but only for two nights" (Matt., Vol. II p. 55). Barclay overlooks the fact that in Jewish reckoning, a day and a night constitute an onah, and that any part of an onah is counted as an onah.

He also questions Matthew's accuracy in quoting Jesus on the discipline of an offending brother (Matt. 18:15-18). "In many ways this is one of the most difficult passages to interpret in the whole of Matthew's gospel. Its difficulty lies in the undoubted fact that it does not ring true; it does not sound like Jesus; it sounds more like the regulations of an ecclesiastical committee than it does like the words of Jesus Christ. We may go further. It is not possible that Jesus said it in its present form …" (Matt., Vol. II, p. 206).

Barclay claims that there is a flaw in Paul's argument in Rom. 5:12-21 (Rom., p. 81). Concerning Paul's use of the picture of the potter in Romans 9:21, he says, "It is a bad analogy. One great New Testament commentator has said that this is one of the very few passages that we wish that Paul had not written" (Rom., p. 140).

Sometimes, according to Barclay, the writers improved on the words of Jesus. For example, "Luke, with a flash of sheer insight, adds one word to this command of Jesus: 'Let him take up his cross daily'" (Matt., Vol. II, p. 167).

He does not hesitate to find fault with the order of verses or of chapters in the New Testament. concerning the parable of the wedding feast in Matt. 22:1-10, he writes, "There is one verse of the parable which is strangely out of place because it is not part of the original parable as Jesus told it, but a comment and an interpretation by the writer of the gospel" (Matt. Vol. II, pp. 294, 295).

In Romans 2:12-16, he teaches that the order of the verses should be changed as follows: 12, 13, 16, 14, 15 (Rom., p. 39).

Commenting on John 7:14-18, he says, “We have already had occasion to see that it is very likely that some parts of John’s Gospel have been misplaced. Maybe he never had time to put it fully in order; maybe the leaves on which it was written were finally assembled in the wrong order. This section, and the section which follows, form one of the clearest cases of misplacement. As these two passages come in here, they hardly make sense; they have no connection at all with their context. It is almost certain that they should not come in here” (John, Vol. 1, p. 248).

He suggests the possibility that “if John had had time and opportunity to revise his book, he might have removed the warning against angel worship in Revelation 22:9 since he had already given it in 19:10 (Rev., Vol. II, p. 286).

Barclay concludes that faulty memory explains why Old Testament passages are not quoted verbatim in the New. Thus in John 12:15, “John does not quote (Zechariah 9:9) accurately because obviously he is quoting from memory” (John, Vol. II, p. 137). When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:8 that 23,000 Israelites died, whereas Numbers 25:9 says that 24,000 died, “the explanation is simply that Paul was quoting from memory. Paul rarely quotes Scripture with verbatim accuracy; no one did in those days” (1 Cor., p. 98). (Mr. Barclay fails to notice that 23,000 died in one day, whereas a total of 24,000 died in the disaster.)

Next Barclay would have us believe that John’s Gospel does not necessarily give us the words of Jesus but only what John understood Jesus to mean. “When we read passages like this (John 5:19-29) we must remember

that John is not seeking so much to give us the words that Jesus spoke as the things which Jesus meant. He was writing somewhere round about A.D. 100. For seventy years he had thought about Jesus and about the wonderful things which Jesus had said. Many of these things he had not fully understood when he had heard them from the lips of Jesus. But more than half a century of thinking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit had shown John deeper and deeper meanings in the words of Jesus. And so he sets down for us not only what Jesus said, but also what Jesus meant. In the light of the thought of his mind, and in the light of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he unfolds and expands the words of Jesus" (John, Vol. 1, p. 181).

With regard to Old Testament passages which describe the wrath of God, he asks, "What about the passages which speak about commandments of God to wipe out whole cities, and to destroy men, women and children? What of the anger and the destructiveness and the jealousy of God that we sometimes read of in the older parts of Scripture? The answer to that question is this — it is not God who has changed; it is men's knowledge of God that has changed. Men wrote these things because they did not know any better. That was the stage to which their knowledge of God had reached" (John, Vol. 1. p. 15).

When Paul spoke of elemental spirits, principalities, powers and authorities (Col. 2:10), he was sufficiently the child of his age to believe in them, says Barclay (Col. p. 165). Likewise John was a child of his day in referring to an angel in Revelation 1:1. "That is what men believed at that time" (Rev., Vol. I, p. 29). And again

when Paul referred to angels in Galatians 3:19, he was "using the Rabbinic thoughts of his time" (Gal., p. 32).

Barclay maintains that the New Testament writers often reflect Jewish and eastern legends in their writings. For example, in 2 Corinthians 11:1-6; Hebrews 11:7; 11:8-10; and 2 Peter 3:5, 6 (the flood legend).

He includes the Apocrypha as part of the Old Testament (John, Vol. 1, p. 39), and quotes it as if of equal authority (Rom., p. 61).

Finally, Barclay denies that revelation ceased with the completion of the New Testament. "One of the mistakes that men sometimes make is to identify God's revelation solely with the Bible. That would be to say that since about A.D. 120, when the latest book in the New Testament was written, God had ceased to speak, that since then there has been no more revelation from God … God is still revealing His truth to men" (John, Vol. II, pp. 227, 228).

As far as the curse pronounced on those who add to the words of the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:18, 19), Barclay says, "It is by no means impossible that these words are not the words of the John of the Revelation at all, but the words of a later scribe, inserted when he copied the book, and was anxious that none should alter it in the days to come" (Rev., Vol. II, p. 296).

Barclay doesn't come right out and deny the inspiration of the Bible in so many words. But he consistently and systematically undermines the authority of the Scriptures until, when he is through, his readers are left with nothing but a mutilated, fallible book.

It is clear that he does not believe that all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). He does not believe that the very words of the Bible, as originally given, were inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13). He does not believe that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

Miracles

It is not only in the area of inspiration that Barclay's books are unacceptable. The way in which he explains away the miracles also reveals him in his true light.

He denies, for instance, that Jesus actually cast demons out of people. He says, "Even if there are no such things as demons, a man could only be cured by the assumption that for him at least the demons were the realest of all things" (Matt., Vol. I, p. 328). "When people believe in demon-possession it is easy for them to convince themselves that they are so possessed; when they come under that delusion, the symptoms of demon-possession immediately arise in them … When a person under such a delusion was confronted with an exorcist in whom he had faith and confidence, often the delusion was dispelled, and a cure resulted. In such cases if a man was convinced he was cured, he was cured" (Matt., Vol. II, p. 39).

Here is Barclay's account of what really happened when the demons were cast into the swine in Luke 8:26-40: "Again we must remember the intensity of the belief of these people in demons. The man, thinking the demons were speaking through him, besought Jesus not to send the demons into the abyss of hell to which they would be consigned in the final judgment. Let us see if we can form a picture of what happened. The man — and this is

the essence of this part of the story — would never have believed that he was cured unless he had ocular and visible demonstration. Nothing less than the visible departure of the demons would have convinced him. Surely what happened was this. The herd of swine was feeding there on the mountain side. Jesus was exerting His power to cure what was a very stubborn case. Suddenly the man's wild cries and shouts and screams disturbed the swine and they went dashing down the steep place into the sea in blind terror. 'Look!' said Jesus, 'Look! There your demons are gone.' Jesus had to find a way to get into the mind of this poor man; and in that way He found it" (Luke, p. 108).

Does Matthew 14:22-27 mean that Jesus walked on the water? Barclay admits the possibility but adds, "It may mean that the disciples' boat was driven by the wind to the northern shore of the lake, that Jesus came down from the mountain to help them when He saw them struggling in the moonlight, and that He came walking through the surf of the shore and the waves towards the boat, and came so suddenly upon them that they were terrified when they saw Him" (Matt., Vol. II, p. 117).

Barclay finds insurmountable problems in believing that Jesus actually sent Peter to get a coin out of the fish's mouth. What really happened was this. "Jesus was saying, 'Back to your job, Peter; that's the way to pay your debts. A day at the fishing will soon produce all we need' " (Matt., Vol. II, pp. 189, 190).

But you have not heard anything yet. Listen to Barclay's comments on the cursing of the fig tree. "The story does not ring true. To be frank, the whole incident does not seem worthy of Jesus. There seems a certain petulance

in it. It is just the kind of story which is told of other wonderworkers but which is never told of Jesus. Still further, we have this basic difficulty. Jesus had always refused to use His miraculous powers for His own sake. He would not turn the stones into bread in the desert to satisfy His own hunger. Later He would not use His own miraculous powers to escape from His enemies. He never used His power for His own sake. And yet here He uses His power to blast a tree which had disappointed Him when He was hungry … The whole story does not seem to fit Jesus at all" (Mark, p. 280).

In Luke 5:1-11 Jesus directed His disciples to a large shoal of fish. Barclay's explanation is as follows: "Most likely Jesus' keen eye saw just such a shoal and His keen sight make it look like a miracle" (Luke, p. 53). Again, concerning the catch of fish in John 21:1-14, he writes, "The catch here is not described as a miracle, and it is not intended to be … Jesus was acting as guide to His fisherman friends, just as people still do today" (John, Vol. II, pp. 326, 327).

Was the widow of Nain's son really dead? Not necessarily, according to Barclay. "It may well be that here we have a miracle of diagnosis; that Jesus with these keen eyes of His saw that the lad was in a cataleptic trance and saved him from being buried alive, as so many were in Palestine" (Luke, p. 86).

Now listen to Barclay's unsatisfactory handling of the healing of the blind man in John 9. "The fact is that Jesus took the methods and the customs of His time and used them. He was a wise physician. He had to gain the confidence of His patient. It was not that Jesus believed in these things, but He kindled expectation by doing

what the patient would expect a doctor to do. After all, to this day the efficacy of any medicine or treatment depends at least as much on the patient's faith in it as in the treatment or the drug itself" (John, Vol. II, p. 49).

One final illustration. Concerning Peter's supernatural release from prison in Acts 12:12-19, Barclay says, "In this story we do not necessarily need to see a miracle. It may well be the story of a thrilling rescue and escape."

Barclay's handling of the miracles is what we have come to expect from liberals and modernists. but all such attempts to give naturalistic explanations for what is plainly miraculous create more problems than they solve. It takes credulity to believe Barclay's version; it takes faith to believe the Bible.

Christ

Nowhere does William Barclay seem to contradict himself more than when he is dealing with the Person of Christ. At times the reader is convinced that Barclay actually believes that Jesus Christ is God. At other times, it seems that he is using evangelical words to mean something entirely different.

Here are some passages where, if words have any meaning, Barclay teaches the deity of Christ.

Commenting on John's Gospel, he writes, "But on the other hand, there is no gospel which sets before us such a view of the deity and Godhead of Jesus" (John, Vol. I, p. xxx).

"When Jesus made the claim that He was the Light of the world, He was making a claim that which none could possibly be higher" (John, Vol. Vol. II, p. 15).

“In Jesus we see, not simply a man who came and lived and died; in Jesus we see the timeless God, who was the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, who was before time and who will be after time, who always is. In Jesus the eternal God showed Himself to men” (John, Vol. II, p. 43).

“Moses, in short, was the servant; but Jesus was the Son. Moses knew a little about God; Jesus was God. Therein lies the greatness of Jesus and the secret of His unique superiority” (Heb., p. 25).

“Glory is that which by right belongs to God and to God alone. To say that Jesus Christ posseses the glory to do nothing less than to say that He is divine and that He shares the rights and privileges of God” (Rev., Vol. I, p. 227).

It would be easy to conclude from these quotations that Barclay sincerely believes in the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus. But we are forced to have second thoughts when he comes out with statements like the following:

When the rich man addressed Jesus as “Good teacher!” Jesus answered, according to Barclay, “No flattery! Don’t call me good! Keep that word for God! … Second, Jesus said in effect, “You cannot become a Christian by a sentimental passion for Me. You must look at God” (Mark, p. 252). Barclay should realize that in this passage Jesus was not denying His deity but He was giving the rich man an opportunity to confess it.

“We believe in evolution, the slow climb upwards of man from the level of the beasts. Jesus is the end and climax of the evolutionary process because in Him men met God. He is at once the perfection of manhood and the fulness of godhead” (Luke, p. 140).

“In any gallery of the world’s heroes Jesus must find a place” (John, Vol. II, p. 59). What a ridiculous understatement if Jesus is really God!

“The danger of the Christian faith is that we set up Jesus as a kind of secondary God” (John, Vol. II, p. 188).

“The serenity, the peace, the glory of divinity — Jesus gave them up, voluntarily and willingly, in order to become man. He emptied Himself of His deity to take upon Himself His humanity” (Philippians, p. 45).

“The Christian doctrine of the creating agency of Jesus Christ was thought out to combat the Gnostic doctrine of an ignorant and a hostile creating God” (Colossians, p. 137).

Barclay weakens the meaning of Colossians 2:9 as follows: “He (Paul) says that in Christ there dwelt the pleroma of deity in a bodily form. He meant that in Jesus there dwelt the totality of the wisdom, the power, the love of God. Just because of that Jesus is inexhaustible” (John, Vol. I, p. 52).

“In the Greek (2 Peter 1:1) there is only one person involved, and the phrase should read, our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The great interest of this is that it does what the New Testament very, very seldom does. It actually calls Jesus God. The only real parallel to this is the adoring cry of Thomas, when he recognized the Lord for what He was: ‘My Lord and my God’ (John 20:28). This is not a matter to argue about at all; it is not even a matter of theology; for to Peter and to Thomas to call Jesus by the name of God was not a matter of theology, but an onrush of the adoration of the heart. It was simply that in the depths of the emotion of their heart and in the glory of their wonder they felt that human

terms could not contain the person whom they knew as Lord" (2 Peter, p. 347).

A final quote is on Revelation 1:1-3. "God gives this revelation to Jesus Christ, The Bible never allows us to forget the majestic loneliness of God. The Bible never, as it were, makes a second God of Jesus. Rather it stresses the utter dependence of Jesus on God" (Rev., Vol. I, p. 28).

Anyone could be excused for being thoroughly confused by Barclay's contradictory stances on the Person of Christ. We can only conclude that when he speaks of the godhead of Jesus he means something else by the word.

Salvation

Next we come to Barclay's teaching on the way of salvation. We feel heartened when we read, among his comments on Revelation 2:18-29, "The claim of Christianity is not that Jesus Christ is one of the Saviiours; not even that He is the chief of the Saviours; but that He is the only Saviour" (Rev., Vol. I, p. 136).

But our joy is short-lived for then we read, "There is far more than one way to God … It was true that, 'All roads lead to Rome.' And it is also true that all roads, if we pursue them long enough and far enough lead to God" (Mark, p. 233).

"Let a man always remember that there are more ways to heaven than one; and let him keep himself from intolerance" (Thess., p. 223).

"Surely this (Rev. 21:12 means that a man can come by many roads into the Kingdom, that 'there are as many ways to the stars as there are men to climb them,' that no Church has any right to claim any monopoly as the

one way to God. The gates of God are many, and a man can find his own" (Rev., Vol. II, p. 269). Barclay quotes Origen approvingly for pointing out six ways in which a man may gain forgiveness of his sins. "He may gain remission of his sins by baptism, by martyrdom, by almsgiving (Luke 11:41), by the forgiveness of others (Matthew 6:14), by love (Luke 7:47), and by converting a sinner from the evil of his ways. God will forgive much to the man who has been the means of leading another brother back to Him" (James, p. 158) … "The man who has rescued his brother, has not only saved his brother's soul, he has covered a multitude of his own sins. In other words, to save another's soul is the surest way to save one's own" (James, p. 158).

Barclay seems to believe in universal salvation, that is, that everyone will be saved at last. (In his autobiography, he makes it very clear that he is a universalist, p. 58).

"In the end there must come a universe in which Jesus Christ is supreme. How that will come about is not ours to know; but it may be that we are allowed to think that this final subjugation will not consist in the smashing and the breaking and the extinction of His enemies, but in their submission to His love. After all, it is not so much the power, but the love of God, which must conquer in the end" (Heb., p. 132). "We are not forbidden to believe that somehow and sometime the God who loved the world will bring the whole world to Himself" (2 Peter, p. 406). "So in the very end all, Jew and Gentile, will be saved" (Rom., p. 129).

Barclay further teaches that in heaven the believer will share the divinity of Christ. "The hope of the Christian is

that the day will come when his humanity will be changed into nothing less than the divinity of Christ Himself, and when the necessary lowliness of mortality will be changed into the essential splendour of deathless and eternal life" (Phil., p. 86).

Conclusion

There are many other areas in which Barclay is unsound. He says, for instance, that belief in the virgin birth is optional for Christians. "The Virgin Birth is a doctrine which presents us with many difficulties; and it is a doctrine which our Church does not compel us to accept in the literal and physical sense. This is one of the doctrines on which the Church says that we have full liberty to come to our own belief and our own conclusion" Matt., Vol. I, p. 13). "There is much more in this chapter (Matt. I) than the crude fact that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin mother" (Matt, Vol. I, p. 13).

He waters down eternal punishment to mean 'punishment which befits God to give, and punishment which only God can give" (Matt., Vol. II, p. 201).

He denies man's total depravity. "Beyond a doubt Jesus did not believe in total depravity; He never believed that you could glorify God by blackguarding men" (Luke, p. 212). He believes that there may be some men who have never broken the law of God. "Even if there are some who can say they have never broken any of the Ten Commandments, there are none who can say that they have never wished to break them" (Matt., Vol. 1, p. 222).

All this is enough to prove conclusively that even if Barclay's books contain much that is helpful, his writings are undependable, There is no question in my

own mind that Barclay belongs to those of whom Jesus said, “He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” One cannot recommend his writings to other believers; the danger of doctrinal defilement is too great.

World's Wisdom vs. God's Wisdom

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Corinthians 1:21

Some in the church in Corinth were trying to make the Gospel intellectually respectable. Their preoccupation with the wisdom of this world made them sensitive to those aspects of the Christian message which were offensive to the philosophers.

There was no thought of their abandoning the faith, only of redefining it so that it would be more palatable to the scholars.

Paul came down hard on this attempt to marry the world's wisdom to God's. He knew only too well that the achieving of intellectual status would result in a loss of spiritual power.

Let's face it! There is that about the Christian message that is scandalous to Jews and foolish to Gentiles. And not only that - most Christians are not what the world would call wise, mighty or noble. Sooner or later we have to face up to the fact that instead of belonging to the intelligentsia, we are foolish, weak, base, despised - in fact, we are nobodies as far as the world is concerned.

But the wonderful thing is that God uses that message, which seems to be foolish, in saving those who believe. And God uses non-persons like us to accomplish His purposes. In choosing such unlikely instruments, He confounds all the pomp and pretension of this world,

eliminates any possibility of our boasting, and insures that He alone gets the credit.

This is not to say that there is no place for scholarship. Of course there is. But unless that scholarship is combined with deep spirituality, it becomes a deadening and dangerous thing. When scholarship sits in judgment on the Word of God, claiming, for instance, that some writers used more reliable sources than others, it represents departure from the truth of God. And when we court the approbation of scholars like that, we are vulnerable to all their heresies.

Paul did not come to the Corinthians with excellence of speech or of wisdom. He determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He knew that power lay in the simple, straightforward presentation of the Gospel, not in occupation with knotty problems or unprofitable theories, or in the worship of intellectualism.

Worship Then and Now

David and the other writers of the Psalms were worshippers. They had great thoughts of God. The marvels of His creation swept them away in rapturous song. When they considered His greatness, goodness, and grace, their minds strained to take it all in. They thought of Him as the Upholder and Controller of all things and were confounded. The writer of the closing psalms was so overwhelmed that he called on all creation, animate and inanimate, to sing the praises of the Lord. All people great and small, old and young, kings and princes, yes, all angels, together with beasts, birds, and creeping things should form a universal choir. He enlists the accompaniment of all kinds of instruments – harps, trumpets, cornets, timbrels, cymbals, and organs. His subject is so amazing that he summons the sun, moon, and stars to join the anthem. The heavens, earth, sea, hills, mountains, and waters must not be silent. Fire, hail, snow, and stormy winds have their part. The subject is so breathtaking that the Lord is worthy of total praise, Ps. 150.

Yet these psalmists did not have a Bible. They did not know how the Son of God would come down to planet earth and be born in a cattle shed, His crib an animal's feed box. They did not know that wise men would see their God 'contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made Man'. Nor did they know that in that manger would lie the One 'who built the starry skies'. Hidden from their eyes was the truth that the babe in the manger would be ‘the Eternal Word that spoke the worlds out of the womb of nothing, that the tiny arms of this helpless child were

the hands of Him who laid the timbers of the universe’ (lan Macpherson).

They did not know that the Architect and Maker of the universe would one day wear a carpenter's apron in a place called Nazareth. Or that He would ‘wander as a homeless stranger in the world His hands had made'. They would have gasped at the thought of God having no place to lay His head, or that He would sometimes sleep under the stars while His followers went to their homes.

Did they realize that God would actually come to earth and heal the sick, give sight to the blind, restore limbs to the maimed, cast out demons, and raise the dead? Or, that in spite of all His kindness, He would be insulted, ridiculed, and driven out of town?

It would have been incredible to them that He, the Judge of all, would be betrayed by one of His own, arrested,and put on trial. The civil authorities would find Him innocent, but He would be scourged until His back was like a furrowed field and He was no longer recognizable as a man.

The psalmists did not know in great detail what we now know. At a place called Calvary men would nail the One who is truly God to a cross of wood. It would be unimaginable to these Old Testament poets. They would have shaken their heads to think that the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His Person, the Maker and Upholder of the universe, was there on a cross, purging man's sins, Heb. 1. 1-3. Frail creatures took the One Who is high and lifted up in glory and lifted Him up on a pole of shame. The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, yet He was bound by nails. It was the Immortal who was dying.

Imagine the torrent of heavenly harmony that the psalmist's massed choir would have raised if they could have sung in the words of Charles Wesley:

Amazing love! How can it be

That thou, my God, should die for me?

Or Isaac Watts' hymn that says:

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast

Save in the death of Christ my God.

They saw through a glass darkly. At times they had brief glimpses of what would happen, but the full revelation was not for them to know.

The thought is this. If they, with the limited knowledge they had, could have poured out such torrents of praise, worship, adoration, and thanksgiving to the Lord, how much more should we with what we know about Calvary and of the One who died there for us.

Once we grasp the truth of what our God has done for us, of the sacrifice He made to save us, we will be spontaneous and compulsive worshippers. No one will have to coax or cajole us to praise the Lord. Our tongues will be the pen of ready writers. Our lives will be one unending psalm of praise to Him. In the words of Charles Wesley, we will 'dissolve our hearts in thankfulness and melt our eyes in tears'. We will be 'lost in wonder, love, and praise', and 'drowned in love's mysterious deep'. Like the psalmist we will call on all creation to join us in singing the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.