

Articles by James Naismith

James Naismith

All material used by permission of the author, as published on
plymouthbrethren.org.

Also online at <https://plymouthbrethren.org/author/64>

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

Abel

Abel

James T Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Peterborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series of studies in Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publishers, used by permission.

Genesis 4, which records the story of Abel, is another chapter of “Firsts.” Here we have the first human birth — and death (physical); the first human family — and the first family quarrel; the first occupations of men — and offerings to God; the first murderer — and martyr. The story of Cain and Abel may baffle human reasoning and contradict man’s logic and philosophy — in acceptance of an offering that necessitated bloodshed, and the rejection of an offering that was evidence of considerable toil and labour. Yet it is deeply instructive to the child of God, who recognizes the truth of the Scripture: Without shedding of blood is no remission, Heb. 9:22. A key verse in the story is verse 4: The LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering. Both Abel and his offering met with divine approval. His offering illustrates God’s way of salvation. Abel demonstrates God’s way of living.

1. Abel’s Offering. God’s Way Of Salvation

The fact that Abel brought of the fat thereof, v. 4, clearly indicates that the lamb he brought was not a living animal but a slain one. We can learn from this:

A. The Seriousness Of Sin, necessitating death. The whole chapter emphasizes the serious character and grave consequences of sin. Note its progression in Cain: beginning probably with pride — in precedence of birth, and excellence of offering; proceeding through envy to anger and culminating in murder. Further sins — of bigamy and murder — characterized the line of Cain, see verse 19 and 23.

B. The Necessity Of Sacrifice

The essential difference between the offering of Cain and that of Abel was that Cain's represented the results of work and toil, while Abel's required the shedding of blood of an animal, which he offered in his stead. Both Cain and Abel were sinners; God had declared that disobedience brings death, Gen. 2:17. In offering a lamb, Abel was recognizing that his life was forfeit because of sin, but that the lamb was taking his place in death. This way of approach was still open to Cain. Sin lieth at the door, v. 7 may be translated. A sin-offering lieth at the door — at hand, ready to be offered for his acceptance. (Or it may mean, Sin croucheth at the door — like a wild beast ready to spring — a warning to Cain).

C. The Way Of Salvation

Hebrews 11:4 lets us into the secret behind Abel's more excellent sacrifice — faith. Thus early in human history, we learn that salvation is not of works, Eph. 2:9 — Cain's method; But through faith, Eph. 2:8, in the Lamb of God, to whom Abel's lamb pointed forward.

2. Abel. God's Way Of Living

It is important that God had respect unto Abel as well as his offering. Three New Testament passages shed light

on the character of Abel: Matt. 23:35; Heb. 11:4; 1 John 3:12. These indicate three characteristics of Abel's life that pleased God, and that we should emulate.

A. Faith.

Heb. 11:4. By faith Abel ... Thus Abel takes his place as first in God's hall of fame of heroes of faith. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, Rom. 10:17. Faith in God accepts God's word and acts upon it. It seems certain that Abel and Cain heard, probably through the lips of their parents, about God, His punishment of sin and His provision of covering for Adam and Eve through the death of another. But only Abel acted on the basis of that revelation of God. In presenting his offering, he obeyed God — the obedience of faith, Rom. 16:26. In this he is an example to all successive generations of men.

B. Righteousness.

Each of the three New Testament passages presents Abel's righteousness. The Lord, Matt. 23:35, spoke of righteous Abel; John declares that his works (plural) were righteous, 1 John 3:12; and the writer to the Hebrews, 11:4, states that, by his sacrifice, he obtained witness that he was righteous. We can deduce from this that by his offering, and the shedding of blood, he was reckoned righteous — just as we are justified by blood, Rom. 5:9. In addition, it would seem from our Lord's words and John's statement about his works, that Abel's righteousness was a characteristic of his life. He was, of course, a sinner, and required to bring an offering for sin, but he pleased God by his faith — and My righteous one shall live by faith, Heb. 10:38.

C. Offering.

Genesis 4 records only one act of Abel: he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof, v. 4. It would seem that this may have been the habit of his life: John speaks of his works and the writer to the Hebrews of his gifts — both in the plural. From these actions of Abel, we can learn lessons about:

1. Giving to God. Abel brought a portion of the flock with which God had enriched him. The portion he presented was of the firstlings and of the fat — both expressions indicating that he gave his best to the Lord. It was true then as it is now that God loveth a cheerful giver.

2. Worshipping God. The first three characters in Hebrews 11 are examples of Worship (Abel), Walk (Enoch) and Work (Noah). As we shall see later in our studies, worship is giving to God (see Psa. 96:7-9); Abel's more excellent sacrifice which he offered unto God is the first example of human worship in the Bible. No doubt God's pleasure in that sacrifice derived from the fact that, looking down through the centuries of time, He saw the Lamb of His providing. We too can give Him greatest pleasure in our worship when we offer the Lamb of God in the glory of His Person and Sacrifice.

"When I stand with Christ on high, looking o'er life's history:

Then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe."

—R. M. McCheyne

Abortion

Abortion

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, is a retired physician who devotes his full-time to a Bible teaching ministry in Canada, the U.S., and abroad.

We express sincere thanks to Dr. Naismith for his helpful articles dealing with current problems and issues, this being his fifth and last of this series.

Not too many years ago, the word would scarcely have been printed in a Christian magazine and the appearance of an article with this heading might have caused shock tremors over a wide area of the Christian world! However, we cannot, ostrich-like, bury our heads in the sand and ignore such problems as this, pretending they do not exist, or hoping they will disappear. It is reported that fifty to sixty million abortions are induced annually in the world — one and a half million in the United States; that there is one abortion for every two live births in North America and that, in some cities, abortions exceed live birth. As Christians, living in a godless world, we must be as salt savouring the unsavoury, and as lights, shedding the light of Scripture in the darkness of this world and on problems of this nature.

What does the Bible say about “abortion”? Very little! But, as on every issue, it provides important, timeless principles that should guide us in our attitudes and actions. In particular, the Word of God does have clear guiding principles on two vital issues which are very

much involved in the consideration of the subject of abortion.

1. The Sanctity of Human Life: Immediately after the flood, at the beginning the the “new world,” God gave to Noah — for all subsequent generations of mankind — very precise instruction on the sacredness of human life and the seriousness of taking it: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen. 9:6). The basis of this was clearly stated by God: “For in the image of God made He man.” To take human life, therefore, is to commit an outrage against God, in Whose image man was made. But, in the case of abortion, is a human life being destroyed? When does human life begin? This is the second vital issue to be considered.

2. The Beginning of Human Life: Our attitude to abortion will be determined by our attitude to the unborn child. Is the developing child just a mass of cells, like a tumour or an abscess, ‘protoplasmic rubbish,’ as it has been crudely described, nonhuman tissue of no significance or value, or is it a real human life? If the latter, when does it become human life? There is very good reason to believe that human life begins at the moment of conception, of fertilization of the ovum by the sperm. Consider the following:

a. Naturally: The normal attitude to an unborn child is to regard it not merely as a potential person but as a real, living human being. An expectant mother speaks of her “baby” from a very early stage in pregnancy, usually from her first knowledge of it. Doctors caring for that mother are very concerned for the unborn child, elevating it to personhood - monitoring it, intervening when it appears ill, operating to save its life. Why should

an unwanted child be considered any different so far as personality is concerned?

b. Medically: The distinct life of the “fetus” begins at conception: at that moment, 23 chromosomes from each parent are brought together into one cell, which now has 46 chromosomes, as do other human beings. Before that cell divides for the first time, it has all the DNA, the entire genetic code, which will determine the characteristics of the new human being. This genetic code is quite different from that of every other cell in the body of the mother in which it has been implanted. That single cell, therefore is a separate life, with the potential to develop into a special, unique person, with certain predetermined characteristics.

By the time the “fetus” is 18 to 25 days old, its heart is already beating. Within a month, although only an inch long, it already has a brain, eyes, ears, kidneys, liver, etc. By 45 days, electro-encephalographic waves can be detected from its brain. Before two months, every limb has begun to appear and fingers and toes are visible. At 9 to 10 weeks, the baby can grasp with its hands, move its tongue, swallow, and suck its thumb. Most abortions are performed after this stage. It is for reasons such as this, together with the destructive techniques used in performing abortion (and there is accumulating evidence that these are exceedingly painful to the child), that many gynecologists and nurses consider the procedure repugnant.

c. Scripturally: Our main concern is with what the Word of God states about the unborn child. It is perfectly clear that God has a very real concern for that child in its mother’s womb, and does not regard it as a mass of cells

that can be disposed of at will. In the Bible, an expectant mother is frequently described as being “with child.” John the Baptist, while still unborn (probably six months after conception) “leaped” “for joy” in Elizabeth’s womb (Luke 1:41,44). The word for “babe” in these two verses is ‘brephos’ which is used of the newborn baby Jesus in Luke 2:12 and 16, of ‘infants’ in Luke 18:15, who were brought to the Lord for His blessing, and of ‘young children’ in Acts 7:19. God’s word for Jeremiah (1:5) declared His choice of Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb and His setting apart of His servant for a special task before he was born. Similarly, Paul was set apart from his mother’s womb (Gal. 1:15).

Perhaps the most significant passage of Scripture relating to the unborn child is Psalm 139:13-16, in which the psalmist unmistakably asserts God’s knowledge of him, interest in him, and purposes for him while he was in his mother’s womb. There, God “possessed his reins”—created his inmost being” (NIV), and “covered”—protected, controlled, and perhaps weaved him. His “substance”—frame—was clearly seen and fully known by God though hidden from all others “in the lowest parts of the earth,” a figurative expression for “in secret,” referring to the darkness of the womb. While he was still “unperfect”—not fully formed—God saw him and had planned his days (“members”) and recorded them in His book before one day had begun. The psalmist leaves no shadow of doubt that, for God, Who caused him to write, human life begins long before birth—at conception.

A passage that has been used to prove that the unborn child is not considered as of significant value compared with the mother is Exodus 21:22, 23. Instruction is given

here for the punishment of a man who, while fighting with another man near a pregnant woman, injures the woman resulting in miscarriage. If “no mischief followed”—that is, no serious injury—the man was still to be punished, as the judges determined. “If any mischief followed,” punishment was to match the injury—life for life, eye for eye, etc. The critical word is “mischief”, many assume this is restricted to injury to the woman and conclude that injury to the child is of no consequence. There is, however, no reason or ground for so restricting it. Professor John Warwick Montgomery (in “Slaughter of the Innocents”) states that “all serious exegetes, classical and modern” interpret the passage as meaning that exactly the same penalty is required for injuring the mother as the child. He concludes that the original text places a value on fetal life equal to that accorded to adult life. A footnote in the NIV Study Bible reads: “serious injury” (the NIV translation for “mischief”) “either to mother or to child.”

Conclusion: In view of all this, it is clear that the Christian’s attitude to abortion must take into account the rights of two individuals—the mother and her unborn child—and must recognize that it is no more right to take the child’s life by abortion than the mother’s by murder. Very infrequently it is required to decide whether to save the child or the mother whose life may be threatened by the continuation of the pregnancy. In such rare cases it may be considered advisable to save the mother’s life at the expense of her unborn child. In other circumstance, the Christian must bear in mind that abortion—however it is done—is taking a God-given life which is sacred in His eyes.

To those who, for various reasons, may be considering abortion, and to those who have had abortion, the Christian should be compassionate rather than judgmental. We should be ready to state the teaching of Scripture and to give counsel based on the Word of God. We should seek at all times to understand the dilemmas of those who face such perplexing problems. We should certainly provide prayer and practical support wherever needed and should avoid malicious gossip. The compassion of our blessed Saviour, shown to people in all kinds of difficult circumstances, should characterize His followers.

Abraham (Part 2)

Abraham (Part 2)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Peterborough. Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series on Genesis Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc., used by permission.

The Compromises Of Abraham

The faithfulness of the Scriptures in recording not only the triumphant faith but also the tragic failures of the leading characters is one evidence of their divine origin. Human biographies tend to gloss over the mistakes of their heroes; not so, the Word of God. Apart from their being truthful to facts, we can discern at least two reasons why the Scriptures record failures such as Noah's and Abraham's:

(a) For our Encouragement, not for our example. Note that in Romans 4:12, we are not encouraged to walk in the steps of Abraham, but in the steps of his faith. Not for our excuse: in contrast to Abraham, we have the written Word of God for our guide, the Son of God for our example, and the Spirit of God for our empowerment. But we can be encouraged in the knowledge that the friend of God, whose faith is so often presented as an example to us, was no superman with superhuman qualities and a supernatural faith, but "a man subject to like passions as we" (just as Elijah — James 5:17), strong in faith, but also subject to failure. We are encouraged, too, to read that Abraham was

graciously restored by God after failure — and so may we be.

(b) For our Warning. God does not condone the faults and failures of great men of God. They are presented to us as beacons of warning — see 1 Cor. 10:11, 12.

Let us then consider some of the lessons we can learn from Abraham's failures recorded in Genesis 12:10-13:4; 16:1-6; and 20:1-18.

A. The Circumstances And Character Of Abraham's Failure

1. Abraham's failures affected the strongest point of his life — faith. Abraham trusted God to provide a land for him as He promised, but he failed to trust the same God to provide food in that land in a famine. He believed in the Lord that He would make his seed as the stars of heaven, Gen. 15:5, 6, yet he did not trust God to accomplish this in His own way, Gen. 16. How like ourselves — trusting God for eternal life and spiritual blessings, but not for temporal and material needs! Since Abraham fell at his strongest point, we need to learn that there is no point on which we are so strong that we do not need to watch and pray. Satan often attacks the strongest point.

2. In Abraham's life, failure begat failure. One sin led to another. Compromise with the Lord, Gen. 12:10, led to compromise with truth, v. 13. It has been suggested that Abraham was not wrong in going to Egypt — indeed, that God was driving him there to witness for Him. The whole story of Genesis 12:10-20, however, suggests that the first step down to Egypt was a wrong move — stepping out of dependence upon God. The geographical

direction of this step — “Abraham went down” — seems to indicate its spiritual direction. Egypt, in Scripture, is often a type of the world, and it is suggestive that Sodom and Gomorrah, the wicked cities, are likened to the land of Egypt in Genesis 13:10. When in Egypt, Abraham practiced deceit; in calling Sarai his sister, he was not telling a lie, but hiding the truth (see Gen. 20:12). Sir Walter Scott wrote, “Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!” As a result of this deceit, Abraham’s compromise with truth led to compromise with purity, and only God’s over-ruling prevented the tragedy of Pharaoh taking Abraham’s wife.

3. Maturity and experience were no safeguards. Genesis 20 is almost a repetition of Genesis 12, and it occurred after years of experience of God and faith in God. Temptations do not diminish in force with the passing years. Gen. 20:13 — the pact Abraham and Sarah made with one another for Abraham’s protection — suggests that this deception was his settled policy, a habit of life never broken.

B. The Consequences And Influence Of Abraham’s Failure

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, Gal. 6:7. This great Scriptural principle is applicable in our lives as it was in Abraham’s. Notice the spheres affected by his sin in Egypt.

1. His own life. We have seen already that, instead of turning from the sin of deceitfulness after the first warning lesson, Abraham seemed to become habituated and made it a settled practice. The sad story of Genesis 16 — Abraham’s relations with his maid Hagar — and all

the tragic consequences springing from that, happened 10 years after Abraham went into Egypt and was probably a direct consequence. It seems likely that Hagar, an Egyptian, was brought from Egypt at this time.

2. Sarah. Willingly or not, she entered into Abraham's deception and was dragged down. But for God's merciful intervention, she would certainly have lost her purity.

3. Lot evidently accompanied Abraham into Egypt (see Gen. 13:1), and the experience influenced his subsequent life. His choice of Sodom in Genesis 13:11, 12 may well have been for its resemblance to the land of Egypt, v. 10, which he had seen. Abraham was later restored to a life of communion with God and separation, but Lot never seems to have been fully restored, and remained always a "wordly believer."

4. The world. On two occasions, the friend of God was rebuked by the ungodly world for the same sin, Gen. 12:18-20; 20:9, 10. Instead of witnessing to the world, Abraham was driven out in disgrace. It is never easy to witness when we comprise with the world!

5. Isaac was not yet born when Abraham committed the sins of Genesis 12 or 20; his birth is recorded in chapter 21. Yet it is significant that the sin of the father was repeated in the son —see Gen. 26:7.

C. Restoration From Failure

In the grace of God it is possible to fall and rise again. The first steps of Abraham's life can be summarized in four phases:

- He "went forth," Gen. 12:5 —Separation;

- “went down,” v. 10 —Declension;
- “went up out,” 13:1 —Restoration;
- and “went on,” 13:3 —Progression.

It is significant that he turned “unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning ... unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first,” 13:3, 4. He returned to the place from which the failure had taken place; there he made his confession, renewed his vows and afresh offered his sacrifice to God. The first step in any restoration is a return to that place from which we went down.

D. God’s Over-Ruling Mercy In Spite Of Failure

(a) When Abraham failed, God’s gracious timely intervention averted disaster, maintained Sarai’s chastity and preserved Abraham.

(b) When Abraham returned to the place of his tent and altar at the beginning, God granted him full restoration and renewed His promises to him, Gen. 13:14-18.

The Choices Of Abraham

In Genesis 13 and 14, two great choices of Abraham are recorded which stand out as examples to us, when we are confronted with different courses and find it difficult to decide which is best.

Genesis 13:5-18

The choice here was one of a place of residence — a decision that confronts all of us from time to time. We are not concerned with the wisdom of Abraham’s decision to separate from Lot, but should note that

1. the step he now took completed his obedience to God's word to "get ... out ... from thy father's house," Gen. 12:1; and

2. the decision was made to avoid marring the testimony of God's people before others. "The Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land," Gen. 13:7, and were thus witnesses of the strife between Abraham's and Lot's herdsman.

The decision where to settle —North, South, East or West — may not seem of great consequence, but what an effect it had on the subsequent lives of Abraham and Lot! Abraham teaches us here the importance of seeking God's guidance in every choice, however insignificant it may seem from a spiritual point of view. The following lessons may be learned from the contrasts between Abraham's choice and Lot's:

A. Abraham chose the Spiritual rather than the Material

Lot's choice was dictated by what he saw, "Lot lifted up his eyes ... then Lot chose," vv. 10, 11. He was allured by physical pleasure and material prosperity, but they led to spiritual poverty. Abraham disregarded the external appearances, and left the choice with God.

For a time it might have seemed that Lot made the right choice. He came to a position of responsibility in Sodom — "sat in the gate," Gen. 19:1 — probably indicating that he was a magistrate in a place of authority. Yet there is no evidence of his using this position as a means of witness — indeed, what he did say had no effect on his fellow-citizens, Gen. 19:9, or even on his relations, v. 14. God gave him an early warning, Gen. 14:12, when he

was removed forcibly from Sodom, but in spite of this, when released, he returned to Sodom, and his tragic end is recorded in chapter 19.

B. Abraham chose Unselfishly rather than Selfishly

As Lot's uncle and senior, Abraham had the right of first choice, but voluntarily chose to forego that right, Gen. 13:8, 9, and gave consideration to Lot. Jeremiah's message from the Lord to Baruch, Jer. 45:5, is appropriate at this point and contains wise counsel for all God's people at all times, Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.

C. Abraham chose God's Will rather than his own pleasure

Gen. 13:14-18. We never lose by giving others first choice, if we leave our choice with God. "He gives the very best to those who leave the choice with Him." Note His renewed promises to Abraham.

Genesis 14:17-24

Abraham's refusal of the temptation offered by the king of Sodom gives us important principles to guide us in dealing with temptation today:

A. The Time and Circumstances of the Choice

In the wake of Abraham's victory, v. 15, over four Mesopotamian kings, who had defeated five kings of Canaan. How prone are God's people in the hour of victory to succumb to Satan's wiles! Even Elijah, great man of God though he was, after his triumph on Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18, fled from Queen Jezebel and

became so discouraged as to request his death, 1 Kings 19:1-4.

B. Preparation for the Choice

Melchizedek, priest of the most high God and type of the Lord Jesus (see Heb. 5:6, etc.) was sent by God to prepare Abraham. Note:

1. Melchizedek blessed Abraham before the king of Sodom offered his blessings; Abraham was fortified. We enjoy the rich blessings of Him who is Possessor of heaven and earth and have no need for the allurements of the world.
2. Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine, so Abraham was refreshed and sustained after his physical conflict and fitted for the spiritual conflict to follow. The bread and wine would seem to be a fitting symbol of the gracious provisions of our High Priest — see John 6:51, 53-55 — and appropriation of Him enables us to face temptation. The bread and wine remind us too of the Lord's Supper and His provision for us there. Faithful weekly remembrance of Him is a spiritual prophylactic against the dangers of temptation. Finally,
3. Abraham gave Melchizedek tithes of all, Gen. 14:20, indicating his devotion and consecration to the most high God whom Melchizedek represented. The promise of Malachi 3:10 still holds true.

C. The Choice and how Abraham met it

The offer of the king of Sodom to Abraham was really his by right of conquest yet he refused it, because

1. He had made a vow to God, v. 22. It is well for us, too, when confronted with temptation, to remember the vows

we have made to the Lord — “For Thee all the pleasures of sin I resign.”

2. Sodom represented the world — cf. Gen. 13:10, 13; Rev. 11:8 — that crucified our Lord. How can we accept the smallest riches from it, however tempting or legitimate?

3. He had received the provision of the most high God through His priest — he needed no more.

D. The Results of the Choice (Gen. 15:1)

“After these things...” God’s assurance and provision came to Abraham as a direct sequel to the choice he made. In view of any possible danger that might result from Abraham’s intervention against Chedorlaomer and his associates, God — not the king of Sodom — would be Abraham’s protection — “thy shield.” Moreover, although he had refused the reward offered by the king of Sodom, he would not lack, for God would be his provision — “thy exceeding great reward.”

Abraham (Part 4)

Abraham (Part 4)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario: a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series on Genesis. Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

The Climax of Abraham's Life (Gen. 22)

Genesis 22 is one of Scripture's rarest gems, of magnificent beauty and priceless worth. It is rich in typical significance, as it points forward to the Lamb of God, who was offered for us on Mount Calvary—to which Father and Son went both of them together. It is also full of practical, spiritual lessons, lessons of value to us in our day.

A. Temptation - Testing, v. 1

In Scripture the word "temptation" is used in two senses:

1. Enticement by Satan to bring out evil;
2. Testing by God to bring out good.

The word "tempt" (v. 1, KJV) would be better translated "test." In this incident towards the end of Abraham's life, God was testing him to prove his faith and faithfulness. We can learn the following lessons:

1. God's Tests are necessary. Just as school examinations are necessary to prove the ability and knowledge of the student, so in the College of Christ, the School of the

Spirit, the Faculty of Faith, those who are going to be Graduates for Glory have frequent tests of faith, 1 Pet. 1:7, faithfulness and love. In this case, Abraham's faith was tested and he believed God in spite of what it cost; his faithfulness was tested and he obeyed God's Word although he couldn't understand it; his love was tested and he proved that he loved God even more than "thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest," v. 2.

God's Tests are purposeful, v. 12 — "Now I know." God's tests are to prove, with a view to approving, as here; or improving, as in the case of the children of Israel in the wilderness (see Deut. 8:2, 3, 16 — "to do thee good at thy latter end"); or reproving, as in the case of Jonah (see Ps. 119:67).

God's Tests are sometimes difficult. Few tests are more difficult than Abraham's was, but then the best scholars have the hardest tests. Sometimes God may take a loved one from us, in order to prove our dependence on Him. Some of the most severe tests follow times of great blessing, as in the case of Abraham.

God's Tests may be modified, v. 12. Sometimes God tests our willingness to obey Him — as Abraham, but may cancel the test when we have shown our devotion. A missionary's return from the mission field after a short term of service may belong to this category. In Abraham's time, the offering of the firstborn was a common practice. To God this was abhorrent, but would Abraham do for Him what others did for idols?

God's Tests are beneficial, vv. 14-18. Through this test Abraham learned that God was "Jehovah-jireh" — the Lord who sees and provides. He also received a renewal

of God's covenant, His promises of blessing for Abraham and his seed (cf. Heb. 12:11).

B. Faith

Both James and the writer to the Hebrews use this incident as a demonstration of the faith of Abraham — Jas. 2:21, 22; Heb. 11:17-19. Here was the climax and culmination of his life of faith. Note:

1. Faith believes God's Word, even when humanly incredible, as it must have seemed to Abraham —to offer a human sacrifice, his only son, in whom all God's promises were centred.

2. Faith obeys God's command, even when humanly impossible. Note Abraham's unhesitating and complete obedience (v. 3 —"early")

3. Faith trusts God's promises and power, even when humanly inconceivable. There had been no previous example of resurrection, but Abraham believed that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead if need be, Heb. 11:19. His faith was not in Isaac, but in the God of Isaac; not in a stream, but in the source; not in human means, but in divine power; not in circumstances, but in the Lord of all circumstances.

C. Worship, V. 5

The word "worship" here is its first occurrence in the KJV — but the same Hebrew word occurs in 18:2 and 19:1, translated "bowed himself." Abraham was not evading the truth when he addressed his servants in this way. What he was about to do was an act of real worship. Worship is giving to God in acknowledgment of who He

is and what He has done (see Ps. 96:7-9). Here we learn that worship is giving

1. an offering acceptable to God; here, a burnt offering — all for God.
2. what God has first given us, as Isaac; all that we have is His. Supremely, when we offer to God Him of whom Isaac was a type — the Lord Jesus — we give to God what He has first given to us.
3. an offering very precious to us — as Isaac was to Abraham; and the more precious, the more sincere will be the worship.
4. an offering in accordance with God's instruction — I will tell thee, v. 2.
5. our bodies in consecration. Note that Abraham included Isaac in the act of worship— I and the lad, v. 5. Isaac was a young man at this stage, perfectly able to refuse to give his body. In presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God, we are doing our reasonable service, Rom. 12:1, or spiritual worship (RSV).

D. Consecration

Abraham's devotion to the will of God, and Isaac's obedient submission to his father in doing the same will are outstanding examples of consecration — in the case of Abraham, being willing to give the very dearest and best to God; and of Isaac, being willing to give one's own life and body. Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord? (1 Chron. 29:5).

Conclusion

Note that the last word in this great story is Jehovah-jireh — In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, v. 14. The memory perpetuated from Mount Moriah is not so much Abraham's faith, or Isaac's submission, but God's provision; not what Abraham did for God, but what God did for Abraham. As we look back on the scene, in the light of Calvary, we cannot forget that, while God spared Isaac, He spared not His own Son.

Abraham --Part 1

Abraham

Part 1

James T. Naismith

This is the eighth in a series of character studies in Genesis by Dr. James T. Naismith of Peterborough, Ontario. Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

The story of Abraham begins the second major section of the book of Genesis. Before Genesis 11:27, the record has concerned the world (ch. 1) and humanity in general (ch. 2 on), but beginning with “the generations of Terah” in 11:27, the spotlight focuses on a specific section of the human race — Abraham and his descendants — which was the object of God’s particular concern and favour. Abraham and his seed are, indeed, not only the main themes of the rest of Genesis, but the central subjects of the whole of the Bible. The Old Testament is devoted to God’s dealings with the physical seed of Abraham, Israel; the New Testament presents the spiritual seed of Abraham, Christ (Gal. 3:16) and believers (Gal. 3:7, 29; Rom. 4:11).

In our study of the earlier chapters of Genesis, we have considered the Fall of man and its consequence, man’s utter depravity, leading to the flood. Now God takes up a special representative man, Abraham, and a special representative portion of the human race, the descendants of Abraham, bestowing upon them remarkable privileges and blessings (see Rom. 9:4, 5). In spite of this, however, complete failure marked their

course, leading to the coming of the Saviour, Himself born “the Son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1).

Abraham, therefore, occupies a very prominent position in Holy Writ. In addition, he was undoubtedly one of the greatest men of all time, revered by Jews and Arabs alike; even to this day, he is referred to by Arabs as “El Khalil” (“Friend of God”). He was one of the most illustrious personages in ancient history. Only Moses, of all the great names of the Old Testament, is referred to more often than Abraham in the New Testament. And, if we exclude those references to the “law” or “writings” of Moses, Abraham is the most frequently mentioned character.

Two important titles given to Abraham indicate his greatness:

1. Father - not only of the Jewish people (see John 8:39; Rom. 4:1, etc.) but “of all them that believe” (Rom. 4:11, 12, 16; Gal. 3:7, etc.). We who believe are the spiritual progeny, the “seed,” of Abraham, who thus is “the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16). This title, then, emphasizes his faith, which stands out as a shining example to us all (Rom. 4:12).

2. Friend. Three times over in the Scriptures (twice in the Old Testament, once in the New) Abraham is referred to as the friend of God: 2 Chron. 20:7: Abraham, Thy friend; Isa. 41:8: Abraham, My friend; James 2:23: he was called the friend of God. In this, Abraham was unique; no other character in the Bible is directly referred to as “the friend of God.” Why Abraham? This title emphasizes two outstanding features in his life: his faithfulness to God, and his fellowship with God. As we shall see in our study, he

lived in very intimate relationship with his Creator, and the chapters recording his life are full of conversations between God and His friend.

Such an outstanding character deserves our careful study, and rich and deep practical lessons may be learned from the Scriptural record of his life and faith. It is noteworthy that, of the fifty chapters of Genesis, no fewer than fourteen (11:27 to 25:10) are occupied with the story of his life; and the writer to the Hebrews in the eleventh chapter devotes twelve verses (8 to 19) out of forty to his faith.

The Scriptures record for our instruction and guidance the circumstances and details of God's call to many of His servants: e.g. Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the 12 apostles, Paul. There are many differences between these calls, but there are basic, underlying lessons that we can learn from all. He calls us, too, to some sphere of service, however humble, and our fruitfulness and the value of our lives depend on our response to His call. At least three passages of the Scriptures detail God's call of Abraham: Gen. 12; Acts 7:1-4; Heb. 11:8. From these we can learn the following lessons:

A. God's Call Demands Faith

(Heb. 11:8)

Faith was an outstanding characteristic of Abraham's life and was evident in several crises, this one being the first — his first "step of faith" (Rom. 4:12). It should also characterize every Christian, from conversion to glory. It is evidenced by:

(a) Believing God's word. "The Lord had said unto Abraham" (Gen. 12:1). We do not know how God spoke to Abraham, but Abraham placed full confidence in His word and acted upon it regardless of the cost. We do know how He speaks to us—by His Word.

(b) Obeying God's command. Gen. 12:4: "So Abraham departed." Heb. 11:8: "By faith, Abraham...obeyed." "The obedience of faith," Rom. 16:26.

(c) Trusting God's promises and provision. Gen. 12:2, 3. Abraham's faith was symbolized by (i) An altar, Gen. 12:7, indicating his close contact with heaven. He was a priest, worshipping God.

(ii) A tent, Gen. 12:8, indicating his loose contact with earth. He was a pilgrim, walking amongst men.

B. God's Call Demands Obedience

(Heb. 11:8; Gen. 12:4)

Without knowing the directions or implications, without stopping to ask why or where or what, Abraham obeyed God implicitly. Yet it would seem that his obedience was at first incomplete. Note Gen. 12:1: "The Lord had said"; and Acts 7:2, where Stephen indicates that God spoke first to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, where we find him at the end of Genesis 11. In response to God's call, Abraham moved from Ur to Haran, and only after his father died did he submit completely to God's will.

There is no record of any fresh revelation from God or accomplishment for God in Haran. Not until after Abraham departed from there do we read of God again speaking to him. How many Christians linger at the

halfway house, in partial obedience to God, clinging to earthly ties, in the place of compromise!

C. God's Call Required Separation

(Gen. 12:1; Acts 7:3,4; Heb. 11:8)

“Get thee out”: “Then came he out.” “When he was called to go out ..., he went out.” For Abraham, this meant:

1. Out of thy country: his homeland, which may signify to us the world —worldly possessions, attractions, fame, friendships.
2. From thy kindred: earthly relationships and friendships. From Joshua 24:2, we learn that his fathers “served other gods.” Abraham’s separation was to serve the true God, cf. 1 Thess. 1:9; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.
3. From thy father’s house: the closest earthly ties, the most intimate human relationships. So the Lord demands our first loyalty and allegiance — before earthly ties. See Luke 14:26.

D. God's Call Requires Sacrifice

Archaeological excavations have revealed that Ur, the city of Abraham’s birth, was one of the largest, most progressive and important metropolises of the ancient world, situated on the east bank of the great Euphrates River, not very far from the Persian Gulf. It appears to have been a centre of education, culture, commerce, and religion. Fabulous treasures have been unearthed from its site. In obeying God’s call and leaving his home town, Abraham was evidently sacrificing comfort, luxury, prosperity and natural ambition — as well as the closeness of friends. He exchanged a luxurious home for

a nomadic tent, settled security for a life of wandering and uncertainty, the friendship of men for fellowship with God. "The annals of adventure have few tales to match the courage and daring of the man who, at the call of God in the twentieth century B.C., left Mesopotamia and struck out across the desert with no compass but the stars and no guide but God." He presents an example for us all, and many a missionary, called by God to a land unseen, has similarly "obeyed ... not knowing where he went," sacrificing home and comforts and future prosperity to do God's will.

E. God's Call Brings Blessing

(Gen. 12:1-3, 7)

The sacrifices involved in obeying God's voice are more than compensated by the blessings resulting from that obedience. Of all the great men of Ur who stayed there when Abraham left, we know nothing. Abraham's name alone stands out. Through his obedience, eternal blessings have come not only to him but to all "his seed."

Adam

Adam

James T. Naismith

This is the fourth in a series of character studies in Genesis by Dr. James T. Naismith of Peterborough, Ontario. These studies were first published in book form under the title, PERSONALITIES IN GENESIS.

Copyright by Everyday Publications; used by permission.

The first human character in our study of Genesis is, of course, Adam — the first character in human history. His name is not mentioned in Hebrews 11 — unlike all the other seven characters we shall study —because he did not exhibit the faith that characterized the others.

Nevertheless, his name and excerpts from his story appear several times in the New Testament, and we can learn important and valuable lessons from a study of these chapters in Genesis that record his life. Much of the New Testament teaching from the story of Adam relates to the typical lessons that it presents. These will be considered later in our study of Christ in Genesis. We are now concerned with the historical account of Adam and the instruction it provides us.

1. Creation of Adam (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7)

There are evidently two accounts of man's creation, quite distinct from one another, yet entirely consistent with one another and complementary to one another.

The first, in Genesis records the creation of man in relation to the rest of creation; the second, in Genesis 2, describes the physical details and is concerned with

man's relationship with his immediate environment. The two are obviously not contradictory but complementary.

It is evident from both accounts —and from many other Scriptures —that man was made directly by his Creator, God, in a unique way, different from the rest of creation. He was the culmination and crown of creation. Note that the word “create” (Hebrew — “bra”) is used in three instances in Genesis 1 — v. 1, of the heaven and the earth; v. 21, of living creatures; and v. 27 — three times in one verse — of man.

The basic essentials of man's nature can be learned from these two initial accounts of his creation.

Gen. 1:26, 27. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” In these momentous words, we are privileged to listen in to a conversation within the Trinity, as Father, Son and Spirit take counsel together in formulating the divine plan for the creation of the head of the human race. Whatever may be meant by the expressions in our image and after our likeness — and doubtless our infinite minds cannot fully understand them — it is evident that they mark man out as different from the animate and inanimate creation around him. Of fish, birds and beasts, it is said that God made them after their kind, vv. 21, 24, 25. Only man was made in God's image and after His likeness. Image in Scripture has the sense of representation — for example, the image on the coin presented to the Lord represented the emperor, Caesar (Matt. 22:20), and idols are frequently referred to as graven images — representing gods. God created man to represent Him on earth. Likeness indicates resemblance — man could only represent his Creator if he bore some resemblance to Him. This is

obviously not a physical likeness, for God in spirit — Jn. 4:24, NIV), but rather moral and intellectual. See Colossians 3:10 (renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him) and Ephesians 4:23, 24 (created in righteousness and true holiness). Man's personality and ability to exercise authority are expressed in the succeeding phrase of Genesis 1:26, Let them have dominion. Man was not created a superior animal, but a moral, intelligent being.

Genesis 2:7. This verse gives an account of the material and method God used in making man: material —the dust of the ground; method —the infusion of the divine breath. We can deduce from this that man is composed of two distinct parts. The physical, material part has come from the dust of the ground. The word dust is actually plural and could be translated “particles” or even “atoms”; man's material body is composed of the same atoms as are found in the earth. It is interesting to note that the word man in Genesis 1:26, 27 and Genesis 2:7 in Hebrew is adam — the name of the first man—and is closely related to the Hebrew word adamah translated ground in Genesis 2:5, 6, 7, 9. Similarly, in Latin, the word for man—homo (from which the word “human” is derived) is cognate with “humus” — the ground.

But man is more than a body. He has also a spiritual, immaterial part. While the material part came from the ground, the spiritual part came from God. Not until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life did man become a living soul. From the Scriptures such as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12, we learn that man is actually a tripartite being composed of spirit, soul and body, the spirit linking him with God, and the soul with the world of men.

2. Dominion of Adam (Gen. 1:26, 28; 2:19, 20)

Prior to the Fall, Adam had and exercised his God-given authority over the animal creation. David referred to it in Psalm 8:4-8, Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. This has not been evident, however, since the Fall, and the writer to the Hebrews notes in 2:5-9, after quoting Psalm 8, we see not yet all things put under him. But God's purposes for man will be fulfilled — in the last Adam — for we see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour.

3. Provision For Adam (Gen. 1:29; 2:23, 3, 8, 9, 15, 16)

God's concern for the welfare of His creature, man, is very evident in Genesis 1 and 2. The whole record of creation in chapter 1 leading up to the creation of man is an account of the preparation of surroundings suited to man's life on earth. Among the provisions God made for man's material wellbeing, the following may be noted:

a. Food: The first provision made for man's nutrition was entirely vegetarian; the provision of animal food was not indicated until Genesis 9:3 — after the flood.

b. Environment: 2:8, 9. God placed man in an ideal environment with no ecological problems. A beautiful garden, with adequate water — by a mist, 2:6, and a river, 2:10 — was man's first delectable home. Note two characteristics of the trees of this garden: pleasant to the sight -aesthetic; good for food - nutritive. This is still characteristic of our environment.

c. Work: 2:15. Man was not created to be idle. God gave him work to do, and it is His purpose that His creatures

should work and eat their own bread, 2 Thess. 3:10, 12, It is interesting to note that man's advances have created problems with regard to these three things that God provided: food—scarcity and famine, largely due to overpopulation; environment — pollution; work — diminishing work with automation.

d. Rest: God's rest on the seventh day was not the rest of exhaustion but of satisfaction and completion of work. He has recorded it for a pattern for man — one day set apart in seven for his spiritual, mental and physical welfare. We do not now rest on the sabbath day, its place having been taken by the first day of the week. Just as the seventh day represented God's satisfaction upon the completion of the work of creation, so the first day celebrates His satisfaction upon completion of the work of redemption — when His Son rose in triumph from the dead.

e. Tree of Life: 2:9. God thus reminded man of his dependence upon Him for life itself. Note that there will also be a tree of life in the new paradise, Rev. 22:2.

4. Companion For Adam (Gen. 2:18, 20-24)

These verses record the divine institution of marriage at the dawn of human history, and illustrate "the law of first mention": "The very first words on any subject on which the Holy Spirit is going to treat are the keystone of the whole matter." It is highly significant that our Lord quoted from this passage, and His words (Mt. 19:4-6) are His authoritative stamp on the sanctity and inviolability of the marriage bond. Note some Purposes of Marriage deduced from these verse:

a. Companionship and Fellowship: “Not good that man should be alone,” v. 18. Verses 19 and 20 point out that in all the animal creation, man had many subjects — But conclude that he had no companion.

b. Help and support: “Help meet for him.”

c. Affection and Protection, v. 21. The woman was taken from the side of the man; not from the head to lord it over him, nor from the foot to be trampled under him, but from the side — under the arm, for his protection; close to his heart, for his affection.

d. Physical Union: expressed in the phrase, they shall be one flesh. In this is implied the physical enjoyment and satisfaction experienced within the marriage bond. See 1 Cor. 6:16. Note the expression of oneness of husband and wife, male and female, in the first account of man’s creation — Gen. 1:27, In the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

e. Reproduction: indicated in God’s first command to man in Genesis 1:28, Be fruitful and multiply.

5. Probation of Adam (Gen. 2:17)

God, the Creator and Provider, is also the Sovereign, to whom His subjects should give absolute obedience. In Genesis 3:1 Satan emphasized the restriction placed on man’s liberty, but note that verse 16 — God’s sufficient provision — precedes verse 17 — God’s single prohibition. This one restriction placed on man’s liberty was to teach him to recognize his responsibility to his Creator and to acknowledge God’s authority by his obedience. Piety untested is piety unproved. Disobedience would lead to death, not only physical, but also spiritual, in separating man from his Creator.

6. Temptation of Adam (Gen. 3:1-6)

a. Its source: Satanic, through the woman.

b. Its significance: In the first temptation lies the seed of all subsequent temptations. Note that the three enemies of man's soul all play their parts.

1. The devil, with consummate subtlety, uses:

2. The flesh — note how the woman saw the tree in verse 6; and

3. The world. John describes three elements in the world, 1 John 2:16. These are all evident in the temptation in Eden: the lust of the flesh — good for food; the lust of the eyes — pleasant to the eyes; the pride of life — to be desired to make one wise. The last Adam was confronted by similar temptations, but in a wilderness, not a garden. See Luke 4:3, 4 — lust of the flesh; vv. 5-8, lust of the eyes; vv. 9-12, pride of life. Only as we are filled with His Spirit and follow His example of strict adherence to God's Word (which Adam and Eve disregarded) can we overcome, as He did.

c. Its success: end of verse 6.7.

Transgression of Adam (Gen. 3:6)

This is described in three of the most tragic words of Scripture: he did eat. True, the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression, 1 Tim. 2:14, but Adam followed close behind. In these words, the first occurrence of human sin in the Bible, we have the seed of all sin. As it was in Eden, so sin is always.

a. Distrust of the purposes of God. See verse 5.

b. Disobedience to the Command of God. See 2:17.

c. Defiance of the Authority of God, and recognition of another authority — here, that of Satan.

d. Displacement of the Person of God from the centre of life. Note that they were allured by Satan's false objective to be as gods, or, better, as God. They partook of the forbidden fruit with a view to taking the place of God — just as Satan before them determined to be like the most High, Isa. 14:14.

8. Realization of Adam (Gen. 3:7-10)

Be sure your sin will find you out, Num. 32:23. How quickly does this principle operate — as it did in Eden! Verse 7 reveals that already they had obtained some of the knowledge of good and evil — they knew — but it led to:

a. Shame. Previously they were unashamed, 2:25; now, in their shame, they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

b. Guilt. They hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God. Conscience was now at work.

c. Fear. "I was afraid," v. 10. Adam's first recorded feeling has been one of man's greatest problems through the centuries. Even in this "enlightened" twentieth century, fear grips the hearts of millions of God's creatures.

9. Condemnation of Adam (Gen. 3:17-19)

God is now seen as Judge, passing His sentence on those who have broken His Law. This judgement is in three phases:

a. The Serpent: vv. 14, 15.

b. The woman: v. 16; (1) Sorrow in childbearing; (2) Subjection to her husband. Herein is the basis of the Scriptural teaching of the place of the woman in the home and in the church —see 1 Tim. 2:11-15; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22-24.

c. The Man: vv. 17-19. The result of man's disobedience was to be sorrow, sweat, and separation — death.

10. Separation of Adam (Gen. 3:24)

Sin had broken the fellowship of man with God, and Adam was driven out of the garden into the place of separation. Physical death was to come later — Gen. 5:5. But spiritual death had already begun when man was separated from God. That broken communion could only be restored when the “sword” that guarded the way of the tree of life was awakened to smite the Shepherd, Zech. 13:7, who suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, 1 Pet. 3:18.

Note, in Genesis, chapter 3, several important words which sum up the chapter:

- Serpent, v. 1, a great Power;
- Sin (not actually mentioned in the chapter, but obviously recorded here for the first time in human history), v. 6, a great Problem;
- Sorrow and Sword (indicating Separation), vv. 16-19, 24, a great Punishment;
- Seed, v. 15, a great Promise; and
- Skins, v. 21 a great Provision. They were obviously the result of sacrifice and death and prefigured the provision of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Capital Punishment

Capital Punishment

James T Naismith

In this issue Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, continues his series on current controversial subjects, and at the same time he concludes his series of studies on the overall theme of "Encouragement."

Capital punishment is the term applied to the death penalty for crime. Crimes meriting the death penalty are called "capital crimes." The list of such crimes has been diminishing through the years until only murder remained. In many countries, the death penalty for murder has been withdrawn, but, where this has happened, there has been considerable agitation and support for its reinstatement. Christians and non-Christians differ in their attitude to capital punishment.

What does the Bible say? In this, as in all matters, our attitude should be based, not on our opinion, however strongly held, nor on the views of men, however great or good, nor on philosophical arguments, be they ever so clever, but on the Scriptures.

In Old Testament times, under the Mosaic law, the death penalty was prescribed for a wide variety of offences, for example: homicide (Lev. 24:17); adultery (Lev. 20:10); spiritism (Lev. 20:27); blasphemy against God (Lev. 24:16); cursing parents (Lev. 20:9), etc. Apart from homicide, none of these would appear to be binding today, and they are certainly not repeated in the New Testament.

However, long before the law was given through Moses, God gave to Noah a principle, emphasizing the sanctity of human life, and establishing the penalty for the taking of human life: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. 9:6). The basis of this principle is an undeniable and unaltered fact: since man is made in the image of God and represents Him, here, it is an act of utmost contempt of the Creator to take human life; murder is an outrage against God. The one who takes another's life forfeits the right to his own; he has no right to live. H. C. Leupold (Exposition of Genesis, page 334) comments: "He that kills a man destroys God's image and lays profane hands on that which is divine." He points out that the imperfect, "be shed," is not "merely permissive or suggestive; it must be rendered as a strict imperative. Consequently, capital punishment is divinely ordained. For the proper safeguarding of the human race this basic ordinance is laid down." The responsibility for executing the murderer is not given to the family or friends of the victim, but to the constituted ruler or government.

This command of God was given after the flood — at the beginning of a new era in human life — to Noah, the new head of the human race, since all are descended from him. It has never been repealed. The New Testament, while not definitely repeating it verbatim appears to confirm it. In his instructions regarding the Christian's responsibilities to governments and rulers, Paul states: "He (the ruler) is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth

evil" (Rom. 13:4). "The sword," while including other penalties that can be imposed by government, would seem clearly to include —and, indeed, to directly signify — the authority to execute the death penalty. R. Haldane (Exposition of Romans, page 583) comments: "The sword is put for the punishment by death of any kind. This refutes the opinion of those who think that it is sinful, nay, that it is murder, to put criminals to death. God here sanctions the practice."

Christian Objections to Capital Punishment: Not all Christians agree with the death penalty for murder. Among the arguments usually used against capital punishment are the following:

1. God is a God of mercy and love, "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9). He showed His kindness to the "chief" of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Surely we should too!

Answer: God is also a God of justice; He must and will punish sin. The same argument about God's mercy could equally well be used against the Biblical revelation of eternal punishment.

2. Capital punishment deprives the murderer of the opportunity to be converted.

Answer: Normally, those sentenced to death have adequate time and opportunity to repent before the sentence is carried out. Why should it be thought that, with more time, they would ultimately repent and be saved?

3. There is no evidence that the death penalty for murder is a deterrent.

Answer: The Biblical basis for capital punishment is not dependent on any deterrent effect it may have. In any case, evidence that the death penalty is or is not a deterrent is conflicting. The former solicitor general of the United States, Robert Bork, has said: "The assertion that punishment does not deter runs counter to the common sense of the community" (quoted by C. Donald Cole, in "Christian Perspectives on Controversial Issues," page 111).

4. Jesus Christ clearly taught that we should love even our enemies (Matt. 5:44). Surely this does not mean we should put them to death but rather we should seek their welfare, including pardon for crime.

Answer: The Lord Jesus also taught just as clearly the seriousness of sin and the certainty and solemnity of judgment. True, He was infinitely loving; He was also absolutely righteous and just. In the same sermon ("on the mount") in which he commanded His hearers to "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44), He spoke, in the most solemn terms, of the certainty of judgment, here and hereafter (Matt. 5:21-30).

5. Modern penology emphasizes rehabilitation rather than retribution.

Answer: The Word of God emphasizes retribution for sin.

6. The Bible commands: "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13).

Answer: The verb "kill" in this verse really means "murder" (see NIV, NASB, NEB). "The verb used in this verse occurs forty-nine times in the Old Testament and in every relevant use means 'to murder,' especially with

premeditation. It is never used of animals, God, angels, or enemies in battle” (C. C. Ryrie: You Mean the Bible Teaches That, page 30).

7. There is always the possibility of the innocent being given the verdict, “guilty,” and condemned to death. This has certainly happened in the past.

Answer: No one should be sentenced to death without clear, unmistakable evidence of guilt.

Christ (Part 1)

Christ (Part 1)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible Teacher, continues his series on Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

It has been truly said that if we “take away Jesus from the Book of books,” we have “a casket without a jewel, an envelope without a letter, a scaffolding without any superstructure, a frame without a portrait.” Both Old and New Testaments are dark to the reader who does not look for Christ in all the Scriptures.

“Behold the Book whose leaves display

Jesus, the Life, the Truth, the Way!

Read it with diligence and care;

Search it, for thou shalt find Him there.”

As we approach the Word of God, we do well to pray:

“When we look within Thy Word,

Show Thyself to us, O Lord;

In its pages may we see

That every lesson points to Thee.”

In John 5:39, the Lord Jesus presented Himself as the key to the understanding of the Scriptures. Search the Scriptures, He said, for they are they which testify of

Me. He was, of course, referring to the Old Testament, which, if less obviously than the New, none the less really speaks of Him. In particular, on this occasion He selected the writings of Moses — the first five books of the Bible — for He went on to say, Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me, John 6:46.

It was with sadness that Cleopas and his unnamed companion pursued their journey to Emmaus on the first day of the week after the crucifixion of their Lord, Luke 24:13-32. As they discussed the shattering events of the preceding days, a Stranger accosted them, listened to their sad story, then guided them through the most wonderful Bible exposition of all time: “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself,” v. 27. The Teacher was the Lord Himself; the subject — Himself; the textbook — “all the Scriptures,” “Beginning at Moses.” We can readily understand that their hearts burned as He opened the Scriptures, v. 32, and opened their eyes, v. 31, to behold Him, and that they were anxious to lose no time in communicating their thrilling experience to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem, vv. 33-35. While they were gathered, “Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them,” v. 36, and again He unfolded to them from the same textbook — “the law of Moses ... the prophets and ... the psalms” — the same sublime subject — “concerning Me,” v. 44. Thus was their understanding opened “that they might understand the Scriptures,” v. 45. In subsequent days and years, the revelation given to them by their risen Lord was reflected in the preaching and writing of some of these

men and recorded in the Acts and the Epistles of the New Testament.

We have, therefore, the supreme authority of the Son of God when we look for Him in the books of Moses — including, of course, the first book, Genesis. While we were not privileged to listen to His exposition of this book, He has given to us His Spirit to teach us all things, John 14:26, to guide us into all truth, John 16:13, and, in particular, to glorify Him and show Him to us, John 16:14, 15.

Although His New Testament name is not mentioned in Genesis, it is not difficult to find in the book many unmistakable references to Him. There seems no doubt that, with the Holy Spirit (and the Father) He is referred to in the first verse of the book in the plural name, God — Elohim — which occurs 32 times in the first chapter, and frequently throughout the book. Similarly, the plural pronouns us and our in such passages as Genesis 1:26; 13:22; 11:7, would also seem to include all three Persons of the Godhead. In addition, however, our blessed Lord Himself is frequently presented to us through the fifty chapters of Genesis: 1. in Prophecy; 2. in Picture; 3. in Person.

1. Prophecies of Christ in Genesis

One of the most convincing proofs of the divine origin of the Scriptures is the number of remarkable prophecies contained in them that have been fulfilled to the letter hundreds of years later. Some of these refer to the Jewish people, others to the Gentile nations; but the most significant and most precious to the believer are those that found or will find their fulfillment in the first and second comings of the Lord Himself. Beginning as a

tiny stream early in the Bible, these prophecies seem to increase in force and frequency throughout the Old Testament, becoming like a rivulet, and ultimately swelling to a mighty, flowing river in the prophetic books. We can trace this stream to its source in Genesis 3, in the garden of Eden, when the darkest hour of human history was lighted by the ray of a glorious prophecy.

Gen. 3:15 The Seed of the Woman

This verse, the first prophecy in the Bible, is the germ of all prophecy. "This text," said Martin Luther, "embraces and contains within itself everything noble and glorious that is to be found anywhere else in the Scriptures."

Henry Law described it as "the first word of grace to a lost world."

The speaker was God Himself. The words were addressed to the serpent, the agent in bringing about the tragedy of the fall and so introducing sin into the sphere of God's creature, man. The context (vv. 14,15) was the judgment pronounced by God upon the serpent because he had "done this." This judgment consisted in

1. cursing of the serpent, v. 14;
2. crushing of Satan, v. 15, which would be accomplished by "her seed," that is, the seed of the woman.

Verse 15 evidently predicts a mighty conflict ("enmity"), commencing in the garden between Satan and the woman; continuing through the centuries of human history between Satan's seed and the woman's seed; and culminating in a particular descendant of the woman. This is indicated in the very personal and individual

description of this seed—"He (it) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." These words have been called "The Protevangelium"—the first preaching of the gospel, and there seems no doubt that the Person about whom Jehovah God was speaking was none other than the Son of God, and that this is the first Messianic prophecy. We cannot fail to observe that, in the second part of the verse, the conflict predicted in the first part narrows down to involve two individuals: "He" ("it" in the KJV) —the Lord Jesus, and "thou" —Satan.

In its reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, this basic prophecy anticipates:

1. His Coming as the seed of the woman — a certain reference to His humanity, (compare Gal. 4:4 — "made" or "born of a woman"), and a possible allusion to His virgin birth, for it is the woman's seed and not the man's that is mentioned.

2. His Cross. "Thou shalt bruise His heel." This was fulfilled literally when His feet were nailed to the tree; metaphorically, embracing all the physical sufferings inflicted by men at Calvary; and spiritually, for "He was bruised for our iniquities," Isa. 53:5.

3. His Conquest. "He shall bruise thy head." Compared with the bruising of the heel —a lesser injury, the bruising of the head is a capital blow, which was inflicted upon Satan as a result of the death and resurrection of the Lord. "Through death," He destroyed — rendered powerless — "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," Heb. 2:14. Satan was crushed, though not annihilated at Calvary. He is still active, but he is a conquered foe, and his doom is sure. The ultimate effect of Calvary's triumph will soon be seen,

for “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,” Rom. 16:20, and he will be cast into the lake of fire for ever, Rev. 20:10.

“His be the Victor’s fame

Who fought the fight alone.

Triumphant saints no honour claim:

Their conquest was His own.”

Christ (Part 2)

Christ (Part 2)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series of character studies in Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

[1. Prophecies of Christ in Genesis] cont.

Gen. 22:18. The Seed of Abraham

In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. This is the culmination of a series of promises made by God to Abraham, from the time of his call in Ur, Gen. 12:2, 3; see also 13:14-17; 15:5; 17:4-8, to this occasion near the end of his life when he so completely obeyed the voice of God in offering up Isaac. All these promises included, not only Abraham's personal blessing, but also the raising up of a "seed" to him, and the blessing of all families and nations of the earth through that seed. The natural descendants of Abraham were very evidently embraced in the seed — they were to include nations and kings, 17:6, and were to be as numerous as the dust of the earth, 13:16, and the stars of heaven, 15:5, 22:17. But the New Testament teaches clearly that much more was involved in these predictions; not only the physical descendants of Abraham were included, but also his spiritual progeny, those who walk in the steps of his faith, Rom. 4:12. So the promise is sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also

which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, Rom. 4:16. This is confirmed in Galatians 3:7-9, 29 — If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed. Finally, in Galatians 3:16 (one of the great "3:16's of the Bible" — cf. John, 1 John, 1 & 2 Tim., etc.) the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul asserts that, by using the singular seed, rather than choosing a noun which would normally be used in the plural such as children, God was making a very specific promise: not ... many; but ... one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

Thus, He who is the Seed of the Woman, the Conqueror of Satan, is also the Seed of Abraham, the Blessor of men. Moreover, He is also the Seed of David, Rom. 1:3, the Sovereign of the world.

Gen. 22:8. The Lamb of God

Abraham's response to Isaac's question, Where is the lamb? was not intended as a prophecy of the distant future, but was a simple and clear expression of his faith in a God who provides in every circumstance. Yet, like the Old Testament prophets (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12) he was stating more than he knew, when he said, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering. His prediction was certainly fulfilled on Mount Moriah in the provision of a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; but not till hundreds of years later was it finally fulfilled — possibly on the same mountain (Jewish tradition has identified Moriah with Jerusalem; "one of the mountains" may have been Calvary) — by One whom John Baptist pointed out on the banks of the Jordan when he said, Behold the Lamb of God, John 1:29, 36. God Himself provided that Lamb; no one else could. Moreover, He provided the Lamb for Himself — the

perfect Burnt Offering that fully satisfied Him. Finally, He did indeed provide Himself a Lamb, for the Lamb of God of John 1:29, 36 is identified with the One who in John 1:1 is introduced to us as the Word — and the Word was God.

Gen. 49:10. Shiloh. Sovereign

This chapter is the record of Jacob's dying prophetic blessings on his sons. Included are some remarkable prophecies, and none more so than those connected with Judah, from which tribe our Lord came, Heb. 7:14. He is the lion of the tribe of Judah, Rev. 5:5, foreshadowed in Genesis 49:9. He is undoubtedly also the "Shiloh" of verse 10. "Shiloh" means "peaceable" or "Peace-bringer," or "He whose it is" — referring to His right to reign. The prophecy seems to indicate that stable rule and law would not depart from Judah till the rightful Sovereign takes the sceptre and establishes peace — see Psalm 72.

2. Pictures of Christ in Genesis

The Bible resembles a profusely illustrated textbook in which the teaching is clarified by diagrams and pictures that make it easier to understand the text. The many "types" of the Bible are the pictures that God uses to illustrate divine truth, particularly in relation to the person and work of His Son. A dictionary definition of a "type" is: "A symbol of something in the future, as an Old Testament event serving as a prefiguration of a New Testament event." Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter, in his comprehensive study of the Bible: "Explore the Book," defines a type as "any person, object, event, act, or institution divinely adapted to represent some spiritual

reality, or to prefigure some person or truth to be later revealed.”

Typology is a fascinating and extremely valuable study, “a priceless treasure-mine to the Bible student.” There is ample Scriptural warrant for such study. While the word “type” does not occur in the King James Version of the Bible, the Greek word “tupos,” from which it is derived, is used in relation to Old Testament illustrations of New Testament teachings. For example, Adam “is a figure of Him that was to come,” Rom. 5:14; and the incidents that occurred during the journeys of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan are cited as “examples” to us, 1 Cor. 10:6, 11. Other words with similar meaning are also used to indicate the pictorial teaching of the Old Testament. Thus, in Hebrews, many lessons are drawn from the tabernacle and the services connected with it. The tabernacle itself was constructed from a model or “pattern” (“tupos” — Heb. 8:5; also Acts 7:44 — “fashion”) shown to Moses on Mount Sinai. All that was associated with the tabernacle was an “example,” a representation; and a “shadow,” cast by the object which it depicted, Heb. 8:5; see also Heb. 10:1. The fact that the high priest alone, once a year and not without blood, was able to enter the most holy sanctuary in the tabernacle was itself a “figure” or parable, Heb. 9:9. The Holy Spirit was thus signifying — making plain by this picture — that there was then no clear way of access into God’s immediate presence, v. 8.

In many instances, we have definite and specific New Testament authority to consider Old Testament persons, events or objects as types, for example, Adam, Melchizedek, Noah’s ark, the tabernacle. In some cases — e.g. Joseph — while there is no such indication of the

typical teaching, the analogies are so close and so clear that the typology is unmistakable.

Christ (Part 3)

Christ

Part 3

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series on Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

The book of Genesis abounds in many interesting and instructive types of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work for us:

[2. Pictures of Christ in Genesis] cont.

A. Typical Persons

Adam

The selection of Adam as the first type of Christ may seem surprising since the record of his life is one of failure with no definite evidence of faith. His name is, significantly, absent from the gallery of faith in Hebrews 11. Yet he is the only Old Testament person who is specifically described as a “figure” or type of Christ. In Both Romans 5:12-21, and 1 Corinthians 15:22-50, it is seen that he stands in the same relationship to humanity as does Christ to redeemed humanity — as head. Adam was head of the natural; Christ is Head of the spiritual.

This type differs in many ways from other Old Testament types, which usually present similarities and

comparisons with the antitype. In the case of Adam, however, we are impressed with the striking dissimilarities — the contrasts with the Antitype. These contrasts are so exact, that we might call them “parallel antitheses.” Note the following points of contrast:

1. ORIGIN. 1 Cor. 15:47, The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. Genesis 2:7 confirms the first part of this statement — The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground; the Lord Himself frequently reiterated, during His earthly sojourn, the second part: I came down from earth, John 6:38, etc. We are by nature from the first man earthy, 1 Cor. 15:48, and bear the image of the earthy, v. 48. By grace, we are associated with the Second Man, and one glorious day will bear His image — the image of the heavenly.

2. NATURE. 1 Cor. 15:45. The nature of the first man is expressed in the words, was made a living soul, “living,” that is, by life imparted to him. This is the contrast to the last Adam, who is a life-giving (quickenings) spirit — that is, imparting life. “Adam was made a living soul — marking him as “natural” (the adjective form of the word “soul” — used in verse 44, and also in 1 Cor. 2:14); in contrast to Christ who is “a life-giving spirit” — as God is spirit. Note, too, that He is not the second Adam, but “the last Adam” — there is none to follow.

3. CHARACTER AND DEEDS. Rom. 5:12-19. This passage emphasizes particularly the contrast between Adam and Christ in character and actions, and the results accruing from these. This can be readily seen by setting side by side the words used of each:

Adam | Christ

Sin, offence, transgression | Righteousness

Disobedience | Obedience

- Adam was a sin-bringer; Christ, the sin-bearer.
- Adam's disobedience was an act of self-assertion; Christ's obedience was an act of self-sacrifice.
- Adam was disobedient unto death — forfeiting life for himself and the race of whom he was head. Christ was obedient unto death, Phil. 2:8, giving His life for the race of the redeemed, over whom He is Head.
- Adam, the man, desired to be "as God," Gen. 3:5, Christ, "being in the form of God," deigned to be "made in the likeness of men," Phil. 2:6, 7.
- "The offence of one" was committed in the garden of Eden. "The righteousness of One" — the crowning act of a life of righteousness — was accomplished in the garden of Calvary, John 19:41.

4. RESULTS. Rom. 5:12-19. As a result of Adam's disobedience and sin, death (vv. 12, 15, 17), condemnation (vv. 16, 18) and judgment (v. 16) were brought upon mankind. Christ's obedience and righteousness have brought life (v. 17), justification (vs. 16, 18) and grace (vv. 15, 17) to those in Him. In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, 1 Cor. 15:22.

Adam and Eve

Before leaving the study of Adam, we should note that, in Ephesians 5:30-32, the Holy Spirit uses the divinely provided relationship of Adam and Eve, his bride (cf. Gen. 2:18, 21-24) as an illustration of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church. God's

purpose for Adam was that he should not be alone, but have a “help meet for him.” So He has designed that Christ should be complete in eternal union with His bride, the Church, “the fulness (complement) of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:23). The “deep sleep” that God caused to fall upon Adam prefigured the deep sleep of death through which our Lord passed to obtain His bride, for Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, Eph. 5:25.

Christ (Part 4)

Christ (Part 4)

James T. Naismith

[2. Pictures of Christ in Genesis] cont.

[A. Typical persons] cont.

Melchizedek

Who was Melchizedek? Varied opinions have been expressed about this apparently mystical character about whom we know very little, who appeared suddenly and briefly on the stage of history and disappeared just as suddenly. Three verses in Genesis (14:18-20) record all we know of his life, yet the New Testament lessons from these verses extend over three chapters —Hebrews 5, 6, 7. His name occurs but once in Genesis (14:18), but nine times in Hebrews (and once in Psalm 110:4).

As careful and capable an expositor as Dr. G. Campbell Morgan expressed his conviction that “this is the story of a Christophany; that here, as upon other occasions, there was granted to a man the appearing and ministry of none other than the Son of God.” But the writer to the Hebrews states that he was made like unto the Son of God, 7:3 — not that He was the Son of God. It would seem, then, that Melchizedek was a real man, a king and a priest whom the Holy Spirit, by His description of him in the inspired record, has made to resemble the Son of God. He is certainly one of the most remarkable types of the Lord Jesus to be found in the Old Testament. Moreover, he is presented as one of the greatest

characters, if not the greatest, in all the Old Testament, for the writer to the Hebrews conclusively proves that he was greater than Abraham, the friend of God and father of the faithful, 7:4-7).

By his strategy and skill, Abraham had won a resounding victory over the forces of four kings under Chedorlaomer, Gen. 14:13-16, who had previously defeated five kings including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and had taken captive Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his possessions, vv. 11-12. On his return after the battle, another conflict was to face Abraham. He was to be visited by the king of Sodom, who would make him an alluring offer: Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself, v. 21. How would respond? Sodom was a very wicked city, Gen. 18:20. It is described in Genesis 13:10 as "like the land of Egypt," and in Revelation 11:8 we read of "the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." These descriptions make it a very appropriate illustration of the world — and its king, of "the god of this world," 2 Cor. 4:4. By his victory, Abraham has a right to keep the goods he had obtained in battle. But he refused to compromise, and would not accept for himself from the king of Sodom even a thread or a shoelatchet. How was he able to win this battle? Not by strategy — by which he overcame Chedorlaomer; nor by his own inherent power. He had another resource. Between the physical battle with Chedorlaomer and the spiritual battle with the king of Sodom, a very important event took place — he was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem ... priest of the most high God, vv. 18-20, who fortified him in view of his impending meeting with the king of Sodom. Communion

with God's priest gave him the spiritual resource to resist compromising with the king of Sodom. How fitting an illustration of the gracious ministry of our High Priest, who is after the order of Melchizedek, who fortifies us in our conflict with the devil, the world and the flesh!

In the story of Melchizedek in Genesis 14 and the New Testament commentary on it in Hebrews 7, we may discern seven dual points of similarity between Melchizedek, the type, and Christ, the Antitype:

1. OFFICES. Melchizedek combined in his person the offices of king of Salem and priest of the most high God, Heb. 7:1; Gen. 14:18. Among God's earthly people, these offices were always kept separate. When Uzziah, the king, endeavoured to be a priest also and "went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense," 2 Chron. 26:16, the privilege of priests alone, v. 18, he was smitten with leprosy and "was a leper unto the day of his death," vv. 19-21. But our Lord shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne, Zech. 6:13.

2. CHARACTER. The writer to the Hebrews points out the significance of the names of Melchizedek — King of righteousness, and King of peace, 7:2. These twin characteristics — righteousness and peace — blend in the person of our Lord and particularly in the work of Calvary, where "righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Ps. 85:10. Peace is the result of righteousness: the work of righteousness shall be peace, Isa. 31:17. His coming kingdom, when the Lord Jesus Christ will exercise the Melchizedek priesthood and be the King-Priest (Ps. 110:4 anticipates that day of His

power), will be established in righteousness and bring “abundance of peace,” Ps. 72:2, 3, 7.

3. PERSON. Hebrews 7:3 poses difficulties to many — “without father, without mother, etc.” There is no doubt that Melchizedek was born of human parents, lived and died — but there is no record in Scripture of these details. It was important for priests “after the order of Aaron” to be able to trace their descent: they were “sons of Levi,” v. 5. But Melchizedek was without recorded parentage — “without father, without mother” — and lineage or pedigree — “without descent.” In this respect, he is “made like unto the Son of God” — not “Son of man.” As a man, our Lord was born of a woman, and had a human mother. As Son of God he had no parentage nor lineage.

4. ETERNITY. Likewise, the absence of any record of Melchizedek’s “beginning of days” and “end of life” — another of the significant silences of Scripture — makes him, in this respect, like our great High Priest, the Son of God. He is “Alpha and Omega,” Rev. 1:11, the first and the last. He had no beginning — He is “from everlasting.” Ps. 90:2; Mic. 5:2, “the Father of eternity,” Isa. 9:6. He could say: “Before Abraham was” —and so, before Melchizedek — “I am,” John 8:58. Moreover, He has no end. He is “to everlasting,” Ps. 90:2. He “abideth a priest continually,” Heb. 7:3. He is “a priest for ever,” Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21. “He continueth ever,” Heb. 7:24. “He ever liveth,” v. 25. He hath an unchangeable priesthood, v. 24, which cannot and need not be transferred to another. He “is made ... after the power of an endless life,” v. 16.

5. GREATNESS. Consider how great this man was, Heb. 7:4. Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham was evidenced by a. Abraham giving him the tenth of the spoils, v. 4: Gen. 14:20, and b. Abraham being blessed by him. And without contradiction the less is blessed of the better, vv. 6-7; Gen. 14:19. This superiority must extend to all Abraham's descendants, including Levi and his sons, the priests, for Levi was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him, vv. 9, 10. Since Melchizedek was only a type of Christ, how much greater must He be, who receives supreme honours from men, and dispenses incomparable blessing to men!

6. PROVISION. "Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine," Gen. 14:18. These essentials — food and drink — to sustain life and to support Abraham in his time of trial, are suggestive symbols of the gracious provision of our Lord for His own, who appropriate Him by faith, John 6:51, 53, 55.

7. BLESSINGS. In the wake of the incident recorded in Genesis 14, Abraham had a very precious message from the Lord, introduced by the first "Fear not" of the Bible, Gen. 15:1. In view of the danger of counter-attack by the defeated but possibly regrouped kings, he was assured of · Divine Protection — "I am thy shield." Lest he should feel any kind of regret, having refused to accept the goods from the king of Sodom.

· Divine Provision was made available for him — "thy exceeding great reward."

What have we to fear, since we know Him who is Priest of the most high God, Himself the Possessor of heaven and earth, Gen. 14:18, 19, 22?

Christ (Part 5)

Christ (Part 5)

James T Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series on Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

[2. Pictures of Christ in Genesis] cont.

[A. Typical Persons] cont.

Isaac

The story of Isaac is rich in typical lessons, and, as in the case of Adam and Melchizedek, there is definite New Testament authority for finding in the record of his life a prefiguring of Christ, God's only begotten Son. Writing of the testing of Abraham's faith, the author of the Hebrews notes that Abraham "received him" from the dead "in a figure," 11:19 —literally "in a parable." Thus, the receiving back of Isaac was an acted parable of the resurrection of Christ.

Each chapter of Genesis, from 21 to 25, describes incidents in the life of Isaac that have remarkable parallels in the birth, death, resurrection and glory of Christ.

Genesis 21

The Birth of Isaac

In several respects, Isaac's birth foreshadowed the virgin birth of Christ:

1. It was promised beforehand. "The Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken" — referring to successive revelations to Abraham of the son God would give him through Sarah, his wife, Gen. 17:16-19; 18:10-14. So among the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament were some that related to the circumstances of the Messiah's birth — Is. 7:14; 9:16; Mic. 5:2. The earliest New Testament prophecies were given to Joseph and Mary and concerned the birth of the Son of God, Matt. 1:20, 21; Luke 1:30-37. As Isaac's birth was "at the time appointed," Gen. 18:14, so "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son," Gal. 4:4. Even Isaac's name was announced beforehand, Gen. 17:19. So prophets and angels declared, centuries or just months before His birth, the name of the Child of Bethlehem's Manger — Immanuel, Is. 7:14; Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, Is. 9:6; Jesus, Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31; Son of the Highest, Luke 1:32; Son of God, Luke 1:35.

2. It was supernatural, the result of a divine miracle — see Gen. 17:17; 18:11; Rom. 4:19. An infinitely greater, and entirely different, miracle, accomplished by the same divine power, resulted in the virgin birth of the Son of God: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God, Luke 1:35.

3. It provoked hatred — by Ishmael, Gen. 21:9; Gal. 4:29, reminding us of the hatred of Herod when he heard of the birth of Jesus, Matt. 2.

Genesis 22

The Sacrifice of Isaac

No Old Testament incident is more suggestive of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the death and resurrection of Christ, than this. How significant are the phrases used! Note:

1. Unique Relation: "Thy Son, thine only Isaac," Gen. 22:2; "his only begotten," Heb. 11:17 — a description used, in the King James Version, only of Isaac and of Christ, John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9. The same Greek word, "monogenes," is also used of the widow of Nain's "only son," Luke 7:12, of Jairus's "only daughter," Luke 8:42, and of the "only child" who was possessed of an unclean spirit, Luke 9:38.

2. Deep Affection: "Whom thou lovest," Gen. 22:2. Doubtless no human parent has ever loved a son more than Abraham loved Isaac — in whom were centred all his joys and hopes and all God's promises. Yet that love was but finite and not to be compared with the love of Another Father for His dear Son, "the Son of His love," Col. 1:3 — a love that was from "before the foundation of the world," John 17:24; and that was proclaimed in time by the Father from an open heaven, Matt. 3:17; 17:5, and by the Son while on earth (e.g. John 3:35; 5:20; 15:9; 17:23, 26).

3. Intimate Communion: "They went both of them together," Gen. 22:6, 8. How suggestive of the fellowship between God, the Father, and God, the Son in eternity (Prov. 8:30. Then I was by Him as One brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him), and in time (John 8:29; 16:32 — The Father is with Me.)!

4. Submissive Devotion of Isaac in permitting himself to be bound and laid on the altar (Gen. 22:9) portrays, albeit faintly, the complete dedication of the Son to the will of His Father — see Heb. 10:7; John 10:17, 18; Matt. 26:39.

5. Sacrificial Substitution — Gen. 22:7-10, 13. The details of this sacrifice are all deeply suggestive of Calvary — “The wood,” of the cross; “The fire,” of the divine judgment meted out upon the Sin-Bearer; “The knife,” of the sword of Jehovah, awakened against His Shepherd, Zech. 13:7. The type, however, falls short of the Antitype. In the case of Isaac, a voice from heaven arrested the uplifted hand and halted the falling knife. But no voice prevented Jehovah’s sword from smiting the Shepherd; Abraham’s son was spared, but God spared not His own Son, Rom. 8:32. A substitute was found for Isaac, but none for Christ, who took our place and died for us.

6. Glorious Resurrection. Abraham’s assurance that not only he, but also “the lad” would come again to the young men (Gen. 22:5) was evidence — according to the Spirit of God through the writer to the Hebrews (11:19) — of his faith that God who had given life miraculously at Isaac’s birth, could also restore life miraculously by resurrection from the dead. He did receive him from the dead “in a figure” — a parable, as we have noted, of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Genesis 23

The Death of Sarah

The death of Abraham’s wife (v. 2) after the sacrifice of his son, suggests the setting aside of God’s earthly people, Israel (described in the Old Testament — e.g.

Hos. 2 — as Jehovah's wife), after the rejection and death of Christ and prior to the obtaining of a bride for the Son.

Genesis 24

The Bride of Isaac

Abraham's servant's mission to find a bride for his master's son is a beautiful picture of the present activity of the Holy Spirit, who is taking out of the nations "a people for His Name," Acts 15:14 — the bride of Christ, purchased by His sacrifice at Calvary, Eph. 5:25, and one day to share His glory, Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:7-9. Just as the unnamed servant extolled the glories of Isaac and told of his possessions, Gen. 24:35-38, so the spirit of God glorifies the Son of God, and takes what is His and shows it to us, John 16:14. The gifts brought from Isaac for Rebekah, Gen. 24:53, were the earnest of blessings to come — in Isaac's home. The Spirit of God is Himself the earnest of our inheritance, Eph. 1:14, and he brings to us "silver" — our redemption; "gold" — the preciousness and divine glory of Christ; and "raiment" — the robe of righteousness — all to enjoy and appreciate even here in anticipation of their full enjoyment when we "see Him as He is" and are ushered into the Father's house, 1 John 3:2; John 14:2.

Genesis 25

The Inheritance of Isaac

Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac, v. 5. Our blessed Lord, God's Son, is heir of all things, Heb. 1:2. The nations have been given to Him for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, Ps. 2:8. God has given him "glory," — Pet. 1:21,

“authority,” Matt. 28:18, “a name which is above every name,” Phil. 2:9; indeed “all things ... in heaven, and ... on earth,” Eph. 1:10. It is noteworthy that prior to Genesis 24, Abraham’s servant had already revealed to the bride that his master had given all that he had unto his son, Gen. 24:36. Later (Gen. 25:5), this inheritance was revealed publicly. Today, the Holy Spirit delights to unveil to the Church, the bride of Christ, the excelling glories and unlimited inheritance of her Lord. One day every eye shall see Him, Rev. 1:7, and every tongue and knee will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, Phil. 2:11.

Christ (Part 6)

Christ

Part 6

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a retired physician who presently devotes his full time to Bible teaching, continues his series on Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications inc.; used by permission.

[2. Pictures of Christ in Genesis] cont.

[A. Typical Persons] cont.

Joseph

Of all the Old Testament types of Christ none is more varied, more beautiful, more complete and more instructive than Joseph. While it is true that the New Testament nowhere indicates that Joseph is indeed a type of the Lord — as is the case with Adam, Melchizedek and Isaac — it has been truly said that “the analogies are too numerous to be accidental.” Over one hundred resemblances to the Lord Jesus have been listed.

Joseph’s history may be epitomized in two phrases from Psalm 105:17, 21, He sent a man ... He made him Lord. How appropriately applicable to the Son of God, whom, when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth, Gal. 4:4, and whom He hath made ... both Lord and Christ, Acts 2:36! God did send me before you to preserve life,

declared Joseph to his brothers, Gen. 45:5. Similarly, God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him, 1 John 4:9.

“Through pit and prison to palace” — thus we might summarize the story of Joseph’s life. “By cradle and cross to crown of glory” might equally describe the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. 1:11. When considering the story of Joseph earlier in our studies, we noted that he exemplified the significant message given by the man of God to Eli, Them that honour Me will I honour, 1 Sam. 2:30. The supreme example of this, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone could truthfully say, I do always those things that please Him (the Father), John 8:29, and I have glorified Thee on the earth, John 17:4, and whom God raised up from the dead and gave Him glory, 1 Pet. 1:21.

An adequate presentation of the analogies between Joseph and Jesus would occupy many pages — even volumes — and is beyond the scope of this book. The following points of comparison may, however, suggest material for further study of this interesting subject:

A. Loved By His Father

Israel loved Joseph, Gen. 37:3. Repeatedly in the New Testament — frequently from the lips of the Son of God Himself — is declared the love of God the Father for His “beloved Son,” Matt. 3:17; 17:5, “the Son He loves,” Col. 1:13, NIV — for example, John 3:35; 5:20; 15:9, 10; 17:23, 24, 26.

The provision of a special coat for Joseph by his father was a mark of special honour and distinction — as were the declarations from an open heaven by God the Father

of His delight in His Son. Indeed, the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand, John 3:35.

The visions of Joseph, Gen. 37:6-10, were doubtless God's revelations to him of his future glory when father and brothers would acknowledge him. Prior to His birth, the future greatness of the Babe of Bethlehem was revealed by an angelic messenger, Luke 1:32, 33, and, on the eve of His death, the Lord made known to those who hated Him and were demanding His death that they would one day see the supreme glory and authority of the One whom they were then rejecting, Matt. 26:64.

Joseph's mission to his brothers (Gen. 37:14), sent by his father, surely prefigures the mission of God's beloved Son, who became the willing servant, and who frequently reiterated that He was sent by the Father (John 4:34; 5:30, 36; 6:39, 40, 44; etc.)

B. Hated By His Brothers

They hated him. Three times this is noted in Genesis 37. There were reasons for their hatred, but our Lord could say prophetically, They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of My head ... I am become a stranger unto My brethren, and an alien unto My mother's children, Ps. 69:4, 8; see also John 15:18, 24. Yet there was a similar basis for this hatred. Joseph incurred hatred because he told the truth about his brothers — he brought unto his father their evil report, Gen. 37:2. Ye seek to kill Me, Jesus said, a Man that hath told you the truth, John 8:40. In both cases, envy was at the root of hatred — Gen. 37:11; Matt. 27:18. note the evidences of hatred.

1. "They conspired against him to slay him," Gen. 37:18. compare Matt. 21:38, "They said among themselves,

‘this is the heir; come, let us kill him’”; Matt. 26:4, they “consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill Him”; Matt. 26:59, they “sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death”; Matt. 27:1, they “took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death”; v. 20, “the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude that they should ... destroy Jesus”; v. 22, “They all say...let Him be crucified.”

2. “They stripped Joseph out of his coat,” Gen. 37:23. Compare Matt. 27:28, “They stripped Him.” Not only was Jesus stripped literally; He was also stripped of His honour — of which Joseph’s coat was a mark — by being given the shame, ignominy and dishonour of a criminal’s cross, and having to endure the indignities and mockery of His creatures, even to the extent of being spit upon — see Matt. 27:29, 30.

3. “They cast him into a pit,” Gen. 37:24. Literally, our Lord was “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,” Matt. 12:40. Figuratively, He could say prophetically, “I sink in deep mire where there is no standing,” Ps. 69:2. There was no water in the pit into which Joseph was cast, but, in the same verse of this Psalm, the Lord added, “I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow Me.”

4. “They ... sold Joseph ... for twenty pieces of silver,” Gen. 37:28. Compare Matt. 26:15, “They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.” “Thirty pieces of silver for the Lord of life they gave: Thirty pieces of silver — only the price of a slave, But it was the priestly value of the holy One of God:

They weighed it out in the temple, the price of the Saviour’s blood.”

5. They forsook him. “The Ishmaelites ... brought Joseph into Egypt,” Gen. 37:28. Compare John 1:11, “His own received Him not”; Matt. 26:56, “All the disciples forsook Him, and fled.”

6. They “saw the anguish of his soul,” Gen. 42:21. Compare Ps. 22:6-21; 69:1-21; Matt. 27:47-49. “I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters but I found none,” Ps. 69:20.

C. Humiliated By Men

Gen. 37, 39, 40

After being sold by his brothers, Joseph “was brought down to Egypt,” Gen. 37:28; 39:1, where he maintained his personal purity, honouring God and bringing blessing to men, both in Potiphar’s house and in Pharaoh’s prison — thus prefiguring the Perfect Servant (Is. 42:1; 52:13; Phil. 2:7). In his home in Egypt, he was the subject of Satan’s attacks (Gen. 39:7-13) — as was the Lord in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11); and of false accusations (Gen. 39:14-19; compare Matt. 26:59-62), but no real charge could be brought against him. So, in spite of the false witnesses against Him, the perfect innocence and purity of the Man of Calvary was attested, during the hours of His trial and death, by the judge’s wife (“that just Man” — Matt. 27:19), the judge himself (“this just Person” — Matt. 27:24), the thief on the cross (“This was a righteous Man” — Luke 23:47), and even the traitor (“innocent blood” — Matt. 27:4). Just as Joseph the servant prospered in the land of Egypt, both in the home of Potiphar and in the prison (Gen. 39:2-6, 21-23), so God has declared concerning His perfect Servant, Behold, My Servant will prosper, Is. 52:13, NASB. The imprisonment of Joseph reminds us of Him who “Was

taken from prison and from judgment," Is. 53:8. With him in the prison were two malefactors — the butler and the baker — one of whom, the butler, was subsequently exalted and restored to his position, the other, the baker, being condemned and hanged (Gen. 40). Our Lord also, while on the cross, was "numbered with the transgressors," Mark 15:27, 28; Is. 53:12 — the two thieves, one of whom heard words of infinite mercy from the centre cross and went to Paradise, while the other, persisting in his railing and rejection, went to perdition, Luke 23:39-43.

D. Exalted By God

At length, God's sovereign and wise purposes for Joseph were brought to fruition. The one who honoured God in Egypt was honoured by God in Egypt and "set over all the land of Egypt," Gen. 41:41, "made ruler over all the land of Egypt," v. 43, all of whose inhabitants were made to "bow the knee" to him. Joseph could later say to his brothers: "God hath made me lord of all Egypt," Gen. 45:9. Already, "God hath highly exalted Him" who, to glorify God, "humbled Himself," and has given Him a name which is above every name." The day is soon coming when every knee shall bow to Him "and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord," Phil. 2:5-11. "He is Lord of all," Acts 10:36.

In his exaltation, Joseph was given by Pharaoh (Gen. 41:45):

1. A name — Zaphnath-paaneah, which has been variously interpreted as: "Revealer of secrets," "God spoke and he came to life," and "the one who furnishes the sustenance of the land" or "the Saviour of the world"

— and all of which were true of Joseph, but even more so of the Lord Jesus.

2. A wife — Asenath. While still rejected by his brothers, a Gentile bride was provided for the exalted ruler of Egypt — suggestive of the bride, the Church, given by God the Father to His Son in His exaltation —but still rejection — to share His name and His glory.

The exalted Joseph was the provider of bread for a needy world. Pharaoh's command was: "Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do"; "and all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn" (Gen. 41:55-57. "I am the bread of life," said the heavenly Joseph. "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger," John 6:35. Those who ate of Joseph's bread — as of the manna in the wilderness — are dead, John 6:49, but "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat of it, and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever," vv. 50, 51. So the command goes forth to all who would have their eternal need satisfied: Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it, John 2:5.

Finally Joseph was seen and recognized by his brothers, who had previously despised and rejected him and sold him into Egypt. In the end, the one whom they had despised became the means of their blessing. In a day soon coming, every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him and His own nation who rejected Him will be blessed through Him.

In the meantime, as we wait that day when the Lord's glory will be displayed to a wondering world, we can discern, in Joseph's command to his brothers, "ye shall tell ... of all my glory," Gen. 45:13, the responsibility

entrusted to us to proclaim His glory to those who, like Jacob, are unaware that the One who was slain (see Gen. 37:33) is “Yet alive,” Gen. 45:28. The same command, “ye shall tell my father of all my glory” may be applied to the privilege we have of worshipping His Father, who delights to hear His people speak well of His Son.

Christ (Part 6)

Christ (Part 6)

James T. Naismith

It is with sincere appreciation to Dr. James, T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a retired physician who now devotes his full time to Bible teaching, that with this brief study he concludes his extended series on Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

B. Typical Events

A number of incidents recorded in Genesis, which have very interesting typical meanings and abound in spiritual lessons — for example, the flood, the offering of Isaac, and the finding of a bride for Isaac — have already been considered in some detail.

C. Typical Objects

The coats of skin; with which God clothed Adam and Eve after the Fall (Gen. 3:21), implying, as they do, the sacrificial death of an animal, are one of the first Old Testament pictures of God's provision of a garment of righteousness and salvation for guilty man through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

Abel's sacrifice (Gen. 4:4) also prefigured the offering of the Lamb of God.

Noah's ark is, as has been noted, a very beautiful picture of the shelter provided by Christ in the storm of divine judgment.

The altars, upon which the patriarchs offered their sacrifices, pointed forward to One of whom it is written, “We have an altar,” Heb. 13:10 — who is, for us, Priest (prefigured by Melchizedek), Sacrifice (illustrated by Isaac, Gen. 22), and Altar.

3. The Person of Christ in Genesis Not only is Christ predicted in prophecies and prefigured in pictures in Genesis, He is also presented in person. As we study this book, we read remarkable statements anticipating His coming, and see apt illustrations of His person and work. On numerous occasions, we actually meet the Lord Himself.

The New Testament makes it clear that no man hath seen God at any time, John 1:18. Yet frequently in the book of Genesis — and throughout the Old Testament — the Lord revealed Himself to many of the characters. For example, we read, “The Lord had said unto Abraham”; “The word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision”; “The Lord appeared to Abraham,” Gen. 12:1; 15:1, 17:1, 18:1. He appeared in such a real, bodily fashion that His feet could be washed, Gen. 18:4, and He could partake of food, vv. 5-8. The second half of John 1:18 explains this apparent contradiction: “the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” While this verse refers primarily to His earthly sojourn, when the Son of God perfectly revealed the glory of God’s character and being, there is no doubt that it includes and explains these appearances of God described in the Old Testament, which are called Theophanies. They were thus really Christophanies — manifestations of the pre-incarnate Christ. Such occasions, when men had the unspeakable privilege of seeing, hearing and speaking with the Son of God prior

to the days of His flesh, are, of course, not confined to Genesis. Among the more familiar examples in subsequent Old Testament books are the Lord's revelation of Himself to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3), to Joshua as "Captain of the Lord's host" (Josh. 5:13-15), to Gideon as he "threshed wheat by the winepress" (Judges 6:11-24), to Isaiah "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Is. 6:1), and with Daniel's three associates in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:24-25).

In recording several of these incidents, the Old Testament writers use the title, "the Angel of the Lord," or "the Angel of God." A careful study of the instances where these expressions occur leads to the conclusion that they are descriptions of the Lord and that these events were also Christophanies. Three characters in Genesis had the privilege of meeting with or hearing "the Angel of the Lord."

1. Hagar (Gen. 16:7-13), to whom "the Angel of the Lord" brought comfort, assurance, guidance and promises, in her loneliness in the wilderness, having fled from Sarah, Hagar recognized the Angel as the Lord Himself, for "she called the name of the Lord who spoke unto her, 'Thou God seest me.'"

2. Abraham (Gen. 22:11-18), to whom "the Angel of the Lord called ... out of heaven," restraining his hand when he was about to slay his son, and subsequently renewing the promises of blessing to him and his seed. With confidence resulting from his experience, Abraham could assure his servant, whom he dispatched on a mission to obtain a bride for his son, that "the Lord God of heaven ... shall send His angel" to guide and prosper him on his way (Gen. 24:7, 40).

3. Jacob, too, recognized the voice of “The Angel of God” (Gen.31:11-13), who revealed Himself to him as “The God of Bethel” whom he had met twenty years earlier at the beginning of his journey from his home to a strange land from which he was not returning. The “Man” who wrestled with him at Peniel (Gen. 32:24-32), and whom he recognized as God (“I have seen God face to face” — v. 30), is referred to by Hosea (12:4) as the “Angel” — another confirmation that “the Angel” is none other than the Lord Himself.

Christian Character

Christian Character

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies in Christian Living for Young Believers, #5
“What manner of persons ought ye to be!” So wrote Peter 19 centuries ago to Christians who were even then looking for the coming of the Lord and the things that would follow. The passage of time has brought that prospect closer, and now we “can almost hear His footfall on the threshold of the door.” How our lives should be influenced by this “blessed hope!” The very fact that we have been born again, receiving a new life and a new nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), must mean that our lives have been influenced. Anyone who has really experienced that change and who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit cannot be the same as before. What manner of persons ought ye to be who have been born into God’s family and have become partakers of the divine nature!

How different we should be from the world around us! The difference should be readily recognised — not simply in our habits, pleasures, interests, and “churches” — but supremely in our character — the kind of persons we are and the kind of lives we live. If our associates in the world cannot recognise us as Christians — Christ’s ones — by what we are and how we speak and act, they have a right to question the reality and sincerity of our profession of faith. Moreover, our witness will be ineffective unless the witness of our lives corresponds with the witness of our lips. “Men look at us six days of the week to see what we mean on the

seventh." What manner of persons ought ye to be who bear witness for Christ among your fellows!

Character determines conduct. Unless we are hypocrites — which God forbid! — the kind of things we say and do depends on the kind of persons we are. Character is what we are; reputation is what others think we are. They do not always correspond, and obviously character is the more important. What then should be the character of the Christian? What manner of persons ought we to be? Surely there is one answer. The character of the Christian should be the character of Christ. The lovely graces that were perfectly displayed in His beautiful life should be reproduced in us — and they can be. Just as His early disciples were recognised as having “been with Jesus,” so today, communion with Christ results in the communication of His character to us and conformity of life to His. As we contemplate Him and behold His glory, a transformation — imperceptible, perhaps, to us, but noticeable to others — will take place in our lives as the Lord, the Spirit, forms Christ in us (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19). What manner of persons ought ye to be who have companied with Him and profess to be His representatives!

As we study, in four New Testament passages, the characteristics that should form the character of the Christian, let us “consider Him” in whom they were displayed to perfection — and, as we do so, the “beauty of Jesus” will become more evident in us.

1. Galatians 5:19-23. The cluster of lovely graces, produced as fruit in the life of the believer who is led by the Spirit, stands in striking contrast to the works that manifest themselves when the flesh dominates the life.

The perfect and complete illustration of each of these characteristics is to be found alone in the life of our blessed Lord. It will be a profitable study to consider how He exemplified them all during His earthly sojourn. If this manifold fruit is produced in our lives, then our character will be truly Christlike and therefore Christian. We should note that the graces are described as “fruit” in the singular, in contrast to the “works,” which are the outcome of the activity of the flesh. He who is controlled by the flesh may show one, several or all of the repulsive “works” enumerated here. On the other hand, the Spirit-controlled believer will display every one of the graces described as “the fruit of the Spirit.” The basis of all the virtues is love—the love that has its origin in the heart of God and its supreme manifestation in the cross of Christ, and which is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom.5:5); love that extends upward to God in Heaven, and outward to men on earth; love that shows all the features described in 1 Corinthians 13. Joy has been described as “love exulting,” has its source in “the Lord” (Phil. 4:4; John 15:11) and is independent of circumstances. Peace is “love in repose,” the tranquillity of mind that should characterize the believer who receives it from the Lord Himself (John 14:27). Longsuffering is “love untiring,” patiently forbearing, and “enduring all things” (1 Cor. 13:7). Gentleness is “love enduring,” showing kindness to others at all times and in spite of circumstances. Goodness is “love in action,” manifesting itself in acts of beneficence, “good works.” Faith or faithfulness, is “love on the battlefield,” always loyal to the object of love. Meekness is “love under discipline” — not demanding our rights, but submitting, without resistance, to God’s dealings, and also to the insults and injuries of men—in

the spirit of our Saviour (1 Pet. 2:23). Temperance, or self-control, is “love in training” that will show itself in the restraint of all our desires and passions.

2. Colossians 3:1-15. (a) vv. 1-4 form the basis for the practical teaching that follows and should therefore be carefully studied. The kind of life we ought to live should be the outcome of (I) our association with Christ. Ponder the three occurrences of the phrase, “with Christ,” “with Him” (vv. 1, 3, 4); and the three tenses expressed in the clauses “ye died” (v.3), “ye are risen” (v.1), and “ye shall appear” (v.4). Because of our association with Christ in His death, resurrection and coming glory, our lives should be different. (ii) our occupation with Christ — indicated by the two words — “seek” (v.1), “set” (v.2). If our aim and ambition, our affection and attention are focussed heavenward, our earthly lives cannot but be effected. (b) vv. 5-9. present two groups of evils that should have no place in the Christian’s character and life. Notice (i) members to mortify or put to death (v.5); (ii) rags to remove —the clothing of the old man, which should be permanently discarded (vv.-8,9).

(c) vv. 10-15 describe the clothes of the Christian — the garments that we should “put on” and constantly wear; the characteristics that form Christian character. Among these garments, note: bowels of mercies, or a heart of compassion, like our Saviour who so often was “moved with compassion” as He witnessed the physical and spiritual needs of humanity; kindness or gentleness (Gal. 5:22) — the sweetness of disposition that should characterize all followers of Him who was the personification of gentleness; humbleness of mind, having a lowly estimate of self and esteeming “other better,” the mind “which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil.

2:3-8); forbearing — allowing for the faults and failings of others and manifesting longsuffering and meekness in relation to one another; and over all these garments, as a girdle binding all others together in perfect harmony, love.

“I want that adorning divine which only Thy grace can bestow;

I want in those beautiful garments to shine which distinguish Thy household below.”

3. 2 Peter 1:3-8. Another cluster of Christian virtues is presented to us in vv. 5-7 of this portion. In our own strength, we could not hope to display these characteristics in our lives, but verses 3 and 4 remind us of the ample provision which God has made for us. He has given to us (a) “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” — all the necessary requirements for spiritual life and character; available to us because we have the experience of knowing Him; (b) “exceeding great and precious promises,” fulfilled not only in a glorious future but even now as we lay hold on them and so become partakers of the divine nature, manifesting God’s likeness and enjoying His fellowship. While these gifts are ours, we still have a responsibility to “give all diligence” — to bend every effort, with utmost earnestness — to develop Christian character as outlined in vv. 5-7. The qualities mentioned are not intended to be developed one after the other — achieving perfection in one before going on to the next; but rather simultaneously, the one providing the soil for the growth of the next. The R. V. reads “add in” instead of “add to.” The Christian should be characterized by “faith”—THAT NOT ONLY RECEIVES Christ but trusts

and obeys Him daily; “virtue,” or moral courage and power; “knowledge” of God and His will for us, in practice as well as in theory; “temperance” — restraining and controlling our desires and passions; “patience” — steadfastness and endurance in the face of life’s difficult circumstances; “godliness” —reverence for God and desire to commune with Him and be like Him; “brotherly kindness” — love to one another; and “love” — in its widest sense, without limitation or discrimination.

2 Peter 3:11-14. The main theme of this chapter is that great incentive to holy and godly living — the coming again of our Lord. Since His coming will result in the passing and perishing of all things around us, we should be detached from them and occupied with the permanent. Our conduct and conversation should be holy, springing from holiness of character, as children of a holy God (see 1 Pet. 1:14-16). In a day of increasing moral laxity and diminishing ethical standards, with little reverence for God and His things, it behoves us who profess His name to manifest His character and deport ourselves with holiness and godliness. At a time when men’s hearts are restless anxious and fearful, we who look beyond earth’s crises for the coming of the Prince of Peace should be “found in peace” — the peace that He alone can give, the peace that rests on Him and on His promises.

Christian Service

Christian Service

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies in Christian Living for Young Believers, #7
“Ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:24). It was not to a group of missionaries engaged in some great pioneer work that this message was given, nor yet to a conference of evangelists, nor even to a meeting of Sunday school teachers; the Apostle Paul penned the words to slaves employed in different households in Colosse and thus reminded them—and us— that in carrying out their responsibilities to their earthly masters, they were actually engaging in a far higher service for a heavenly Lord. So today, every Christian, however humble his sphere and lowly his earthly calling, and however few and limited may seem his qualifications for spiritual service, is called into the noblest and best of all service for the Greatest of all Masters. None of us is exempt from the responsibility of serving Him; nor is any one of us deprived, by our limited ability, of the privilege of engaging in His service. Whether we have one, two or five talents, we are all entrusted with the responsibility of doing His business with His goods till He comes.

Salvation is not of works. The work of salvation has been fully accomplished on our behalf, and Ephesians 2:4-9, with many other New Testament passages, makes it abundantly clear that we are saved entirely on the principle of God’s grace. Yet verse 10 of the same passage declares God’s purpose in saving us by grace —“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus

unto good works." Works, then, though not the means of salvation, should be the manifestation of it. We have a responsibility to show that we have been saved by grace by the works we practise. We are not saved by serving but we are saved to serve.

If someone had delivered us from drowning or some other disaster, we should wish to express our gratitude by doing something for our rescuer. While we might never fully recompense the one who had done so much for us, we would at least show our appreciation thereby. None of us can repay the Lord Jesus for the price He paid — with His own blood — to save us from the greatest of all disasters — perishing for ever in hell. But we can express our appreciation and gratitude not only with our lips, but by lives of devotion and service.

Among the basic essentials for a healthy physical life are food, air and exercise. Our spiritual lives too require to be maintained by the food of the Word of God, the atmosphere of communion with Him, and the spiritual exercise of serving him. Spiritual atrophy will be the outcome of failure to engage in spiritual exercise, and, alas, there are too many atrophied Christians.

In the natural realm, some form of occupation is necessary, not only because of the remuneration it provides, but also because of the happiness and satisfaction that come from being occupied in useful activity. In the spiritual sphere also, our joy in the Lord will be affected by our service for Him — or lack of it; and so will our reward, both here on earth and hereafter in Heaven. Using this analogy of our daily work, let us apply the principles of our natural employment in our study of our service for God. In considering the

characteristics and relative advantages of any earthly employment, we take four aspects of it into consideration: (a) the master — what kind of employer is he, hard and difficult, or gentle and considerate? (b) the servant — what qualifications and responsibilities are expected of him? (c) the work — what are the manner, circumstances and hours of employment? (d) the reward — what wages are paid for work rendered? All these matters are of importance in studying our work for the Lord.

THE MASTER. Study Joshua 24:14-24 — the message of a servant approaching the end of his task and encouraging others in their service; and Isaiah 6:1-9 — the record of the call of a servant at the beginning of his service.

His Claims. Our heavenly Master is “the Lord” (Josh. 24:14-21; Is. 6:1), “a jealous God” (Josh. 24:19), who claims our undivided allegiance. He sits upon a throne high and lifted up in Heaven and should occupy the throne of our lives and direct and control our service. He brooks no rival. He will not share the supreme place in our lives with any other. He must be absolutely pre-eminent.

His character He is a “holy God” (Josh. 24.19). “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:3). The throne and the temple of Isaiah’s vision (6:1) indicate respectively the sovereign claims and the holy character of the One into whose service we are called. Before such a Master we must all confess, with Isaiah, our utter unworthiness (v.5), and claim the cleansing which He Himself provides and for which He stooped from the throne to the altar (vv. 6,7). As we engage in His service, we should keep

the vision of His holiness ever before us and manifest it in our lives (1 Pet. 1:15-17). “Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever” (Ps. 93.5).

THE SERVANT. (1) His Devotion. A good servant is marked by devotion to his master, whoever the master may be. This devotion is expressed in his readiness to respond immediately and implicitly to his every wish. How devoted to our Master should we be who “serve the Lord Christ” — who is not only supreme in the universe, but whose love is as great as His power! Devotion to Him springs not only from recognition of His greatness and worth but especially out of deep and true love for Him who first loved us. A human illustration of such devotion is seen in the Hebrew slave (Ex. 21:1-6) who, because of his love for his master, was willing to “serve him for ever” and, as a token, had his ear bored through with an awl. One of the greatest of all servants of Christ was the Apostle Paul. Consider his devotion — expressed, for example, in the words by which he committed himself to the service of his heavenly Lord, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). Are we as willing to place our lives at His disposal, regardless of the implications and cost? This is true devotion.

(2) His Deportment As a representative of his Master, the Christian is responsible to conduct himself in a way that befits this great service. The character of the Master should be reflected in the conduct of the servant. Study carefully the characteristics of “the servant of the Lord” seen in 2 Timothy 2:19-26, a passage written to a younger servant by one who was mature and experienced. Note, especially, verse 21 and the emphasis it lays on the servant’s separation from evil (in

the context, evil associations — false teachers —but applicable to all forms of evil) in order that he may be of service to his Master, and “prepared unto every good work.”

THE WORK. (1) The Strength. However humble may seem the service the Lord has entrusted to us, we should ever remember that the Lord’s work must be done in the Lord’s strength. Many Christians excuse themselves from service to which they have been called on the plea of lack of ability and strength. No less a man than Moses with all his Egyptian training and ability used this very excuse and reiterated it despite repeated assurances of God’s presence, power and wisdom — see Exodus 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13. The Lord who entrusts a task to us enables us to do it (see 1 Tim. 1:11, 12 for Paul’s own testimony of this), by placing all His infinite resources at our disposal. In all our service we can be confident that God is in us (Phil. 2:13), with us (Mark 16:20), and for us (Rom. 8:31), and that His strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9), so that we can confidently declare, with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

(2) The Sphere. The Christian servant is never off duty. In every sphere of life — whether at work or in leisure, in company or alone, in the Church or in the world, on holiday or at home — his Master has work for him to do. (a) In church in fellowship with others, it is important for us to discover the particular sphere for which God has fitted us to serve Him, and to use the gift He has given us to carry out our responsibilities. See Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12. 4,10,11. (b) At work we serve the Lord by our conscientious devotion to duty, by the spirit and manner in which we perform our tasks, and

supremely by doing whatsoever we do “heartily as to the Lord” — see Colossians 3:22-25; Ephesians 6:5-8.

(c) Everywhere we can manifest our work for the Lord by our good works towards men. The importance of “good works” in the life of the believer is indicated by the frequency with which the New Testament writers exhort the readers to be “zealous,” “rich,” “fruitful” etc. in them — for example, Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 1:10; 1 Timothy 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:21; 3:17; Titus 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14, etc.

THE REWARD Were we to do all things that are commanded us, we would at best be “unprofitable servants,” for we would only have accomplished our duty (Luke 17:7-10). Yet the Lord has promised rewards — here and hereafter — to servants who have come far short of even that standard.

The principle of 1 Samuel 2:30 is as true today as ever. God delights to honour any who seek to honour Him — as all who have put Him to the test can gladly testify. The rewards He bestows now are not necessarily material — although many who have honoured Him in their lives have been prospered materially — but there is no doubt that He gives spiritual rewards, which are far more significant and satisfying. Who, for example, would exchange the joy of leading a soul to Christ for the reward of material prosperity, however great?

Encouragement --Part 1

Encouragement

Part 1

James T. Naismith

Dr, James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario is a retired physician who now devotes his full time to a Bible teaching ministry. This study is the first of a series on a needful theme among God's people today — encouragement.

Are you ever discouraged? downcast? depressed? Do you always live on the mountain-top of elation, or do you sometimes descend to the valley of depression? Are you discouraged because you do sometimes “get down”? Perhaps you imagine that a believer in the Lord should always be on the mountaintop. While a Christian should never take up residence in “downcast valley,” if that's where you are from time to time, you are in good company! Think of Elijah: that great prophet: man of faith — and prayer! If anyone ever had a mountain-top experience, it was he, when he faced and triumphed over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). How quickly the situation changed! How soon he came down to the deep valley of depression! The next chapter finds him very discouraged as a result of the threat of a woman — Jezebel; he was almost suicidal, asking the Lord to take away his life.

Think of the psalmists: they loved God and knew Him better than most. They experienced His goodness and guidance. Yet they had their downs as well as their ups. The unnamed writer of Psalms 42 and 43 — probably

two parts of a single poem — was evidently devoted to the Lord. He speaks of God as “my God” (42:6, 11; 43:4, 5), as “the God of my life” (42:8) and as “God my rock” (42:9). He had enjoyed in the past going to God’s house (42:4), and he really longed for God: his “soul thirsted for God, the living God” (42:2). But he seemed now to be far from Jerusalem and God’s house (42:6), and was passing through a severe trial —a deep valley. Three times in the space of 16 verses, he asks the questions: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?” (42:5, 11; 43:5). It seemed to him that God had forgotten him (42:9) and had cast him off (43:2). All God’s “waves and billows” had swept over him (42:7). Because of his circumstances, he was the object of reproach by his enemies, who questioned, “Where is your God?” (42:3, 10). Have you been there?

Asaph, the writer of Psalm 77 seems to have been in a darker night of trial and was even more discouraged: “In the day of my trouble, I sought the Lord... my soul refused to be comforted ... I remembered God and was troubled ... I am so troubled that I cannot speak” (vv. 2-4). He too had questions about God that we would hardly dare to ask: “Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Doth His promise fail forevermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?” How low he was! So low, it has been suggested, that even the mosquitoes had to get down on their knees to bite him! Have you been there?

Even the Apostle Paul, great man of God though he was, had his periods of discouragement. He wrote about them in 2 Corinthians: “We are troubled (hard-pressed) on

every side...perplexed...persecuted... cast down" (though "not distressed...in despair...forsaken... destroyed") (1 Cor. 4:7-9). Later in the same epistle, he writes: "We were troubled on every side (harassed at every turn); without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts those who are cast down, comforted us..." (7:5, 6). The implication is that Paul was "cast down" and in need of comfort, or encouragement, which God provided. Have you been there?

Such experiences and feelings have been repeated in the lives of God's choice saints through the centuries. Many hymns we sing express the experience of discouragement —and give the answer to it. For example: "When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done." "Come, ye disconsolate! where'er ye languish, Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel; Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish: Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal."

Evidently, these hymn-writers —and many others — knew (probably from personal experience) the circumstances and experiences that their fellows passed through and wrote to encourage them.

What discouraging circumstances beset us all, particularly in these days at the close of the twentieth century! Many of the Lord's dear people have cause to be discouraged: by sickness or sadness; family problems or financial difficulties; world crises or personal calamities. The question arises: If Christians become

discouraged by circumstances, what value is there in being a Christian? The difference between a believer and an unbeliever is that the believer has sources of encouragement which are unknown to the unbeliever. In this series of studies, we shall consider some of these sources of encouragement.

Strange as it may seem, the word “encourage” does not occur once in the King James Version of the New Testament — and only nine times in the Old Testament. However, in the New International Version, the words “encourage” and its derivatives occur 62 times: 46 of these in the New Testament, where, in all but five instances, they are the translation of the Greek, “*palakaleo*” and the noun “*paraklesis*,” which are found 107 and 29 times respectively in the Greek New Testament. Another form of the word, the verbal adjective “*parakletos*,” translated “*paraklete*,” occurs five times: four in reference to the Holy Spirit, the “Comforter”; and once of “Jesus Christ the Righteous,” the “Advocate.” Literally, “*parakaleo*” means “to call alongside” (i.e. to one’s help). Among the KJV translations are: “comfort, consolation, beseech, pray, desire, intreat, exhort.” In many cases, the best translation would be: “encourage.” From a study of the occurrence of these words, we can learn the sources of encouragement for the child of God in circumstances of discouragement.

1. GOD: In Romans 15:5, God is described as “the God of patience and consolation” (*paraklesis*); “The God who gives endurance and encouragement” (NIV). In a passage in which the words “*parakaleo*” and “*paraklesis*” occur frequently (2 Cor.1:3-7), Paul introduces his words of encouragement by giving praise

to “God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort (paraklesis).” There are many channels by which encouragement comes to us, but they all proceed from one source, the God of all encouragement, who encourages “in all our tribulation.”

2. THE SON OF GOD, THE SAVIOUR: In Philippians 2:1, the statement, “If there be therefore any consolation (paraklesis) in Christ” does not imply any doubt or question, but rather assurance that Christ does provide encouragement to the Christian. The NIV translation is: “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ...” All our blessings — including encouragement — come to us from God through His Son.

3. THE SPIRIT OF GOD: He is the Paraklete, the Encourager, sent by the Father in the name of the Son (John 14:26), who makes God’s blessings real to every believer. He gives encouragement, not only to individual believers, but also to churches. Thus, the early churches in Judea, Galilee and Samaria, “were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort (paraklesis) of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” “The church ... was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (NIV).

4. THE SCRIPTURES: The Word of God is a prime channel through which God’s encouragement is provided for God’s people. Old and New Testaments alike have been written “for our learning, that we through patience and comfort (paraklesis) of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). The NIV

reads: “through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures.”

5. THE SAINTS: An important means God uses to encourage His people is — His people! Repeatedly, believers are exhorted to encourage one another. For example, 1 Thessalonians 4:18: “Wherefore comfort (parakaleo: “encourage” —NIV) one another with these words.” In Hebrews we read: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together ... but exhorting (parakaleo — “encourage” — NIV) one another.” “The God of all comfort (paraklesis) comforts (parakleo) us ... that we may be able to comfort (parakaleo) by the comfort (paraklesis) wherewith we ourselves are comforted (parakaleo) of God” (2 Cor. 1:3, 4). He, the God of encouragement, encourages us, not only that we may be encouraged, but that we may be encouragers.

In succeeding studies we shall examine these sources of encouragement, prayerfully trusting that we shall all be encouraged thereby.

Encouragement By The Saints

Encouragement

By The Saints

James T. Naismith

“The Christians! They get me down! I know they are my brothers and sisters, but how discouraging they can be! The things they do and say — and their attitudes! They make me sick!”

Have you ever felt like this? Alas, it does happen — occasionally — that Christians can be a source of discouragement to one another. “My brethren, these things ought not so to be!” (James 3:10). On the contrary, we should be channels of encouragement to fellow-believers, our brothers and sisters in the same family, the means God uses to bring comfort and cheer to His people. But how?

The writers of the New Testament exhort us to “encourage one another” — four times in the NIV translation:

Hebrews 10:24, 25

One of the key phrases of Hebrews is: “Let us” — occurring thirteen times in thirteen chapters — but sometimes in “bunches.” For example, this is seen in each of the successive verses of Hebrews 10:22-24. The NIV adds two more in v. 25: “Let us not give up meeting together ... but let us encourage one another...” The word translated “exhorting” in the KJV and “encourage” in the NIV is, again, the word, ‘parakaleo,’ meaning to call alongside — to help.

When should we encourage one another? Always, of course — whenever we have opportunity. But the writer adds: “So much the more as ye see the day approaching.” What day? Possibly — for the initial readers of the epistle — the day of intense persecution which Hebrew Christians were soon to face when Jerusalem was destroyed. We, too, need to encourage one another especially when days of trial and tribulation loom ahead. For them and for us, however, there is another day approaching — nearer now than it was for them — which should inspire us to encourage one another: the day of the Lord’s return; this may be any day, even today! So let us be encouragers of each other as that glorious day approaches! But how? These two verses suggest two ways:

1. By meeting together. “Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together” (v. 25); “Let us not give up meeting together” (NIV). In times of trial and persecution, such as these Hebrew Christians had experienced (see vv. 32-34), the gatherings of believers have special value for encouragement. But, at all times, we may be an encouragement to one another by meeting together with those of “like precious faith” (2 Pet. 1:1). Too many stay at home and criticize, instead of coming together to encourage. Our very presence can be an encouragement. A preacher was visiting a backsliding Christian who had been absenting himself from the assembly prayer meeting. Sitting down with him in front of a coal fire, he silently took the tongs, lifted a glowing coal from the fire, placed it on the hearth, sat back and watched. Soon, of course, the glowing ember ceased to glow and the fire itself burned less brightly. The backslider broke the silence: “I’ve got the message; I’ll

be out next Wednesday evening!" Our absence from the gatherings of the church not only discourages others, it affects our own spiritual warmth, health and growth.

2. By considering one another: "to provoke unto love and good works" (v. 24). How we need 'provocative' saints! — provoking one another — but in the right way! "Provoke" is a medical word which could be transliterated 'paroxysm.' Paroxysms — sudden outbursts of pain, coughing, rapid heart action, etc. — are often induced or 'provoked' by certain stimuli, which the patient comes to recognize and tries to avoid. So the writer here encourages the readers to "consider one another" — observe and study closely, and take note of the special needs, problems and circumstances of each other, and of the particular stimuli which will touch the nerve endings to induce a paroxysm of love and good works.

B. Hebrews 3:13

"Exhort (NIV: "encourage"; Greek: "parakaleo") one another daily lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "Lest" is another keyword of Hebrews and found eleven times in the KJV. Each time it occurs, it sounds a note of warning — and there are several warning lessons throughout the book. In this particular instance, the danger is stated in verse 13, a hard heart, "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Who has an "evil heart of unbelief" ("a sinful, unbelieving heart" — NIV)? A sinner, and unbeliever, of course! Compare some unbelievers at Ephesus, who "were hardened, and believed not but spoke evil of that way" (Acts 19:9). The writer was concerned that, among those to whom he wrote, there may have been some who

were not true believers and who were turning back from their profession of faith to their former “religion” Judaism. So he encourages them to encourage one another. His message, however, has a valid application to all of us to encourage one another not to pursue a course of unbelief and disobedience to God’s Word.

Why should we “encourage one another”? “Lest any be hardened” that is, to prevent or arrest sin —whether in false doctrine or impure lives. An unbelieving heart can easily become a hardened heart. We should encourage one another not to depart — to go away from — “the living God,” but to “go on” for Him (Heb. 6:1).

When should we “encourage one another”? “Daily,” — all the time, continually; “while it is called today.” There is an urgency about it; let us seize the opportunities!

C. 1 Thessalonians 4:18

“Wherefore comfort (parakaleo) one another with these words”: “encourage each other” (NIV). Verse 15 indicates the source of the words with which saints can encourage one another: “the word of the Lord.” We can and should give encouragement by applying the “comfort (encouragement) of the Scriptures” (Rom. 15:4), not only from the pulpit but in our mutual conversation. How much more edifying and encouraging would our conversations be if the Word of God figured more prominently in them! To be able to encourage by the Word of the Lord, however, we need more than a passing acquaintance with it! We need a personal knowledge of its teachings, experience of its truths, and application of its principles to our lives. This does not result from simply “attending church” once a week, listening to an occasional taped message or TV

programme (helpful as all of these may be), but from the absorption of our minds, hearts and lives in the Word — reading, memorization, meditation, study and application.

In this instance, there was a specific “Word of the Lord” that was and is an encouragement: it concerned the return of the Lord, the Rapture, and the resurrection of the “dead in Christ,” a message that is specifically encouraging in circumstances of bereavement and sorrow. But many other teachings of the Scriptures are for our encouragement. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul uses the word “parakaleo” eight times. Chapter 4 has it at its beginning and end and in its centre. At the beginning, verse 1, he encourages (“exhort” — parakaleo) the believers to “abound” in a walk that pleases God, and refers to the “commandments” he had given “by the Lord Jesus” as the source of that encouragement. In verse 10, he “beseeches” (parakaleo) the Thessalonians to “increase more and more” in love for one another, as they had been “taught of God” (verse 9). Thus, three times in this chapter, the apostle gives an example of encouraging the saints by the application of the great truths and principles of the Word of God. We can encourage one another not only by the comfort of the Scriptures, but also by their commands.

D. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

“Wherefore comfort (parakaleo) yourselves together” (NIV: “encourage one another”). The encouragement of this verse is obviously based on the message of the previous verses, which can be summed up in verse 9: “God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” — not

only the past salvation from the penalty of sin by His death for us; and more than His present salvation from the power of sin by His life for us in the glory and His presence in us by His Spirit; but, especially, in this passage, the salvation in the future, when He comes for us and takes us to glory. This salvation will not only be from the presence of sin, but from the “wrath” (verse 9), which will come upon the earth during the Great Tribulation after the rapture.

“ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER:” How? By meeting together regularly, by considering one another, by warning each other of spiritual dangers, by applying the Word of God — its precepts, principles and promises — in our teaching and conversation, and by reminding each other of our great salvation and glorious prospect, we can all be an encouragement to the saints!

Encouragement by the Saints (Part 2)

Encouragement by the Saints (Part 2)

James T. Naismith

Would you have imagined the great Apostle Paul being discouraged? That outstanding servant of Christ, whose letters have been an encouragement and blessing to millions, who wrote four chapters full of joy (Philippians) from a Roman prison, and who faced martyrdom at the hands of Nero with confidence, peace and hope (2 Tim. 4:6-8) —surely he didn't ever descend into the valley of depression? Yes! From his own account, it seems to have actually happened! He implies it on several occasions in 2 Corinthians. He certainly did not despair — but he was downcast — and, humanly speaking, he had good reason to be! One reason was “the care of all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28), which was a daily burden for him. Those who share, as elders, in the care of just one church can appreciate just what he meant by that phrase. One of the churches that caused him particular concern was the one to whom he wrote those words — the church of God at Corinth. But this very letter to the Corinthians, that reveals his discouragement, could be called: “The Epistle of Encouragement”! The experiences of discouragement fitted the great apostle to be an encourager.

One of the key words of 2 Corinthians is the word ‘parakaleo,’ which, as we have seen in these studies, literally means to call alongside (to help) — that is, to comfort, console, encourage. The verb form occurs eighteen times in the epistle (three times in one verse: 1:4), and the noun form eleven times (six times in

chapter 1, translated “comfort” and “consolation”). Another important word is the noun ‘thlipsis’ and the corresponding verb ‘thlibo’ which, together, occur twelve times in the epistle, translated: “tribulation,” “trouble,” “affliction,” “burden.” Literally, it means “pressure pressing on and burdening the spirit.” It was the word that would be applied to the ancient punishment in England by a heavy weight being placed on the chest of the wrongdoer, crushing him to death. It is the word used for the great “Tribulation.”

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-11, Paul writes of:

A. THE NEED FOR ENCOURAGEMENT: Note how he describes the pressures of life: “tribulation” (4), “trouble” (4, 8), “afflicted” (6) — using the same Greek word in each case. In other parts of the epistle, he details some of these pressures; for example, chapter 4, verses 8, 9: “We are troubled (hard-pressed) on every side ... perplexed ... persecuted... cast down” (though not “distressed ... in despair ... forsaken ... destroyed”). Again, in 7:5, 6, he writes: “We were troubled on every side” (NIV: “harassed at every turn”), “without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, Who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” From these passages, we can deduce: first, that Paul was downcast (“cast down”); and, second, that God used a fellow-believer—Titus—to encourage him.

The crisis he describes in chapter 1 was probably different from those described in chapters 4 and 7. It was evidently one of the utmost gravity which gave ample reason for discouragement. We cannot be sure of the exact nature of this trying ordeal — whether a

severe illness, a grave danger or a terrible persecution — but it was for him a critical situation. Three times in three verses (verses 8, 9, 10), he describes himself as being “at death’s door”; 8: “we were pressed out of measure” —weighed down, under great pressure and strain; “above strength” —beyond his natural ability to endure it; “insomuch that we despaired even of life” — death seemed certain. There seemed no way out of this desperate situation. Few of us have been as low as that! 9: “We had the sentence of death in ourselves” — humanly speaking, there was no hope of recovery; he was under the “death sentence” with no possibility of reprieve! The only way to look was up! — “That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.” Only a miracle of divine power could save him — and it did! 10: “Who delivered us from so great a death” — a condition that could be described, medically, as ‘terminal,’ ‘in extremis.’ Very few of us have been there!

In this deep, dark and difficult “valley of the shadow of death,” God was his only hope. His deliverance from this “deadly peril” (v. 10, NIV) was unmistakably a miracle of divine providence, resulting from God’s intervention.

B. THE SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT: Out of this crisis, Paul records the source from which he derived his encouragement; verses 3, 4: “the God of all comfort.” Encouragement may come to us through many channels, but it always emanates from the same source — God — He encourages us “in all our tribulation” (thlipsis) — in every pressure-filled situation. Paul states three reasons why He is our encouragement:

1. Who He is: a. "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (3), in Whom are perfectly displayed the character and characteristics of the Father — His grace, compassion, tenderness, power, wisdom. b. "The Father of mercies" (3) — that is, the Source of all compassion. c. "Our Father" (2) — we are the object of His Fatherly concern and interest.

2. What He is: i. "The Father of mercies; He is compassionate and merciful: "It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lam. 3:22). ii. "The God of all comfort" (paraklesis: encouragement), Who consoles and encourages His people.

What He Does: He delivers in every trial (10). In the past, He "delivered"; in the present, He doth deliver"; so we can have confidence that, in the future, "He will yet deliver us."

C. THE PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGEMENT: (4-6). God does not encourage us only for our benefit, but for the blessing of others; not merely that we may be encouraged, but also that we may be encouragers. He encourages us "in all our tribulation" (thlipsis), "that we may be able to comfort (encourage) them which are in any trouble (thlipsis), by the comfort (encouragement) wherewith we ourselves are comforted (encouraged) of God." Verses 5 and 6 expound this theme. The more we have experienced affliction — pressure — the better fitted are we to pass on to others the encouragement we receive. The one who is best qualified to encourage others is the one who has suffered the same sickness, experienced the same sorrow, endured the same trial or walked the same path.

D. THE MEANS OF ENCOURAGEMENT: While God is the ultimate and only Source of encouragement, He uses many ways to dispense and channel it to his people.

1. Human Channels: In this passage, He uses Paul to encourage the Corinthians — and us. Amazingly, He also used the Corinthians with all their carnality and failures to encourage Paul. In chapter 7, he expressed his joy in the encouragement he had received through Titus by his coming and by the news he brought of the Corinthian church: their changed attitude and behaviour, their deep sorrow, and earnest desire. So may we encourage fellow-Christians by our fervour, spiritual desires, and concern. But in chapter 1, Paul indicates another way in which they had encouraged him when he was in a grave crisis: “Ye also helping together by prayer for us” (v. 11). Their co-operation and partnership in prayer encouraged the great apostle, who frequently wrote of his prayers for the saints and solicited their prayers for him. By our prayers, we too can encourage the Lord’s people, including His servants.

“The weary ones had rest, the sad had joy

That day and wondered how?

A ploughman, singing at his work, had prayed,

‘Lord help them now.’

Away in foreign lands they wondered how

Their simple word had power:

At home, the Christians, two or three, had met

To pray an hour!

Yes, we are always wondering, wondering how?

Because we do not see
Someone, unknown perhaps and far away,
On bended knee.”

Wilbur Chapman, the well-known American evangelist, became discouraged in his early days of preaching because of his ineffective delivery. A few elders in his church pledged to pray for him in His service. Their encouragement by prayer proved to be a factor in his effectiveness.

2. Heavenly Consequences of earthly trials. 2

Corinthians 4:17 was written as an encouragement for the Corinthians and for us. Earlier in the chapter, Paul writes of the pressures that had burdened him: “We are troubled (thlibo) on every side” (v. 8). Pressure seemed overwhelming — verses 8, 9. Yet, in verse 17, the same pressure (“affliction”) is described as “light.” Why? Because it is contrasted with another weight — of glory — which is “far more exceeding.” The present “affliction” is “but for a moment”; the future glory is “eternal.” What encouragement it is to look through the mists of our present affliction and view the glory yet to be: the weight of glory; eternal weight of glory; exceeding and eternal weight of glory; more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”!

Enoch

Enoch

James T. Naismith

This is the sixth in a series of character studies in Genesis by Dr. James T. Naismith of Peterborough, Ontario. These studies were first published in book form under the title, PERSONALITIES IN GENESIS.

Copyright by Everyday Publications; used by permission.

Genesis 5:1 marks the beginning of the third section of Genesis, the generations of Adam, i.e. the history of the development of Adam's progeny, through the line of his son Seth, the seed appointed by God instead of Abel whom Cain slew, Gen. 4:25. After recording the death of Abel, Genesis 4 gives the succeeding history of Cain and his successors down to Lamech, in whom sin and ungodliness had reached a terrible climax, verses 23, 24. Seth is introduced in verse 25, and the subsequent record of Genesis is concerned with the line of Seth rather than Cain. Genesis 5 gives a list of ten generations in the line of Seth, and introduces us to two of the outstanding men of faith, whose lives we shall study next — Enoch and Noah. The list is characterized by the repeated recurrence of the phrase — found eight times in the chapter — and he died. The only interruption is in the case of Enoch, who shared with Elijah the distinction, out of all the untold millions of human history, of being taken by God without dying. The only references to Enoch in the Bible are the four short verses in Genesis 5 (21-24), two verses in Hebrews 11 (5 and 6); two verses in Jude (14 and 15) and the incidental

inclusion in Luke's genealogy of the Lord Jesus (3:7). Yet, although we know so little about him, sufficient is revealed to present him to us as an example of faith and godliness. We shall note four things that are said of him:

1. He Walked With God (Gen. 5:22, 24)

Twice in this brief Genesis record is this stated. He shared this distinction with Noah, Gen. 6:9, the only other person of whom it is expressly stated that he walked with God. (Of course, others did walk with God, but only in these two cases is it so recorded.) This is indeed the only activity of his life that Genesis records — apart from begetting sons and daughters. There are many things that great men of God have accomplished that are beyond the ability of many of us, but here is something that is open to us all. Note:

A. The Circumstances Of His Walk. Jude 15 indicates the characteristics of the times in which he lived — ungodly; so ungodly, indeed, that, on the death of his son, Methuselah, God brought a flood of judgment upon the earth. Genesis 5:22 indicates another aspect of the circumstances in which he lived —he was a family man with domestic responsibilities. Walking with God is consistent with earthly responsibilities.

B. The Commencement Of His Walk — after his son Methuselah was born, Gen. 5:22. God's gift to him of that new life led to the beginning of his walk with God.

C. The Conditions Necessary For Walking With God:

1. Faith, as emphasized in Hebrews 11:5, was the basic characteristic of Enoch's life. How can one walk with an invisible companion — except by faith?

2. Harmony. Amos 3:3, Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

3. Humility. Micah 6:8, Walk humbly with thy God.

4. Light. 1 John 1:6, 7. To walk in fellowship with God means to walk in the light — i.e. in accord with the character of God who is light, v. 5; in obedience to the Word of God, which is light, Psalms 119:105; and in purity and love.

5. Separation from evil and evildoers. 2 Cor. 6:14-17. Enoch walked with God separated from the ungodly world, to which he witnessed.

D. The Consequences Of Walking With God

1. He pleased God — Heb. 11:5. The Septuagint version of Enoch walked with God is was well-pleasing to God.

2. He learned God's will and so was able to prophesy — Jude 14, 15.

3. He was taken by God into the presence of the God with whom he had walked so long on earth.

E. The Culmination Of His Walk—Enoch's walk with God on earth reached its climax when God took him, Gen. 5:24, to walk with Him in white, Rev. 3:4, for he had not defiled his garments on earth.

“He ‘walked with God!’ Could grander words be written?

Not much of what he thought or said is told:

Not where or what he wrought is even mentioned;

He ‘walked with God’ — brief words of fadeless gold!

How many souls were succoured on, his journey—

Helped by his words, or prayers, we may not know;

Still, this we read — words of excelling grandeur,
He ‘walked with God’ while yet he walked below.
And, after years, long years, of such blest walking,
One day he walked, then was not, God said ‘Come!
Come from this scene of weary sin-stained sadness!
Come to the fuller fellowship of Home!’
Such be the tribute of thy pilgrim
When life’s last mile thy feet have bravely trod—
When thou hast gone to all that there awaits thee,
This simple epitaph — ‘He walked with God.’”
—J. Danson Smith

2. He Pleased God (Heb. 11:5)

This is perhaps the highest commendation that anyone could receive. It was true of the Lord Jesus that He pleased not Himself, Rom. 15:3, but did always those things that pleased the Father, John 8:29. So it should be our ambition to be acceptable, well-pleasing to Him, 2 Cor. 5:9. The basis of pleasing God is, for us as with Enoch, faith: for without faith it is impossible to please Him, Heb. 11:6 — faith that believes, trusts and obeys God.

3. He Prophesied For God (Jude 14, 15)

The second last book of the Bible records something about Enoch that is not revealed in the first book. He was evidently the first human prophet, though the first recorded prophecy is earlier, in Genesis 3:15. His prophecy, Behold the Lord cometh, has been reiterated frequently in the Scriptures, e.g. Isa. 40:10; Rev. 1:7;

22:7, 12:20. His prophecy related to the Lord's coming in judgment. Can we trust his prophecy? He made another prophecy that was fulfilled with amazing accuracy. When his first baby boy was born, he called his name Methuselah, which means, When he is dead, it shall be sent, i.e. the deluge (Newberry). When Methuselah was 187, Lamech, his son, was born, Gen. 5:25; 182 years later, Noah was born — Methuselah was now 369 years of age, v. 28. When Noah was 600 years old, the flood came, Gen. 7:11. At this time Methuselah was 969 years old — that was the very year he died, Gen. 5:27. How accurate was Enoch's prophecy! He was able to prophesy because he walked with God — in constant touch with Him, so that he knew His will. We, too, can only know God's will by being in constant touch with Him.

4. He Was Taken By God (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5)

The Septuagint renders this clause, as does the writer to the Hebrews; God translated him —i.e. carried across, from earth to heaven. Death did not intervene. He is thus a type of many saints who will be alive when the Lord comes and will be translated without dying—just before the flood of divine judgment descends upon the earth.

Euthanasia or “Mercy Killing”

Euthanasia or “Mercy Killing”

James T Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, is a retired physician who devotes his full time to a Bible teaching ministry.

This is his third in a series of four articles dealing with several of today’s difficult and complex problems.

“Euthanasia” literally means “dying well”: that is, gentle, easy death. The word was introduced with this meaning in the 17th century. Such a gentle, easy passing should be the desire and objective of every physician treating a terminally ill patient. However, like many other words in the dictionary, this has changed — or, perhaps, expanded — its meaning through time and it has come to be applied to the deliberate termination of the life of a person suffering from a distressing or irremediable disease or disability. It has even been used of the intentional killing of persons so deficient mentally or physically as to be considered of no value to society. Such actions should, of course, be condemned by Christians and non-Christians alike.

In this study our consideration will be restricted to the termination of the life of a person suffering from a painful, disabling or incurable disease, who personally requests that his or her life be ended. Such situations occur frequently in the practice of many physicians and require some of the most difficult decisions in medicine.

Euthanasia has been divided into three categories: 1. Administration of a poisonous or noxious substance with intent to kill. Legally, this is regarded as murder or, at least, manslaughter, thus a criminal offence. 2. Administration of therapeutic doses of pain-killing medication in the knowledge that, because of the development of tolerance to the drug, increasing quantities will be required to keep the patient free from pain and ultimately may contribute to his death. 3. Withholding of further therapeutic measures which could prolong the life of the individual, thus allowing him to die.

Advances in medicine and technology have created increasing difficulties for physicians treating patients who cannot be cured and who are suffering intensely. Patients may be kept alive today who, not long ago, would certainly have died, and who would die now if a machine were unplugged or if other forms of treatment were withheld. Moreover, there is sometimes a conflict regarding the use of life-support measures — which may be very costly, and are usually quite limited. Should the resources be spent on those who are more likely to respond favourably and benefit more from treatment? Or should such treatment be on a “first come first serve” basis? Many factors complicate such decisions.

To treat or not to treat? that is the question. In some cases, treating a patient who is inevitably going to die is simply prolonging the act of dying. On the other hand, the discovery of new cures makes previously incurable diseases amenable to treatment; sometimes it is possible to maintain the life of a patient until such measures become available. Doctors are sometimes wrong in their

diagnosis and prognosis, and patients not expected to recover sometimes do — almost remarkably.

What is the Christian attitude to euthanasia?

1. All human life is sacred. We have an obligation to God, in Whose image man was made, to maintain that life where possible. Included in the Hippocratic Oath, which doctors take, is the vow: “I will administer no fatal medicine to anyone, even if solicited, nor will I offer such advice.”

2. We also have a responsibility to our fellow-man: to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt. 19:19, etc.), and therefore to do to others as we would have done to us (Matt. 7:12), as commanded by our Lord while on earth. Thus we should not deprive them of any treatment that will prove beneficial. Sometimes, however, it is more compassionate to allow believers to go to be with the Lord than to retain them here on earth for the sake of having them with us.

3. In His life on earth, the Lord Jesus has given us the supreme example of compassion and care for those who are in dire physical need. We cannot match His power in curing the incurable, but we should emulate His compassion for those in need. The care of those who are dying requires love, tenderness, compassion, time and patience. As Christians, we should be willing to give that loving support and compassionate care — including food, warmth, attention and affection —even if the end result seems inevitable. Every measure should be used to alleviate suffering, if possible without shortening life, and to provide the maximum of comfort for those who, it would seem, are soon to depart from us. There are available today medical measures which, if properly

administered, can go a long way toward making most patients relatively comfortable. These combined with the compassionate, tender, loving care provided by the attendant will provide true euthanasia — gentle, easy dying.

Feminine Fashions

Feminine Fashions

Dr. James Naismith

In this article Dr. Naismith has complied with the request that there be published some ministry on this very important topic. We are grateful for the spiritual discernment and yet the practical approach to the tendency of worldliness in dress.

We live in a rapidly changing world. "Change and decay in all around I see." Among the changes to which we are exposed, few occur more frequently than in the realm of fashions. Whether in cars, carpets or clothes, variations are constantly taking place. What was revolutionary yesterday is accepted today and will be out-dated tomorrow. Mercifully, some of the more shocking of fashions — "topless dresses," for instance — are very short-lived; but unfortunately, others, only slightly less shocking, seem to persist despite the protests of many. To keep abreast of changing fashions is no easy task — and demands more financial ability than most of us possess. But is it right for a Christian to endeavour to do so? Certainly, to endeavour to be old-fashioned is not fitting for children of God. Yet we are exhorted to be transformed, not conformed; different, not the same (Rom: 12:2).

The fashions of a God-hostile world should surely not be the guide for a God-loving saint. But where are we to draw the line? Particularly are our younger (and perhaps older) sisters faced with this problem. How are they to dress? What adornment should they wear? What

principles should guide them? For, let it be clear at the outset, the Scriptures state the basic principles by which we should be regulated: they do not go into details of the kind of clothes we should wear. Nor should we expect them to: obviously none of us today dresses as Paul and Peter and believers of their time would dress—or as our Saviour did. Moreover, fashions vary not only from time to time, but from place to place, and we generally dress more or less in accordance with the customs of the community in which we live — otherwise we certainly would be drawing attention to ourselves.

Both Paul and Peter present some of the principles that should apply in these matters, in our day as in theirs. Let us examine their brief but helpful comments.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3:1-4).

These verses, addressed primarily to the believing wives of unsaved husbands, have an application to all Christians in respect to their contacts with unbelievers. How can these husbands be won for the Lord? How can we all influence our unsaved colleagues and neighbours? By all means let us speak “the Word” to them. But, if they “obey not the Word,” what then? Should we keep on nagging them, preaching at them? No! In these

circumstances, the unbelieving husband “may without a word (as it should be) be won by the conversation of the wives” —and, likewise, our unsaved friends may be brought to Christ by the silent testimony of Christlike lives without a word being spoken. Actions speak louder than words. Our practice outpoints our preaching. By her submissive attitude, her utter faithfulness and chastity, and her godly fear, a Christian wife can be more effective than a hundred sermons.

What about her dress and accessories? By the attractiveness of her appearance, she might reason, she could influence her unsaved husband. Should she not, therefore, dress “in the height of fashion and the mould of form? Would glittering jewellery and the most modern hair-do contribute to this end? Her modern counterparts — Christian women of today — might likewise state a case for expensive and fashionable apparel, dazzling ornamentation, and costly coiffure. What is Peter’s answer? “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart...a meek and quiet spirit.” Does this mean that our sisters should wear no jewellery and have completely plain hair-styles? Is Peter forbidding outward adorning completely? No more than our Lord was forbidding work when He said, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (John 6:27). He was there clearly emphasizing the greater importance of the spiritual and eternal and urging His hearers to devote their efforts to things which have enduring values. So, here, Peter is not prohibiting external adornment (he includes “putting on of apparel,” and obviously would not forbid this!) but is

emphasizing the supreme importance of internal — spiritual — adornment.

The Christian should not seek to make herself attractive by what she wears outside so much as by what she wears inside. Not the outer adorning, but the hidden man of the heart should be the secret of her attraction. The spirit of meekness and quietness is far more effective adornment than glamorous apparel or glittering ornaments. The latter are costly in human values; the former is “in the sight of God of great price.” The latter are perishable goods — soon outdated and outworn: the former is “incorruptible” — never old-fashioned, never decaying. What a lesson on relative values! We tend to give so much thought to wherewithal we shall be clothed, and forget that inner clothing, like inner cleanliness, comes first.

“I want that adorning divine
That only Thy grace can bestow.

I want in those beautiful garments to shine
Which distinguished Thy household below.”

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety: not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but which becometh women professing godliness with good works” 1 Tim. 2:9-10).

Into these two short verses, Paul compresses his teaching, under the Holy Spirit’s direction, on the apparel and adornment of sisters. Four important guiding principles can be discerned:

Importance of Tidiness and Taste

Importance of tidiness and taste is suggested by the phrase, “adorn themselves in modest apparel.” Adorn” means to put in order, arrange; and “modest” also implies well-arranged, orderly, in good taste with modesty and good sense. There is no virtue in a shabby, frumpish old-fashioned appearance in a Christian. An untidy Christian —especially at gatherings of the church is a poor testimony for her — or his — Lord.

Maintenance of Modesty and Morals

“With shamefacedness and sobriety.” “Shamefacedness” should really, as Trench explains in his “Synonyms of the New Testament,” be “Shamefastness” (similar to bedfast, bedridden; weather-fast, weather bound) and implies what has been established, made fast, by a sense of shame. Trench defines it as shrinking “from overpassing the limits of womanly reserve and modesty.” “Sobriety,” he describes as “that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires.”

Today’s fashions so frequently transgress the boundaries of propriety and enter the realm of indecency. A Christian should beware and should never dress “suggestively,” but, at all times, and especially in public places and gatherings, with becoming modesty and morality. Christian sisters should be ashamed to be seen in some of the attire that passes in many circles around us, but should in all circumstances, be characterized by proper reserve and sound spiritual judgment — in clothing as in conduct. Anything less is unbecoming to them and dishonouring to their Lord.

Avoidance of Extravagance and Extremes

“Not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.” When Paul wrote, there was a prevalent custom of interweaving in the hair gold, silver, pearls, causing it to flash brilliantly and dazzling in the light, with the object of drawing attention to the wearer. Such extravagances and excesses of personal adornment are unbecoming for a child of God, who should wish to draw attention to her Lord rather than herself. Good clothing, fashionable and in good taste, will enhance a sister’s appearance and testimony. Ostentatious display will only detract from it and should be avoided.

Pre-Eminence of Deeds Over Dress

Pre-eminence of deeds over dress, of character over coiffure! “Not with broided hair ... but ... with good works.” “A virtuous life is the best adornment” (Knox’s translation) far surpassing glittering jewels and expensive attire. What we do is more important than what we wear.

Thus both Peter and Paul, in dealing with the subject of feminine fashions, emphasize the priority of inner, spiritual adornment — a meek and quiet spirit, manifesting itself in good works. May we too seek this “adorning divine”!

Focus Question Column

Focus Question Column

Dr. James Naismith

This new column will be devoted to questions submitted by readers, and, hopefully answers to these questions by students of God's Word with experience of varied problems. Comments on the questions — and answers — will be welcomed from readers who may not entirely agree with the answers submitted, or who wish to present other aspects of the problems. Questions — or comments — should be sent to the editor of this column, Dr. J. A. Naismith, 1121 Hilltop St., Peterborough, Ontario, K9J 5S6.

The question for this issue comes in the form of a story, typical of many:

I Don't Know Which to Choose!

This is Bill Brown: A few weeks ago my life started anew! I couldn't begin to tell the sin, the tangles, the heartbreaks I experienced before. My home life was miserable: my wife and children and I fought constantly. Things weren't much better at work. My past was catching up on me. I knew it couldn't go on —but in my wildest dreams I could not have imagined what was going to happen to me.

Then one night it happened! I found myself, of all people, in a religious service. Don't ask me how it came about. In my misery, I had allowed myself to be persuaded to attend — at least, I reasoned, it could do no harm: I had no doubts that it would not do me any

good. Even if the nationally known evangelist could help others, his type of Bible-thumping approach was not for me! If God existed, He didn't care about me.

I'll never know quite how it happened, but, that night, in deep conviction and in tears (quite a new experience for me), I "went forward", confessed my sin and failure, and committed my life to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I came from that wonderful moment loving Him and anxious to live for Him.

Now I have a problem and I need your help. I realize that I need a spiritual home — a church where I can worship God and share the fellowship of other Christians. But how to choose the right one? I have visited several churches in the neighbourhood and my choice seems to be limited to two:

A few blocks from here there is a strong, thriving, active church, with a wonderful pastor who really preaches the Gospel and believes the Bible (something I didn't find in some of the other churches I tried). A good programme has been arranged for all the family. The congregation is growing. They make one feel really welcome, and I do enjoy going there.

Also close by there is a "Gospel Chapel" where the Bible is also believed and taught. There is no minister. Many of the speakers are untrained. Some are very good; others would be better not to speak! While this somewhat smaller congregation is not growing, the members appear devoted to Christ. They stress a weekly communion service.

I don't know which church to choose. Please help me.

Here is the problem — quite a common one! If Bill Brown had called you for advice, what would you have told him? Focus is anxious to have reader responses to this practical problem, and will print as many as possible. Let's hear from you!

God

God

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Peterborough, Ont., a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series of studies in Genesis. Copyright by Everyday Publications, used by permission.

Right at the outset of the book of Genesis we are introduced to its main character — God. His name appears 32 times in the first chapter, occurring in all but five of its 31 verses, and twice in six of these verses. Of all the 50 chapters of the book, there are only 5 in which His name is absent — 23, 34, 36, 37, 47.

The very first mention of “God” is significant. The name “God” is the plural Elohim, while the verb created is singular — a strong early suggestion of the Trinity acting in unity. A similar significance may be seen in verse 26, where “God” (plural) said: “Let us (plural) make (pl.) man in our (pl.) image” (singular) — indicating the counsels of the Triune God in creation.

Hebrew Names For God in Genesis

1. ELOHIM — occurs exclusively from Chapter 1:1 to 2:3 (35 times in 34 verses) and frequently through the remainder of the book (about 2500 times in the Bible). The name is the plural of ELOAH (root meaning — to worship, adore) and presents God as the one supreme object of worship and adoration.

2. JEHOVAH — usually rendered “the LORD” — much less frequently “GOD” in the KJV (letters all capitalized).

Means: “He that always was and is and ever was and ever is to be.” (Derived from three words — YEHI - He will be; HOVE - being; HAHYAH - He was). See Rev. 1:4. It indicates His eternal existence and constant faithfulness, and is the title particularly used to express His relationship to His people. This name occurs alone from chapter 4 on, but from chapter 2 verse 4 through chapter 3, it is joined with ELOHIM — The LORD God.

3. EL - found first in chapter 14:18, 19, 20, 22 — signifies Strong, Mighty, or First, and describes God as the Mighty One, the First great Cause of all.

4. ADONAHY - Sovereign Lord or Master — is first found in Genesis 15:2, 8, where it is combined with JEHOVAH “Lord GOD,” i.e. “ADONAHY JEHOVAH.” It occurs alone in 19:18 — “my Lord,” and 20:4 — “Lord.”

Titles of God Used in Genesis

God revealed Himself to His people early in human history by some very meaningful titles. Here are some:

THE MOST HIGH. EL ELYON. Gen. 14:18, 19, 20, 22. Indicates God as the Supreme Being — above all others. Compares the New Testament titles — “The Highest” — Luke 1:32, 35; “most High God” Acts 16:17.

THE ALMIGHTY GOD. EL SHADDAI. Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25. Note that EL is singular, while Shaddai is plural. The title emphasizes the Strength, or perhaps, the Sufficiency of God.

THE EVERLASTING GOD. EL OLAM. Gen. 21:33. As in the case of the first two titles, Abraham was the first person to whom the Lord revealed Himself by this title, reminding him of God’s unchangeableness. He is the God of the everlasting covenant, 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19, who

gives an everlasting possession to His people, 17:8; 48:4, and who created the everlasting hills, 49:26.

THE GOD OF HEAVEN AND THE GOD OF THE EARTH. Gen. 24:3. (See also v. 7.) The God who created the heaven and the earth, Gen. 1:1, is Sovereign in both of these spheres.

THE GOD OF BETHEL. EL BETHEL. Gen. 31:13. Bethel — the house of God — was the place where Jacob, setting out from home years before, had met with God and had experienced His presence and received promises of His protection, Gen. 28. He is ever after the God of Bethel, maintaining His presence and fulfilling His promises.

THE GOD OF ISRAEL. ELELOHE-ISRAEL. Gen. 33:20. The mighty God of Israel — remaining the same in spite of human failures.

In all these titles, the name El is used of God. The same name occurs as part of a number of names in Genesis; e.g. Bethel — the house of God; Peniel — the Face of God, 32:30. Eliezer — God, my Helper, 15:2; Ishmael — God will hear, 16:11; (note that He also sees — 16:13).

JEHOVAH JIREH. Gen. 22:14. The first of several combination titles of Jehovah in the Old Testament. This one means: Jehovah will see (to it) or provide — as He had just provided for Abraham on Mount Moriah.

Characteristics of God in Genesis

The God of Genesis is the God of the Bible — the true God. His characteristics, displayed here, are revealed throughout Holy Scripture. Here are some that are clearly suggested, or unmistakably revealed in this first book of the divine library, and can be traced through its pages: Unity (as opposed to many heathen deities);

Trinity — suggested, as we have seen, in the opening verse and chapter;

Infinite ability — for example, to create the world;

Sovereignty and authority over the heaven and the earth
He created:

Eternity — He is the Everlasting God;

Immutability — expressed in one of His favorite titles, Jehovah; Personality — Entering into a personal relationship with His creatures, seen in many of the verbs that are used of God's activities in this book;

Purity, etc.

Activities of God in Genesis

God presents Himself to us in Genesis as:

Creator

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. With sublime, majestic grandeur, the Word of God commences. "This single sentence separates the Scriptures from the rest of human productions."

The first two chapters of Genesis record the story of creation. Since there were obviously no human witnesses of these great events, this account must have been given by divine revelation — in terms sufficiently simple and clear for ordinary men of all ages to understand, and not in scientific terminology that would be beyond the grasp of even the most learned scientists of any generation including our own.

The record of creation can be divided into two parts:

A. 1:1-2:3 Creation is described in general terms, and the name of God in this section is Elohim.

B. 2:4-2:25 This section specifically relates to man and his environment, and the combined name, Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God, is used. This is very appropriate since Jehovah is the name that particularly emphasizes God's covenant relationship and faithfulness to man.

Considerable controversy has raged over the date and days of creation, in view of supposed scientific evidence that the earth is much more than a few thousand years old. There are several possible explanations, e.g.:

1. That there is a "gap" between the first two verses of Genesis 1. According to Isaiah 45:18, God did not create the earth in vain — *tohuw* — the same word is translated without form in Genesis 1:2. It is asserted that something must have happened after God created the earth — i.e. after Genesis 1:1, to make it without form. Those who hold this view believe this to have been associated with Satan's rebellion against God — see Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:14, 15. As a result, any time period may be postulated between verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1.

2. That the days of Genesis 1 need not be literal days of 24 hours. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, 2 Pet. 3:8; and weeks in the Bible are not always literal periods of seven days, but may be seven years (e.g. Dan. 9:24). Each of the days may be a long period of time — one of God's days rather than man's days.

3. That the days of Genesis 1 were not days of creation but days of revelation, that is, that God revealed to Moses on successive days the various phases of His great work of creation.

There is, however, a growing conviction among an increasing number of scientists that there is no need to accommodate the plain statement of Genesis 1 to the hypothetical “long ages of the geologic time scale” which are a matter of faith rather than evidence. “Many creationist scientists believe the evidence favours a recent creation of the universe” in contrast to the billions of years demanded by evolutionists.

Whatever the explanation, Genesis 1 is a beautiful and majestic account of God, the Creator, at work. Here is revealed His power. Note the recurrent phrases: And God said ... and there was; And God said ... and it was so ... and God saw that it was good. We can discern, too, His purpose — to make a habitation suited for man, the crowning work of His creation, and who, unlike the other creatures in the chapter, was made in God’s image and after His likeness. To accomplish this purpose, God had a definite plan, outlined, step by step, in Genesis 1. In verse 2, this habitation — earth — was without form, and void — empty and dark. The subsequent verses describe how God first provided light, v. 3, then fashioned and filled the earth, and finally created man to live on it.

Sovereign

The frequently repeated phrase in Genesis 1, And God said, is not only the command of the Creator but the fiat of the Sovereign, whose authority is absolute and to whom obedience is immediate. The same God is Sovereign over the affairs of all His creatures, and in particular, man. Genesis records some of these commands, given in the earliest days of human history, e.g. 1:28; 2:16, 17.

Judge

Man's defiance of God and disobedience to His commands led to divine judgments — e.g. in Genesis 3:14-19; 4:10-12; 6:5-7:24; 11:6-9; 19:12-19. Note Abraham's description of God in 18:25, The Judge of all the earth.

Redeemer

God's judgment is mingled with mercy. Even while pronouncing judgment, following Adam's sin, God provided salvation by a Redeemer and a sacrifice, Gen. 3:15-21. Likewise, while announcing judgment upon man by means of a flood, God made provision for Noah and his family by an Ark.

Repeatedly through the book, e.g. in the sacrifices offered, we have a preview of the coming Redeemer, the Lamb of God.

Friend

The great Creator and Sovereign of the universe is seen in Genesis as a personal God, revealing Himself to men on earth and desiring communion with his people. Enoch and Noah both walked with God, 5:22; 6:9. Abraham walked before Him 17:1, and was the friend of God. Jas. 2:23; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8.

Guide

The stories of the patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph in particular — teach us that He who directs stars in their courses guides men in their lives, if they are submissive to His will. As examples, see Gen. 12:1-4; 13:14-18; 24:7, 27, 48; 26:2-5; 28:15; 35:1-3; 45:5-8.

God's Relationship With Man in Genesis

The book of Genesis — as indeed, the whole Bible which it introduces — is primarily concerned with God and man in their mutual relationship: their fellowship prior to the entrance of sin, the disruption of that fellowship by sin, and the restoration of fellowship by the Redeemer and His sacrifice for sin.

God: The Source of All Encouragement (Part 2)

God: The Source of All Encouragement

Part 2

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, is a retired physician who presently devotes his full time to a Bible teaching ministry.

This is his second article in his series on the theme of “Encouragement.”

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?” (Ps. 42:5, 11; 43:5, NIV). Which of us has not, at one time or another, asked these questions? We can relate to the psalmist because we too have had depressing experiences and often need encouragement. In spite of his feeling of reproach by men (42:10; 43:2) and rejection by God (42:9; 43:2), he knows the solution to his problem and expresses it three times — immediately after he has asked these questions: “Put your hope in God” (42:5, 11; 43:5, NIV). Moreover, he is confident that his problem will be solved, his situation will change, and he will “yet praise Him” (42:5, 11; 43:5). However dark things are now, he is assured that God will send out His light and truth and bring him into His “holy hill” (43:3, 4). There, at “the altar of God,” he will find “exceeding joy” in God. God is the source of his encouragement. And He is for us! As we considered in our last study, He is “the God of patience and encouragement” (Rom. 15:5); indeed, He is “the Father

of mercies and the God of all encouragement” (2 Cor. 1:3).

It was a black day for David and his men when they arrived at Ziklag (1 Samuel 30:1-3) and found the city “burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters taken captives.” They “wept until they had no more power to weep.” David’s two wives were captured; and his men were on the point of stoning him. Not surprisingly, he was “greatly distressed,” “but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God” (v. 6) — he found the source of all encouragement! But how is God an encouragement to us in times of stress and distress? Let us consider five reasons:

A. The Names of God:

David’s experience of God’s encouragement led him to write many psalms, including Psalm 9, where he declares: “The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee: for Thou, Lord hast not forsaken them that seek Thee” (vv. 9, 10). “Times of trouble” — David certainly had his share of these! He was writing from his own experience when he said: “Thou, Lord, has not forsaken them that seek Thee.” After all, it was he who wrote: “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up” (Ps. 27:10). He had learned the secret: “They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.” To know God’s name is to know not so much what God is called, but what God is. Bible names frequently have great significance: divine names are always significant and there are hundreds of them in the Scriptures. They declare His nature and Person. What encouragement is to be found

in them! Let us ponder just three: one in the Old Testament, one in the New and one in both.

An Old Testament Name: JEHOVAH. This is the name David used in Ps. 9:9, 10 — translated “LORD”; it was his favourite name for his God. It is the most frequently occurring name of God in the Old Testament — about 7600 times: 6800 times translated “LORD” and 800 times “GOD” (KJV). Jehovah, or Yahweh, was the name of God in covenant relationship with His people. The very meaning of the name is an encouragement to His redeemed people: He Who always was and is and ever will be; the ever-existing One; “the Lord, the everlasting God” (Gen. 21:33). On four occasions the name is left untranslated in the King James Bible, and each of these occurrences provides encouragement:

Ex. 6:3: Here the name “Jehovah” is associated with another divine name; “God Almighty” — “El Shad-day” — the All-sufficient God.

Ps. 83:18: “Thou, Whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.” Our God is supreme over all. Elyon, another name of God, was first used in Genesis 14:18-20: Melchizedek was “priest of the most high God.”

Is. 12:2: “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the LORD Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.”

Is. 26:4: “Trust ye in the LORD forever: for in the LORD Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

What encouragement is given us by these statements about Jehovah: the All-sufficient God; the Supreme One; the One Who is the source of our strength, our song and

our salvation; and in whom is “everlasting strength.” Surely we can trust Him forever and not be afraid!

In addition, the name “Jehovah” occurs three times in the King James Bible in association with another Hebrew word to form three of 10 or so “Jehovah titles”; these, too, provide encouragement for discouraged saints:

1. JEHOVAH-JIREH: Gen. 22:14: associated with Abraham, and the “altar” (v. 9) on which he offered up Isaac (Heb. 11:17). He sees all our circumstances and provides for all our needs: as He saw Abraham and provided the “ram caught in a thicket.”

2. JEHOVAH-NISSI: Ex. 17:15: associated with Moses and the “altar” he built as a memorial after the victory over Amalek; a perpetual reminder that it is God Who provides victory over life’s foes, and that prayer is vital to secure this victory (v. 11). He is our Banner.

3. JEHOVAH-SHALOM: Judges 6:24: associated with Gideon and the “altar” he built to commemorate the peace God gives to allay the fears we have; as the Lord told Gideon: “Peace be unto thee; fear not.”

Similarly, encouragement can be derived from considering other Jehovah titles found in the Old Testament, but not transliterated in the King James Bible. For example: JEHOVAH-ROPHEKA — Ex. 15:26: the Healer. JEHOVAH-MeKADDISHKEM — the Sanctifier: Ex. 31:13; etc. JEHOVAH-ZeBA’OTH — 1 Sam. 1:3, etc.; Lord of hosts, Lord Almighty. JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU — our Righteousness: Jer. 23:6; 33:16. JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH — Ezek. 48:35: The Lord is there. JEHOVAH-ELYON — Ps. 7:17; 47:2; 97:9: Most High. JEHOVAH-RO’I — Ps. 23:1: My Shepherd.

A New Testament Name: FATHER: This is the precious name by which we know God in view of the relationship with Him into which we have been brought as “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:36). The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is now, in virtue of His death and resurrection, our God and Father. As Jesus said to Mary outside the empty sepulchre: “I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God” (John 20:17). “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ... Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (1 John 3:1, 2). We have “received the Spirit of adoption (sonship), whereby we cry ‘Abba, Father’” (Rom. 8:15)—a name that slaves could not use—only sons.

What blessings and privileges are associated with this name! All that an earthly father should be and do for his children — and more — our heavenly Father does for His children, brought into His family by sovereign grace. What encouragement this should give us in all of life’s circumstances and trials: to know that God, Who controls all circumstances, is our Father!

Anticipating this relationship, the Lord Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, described some of the characteristics of their heavenly Father to His disciples, and indicated the great privileges and corresponding responsibilities that come from this relationship. In Matthew 5, 6 and 7, where the first New Testament references to God as our Father occur, the Lord emphasized that the lives of children in God’s family should be:

1. Without impurity (Matt. 5:21-48), because “your Father Who is in heaven is perfect” (v. 48).
2. Without hypocrisy (Matt. 6:1-18), because “your Father sees in secret” (vv. 6, 18).
3. Without anxiety (Matt. 6:19-34), because “your Father knows that ye have need of all these things,” (v. 32) and “your Father feeds” — provides for even the birds (v. 26).
4. Without hesitancy in asking our Father for our needs (Matt. 7:1-12), because “your Father gives good things to them that ask Him” (v. 11).

An Old and New Testament Name: LORD. The Hebrew name “Adon,” or “Adonay” in the Old Testament, and the Greek name “Kurios,” used of God and Christ in the New Testament, imply His authority, power, and control of all things, including all the circumstances of life and the order of the universe. He is the supreme Sovereign. Nothing happens that is beyond His control. What an encouragement it is to know that “He is Lord of all” (Acts 10:36)! We can safely entrust everything to Him and submit to His will.

God: The Source of All Encouragement (Part 3)

God: The Source of All Encouragement

Part 3

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, is a retired physician who devotes his full time to a Bible teaching ministry, which in 1986 extended all the way to India. This is his third study on the theme of encouragement.

B. The Nature of God:

Not only may we be encouraged by the names of God, expressing Who He is, but we may also take comfort in the nature of God — what He is. This is a vast subject: many books have been written on “theology”: it is beyond human comprehension. “No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matt. 11:27). His glories are infinite and thus inexhaustible. We would never try to drink all the water in a huge reservoir, but would be content with sufficient to satisfy our thirst. So, like the psalmist whom we have been considering, our souls thirst for God, the living God” (Psa. 42:2) — but we shall never exhaust Him; however, He satisfies our deepest longing and encourages us in our greatest trial. Let us think of only three aspects of God’s nature that encourage us:

1. God’s Holiness: We might think, in view of our unholiness, that the holiness of God would be a

discouragement to us. The psalmist, however, exhorts us to “give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness” (30:4; 97:12). God’s holiness should fill us with awe and reverence, but also with gratitude. Why? Holiness sets God apart from all others. The first occurrence of “holiness” in the Bible is in Exodus 15:11: “Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders?” Thank God: He is “God and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee” (Hos. 11:9). This should encourage us, who trust in Him. Holiness embraces not only His purity and righteousness, but all His attributes. As the sun’s rays blend into one all the colours of light, so all the attributes of God blend into the white light of His holiness.

2. God’s Love: Every dimension of God’s love and every manifestation of it should bring us encouragement. “The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell.” It is an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3). He loves us not because of what we are and do — but in spite of all. His love is immutable. C. H. Spurgeon, passing a weather-cock, with the text: “God is Love,” remarked to his companion how inappropriate this text was on such a changeable thing. His companion replied: “God is love whichever way the wind blows.”

3. God’s Faithfulness: Faithfulness is that characteristic of God that makes Him totally reliable and trustworthy. Whatever the circumstances of our lives, we can trust Him implicitly to remain the same and true to His Word. It is seen in the continuation of His providence daily: “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22, 23). He is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23). God’s

faithfulness guarantees that His purposes will be accomplished: “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you Who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

C. The Works of God:

God demonstrates what He is by what He does. What He does — and has done — should be a great encouragement to us who commit our lives to Him. It was the remembrance of God’s work and wonders that encouraged Asaph in the time of his great depression, expressed, as we previously considered, in Psalm 77. After his questions about God’s promises, mercy, and grace in verses 7-9, he continues on a brighter note for the rest of the psalm: here is the reason: “I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember Thy wonders of old ... Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: Thou hast declared Thy strength among the people” (vv. 11-14).

The hymn-writer knew the value of considering God’s works when we are distressed and tried: “When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.” God’s works are seen in many ways:

1. Creation demonstrates God’s power, wisdom and glory. Can we doubt His ability “to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20) when we see and consider His great power in creating

the universe? Can we doubt the wisdom of His ways — which we often do not comprehend — when we contemplate the wisdom of creation?

2. Providence displays God's continuing concern for His creatures and His faithfulness in providing for their needs in spite of their failures. Jeremiah wrote: "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning" (Lam. 3:22, 23). David concurred: "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness" (Ps. 65:11). Has there ever been a day when the sun has not risen (although we may not have seen it!) or a year when summer has not followed winter (although summer may have been fleeting!)? Has God failed in any of His works of providence? Every morning we see the light of a new day should encourage us: God is still on the throne! The recurrence of seasons in their order each year should encourage us: God is still in control!

"Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love."

3. History: Earlier in our study, we considered the psalmist's encouraging statement: "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." Why? He gives the answer: "For Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee." God's actions in the past — in the lives of others and in our own experiences — give us confidence to trust Him for the future. The Bible has recorded, for our encouragement as well as our admonition, God's dealings with His people, Israel, and with individuals such as Abraham, Moses, David, and Daniel. In spite of

frequent sad failures, God remained faithful. He delivered them from all kinds of circumstances: from enemies, waters, rivers, fires, lions. And shall He now fail us? Surely not! The God who has been “our help in ages past” will just as certainly be “our hope for years to come”!

4. Redemption: The God who encourages us is One whose nature was fully revealed at Calvary. There we behold His holiness and love, His wisdom and power, His mercy and truth. Can we doubt His loving concern for us in our need when we see such a demonstration of His compassion and interest in our eternal need? “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

D. The Purposes of God:

Romans 8:28 is one of the best known, best loved, and most encouraging texts in the Bible: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” The last word in this verse — purpose — is a key to the text. God has a purpose, a plan, for all whom He calls to Himself, who love Him. Since it is God’s purpose, it must be good: for our eternal good, as well as for His eternal glory. The verse assures us that, in all things — trials, problems, sicknesses, bereavements — God is working for our good. George Muller once wrote: “In 1,000 trials, it is not 500 that work for the believer’s good, but 999 — and one beside!” The very disappointments we experience are His appointments! “No chance has brought this ill to me: ‘Tis God’s sweet will, so let it be.” “God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to

perform” — but, by these ways that seem mysterious to us, He not only performs His wonders, but accomplishes His purposes for our good. What is God’s ultimate purpose for those whom He has called? The next two verses — 29 and 30 — explain that purpose, as indicated by the “for” at the beginning of v. 29, linking it with “purpose” at the end of v. 28. God’s purpose, for which we were marked out beforehand in eternity past, is that we should be “conformed to the image of His Son” (29), “glorified” (30). Can anything possibly thwart or frustrate His purpose? God forbid. God would not be God if He were unable, for any reason, to bring His purpose to fruition. “He Who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). “Tribulation, distress, persecution,” etc., can never “separate us from the love of Christ” (Rom. 8:35). Indeed, these are among the “all things” that God uses to work out His purpose for our good that we might be more conformed to the image of His Son. One day, His purpose will be completed, and “we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Even these lowly bodies of ours will be “fashioned” — conformed (same word as in Rom. 8:29) —like His body of glory (Phil. 3:21). Meanwhile, we should be encouraged that, in all the discouraging circumstances of life, God is working for our good and accomplishing His glorious purpose for eternity.

E. The Promises of God:

God is the source of all encouragement: His names, His nature, His works, His purposes and His promises. These promises — contained within His word, both Old and New Testaments — are very numerous. But “no

matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘yes’ in Christ. And so through Him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God” (2 Cor. 1:20, NIV). God’s promises are centered in Christ Who affirms them all to us, so we can respond: “Amen,” recognizing their truth. We can reiterate the words of Solomon, spoken at the dedication of the temple: “There hath not failed one word of all His good promise.” Men’s promises are “like piecrusts —made to be broken.” God’s promises are faithful and sure: “He is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23). We should read them in His word, trust them day by day and be encouraged as we travel on to glory.

Guidance

Guidance

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies In Christian Living for Young Believers

#12 The will of God for my life. Nothing more. Nothing less. Nothing else." These words, penned in the writer's autograph book nearly 20 years ago by a missionary to the former Belgian Congo, have left an indelible impression on his memory. To know and to do the will of God should be the ambition of every Christian. Anything less is no better than second best. "What is the end of life?" asked Henry Drummond of Stirling, Scotland, and he answered, "The end of life is not to do good, although many of us think so. It is thought so. The end of life is to do the will of God." And this, of course, embraces all other objects in life. If our lives are in the current of His will, we can be sure they will be channels of blessing to others, and will bring glory to God. Nor need we doubt the blessing that will result in our own lives nor the rest and peace that we shall experience from the very consciousness of doing His will.

Our Great Exemplar, the Lord Jesus Christ, has left us this supreme example of being always in the will of God. In the only record we have of His early years, He is presented to us as One who "must be about (His) Father's business" (Luke 2.49). On the evening of His death, about to complete the great purpose of the Father, He prayed, "Not My will but Thine be done" (Luke 22.42). And between these two events, His life was one of continual obedience to the Father's will;

this was His meat (John 4:34); this was His purpose (John 6:38). Let us “follow His steps.”

But how are we to know the will of God? How can we be certain of His guidance in life? How can we rest in the blessed assurance that He is leading and we are following? Oft times we are perplexed and uncertain, longing for the voice behind us that says, “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isa. 30:21). At the many crossroads of life, how difficult it is frequently to choose the right direction — the path of His choosing!

Yet it is the Lord’s gracious desire that we should know His will, and among His most precious promises are those assuring us of His guidance. “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye” (Ps. 32:8). “The Lord shall guide thee continually” (Isa. 58:11). Nor does He leave us in doubt as to the methods He uses in directing our paths and the conditions we must fulfil to experience His leading.

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:6). The first essential, then, is an acknowledgment of God in every department and sphere of our lives and a willingness to submit to His will in every detail. When we place His interests first, and really seek His will and not our own, His glory and not our selfish ambitions, we shall find it easy to discern His leading. But we must be ready to act on His direction and to obey His commands at all times. “If any man will —is willing to—do His will, he shall know ...” (John 7:17). “The Lord shall guide thee continually,” — but we must be willing to be guided continually — not only in the major decisions of life but in the minutest details. He

who seeks to do God's will every day will readily know that will on special days.

Secondly, the Christian's sure source of guidance is the Word of God — described by the Psalmist as "a lamp" to his feet, and "a light" to his path (119:105). The Lord never guides contrary to His Word. Any course of action which will bring us into circumstances at variance with the principles laid down in His Book is not of His leading. It is our responsibility to hearken to His voice in His Word, to obey it and to place implicit trust in Him to fulfil His promises in it. To disobey the Scriptures is to run counter to His revealed will, to refuse His clear guidance. While it is true that a verse of Scripture — sometimes out of its context — has frequently been a means of direction to His people, yet it is not usually by isolated texts, selected at random, that God leads, but by the general teaching of His Word. Oft times the passage on which we have been meditating will contain specific counsel, and, supplemented by portions that have been, from days previously, impressed upon our minds and lives, will be God's means of guidance for the day. He who seeks God's leading must therefore become acquainted with his Father's Wishes, revealed in His Word, and be daily meditating upon the Scriptures.

Thirdly, the Spirit of God is our Guide (John 16:13; Rom. 8:14). As our constant Companion in life, He is not only our Comforter, but our Counsellor directing us in the Scriptures and leading our steps in obedience thereto. It must be clear, therefore, that the Spirit-filled Christian who lives his life under the continual control of the Holy Spirit will be walking daily in the path of God's will for him. The apostle Paul experienced this (Acts 13:2, 16, 7, etc.) and so could exhort, "Be not unwise, but

understanding what the will of the Lord is.” How? we may ask, and he continues “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:17, 18).

A fourth principle of guidance is to follow the Son of God, who declared: “I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8.12). Travellers in a dark world need not only the lamp of God’s written Word but the light of God’s Living Word to illumine the path. As His sheep we are very apt to go astray unless we hearken to His voice as He calls us and follow Him. As we get to know His voice, we shall readily distinguish it from the voice of strangers and from all other voices that may call us — from without or within; and shall flee from them (John 10:3-5). We can be sure He will lead us in right paths—“paths of righteousness for His Name’s sake.” Let us be sure that He is leading — and not a stranger. There are many circumstances and situations where we might go — but we would not be following Christ, for we would not find Him there! There is always safety in following closely — but how easy it is to follow, but afar off, like Peter — and how disastrous the consequences can be! So let us hearken to His last recorded words in John’s Gospel — to Peter — “Follow thou Me” (John 21:22).

Waiting upon God is a fifth means the believer has of ascertaining the mind of the Lord. To know his father’s desire, a child has but to ask him. Our Father is waiting for His children to ask Him, to wait upon Him in prayerful committal of their steps to Him. No matter is too trivial for Him though it may appear so to us. “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6).

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). Implicit in the term “waiting upon God” is the thought that God does not always show us immediately the right path, and we do well to bide His time. It is folly to rush on without knowing His will — even though an urgent decision appears to us to be necessary. God will not keep us waiting too long —but we can go before Him, in our time and not His, and live to regret it. Moreover, God does not show us the whole path ahead, much as we should like to know. He guides us at each step, and in the matter of guidance, it is not necessary for us to know two steps ahead — so long as every step is in His control.

The children of God can be a further help to another child who seeks to learn his Father’s will. The experience of another can be of great value to one less mature, and we ought all to help one another. The counsel of others is, however, no substitute for the wisdom from above, which God gives liberally to those who ask Him, nor for the direct leading of the Spirit throughout the Word. The apostle Paul received advice from well-meaning believers of experience and ability (Acts 21:4-14). Their predictions were accurate. But the Apostle — rightly, we judge —did not accept their counsel, though he knew the correctness of their forecast (20:22-24), and in the end they submitted to the will of God. By all means let us seek the advice of mature believers, remembering, however, that God has different ways with each child in His family and that He gives to us individually the guidance suited to His purpose for our lives.

Finally, we may discern in the Providence of God, by which He orders and overrules the circumstances of our

lives, His purpose for us at any particular time. The opening of doors before us is oft times a confirmation of the rightness of the path we are treading, and, conversely, a series of closed doors — which do not open to the knock of faith — should lead us to reconsider prayerfully the decision we have taken. Circumstances, however, are a very fallible guide, and great care is required in interpreting them. Sometimes God's will takes us through storms and difficulties — it was certainly thus with Paul as the record of the Acts and his own account in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 plainly reveal. On the other hand, when all is plain sailing and the sea is calm, we are not necessarily in the current of God's will. Frequently, however, the Lord graciously confirms His purposes for us by ordering our circumstances in such a way that we cannot but rejoice in the evidence of His leading. Every missionary record is filled with such incidents, and all of us can look back with gratitude to occasions in our own lives when the alignment of circumstances confirmed an inward conviction wrought by the Spirit of God in response to prayer and meditation upon God's Word.

Gideon's experiences with the fleece — Judges 6:36-40 — have encouraged many to ask the Lord for similar tokens of His will. As, in His grace, He responded to Gideon, so He has done in the experience of many today. In general, however, His will can be learned by the means outlined here, and there will seldom be need to seek further tokens. If we use such a method, we should do so for confirmation of guidance received through following and waiting upon the Lord and meditating upon His Word, and not merely as an easy shortcut to

knowing God's will and to save us having to wait for His time.

Is God Dead?

Is God Dead?

Dr. James Naismith

‘Many centuries ago, at the dawn of human history, a question was asked — the first to be recorded in Holy Writ — the first in the long story of man. That primeval question — “Hath God said?” — has kept recurring through the intervening ages right to modern times, to be joined at intervals by others. The most recent, and most blasphemous in the series, asked by the creature about the Creator — “Is God dead?” —has startled and stunned Christians and non-Christians alike. We may be sure that it has the same satanic origin as did that first question instilled in the minds of our first parents in Eden’s garden. Let us examine this so-called “New Radical Theology,” concocted by the puny, infinitesimal creature who announces the death of the Infinite, Almighty Creator. Such blasphemy scarcely merits our consideration, but we are confronted with it and have to answer the questions of our fellows who are “without hope and without God in the world.” Let us pray that our study may establish our faith in “the living God” and challenge our lives that we may more effectively make Him known.

Let us consider:

1. The Character of the New Radical Theology.

Who has enunciated this heresy? Whence has it emanated? Avowed atheists? Professed agnostics? Blatant infidels? So we might have anticipated. But no!

Strange as it may seem, this “theology” has come out of “theological colleges,” devised by “divinity” professors, who call themselves “Christian atheists” (Paradox of paradoxes!). The names of the leaders and originators — Thomas J. Altizer, Professor of Bible and Religion at Emory University; Professor Wm. Hamilton, member of the faculty of Colgate - Rochester Divinity School; and Paul Van Buren of Temple University — are familiar to readers of popular periodicals which have, over the past year or so, aired their views.

What is the nature of this new philosophy? Here we face a difficulty — for the proponents of the “God is dead theology” (few though they are) are divided among themselves and contradict one another. With varying degrees of emphasis, they seem to assert, however, that the death of God is an event that has actually taken place. It is not simply that the God of our thinking has died and that we have to re-orientate our ideas of God. No! The death of God is a literal fact. Altizer, most emphatically, states this: “We shall understand the death of God as an historical event: God has died in our time, in our history, in our existence.... If God has truly died in our history, then he must be negated by the word of faith. It is the Christian who must murder God, or, rather, it is the Christian who must bury the decomposing God who continues to haunt our memory of things past.” Hamilton is only slightly less dogmatic: “What does it mean to say that God is dead? ... It is really that we do not know, do not adore, do not possess, do not believe in God ... God is dead. We are not talking about the absence of the experience of God, but about the experience of the absence of God.... Death of God is a public event in our history.” Nor is he perturbed by the

discovery or sorrowful because of the bereavement: “However acute the experience of the death of God may be for us, however much silence and loneliness are entailed during our time of waiting for the absent God, we are not particularly cast down or perplexed by this.” (All quotations from “Radical Theology and the Death of God,” by Altizer and Hamilton, 1966).

Such statements from the pens of these “theologians” expose their blatant blasphemies. Yet, many of them profess to believe in Christ and present Him as the object of faith. Their philosophy has been summed up thus: “God is dead! Long live Jesus!” and “There is no God, and Jesus is His Son.” To what depths of absurdity man can descend!

Let us examine now:

2. The Causes of the New Radical Theology.

Why has this theory been propounded? What has motivated such blasphemies? Several reasons could be suggested:

a. As already indicated, the satanic origin of this modern lie about God is evident — it comes from the one whom our Lord described as “a liar, and the father of it,” who “abode not in the truth” (John 8:44). At the outset of human history, he questioned the revelation of the true God (Gen. 3:1); now, near its close, he denies the reality of the living God. Through the centuries, he has been the slanderer of God’s people to God (Job 1:11; 2:5) and of God to His people.

b. In the “new theology,” we can discern the influence of the secular age in which we live — with its humanistic philosophies. Man’s striking achievements, in

technological and other spheres, have made him so self-sufficient and self-reliant that he has dispensed with God. Not only has he no time for God — he has no need for Him either. The “death of God theology” is the contemporary theology for the nineteen sixties, the religion of the “secular city,” in which the sacred is no longer held dear, and obsession with this world has shut out the other world. How easily does the world around us mould our thoughts and our lives! How necessary, therefore, the repeated warnings of Scripture: “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2); “Love not the world” (1 John 2:15)!

c. The “death of God theology” — or, to use a term coined for it, “Theothanatology” — has arisen out of the background of recent and contemporary theology — modernism, neoorthodoxy, existentialism. (All its proponents were profoundly influenced by neo-orthodoxy). In these schools, the authority and reliability of the Bible have been denied — and from there it is but a small step to discrediting the living God of Biblical revelation. Theologians have, for years, been endeavouring to destroy the great doctrines of the faith — the inspiration of Scriptures, Deity of Christ, His virgin birth, miraculous life, atoning death and physical resurrection. Is it so surprising, after all, that they add to all this the doctrine of God Himself?

d. Human egotism is strikingly evident in the announcements by which the “Theothanatologists” have startled an open-eared world. Their slogan — “God is Dead” — flames from journals and periodicals. Their names have suddenly risen from oblivion to world “renown.” By frequent changes of theological posture,

they contrive to keep themselves in the headlines. As a publicity stunt, it has been an unqualified success!

e. Let us search our lives and see if we ourselves, believers in the living God, have not contributed, in some measure, to this blasphemous heresy. What evidence do our lives present of the reality of a God who is alive? Alas, have not many of us become a part of the secular age? Has not the materialism of our fellows made inroads into our lives too? If all God's people of this generation had been truly manifesting the living God in their lives, could a "God is dead" philosophy have gained a hearing in our world?

We must now discuss

3. The Conflict of the New Radical Theology.

What is our attitude to this manmade "theology"? How do we answer the question it poses? Is God really dead? To ask the question is to answer it. The very idea is in conflict with:

a. Our traditional upbringing, beliefs and thinking. Our minds are appalled by the mere suggestion. Most of us have been brought up to believe in an eternal God. We do not readily welcome anything that so drastically challenges our traditions. It is sometimes necessary, however, to discard traditions. Let us be sure that our answers to the questions are based on a more solid foundation than our cherished traditions. But the new theology runs counter to:

b. The Word of God — the Holy Scriptures that declare that our God is "the eternal God" whose "everlasting arms" are underneath us (Deut. 33:27), and who is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 90:2). The New

Testament seems to have anticipated the rise of this heresy, and describes the “only wise God” as not only “eternal” but “immortal” (1 Tim. 1:17), and reiterates that He “only hath immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16). Fifteen times in the Old Testament, and 16 times in the New, He is referred to as the “living God.”

Moreover, the “death of God theology” is in conflict with:

c. The evidence in the world around us, which bears ample witness to a living Sovereign who guides and controls the universe, maintaining perfect harmony in the realm over which He reigns; and d. The experience of believers all over the world — including ourselves. He is still the “great God of wonders,” performing His miracles in the lives of men who trust in Him. To say that He is dead is to ignore the countless times and ways in which He still responds to the prayers of His people and delivers those who call upon Him.

Finally we must give heed to:

4. The Challenge of the New Radical Theology.

God is able to work His sovereign purposes despite the errors and blasphemies to clarify truth and to glorify Himself. We may be sure that this is no exception. The heresy that God has died is a challenge to everyone who has “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9); to all who “trust in the living God” (1 Tim. 4:10); to every saint living in a secular world where God is deemed irrelevant and man all-important. We are challenged, first, to learn more about the living God — to have right thoughts about Him; to search the Scriptures to discover the true God as opposed to the false gods of popular opinion; and to

commune with Him daily. Secondly, we should live as if He were alive; forsaking the idols of our business and pleasure, homes and cars, education and sport — and, having forsaken all, trusting Him wholly and serving Him only. Finally, we are challenged to communicate the living God to others who may be unconvinced as they have looked at our lives in the past — to make it clear to them that He lives in our lives, and to explain that they too can have a real experience of the living God through Christ who is THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE.

Isaac

Isaac

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series on Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

In our biographical studies in Genesis thus far, we have considered men of outstanding faith and faithfulness, who attained great heights of spiritual success and had real mountain-top experiences with God. We may feel discouraged as we ponder their lives, realizing that the standard they have set is beyond us, and feeling that we can never soar in the realms of their communion with God, we succumb to their failures more often than we succeed in emulating their faith.

When we come to consider Isaac and Jacob, we seem to be on a different spiritual plane. Their lives appear to be on a level closer to our own. Isaac lived an ordinary type of life with no really outstanding incident. Jacob's failures seem to stand out in the record of his life — he is portrayed to us as a schemer, yet an object of God's blessing and grace. Perhaps, on this account, we can empathize more with them, and we can take encouragement from the fact that both receive honourable mention in God's Hall of Fame, Heb. 11:20, 21.

The story of Isaac covers chapters 21 to 35 in Genesis — almost as long as the record of Abraham; yet in fact, much less is said of him. Of all these 15 chapters, only one is really devoted to Isaac, the others being more concerned with his father, Abraham and his son, Jacob, whose lives impinge on Isaac's. He is seen in Genesis as the ordinary son of a great father, and the ordinary father of a great son. We may, however, learn valuable lessons from each of the phases of his life, and indeed, may see in the record of Isaac some parallels with our own spiritual experience. We shall note briefly 10 successive experiences of Isaac, with their instruction for us:

1. Born

Gen. 21:1-5.

Although quite an ordinary person, Isaac had quite an extraordinary birth, requiring a divine miracle. His father, Abraham, was 100 years old, and his mother Sarah, 90 years old when he was born (see Gen. 21:1-5; 17:17). From a natural standpoint, considering potential for offspring, Abraham's body was dead, and Sarah's womb was dead, Gen. 18:11; Rom. 4:19. The birth of Isaac then was supernatural — life from the dead. So is the miracle of the new birth. We, though quite ordinary persons, had quite extraordinary births. Life was imparted to us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. 2:1.

The name "Isaac" means "laughter," or "one laughs," and was given in view of Abraham's laughter of joyful gratitude, Gen. 17:17, and Sarah's laughter of sceptical cynicism, Gen. 18:12. Yet, significantly, it is this particular incident that the writer to the Hebrews

selects as evidence of Sarah's faith, Heb. 11:11.

Evidently, while momentarily she doubted and laughed at God's revelation, she accepted it by faith, and so was given supernatural strength to conceive ... when she was past age, Heb. 11:11. She trusted God and judged Him faithful who had promised.

2. Boy

Gen. 21:8-11.

The conflict between Ishmael, born after the flesh, and Isaac, the child of promise, born after the Spirit —is used by Paul in Galatians 4:28-31 as an illustration of the conflict between Judaizers of his day and Christians. It is also a picture of constant warfare between the two natures in the believer, Gal. 5:16-25. We are not long born into God's family till we realize that there is an enemy within us, and a continual battle between the old nature and the new, the flesh. and the Spirit.

3. Burnt-Offering

Gen. 22:1-4.

Isaac's submission to his father's word and to God's will prefigures the believer's devotion to God's Word and will. Like Isaac, we should be willing to present our bodies — in our case, a living sacrifice, Rom. 12:1. "Is your all on the altar?"

4. Bridegroom

Gen. 24.

Among the varied lessons for the reader of this wonderful chapter is the example of Isaac's acquiescence in his father's choice of a bride for him —

not taken from the nations round about (the world), but from Isaac's father's people, vv. 3, 4. This surely illustrates the teaching, oft-repeated through the Scriptures, that God would have His children take their partners — particularly in marriage, but also in business, etc. — from among His own people. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, 2 Cor. 6:14. Failure to heed this clear and definite Scriptural command has brought untold suffering and sorrow to God's people.

5. Barren

Gen. 25:21.

For 20 years, Isaac and Rebekah lived together without a family (compare Gen. 25:20, 26). In his disappointment, Isaac did not resort to the method of Abraham, his father, Gen. 16:1-4. Perhaps Isaac had learned the lesson from the sad result of that action in his own life. Instead, he entreated the Lord for his wife — an obvious example to us in our disappointments and frustrations.

6. Biased

Gen. 25:28.

The evidence of favouritism on the part of Isaac and Rebekah for Esau and Jacob, respectively, is a warning to us, leading, as it did, to conflict in the home; and resulting, on Isaac's part, from what Esau could bring to him for his personal gratification. We should beware of showing partiality in our home — or, indeed, our church — especially if our attitude is determined by personal gain.

In spite of a possible mistake and failure to trust God in going down to Gerar, v. 1, Isaac was given wonderful blessings by God; divine guidance, v. 2; presence, v. 3; promises, vv. 3, 4. It was not because of his own life and character that Isaac received all these blessings. They came to him because of the faithfulness of his father, Abraham, v. 5. So the blessings which God has provided for us are the result of the faithfulness of Another. It is interesting and encouraging to us to note that, in spite of Isaac's subsequent backsliding and failure, God still fulfilled His promise of blessing to him. (v. 12, And the Lord blessed him.)

8. Backsliding

Gen. 26:6-11.

Isaac's failure at this time was strikingly similar to Abraham's on two occasions in similar circumstances (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-13) — like father, like son. His actions resulted from lack of faith in God to protect him and a selfish desire for his own preservation at the expense of Rebekah's purity. This brought dishonour upon God's name and a rebuke from the world.

9. Busy

Gen. 26:12-25.

Two characteristics of Abraham's life, symbolic of his faith — a tent and an altar (Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:1, 4; etc.) — also characterized Isaac, Gen. 26:25. A further characteristic was a "well" — Gen. 24:62; 25:11; 26:15-22, 25). Isaac was kept busy digging wells to obtain supplies of water, while his enemies persisted in preventing him from obtaining the water by filling up the wells. In Genesis 26:19, it is significant that

“springing water” is, literally, “living water.” Our enemy endeavours to keep us from finding the Living Water within God’s Word, and we require to be constantly diligent and busy digging — reading, meditating, studying, learning. Isaac’s meek, gentle spirit is again seen here in his attitude to the Philistines — not picking a quarrel with them, or standing up for his rights, but moving on to find water elsewhere — surely an example for us (see 2 Tim. 2:24, 25).

10. Blessing

Gen. 27.

One of Isaac’s last recorded acts, blessing his children, is selected by the Spirit as evidence of his faith (Heb. 11:20). It is surely fitting that one who was blessed as Isaac was—richly and undeservedly—should bless others. We too have been blessed, infinitely beyond our merits, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, Eph. 1:3, as well as with countless temporal and material blessings. Should not our lives be “channels of blessing” to others?

Jacob (Part 1)

Jacob (Part 1)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series on Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission The life of Jacob spans a more extensive section of Genesis than any other human character in the book. His birth is recorded in chapter 25, his death not till chapter 49. Thus half of the book records events that happened in his lifetime. Perhaps the most obvious feature of his life is that it was characterized by spiritual vicissitudes: his was a chequered career, reaching some high mountain peaks of communion with God, but frequently dipping to low valleys of selfish ambition and deception. The valleys of failure seem to be more in evidence than the mountain-peaks of faith. It may seem surprising, therefore, to read his name among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 (v. 21), although the Holy Spirit goes to the end of his life to record an act of faith. Still more surprising are the comments on Jacob elsewhere in the Scriptures, e.g. in the Psalms:

47:4 — The excellency of Jacob whom He loved.

135:4 — The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself.

147:19 — He showeth His word unto Jacob.

In spite of his failings, he was evidently held in high esteem by his descendants, as indicated by the woman's words to the Lord at Jacob's well at Sychar: Art Thou

greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us the well? John 4:12. What was it that made this man who was naturally so unattractive, a selfish deceiver (his name, Jacob, means “supplanter” — see Gen. 27:36), such a great man, loved by God and honoured by men? The answer can be found in another expression, “the God of Jacob,” found 12 times in the Psalms (20:1; 46:7, etc.) and several times elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments. All that was commendable in Jacob was not in Jacob naturally but was owed to the God of Jacob. The heights that Jacob reached were the result of his experiences with God and of God’s presence and blessing.

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, Gal. 6:7. This is one of the main lessons to be learned from the record of Jacob’s life. He who, by trickery and deceit, won the birthright from his brother, Gen. 25:29-34, and the blessing from his father, Gen. 27, and who deceived his uncle Laban, Gen. 30:37-43), experienced the bitterness of being deceived by his uncle, Gen. 29:23, and later by his own sons, Gen. 37:31-35.

Another Scriptural principle that is clearly illustrated in Jacob’s chequered career is: Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, Rom. 5:20. Jacob himself confessed his own unworthiness of God’s gracious blessings, and acknowledged on several occasions the debt he owed to his God, the God of his fathers (see Gen. 31:42; 32:10; 33:5, 11; 35:3; 48:3, 4, 11). Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas has well written: “There is no character in Holy Scripture which more clearly manifests the glory of divine grace in dealing with the most forbidding of materials.” As we study God’s training of His wayward

servant, we shall no doubt see reflections of our own spiritual histories and rejoice afresh in the triumphs of God's grace in our personal experiences.

In his excellent survey of the Bible, "The Unfolding Drama of Redemption," Dr. W. Graham Scroggie has divided Jacob's life into four periods, "associated with four places, the name of each being eminently suited to the phase of Jacob's life of that period":

1. The Supplanter In Beersheba,

Gen. 25:26 - 28:9. 77 years.

The principal parts of this phase are the stories of

1. The Birthright, 25:29-34, and

2. The Blessing, chapter 27.

"The key to both is in 25:23, The elder shall serve the younger. This was God's purpose, but to be fulfilled in His way and time. Jacob brought upon himself divine discipline, resulting in 20 years of labour away from home. At the end of this period, he left his home and family, including his mother to whom he was so closely attached and whom he never saw again. The way of the transgressor is hard, Prov. 13:15.

2. The Servant in Padan-aram,

Gen. 28:10-31:16. 20 years.

At 77 years of age, he left Hebron for Haran, 450 miles N.E., to find a wife from his father's people, like his father before him (Gen. 24). On the journey he had a very special experience (akin to conversion), when he met with God at Luz, renamed Bethel, 28:10-22. This seems to have been his first experience with God, and is one of the mountain-peaks of his life. Having arrived at

Padan-aram, he worked for Laban for 20 years, 31:41, deceiving and being deceived, reaping what he had sown. Here he married Leah, then Rachel, the daughters of Laban (working 14 years for both), with their handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah, and became the father of 11 sons and some daughters. The experiences at Padan-aram were part of God's training in His school.

3. The Saint in Hebron,

Gen. 31:17-45:28. 33 years.

Dr. Graham Scroggie modifies this title by pointing out that "in much of the story of these chapters Jacob is anything but a saint" and that less than two-thirds of the 33 years from his leaving Haran till his going down to Egypt was actually spent in Hebron. Yet "here was a saint in the making" and "his goal was Hebron, though he took long to get there." At the crossing of the river Jabbok (Gen. 32) — at a place renamed, by Jacob, Peniel (the face of God), Jacob had his second major experience with God, wrestled with Him and was left lame, but received a blessing — and a change of name to Israel (prince of God). If Bethel is suggestive of conversion, Peniel's experience speaks of consecration.

Subsequently, he met with Esau, 33:1-15, in fear rather than faith; then moved on to Succoth, 33:17. From there he went to Shalem, in Canaan, 33:18-20, and, at God's command, 35:1, back to Bethel, 35:1-15, where he built an altar, and where God again appeared to him as He had done when he fled from Esau. Finally, he moved on to Hebron, 35:16-27, losing Rachel and gaining Benjamin on the way. He spent 22 mostly sad years at Hebron, where he mourned his father's death, 35:29, and the loss of his favourite son, Joseph, 37:33-35.

4. The Seer in Egypt,

Gen. 46 - 49. 17 years.

The final scenes in Jacob's life were enacted in Egypt, whither he went by the arrangement of his son, Joseph, who had become "Prime Minister" of Egypt. Here we see him come to maturity and rise to his highest heights — in his blessing of Joseph's sons (the incident selected by the Holy Spirit in Heb. 11:21 as evidence of his faith), Gen. 48; and in his remarkable prophetic discourse regarding his own family, Gen. 49.

Jacob (Part 2)

Jacob (Part 2)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series on Personalities In Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

Bethel, The House of God and Jacob's Conversion

Genesis 28:11-22

1. The Background

The early history of Jacob is that of a “supplanter,” scheming to obtain his own ends at the expense of others, and deceiving both his father and brother in the process. Fleeing from Esau, he is now beginning to experience God’s disciplinary dealings with him. He is alone, in strange surroundings, away from home. Though unknown to him at the time, he was never to be home for 20 years, and never to see his mother again — reaping the harvest of what he had sown in those years at home. With the sky above and stones for his pillow, v. 11, he lay down to sleep that first night, perhaps with a remorse of conscience as he contemplated the past, and with fear and forboding as he anticipated the future.

2. The Vision, vv. 12, 13

But God was keeping pace with him. He was fleeing from Esau, but he could not flee from God, Ps. 139:7. God was with him and graciously gave His erring creature a vision of His grace and glory. In his vision, there were three particular objects:

1. A Ladder — from earth to heaven. There was now no communication with home and family, but communication with heaven and God was not cut off, in spite of his waywardness.
2. Angels — although he was alone, without earthly companions, here were heavenly messengers: ascending — taking his needs to God; descending — bringing God's blessing to him.
3. Behold the Lord stood above it. Jehovah, in all His constancy and faithfulness, stood — as He was standing to welcome Stephen, Acts 7:55; and as He stood with Paul in the hour of his need, 2 Tim. 4:17.

3. The Blessing, vv. 13-15

What a message for a wayward Jacob! What comfort and assurance these words of the Lord who "stood above" must have been then and in the years ahead. Note the sevenfold assurance of His:

1. Person, v. 13. "I am Jehovah God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac." Unchanging, ever-faithful, the God of whom he had heard.
2. Provision, 13, 14. "I will give ..." Renewal of promises made to Abraham and Isaac.
3. Presence, v. 15. "I am with thee."

4. Protection, v. 15. "I ... will keep thee."
5. Preservation, v. 15. "I will bring thee again into this land."
6. Promise, v. 15. "I will not leave thee."
7. Purposes, v. 15. "until I have done that which I have spoken."

4. The Vow, vv. 20-22

Jacob could not but be conscious of the sacredness and awesomeness of that place where God had revealed Himself and made His presence felt. Note how he describes it: "the House of God," v. 17 — God's dwelling place; "the Gate of Heaven" — the entranceway to heaven itself. Having made a memorial with the stone that formed his pillow, v. 18, he made a vow — the first vow recorded in Scripture. This was a commitment of himself, and a tenth of his possessions, to God and corresponds with our commitment at conversion. While we may criticize Jacob for attaching conditions to his vow, it may be that the "if" really means "since" and is indicative of Jacob's trust and dependence upon God. In any case we must remember he was immature spiritually — this may have been his first real experience of God.

Peniel, the Face of God, and Jacob's Consecration

Genesis 32

Circumstances, vv. 1-8

1. Behind Jacob: 20 years of labour, deception, disappointments — but of divine blessings, which Jacob himself acknowledged, v. 10.

2. Ahead of Jacob: Esau, advancing with 400 men. Twenty years had not seemed to cool Esau's anger and his desire for vengeance.

3. Meeting Jacob: God's hosts of angels, vv. 1, 2. Sent as a timely assurance by God to Jacob in the moment of fear and crisis. Jacob recognized them as "God's host" and called the place "Mahanaim" — two hosts — God's and his. He should have recognized that If God be for us, who can be against us? Rom. 8:31. Perhaps his vision of angels at Bethel, Gen. 28:12, made him realize that this was God's host.

4. Within Jacob — fear and distress, v. 7 — in spite of God's revelation of His protection by sending angels, and in spite of Jacob's acknowledgment of them as "God's host." How little faith he really had!

Confession, vv. 9-12

At length Jacob turned to God in prayer — the first actual prayer of Jacob recorded in the Bible. Note that he:

1. Addressed a personal God — "of my father, Abraham and of Isaac" —yet not so personal as to say "my God" — evidence of his partial faith.

2. Admitted personal failure. "I am not worthy."

3. Acknowledged divine blessing— v. 10.

4. Asked divine deliverance, v. 11. “Deliver me, I pray Thee.”

5. Apprehended divine promises, vv. 9, 12.

Yet, in spite of his prayer, the subsequent verse show his lack of faith in God as he planned and schemed to appease Esau’s anger, and wondered if Esau would accept him, v. 20.

Conflict, vv. 24-32

1. Time. Night — “until the break of day.” It was at night that the Lord had appeared to Jacob at Bethel. This experience, too, was at night: all was dark around; all was dark behind — the dark schemes of deceptions all was dark ahead — the fear of meeting Esau.

2. Circumstances. As at Bethel, Jacob was “left alone” — with God.

3. Opponent. “There wrestled a man with him.” The “man” was evidently none other than God — a Theophany. Jacob summed up the experience in the words: “I have seen God face to face,” v. 30. Note that the Lord took the initiative — it was not Jacob that wrestled with Him but vice versa.

4. Objective. God’s object in the conflict with Jacob was to expose his weakness, break down his opposition and bring him to utter dependence on God. This was a physical struggle, resulting in a physical weakness; but it had a spiritual objective. So God today sometimes uses physical trials to accomplish spiritual purposes.

5. Blessing. Jacob made two requests. One was not granted — “What is thy name?” The divine name was not revealed — it is beyond man’s comprehension. The other

request was granted: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," v. 26. God's blessing was expressed in the change of Jacob's name to Israel, "God's Prince" or "God's Perseverer," and what was implied in that change, a new power with God and with men. Jacob's persistence in clinging to God and prevailing was going to be remembered ever after in the new name by which he and his successors would be named — Israel.

6. Result. "The sun rose upon him," v. 31. A new day dawned in Jacob's life and he would never be the same again. By seeing the face of God, he was a changed man.

Joseph

Joseph

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, physician and Bible teacher, continues his series of character studies in Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications Inc.; used by permission.

Of all the characters in Genesis, or throughout the Old Testament, there is no more beautiful type of the Lord Jesus than Joseph — in his humiliation and subsequent exaltation.

In his story we can also find valuable instruction for believers of today, who live in a world that not only despised and rejected their Lord, but has the same attitude to them. Unlike the life-stories of his ancestors, that of Joseph contains very little in the way of failure, and he is presented to us as an outstanding example of the kind of life God is pleased to bless and honour.

A verse that seems to epitomize Joseph's story is 1 Samuel 2:30, Them that honour Me I will honour. Each phase of his life can be considered as an illustration of this verse.

Them That Honour Me ...

1. At Home, Gen. 37

Apart from the record of his birth and one or two passing mentions of his name, Genesis 37:2 is the first

reference to Joseph's life, and the closing phrase gives an insight into his character: Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Some feel that this indicates him to be no more than a malicious talebearer, but it seems more likely that it is, in fact, an evidence of his uncompromising purity of life and separation from evil. This comes out later in his life, in Potiphar's house. It shows his concern for his brothers who were evidently involved in wrongdoing. Thus he honoured God at home, in his family life, taking a stand against evil. The hatred of his brethren towards him, recorded in this chapter, was no doubt stirred by his refusal to participate with them in their evil ways — though it was intensified by his father's partiality towards him, and by the recounting of his dreams.

2. Away From Home. In Potiphar's House, Gen. 39

As a result of his brothers' animosity, Joseph is now a stranger in a strange land, but even in difficult circumstances he still honours God and maintains his standard of conduct, resisting the temptations of his master's wife, vv. 7-10. She kept asking Joseph day after day, but he refused to lie with her and be in her company, v. 10 (NEB). He based his refusal, not on any fear of the possible consequences, but on the fact that to yield to the temptation would be to sin against his master, who had placed implicit trust and confidence in him, v. 8, his master's wife, who alone of all his master's possessions, was withheld from him, v. 9, and, supremely, his God, v. 9 — to whom he was thus a courageous and effective witness in an alien environment.

3. In Prison, Gen. 40

His faithfulness to God and his stand for right and purity had apparently disastrous results, for he now found himself in prison, falsely accused of wrongdoing. Yet even then he still honoured God — now, in a very positive way, by witnessing to his God in the prison, when he declared that interpretations belong to God, v. 8. It is evident, indirectly, that he had similarly honoured God in a positive way while still serving Potiphar, since Potiphar recognized that the Lord was with him, 39:3.

4. In The Palace, Gen. 41-50

Because of his interpretations of the dreams of the butler and baker in the prison, Joseph was summoned to Pharaoh's palace (when the butler ultimately remembered) to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Even here, in the presence of the ruler of the land, he honoured God in a positive manner by reiterating God's ability to reveal secrets and His purposes regarding the future, 41:16, 25, 28, 32, so much so that even Pharaoh was forced to acknowledge Joseph's God, vv. 38, 39. Subsequently, through the rest of his life in Egypt, Joseph repeatedly acknowledged God — in naming his children, 41:51, 52; in expressing his fear of God to his brothers, 42:18; 43:23, 29; in recognizing God's purposes in the past, 45:5-9; 50:20, and in the future, 50:24, 25.

I Will Honour

1. At Home, Gen. 37

It hardly seemed, at this early stage of Joseph's history, that his fidelity to God in separating himself from evil

was bringing any reward from God. God's paths sometimes lead in unexpected directions. "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform"; and, in Joseph's case, that mysterious way was via a pit and a prison — But it led to a palace. But even in this chapter, we can discern God at work; the dreams given to Joseph were no doubt of God, and were God's prophetic indication to him of his future glory. Thus, even when surrounded by hatred and enmity, Joseph was being honoured by his God.

2. Away From Home. In Potiphar's House, Gen. 39

That God was honouring His servants in the midst of trial and difficulty, in a strange land and home, is clearly evident both at the beginning and end of this chapter: Verses 2 to 5 record that God was with Joseph and blessed him, blessed Potiphar's house through him and made it evident, not only to Joseph but also to Potiphar, that He was with His servant in the house of his earthly master.

3. In Prison, Gen. 40

The evidence of God's honouring of Joseph in the prison is seen in the closing verses, of chapter 39. Joseph experienced God's presence, mercy, favour and prosperity, and was given a position of authority and trust, even in the prison. Although Joseph did not know it at the time, his fellow-prisoners and their dreams were included in God's plan — as had been his brother's dealings with him, and the falsehood of Potiphar's wife — for the ultimate high honour that was to follow.

4. In The Palace, Gen. 41-50

Here we see God's purposes come to fruition in the honouring of Joseph and his exaltation to the highest post in Egypt. But more than Joseph's personal prosperity was involved: through Joseph, and by his submission to God's will in his life, God was working out His purposes for his brothers — the children of Israel, preserving their lives, Gen. 45:5, 7, and thus filling His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The story of Joseph thus illustrates the words of the hymn:

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

Noah

Noah

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Peterborough, Ontario, a physician and Bible teacher, continues his series in Genesis. Copyright by Everyday Publications, used by permission.

The story of Noah (Gen. 6 to 9) may be considered historically, prophetically, typically, evangelically and practically. In our studies, the practical lessons we can learn from these great examples of faith, who lived before there was a written revelation from God, are our primary concern. It will be profitable, however, to consider some other aspects of this familiar Old Testament story.

1. Historically

Few portions of the Scriptures have been subjected to more critical contempt than the chapters narrating the Flood. We take the stand that the record of Genesis 6-8 is an account of actual historical fact. The Scriptures — both in Genesis and elsewhere — make it clear that the Flood was of universal extent, covering all the high hills (mountains) that were under the whole heaven, Gen. 7:19, and destroying every living thing ... which was upon the face of the ground — man, beasts, reptiles, birds, Gen. 7:23. It was an evidence of divine intervention in judgment, because of the wickedness of man, Gen. 6:1-13. In His mercy, God saved one family —

Noah's — eight people in all, from whom humanity is descended.

Our assurance of the reliability of this record is based on:

A. The Infallibility of the Word of God. Genesis 6-8 is part of all Scripture ... given by inspiration of God, 2 Tim. 3:16.

B. The Authoritative Statements of the Omniscient Son of God, who, by His reference to Noah, the flood and the ark, has made it impossible to believe in Him and reject the Genesis record of the flood. See Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26, 27.

C. Corroborative References by other writers of Scriptures inspired by God: e.g. Isaiah (54:9); Peter (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:5, 6).

D. Confirmation by Human Traditions. Hundreds of traditions found in every part of the world include the recollection of a universal flood. Many of these are found among American Indians and tell of the building of a great ark which saved men and animals from destruction and finally landed on a mountain. The 11th tablet of the Gilgamesh epic contains the Babylonian flood account which parallels the Genesis account even in matters of detail. Such traditions do not prove the accuracy of the Biblical record, but they confirm it. The absence of such traditions might have been "a weighty objection to the veracity of the Biblical account."

E. Geological Studies. In their excellent book on "The Genesis Flood," John C. Whitcomb Jr. and Henry M. Morris have "clearly shown that the Bible teaches a unique Creation and subsequent worldwide Deluge, and

that the major facts of geology and other sciences can be satisfactorily oriented within this framework.”

2. Prophetically

The flood is one of the supreme examples of God’s judgment in the past. Peter in 2 Peter 3:5, 6 presents it, as a foreshadowing — and, in-deed, proof — of His judgment in the future. In the past, by water; in the future, by fire. The Lord Jesus, too, in His reference to the flood —Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26, 27 —used it as a warning of the sudden, unexpected nature of His future coming as Son of man. He pointed out that the conditions that preceded the flood are a parallel to those that will obtain at the time of His Coming.

3. Typically

If the flood is an evidence of God’s intervention in judgment, and prefigures His coming judgment upon men, then the ark is a very beautiful type of the provision He has made for the salvation of those who, like Noah, by faith are obedient to His command and entrust themselves to the Shelter He has provided in His Son. Notice that Peter draws attention to this type in 1 Peter 3:20, where he says that Noah and his family were “saved through water” — and we today are saved “by the resurrection of Christ” (v. 21). The Lord, like the ark, has exhausted the billows of divine judgment, having passed through the storm when He died on Calvary, and, by His resurrection, has arrived safe on the other side — securing all who are “in Christ.” Note, too, that in 2 Peter 2:5, Peter states that God “saved Noah” while the ungodly perished in the flood. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word “kaphar,” translated “pitch” in

Genesis 6:14 (and the corresponding noun “kopher,” also translated “pitch” in this verse) is never used for “pitch” elsewhere in the O.T. It is the word commonly used for “atonement” — seventy times; it is also translated “cleanse” (1); “forgive” (2); “be merciful” (2); “pardon” (1), “purge” (8), “reconcile” (3), “make reconciliation” (4), etc. Just as the pitch covered the ark and protected those inside from the waters of judgment, so the blood that made atonement covered those who offered it from the judgment of God. The blood of Christ, to which those sacrifices pointed forward, protects us from divine judgment.

4. Evangelically

The story of Noah and the ark has been a source of many good Gospel sermons. Among other things, we can see in this narrative:

1. Divine Condemnation upon human sin, in the flood.
2. Divine Salvation from the flood of judgment — in the ark, provided by God, and offering the only hope of safety. It was large enough for all who would avail themselves of its provisions; it is protected from the flood by itself bearing the storm — all very suggestive of God’s provision in Christ.
3. Divine Invitation — Gen. 7:1 — the first of its kind in the Bible — corresponds with the invitation of the Saviour today, Matt. 11:28.
4. Divine Preservation. The safety of Noah and his family was not dependent on their ability to swim when the rain subsided, but on their being inside the ark. So our eternal security is based on our being “in Christ Jesus,” Rom. 8:1.

5. Practically

Noah's name is included in two great honours lists. In Ezekiel 14:14, 20 he is named, with Job and Daniel, as an outstanding example of righteousness. In the New Testament his name is third in the Hall of Fame of Hebrews 11, as an example of faith. Like Job and Daniel, he stood out from the men of his time in his faithfulness to God and won God's approval and commendation. The background to his life is given us in the first half of Genesis 6, which paints a very black picture of "wickedness," "evil," "corruption" and "violence" — of such a degree as to bring upon man God's wrath and judgment in the form of a flood. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, v. 8. What a contrast to the moral darkness that abounded on every hand! And what an example to us who live in days parallel to his, just prior to the coming of the Lord in judgment! We shall look at five characteristics of his life that should speak to us in our day:

A. Faith, Heb. 11:7.

As in the case of Abel and Enoch, Hebrews 11 gives us the secret of Noah's life, the reason why he pleased God, Heb. 11:6, and found favour in God's eyes, Gen. 6:8.

1. Its Foundation. The Word of God. He was "warned of God of things not seen as yet." "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." Although there had apparently been no rain before (Genesis 2:6 seems to indicate the means of watering the ground), Noah believed God would do what he had never seen —because God said He would.

2. Its Demonstration. "Prepared an ark." Faith not only believes God's word, but also obeys God's command.

God said to Noah: Make thee an ark, Gen. 6:14, and Noah showed his faith in God's word by obedience to His command. See Gen. 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16 and note how absolutely he obeyed — According to all that God commanded him, so did he.

3. Its Vindication. His preservation through the flood was God's vindication of the faith that implicitly trusted and obeyed Him. His faith was vindicated, and the unbelief of "the world" was condemned. But more: because of his faith, he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Like Abraham —and us — his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness, Rom. 4:9.

B. Fear, Heb. 11:7

Trusting and obeying God in a godless environment, Noah evidently had no fear of men, however much they would scoff at him. But he feared God, and he who fears God need not fear men. "Moved with fear" — this was the impelling motive of his faith — godly fear, reverence for God.

1. Its Causes. No doubt Noah's fear of God arose from the evidence of God's power and wisdom in creation, and the knowledge of His holiness and yet His mercy, revealed in God's conversation with Noah, Gen. 6:13-22.

2. Its Characteristics. The fear of the Lord has been defined as "that affectionate reverence by which the child of God binds himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law." It is manifested: (a) Negatively: "to hate evil," Prov. 8:13. This evidently characterized Noah, for he was a just man and perfect in his generations, Gen. 6:9. (b) Positively: "to keep His commandments," Eccl. 12:13. See Gen. 6:22.

3. Its Consequences. The Scriptures abound in promises to those who “fear the Lord” — of mercy, satisfaction, protection, deliverance, etc. For Noah, the fear of the Lord brought favour, salvation and deliverance.

C. Fidelity.

Noah not only trusted God: he was one whom God could trust. His faith in God, resulting in faithfulness to God, was seen in three ways:

1. His Walk. “Noah walked with God,” Gen. 6:9. Noah shared the honour of having these words said about him with only one other person — Enoch. He probably lived in circumstances similar to Enoch’s, amid ungodliness and wickedness, yet he lived quite differently from his fellows. He was “perfect in his generations,” Gen. 6:9, or “blameless in his time” (NASB). He chose the companionship of God rather than the world.

2. His Work. He “prepared an ark” — what a task! The ark has been described as “a gigantic barge” with a gross tonnage of about 13,960 tons, “Which would place it well within the category of large metal ocean-going vessels today”; three decks with a total deck area of approximately 95,700 sq. ft. (equivalent to more than the area of 20 standard college basketball courts); a volume of 1, 396,000 cu. ft. and a carrying capacity equal to that of 522 standard stock cars as used by modern railroads. It may well have taken 120 years to build, (Gen. 6:3), and all this time without evidence of rain and the coming flood to justify the work. Yet Noah continued. How faithful he was!

3. His Witness. Peter describes Noah as a “preacher of righteousness,” 2 Pet. 2:5. What a difficult subject —

righteousness —especially in his circumstances; it certainly required faithfulness in life to continue to preach it! What an unsuccessful preacher! No converts outside his own family.

D. Fellowship

The strength of Noah's faith and faithfulness all these years, in spite of all the difficulties, lay in the fact that he "walked with God." His fellowship with his Creator influenced every stage of his life;

1. Before the Flood — Separation to God from the wicked, ungodly world. He was uncontaminated by unholy men because he lived close to a holy God.
2. During the Flood — Security by God from the flood of judgment.
3. After the Flood — Sacrifice to God — Gen. 8:20-22 — that brought pleasure to God as did Noah's life before the flood, v. 21. This is the first mention of "altar" in the Bible. It was (a) an expression of gratitude to God for His deliverance, (b) a recognition of sin and the need for sacrifice for sin, and (c) an expression of consecration of life.

The offerings Noah offered were "burnt offerings," in which "all" was "burnt on the altar" (Lev. 1:9), expressive of complete devotion to God.

E. Failure. Gen. 9:20-23.

The faithfulness of the divinely inspired account of Noah is seen in the record, not only of his faithfulness, but also of his failure. Like Elijah, he was a man subject to like passions as we are, and we can learn, not only from his good example, but also from his sad failure:

1. Circumstances. This story is not taken from his early life, but when he was at least 601 years old — after a commendable life of faith and faithfulness, after many years of experience with God, after evidence of God's judgment and salvation in the flood and ark.

2. Characteristics. Intemperance and Immodesty.

3. Conclusions. The record of Noah's failure surely teaches us that, however faithful we may have been, however closely we have walked with God, however long our life of devotion to Him, however great our experiences of His deliverance, we still need to exercise constant care, realizing that the flesh is ever with us.

Personalities In Genesis

Personalities In Genesis

James T. Naismith

With these brief introductory comments, we begin a series of character studies in Genesis by Dr. James T. Naismith of Peterborough, Ontario. These studies were first published in book form under the title, PERSONALITIES IN GENESIS.

Copyright by Everyday Publications; used by permission.

Dr. Naismith, in addition to practicing medicine, is an able and appreciated Bible teacher.

Introduction

The name Genesis is derived from a Greek word meaning origin or beginning. The Hebrew name of this book is bereshith — the first word in the Hebrew Bible — In the beginning.

This is the book of beginnings —of divine revelation, world creation, human history. Here we read of the beginning of man — as an individual, family, society, nation. Here is the record of the beginning of sin, of sacrifice for sin, of salvation from sin. Genesis describes the beginning of the human race and goes on to deal with the beginnings of the Jewish race — God's people, chosen out of the human race.

Genesis has aptly been described as "the foundation on which the superstructure of the Scriptures rests"; "the seed in which the plant of God's Word is enfolded"; "the plinth of the pillar of the Divine revelation"; "the root of

the tree of the inspired Scriptures”; “the source of the stream of the holy writings of the Bible.” It is indeed the watershed of all Scriptural revelation, the seed-plot of the Bible, to which we can trace so many of the themes developed through the Sacred Page. Here are the seeds of sin, salvation, prophecy, Bible doctrines, godly living. It has been said: “The roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here.”

Much of the book of Genesis has been subjected to severe scientific, philosophical and theological criticism, the first 11 chapters —particularly, the records of the Creation, Fall and Flood — being regarded by some as merely mythical. We shall not be considering these critical questions in detail in our study, but our position will be that the early chapters of Genesis are divine revelations of actual events. In this we are fortified by the authoritative statements of our Lord who referred on several occasions to the book of Genesis in His ministry (see Matt. 19:4-6; 24:37-38; Luke 11:51; 17:26-29, 32; John 8:44, 56-58) and by frequent allusions to and quotations from the book by the New Testament writers.

Sir Winston Churchill once wrote: “We reject with scorn all these learned and laboured myths that Moses was but a legendary figure upon whom the priesthood and the people hung their essential social, moral and religious ordinances. We believe that the most scientific view, the most up-to-date and rationalistic conception will find its fullest satisfaction in taking the Bible story literally, and in identifying one of the greatest human beings with the most decisive leaps forward ever discernible in the human story. We remain unmoved by the tones of Professor Gradgrind and Dr. Dryasdust. We

may be sure that all these things happened just as they are set out in Holy Writ. We may believe that they happened to people not so very different from ourselves, and that the impressions those people received were faithfully recorded and have been transmitted across the centuries with far more accuracy than many of the telegraphed accounts we read of goings on of today. Let the men of science and learning expand their knowledge and probe with their researches every detail of the records which have been preserved to us from these dim ages. All they will do is to fortify the grand simplicity and essential accuracy of the recorded truths which have lighted so far the pilgrimage of man."

Outline of Genesis

The book divides itself into 2 major sections:

I. CHAPTERS 1-11. Primeval History. Record of 4 main events — Creation, Fall, Flood, Babel; and 4 particular men — Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah.

II. CHAPTERS 12-50. Patriarchal History. Account of the lives of 4 main characters; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph.

The book provides its own subdivisions by the ten recurring phrases: The book of the generations of, or these are the generations of. Each of these phrases refers to what follows and marks the beginning of a new section of the book. Genesis can thus be analysed as follows:

1. Introduction — Creation — 1:1 to 2:3
2. The Heaven and the Earth — 2:4 to 4:26
3. Adam — 5:1 to 6:8

4. Noah — 6:9 to 9:29
5. Sons of Noah — 10:1 to 11:9
6. Shem — 11:10-26
7. Terah — 11:27 to 25:11
8. Ishmael — 25:12-18
9. Isaac — 25:19 to 35:29
10. Esau — 36:1 to 37:1
11. Jacob — 37:2 to 50:26

Personalities In Genesis

The book of Genesis teems with characters whose life-stories are penned for our profit as well as interest. Seven of the eight great men noted above, whose lives we shall consider, are given honourable mention in God's Hall of Fame — Hebrews 11 — and take up more than half of this chapter of illustrious men and women. But men (and women) are not the only personalities in the book. The dominant Person is God, and all others — and all else — are seen in relationship to Him. We shall briefly consider what Genesis reveals of Him as Creator, Sovereign, Judge, Redeemer, Friend, Guide. Satan, too, is introduced to us early in the book, and we are given an insight into his character, methods and judgment. Finally, the Lord Jesus Christ, though not specifically named, is undoubtedly here, as He is "in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27) — in direct prophecy, in many wonderful types, and in actual Person.

Prayer

Prayer

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies In Christian Living For Young Believers,
#2 If the Word of God is the spiritual nourishment that sustains the believer's life, prayer is the very atmosphere in which he should live day by day — an atmosphere of communion with God. "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air." Yet, though essential for our spiritual wellbeing, perhaps nothing is so frequently and easily neglected. The devil sees to it that as many of us as possible live in a spiritually rarefied or poisoned atmosphere, and are deprived of the blessing, refreshment and power that result from constant fellowship with God. Our lives will be fruitless, our study of God's Word unprofitable, and our witness ineffective unless we "spend much time in secret with Jesus alone."

1. Passages for Special Study

A. Matthew 6:5-15. Much of the scriptural teaching on prayer came from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our study is directed especially to His teaching on the subject—which He perfectly exemplified in His own life. In the course of His ministry, He enunciated many of the essential principles that should govern our prayer-lives. Notice three of these in this passage: (1) Secrecy of prayer (vv. 5, 6). Intimate communion with God can only take place if our ears are closed to the noise and bustle of earth. The "closet" we select need not have four walls, a roof and a door. We might well emulate the

example of our Lord who chose as His “closet” “a solitary-desert-place” (Mark 1:35), “a mountain apart” (Matt. 14:23), and “a garden” (Matt. 26:36-39).

(2) Sincerity of prayer (vv. 5, 7, 8). In contrast to the religious “hypocrites” and the “heathen” of the Lord’s day (and their modern counterparts), we should not pray to be “seen of men” or to be “heard for our much speaking,” but with the sincerity of a child expressing himself to his father. (3) Simplicity of prayer (vv. 9 - 13). What a model of reverent simplicity is this prayer given by our Lord to His disciples —not as a formal prayer to be recited, but as a pattern to guide! Careful study of it will be amply repaid and many lessons will be learned — for example, regarding (a) The Person we address (v.9), (b) the Praise we offer (vv. 9,13), and (c) the Petitions we present — relating first to God’s things (v. 10), and then to our needs, both physical (v. 11) and spiritual (vv. 12, 13).

B. Luke 11: 1-13. From this important passage on prayer, we can note four simple lessons: (1) An Excellent Example, “As He was praying” (v. 1). He was God. He created and upheld all things by the word of His power. Yet, as dependent Man, He prayed — and this is only one instance of many recorded from a lifetime of constant communion with His Father. What a pattern for us! (2) A Disciple’s Desire, “Lord, teach us to pray” (v. 1). The disciple was impressed by His example — and the more we behold Him and consider His prayer-life in contrast to ours, the more will that same desire become the earnest longing of our hearts. (3) A Pattern Prayer (vv. 2-4). (4) An Illustration of Importunity (vv. 9-13). Human friends are sometimes reluctant to respond to our requests, but can be roused by persistent, persevering

petition. How much more our Bountiful Father who is willing to give the very best gifts to His children if they but ask, seek, and knock, and keep laying hold upon Him in faith!

2. Suggested Outline of Study

A. The Bible Provides Instruction On Prayer

(1) Time: We should pray “always” (Luke 18:1), “without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). This does not, of course, mean that at every moment of our lives we should be speaking to God in prayer, but that we should live continually in the consciousness of His presence and in the spirit of prayer, so that at any time we can speak to Him and listen to His voice to us.

(2) Place: The Scriptures instruct us to pray “everywhere” (1 Tim. 2:8), alone, in private (Matt. 6:6), and in the company of others (Matt. 18:19, 20, Jude 20).

(3) Content: When we pray, we should not simply make requests to God for our wants and needs. Our prayers should include worship —adoration and appreciation of all that God is; praise — expressing all that He has done — His works and ways; thanksgiving — for all that He has given; intercession — on behalf of others; supplication — expressing our intense longing desires for others or ourselves (Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:1).

(4) Subjects: Our hearts and lips need never be silent for want of prayer topics. The Apostle Paul has given us a wide scope (and he evidently had a very long prayer list himself) — “In everything by prayer” (Phil. 4:6); “supplication for all saints” (Eph. 6:18); “prayers... for all men” (1 Tim. 2:1). Are we as inclusive in our prayers?

(5) Manner: Prayer should be reverent (Matt. 6:9), earnest (James 5:16), sincere (Matt. 6:5), persistent (Luke 18:7), believing (Matt. 21:22) etc.

B. The Bible States Conditions For Effective Prayer

(1) In Christ's Name (John 14:13, 14; see also Matt. 18:19, 20). This does not mean to simply append His name to all our wants and expect Him to supply them; but to make our requests for His glory, in His interests, for His sake — not for our selfish ends (James 4:3).

(2) Abiding in Him (John 15:7). As the branch abides in the vine and derives all its strength and nourishment from the vine — and can only live as it depends on the vine — so the believer depends utterly on “the True Vine,” lives and feeds on Him, and finds his all in Him. In such a dependent attitude should we list our desires.

(3) Obedience to Christ (John 15: 7b; I John 3:22).

(4) Faith (Matt. 21:21, 22; James 1:6).

(5) Fellowship and Agreement with others (Matt. 18:19, 20). The Lord taught that we should not only pray alone (Matt. 6:6), but also with others, and in these two verses He gave two very wonderful promises to those who meet together in His name and pray in harmony — answered prayer (v. 19), and His assured presence (v. 20).

(6) Earnestness and Persistence (James 5:16, 17; Eph. 6:18).

(7) Spirit - direction (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20; Rom. 8:26, 27).

As we ponder these conditions —and others that we find in our study — let us apply them to our own prayer-lives

and so experience more fully the power and blessing of prevailing prayer.

C. The Bible Makes Promises To Those Who Pray

Not only do the Scriptures assure us of answers to our prayers, but fulfilment of our desires if expressed in accordance with the above conditions. Other blessings are also promised to those who pray, e.g. peace (Phil. 4:6), power (Isa. 40:31; James 5:16-18; Acts 4:31). Prayer changes things! Prayer also changes people!

“Lord, what a change within us one short hour

Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make!” (Trench)

D. The Bible Abounds In Illustrations Of Prayer

The lessons we have learned from our study can be reinforced by examining numerous examples from both Old and New Testaments:

(a) of People who Prayed: e. g. Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Nehemiah, Daniel, the early apostles and churches, Paul, and, supremely, the Lord Jesus Christ. Study His prayer-life in particular, noting the occasions when He prayed, the places He chose, the attitudes He adopted, and the manner in which He addressed and expressed Himself to His Father. (b) of the Prayers They Uttered. The Scriptures have recorded for our instruction and profit some of the actual utterances of men who prayed, e.g. Abraham (Gen. 18: 22-23), David in many of the Psalms, Solomon (1 Kings 8:22-53), Asa (2 Chron. 14:11), Nehemiah (Neh. 1:4- 11), Daniel (9:3-19), the early Christians (Acts 4:24-31), Paul (e.g.

Eph. 1:15-23, 3:14-21), and the Lord Himself (e.g. John 17). (c) of the Results of Their Prayers. (e.g. Acts 4:31, James 5:17, 18).

We conclude with a resolution from the Old Testament: "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray" (1 Sam. 12:23), and an exhortation from the New Testament: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5: 17).

Satan

Satan

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith is a beloved physician and Bible teacher who resides in Peterborough, Ont. This is his third study from his book on Personalities in Genesis.

Copyright by Everyday Publications; used by permission.

The name of Satan does not appear in Genesis, but there is no doubt that he is the principal actor in the tragedy enacted in the third chapter, the prime cause of the Fall of man. Many see his influence even before this — as early as the second verse of the book.

Genesis 3

Since “Satan is alive and well on planet earth” and remains the archenemy of God’s people, it is important that we should not be “ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11), but aware of his nature, alert to his methods, and assured of his doom. God has recorded in detail his first incursion into human history, and in Genesis 3, his nature, methods and doom are clearly exposed. The lessons taught here are reiterated and expanded through the pages of the Bible. In his first encounter with man, Satan won a resounding victory, and he has won countless battles since. He is still the god and prince of this world, though he has been conquered and his doom is assured.

In Genesis 3, he used a “serpent” as his agent, the instrument by which he attacked Eve, and through her, Adam, and so brought about disobedience to God and

the Fall of man. We accept this record, not simply as an allegory, still less as a myth, but as a divinely inspired record of actual fact, with important lessons for all time. Later, Satan used a man — Judas — as his instrument to accomplish his greatest crime (John 13:27).

1. His Nature

Genesis 3 illustrates many characteristics of Satan, that old serpent, as he is called in the last book of the Bible (Rev. 12:9; 20:2) —characteristics that are described in other parts of the Bible, especially in the New Testament and particularly in the writings of John. He is described as a:

MURDERER, John 8:44. The Lord Himself knew his character from personal experience and said about him, He was a murderer from the beginning. He deprived man not only of physical life but of spiritual life, for God had said, In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:17).

LIAR, John 8:44. His denial of the Word of God in Genesis 3:4 is perhaps the supreme example of our Lord's words that he abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him ... he is a liar and the father of it.

SINNER, 1 John 3:8. The devil sinneth from the beginning. This may refer back further than Genesis 3 to Satan's prior defiance of God and rebellion against Him, but certainly Genesis 3 is included. 1 John 3:4 states that sin is the transgression of the law, i.e., disobedience to God's revealed command. In the garden of Eden, Satan asserted his will against God's, and his own word against God's, and enticed Eve to disobey God's command.

DECEIVER, Rev. 12:9; 20:2, 3, 7-10; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3.

These passages teach that his deception, which began at the very start of human history, and which has become universal — deceiveth the whole world — will continue until Satan is cast into the lake of fire. Genesis 3 is the account of the first subtle deception — and how successful it was! (1 Tim. 2:14). This is still his characteristic (2 Cor. 11:14, 15).

ADVERSARY, Rev. 12:9; 20:2; 1 Pet. 5:8. The name “Satan” means “adversary” and expresses his opposition to God and man — seen in Genesis 3 and also to Christ. He is still your adversary, the devil.

SLANDERER or ACCUSER. This is the meaning of the word, “devil”: he accuses men to God (see Job 1:6-11; 2:1-5), but in Genesis 3, his slander is levelled against God, in the hearing of man.

2. His Methods

The first six verses of Genesis 3 reveal clearly the subtle methods Satan used — and still uses — to accomplish his ends. His plan of attack included:

1. Doubting God’s Word, v. 1, “Hath God said?” i.e. “Did God really prohibit you from eating?”
2. Denying God’s truth, v. 4, “Ye shall not surely die,” i.e. “It is not true that you shall die, as God said.”
3. Distorting God’s purposes, v. 5, in which he inferred that God, by his prohibition, was depriving them of a real benefit, because He did not want them like Him and therefore rivals to His position; i.e. God’s purposes were selfish and not for man’s best good.

4. Discrediting God's character. In two short utterances in verses 1, 4 and 5, Satan impugned God's truthfulness, goodness, honesty, etc.

5. Deceiving God's creatures. Verse 6 shows how completely he succeeded in accomplishing this objective.

3. His Doom

In this bleak chapter, one of the first in human history, there is a ray of light and hope — Satan will not always be triumphant; his doom is sealed. God's judgment upon him in verses 14 and 15 contains the first in a line of great Bible prophecies that culminate in the coming of the Messiah and His ultimate triumph over Satan. Later in our studies, we shall consider the application of the prophecy to Christ. Here we are concerned with the sentence of Satan.

Verse 14, The Serpent — the instrument of Satan is cursed to experience the degradation of grovelling in the dust. Whether we can infer from this that the serpent had been an upright and glorious creature is uncertain. It is certain, however, that henceforth it would be degraded and despised — doubtless symbolic of the deeper punishment upon Satan who used the serpent as his agent.

Verse 15. Satan is crushed. God put enmity between Satan and his seed (presumably demons) and the seed of the woman (humanity) —especially between Satan and the particular seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ. At Calvary His heel was bruised by Satan. Literally, His feet were nailed to the cross; spiritually, He was bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53:5); and metaphorically,

bruising of the heel is a much lesser injury than bruising of the head, which is a vital spot. At Calvary also Satan's head was bruised when through death Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). Destroyed here means rendered powerless.

The ultimate effect of this will be seen when Satan is bruised under the feet of the saints (Rom. 16:20), and cast into the lake of fire for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

Genesis 1:2

As already indicated in our study of God, the Creator, there are many Bible expositors who believe that the condition of the earth described in this verse is the result of Satan's pride, rebellion and fall, described in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:14, 15. Sin entered the universe long before God created man — and Satan was its originator then. In consequence of that sin, many believe, "God, therefore, spoke the Word of judgment and the material world —in fact, the whole domain of Satan —was blasted to chaos with a single breath from God ... This is the event which occurred between the first and second verses of Genesis. The world, waste and empty, without form and void, was the result of this Word of judgment spoken by Almighty God."

Studies in Christian Living

Studies in Christian Living

Dr. James Naismith

The Word of God is as essential for the spiritual life of the believer as his daily food is for his physical life. Since the spiritual takes precedence over the physical, it is right that the Christian, like Job (23:12), should esteem the words of His mouth more than his necessary food. Studying the Scriptures is therefore vital for Christian living.

Passages For Special Study

Psalm 119

This Psalm, well known as the longest chapter in the Bible, is also remarkable for the fact that, with only a few exceptions, each of its 176 verses mentions and is concerned with the Word of God. Of course the Psalmist—who, it has been suggested, was Daniel (and it is interesting to study it in the background of Daniel's life)—had only a part of the Old Testament to draw upon—and how much he valued it! How much more should we value the whole canon of Scripture—both Old and New Testaments! As we study the Psalm, we should note: first, different terms used for the Word of God, e.g. word(s)—spoken by God Himself, His personal message; statutes—God's enactments and decrees, emphasizing especially their unalterable and abiding quality; they stand, for ever sure; testimonies—bearing witness to God's person, character and works, and to His Son (John 5:39); precepts—divine instruction to His people;

commandments—given by the fiat of the Almighty and demanding our obedience; law—revealing God’s will for man’s life; etc. Second, the characteristics of God’s Word. The Psalmist has found it to be good (39), wonderful (129), sweet to taste (103), upright, right, righteous (137, 75, 106, etc.), faithful (86, 138), true (160), very pure (140), founded, settled, and enduring for ever (89, 152, 160) etc. Third, the blessings and value of God’s Word—e.g. life-giving, quickening (25, 37, 50, etc.), cleansing (9), delighting, rejoicing (14, 16, 24, 111, etc.), counselling (24), comforting (50, 52, 76), strengthening (28), keeping from sin (11), upholding (116), helping (175), etc. Four, our response and responsibility to God’s Word. Its influence on us—as on the Psalmist—should be seen in every part of our being and every department of our lives: e.g. the mind—learn (7, 71, 73), be taught (12, 26, etc.), meditate (15, 23, 48, 97 - “All the day”, 148 —at night, etc.), understand (27, 34), consider, (95), etc.; the memory—remember (52), not forget (16, 61, etc.); the will—keep (2, 4 - diligently, 44 —continually, 69 —with the whole heart, etc.), observe (34); the eyes—opened to behold wondrous things (18); the heart—hide the Word in (11), incline to (36, 112), keep and observe with the whole heart (34, 69), love (47, 48, etc.), delight and rejoice in (16, 14 etc.) long for (20, etc.); the hands—lift up to (48); the lips—declare (13), sing (54), speak (46); the feet — walk in (1, 3), direct ways to (5), order steps by (133), turn to (59), run the way of (32), lamp and light to feet and path (105).

2 Timothy 3:14-17

At a time when the characteristics of the “last days,” described earlier in this chapter, are becoming increasingly evident around us, and in a world where tribulation and persecution are still the lot of those who devote their lives to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the exhortation of these verses comes with force to our hearts as it did to Timothy’s. “Continue” writes the departing Apostle (see ch. 4:6) to one who is left to carry on the work of God. “Continue” repeats the Holy Spirit to us who in our day have the same responsibility — continue in the truths we have been taught and the ways we have learned, from the Sacred Writings, the Word of God, the foundation of our lives. There are two reasons why we should continue: First, The Origin of the Scriptures. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Human penmen wrote with divine authority and under divine direction. These are not merely the writings of men, but have come to us from God Himself. Second, The Object of the Scriptures. Their primary object (15) is to “make wise unto salvation,” to instruct us in the truth of salvation and to lead us to receive and enjoy it “through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Their further object (16) is to direct and guide our lives. The fourfold purpose stated in this verse can be divided into doctrinal — positive, teaching the truth (“doctrine”), and negative, correcting error (“reproof”) — and practical — negative, setting us right when wrong (“correction”), and positive, training and leading us in the right way (“instruction in righteousness”). Their ultimate object (17) is to completely equip and perfectly train us to do God’s will.

Suggested Outline of Study

The Bible

First, Its Origin and Nature. In addition to 2 Timothy 3:16, already considered, read 2 Peter 1:21. While these verses, of course, apply to the Old Testament, they are just as true of the New Testament. "Inspiration" is the means whereby "holy men of God," infused by the breath of God, wrote in obedience to God's command, clothing the truth of God in their own language and with their own personality, but kept by God from all error in presenting it. Thus, the styles of Paul and Peter can be readily distinguished; yet both were equally moved by the Holy Ghost.

Second, Its Central Theme. The Lord Jesus Christ is the subject of both Old and New Testaments (John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44). In all our reading and study of the Scriptures, we should look especially for what they testify of Him. Thus, in the Old Testament we can discern the figures (law), feelings (Psalms), and foretellings (prophets) of Christ; while the New Testament presents the facts (Gospels), faith (Acts and Epistles) and fulness (Revelation) of Christ. "When we look within Thy Word, shew Thyself to us, O Lord; in its pages may we see that every lesson points to Thee."

Third, Its Value. In addition to the passages already considered, Psalm 19:7-11 should be examined. The value of the Scriptures can be seen in the many illustrations of themselves which they present to us. For example: seed — imparting life (1 Pet. 2:1-3; Luke 4:4; Deut. 8:3; Job 23:12; Jer. 15:16); light — illuminating and directing life (Ps. 119:105); water — cleansing life (Eph. 5:17; Heb. 4:12); fire (Jer. 23:29); hammer (Jer.

23:29). As we study these illustrations and look for others, let us consider their practical implications and apply these lessons to ourselves in our reading and studying of the Word of God. For example, do we not only ingest (read), but digest and absorb (study) and assimilate (apply) the “sincere milk of the Word”? Do we “walk in the light,” allowing the Scriptures to direct our path? Do we take heed to the Word and allow the “water of the Word” to cleanse our way? And, as we look into the mirror of God’s Word, are we doers as well as hearers?

Principles of Bible Study

The consequences of hurriedly eating one or two small snacks of food daily without having a substantial meal, would all too soon be evident in our lives — in stunted growth, loss of weight, impaired health, and diminished resistance to disease. Many Christians have only one, or at most two, hurried snacks of spiritual food daily — more to salve their consciences than to satisfy their souls; it is not surprising that their spiritual health and growth are affected and that they show increased susceptibility to the devil’s poisons. In the physical realm, however, the results would be just as serious, even if several substantial meals were taken in the day, if none of the good food were digested, absorbed and assimilated. So, in the spiritual, it is necessary to do more than hurriedly read the Word of God. We should all be students of the Word and should observe certain important principles in our study: Read. The first essential is to read —read regularly and repeatedly (Dr. Campbell Morgan read a book forty or fifty times before he expounded it); read carefully and prayerfully; read

with pen and paper at hand, noting what we learn as we read. Meditate. Seven times in the 119th Psalm the Psalmist states his practice of meditation (15, 23, etc.). We should emulate his example (see also Ps. 1:2; Josh. 1:8). Learn. We read and study God's Word to learn about God and His Son, His character and purposes, and His will for our lives. The Spirit of God is our teacher (John 14:26; 16:13-15; 1 John 2:27), and only in dependence on Him can we be taught aright the truth of God (see Ps. 25:4, 5, 9, 119:12, etc.). Compare Scripture with Scripture (1 Cor. 2:13), remembering that the Scriptures cannot contradict themselves. Other portions of the Word of God will shed light on any passage we study. We should therefore "search the Scriptures" to learn their meaning. The marginal references in our Bibles, and a good concordance will often guide us to appropriate passages for reference. Memorize (Ps. 119:16, 52). It is good to have a store of God's Word from which we can draw in our study and also in the varied circumstances of life. (Psa. 119:11; see also our Lord's use of the book of Deuteronomy in His temptation in the wilderness, Matt. 4). Apply, practise, obey, keep (Josh. 1:7, 8; Ps. 119:1, 2, etc.; Jas. 1:22; 1 John 2:3-5). We should not think of the Bible simply as a textbook of divine truth to be learned, but as God's Word to be obeyed. Speak (Ps. 51:13; 119:46). God instructs us in His truth that we pass on to others what we have learned. As we read His word, let us pray, "Lord speak to me that I may speak in living echoes of Thy tone."

Let us conclude our study by considering examples, recorded in both Old and New Testaments, of men who heard and heeded God's word —e.g. Abraham and Moses before there was any written Word, David as

recorded in the Psalms, Peter and Paul (think of their references to the Old Testament in their sermons and writings), and supremely, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose ear was awakened morning by morning to hear God's voice, and who used God's Word in time of temptation and so frequently in His teaching (Isa. 50:4, 5; Matt. 4:1-11; 5:27, 31, 38; 12:3-8, 39-41; 13:14-16, etc. Luke 24:27, 44, 45).

Correction

There were two unfortunate omissions in Dr. Naismith's article that appeared in the January issue under the title *Studies in Christian Living*, and which dealt with the matter of how best to study the Holy Scriptures.

In the paragraph dealing with the value of the Word of God, some of the references were confused. The correct references are as follows:

"After seed — imparting life (I Pet. 1:23-25. Luke 8:11. James 1:18); food (I Pet. 2:1-3 etc.). Three lines farther on, in relation to water —cleansing life, the reference should be (Eph. 5:26. Psal. 119:9, 11) followed by mirror — revealing life (James 1:22-25); sword (Eph. 6:17)."

We regret that these errors occurred and would suggest that this correction be added to the bottom of this excellent paper. —Ed.

Suicide

Suicide

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, is a retired physician who devotes his full time to a Bible teaching and conference ministry in Canada and the U.S.A.

This article is the third in his series dealing with several of today's controversial issues and problems.

Suicide — the intentional taking of one's own life — is one of the leading causes of death in North America and of the world. Some years ago, the World Health Organization estimated that there were one thousand deaths by suicide daily. In North America, suicide is the second leading cause of death in teenagers — second only to accidents. In 1984, five thousand Canadian teenagers were reported to have committed suicide: this was three times the number of adolescent suicides reported thirty years previously.

Since many suicides are — for confidentiality — not reported as such, the actual figures may be very much higher than those reported. Additionally, it is conservatively estimated that there are eight attempted suicides for every one that is achieved. Thus the figures for reported suicides are probably only a fraction of the numbers who endeavour to take their lives. It has been stated that probably 90% of the population will consider suicide a possibility at some time in their lives. This problem is obviously a major concern in our society.

It is, of course, by no means a new problem. The Bible records several examples, mostly in the Old Testament. For example: Abimelech (Judges 9:54); Saul (1 Sam. 31:4); Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23); and Zimri (1 Kings 16:18). Samson (Judges 16:30) should probably be included in this list. The most notable example, of course, is in the New Testament: Judas Iscariot (Matt. 27:5; Acts 1:18).

The Scriptures nowhere approve of suicide, which is really self-murder. What should be the Christian's attitude to it?

1. In view of the sanctity of human life, clearly stated in Genesis 9:6 and throughout the Word of God, the consequent prohibition against the taking of human life applies equally to the taking of one's own life as to that of others. Suicide is never the will of God for the believer or for anyone else. The giving of one's life for others, as did our blessed Lord; or the giving of one's life for Christ and the Gospel — as did Stephen, Paul, and multitudes of other martyrs — is not, of course, to be considered as suicide.

2. Our times are in God's hands (Ps. 31:15). All the circumstances, situations, trials and problems of life are known fully to Him and are completely under His control. However trying and difficult they may be, they are best left there with the One Who loves us perfectly and Who is working out His good purpose for our lives (Rom. 8:28). To commit suicide is to take ourselves out of His care. Much better it is to commit ourselves unreservedly to Him whatever the circumstances and trust Him to have His way with us, for His way is always the best way. He will give grace for every trial and will

not suffer us to be tempted beyond our ability to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

3. The believer who commits suicide is depriving himself of opportunities for further service for the Lord. He is depriving his Lord of what belongs to Him — his life, which he really holds in trust as a steward. By that act, he also deprives his fellows: his family and friends, of his companionship; the Lord's people, of fellowship and cooperation in service; and the unsaved, of the opportunity to hear the Gospel from his lips.

4. Suicide must be considered in the light of the Judgment Seat of Christ, where "we must all appear" and where "everyone" will "receive the things done in (by means of) the body" (2 Cor. 5:10), including the taking of that life that belongs to the Lord. "Everyone of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). How shall we stand before Him in that day if we have cut short our life that He could have used for His glory?

5. It has been stated that no believer can commit suicide, and, therefore, that anyone who has done so cannot have been a believer. This is obviously contrary to the experience of many genuine believers who have taken their lives in a state of mental depression. It is true that no believer should commit suicide or, for that matter, any other known sin. The fact that a believer sins —sometimes grievously — does not indicate that he is not a real believer. Likewise, the suicide of a professed believer does not disprove his profession of faith. Moreover, many commit suicide when their mental state is unstable; in some cases, though by no means all, they may be hardly responsible for their actions. We can

be absolutely sure that the Lord will be more gracious to them than many of their fellow believers on earth are!

6. Since the eternal security of every believer is repeatedly assured in the Scriptures, no true believer who commits suicide will ever be lost.

7. For unbelievers, death, whether by suicide or by natural means, deprives the person of further opportunities of salvation. Since death does not end all, as they may have vainly hoped in taking their lives, suicide is certainly not an escape, but rather the doorway to torment infinitely worse, as the rich man of the Lord's story in Luke 16:22-24 found. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

8. As Christians, we have special responsibilities to those under severe stress and pressure, who may be considering terminating their lives. (Note: it has sometimes been stated that a person who threatens to commit suicide never does. This is, in fact, far from the truth. Indeed, 80% of those who commit suicide have communicated their intention to others beforehand.) By our compassion, help and prayer, we may be the means of delivering them from such a course and thus of saving their lives as well as their souls.

The Brain Drain

The Brain Drain

Dr. James Naismith

An Analogy

Canada is becoming desperately short of brains, according to a recent report by the Bladen commission on higher education. Shortage of doctors, dentists, scientists, and university lecturers is causing national concern. Not only is production of such skills too limited: a serious drain is taking place, particularly to the United States of America. It is estimated that 3,500 highly skilled professional workers move from Canada yearly. Higher pay, greater opportunities, better climate and easier divorce are among the factors that are luring people south of the border. Nor is Canada alone in this: other countries have the same problems. British leaders have been grappling with them for some years. The “brain drain” is reaching alarming proportions, and drastic measures have been urged to stem the tide, to close the gap.

Many assemblies are faced with a similar serious problem. Godly overseers are concerned that some of the most promising, spiritual, capable, and keen young Christians — future leaders — and others, less talented but still important, are being lost to the assemblies. Many continue in effective witness elsewhere, and we ought to praise God for this, but their leaving us should nevertheless cause us dismay and alarm. How can we stem the tide? How can we stop the drain? How can we close the gap?

We can only remedy the situation if we can pinpoint the cause. Accurate diagnosis must precede effective therapy. We can never solve the problem unless we know what the basic problem is.

Let us try to analyse some of the main reasons for this drain:

Lack of Conviction

Immediately it will be asserted by many that the prime reason is so many young people in assemblies do not have a real conviction of the nature and importance of the New Testament principles of gathering. It is doubtless true that Christians with sufficiently deep and firm convictions will not readily be either driven or drawn away. But are those of us who are older free of blame? (a) Do we have sincere convictions, based on scripture? Or have we simply drifted into assemblies on the basis of the convictions of others without examining and confirming the scriptural basis for these beliefs. Have we “searched the Scriptures” to see whether those things are so? Or are we content to use a few well-worn clichés — “one - man ministry,” “priesthood of all believers,” etc. — without really knowing what these mean, and what is the scriptural teaching on such matters. If our beliefs are lightly held, we can hardly be surprised if our young people do not hold any convictions tenaciously. (b) Further, do we endeavour to pass on truth to others? How many young believers in assemblies have never had systematic instruction on the New Testament principles relating to local church practices! Is it surprising that many are confused if they have never been taught? Let us be careful, too, to differentiate, in our thinking and our teaching, between

divine truth and human tradition. In our Lord's day, religious leaders placed greater stress on the traditions of the elders than on the Word of God — and there is a like danger among us, which may have been good in certain circumstances, and may still be good, but which do not carry scriptural authority. It is important to examine our practices in the light of the Scriptures and not to emphasize our traditional thinking at the expense of scriptural teaching. (c) Finally, how do we transmit our convictions to others? In a spirit of arrogance ("We are the people and wisdom will die with us".) and condemnation of others? Or in a spirit of meekness and dependence upon God, firmly standing for the truth of His Word, yet showing a real love for all saints in whatever group they move? The way we express our convictions and our attitude towards our brethren who do not hold them will have an undoubted influence on those who are seeking for the truth.

Lack of Attraction

A reason often cited for young people leaving assemblies is that "there is nothing to attract them" there, while in other groups much more endeavour is made to allure and hold them. Unfortunately, this criticism is too frequently justified. It is not sufficient for us to sit back and say (or think) "We have the truth; if they don't want it, let them go elsewhere." Surely it is not only our responsibility to hold and impart truth; we are responsible also to hold by the attractiveness of our fellowship those who might easily be lured away from us. This does not mean that we should compete with the world — or with other Christian groups — in offering material and recreational allurements — although group

recreational activities do afford excellent opportunities for fellowship and witness. However, in many assemblies much more could be done, on a spiritual level, to attract and hold young people with an interest in the things of the Lord. Our meetings frequently tend to be drab and lifeless, repetitious and unvaried. Prayer meetings, for instance, lose their interest when, week after week, the same two or three brethren cover almost all possible topics in each of their stereotyped prayers. By suggesting a variety of prayer subjects, each person praying briefly and specifically about one or two items, and, perhaps, by dividing occasionally into groups for prayer, the prayer meeting could be enlivened and made more effective and interesting. Bible studies, similarly, should be varied in style, theme, and leadership to provide more incentive for others to attend and benefit. And so it may be with all the gatherings of the church. Additional, informal, “fellowship” meetings may also help to bind the Lord’s people together. If it be objected that “we didn’t require such ‘allurements’ in our early days,” let us remember that times change, and with them the circumstances, needs, and desires of the Lord’s people. While scriptural truths and principles are timeless, they can, and should, be applied in varying ways to the needs of the particular hour and circumstance.

In addition, it is important to remember the attraction of activity. Our young people, and, indeed, all of us will form closer ties with assemblies if they are encouraged to develop the gifts that God has given them and to use them in fellowship with the local church for the profit of all. Specific service, suited to each one should be assigned, and emphasis placed on the value of such

service, however humble it may seem. A word of encouragement when a young believer engages in this service or participates in the gatherings of the assembly, will help each to appreciate his or her responsibility and provide added stimulus. How much there is to do! How much more could be done if each were encouraged to serve the Lord in a sphere suited to the gift He has given. What a responsibility rests upon the fathers in the assembly to direct and encourage the exercise and activity of the babes and young men in Christ!

Lack of Attention

In some, though by no means all, assemblies, there is, regrettably, a lack of interest shown in those who are not taking an active part in the gatherings of the church. Young people, and older ones, are allowed to come and go unnoticed. Because their voices are not commonly heard, they are scarcely missed when absent. Visitation is a neglected service, and the problems of young Christians are bottled up within their own hearts and minds because so few seem sufficiently interested to pay attention to them. Perhaps the elders are aloof and unapproachable, critical, and unsympathetic. This may not be a common situation but it does occur, and not a few have left our fellowship simply because they have found, in other circles, more attention being paid to their needs and problems. How can we blame our young people for lack of interest, if we too are characterized by a lack of interest in them?

Lack of Affection

One of the key words of the New Testament is love, the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of the saints

produced by the Spirit as fruit in our lives. Among His parting words to His own, our Lord gave them a new commandment, "Love one another." His words are reiterated by all the New Testament writers. The qualities and consequences of such love are oft described. Yet in many assemblies, alas, a spirit of bitterness, strife, jealousy, and pride replaces and hinders that "love to all saints" which was so characteristic of early believers. Many have wondered, not without reason, whether they are right to remain in a local church where New Testament correctness is professed yet the great commandment of the Lord is ignored. Surely 1 Corinthians 13 is at least as important as 1 Corinthians 12 or 14 in the New Testament pattern of local church practice! The gatherings of the saints should be evidences, not only of our adherence to the Scriptures, but also of our love for one another which these Scriptures emphasize. In particular, young Christians who make the assembly their spiritual home should surely find in it a warm and sincere love towards themselves rather than a carping criticism of their actions and the difficulties and doubts they may express. They require to be instructed, guided, corrected, sometimes chastened — but all this should be done tenderly and in love.

Not all who emigrate do so because of their discontent with local conditions or the supposedly greater attractiveness of another country. Many have purely personal reasons for leaving their native land; for example, family and friends in another part, a missionary spirit (be it for the cause of Christ or even communism), or simply a wander lust. Doubtless, corresponding motives impel not a few who leave the

assemblies, and what has been said here may not apply in their cases. By the attractiveness of our teaching and fellowship, however, even these may be constrained to remain with us. Let us endeavour so to manifest the grace and truth of Christ that others may find their spiritual home where we believe, according to God's Word, it is His will that they should belong.

The Christian in Church

The Christian in Church

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies in Christian Living for Young Believers, #10 Which church should I join? The question, in one form or other, presents itself to every young believer. Surrounded by a bewildering variety of so-called churches, he may find it rather difficult to answer. As he studies the Scriptures, he will learn, of course, that when he was saved, he was “added to the Church” — not by any preacher, or even apostle, but by the Lord Himself (Acts 2: 47); and so has become a living stone in the most wonderful building ever built — the Church (see 1 Pet. 2:4, 5; Eph. 2:20-22). It is God’s desire for him — and will be his desire too — that he should, like Saul, “join himself to the disciples” (Acts 9:26) in a local church, and so enter into the privileges of fellowship with God’s people and fulfil his responsibilities in worship and service in association with them. But how is he to choose the right church? Many and varied are the criteria that guide the choice of “church-goers” — from the purely material factors such as the size and appearance and nearness of the building through the social attractions as the kind and class of people who go and the welcome offered, to the more spiritual qualities such as the place of conversion, the quality of the preaching and the apparent happiness and usefulness that fellowship in a certain church might offer. The believer, however, who wishes to do God’s will, will take his directions from the Word of God and not be guided by his own personal preferences. He will want to be

where God would have him, and there are clear indications in the Scriptures of the principles that should guide him in his choice. Briefly, some of the important characteristics by which he can recognize a church which is conforming to the scriptural pattern are as follows:

1. Every member is a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ —see Acts 2:41-47; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
2. The teaching of Scripture is believed, taught, obeyed and practised —see 1 Timothy 3:15; and, as a corollary, unscriptural teaching and practices are refused.
3. The Lordship and Headship of Christ are recognized — by each person in his life and by the company of believers in their gatherings — see 1 Corinthians 12:1-5. No other person, however influential, gifted or godly, can take the place of the ascended Head, and all the activities of the church should be under His direction and guidance.
4. Opportunity is afforded to every member to fulfil his (or her) responsibilities and use his gift in the activities of the church. As in the human body, so in the local church, the members differ from each other and each is peculiarly fitted by God to serve in a particular sphere — see 1 Corinthians 12. God has set the members in the Body as it has pleased Him so that they can use their ability — gift — to the profit of all, not one to do everything, but everyone to do something. Only when there is opportunity for all to use their gift is the church functioning in God's pattern. Moreover, every believer is described in the Bible as a priest — see 1 Peter 2:4-10 — and opportunities for worship and service as priests should be provided in the church. Finally, there will be

“bishops” (also described as “overseers,” “shepherds” — “pastors” — “elders” — in the plural) and “deacons” — whose qualifications and service are clearly defined in the Scriptures —e.g. 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

5. The ordinances are observed as taught in the Scriptures. Ere He left His own, our Lord gave two such ordinances for His disciples to practise in His absence — baptism of believers (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16) and the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19, 20. etc.). The believer who seeks the Lord’s guidance will wish to associate with those who observe these ordinances in a scriptural way.

Having made his choice in accordance with these and other principles of Scripture, the young believer will find the local church to be his spiritual home where he can enjoy the fellowship of other believers, who are in the same spiritual family, and where he can bring his spiritual problems, sure of finding a sympathetic understanding: a nursery where he receives spiritual food and training in Christian living; a school where he is taught divine things and learns God’s will as revealed in the Word of God; a gymnasium in which he exercises himself in God’s service; and a hospital where he is cared for in times of spiritual weakness and sickness.

The privileges of church fellowship, however, bring responsibilities to every believer in that fellowship, and the measure in which we fulfil these responsibilities will influence not only our personal happiness but also the spiritual power and effectiveness of the church. As in the human body even a sore finger, that is not discharging its functions, keeps getting in the way and may upset the whole body, so the work of a local church

suffers if any member is not carrying out his responsibilities. What are these responsibilities? Perhaps we can summarize them in seven simple verbs:

1. Gather. It seems almost superfluous to mention this — a church can only be fully expressed when the believers who comprise it “come together” (1 Cor. 11:17-20, 33; 14:23, 26), “are gathered together” (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 5:4), “assemble” (Acts 11:26). Yet how many there are who, in “the manner of some” in the early days, “forsake the assembling” of themselves together (Heb. 10:25).

2. Worship. This is not the sole prerogative of a few brethren who lead the saints in worship at the Lord’s Supper, but is the privilege of every believer who, as a priest, brings his sacrifices to God — whether by lip, heart or life. In gathering together to remember the Lord —and on other occasions too — we can all “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 96:9), audibly or inaudibly, and when we are absent, or are present but not worshipping, we not only deprive ourselves but also the local church, and, above all the Lord Himself.

3. Obey. The Lordship and Headship of Christ will be evident in the gatherings of the church only when each believer is obeying Him in his life — carrying out His commands, e.g. in baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and in every detail of life and service.

4. Serve. Service is not confined to preachers and teachers in the church—no more than the tongue is the only member that serves the body. In the Church, as in the body, every member has his sphere, his gift, his task, and, guided by the Spirit, and in fellowship with other members, he should serve the Lord.

5. Pray. Judging by attendances at assembly prayer-meetings, this may well be the most neglected responsibility of believers today — yet it is no less important than the others. Our prayers should always be comprehensive in their scope (“for all saints” — Eph. 6:18; “for all men” — 1 Tim. 2:1), but should also be particularly directed to the saints and service of the local church. Nor should our prayers for the church be confined to prayer-meetings; in private, too, we should seek the Lord’s blessing on His people and His work.

6. Love, How frequently in the Epistles we are exhorted to “love one another,” as our Lord commanded His disciples in the upper room (John 13:34)! Between two very important chapters on the gifts, service and gatherings of the local church — 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 — the Holy Spirit has been pleased to interpolate a whole chapter on the pre-eminence of love—Chapter 13—evidence surely of its importance in the Church. Opportunities in abundance will be afforded us for the expression of this love to each other, not only in word, but in attitude and actions.

7. Give. By example and precept, believers are exhorted, in the Scriptures, to “abound” in the “grace” of giving; first giving ourselves to the Lord, and then distributing from our material possessions, as the Lord has prospered us, to the needs of the Lord’s people and His service — see 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, Philippians 4:10-19. How much more might our assemblies accomplish for the Lord if each one of us were more faithful in our giving!

It must be evident that the Christian who has a real heart for the local church and is fulfilling his

responsibilities will be kept busy. In his labours, he will have many encouragements. Since no local church, composed of imperfect men and women, is perfect, he may occasionally be discouraged and disappointed in his brethren — and they in him, perhaps. Let him, in these circumstances, remember that he and they are responsible to the Lord and let him do his service to the Lord and not unto men.

The Christian in The World

The Christian in The World

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies in Christian Living for Young Believers,
#11 Among the most perplexing problems that confront the young believer in Christ are those that relate to his attitude towards the world — its people, pleasures, pastimes, places. “Should I do this, or go there? What harm is there in that? So and so goes there — why shouldn’t I?” These and similar questions puzzle the minds of many and are frequently expressed openly, of-times with less than satisfactory answers.

One of the main reasons for the difficulties is that the Scriptures do not give direct commands or prohibitions; many of the problems arise from modern life and were unknown in Biblical times. However, God has not left us without guidance or instruction, and in the pages of His Book are age-abiding principles which can be applied equally well to the problems of today as to those of 19 or more centuries ago. The Scriptures are the Christian’s rule of life, his final court of appeal — not the opinions and statements of others, however weighty, nor the example of others, however good. If he diligently searches the Scriptures and truly seeks to learn the Lord’s will therein, his quest will not be in vain.

Another source of difficulty is the variety of opinions expressed and of practice adopted by Christians apparently equally godly and spiritual. It is disconcerting, to say the least, to receive diametrically opposite advice from two mature believers whose

judgment is generally worthy of respect. Romans 14 should be carefully studied as it gives very important guiding principles in connection with matters of this kind. Problems relating to diet and days — on which divergent opinions were held — are considered, and two important dangers are stressed that we still do well to remember and avoid. On the one hand, while we should ourselves have a firm conviction (“fully persuaded”) based on the Scriptures, we should not despise the principles and scruples of others, nor, on the other, should we judge the apparent lack of principle of others (see especially verse 2).

A third difficulty arises in the mind of some, namely, the fear of being considered aloof or even of antagonizing unsaved friends if they refrain from things considered by some to be perfectly innocent or even necessary. The principle of separation from the world is repeatedly stressed in God’s Word and it will be surprising if the Christian’s life is not in many respects different from those around us — to their wonder and annoyance at times. See Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 4:24. We should, however, be careful to avoid adopting a “holier than thou” attitude. What we are, we are by the grace of God; let us never give the impression that we consider ourselves to be better than they. It may be difficult to explain to unsaved friends the reasons for our different attitudes to such matters — since we look at them from an entirely different standpoint, and spiritual things are spiritually discerned. We should, however, be fully assured in our own minds in the light of God’s Word, and, while we may not be able to convince others, we may use occasions of discussion as opportunities to witness for our Lord.

Our blessed Lord, in what has been well described as “the greatest prayer of all time,” recorded in John 17, used four significant phrases which summarize His disciples’ relationship and attitude to a world that is an enemy of God and has shown its hostility to Him and to them (see James 4:4; John 15:18-25; 16:33; 17:14); verse 6, “The men which Thou gayest Me out of the world;” verse 11, “These are in the world;” verses 14, 16, “They are not of the world;” verse 18, “I ... sent them into the world.” Our Lord has not only left us in the world; He has sent us into it — to shine as lights in it (Phil. 2:15), to preach the Gospel to it (Mark 16. 15), and to sow the good seed of the Word in it (“The field is the world”); to be an influence for Him. We must ever remember, however that like our Master, we are “not of the world,” having been called out of it by Him. This world is not our home; we are “strangers and pilgrims,” passing through, not settling down; “ambassadors,” not citizens; transformed, not conformed (Rom. 12:2); influencing, not influenced by it; loving the world of men and women as God loves (John 3:16), but not loving the system — which is “not of the Father,” not the things that are in it.

When we are confronted with such problems as are referred to at the beginning of this paper, we should consider them in the light of certain

Basic Principles

1. The Love of Christ and His sacrifice on Calvary (2 Cor. 5:14, 15. Gal. 2:20; 6:14). Here is the constraining motive that should guide our whole lives and influence our every decision. How insignificant will seem any sacrifice we make in relation to worldly attractions, when seen in the light of His great sacrifice! If His love

for us has stirred in our hearts a true love for Him, surely we can never again love a world that crucified Him and that still despises Him and His followers! "Can I take part with those who nailed Him to the tree? And where His name is never praised, is there the place for me?"

2. The Lordship of Christ (Rom. 14. 6-9). "We are the Lord's." To Him we have an over-riding responsibility, for "we live unto the Lord," Every doubt and every decision of our life should be submitted to Him, and His will and commands obeyed implicitly. Let us take our question, "Should I do this or that?" to Him and ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

3. The Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14. 9-13). "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." What an influence that day should have on this day — that day, in which the actions of this day will be brought to light and their influence clearly revealed! How carefully, then, should we weigh our actions here, since "every one of us shall give account of himself" — not of his brother except insofar as he has influenced his brother. In view of that day, let us neither judge others for their actions, nor stumble them by ours.

4. (d) The Glory of God (1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31; Col. 3:17, 23). "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Here is the chief end of the Christian's life, and the golden rule by which it can be regulated. Many a problem can be solved by simply asking the question, "Will God be glorified through my doing this?" If the answer is negative or uncertain, it is better left undone.

The application of these principles to specific difficulties will in most cases lead to their solution. If we are still in

doubt about a certain pleasure or habit or pastime, we should ponder the influence.

Influence

What influence will it have on (a) our spiritual lives (Heb. 12. 1)? How will it affect our appetites for God's Word, our desire to pray, our love for the Lord and His people, our opportunities for Christian service and fellowship? Will it increase or curb our desire for spiritual things? Will it spur us on or retard us as we run the race set before us? Will it be a wing to help or a weight to hinder? Is there a possible danger of acquiring an appetite for it with serious spiritual consequences? (b) Our bodies (1 Cor. 6:20): Our bodies belong to the Lord and are the vehicles by which we serve Him here. We should maintain them in fit condition for this service and seek to use them for His glory, avoiding anything that would interfere with their proper functioning. The writer, for example, refrains from smoking, in part because of the undoubted relationship between smoking and lung cancer and other conditions, which if developed, would impair his usefulness and limit his period of active service for the Lord, (c) Our time: "Redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16). It is incumbent upon us, as those who will give account, to spend our time wisely and not wastefully. We all need recreation, but let us be sure we obtain it profitably and, as far as possible, in the company of God's people. (d) Our money: As stewards, we are responsible for the use or abuse of the material possessions wherewith God has blessed us. How much money is consumed in smoke that could benefit the Lord's servants and His work! How much, is directed to the support of things that lead many astray!

(e) Others (Rom. 14:13-15, 21; 1 Cor. 8:9-13): We must ever be careful not to stumble others by our actions, and remember that a situation into which we may enter without peril may endanger the spiritual health of another who may enter therein. What may seem perfectly innocent to one may be poison to another. Be careful what you do and where you go; others are watching and being influenced.

If, having sought the Lord's will in His Word and in earnest prayer, we still find ourselves in doubt, it is a safe rule "When in doubt, don't." On this principle, the Apostle closes the chapter to which we have so frequently referred, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23),.

In pursuing a path of separation from the world, we may frequently find that the Lord would have us give up for Him many things that we might hold dear, or pleasures in which we might be tempted to indulge. We can be sure that no sacrifice we make but will be amply repaid by Him. "He gives the very best to those who leave the choice with Him." Indeed we shall discover that as His things, the "things above," occupy our attention and affection "things on earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

The Claims of Christ

The Claims of Christ

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies in Christian Living for Young Believers, #
3 Every believer has been brought into intimate and eternal association with God's Eternal Son, the Lord Christ, the King of kings. What an honour is this! What dignity is conferred upon us! What blessings and privileges result from this association! What responsibilities are ours to acknowledge the claims upon our lives of this glorious Person! The contemplation of who He is, what He has done for us, and the blessings that are ours in Him should challenge our every heart. He is the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, and its supreme Sovereign. Does He not merit our complete trust and constant obedience? He left the glory of Heaven, stooping to share the sorrows of earth and to die in shame on a cross. Should we not live for Him who thus died for us (2 Cor. 5:15), and count any sacrifice as nothing compared with His? He has given us countless and priceless blessings for time and Eternity, utterly undeserved — eternal life (John 10:28), joy (John 15:11), peace (John 14:27), and satisfaction here (John 6:35, 51 ff.), and the prospect and assurance of a heavenly home and eternal glory hereafter (John 14:1-3; 17:24). Can we withhold from Him, in return, our hearts, our lives, our all? Let us then consider His claims upon us and our responsibilities to Him from four aspects.

He is Our Divine Creator

The Scriptures repeatedly emphasize that our Lord Jesus Christ is God, and that He made the worlds. John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-17, and Hebrews 1:1-4 should be specially studied. In John 1, notice the clear statements of His eternal existence, distinct personality, divine person, and creative power. The word “firstborn” in Colossians 1:15 does not, of course, mean that He had a beginning — for He was “in the beginning” (John 1:1) — but that He has priority over all creation — as the explanatory “for” in verse 16 indicates. This priority is evident from the facts stated in verses 16, 17 — in the past, all things were created by Him; in the present, all things consist or hold together by Him; and in the future, all things are “for Him.” Hebrews 1 declares His superiority over men and angels in virtue of His person, power, propitiation, and position; and His Deity and creative power are again unmistakably asserted in this chapter.

Since this is so, should we not give Him the honour and worship which are His by right (John 5:23), live in utter dependence upon Him by whom all — including ourselves — consist, and seek to fulfil the purpose for which He made us — to glorify God in our lives?

He is Our Saviour

“The great Creator became my Saviour.” This was the wondrous purpose for which He came, sent by the Father into the world (1 Tim. 1:15; Luke 19:10; John 3:17; 1 John 4:14). In each chapter of his short letter to Titus, Paul speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as “our Saviour” (1:4; 2:13; 3:6), and it is instructive to compare the expressions he uses with the phrase “God our

Saviour,” also occurring in each chapter (1:3; 2:10; 3:4), and thus to note an incidental proof of the Deity of the Lord Jesus. As is well known, the salvation He has provided has three tenses: not only has He saved us from the penalty of sin by dying for us; He is saving us from its power by living for us; and He will save us from its presence by coming again for us (see Hebrews 7:25; Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Romans 8:24, etc.). What should be our response to Him who has given us “so great salvation” at infinite cost to Himself? Surely He claims our gratitude — not only saying and singing our thanks with our lips, but showing our appreciation by our lives yielded to Him and doing His service; our trust — for deliverance from sin’s power as well as its guilt; our devotion — living for His glory, and telling others of His saving power; and our joyful anticipation of that coming day when salvation will be complete.

He is Our Lord

“Our Lord is still rejected and by the world disowned.” Yet God has made Him Lord (Acts 2:36), and the day is fast approaching when every tongue shall confess that “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:11). Even now this should be the confession of our lips and the acknowledgment of our lives. It is characteristic of every true believer that he has not only claimed Him as Saviour but crowned Him as Sovereign, reverencing Christ as Lord in his heart (1 Peter 3:15, R.S.V.). Note the emphasis on His lordship in such familiar Gospel texts as Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9. The Lord Jesus died and rose again not only to be our Saviour, but “that He might be Lord” (Romans 14:9). Having received Him as Lord, we should live constantly in recognition of His claims (Col.

2:6). In terms of utmost solemnity, the Lord warned His hearers of the seriousness of a lip-expression of His lordship without corresponding life experience (Matt. 7:21-23, Luke 13:24-30). It is therefore of tremendous importance that we should know what it means to call Him Lord.

“I am the Lord’s; yet teach me what it meaneth,
All it involves of love and loyalty,
Of holy service, absolute surrender,
And unreserved obedience unto Thee.”

(1) Obeying His Commands (Luke 6:46, Matt. 7:21).
“Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5) should be our motto as we hear His voice in the records of His earthly ministry, the pages of His Word, and the quietness of His presence. Ignorance is no excuse for disobedience. It is our responsibility to listen, to learn and to obey. Samuel’s request should constantly be ours: “Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth” (1 Sam. 3:9). Think, for example, of some of His commands given to His disciples near the end of His sojourn here — to love one another (John 13:34), to go and declare His message (Mark 16:15), to be baptized (Mark 16:16) and to remember Him (Luke 22:19). Are we obedient?

(2) Serving at His Commission, wherever He may send us and in whatever service He may entrust to us. Without questioning the implications of His commission, we should unhesitatingly present our lives to be used as He directs; responding, as did Isaiah to the Lord on the throne, “Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:8), and as Saul of Tarsus to the Lord in the glory, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6).

(3) Yielding to His Control. “We are the Lord’s” (Rom. 14:8) — His personal property, His by sovereign right. He has a claim to every part of our being and we should allow Him to control every day (not only the Lord’s day), every department (In church — 1 Cor. 1:8, 12:3; at work — Eph. 6:7, Col. 3:24; at home — e.g. Eph. 5:22, 6:1, 4; and everywhere — Col. 3:17), and every decision of our lives (Rom. 14:6; Col. 3:17).

(4) Conforming to His Character. As His subjects, it is our responsibility to represent Him, and He has given us a perfect example to reproduce (John 13:13-17).

(5) Looking for His Coming, “like unto men that wait for their Lord” (See Matt. 24:42, 45, 46; Luke 12:35-38; and note the frequent reiteration of the title “the Lord” in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18).

“In full and glad surrender, I give myself to Thee,

Thine utterly and only and evermore to be;

Reign over me, Lord Jesus, Oh, make my heart Thy throne; It shall be Thine, dear Saviour, it shall be Thine alone.”

He Will be Our Judge

In John 5:22 we read that “the Father... hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” Two verses later, believers in Him are assured that they will not come into judgment. Yet “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10, Rom. 14:10), not to be condemned and sentenced for our sins, but to be rewarded for our service. The Judge is Himself our Saviour, having taken in full our sentence, and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). When He comes again,

however, and we appear before Him, our lives and service will be appraised and rewards will be given commensurate with our faithfulness to Him. The relevant passages should be carefully studied (in particular, Rom. 14:10-13, 1 Cor. 3:9-15, 2 Cor. 5:9-10). Note the practical implications for us all: in relation to Him, we should make it our ambition to be acceptable, well-pleasing to Him (2 Cor. 5:9); in relation to others, we should not pass judgment on their motives and service (1 Cor. 4:3-5) or actions (Rom. 14:10-13), nor should we do anything that might cause them to stumble (Rom. 14:13); and in relation to ourselves, we should examine our motives and the quality of our service, remembering that quality, not quantity, will stand the test in that day when our work “shall be revealed by fire” (1 Cor. 3:10-15) — under the scrutinizing, discerning look of Him whose eyes are “as a flame of fire” (Rev. 1:14).

The Encouragement of God's Son

(Part 4)

The Encouragement of God's Son (Part 4)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, is a retired physician who devotes his full time to a Bible teaching ministry. Like the editor, he is a visiting instructor at Kawartha Lakes Bible School in Peterborough, Ontario, and for many years has served on the board of "Food for the Flock."

The conjunction "if" usually implies an element of doubt in the phrase or sentence that follows. Sometimes, however, it is used with the assurance that the following statement is true: for example: "If that is the case" may really mean "That being so," and the "if" could be changed to "Since." In the New Testament, when "ei" — "if" — is "followed by the indicative mood, the hypothesis is assumed as an actual fact ... no doubt being thrown upon the supposition." (Companion Bible, Ap. 118:2a) This is the case in such well-known verses as Romans 8:31 ("If God be for us") and Colossians 3:1 ("If ye then be risen with Christ"). In Philippians 2:1 there are four such "ifs," introducing four statements which are actual facts, without any doubt or question: each could well be translated "since." The first of these is: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ." As was previously noted, the word translated "consolation" is the Greek word, "paraklesis," which might better (and is, in the NIV translation) be translated "encouragement." When we are discouraged, we can

certainly find encouragement in Christ, the Son of God, our Saviour. Let us consider four (there are many more) reasons for this encouragement.

A. His Supreme Example:

Philippians 2:5-11. The context of this phrase is the glorious example of the Lord, presented as a corrective to the discord, disharmony and disunity which had evidently reared its head in the church at Philippi. His example should be an encouragement to us, too. But, we might reason, His example really discourages us: it is so far beyond the possibility of attainment. However, the Spirit of God not only presents the pattern of Christ: He adds, in verses 12 and 13, the power by which we can follow that example and so “work out our salvation” — deliverance from the strife and vainglory that results in disharmony. That power results from God working in us “to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

Moreover, the example of Christ is in itself a great encouragement for those who are “down.” “He humbled Himself ... Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him” (vv. 8, 9). He was low: God has made Him very high. He was down: God has lifted Him up. He “made Himself of no reputation” (7): God has “given Him a name which is above every name” (9). He “took upon Him the form of a servant”: one day, “every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (7, 11). No place too low was found for Him on earth: no place too high is found for Him in heaven. By His exaltation, God has more than reversed the actions of men in His humiliation. Is this not encouragement for us who are associated with Him in His rejection? “Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against

Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” He “endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

“If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:11, 12).

“Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 4:13).

B. His Changeless Character

Hebrews 1:12: “Thou art the same”; Hebrews 13:8:

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” We live in a constantly changing environment and world. “Change and decay in all around I see.” We ourselves are always changing: our appearance, our moods, our ways. Even the “everlasting hills” are not really everlasting; they were created at a definite point in time, and they will not last forever. Continual change characterizes all of us — and all we see and touch.

Thank God for the unchangeable, the immutable God: “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6); the abiding Word of God: “till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be

fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18); and the changeless Christ of God.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, of which He is the Subject, begins and ends with statements of His immutability. In 1:12, He is changeless in His deity — in contrast to creation. In 13:8, He is unchanging in His humanity and remains forever — in contrast to His creatures — the “guides” (v. 7) whom the readers were to “remember.”

In Hebrews 1:10-12 — the sixth Old Testament quote in the chapter — from Psalm 102:25-27, the universe is

likened to a garment, wearing out, growing old and ready to be discarded. But the wearing out of a garment is no indication of the slackening strength or waning energy of the wearer. When the earth and the heavens — “the work of His hands” — perish and grow old, as they will, He will fold them up and they will be changed; but He will remain the same: changeless, eternal. He is from eternity — “in the beginning” (v. 10) — to eternity: “Thy years shall not fail” (v. 12). What an encouragement to us, surrounded by changing places, people and problems, to anchor to the solid rock of His immutability!

Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ the same...” Yesterday we trusted Him. Did He prove worthy of our trust? He still is today! So will He be tomorrow — and all our tomorrows — forever. We can extend “yesterday” back to the days of His pilgrimage on earth. Think of the matchless records of His glorious ministry among men — His love, wisdom, compassion, grace, power, purity. He has not changed; He is the same; so trust Him!

Praise the Saviour, ye know Him;

Who can tell how much we owe Him?

Gladly let us render to Him

All we are and have.

Trust in Him, ye saints forever;

He is faithful, changing never;

Neither force nor guile can sever

Those He loves from Him.

C. His Continuing Ministry:

The work of our salvation was completed at Calvary; it was finalized and ratified by the resurrection and ascension of the Saviour —the evidence of divine approval and satisfaction and of our justification.

But His work did not cease when He ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high. His past, present and future work on our behalf combine to assure us of eternal security. His present work for us is a source of very real encouragement. Let us consider three aspects of His continuing ministry.

1. Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14): The priesthood of Christ is the central subject of Hebrews, occupying the middle six chapters from 4:14 to 10. Who is He? “Jesus, the Son of God” (4:14); Jesus, the name of His humanity and expressing His experience of our circumstances and conditions; He knows the trials of life on earth. He has had experience of hunger and thirst, weariness and sleep, sorrow and suffering, hatred and hostility, pain and even death itself. He knows all about our struggles. He “was tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart” (Heb. 4:15). The Son of God, the name of His deity and assuring us of His ability to meet our every need.

What can He do for us? He is able to Sympathize (Heb. 4:15); the double negative: “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched ...” results in a strong affirmative. “Be touched” — sympatheo — feel with, sympathize. Because of His very real experience of our trials, He is able to give us sympathetic understanding and help.

He is able to Succour (Heb. 2:18). Because of His personal experience of testing and trial which caused Him suffering He can provide help for all who are tempted and tried. Since He was and is God, Christ could not be “tempted with evil” (James 1:13). Satan tried to tempt Him to see if He would sin. God allowed Him to be tested to prove that He could not sin. In the course of that testing, He suffered in a way and to a degree that we shall never understand; His holy soul shrunk from all association with sin.

He is able to Save (Heb. 7:23-25): not here because of His divine power or human experience, but because of His endless life. Old Testament priests were constantly changing because of death. Our High Priest has an unchangeable — untransferable — priesthood because He never dies; He lives in the power of an indissoluble life. Since He ever lives to make intercession for us, He is able to deliver from every trial and problem of life — and that, completely — to the uttermost.

2. Advocate (1 John 2:1). The word “Advocate” is the same as that translated “Comforter” of the Holy Spirit — “Paraklete” — and is related to the verb “parakaleo” and the noun “paraklesis,” which, as we have noted, can be translated “encouragement.” One of the greatest causes of discouragement is in the life of the believer. But “if any man sin, we have an Advocate” — One Who encourages us — our legal counsel, who pleads our cause. He does not plead “Not guilty” — because He is “Jesus Christ, the righteous.” But, “He is the propitiation for our sins,” that is, He pleads the merit of His atoning sacrifice which has satisfied God’s claims and provided the means whereby He can justly be merciful to the sinner.

3. Shepherd (1 Pet. 2:25; Ps. 23; John 10:1-18). All that a good shepherd does for his sheep, Christ, “the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11) and the “Great Shepherd” (Heb. 13:20) does for us His sheep; He provides and protects, guides and guards, leads and feeds, watches and warns. Soon, He will return as the “Chief Shepherd” to reward the undershepherds, the overseers (1 Pet. 5:4).

D. His Coming Glory:

The believers at Thessalonica were exhorted by Paul to “comfort (parakaleo — encourage) one another with these words.” What words? The “blessed hope” (Tit. 2:13), the coming of the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The prospect of meeting, in the air, our blessed Lord, the Man of Calvary, the Lord of Glory; of being with Him and like Him forever; and of seeing Him reigning, worshipped, glorified and adored, is surely one of the supreme causes of encouragement, as we “journey through this desert drear and wild”!

“I am waiting for the dawning of the bright and blessed day, When the darksome night of sorrow shall have vanished far away; When forever with the Saviour, far beyond this vale of tears, I shall swell the song of worship through the everlasting years.

I am waiting for the coming of the Lord Who died for me; O His words have thrilled my spirit, ‘I will come again for thee.’

I can almost hear His footfall on the threshold of the door, And my heart, my heart is longing to be with Him evermore.”

The Encouragement of the Scriptures

(Part 6)

The Encouragement of the Scriptures (Part 6)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a frequent contributor to “Food for the Flock,” is a retired physician who devotes his full-time to a Bible teaching and conference ministry in Canada and the U.S.

Some years ago, Haile Selassie, the former emperor of Ethiopia, when exiled from his native land, attended a gathering of thousands in the Royal Albert Hall, London, assembled to pay tribute to the Bible. He gave this personal testimony: “From early childhood I was taught to appreciate the Bible, and my love for it increased with the passage of time. All through life, I have found it a cause of unfailing comfort ... I glory in the Bible.” His testimony could be reiterated by millions of others who also find it never fails to encourage. The Apostle Paul wrote of the “comfort” (NIV: “encouragement”) of the “Scriptures” (Rom. 15:4). He was writing about the Old Testament, “written aforetime,” but his words are equally true of the New Testament.

In all the circumstances of life, we can find encouragement in the Bible. Whether the path is smooth or rough, the voyage calm or stormy, the day sunny or gloomy; however dark the night or difficult the day, the Word of God gives consolation to the child of God. After all, it comes to us from our heavenly Father, Who knows us perfectly, loves us deeply and cares for us constantly.

Let us then consider some of the circumstances in which the Scriptures encourage the saints.

1. FEAR was man's first expressed emotion after sin entered the garden of Eden: "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid" (Gen. 3:10). Albert Camus, French essayist and Nobel prize winner, described this century as "the century of fear." Fear arises from many causes: death — and life; the future and its uncertainty; the present and its problems; the past and its results; pain — and even pleasure; failure —and success; the unknown — and also the known. Sometimes there is no apparent reason: "There were they in great fear, where no fear was" (Psa. 53:5: "overwhelmed with dread when there was nothing to dread" — (NIV).

The Bible is the sure antidote to fear. It has been said to contain one exhortation not to fear for every day of the year. Certainly, there are over 70 direct "Fear nots" in the King James Bible. They give encouragement in a wide variety of circumstances that inspire fear. One outstanding example is the great verse in Isaiah 41:10 — given as God's encouragement to His earthly people in circumstances that caused "the isles" to fear, and "the ends of the earth" to be afraid (v. 5), because of the lightning-like invasion of many countries by Cyrus of Persia, as he overcame the Babylonian empire.

Although today's circumstances may be different, the encouragement applies equally to God's heavenly people, whatever their circumstances.

"Fear thou not," He says to us as to His earthly people. Why? The Lord gives three sure grounds for the alleviation of fear. 1. The Presence of God: "For I am with thee." The same assurance led David to say in "the

valley of the shadow of death”: “I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me” (Ps. 23:4). 2. The Person of God: “For I am thy God”: the same God, Who, two chapters later, says to the same people: “Thou art Mine” (Isa. 43:1). “I am His and He is mine.” 3. The Power of God: “I will strengthen thee” — to keep thee from fainting; “yea, I will help thee” — to keep thee from failing; “yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” — to keep thee from falling.

Closely related to fear is the problem of: 2. ANXIETY. We are still living in the period described by the poet, W. H. Auden, as “the age of anxiety.” Among the most frequently prescribed drugs in North America are tranquilizers to relieve the anxieties caused by the stresses and strains of life in the end of the twentieth century. Symptoms of anxiety have been reported in over 75 percent of the population of large North American cities. Christians are not exempt. It is the “thief that robs many Christians of the fullness of life Christ intends they should experience.” Does the Bible have the answer? Of course it does! Encouragement is found repeatedly in its pages for those who are anxious and worried. Several times in the latter half of Matthew 6 — in the Sermon on the Mount — the Lord Jesus encouraged His disciples not to be anxious (“Take no thought” — KJV). The basis for this encouragement is twofold: 1. “Your heavenly Father knoweth” (v. 32): He fully understands all our needs even before we tell Him: even before they arise! 2. “Your heavenly Father feedeth” (v. 26): Just as He provides food for the birds and clothing for the lilies and the grass, so He will meet all our need — as He has done until now. In the same passage, the Lord prescribed the remedy for

discouragement: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (v. 33). Peter, who was there when these gracious words were spoken, later confirmed the secret for a care-free life: “Cast all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

3. GUILT: The consciousness of sin, and the experience or dread of its consequences are frequent causes of discouragement — even for Christians. Although believers are assured of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ and through faith in Him (Eph. 1:7; Acts 10:43; 13:38, 38, etc.), they may be more discouraged by sin than unbelievers. Indeed, the more saintly they are, the greater their consciousness of sin: “They who fain would serve Thee best are conscious most of wrong within.” Again we should turn to the Word of God for encouragement — to such great verses as 1 John 2:1: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father” — our “Paraclete,” Comforter, Encourager, Who is called alongside us, Who speaks in our defence and pleads the value of His propitiatory sacrifice at Calvary, which has fully satisfied the claims of a holy God and provides the basis for His being merciful to us. We experience forgiveness and cleansing by confessing our sin to Him: “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Not that any sin could ever take us out of the family of God or shut us out of His heaven: but unconfessed sin is discouraging for it deprives us of the joy of family fellowship.

4. SUFFERING: “God had only one Son without sin, but He has none without suffering.” Some who are most like that Son are called to pass through deepest suffering.

Discouraged saints ask: “Where is God when it hurts?” as Philip Yancey asks in his book with that title. Repeatedly, the Bible focuses on the problem of suffering; we can turn to many of its pages for encouragement: e.g., in Job; Rom. 8; Heb. 12; 1 Peter. In Romans 8, we learn that suffering is a great privilege — for we “suffer with Him” (v. 17), with a glorious prospect — of being “glorified together” (vv. 17, 18), and a good purpose, since “all things” —including suffering — “work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (v. 28.)

5. TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS: In the last words of His discourse to His disciples on the eve of His anguish (John 16:33), the Lord Jesus anticipated “tribulation” for them: Greek “*thlipsis*” —pressure, affliction, trouble — but in the same verse He provided encouragement in that trial: “Be of good cheer” — or courage; “be encouraged.” On what does this encouragement depend? Examine the verse and discover: a. the source of discouragement — “in the world ... tribulation”; b. the solution to discouragement — “in Me ... peace” — because “I have overcome the world.” Since the solution is found in Him, the secret of encouragement is obviously what He stated several times in the previous chapter (15): “Abide in Me.” As we abide in Him, day by day communing with Him and deriving strength and sustenance from Him, we not only abide in His love (v. 10) and are filled with His joy (v. 11), but experience His peace (16:33).

6. TEMPTATIONS: Are you discouraged by temptations? By their force? Their frequency? The difficulty in resisting them? If so, you are not alone! But even here, the Scriptures provide encouragement. 1 Corinthians

10:13 assures us that “there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man”: however great your temptation seems, it is not unique — you are not the only one to experience it. While it may seem almost irresistible at times, God places a limit on it. Satan tries to overwhelm you as he tried to do to Job, but, as in that case, God will only allow him to go so far and no farther — “He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” He knows the force of the temptation, and He knows the limit of your ability and sets a corresponding limit on the temptation. “God is faithful” — He will remain true to Himself and to His people in every trial. With every temptation, He will provide a way to escape — not out of or under, or round about the temptation — but through it, “that ye may be able to bear it,” not in our strength, but by His divine enablement.

7. DEATH: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26). Thank God, its destruction is certain. The One Who will destroy it has already conquered it. But in the meantime we are faced with its ravages and the discouragement it causes. Again, however, we turn to the holy Scriptures for comfort and encouragement. They assure us that, for the believer, to die is to be “with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:23). To be “absent from the body” is to be “at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). while “the valley of the shadow of death” is both dark and difficult, we can assert, with David, “I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me” (Ps. 23:4). The One Who has Himself walked through the valley will be with us all the way and will welcome us on the other side! But is there any encouragement for us as loved ones are taken from us in death? Can we know “Peace, perfect peace; death shadowing us and ours?”

Surely we can, for “Jesus has conquered death and all its powers.” Loved ones who knew Him and have been taken from us in death are even now with Him, and we shall see them when we see Him in the morning of the first resurrection: “The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Meantime, we can be cheered by the assurance that He in whom we trust will not leave us alone in our bereavement, for He has said: “Lo, I am with you alway” (Matt. 28:20); and “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

Conclusion

Discouraged? Downhearted? Depressed? Whatever the circumstances, the Bible has encouragement. It is God’s Word, and it speaks to your every need. Learn its principles! Obey its precepts! Trust its promises! Claim its provision!

The Encouragement of the Spirit of God (Part 5)

The Encouragement of the Spirit of God (Part 5)

James T. Naismith

Dr. James T. Naismith of Scarborough, Ontario, a frequent contributor to "Food for the Flock," is a retired physician who devotes his full time to a Bible teaching and conference ministry in Canada and the U.S.

It was not without reason that the Lord Jesus, in the course of His discourse to His disciples on the eve of His suffering on Calvary (John 13-16), spoke of the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter" on four recorded occasions (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Their hearts were troubled (14:1, 27; 16:6). The realization of His impending departure distressed them. They were facing a hostile world that hated, persecuted, and ultimately crucified their Master, and would treat them no better (15:18-25; 16:33). They needed encouragement! In His wonderful message to them, recorded in these chapters which have comforted and encouraged the Lord's people in all the centuries since, the Lord gave them some very precious promises. Among these were two that are especially comforting: 1. The Prospect of Another Coming: "Let not your heart be troubled ... I will come again" (14:1, 3). 2. The Presence of Another Comforter: "I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter ... I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (14:16, 18).

Why "Another Comforter"? Because the Speaker Himself had been their Comforter. Now, on His departure, the

Spirit of God would come as “Another Comforter.” He has come, and is our divine Comforter here on earth, while the Lord Jesus, Who made the promise, is our Comforter — “Advocate” (same word) — in heaven.

The word “Comforter” is the translation of the Greek word “Parakletos,” which literally means, as we have previously seen, “called alongside” — to help. It is variously translated: “Counsellor” (NIV), “Advocate” (NEB), “Helper” (NASB), “One ... to stand by you” (Phillips). Included in the meaning is:

“Encourager.” Just as the early churches in Judaea, Galilee and Samaria, “walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort (paraklesis) of the Holy Spirit (NIV: “were encouraged by the Holy Spirit”) were multiplied” (Acts 9:31), so today, believers, individually and collectively, derive encouragement from the Holy Spirit in their walk with the Lord.

How does the Spirit give this encouragement? Since the Lord Himself introduced the Name “Paraklete” to describe the Holy Spirit, we may well find the answer to this question in His teaching about “the Comforter” in John 14-16:

1. By His very presence with us and within us, He is a source of encouragement. “He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever ... He dwelleth with you and shall be in you” (John 14:16, 17). Repeatedly, in this discourse, the Lord spoke of His “going” from them (for example: 13:33, 36; 14:2, 3, 4, 12, 28; 16:5, 7, 16, 28), and sorrow filled their heart (16:6). But He was not going to leave them “comfortless” — orphans, bereft of their dearest Friend and greatest Support. He said: “I will come to

you" (14:18) — meaning, in this context, by the Holy Spirit (though it was equally true that He came to them) after His resurrection and will come again as He promised in 14:3). While not seen with natural eyes, the Spirit is just as personal and as real as the Lord Himself, and, being God, is equal in power and wisdom. This promise to His disciples is also the experience of every Christian today. On believing, we "were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). Our body is, even now, "the temple of the Holy Spirit" Who is in us (1 Cor. 6:19) and he will never leave us, even though we may grieve Him (Eph. 4:30), for we are "sealed unto the day of redemption." Indeed, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9), that is, he does not belong to Him, is not a real Christian. How encouraging to know that God, the Holy Spirit, is actually our indwelling heavenly Guest, abiding with us forever, in every vicissitude of life, and in spite of our failings and failures!

2. This abiding Companion not only encourages us by being with us, but also by teaching us. For three-and-a-half years, the greatest Teacher the world has ever heard, the Lord from heaven, had been with the disciples. What marvellous instruction He had given them): the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), the "Sermon by the Seaside" (Matt. 13), the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24, 25), and now His farewell ministry (John 13-16) — as well as His other words, recorded through the Gospels — and many not recorded! What encouragement, blessing and guidance did that teaching give them) as they listened, spellbound, to Him! But now, He is to be no longer with them! However, "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17) — another appropriate title for the

“Comforter” — would instruct them in divine truth: “He shall teach you all things” (14:26). While this promise was intended primarily for the disciples who heard it, it is also true for us. The beloved disciple, who recorded the words of Jesus in the upper room, wrote, in his first epistle: “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things ... the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth” (I John 2:20, 27). Evidently, the words “Unction” and “Anointing” refer to the Holy Spirit (see 2 Cor. 1:21, 22). Just as the Lord Jesus opened the eyes of the two on the Emmaus Road and the understanding of the disciples in the upper room (Luke 24:26, 27, 31, 44, 45), so the Spirit of God opens our eyes to “behold wondrous things out of Thy Law” (Ps. 119:18). May our prayer be: “Spirit of God, my Teacher be, showing the things of Christ to me!”

3. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is also one of reminding — bringing to remembrance. How prone we are to forget! The words spoken by our Lord during His earthly sojourn were too precious to lose. But how could the disciples possibly remember them all? He provided the solution: “The Comforter ... shall ... bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (14:26). It is to Him we should be grateful for the inspired record of the “beautiful words of Jesus, spoken so long ago,” these matchless sayings, beautiful parables and illustrations, and marvellous discourses. What He did for the disciples, He does for us — bringing to our remembrance what we have heard from and read in the Word of God. In the dark days of life, when oppressed by trials and troubles, it is His still small voice that whispers in our ears words of encouragement

— sometimes words “that we have known long since and lost awhile.”

4. The Spirit of God also enables us to bear witness of the Lord Jesus: “He shall testify of Me; and ye also shall bear witness” (15:26, 27). On a previous occasion, the Lord had encouraged His disciples not to be anxious what they should speak when they were delivered up before governors and kings, “for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father Who speaketh in you” (Matt. 10:18-20). Likewise, today, in similar circumstances — or whenever we are called to witness for our Saviour — we need not be anxious, for the Spirit of God will bear witness and give us the words to speak. To fully experience this blessing, we need to be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18) — yielded to His control — as were the early Christians after their first persecution: “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness ... And with great power gave the apostles witness” (Acts 4:31, 33). Remember that the whole task of convicting those to whom we witness is not ours but His to accomplish (John 16:8-11).

5. The Holy Spirit is our divine Guide. To travel the highway of life without a Guide or guidebook is surely discouraging; but we have both. “The Spirit of truth ... will guide you into all truth” John 16:13) — that is “In the way of all truth” (F. F. Bruce). Since the Lord Jesus is “the Truth” (John 14:6), and God’s Word is truth (John 17:17), it is clear that the Spirit of truth guides the people of God, who submit to His leading, in a path of following Christ, our Leader, and of obedience to the Word, our guidebook. In such a path, and with such a Guide, we cannot stray. What an encouragement it is to be guided aright!

Life's discouragements frequently result from fear and foreboding about the future. "Peace, perfect peace — the future all unknown?" asked the hymn-writer. But those who are led by the Spirit can be encouraged as they look into the future, for "He will shew you things to come" (John 16:13). For the believer, "the future is as bright as the promises of God," centered, as it is, in the Son of God and the prospect of His coming and our being with Him for ever.

Thus, the Spirit encourages us by being with us always, by teaching us, reminding us, bearing witness, guiding us and showing us the future. Supremely, and including all His other activities, "He shall glorify Me" (John 16:14). This is His preeminent purpose and activity. As the Son glorified the Father on earth (John 17:4), so the Spirit glorifies the Son. To all who know and love the Lord and appreciate His Person and work, there can be no greater encouragement than to have Him revealed to our hearts in all His matchless glory!

The Sanctity of Human Life

The Sanctity of Human Life

James T. Naismith

Is it ever justifiable to take human life? What about “mercy killing”? Capital punishment? The life of the unborn? One’s own life?

These issues are by no means new; some are almost as old as man himself. But they are certainly very relevant in today’s world, and particularly so in North American society. Moreover, there are divergent opinions on each of them, so it ill behooves us to hastily pass judgment on those who do not see eye to eye with us. What does the Bible teach?

In subsequent issues of “Food for the Flock,” we shall examine some of these problems. Essential to any Biblical consideration of them, however, is the concept of the sanctity of human life, which the Bible does emphasize and which itself is based on the distinctiveness of human life (Gen. 9:5, 6). As an introduction to these studies, we should consider these subjects.

The Distinctiveness of Human Life

Since, obviously, no human being was present to witness or record the origin of human life on earth, our knowledge of this must come from God’s revelation in His Word: in Genesis 1:26, 27 and 2:7. These two accounts are not contradictory but complementary: the first describes the creation of man in relation to the rest of God’s creation; the second gives the physical details,

and man's relationship with his immediate environment on earth. Both clearly indicate that man did not evolve from other creatures but came directly from the hand of God; he was created by a definite act of God. This, of course, totally contradicts "theistic evolution."

That human life is distinct and on a different plane from that of all other living creatures on earth is evident from the following:

1. The creation of man is the culminating act of Genesis 1. The verses before verse 26 are preparatory; God was making a suitable environment in which to introduce the climax and crown of His creation: man. Of all the earlier stages, God said: "Good" (verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25); of this final stage — the creation of man — God said: "Very good" (31).

2. The word "create" occurs on three separate occasions in Genesis 1: in relation to 1. "the heaven and the earth" (1); 2. living creatures in general (21) — including fish, birds, and, subsequently, beasts; and 3. man (27) — of whom the word is used three times in one verse (and several times throughout Scripture). Evidently, man was a distinct creation of God.

3. In creating other creatures, God said: "Let the waters bring forth... let the earth bring forth..." (20, 24). The creation of man necessitated a council in heaven, when Father, Son and Spirit made the momentous decision: "let us make man."

4. God made other living creatures on earth "after his kind" (21, 24, 25). Only of man did He say: "Let us make ... in our image, after our likeness" (26). Whatever else may be meant by this statement, it clearly marks man as different from and superior to the animate and

inanimate creation around him. Likewise, of no other creature is it said: “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ...” (Gen. 2:7). Even the evolutionist, Sir Julian Huxley, admitted that “man is unique in virtue of his power of conceptual thought.”

5. Man was, at the time of his creation, given dominion over the rest of living creatures (26).

6. After the flood, God allowed Noah and his descendants to use as food “every moving thing that liveth” but prohibited the taking of human life (Gen. 9:1-6).

7. The Ten Commandments include the command: “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13) — that is, murder — the taking of human life. Yet God commanded His people to “kill” bullocks, sheep, goats, etc. as offerings on behalf of man.

8. Our Lord, while on earth, gave His assessment of the value of human life, when He asked, “Are you better than they (the fowls of the air)?” (Matt. 6:26), and: “Ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:31), and when He reproached the religious leaders of His day for their criticism of His healing of humans on the Sabbath, while they cared for their own ox or ass on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14-16).

9. In 1 Corinthians 15:39, Paul distinguishes the flesh of man from that of beasts, fish and birds.

Alas, it is true that many humans have stooped morally to or below the level of beasts, but, in His grace, God can raise them — even to “sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6).

The “Animal Rights Movement” denies the Scriptural view of human uniqueness in its stand against the use of animals in research related to human diseases, and even in the provision of food. Thus, ethics professor Peter Stringer (in “Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for our Treatment of Animals”) argues: “It can no longer be maintained by anyone but a religious fanatic that man is the special darling of the whole universe or that other animals were created to provide us with food, or that we have divine authority over them or divine permission to kill them.” Cruel and needless animal experimentation is never justified. Without animal research, however, many of the modern remedies for human disease would not be available, and medical knowledge of the cause and treatment of both animal and human disease would be much more limited.

The Sanctity of Human Life

In His first recorded commands to Noah after the flood, God emphasized the sacredness of human life and the seriousness of taking life (Gen. 9:1-7). The basis of the sanctity of the life of man is stated to be: “for in the image of God He made man” (v. 6). When He created man, God said: “Let us make man in our image and after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26) — a statement of the Triune God which is far beyond the intellectual grasp of His creature man. “Image” in Scripture has the sense of representation: as the image on the coin presented to the Lord represented the emperor, Caesar (Matt. 22:20, 21), and idols are often called “graven images” — representing “gods.” Thus God created man in His image to represent Him on earth. This he could only do if he bore some resemblance to the Creator — indicated

by the word “likeness.” This is obviously not a physical likeness — for God is Spirit (John 4:24) — but rather moral, intellectual, spiritual.

Since man is made in the image of God, it is very serious, indeed, to take human life; to do so is to express the utmost contempt for the Creator, represented by that human being. One who kills another has forfeited his own right to live.

This divine prohibition regarding the taking of human life is reiterated through the Old Testament, including, of course, the sixth of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not kill.” The Lord Jesus Himself reinforced it in His teaching (Matt. 5:21, 22).

The Spirit Controlled Life

The Spirit Controlled Life

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies in Christian Living for Young Believers, #4

Their hearts were troubled! Their best Friend was about to leave them. For three memorable years, He had been their constant Companion and Guide. They had of times listened spellbound as He, the greatest Teacher of all times, explained sublime truths of Heaven in simple terms of earth. On several occasions, He had forewarned them of His cruel death at the instigation of their fellows — but they had not apparently understood. Now the realization of His impending departure was beginning to dawn upon them and their hearts were “filled with sorrow.” To comfort them on the eve of His anguish, He spoke words that have been a priceless heritage to His followers of all centuries, recorded by John in the 14th., 15th., and 16th. chapters of his Gospel. What comfort, peace and joy countless troubled hearts have found in this sweet portion! How precious the promises contained therein! “I will come again,” our Blessed Lord has assured us (Ch. 14:3). Nineteen centuries have passed and still, with eager anticipation, we look for Him. But He has fulfilled another promise: “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.” Another coming — a prospect for the future! Another Comforter — a provision for the present! In the interval between His two comings, the Holy Spirit has come, not only as Comforter, but as Constant Companion (Ch. 14:16), Guide (Ch. 16:13), and Teacher (Ch. 14:26) — just as the Lord had been. And not only is He with us —

and “for ever” (Ch. 14:16); He is in us (v. 17). What potential is here for the life of every believer! What a source of power and blessing! What possibilities for service and witness!

1. Passages for Special Study

A. Romans 8:1-18, 26, 27. The Spirit of God is more frequently mentioned in this chapter than in any other in the Bible — and this is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that the seven preceding chapters contain only one reference to Him (Ch. 5:5). The contrast between chapters 7 and 8 is obvious to the most superficial reader. Chapter 7 clearly portrays a defeated and perplexed Christian who ultimately cries out in despair, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” In chapter 8, he has found the secret of deliverance and in joyful triumph exclaims, “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free.” The recurring “I” of chapter 7 (27 times from verses 14 to 25) is replaced by “the Spirit” in chapter 8 (15 times in the first 16 verses) — indicating that the secret of power, victory and blessing in the Christian’s life is to allow the Spirit to take the place of self and control the life. In our study of this portion, we should note the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in us (v.9), His witness to us (v. 16), His control of us — our walk (v. 4), mind (vv.5,6), life and actions (vv. 12,14), — and His intercession for us (vv.26,27). Notice carefully the prepositions used in connection with the Holy Spirit — “walk after the Spirit” (v.4) — i.e. dominated, controlled by Him; “in the Spirit” (v.9) — i.e. in the sphere of the Spirit (true of all believers as the verse goes on to explain); “through the Spirit” (v. 13) —i.e. by His power; and “led by the Spirit” (v.14). Finally we

should consider the emphasis on the contrasting influences in our lives — the flesh and the Spirit. The believer has two natures which are in opposition to one another: we are all indwelt by the Spirit of God, but we still have the flesh within us—the old sinful nature which controls the unregenerate person. Whether we live a victorious life which is pleasing to God or a defeated life will depend on whether our walk (v.4), our mind (v.5), and our actions are controlled by the Spirit or by the flesh.

B. Galatians 5:16-25. The conflict (v.17) and the contrast (vv. 19-23) between the two natures of the believer are the theme of this passage also. A continual battle rages in everyone of us; the flesh endeavouring to prevent us following the leading of the Spirit, and the Spirit empowering us to overcome the lusts of the flesh. The result of this struggle will be determined by whether we yield to one or the other. If we allow our lives to be dominated by the old nature, “the works of the flesh” will be manifest (vv. 19-21). If, however, we are led by the Spirit and guide our steps by His direction, we shall not only experience deliverance from the desires of the flesh (v. 16) and its works; our character will be transformed and the spiritual graces displayed to perfection by our Lord will be produced as the “fruit of the Spirit” in our lives (vv. 22,23). The law cannot condemn anyone who is thus led by the Spirit (v.18) and manifests this fruit (v. 23). Indeed, as Romans 8:4 states, the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled by those whose walk is controlled by the Spirit. In view of this, let us heed the concluding exhortation of v.25: “If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course” (N.E.B.).

2. Suggested Outline of Study

A. Some Basic Facts about the Holy Spirit should be noted as a prerequisite to any consideration of His purpose and place in our lives. (i) He is a Person, not merely an influence. Our Lord's references to Him in John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:13-15, and many other scriptural statements about Him are only applicable to One who has personality. (ii) He is divine. As proofs of His Deity, study His association with the Father and Son in the benediction (2 Cor. 13:14), the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19), and the provision of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-6); His divine attributes e.g. eternity, (Heb. 9:14), omniscience (1 Cor. 2:11); and His work in creation (Gen. 1:2), resurrection (Rom. 8:11), and regeneration (John 3:5). (iii) He indwells every believer (Rom. 8:9).

B. The purposes of the Holy Spirit in our lives are manifold and include the following: (i) To glorify Christ and to reveal Him to us (John 16:14, 15) is His primary purpose and underlies all others. (ii) to teach us—"all things" (John 14:26; 1 John 2:20, 27, where the "unction" and the "anointing" — same word — are references to the Holy Spirit, often in Scriptures typified by oil); "all truth" (John 16:13); "the things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9-16). He is the perfect Teacher, but His instruction will only be effective if we are apt pupils willing to learn in His school and study under His direction, using His textbook, the Holy Scriptures. (iii) To produce in us Christian — Christ-like — character (Gal. 5:22, 23). This is not "automatic" — as is evident from the un-Christlike lives of so many of us. But if we are willing to be guided by Him as He reveals Christ to us in His Word and so behold "the glory of the Lord," He, the Lord, the Spirit, will transform us into His

likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). (iv) To empower us — Acts 1:8; Eph. 3:16) —to overcome sin (Gal. 5:16), to live righteously (Rom. 8:4) and to witness effectively (John 15:26, 27; Acts 1:8; 4:31, 33 etc.). This power is at the disposal of each of us, ready to be harnessed in our lives as we live in obedience to and dependence upon the Spirit who dwells in us. For example, we can all be good witnesses if we take advantage of opportunities He affords us and trust in Him for power to use them. (v) To lead and guide our lives (John 16:13; Acts 13:4; 16:6, 7; Rom. 8:14), our walk (Gal. 5:25), our worship (Phil. 3:3) and our prayer (Rom. 8:26, 27). Indeed, at every moment, and in every phase of our lives, He is willing to be our unfailing, unerring Guide, if we are willing to submit (1 Cor. 12:3-11). God has appointed a sphere in which each of us can serve Him in association with others in a local church. As every member of our bodies has been specially adapted anatomically for the specific functions it performs so we, members of the Body of Christ, have been given gifts by the Spirit to enable us to engage in this divinely appointed service. It is our responsibility to discover the gifts that we have been given, to train and develop them, and to use them under the Spirit's direction and in cooperation with other members, for the glory of God and the profit of all.

C. The Control of our lives by the Spirit. We cannot read the Acts of the Apostles without being impressed by the fact that these "acts" were really the acts of the Holy Spirit performed through men who were "filled with the Holy Ghost" (e.g. 2:4; 4:31; 6:3 etc.). If our lives are to be as fruitful as theirs, we too require to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). This exhortation is given at the beginning of the section of Ephesians dealing with the

believers' relationship in the church (Ch. 5:19- 21), in the home (5:22 - 6:4), and at work (6:5-9), suggesting that the filling of the Spirit is essential for right Christian living in these spheres. What does it mean to be "filled with the Spirit?" It assuredly does not mean that we can have more of Him — but He can have more of us! He should have free access to and complete control of every department of our lives — no room should be barred to Him. To be filled with the Spirit we must be emptied of self and of anything that hinders His working through us. All of us possess the Spirit: only when He possesses us, are we really "filled with the Spirit." A Spirit-filled Christian will constantly "walk in" or "after the Spirit," and be "led by the Spirit," phrases which, as we have seen, indicate His control and direction of our lives.

On the negative side, we can hinder the Spirit's work in us, and so we are exhorted to "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30) and to "quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess.5: 19). If we allow untruthfulness, theft, unwholesome language, bitterness, anger, wrath, quarrelling, slander and malice (Eph. 4:25-31), our lives will certainly cause grief to Him who is the Holy Spirit. We quench Him when we stifle His leading in our lives, or when we suppress His promptings in the service and gatherings of the church.

Walk, Or Christian Behavior

Walk, Or Christian Behavior

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies in Christian Living for Young Believers, #9
A Christian should show what he believes by the way he behaves.

In the early days of Christianity, the Christian faith was frequently referred to as “the way,” and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ were described as being “of this way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). This would seem to indicate that not only did they declare a doctrine to be believed — the way to God (John 14:6), but they manifested in their lives the practical implications of this doctrine — the Christian faith was a way of life. So it is today. While it is necessary for us to be acquainted with the teachings of the Scriptures and the truths of the Gospel, these teachings and truths should affect our lives and conduct. The writer of the 119th. Psalm obviously delighted in God’s law, learned His statutes, and meditated upon His Word; but he stresses frequently in that great Psalm the importance of walking in the law of the Lord (vv. 1, 3, 5), and allowing the way to be cleansed (v. 9) and directed (vv. 59, 105) thereby. Everywhere in the Scriptures, emphasis is placed on the necessity of a life consistent with our profession of faith.

In considering this subject, we are going to study two words used in Scripture to describe our conduct — “walk” and “conversation” — and to use as our textbooks, in particular, two New Testament Epistles —

Ephesians and 1 Peter — in which these words respectively occur on several occasions.

“Walk:” Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians has been summarized in three words —the wealth, walk, and warfare of the believer. The immeasurable wealth — the blessings — with which we have been endued, forms the main theme of the first half of the book, and especially the first chapter; the consequent walk — behaviour — that should characterize us is emphasized in the second half, the final section of which reminds us that we are engaged in warfare — a battle —against powerful adversaries determined to deprive us of the enjoyment of our blessings and to prevent us manifesting this behaviour.

A glance at a concordance will quickly demonstrate that the word “walk” is frequently used in both Old and New Testaments of the course, character and tenor of a person’s life — whether believer or unbeliever — and embraces all his conduct and activities. Just as a soldier can sometimes be recognized by his walk, and certain types of gait are characteristic of certain illnesses, so the Christian should be distinguished by the character of his walk. Notice three ways in which the word is applied in this Epistle:

(1) How we used to walk, Chapter 2:2. “In time past ye walked.” “There, but for the grace of God, am I” are words we can all use as we read the description of verses 1-3 of this chapter, for there we discern a picture of what we once were and might yet have been. The picture is in three parts: verse one, the condition we were in; verse two, the character we had; verse three,

the consequences we deserved. We were dead, disobedient and doomed. Notice particularly the description of our previous walk in verse 2: (a) its course — “The course of this world”; (b) its control — “the prince of the the power of the air”; (c) its character — “disobedience.” By implication, we can describe what our present walk should be, in contrast to this — heavenly in its course, directed and controlled by the Lord Jesus Christ, and characterized by obedience to the Word of God.

(2) How we should not walk, Chapter 4:17-19. “Walk not.” Our lives and conduct should be entirely different from those of others in the world around us, “not conformed to this world but ... transformed” (Rom. 12:2). The emptiness and aimlessness of life, darkness and ignorance in relation to divine things, hardness of heart, sensuality, uncleanness of life, speech and thought, and greed that are still as prevalent in the 20th. century as they were in the 1st. should not characterize the Christian’s walk.

(3) How we should walk. A number of phrases that describe the walk of the believer should be carefully studied in their context:

(a) “In good works.” Chapter 2:10. We are not saved by works, but God’s purpose in saving us by grace was that we should walk in good works.

(b) “Worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,” Chapter 4:1, that is, in keeping with the great privileges and the high position, into which, as we learn from the first three chapters, we have been brought through God’s grace. The characteristics of such a worthy walk are outlined in verses 2 and 3 and relate especially to

our relationships with other believers, who are fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the one Body and fellow-partakers of God's promise in Christ (ch. 3:6). The unity of the Spirit will be maintained and manifested if each one of us walks "with all lowliness and meekness," etc, (c) "In love." Chapter 5:2, sacrificial love, imitating God Himself (v. 1, and see, e.g. John 3:16), and inspired by the highest example and striving towards the highest standard — "as Christ also has loved us."

(d) "As children of light," Chapter 5:8, walking in the light of God and His Word; following Christ who is the Light of the World (John 8:12; 12:35, 36); and living lives of transparent sincerity and truth, as those who love light rather than darkness because they "do truth" and have no fear of their deeds being made manifest (John 3:21).

(e) "Circumspectly," Chapter 5:15, accurately, carefully, wisely, — remembering others are watching us and noting our lives.

These are all the occurrences of the word "walk" in the Epistle to the Ephesians, but our study can be profitably extended to include other descriptions of our walk in the New Testament. The following list is intended to be suggestive but by no means exhaustive:

Negatively: we ought not to walk selfishly (Phil. 3:18, 19), deceitfully, craftily (2 Cor. 4:2), "disorderly" (2 Thess. 3:11), "after the flesh" (Rom. 8:4, etc.)

Positively: our walk should be "in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), "worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:10), "worthy of God" (1 Thess. 2:12), "in Christ as Lord" (Col. 2:6), "in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, etc.), "by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7), "in

truth" (2 John 4), "light" (1 John 1:7), "wisdom" (Col. 4:5), "honestly" (Rom. 13:13, 1 Thess, 4:12).

"Conversation:" 1 Peter

The word "conversation" is one of several the meanings of which have changed since our Authorized Version was translated. Today it refers to talk; in our Bibles it means, rather, walk — behaviour, the whole conduct of the life. Three different words are translated "conversation" in the A. V. of the New Testament. In Philippians 1:27, 3:20, the word means "citizenship" and indicates our heavenly calling and status and the kind of life and conduct consistent with this position. In Hebrews 13:5, "let your conversation be without covetousness," the word literally means "a turn," is translated elsewhere "manner," "means," "way," and obviously refers here to the manner of life. Six of the other 15 occurrences of the word are in Peter's first Epistle (and 2 in the second Epistle). On all these occasions, the word "conversation" translates a Greek word meaning to "turn back," and, by implication, to "move about in a place," "busy oneself," and so to "behave, conduct oneself." It refers, therefore, again to the manner of life and behaviour, Notice again the negative and positive aspects of our "conversation:" (i) Negative, "Vain" (1:18) — the empty, aimless, fruitless kind of life we used to live, and from which we have been redeemed at the infinite cost of "the precious blood of Christ." (ii) Positive, "Holy" (1:15) — as children in God's family, manifesting His character in the way we live amongst men. "Honest" (2:12) — beautiful, admirable, intrinsically good and commanding respect — as pilgrims in the world coming in contact with others. "Chaste" (3:1, 2) — as members of a human

family with an influence for good or ill on our relatives in the home. (These verses were specifically written to believing wives of unsaved husbands, and exhort them to endeavour to win their husbands, who “obey not the word” — the Word of God in the Gospel — by their “conversation,” “without a word” — see other translations —that is, without even speaking to them. So great is the influence of our lives apart altogether from our words that this verse can be extended to apply to all our contacts with others.) “Good” (3:16) — as Christians facing persecution, the best way to answer the false charges that may be made against us is to deny them by the good lives we live.

Witness

Witness

James Naismith

Basic Studies In Christian Living for Young Believers #8

An important aspect of our service for the Lord Christ is the witness we give for Him amongst our fellows. While there are many other ways in which we can serve Him, witnessing is of such importance and so frequently mentioned in the Scriptures that it merits special consideration.

Reasons for Witness

It should not be difficult for those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, saved from an eternal hell to which their fellows are hastening, and brought into eternal association with the Son of God as Saviour, Lord and Friend, to find abundant reasons for bearing witness to their fellows for the One who has done so much for them. Yet how few of us are really faithful witnesses unto Him in a world that still despises Him but needs Him desperately! Here are two reasons for witnessing that include many others:

(1) Love for Christ. A witness is a person who gives evidence in a court of law because he has had a certain experience or acquired special knowledge. In the world's courtroom, the Name of our Lord is being dishonoured, His Person despised, His claims disowned. A wrong verdict is being given against Him by a great majority including many of our acquaintances. Surely it is our responsibility, who profess to love Him and have

had personal experience of Him and come to know Him, to defend Him by faithful and fearless witness. His last words to His own ere He was taken from them into Heaven were, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.... unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). If we love Him, we should gladly keep His words (John 14.23) — particularly His last words. The record of the Acts of the Apostles shows that His disciples then took Him at His word and boldly witnessed for Him despite fierce opposition and bitter persecution. Do we, in circumstances much more favourable? Note carefully His words: “witnesses unto Me” — He should be the central theme of our witness; all else should lead to Him. Their witness was to begin “in Jerusalem” — and it did — at home where opposition could be expected to be greatest in their case. It was to extend — and it did — to earth’s remotest bound. Here, too, is an example for 20th. century disciples.

(2) Compassionate Love for men. As our Lord “saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion on them” (Matt. 9.36)—a compassion influenced by the physical and spiritual needs of suffering and sinning humanity. Moved with the same compassion towards the multitudes as needy now as ever, we will witness to them of Him who alone can meet their need as He did in the days of His flesh. At least two motives should inspire us: (a) the great blessings Christ provides; like the four lepers who found unexpected supplies in the Syrian camp (2 Kings 7) if we fail to tell others, “we do not well: this is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace” while our fellows starve for lack of the Bread of Life; (b) the great danger from which Christ delivers. Like Ezekiel, we have been set as watchmen unto the world

to give warning from the Lord (ch. 3:17, 18). Woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel, if we blow not the trumpet to warn the people (ch. 33:1-9).

Requirements for Witness

Certain essential qualifications are necessary in a person who is called to stand in the witness-box: these are no less necessary for a Christian witness who stands before the world in defence of his Lord.

(1) Experience. A witness can only present evidence if he has had an experience, e.g. seen an accident. The closer he has been to the incident and the more experience he has had, the more weighty will be his evidence. The testimony, for example, of an observer of an automobile accident will carry more weight than that of a witness who arrives at the scene even seconds later. It is perfectly clear that only those who have had a personal experience of Christ in their lives and know Him as Lord and Saviour can be true witnesses unto Him. Compare Luke 24:48, "Ye are witnesses of these things," with Acts 1:8, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." It was because of their experience that the Lord called these disciples as witnesses — and they frequently expressed this in the evidence they presented — see Acts 4:20, 5:32, 10:39, etc. The impression they left on their enemies was "that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13), so effective was their witness for Him. The more we are with Him, the better we know Him, the more we experience His power in our lives, the more faithful will be our witness for Him.

(2) Power. How nervous and trembling we might feel if called to give evidence in a court of law! With many of us, too, there is a natural reluctance to witness for

Christ to others; perhaps through fear of what they might say (or think) or of being unable to give satisfactory evidence or meet the arguments, and answer the questions presented to us. God has, however, provided power for effective witness. The Lord intimated that the Holy Spirit was to be the source of this power — see Acts 1:8, John 15:26, 27. What a transformation took place in the fearful, timid disciples when He came in mighty power at Pentecost! How effectively did Peter witness that day to the resurrection and ascension of the Man he had denied and they had crucified! The secret of our power is prayer. Consider the effects of the first described prayer meeting of the early Christians in Acts 4:24-33. In our personal witness for Christ, we should never cease to pray (a) for ourselves, that we may receive guidance, courage, wisdom and help to witness faithfully; (b) for our contacts. Prayer for them should be particular — specifically mentioning each by name before the Lord; passionate — not half-hearted but fervent and sincere, for such prayer “availeth much” (James 5.16); and persevering — continuing until God in His mercy is pleased to save the one for whom we are concerned, and still persisting as we seek their growth in grace.

(3) Evidence. A witness is required to “speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” The evidence which we present as Christians comes from our experience of Christ and from the Scriptures which declare the “whole truth” — “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Good witnesses must first “hear the word at His mouth” in order to “give warning from Him” (Ez. 3:17). We must, therefore, be diligent readers and students of the Scriptures, acquainting ourselves

with their teaching, able to turn without hesitation to passages bearing on different subjects, and memorizing verses and passages of special importance. Only thus will we be able to “give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Means of Witness

One of the best scriptural examples of witness is that of John the Baptist. The Apostle John has given to us in his Gospel a very instructive account of the record he bore. Study chapters 1:6-8, 15, 19-37; 3:23ff; 5:32-35; and note the frequent recurrence of the words “witness” and “record.” We are left in no doubt as to the subject of his testimony — “that Light” (1.7), “the Lamb of God” (vv. 29, 36), “the Son of God” (v. 34); nor were those who heard him — 3:26. The Lord Himself was pleased to acknowledge and commend his witness (5:32-35). The effectiveness of his witness is stated in chapter 1:37 — two of his disciples were attracted to the Saviour through his testimony; this surely is the great objective of all witness for Christ.

It is interesting to compare John’s description of himself (1:23) with that of the Lord (5:35). “A light,” said the Lord — to shine, to show. “A voice,” said John — to speak, to shout. The two words summarize the two important phases of our witness — by our lives and our lips, our walk and our talk. We, too, should “shine as lights in the world,” and be voices “holding forth the word of life” (Phil.2:15, 16); showing Christ and speaking of Him so that others like John’s disciples, may “follow Jesus.” (a) Our Lives: The witness of our lives cannot be over emphasized. “You are living a Gospel, a

chapter each day, by things that you do, by words that you say; men read what you live, whether faithless or true — Say! what is the Gospel according to YOU?” In a world where the Scriptures are read with diminishing frequency, the message of the lives of Christ’s witnesses assumes ever-increasing importance. We are living epistles “known and read of all men.” May we be truly “epistles of Christ” (2 Cor. 3:2, 3), and may the words of Emerson, the essayist, never apply to us: “What you are stands over you that I cannot hear what you say.” (b) Our Lips: Even if our lives were perfect, we should still be responsible to proclaim Christ with our lips. Day by day, we meet with many who know Him not and may never come to know Him except through us.

Our witness for Christ should not be confined to the personal testimony which we bear individually before others. In company with other believers in a local church, we should “strive together for the faith of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:27). This collective witness can take several forms, e.g. (a) Baptism is an act of public confession of Christ whereby we declare that we have been identified with Him. (b) In partaking of the Lord’s Supper week by week, we proclaim the Lord’s death and witness to the fact that He is our Lord. (c) By our presence at the gatherings of the local assembly and by our efforts in support of its Gospel activities—e.g. inviting others to the Gospel meeting, welcoming strangers, and taking part in any way — we are contributing to the witness of the local church and so carrying out our Lord’s last command.

Worship

Worship

Dr. James Naismith

Basic Studies in Christian Living for Young Believers, #6

Worship is the highest form of spiritual exercise in which a child of God can engage and one that brings special delight to his Father. It is therefore important that we learn its true meaning and rid ourselves of some common misconceptions relating to it. For example, in the minds of many, the term “worship” is applicable to almost any religious activity within a “church” building — a “place of worship.” Others associate it with one particular gathering of the church — the Lord’s supper — which is frequently referred to as “the worship meeting”; and some confine it, in their thinking, to the audible expressions of praise and thanksgiving at such a meeting, or even to the “prayers” of a few believers who lead the company. While it is true that the occasions when we meet to remember our blessed Lord afford special opportunity for collective worship — by all believers present, both audibly and inaudibly — our worship ought not to be restricted to the remembrance feast, but may be expressed at other gatherings of the Lord’s people. Nor, indeed, should it be limited to such occasions when believers meet together. Worship should be the constant exercise of every believer — wherever he is — and only when it is, will he be able truly to worship in company with others.

The word “worship” is an Old English word derived from the two words, “worth” and “ship,” and so means the acknowledgement of the worth of God — His glory,

majesty, wisdom, power, holiness, love, etc. This acknowledgement may be expressed in the praise and adoration of our lips, or in the reverence, homage and devotion of our lives.

When Abraham, sitting in his tent-door in the plains of Mamre, lifted up his eyes and saw three heavenly messengers, he ran to meet them and instinctively “bowed himself toward the ground” (Gen. 18:2). The word translated “bowed himself” is the first occurrence of the Hebrew word most frequently rendered “worship” in the Old Testament. Its next occurrence is in the following chapter (19:1) when Abraham’s nephew, Lot, had a visit, in Sodom, from two angels, and he, too, “bowed himself with his face toward the ground.” Other renderings of the same word are “fall down” (e.g. Ps. 72:11), “make obeisance” (e.g. Gen. 37:7, 9; 43:28), “do reverence” (e.g. 2 Sam. 9:6), and, most often, “worship.” Thus, in the Old Testament, worship is the act of prostrating oneself in reverence and homage before a superior being, and, in particular, before God, the Supreme Being. The same meaning is implied in the New Testament, where the usual word for “worship” literally means to “kiss,” and is used of a dog licking the hand of and fawning upon its master. The hymn-writer has well expressed the adoration of true worship in the beautiful hymn:

“Gracious God, we worship Thee,

Reverently, we bow the knee;

Jesus Christ our only plea:

Father, we adore Thee!

“Low we bow before Thy face,

Sons of God, O wondrous place!

Great the riches of Thy grace:

Father, we adore Thee!"

In our study of this subject, we can profitably consider one central passage relating to it from both Old and New Testaments, and also the first occurrences of the English word "worship" in both Testaments.

I. PSALM 96 can suitably be described as a Psalm of worship. The familiar call of the Psalmist in verse 9: "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" forms a fitting climax to which the preceding verses move, and from which the following verses proceed. Note:

(a) The Object and Source of worship (vv. 1-6) is the Lord Himself. True worship is inspired by contemplation of "His name," "His salvation," "His glory," "His wonders," and by consideration of "His honour and majesty ... strength and beauty." One of the reasons for the lack of worship and the pauses expressive of dearth in our gatherings today is that we are so occupied with our own interests and meditate so little on the glories of God.

(b) The Nature of worship is indicated in vv. 7-8, by the recurrent "Give ... give ... give ... bring an offering." In essence, worship is giving to God in appreciation of His worth, and, as we "come into His courts," we should not be empty-handed but should have an offering to present to Him. Both Old and New Testaments contain excellent illustrations of worship which clearly illustrate this point. As we worship, individually or collectively, we should remember that worship is not getting but giving, not asking but adoring.

(c) The Characteristics of worshippers are emphasized in v. 9 — holiness and fear. Only those with “clean hands and a pure heart” can fitly “stand in His holy place” (Ps. 24:3-4). In view of the holiness and majesty of the Lord, they who worship Him must do so “in the beauty of holiness,” and with reverential fear — living holy lives even as He is holy, and approaching Him in a spirit of reverence, so sadly lacking in some of our gatherings.

(d) The Outcome of worship is the theme of vv. 10-13. Worship takes precedence over service, but true worship of God will certainly issue in witness for God (v. 10); and joy, gladness and rejoicing will invariably result if worship is given its rightful place in our lives (vv. 11-13).

II. JOHN 4:19-24. Surprising though it may seem to us, the Lord expounded the subject of worship, not to the religious Nicodemus, but to the sinful woman of Samaria. From His memorable words spoken to her we can learn:

(a) The Importance of worship indicated by His statement that the Father seeks worshippers (v. 23) — the only place in Scripture where we read of the Father seeking.

(b) The Place of worship. In Old Testament times, the place — in tabernacle and temple — was of great importance; the children of Israel were instructed to bring their offerings “unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose to put His name there” (Deut. 12:5, 6, 11, 14, 18, 26, etc.). The Lord Jesus clearly indicated that the material location is not now of importance. What is important is the spiritual location — within the holiest of all which we enter “by the blood of Jesus ... through the veil” (Heb. 10:19-22); and also (c) The

Manner of worship, vv. 23, 24. Worship acceptable to God will be (i) In Spirit. Since God is Spirit, He is seeking today not for material but spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5), offered under the direction and by the power of the Holy Spirit (see also Phil. 3:3), (ii) In truth — in transparent sincerity; from the heart as well as by the lips; and in accordance with the truth of God's Word.

III. GENESIS 22:5. We must not imagine that Abraham used the word "worship" here — its first occurrence in our Authorized Version —merely as a cover-up to conceal from his servants and Isaac the real purpose of his mission to Moriah. What he set out to do that day was worship in its true sense, and this is one of the most beautiful scriptural illustrations of the subject. Among many lessons, we can learn that worship is giving to God:

(a) An offering acceptable to Him. Abraham described it as a "burnt-offering" (v. 8), one of the characteristics of which was that all ascended to God as a sweet-savour (Lev. 1:9), bringing delight to Him. We cannot but discern in the story a picture of another Father and Son, going both of them together to the place of sacrifice; the heavenly Isaac in His unfaltering devotion to His Father's will. Our worship brings greatest pleasure to God when we present His only, well-beloved Son as our offering.

(b) What He has already given to us. Isaac was God's gift to Abraham: he was offering him back to God. So, when we present Christ we give what God has first given to us.

(c) An offering very precious to the worshipper. "Thy son, thine only Isaac, whom thou lovest." What a costly

offering was this! How costly, too, was Mary's offering (John 12:3) when she expressed her worship by anointing her Lord's feet with "ointment of spikenard, very costly!" And how much He appreciated it! So, the more precious the Lord Jesus is to us, the more we learn of Him and contemplate Him — and the more it costs us to do so — the more will our worship delight Him to whom it is offered!

(d) In accordance with God's instructions. "I will tell thee of." See Hebrews 10:22.

(e) Our bodies. Notice that Abraham includes "the lad" in this act of worship, for Isaac's part in voluntarily yielding his life (and he was much more than a mere boy at the time; 26 years of age according to Bible dates) was as much worship as was Abraham's. So, when we present our bodies as a "living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God," this is "spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1, R.S.V.). This is one of the "spiritual sacrifices" that, as "holy priests" we can offer daily to God (1 Pet. 2:5) and thus worship Him. Praise (Heb. 13:15), good works (Heb. 13:16), and material possessions given to the Lord's servants and people (Phil. 4:18) are other sacrifices we can present as we worship Him.

IV. MATTHEW 2:2, 8, 11. The first instance of worship recorded in the New Testament was that offered by wise men from the East to the young Child in the manger at Bethlehem — who, as God manifest in flesh, is worthy of equal honour with the Father (John 5:23). The last occurrence of the word in the Bible in Rev. 22:9 reminds us that God alone should be worshipped. Since Christ is God, it is proper that we should join with angels (Heb. 1:6) in worshipping Him (Rev. 5:11-14). The wise men

expressed their worship by (a) falling down — not before the mother, but the child; (b) presenting unto Him gifts — another illustration of the true nature of worship.