

The Sword AND Staff

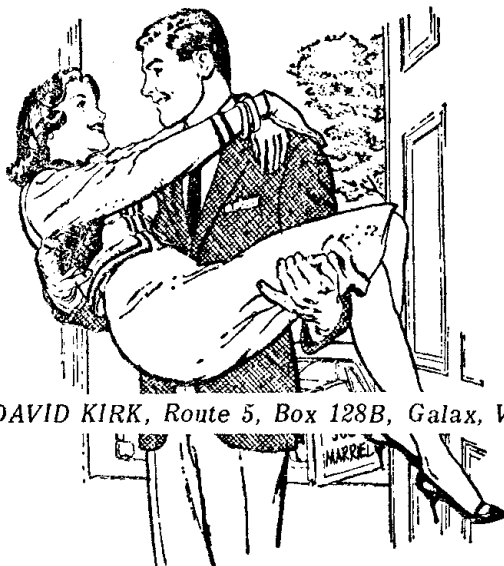
"Preach the Word." (II Timothy 4:2)

•

"Feed the Flock." (I Peter 5:2)

The BEST THINGS in

L-ove I-ntegrity F-aith E-xpectancy



• By DAVID KIRK, Route 5, Box 128B, Galax, Va. 24333

WHAT ARE the best things in life to you? Doing the Father's will was the most important thing in Jesus' life. He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me" (John 4:34). Here he indicated that his Father's will was more important than necessary food for the body. Later, when faced with giving his life upon the cross for the sins of the world, he prayed, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, THY WILL BE DONE" (Matthew 26:39). To Jesus the Father's will was the best thing in life, even better than life itself.

What do you consider the best things in life? Money? Pleasures of sin? Sex? Drugs? Cars? Clothes? Houses? Lands? Power? The World? People have tried all these things and still their lives have been empty and without meaning. Solomon tried all the world had to offer in his day and pronounced all these things as "vanity."

Multitudes today have full stomachs but empty hearts. Millions have drunk at the fountains of sin, only to find out that these fountains never quench the thirst of the

soul. Many have mastered the most difficult problems of mathematics and other sciences, but have never mastered the real problems of life such as the quest for satisfaction of the inner man.

What, I ask again, do you consider to be the best things in life? In this sermon I would like to point out what I consider are four of the best things in life. *And number one on this list is LOVE.* Here I have no reference to the pseudo-love presented by the movies, TV, so-called "true love stories" as seen in magazines and books, and similar misrepresentations of love as described in the Scriptures.

I am writing of something that is greater than faith and hope as Paul writes in I Corinthians 13:13: "And now abideth faith, hope, and love, but the GREATEST of these is love." This kind of love is best seen in example, such as, a mother caring for a sick baby—going without many hours of sleep, forgetting food and rest as she feeds and rocks, soothes and doctors, and literally forgets herself as she tries to comfort and help her beloved child.

This love is seen in a greater measure as we observe Stephen preaching his heart out, trying to win his brethren to the Lord, and then as he is being stoned to death by those he was trying to reach, we hear him pray, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60).

We see this same love manifested in the early church of Christ. Barnabas, "having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:37). For what purpose did he make this sacrifice? He made it that the needs of his brethren might be supplied!

A great measure of love was shown when the people of Macedonia overcame religious feelings that existed between Jews and Gentiles and "in a great trial of affliction" although in "deep poverty" themselves, their giving is described as "riches of their liberality" (II Cor. 8:2). So generous were they with their giving that it appears Paul had to be persuaded to accept their liberality for we read of their "begging...with much entreaty for the

(Continued on Page 3)

THE SWORD AND STAFF
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Proverbs of Today

The Word of God is no more the Holy Spirit than my words are me and your words are you.

"Success in marriage is much more than finding the right person; it is a matter of being the right person."

Young person, if you marry for puppy love you will probably lead a dog's life.

"People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing."

If you let a hypocrite stand between you and God, that means the hypocrite is nearer to God than you are.

"God without man is still God; man without God is nothing."

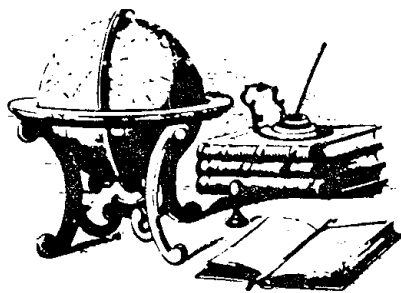
A lot of people are more interested in speed than in direction.

"The man who trims himself to suit everybody will soon whittle himself away."

A Christian with a bottle of beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other is as much out of place as an alien sinner at the Lord's table.

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EDITORIAL

COMMENTS...

ORDER NEW MATERIALS BEING PREPARED

THE ARTICLE which appeared in the May issue of this paper, "The Meaning of Suffering in the Life of the Christian," is being prepared in booklet form. It is ideal to give to Christians in the hospital, and to help those not Christians, we are adding a brief summary of the plan of salvation at the close of the booklet. During sickness is the best time to impress spiritual truths on people, and we believe this booklet can be used most effectively by you. Order a supply at 8¢ each or 100 copies for \$6.00.

The chart, "Salvation and Church Membership," in this issue deals with a subject that needs your attention. Misunderstanding abounds in the religious world on this subject. Brother Strever does an excellent job visually illustrating God's truth on this matter. Order this chart from us at 8¢ a copy or 15 copies for \$1.00. □

SALVATION AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

(Read this in connection with the Chart)

The importance of a study of this subject is clearly seen, first: by the fact that many people believe they can be saved and never be a member of the Church. Second: by the fact that there are many people who profess church membership who have never been saved from sin.

To retain the uncluttered appearance of the chart, not every usable Bible verse has been employed. The one teaching from this chart can readily supply additional verses if they are needed. By controlling the length of discussion of each point, the chart can serve as a one-time study or as a series of studies.

I. Consider: "The Soul Without Christ."

Study carefully each term describing the soul without Christ, so that the full meaning of this condition can be realized.

II. Discuss: "The Gospel."

Show that: 1. the Gospel is given by Christ; 2. it is the power of God to salvation (Romans 1:16); 3. that is pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 4. When the seed is sown in the "good and honest" heart, faith is produced in the heart; 5. genuine faith will produce repentance, which begins in the heart, but is manifest on the outside; 6. faith and repentance will produce a willingness to "confess with the mouth."

Note: Don't rush. Move slowly enough that these important truths become clear.

III. Discuss and explain the section on Baptism.

IV. Show the relationship between Christ and the Church.

- Christ the head of the Church.
- The Church the body of Christ.
- The harmony between Christ and the Church (Matthew 25:45; Ephesians 4:15, 16; Acts 26:15).

—KENNETH L. STREVER

The BEST THINGS in LIFE



(Continued from Page 1)

favor of participating in the support of the saints" (II Cor. 8:3).

The love of Epaphroditus for the apostle Paul constrained him to not regard "his life, to supply" Paul's needs. See Philippians 2:25, 30. Of Priscilla and Aquilla, Paul writes, "...For my life laid down their own necks" (Romans 16:4). Real love motivated these sacrifices.

Paul had great love for his brethren in the flesh. He reveals this love in these words: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself WERE ACCURSED from Christ (Note: this is the equivalent of he wished himself lost eternally) for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-3). And to think these words of Paul were written about the very people who hunted him continually as one would a vicious wild animal, to destroy him. They were responsible for inflicting endless suffering upon Paul.

But, when illustrating love, there is one example that far outshines all others. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16, 17).

And the love of Christ, like the love of His Father, exceeds all other love. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But Jesus gave his life for his enemies as Paul states in Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Love for brethren will bring us to make great sacrifices for them even as the Macedonians did for the brethren in Judea. Love for God will move us to do God's will without question regardless of the personal cost. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (I John 5:3).

Truly and without question, love is one of the greatest things in life.

INTEGRITY is another great thing in life. "Integrity implies trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is incapable of being false to a trust, responsibility or pledge," so defines Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.

A man of integrity is entirely honest and dependable with God, man, and himself. Integrity is a virtue lacking in so many people today. It is essential if we are to please God. It helps to direct our lives. "The integrity of the upright shall guide them" (Proverbs 11:3). "Better is the poor that walks in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips and is a fool" (Proverbs 19:1). "The

just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (Proverbs 20:7). Integrity, as you can see from these Scriptures, keeps a man from being perverse, it guides his life in the right way, and it brings a blessing to his children after him.

A person of integrity finds it easier to make many decisions in life. He has once and for all made a very important decision—the decision to always do that which is right, and by the same token to avoid evil.

A young or old person cannot be bought or threatened into violating their consciences or a trust, if they are a person of integrity. A man who was loyal to David could not be paid enough to hurt his friend. When Joab said to him, "I would have given you ten shekels of silver, and a girdle" (if you had killed Absalom) (II Samuel 18:11), the man answered Joab, "Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son..." (II Samuel 18:12).

King Jeroboam tried to bribe a young prophet of Judah to come and eat with him, but the young prophet answered him, "If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: For so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou comest" (I Kings 13:8, 9). This young prophet was a man of integrity. He refused to be turned aside from the Lord's will by a bribe.

Integrity makes you worthy of trust. It increases your influence for righteousness. It guards one from becoming a hypocrite. It gives boldness to one's life. The apostles of Christ were men of integrity. They could not be scared by threats nor beatings. And after experiencing both of these forms of persecution, they continued to preach boldly the gospel of Christ. Honesty demanded that they "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Truly **INTEGRITY** is a virtue of great worth.

Another great thing in life is **FAITH**. It has been said that faith makes the world go 'round. What would life be like without a certain amount of faith. Business, home, city, state and national government, etc., must have a little faith to function at all.

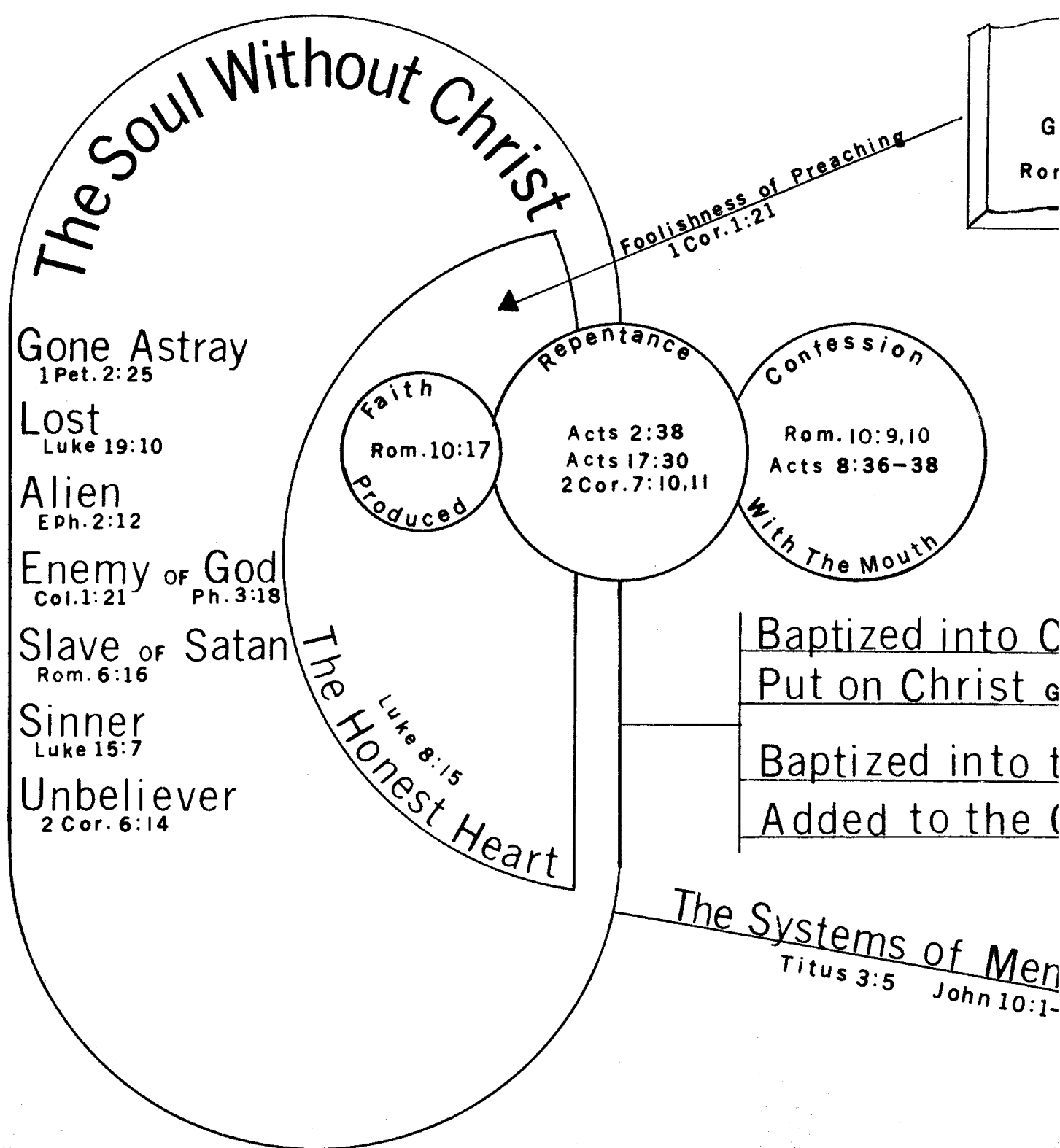
But faith in God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and in the Word of God, along with faith in brethren in Christ, is indispensable to a fully useful life that offers hope after this life comes to a close.

Without faith we cannot please God (See Hebrews 11:6) nor can we understand creation. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). The evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of special creation rather than evolution as the origin of the universe. This evidence was not so readily available in the past. This made it all the more important to have faith in God and His Word, the Bible. There is so little of what there is to learn about the universe that man fully understands; therefore it is still necessary to take or accept many things by faith. When we learn to "walk by faith and not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7) the skepticism of man does not trouble us even when there are questions asked that we are unable to answer fully, for by faith we rest confident that God has an answer to every question.

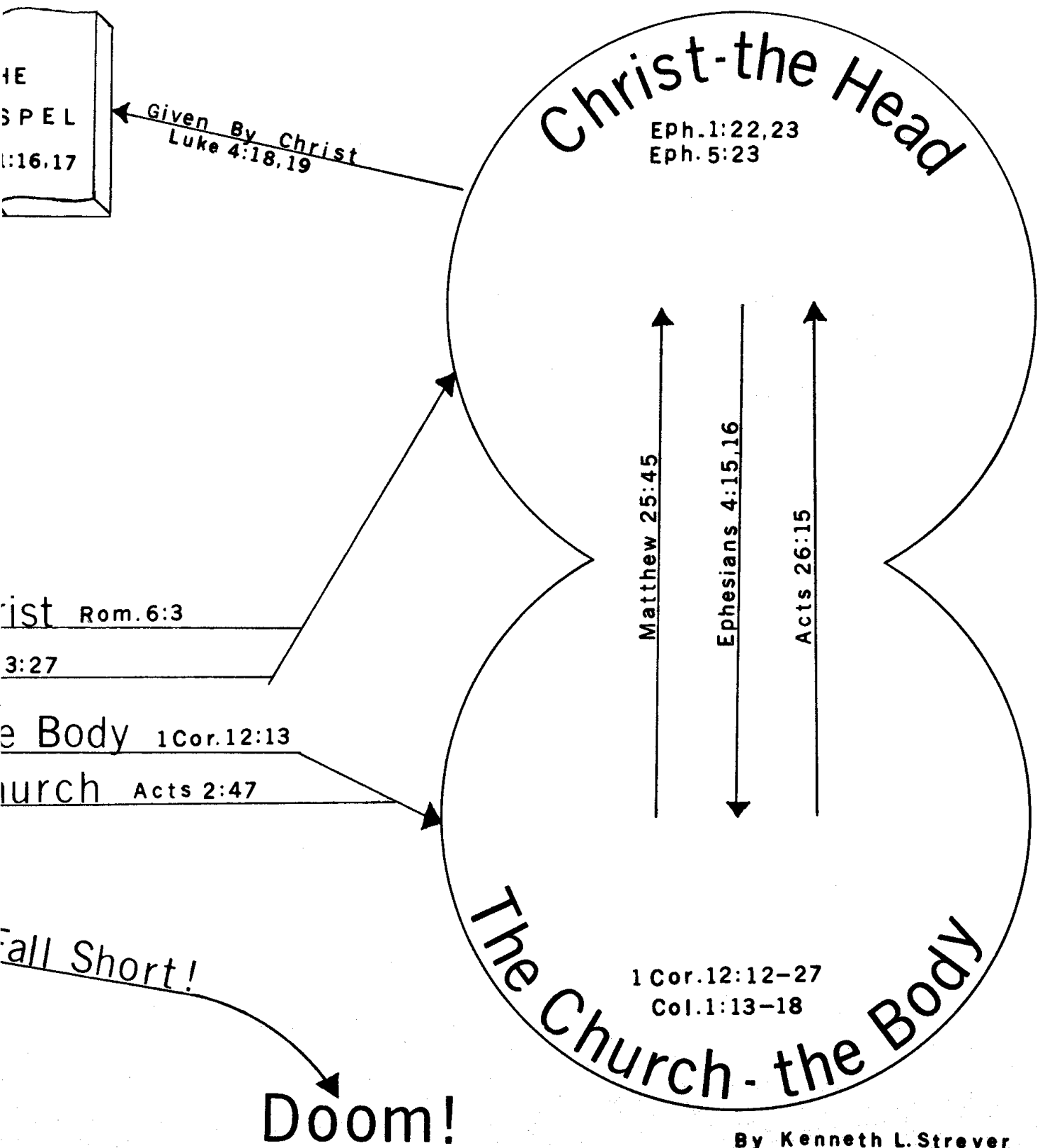
Faith is essential to pleasing God: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Only as we

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SALVATION AND CH



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP



By Kenneth L. Strever

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE

(Continued from Page 3)

please God do we have a good conscience and have confidence for the present and the future.

Faith brings victorious living. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4). Through faith we overcome the evils of the world along with the cares of this life that would defeat us. With the "shield of faith" one is able "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16).

Faith is also the basis of hope. "Now hope is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access BY FAITH into this grace wherein we stand, and REJOICE IN HOPE of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1,2). You will also note in the above Scripture that faith brings about justification and peace.

Faith produces daring results. By faith Peter spoke to Jesus with the most unusual request: "Bid me come to you on the water." Jesus bade him to come and Peter walked on the water.

A centurian, a Gentile, showed such unusual faith in Jesus that the Savior said to him, "I have not seen so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Faith is only seen in action. Men who met with the approval of God in the Bible were men of action who were moved by faith to do whatever God commanded them to do. By faith Noah built the ark to the saving of his house; by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain by which he met with the approval of God; by faith Abraham offered Isaac upon the altar of sacrifice; by faith great victories have been won for the Lord by men of faith in every age.

But faith "without works is dead" (James 2:26). James says, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

Without a doubt faith is one of the greatest things in life.

But even love, integrity and faith would be very empty without EXPECTANCY. For what would life be like without hope? Hope gives purpose and motivation for living. If there is no hope, just what is there to live for that is really challenging and worthwhile?

So many lives are an empty void because they have no hope. College level young people lead in suicide death rate over older people. Why? No doubt it is largely because this materialistic age offers no hope. Atheism offers nothing to live for beyond this present evil age. It offers nothing to lift man from the hopelessness of what the world alone has to offer.

But hope gives inward strength and courage that will carry one through the severest trials of life. Take a good look at Job as he sat in ashes covered from head to toe with boils. See him as he took a piece of broken pottery and scratched himself to try to get a little relief from his suffering. See his "friends" who gathered about him and accused him of bringing this sad condition upon himself by sin, when Job was entirely innocent. Hear Job's wife as she said to Job, "Curse God and die." Yet through it all Job maintained his integrity. It was hope that sustained him, that kept him faithful to God through it all. His physical suffering had been preceded by the loss of children and his riches. But his trust was not in material things, not even in man. His trust was in God. And even

though he was unable to understand why he had to suffer, yet he endured it because of hope. Job said, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold...though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27).

"We are saved by hope" (Romans 8:14). "And now abideth faith, hope and love..." (I Cor. 13:13). "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:3). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a LIVING HOPE by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3). The blessings of hope are boundless.

You, my friend, may have all four of these BEST THINGS IN LIFE! We can all know love once we consider what God and Christ have done for man. "We love, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). By God's grace we can become men and women of integrity. By being entirely honest with ourselves, we can, with the help of the Lord, become honest with God and our fellowman. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). By reading, studying and meditating upon God's Word: plus putting Christ to the test as he challenges men to do in John 7:17, "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself," you can and will develop a faith that will carry you through this life safely. And with integrity and faith and love you will develop a hope that all the allurements and trials of this life cannot destroy. Begin today to include and increase in your heart the truly best things in LIFE: Love, Integrity, Faith and Expectancy! □



"Know-your-Bible" BIBLE QUIZ



1. Under what conditions did God make this promise to the Israelites: "I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians"?
2. What kind of a person is the "strange woman" mentioned throughout the book of Proverbs?
3. According to the book of Proverbs, when can a person's prayer become an abomination?
4. "A _____ uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."
5. What prophet was ordered by God to shave his head, then do various things with the hair as a type of Jerusalem's desolation?
6. Instead of rejoicing that evil spirits were subject to them, what did Jesus tell his disciples to rejoice over?
7. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are _____: we have done that which was our duty to do"—JESUS.
8. What woman at Joppa was raised from the dead through the apostle Peter?
9. According to the apostle Paul, all things work together for good to whom?
10. What New Testament writer speaks of the "antichrist" (using this term) in his writings?

(Answers found elsewhere in this issue)

The Old White Goose

TOMMY AND SUZIE, a brother and sister, were spending the summer with grandma. Grandma lived on a farm and one of her prized possessions was a big white goose. Sometimes the goose got enjoyment out of chasing the children, especially Tommy. And Tommy, well, he always enjoyed throwing things at the goose.

One day Tommy threw a pretty big rock at the goose and just by chance it hit right on the head. Grandma's prized goose was dead! Fear motivated Tommy as he went to an obscure place, dug a deep hole and carefully laid the goose to rest. He had

Suzie sworn to silence. When questioned about the goose, the children did not know what could have happened to her. Luck was on his side, Tommy was keeping his story a secret.

Grandma had a rule that each night after the evening meal one of the children would clean up the table and other would wash the dishes. But things began to change. Suzie cleaned no more tables, and she washed no more dishes. Tommy seemed to want to do it all. He had complained before that "Cleaning tables and washing dishes was girl's work." But

no complaints were heard now. And if he even looked like he was going to complain, Suzie would remind him in a whisper, "Remember the old white goose."

Finally, Tommy had taken all the table cleaning and dish washing he could stand. He went to Grandma with trembling lips and tears in his eyes and told her everything. Grandma hugged him and told him she forgave him, but she did wish he had told the truth to begin with. Words could not describe how good Tommy felt.

That night after supper Suzie got up to leave the table. Tommy reminded her that it was about time she cleaned the table and washed the dishes. He had done his share for a long time to come. She leaned over and whispered, "Don't forget about the old white goose." Tommy's simple reply was, "What about the old white goose?"

Yes, "What about the old white goose?" That was all taken care of now. There was no more feeling of guilt! How many of us are just like Tommy? We sin. We fail to seek forgiveness, and we live each day with a load on our minds that we are not able to bear. There is peace of mind that belongs to the one who has forgiveness of his sins—peace of mind that cannot easily be put into words.

If you are carrying the guilt of sin, why not obey God's Word and receive forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. He died for you. You should take advantage of the sweet peace of mind that has been provided for you.

—Adapted

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"INTO" THE COFFEE POT

Here is a pointed story which has been told in rhyme
About a certain preacher who lived once on a time.
At one of his appointments, some members—not a few—
Became most sorely troubled about the word "INTO".
The Good Book says quite plainly (Acts 8) "they came unto,"
And "went down INTO" water, as Bible people do.
This "parson" preached a sermon with zeal and power
and might,
And, to his satisfaction, he set the passage right.
"INTO there don't mean INTO, but AT or NEAR or BY,
They went down TO the water, and got a small supply."
Now, near this place of worship, there lived a sister
Brown,
Who, by her splendid cooking, had gotten much renown.
And her delicious coffee, on all the circuits round
The preacher oft said boldly, "It's like could not be found."
When he would preach a sermon of extra power and length
He liked at her good table to recuperate his strength.
She was a simple Christian—no better in the land,
And oft reproved the daring for changing God's command.
She heard Jones' "INTO" sermon, and thought the matter o'er,
Then asked him home to dinner, as she had done before.
She fixed her well-known coffee—the kettle steaming hot—
But put it AT, not INTO, the famous coffee pot.
She poured for him a cupful—I think she did not sin;
"Why, Sister, you've forgotten to put the coffee in."
"No, no, dear sir, that's coffee; I ground a good supply
And then down by the vessel I put it AT, near BY.
By logic of your sermon (I thought it very thin)
If AT or NEAR means INTO, I put the coffee IN.
But if you now will promise no more such stuff to teach
Nor dodge God's plain commandment when you attempt
to preach,
I'll go and make some coffee just to a Bible dot,
And I will put the coffee INTO the coffee pot."

ANONYMOUS

READERS'

... Response

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "Thank you for sending THE SWORD AND STAFF. I want to especially thank you for the thoughtful and sobering article by David Kirk titled 'Time.' How we as Christians need to be reminded of the fleeting nature of time. 'Only one life, it will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.' May we live with eternity in view. Are you considering reprinting it in tract form? I think that it deserves wider circulation. Thank you."

TEXAS:

■ "I read with interest the letter and article printed in the July, 1972, issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF from the brother in White Mills, Kentucky.

"This brother is not the only one concerned about the direction some...are trying to lead the Lord's people. Perhaps now many will realize that the claim of being a Christian minister doesn't make it true. We need to realize that as Paul warned, men have arisen...speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them..."

KENTUCKY:

■ "Your paper is a positive approach on the subjects you discuss and I hope the facts will help others who may be deluded as the many you have mentioned. Even the Nazarenes who came out, for good reason, from the NCC, have fallen for Key 73.

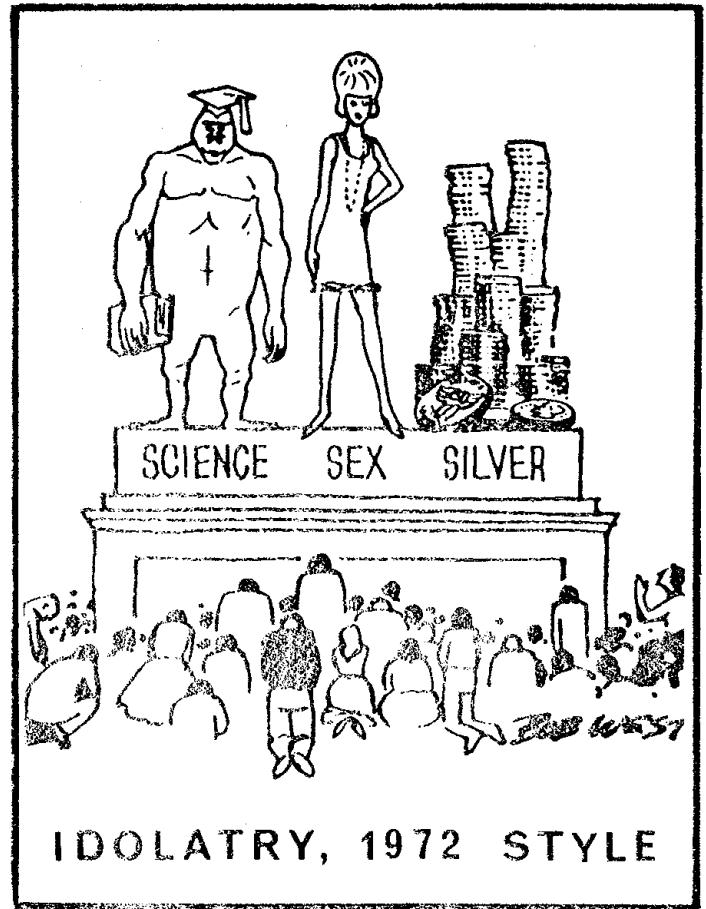
"Keep on the firing line and may the Holy Spirit guide and keep you manifesting the power of His Word."

MISSOURI:

■ "I just received the package of tracts. 'The Letter That

Was Never Answered' I must say was the best I ever read. It was so nice the Lord used the ignorance of this man to bring out such a good explanation. Hope he takes advantage of it (I started out on the same track)..."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Order These Materials

- ☐ Evolution and the Modern Christian—\$1.00 per copy.
- ☐ The Subject of the Holy Spirit Made Simple—25¢ each, or 5 for \$1.00.
- ☐ Objections to the Necessity of Baptism Answered—8¢ each, or 100 for \$6.00.
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- ☐ I Saw Him Standing There (Or, The Old Gospel Preacher)
- ☐ In Style With the World, But Out of Style With God

ANSWERS TO "Know-Your-Bible" BIBLE QUIZ

1. Exodus 15:26; 2. Proverbs 23:27; Proverbs 28:9; 4. Proverbs 29:11; 5. Ezekiel 5; 6. Luke 10:17-20; 7. Luke 17:10; 8. Acts 9:36-41; 9. Romans 8:28; 10. John in I and II John.

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