

# The Sword AND Staff

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

•

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



## **HARD SAYINGS of the Gentle Master**

was especially stern in dealing with religious hypocrites). Jesus preached a sermon on the bread of life. "Many of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:60). (This word hard, *skleros*, literally means dried up, stiff, rough—i.e., repulsive, offensive to the mind of the hearers).

Not only were many of his teachings readily classified as hard sayings as far as their content was concerned, but because of their application. Jesus could be very gentle in dealing with the ordinary sinner who had gone astray, but he had no patience with religious hypocrites. Read the famous sermon on the mount (Matthew 5,6,7). It is a mistake to think of it as purely a positive address. Notice it cuts right at the heart of the scribes and Pharisees and their religious practice. Matthew 23, in addressing the same people, is a verbal onslaught of hard sayings. As someone has well said: Jesus was not crucified for saying, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow," but for saying, "Consider the scribes and Pharisees, how they live."

By JAMES E. GIBBONS — 1535 Fairfield Drive  
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PAUL, in handling the Corinthian problem, wrote, "I beseech you by *the meekness and gentleness of Christ*" (II Corinthians 10:1). How expressive. How reminiscent of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 where he said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for *I am meek and lowly in heart*: and ye shall find rest unto your souls, For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Also, Matthew 12:18-20 comes to mind. In dealing with people, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." Then we have a mental picture of the gentle Saviour with the little children in his arms.

Although Jesus was meek and lowly, at times his teachings came through as "hard sayings" (and he

### **I. SOME OF THE HARD SAYINGS**

#### **The Bread from Heaven**

Read John 6:32-69. This gives an account which resulted in the teaching of Jesus being called a "hard saying." After spending an unusual night on the deep, Jesus was fresh back from the northwestern side of the Sea of Galilee where the day before he had miraculously fed 5,000 people (not counting women and children). This was great, and what better person could they have for a king? They planned to take him by force and make him their king. But to be an earthly king was not why Jesus had come into this world. He evaded their selfish aspirations for him, slipping away into the

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**INFORMATION:**

—We are totally dependent upon your financial backing in the publication of this religious paper. To get on the mailing list, send a contribution. Subsidizing gifts along are definitely needed in order for us to continue this unselfish labor of love for truth. You may use the date affixed beside your address as a reminder and point of reference in sending an offering (perhaps annually). No notices are sent out. Make your checks out to **CHURCH IN MT. AIRY**. Frequency of publication is determined by your financial backing. James E. Gibbons is editor. (Money received for printed material is considered as an offering).

## Proverbially SPEAKING...

*HE WHO neglects faith may stress works all he pleases, but he will not be pleased with the kind and quality of works he gets.*

"The greatest fault is to be conscious of none."

*Having been blessed with unmerited favor (GRACE) from the Lord, don't think it strange to be the object of disfavor from the world (I Peter 2:18-24—notice grace in verses 19 and 20, rendered "thankworthy" and "acceptable," KJV).*

"The devil's substitute for the joy of the LORD is entertainment."

*A smile goes a long way in improving human relations.*

"When in doubt as to what you should do, take the safe side; if you are in doubt as to the conduct of another, give him the benefit of the doubt."

*A mind that is closed can be awfully stuffy.*

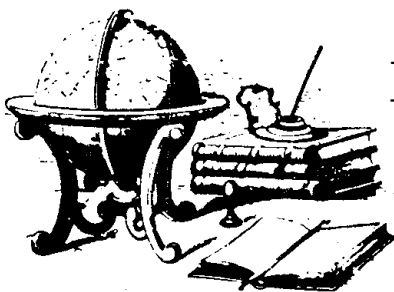
"Instead of putting others in their place, try putting yourself in their place."

*Are men sinners because they sin, or do they sin because they are sinners?*

"Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it—autograph your work with excellence."

*The man who CAN is the man who thinks can.*

"A gossip is like an old shoe—its tongue never stays in place."



## EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

### "WHY DOESN'T SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING?"

THIS UNWORTHY WRITER is very thankful to publish *The Sword and Staff* (yes, through God's grace and your backing). Little realizing what a big undertaking this would turn out to be, as a young man in my early twenties, the first issue went into the mail in 1957. The paper was printed for four years with a reading audience of several hundred. Then for the next six years the paper was not published, looking for sure like it had gone the way of so many publications. But the editor "knew" that one day it would go into the mail again. In 1967 the paper was revived (or, as some would say, resurrected) with us having our own print shop (such as it is), and by God's grace we have continued until this day (but it has not been easy, nor is it yet). Now around 10,000 copies of the paper go into the mail each time (to all 50 states and several foreign countries—1,000 to the Philippines). We are thankful.

"I asked, *Why doesn't somebody do something? Then I realized that I was somebody.*" These words well describe our undertaking in this printing endeavor. We are not especially qualified anymore than any other person who loves God and His Word (and wants to follow it and it alone). But something needed to be done (and still does!). Apostasy and sin are all about us. Shallow thinking and traditionalism rule in too many circles. Too many preachers would rather defend the *status quo* than go all the way back to the Word of God. The undenominational New Testament church is the loser. There is a lot of unfinished work (and study) that needs to be done.

Thank you for backing us (financially and otherwise). No doubt you feel the same way as this unworthy writer. "*Why doesn't somebody do something?*" And you are somebody. And you are doing something when you support our humble efforts. Our mutual feelings of frustration are being eased and answered. We are speaking up on truths that need to be heard.

Also, in this new year help us increase our impact and potential for good by increasing our mailing list. If you know of any who would be interested in this paper, or who need it or would profit from it, why not take steps to get them on the mailing list? Tell others about the paper.

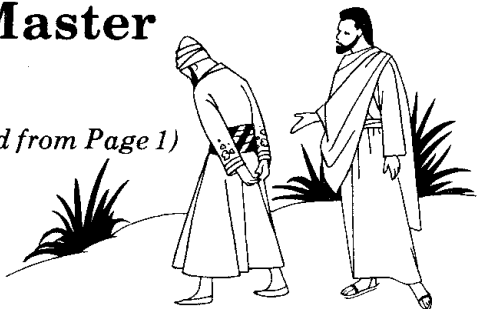
Let us hear from you. Thank you.—*Editor* □

### VISIONS, DREAMS, AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

THE ARTICLE beginning on page 9 is a reprint available from us at 3¢ each (folded form). *What Must I Do to Be Saved?* and *The Subject of the Holy Spirit Made Simple* are companion studies (available too). All came from this writer's own personal experience and quest for truth. □

# **HARD SAYINGS of the Gentle Master**

*(Continued from Page 1)*



mountain to be alone. The next day back in Capernaum in the synagogue Jesus preached a sermon on the bread of life. They had been greatly impressed by being fed physical food, but Jesus said they must eat another kind of bread. He declared, "I am the bread of life." He further elaborated, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. . ." "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Then we read, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" It was here, and at this time, that Peter made that great monumental statement. "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Perhaps what Jesus said was a "hard saying" to them for two reasons: (1) their predisposition to take what Jesus said literally; (2) their lack of understanding as to the nature of the Messiah and the Messianic reign. If Jesus meant what he said in a literal sense, they were to actually eat his flesh and drink his blood, and this was doubly repulsive. The Jew was forbidden by Mosaic law to eat blood, and it would be cannibalism. How unthinkable! And this was a hard saying to them because they expected the Messiah in the form of a political, earthly king. Jesus put all their misunderstandings and misgivings to rest by saying (if they would have listened), "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (6:63). In other words, spiritual things are what I am talking about, not physical (the flesh). My teachings are spiritual and life-giving. And, with their imperfect concepts, they would have a further problem with him ascending back to the Father, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was

before?" (6:61,62). This would not fit in with their thinking about an earthly Messiah.

All of this is a "hard saying" to many "Fundamentalists" in the denominational world today, if they would but face up to it. They expect an earthly Messiah to reign out of Jerusalem. They have fallen into the same error of the first century Jews who crucified Jesus, when Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

## **The Tradition of the Elders**

Read Matthew 15:1-14. Jesus was sharply criticized by the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem because his disciples did not ceremonially wash their hands before eating (which was not a part of the Law of Moses, but their own manufactured tradition). Listen, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread?" Jesus silenced their arbitrary question with a question of his own, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" He gives a vivid illustration of their doing this, and then says, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Jesus does not hesitate to call them hypocrites, and continues by saying, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." His disciples were not pleased that Jesus had spoken in such a way to the religious elite of the land. They said to him, "Knowest thou not that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?" "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone (Romans 16:17; I Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 3:10): they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

All of these things were "hard sayings" to the scribes and Pharisees. They were hypocrites. They criticized people for not following their man-made traditions while at the same time replacing what God had said by their tradition. Jesus had little patience with them back then, and he has little patience with the denominationalists today who do the same thing.

## **Teachings on Marriage**

Read Matthew 19:3-10. The Pharisees enter the picture again. They are out to "get" Jesus. They come forth with another question, trying to put Jesus in a bad light. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" There were primarily two schools of thought among the Jews on this question, that of Shammai and that of Hillel (the latter permitting the man to divorce his wife for any and every "cause"). Shammai was more strict, but Hillel's thought gave sanction to the loose practices of the day (and was the commonly accepted view). Jesus made in plain that

**(Continued on Next Page)**

## **HARD SAYINGS OF THE GENTLE MASTER** *(Continued from Last Page)*

God made one woman for one man, that they should become one in marriage, and that they should stay that way. Thus he said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Moses because of the hardness of the human heart had allowed divorce, but that is not what Jesus wants. In fact, Malachi 2:16 says that God hates divorce (putting away). From the beginning divorce was not God's plan. We read what Jesus further said, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." To show the solemn nature of what his is about to say, Jesus prefixed it with the deliberate, "*I say unto you.*" Jesus did not want to be misunderstood. He was not speaking lightly. And obviously this proved to be a "hard saying" in the ears of his disciples, for we read, "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." In other words, one would be better off not to get married if God does not approve of an easy divorce. They thought perhaps they might get the wrong woman and be stuck with her.

Today so many people have disregarded what God teaches on marriage and divorce. Simply reading this is a "hard saying" to them. When you get married, realize that God intended it for a lifetime. Do not enter into such a relationship lightly.

### **Teachings on Riches**

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:23-26).

This Scripture follows the account of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus, but "went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." Jesus knew that material things controlled his life. He put him to the ultimate test, and he failed. With a person's material possessions (or anything else) when we come to God, it is an "either or" proposition. God must be Lord of all in our lives or He is not Lord at all. He must have first place or no place. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). All are not called upon to sell all that they have and give to the poor, like the rich young ruler (Jesus knew where his spiritual problem was), but all must be "rich toward God" (Luke 12:20,21). Jesus must be the Lord of our lives, Lord of our riches. One has a problem and a potential problem in his riches. Jesus made it plain how that you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven as a

"rich man," but must become "poor" before him (poor in spirit, and put what you are and have at His disposal). Then "with God all things are possible."

This was a "hard saying" to the disciples of Jesus for they were conditioned to think like the Jews. To them wealth was evidence of God's special favor. If the wealthy weren't saved, who were? But that is not necessarily the case, and a lot of false teachers today whose god is covetousness needs to realize this. This is a hard saying to them.

## **II. HARD SAYINGS TO PEOPLE TODAY**

These things we have just noticed were some of the "hard sayings" that struck the ears of the people in the day of Jesus (and are equally hard sayings today). There are others more specifically we wish to point out.

### **Necessity of Being Born Again**

What Jesus told Nicodemus about being born again (John 3:1-10) fell in the category of a hard saying with him. He marveled and questioned Jesus about such a thing. People today find this a hard thing to accept when they are told this is an absolute necessity if they want to go to heaven. They are offended. They want to think that they are good enough already, and that everyone is acceptable with God. But this simply is not the case. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). No man can make it to heaven on his own. We need the righteousness of Christ to take away our sins (II Corinthians 5:21). We need a new beginning. We must be born of the water and the Spirit before we can enter God's kingdom (John 3:5). This takes place when we repent and are baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38,41,47; Titus 3:5). "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have

## **JUST A MINUTE**

*I have only just a minute,  
Only sixty seconds in it  
Forced upon me,  
Can't refuse it,  
Didn't seek it,  
Didn't choose it,  
But it's up to me to use it.  
I must suffer if I lose it,  
Give account if I abuse it,  
Just a tiny little minute—  
But Eternity is in it.*

**—Author Unknown**

put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). Thereupon we are raised with him to walk in newness of life (Romans 6: 1-6). This may be hard to accept, but it is God’s Word.

**Necessity of the Right Teachings**

We are living in a day when anything goes religiously and otherwise. You would think that ultimate truth had no relationship to religion. However, Paul was disturbed about what had happened among the Galatian Christians. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another: but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-8). Then Paul questioned them, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16). What Paul said was a “hard saying” to them, and it is today to those who say it doesn’t make any difference what you believe just so you are sincere. This is anything but the truth.

**Necessity of the Separated Life**

The church is plagued by worldliness today. People are afraid to be different. However, II Corinthians 6:14-7:1 has something to say about this. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” The word “holiness” signifies separation. People don’t like to hear that today. It is a hard saying to them (and especially when all that is involved is applied). They are too much at home in, too much a part of, this old sinful world. But, if they want to go to heaven, this is an absolute necessity (Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 21:27).

**Calling Sin, SIN**

Even back in Isaiah’s day they had this problem. He said, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20). Paul told Timothy, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables” (II Timothy 4:3,4). Although men didn’t like it, John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus called sin, SIN, and called on men to repent.

Today the idea of sin is soft-pedaled and sugar-coated. It is made respectable. The murder of pre-born babies (abortion) is called termination of pregnancy.

Drunkenness is called alcoholism. Fornication and adultery are called premarital and extramarital affairs. Homosexuality (sodomy) is dubbed an alternate lifestyle. Shacking up together is called free love or an arrangement. Denominationalism is exercising one’s religious freedom. Gossip is passing on information.

And thus we could go on. But, sin is still SIN! (And it will be called by name in the day of judgment!).

**HOW WE NEED** more of the “*meekness and gentleness of Christ.*” We do not want to be unnecessarily abrasive in dealing with people. The truth of God should be presented with conviction and love. But when it is presented, there is no backing down from it. Perhaps “hard sayings” are hard sayings because of the hardness of people’s hearts and their unwillingness to accept the divine message. Even Jesus had to deal with this problem. Let us not think that we are better than He. Jesus himself said, “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20). □

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**HAVE YOU EVER KNOWN. . .**

- 1. A farmer who failed in life because he quit early Wednesday evening for services?
- 2. A business man who ever lost his business because he closed on Sunday and Wednesday evenings?
- 3. Anyone who was “too tired” to go to worship on Sunday, who was also “too tired” to go to work on Monday?
- 4. A Christian to ever be strengthened by engaging in recreation when he should be worshipping God?
- 5. A strong spiritual Christian who neglected the assemblies of the church?—*Selected*

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**THEY FINALLY JOINED HANDS**

UP IN THE DAKOTAS a small boy wandered from his own farmyard and was lost in the endless fields of billowing wheat which stood ready to harvest. Searching parties sought him in vain for two days and nights. Finally someone suggested that the hundred or more searchers should join hands and together comb the wheat field surrounding the farm buildings. This they did, and later that day came upon the lifeless body of the little lad who had become lost.

As the father looked down upon the lifeless body of his son, he said to the saddened group gathered about him, “Oh, why didn’t we join hands sooner? Why didn’t we join hands sooner?” It is high time we became so thoroughly Christian that Christ would be able to blend our hearts and our purposes together for His glory and for the redemption of the human race.

—*Christian Companion*

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# “WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?”

WHEN AN ELDERLY COUPLE passed away, it was revealed that their will bequeathed \$70,000 to “Christians.” Unable to probate the will properly, the probate officer placed the case into court. It was contested by relatives who had been ignored in the will. This Waterloo, Iowa case is unprecedented in the annals of jurisprudence. The question, “Who is a Christian?” had been a hotly-contested, centuries-old debate theme, but now it had to be settled legally. But, can such a question be settled to the satisfaction of the courts of law? It is my conviction that it COULD, but the unvarnished fact is, it was NOT!

Key figures in the religious world were called upon to testify. Thousands of words of testimony were read. Religious creeds were introduced to that forensic body, but all to no avail! The will was broken because, “It can not be determined what a ‘Christian’ is,” said the law executors! How pathetic! In this land of religious freedom, in this land of greater religious activity than any other country enjoys, in this land where opportunities for religious learning abound, our courts cannot determine what a Christian is!

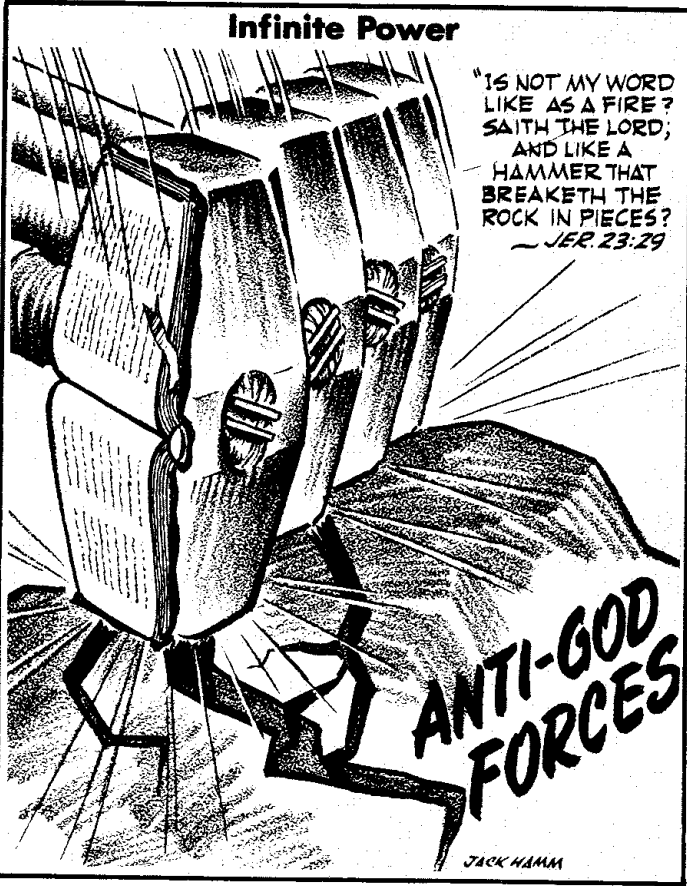
While the word “disciple” indicates a learner of Christ, “Christian” means a follower of Christ. The etymology of the word can be easily ascertained, but what about the practical meaning? Every religious body boldly claims to have the answer, but they stubbornly refuse to accept each other’s answers. Why? Doubtless because there is no commonly accepted authority. Surely, if professed religious people cannot agree upon an answer to the question, “What is a Christian?” how could it be expected that courts of law would? The law executors rely upon those whom they suppose are experts in matters of religion, so that these self-styled “experts” fail to agree upon the question, the courts have no supporting testimony for a favorable decision.

Most religious people are agreed that a man can be saved without being a member of any certain religious body, but no devoutly-religious, Bible-believing, God-fearing, Christ-honoring person would dare hint that there is even a remote possibility of a man’s being saved if he isn’t a Christian. He is a Christian who accepts and follows Christ. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath NOT the Son of God hath NOT life” (I John 5:12). And, yet, suppose that one of the members of that law-body had desired to become a Christian? Suppose that he had inquired, “What must I do to be saved?” Had he depended upon an unquestioned answer from the witnesses of that court case, he would have sought in vain for salvation!

Small wonder, then, that thousands of people in our times are confused about religion! We need not wonder why countless millions of people will be lost simply because they do not know which way to go, what to believe, or what religious body is Scriptural. For the first two centuries of the church, Christians struggled to exist under the oppressive power of destructive

paganism. The next three centuries were years of religious anarchy and doctrinal wars. Then came the dark ages of religious intolerance and Bible ignorance. The dawning of the Reformation brought light and hope for millions, only to find the horizon of religious liberty being darkened by religious creed-makers. Since then, there have been many noble efforts to restore mankind to the simplicity of spiritual, Scriptural Christianity. But, for the most part, the masses are still consulting antiquated human creeds as authorities for their religious exercises. The Bible has become a book to talk about, hold in apparent reverence, and treat as a volume of prooftexts when religious arguments demand more than mere assertions of human wisdom, but the Bible is not so often studied as a divine Book that reveals the Will of the Living God. Opinions are read into the Bible instead of truth being derived from it. Men are quick to judge the Bible, but slow to let the Bible judge them. Had the judge on the bench only opened the very Bible that he used to swear in his witness for that case, he would have been able to find the answer to his question, “What is a Christian?” Can you answer it from the Bible?—*Burton W. Barber* □

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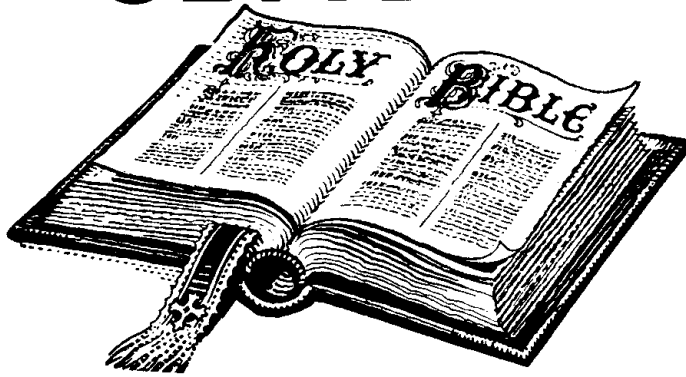
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“IN THE MULTITUDE OF WORDS there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”

—PROVERBS 10:19



# Grounded *and* SETTLED



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**“AND YOU THAT** were sometimes alienated and the enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unproveable in his sight. If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which we have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister. . .” (Colossians 1:21-23).

We hear much talk today about what the church needs. Men have all kinds of plans and ideas on how to make the church more effective in carrying out her work. We have all the pattern and plans we need set forth in God’s Word. The real need of the day is to get people “Grounded and Settled” on this divine plan. Peoples’ lack of knowledge of the Word of God is the reason for so many members being tossed about by every wind of doctrine in the church today. Members who have been in the church for years are still in the “milk stage” of knowledge, when they should be in the “meat stage” (Hebrews 5:11-14). There may be two reasons for this. It may be due to the fact that those who teach are incapable of feeding them the meat of the Word, or it may be that these people just are not interested enough to study the Bible for themselves so that they may grow in the knowledge of what it says. Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night are often the only times some members ever pick up their Bibles. These members will never be “Grounded and Settled” in the faith. I want to set forth here three things these members need to be taught.

## Reconciliation

First of all they need to be reminded that they have been reconciled unto God by the blood and the body of

Jesus Christ who died on the cross for them. God’s great mercy and love for you and me caused him to send His Son down to this earth. Christ became flesh and blood that he might come to know our infirmities and suffer our temptations (Hebrews 2:14-18). All of us need to keep in mind the fact that we are “bought with a price” (I Corinthians 6:20). This reconciliation took place at the time of our conversion to Christ, by obedience to the Gospel (I Peter 1:22). Those members of the church who will not study their Bibles leave the impression on me that they think reconciliation to God is all they need. But our text shows, that though we have been reconciled, yet there is a chance that we might be moved away from the faith, and the hope of the Gospel. God and Christ paid a great price in order to reconcile men unto God again. We need to have this impressed upon our minds.

## Study

In the second place, we need to recognize that after we have been reconciled to God, we need to “Study to show ourselves approved unto God” (2 Timothy 2:15). By so doing, we are able to rightly divide the Word of God. This will keep us from making many mistakes. In speaking of the Word of God, Peter wrote, “As also in all his (Paul’s) epistles, speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever” (2 Peter 3:16-18). God said in the long ago, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God. . .”

People ask the question, “Why is there so much digression and trouble in the church today?” God’s Word comes ringing back, “Thou has rejected knowledge”; “Ye do err not knowing the Scriptures.” A person is going to be just as strong a Christian as he is strong in the knowledge of God’s Word. When men start speaking lies in hypocrisy to draw away disciples after themselves, those who are untaught and unlearned, will be the ones drawn away. This is the very thing that undergrids denominationalism. Peoples’ ignorance of and refusal to study the Word of God for themselves is the only reason on earth that denominations exist, unless they are just plain dishonest people. But I believe their basic reason is failure to search the scriptures to prove whether or not the things being taught them are so or not. This is why the churches of Christ are denominationalizing in many places. Men are wresting the scriptures, and untaught and unread members are being deceived into error. God’s Word warns, “Let no man deceive you with

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**GROUNDING AND SETTLED**

*(Continued from Last Page)*

words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be ye not therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." I think it safe to say, that if all my brethren could prove all the things which they teach and support as being scriptural, as actually being scriptural, division and digression would cease to exist. We need to remember and apply the exhortation of Ephesians 6:10-18: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. . .Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. . ." This takes study, brethren.

Continue Steadfastly

Then in the last place, recognizing the great price of reconciliation, and the need for studying the Scriptures, we need to be, "Rooted and Grounded," "Rooted and built up in him. . ."; "Continue in the things we have learned and been assured of"; "Fight the good fight of faith"; "And earnestly contend for the faith once for all times delivered." We dare not conform to the world or its teachings. If standing for the truth, means separation from those who refuse to do so, then separate we must. A little leaven can and does leaven the whole lump regardless of what some "compromisers" say.

Being "Grounded and Settled" takes diligent study, brethren. And it takes study in order to equip oneself to be able to earnestly contend for the faith. So I hope, brethren, as Peter, "to stir up your minds," to the end that you might be established in the truth of God's Holy Word so that you might, with all diligence, make your calling and election sure: for it you do these things, you shall never fall.

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**HE GAVE HIS SON**

WHETHER IT was based on fact or was merely used as an illustration, I really never knew, but there is a story about an operator of a railroad draw bridge over

a wide and deep river. He had drawn the bridge for a boat passing up the river and had returned the bridge to the position for the trains, but a problem developed with the mechanical device which locked the bridge in a secure position. It was only minutes until the next train. He manually closed the device, but it would require that he hold it in position while the train passed and while he stood on a little platform beside the track midway across the bridge.

It was too late to send a message for the train to stop, and his concern was for the safety of its many passengers. He hastened to the lock at the center of the bridge, forced it into position, and standing on the little platform beside the rails with the heavy lever gripped firmly in his hands, he looked in the direction of the oncoming train now within sight. A horrible and sickening feeling rushed over him. His little son was toddling toward him, between the rails out onto the bridge. There was no way that the man could run to his son and snatch him from the path of the train and return to the lock in time for the train to cross the bridge. He sacrificed his son to save the lives of those on the train, though at the time they were totally unaware.

I thought of another Son, one who died on Calvary's cross. He was sacrificed for us. He died so we might live. God could have rescued Him, but He allowed Him to die so we could be saved. It was no instant decision with God. He had so designed it from the beginning of the world. God gave His Son to save our souls.

—The Gospel Message

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**"STUMBLED STEP"**

Some would say,  
 When Christians stumble and sin,  
 We should straightwith stand up  
 and try again.  
 . . .but haven't we forgotten  
 the most needful step of all?  
 Best we stay awhile upon our knees,  
 lest again we fall.  
 O, how we need the Savior's salve,  
 if His solace we hope to have.  
 Indeed, there's no forgiveness when we're wrong,  
 Save we pray, "I am weak, but Thou art strong."  
 Satan would have us in a Hell-bound hurry,  
 that of repentance we'd have no time to worry;  
 So slow down for thy soul's sake,  
 that for God's counsel time you'll make.  
 Pray, kneel down before Him  
 and give Him praise,  
 For He hears our repentant prayers  
 and forgives our foolish ways.  
 "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed  
 lest he fall." ( Corinthians 10:12 NASV)  
 —By BOB WICKLINE



# Are VISIONS, DREAMS, and RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES Proof of Salvation?

By JAMES E. GIBBONS

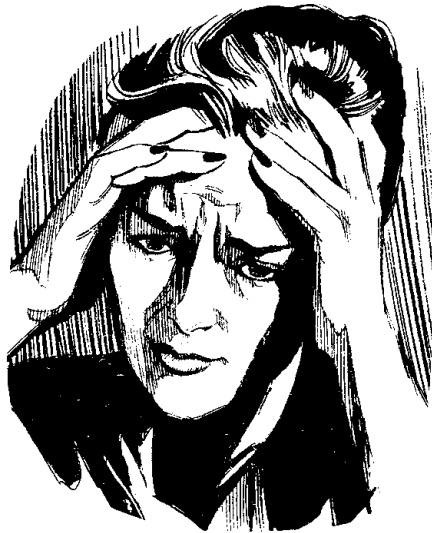
IT IS COMMONLY believed by a sizable segment of the religious community that conversion to Christ has not been accomplished unless preceded by prolonged agony and finally climaxed in a bazarre, and traumatic, "religious experience." The sensational experience is subjectively sought usually by "praying through" (associated with an "altar"); seeking a sign, a vision—seeing a light; or hearing a voice, etc. When finally "attained," to some it means their sins were thereby forgiven. To others, God has assuredly let them know that they are among His predestined elect. The truth is that not all professing religious people have experienced these things (although they may love the Lord dearly). As a matter of fact, not all who have sought these experiences (real or imagined) have been able to have them—although they were deadly in earnest, and although they were told they much have them before they could be saved.

Obviously something is strangely amiss somewhere because God wants all to be saved (II Peter 3:9; I Timothy 2:4-6). Let us look carefully into the Bible, and examine the New Testament in particular, on this matter.

The book of Acts in the New Testament has been called the "book of conversions." In this short history of the early church we see how men were converted—how they became Christians. At least two of these records of conversion were accompanied by unusual and miraculous circumstances, but did this have anything to do with salvation? We shall now see.

## The Household of Cornelius

The tenth and eleventh chapters of Acts give the account of the conversion of the household of Cornelius, the first Gentiles to come into the church. To start with, Cornelius saw a vision of an angel in his house, who actually talked to him (Acts 10:1-8; 11:13,14; etc.). Many today would declare that such a glorious vision would be definite evidence of salvation, but was that true of Cornelius? Did he think he was saved? The angel told him to send for the apostle Peter "who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). The parallel words to this in Acts 10:6 read: "...he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." The messengers of Cornelius told Peter of the vision and how he (Cornelius) was waiting to "hear words



of thee" (Acts 10:22). Upon the arrival of the apostle, Cornelius again told of the vision, and then said, "Immediately therefore I sent to thee: and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33). After the rapidly ensuing events, we read of what happened to these believing Gentiles. "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). This same apostle had preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38,39). Who were the ones mentioned as being "AFAR OFF"? In Ephesians 2:11-17 (notice especially verse 17) we learn this expression refers to GENTILES (the non-Jewish people). In other words, the apostle preached to the household of Cornelius the same thing he had preached on Pentecost (offering the same promise)—**Repent and be baptized; you will be forgiven and receive God's Spirit.** This promise is for everyone who will do this, including Gentiles. Everyone who is Scripturally converted is converted in this way. Visions and dreams have nothing to do with it. And, again, this same apostle Peter wrote in I Peter 1:22,23—"Seeing ye have purified your souls in OBEYING the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another

with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Furthermore, this same apostle said, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us. . ." (I Peter 3:20,21).

This apostle Peter, reviewing before the Jerusalem church and the other apostles what actually happened when he went into this Gentile's house, said, "And as I began to speak the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15)—also consider verse 14 again. Peter had not fully told them what to do in reference to being saved when this extraordinary demonstration of the Holy Spirit occurred as "at the beginning." This plainly implies that this special outpouring of the Holy Spirit was not a common experience in the early church. Why say "the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us AT THE BEGINNING" (Pentecost: about ten years before) if it had happened with every conversion? This outpouring of the Spirit had nothing to do with saving them. Peter would tell them what they must "DO" (Acts 10:6,33) to be saved (Acts 11:14). This special outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to prove that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, should have the gospel preached to them (they had been "dragging their feet" in doing this)—it was not for salvation (Acts 11:17,18). It happened before they were fully told what they must "DO" and as the apostle "BEGAN TO SPEAK."

## The Case of Saul of Tarsus

Saul of Tarsus, leading a great persecution against the early church, was on his way to Damascus for that very purpose. As he approached the city suddenly he saw a great light, he heard a voice, and he actually saw Jesus in this heavenly vision (Acts 9:1-6). Many contend that Saul was therewith saved, but is this the truth? Did this heavenly vision save him?

No. Three days later when Ananias came unto him, he still had his sins. In the record of Acts 22 Paul gives the details of Ananias coming to him. It was at this time Ananias said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Why say such things to a poor, repentant sinner if he is already saved? This is no time for empty words. Now, remember what the Lord had said in answer to Saul's question on the road to Damascus. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to DO? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6).

(Continued on Next Page)

**ARE VISIONS, DREAMS, AND  
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES PROOF  
OF SALVATION? (from Last Page)**

This was part of what he "MUST DO."

Then, for those who put great faith in "praying through," please notice this about Saul (later called Paul). He fasted and prayed for three days (Acts 9:9,11) and still had not "prayed through." The truth of the matter is a person cannot "pray through" to salvation—one must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins to get "through." Therefore, Ananais urged Paul, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

What was the purpose of the vision if it was not to save Paul? Jesus said, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16). Paul further said, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). He later wrote, "Am I not an apostle? . . . have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" (I Corinthians 9:1). The purpose of the heavenly vision was not for salvation, but to qualify Paul to be an apostle of Christ, although arriving belatedly on the scene (I Corinthians 15:7-9). Apostles were the "official" eyewitnesses of Christ.

**The Ethiopian Eunuch**

Now examine the case of the Ethiopian eunuch. This sincere man was riding in a chariot when God directed the evangelist Philip to join him. The Ethiopian was reading from the Old Testament Scriptures and invited Philip to comment on it. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:35-39).

You see the direction this religious discussion takes as these two men ride along in the chariot. You see the simple sequence. When the Ethiopian said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" what was the answer? "You must see a vision first"? No. "You

must pray through first"? No. "The church must vote on you first"? No. It was rather, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He confessed his faith and was straightway baptized. It is that simple.

**The Other Conversions**

Upon analyzing the different accounts of the Great Commission given by our Lord, we come to the conclusion that faith, repentance, and baptism are necessary to becoming saved; then continuing in what has been commanded, to remaining saved (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47). The conversions in the book of Acts correspond faithfully to this simple arrangement. Men preached the simple gospel; sinners believed it, repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38-41; 3:19; 6:7; 8:12,35-39; 10:48; 16:14,15,30-34; 18:8; etc.). Paul asserted in II Corinthians 4:7 that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." Paul also says that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21). Nowhere is it recorded that God directly spoke from heaven to tell sinners what to do to be saved. Nowhere do we find angels doing this. The seeing of visions (whether real or imagined) does not save nor is it proof of salvation. God has ordained through the "foolishness of preaching" to save the world. This treasure is carried in the earthen vessel of man. God uses man to tell other men what to do to be saved.

**Fact, Faith, and Feeling**

The mind of man with its intricate emotional makeup many times is tricky. It can prove to not be altogether reliable—especially when all of the facts are not in hand.

In the Bible we read of Joseph with his coat of many colors. His father had showed partiality in giving him this special gift which only served to make his neglected brothers more jealous. We know the story how these brothers sold Joseph into slavery because of their bitterness toward him. Dipping his coat of many colors in the blood of a goat, they brought it to their father. The heart of poor Jacob was broken as he was overcome with grief. As far as he knew and was concerned, his favored son was dead—a wild beast had killed and torn his body to pieces. He actually felt, acted, and reacted as though it had happened. Many years later when word came that Joseph was alive and well down in the land of Egypt, he refused to believe it. He was so firmly convinced that his son was dead.

And experiences in religion within

themselves prove nothing. Ones feelings are not a safe guide alone. A thing can be taught a person so strongly, and he believe it so assuredly, that he reacts to it as though it were the truth (although it may not be; everything can not be right religiously—there are too many conflicting beliefs). Fact, faith, and feeling should be there, *and in that order*. Without the fact of God's Word producing the feeling and backing it, our feelings are merely delusion. We are going to be judged by God's Word—not what or how we may feel about it.

Then, many times people seek after a tangible feeling or experience because they have little faith. But Paul says, "We walk by faith and not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). We have seen faith come alive in such people; then they stopped talking about feeling. When one truly believes, repents and is baptized into Christ, like the Ethiopian, he will go on "his way rejoicing." But his personal makeup, disposition, and circumstances will determine the degree of it. He has obeyed from the heart (Romans 6:17). He has done the right thing and is pleased about it. His sins have all been taken away. His religious experience comes as a by-product of his faith and not his faith as a by-product of his religious experience.

Would you put your faith in Christ Jesus and HIS WORD and stop worrying about your feelings? Do what God commands, and He will take care of the rest. He cannot lie.

*"AND the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).*

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# Some Thoughts on “THE MINISTRY” for 1985—By Richard Snell

**I TIMOTHY 1:12** says, in the King James Version, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” In 2 Timothy 4:11 (KJV), Paul wrote to the preacher Timothy about John Mark, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

These two uses of the phrase, “the ministry” in the KJV have helped keep alive a distorted idea that *the ministry* is a vocation one enters for pay, doing preaching or related full-time spiritual work as a profession in life. The majority of people associate “the ministry” with “clergy” and “ordination.”

We suggest that serious minded disciples look up I Timothy 1:12 and 2 Timothy 4:11 in versions other than the KJV and note Paul’s true language. In the Greek the word stands for simply SERVICE, and does *not* have the article (“the”) in front of it. Literally, Paul was “in service” for Christ. And isn’t *every* Christian, to the extent of his opportunities and time allowance? Most certainly!

As surely as Jesus is Christ (Acts 2:36) and Elders are Bishops (literally, overseers—Titus 1:5-9) and the church is what Christ saves (Ephesians 5:23),—as surely as that, it is sure that *all true Christians are ministers*. See Hebrews 6:10; I Peter 4:10; Matthew 25:31-45. This is so because the Bible noun *minister* refers not to a “clergyman” but to a servant—a humble servant, whether paid or unpaid, serving his Lord out of gratitude. To minister is to serve, and to be a servant is to be a minister. The noun “minister” in the Bible never refers to a church official, except for the case of DEACONS.\* Rather than referring in some special way to a class of men who preach, “ministry” refers to a function performed by every one of those who walk in the way of Jesus.

There is perhaps no more descriptive or more scriptural designation than “minister” for a preacher of the gospel, for truly he is a servant of Christ Jesus. But for him to monopolize the term by referring to himself as “the Minister” or by some synonymous *title* as if he were the only one in the congregation who did anything is to grossly misuse a good Bible word, which is never used in a titular sense in the New Testament except in reference to the office of Deacon. All who serve the Lord in any way small or large are ministering for Him.

Any who do not minister are not followers of Christ. He who is not a servant, or minister, appears most ungrateful for salvation and makes an exceedingly poor showing in the Master’s school of discipleship. Mark well the words of Jesus in Mark 10:44,45: “Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For

even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to give his life a ransom for many.”

If in 1985 we really LOVE Jesus and FOLLOW Jesus and SERVE Him, as discipleship requires and as love demands, surely it will be seen in regular church attendance, faithful stewardship of money, time and abilities, in regular Bible reading and prayers, and in ministering to other people, both Christian and non-Christian.

To minister for Jesus is not always easy. But it was not easy for the Master to minister even unto death. Therefore we should not expect Christian service to be easy for us. As Phillips Brooks said, “O, do not pray for easy lives. Pray for stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks.”

**WHEN YOU ENTERED CHRIST**, you entered the ministry. Live accordingly during the whole of 1985.

\*Deacon is actually the untranslated Greek word for servant, and the only church office in the Bible officially called “minister” (deacon) is that one filled by appointed men possessing the qualities required in I Timothy 3:8-11.

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## CLASSIFIED

**FREE**—Permanent residence with heavenly surroundings. Act now. Offer is time limited. For information contact any true follower of Jesus Christ or refer to the Holy Scriptures.

**REWARD OFFERED**—for faithful obedience to Jesus Christ. See details in your Bible.

**LOST**—Multitudes of souls. Bring as many as you can to Jesus.

**WORKERS WANTED**—People who will distribute the gospel of Jesus Christ and labor diligently to serve the true and living God.

**POSITIONS AVAILABLE**—Openings now available for thousands of servants. Benefits are out of this world. Further information is to be found in the New Testament.—*Selected* □

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## TODAY...

**MEND** a quarrel. Search out a forgotten friend. Dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust. Write a letter. Share some treasure. Give a soft answer. Encourage youth. Manifest your loyalty in word or deed.

Keep a promise. Find the time. Forego a grudge. Forgive an enemy. Listen. Apologize if you were wrong. Try to understand. Don’t envy. Examine your demands on others. Think first of someone else. Appreciate, be kind, be gentle. Laugh a little more.

Deserve confidence. Take up arms against malice. Decry complacency. Express your gratitude. Worship God. Gladden the heart of a child. Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth. Speak your love. Speak it again. Speak it again. Speak it still once again.—*Unknown*.

# CHURCH ETIQUETTE

- 1. Come early. Rushing into the building at the last minute disrupts the service.
- 2. Take a place toward the front of the auditorium. Leave the rear seats for those who may be late and for visitors. This is a common courtesy.
- 3. Be devout—the church building is not a place of amusement. You come to worship God, not to whisper, nor lounge, or sleep. God’s house deserves utmost respect.
- 4. Always remember that strangers are guests of the church members. Treat them with the same courtesy you would if they should visit your home.
- 5. Never rush for the door after the benediction as though the house were on fire. Remain to speak and be spoken to.
- 6. Remember at all times you are in the house of God and act accordingly.—*Copied*

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# CHRISTIANITY

TO SOME PEOPLE Christianity is little more than ritualism, pageantry, pomp and ceremony. Such was the attitude of the Pharisees concerning the religion established by the law of Moses. For them, ritualism, ceremony, pageantry and show were everything; character and conduct were nothing.

Christianity is not pageantry, pomp, ritualism and ceremony. You may be sure that the people who parade their Christianity (?) by pageantry and pomp, and by the wearing of gorgeous robes and sparkling jewelry have failed completely to understand what Christianity is.

Christianity is right living in the various relationships of life.

In the home Christianity is love, kindness and the training of children in the way they should go.

In business Christianity is diligence, honesty and fairness.

In society Christianity is courtesy and helpfulness.

In the church Christianity is faithfulness, humility, love, soberness, righteousness and godliness.

Toward God Christianity is reverence and obedience.

Toward the poor Christianity is helpfulness.

Concerning self Christianity is glorifying God with the body and the spirit.—*Selected*

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# THE FAITH OF AN ATHEIST

YES, an atheist does have “faith” with respect to the questions of origins. He has a “settled conviction” concerning origins which is not, and cannot be, tested by the scientific method. He thinks his beliefs are signs of intelligence while the beliefs of Christians are signs of stupidity.

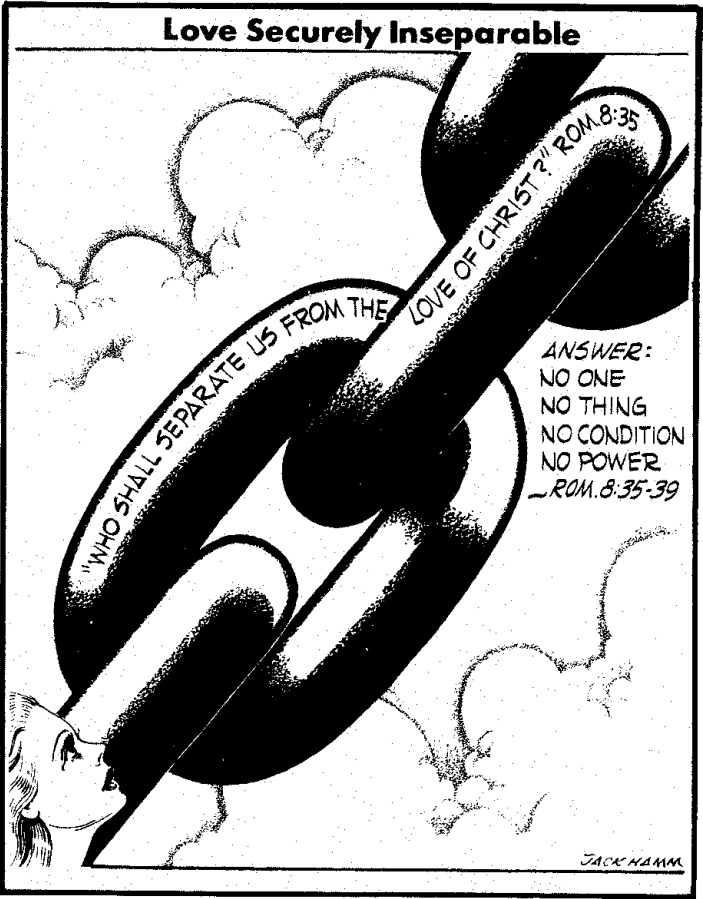
The Christian believes that God is Eternal. He has always existed, even before “the beginning” of Genesis

1. He believes that God spoke the material world into existence (Hebrews 11:3). He believes that God caused dead matter to become living matter (Genesis 2:7). Believing in such a God he has no difficulty accepting the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Atheist *must* believe that God does not exist. He *must* believe that matter is eternal. He *must* believe that original life came from dead matter without any outside stimuli. He *must* believe that matter created mind, intelligence and consciousness. And he *must* believe that this complex universe exists in its present form entirely as a result of blind chance.

*JUST WHOSE FAITH is ridiculous?—J. Cooper* □

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# STATEMENTS FROM GREAT MEN

IT IS SAID that Patrick Henry closed his will with these words: “There is one thing more I wish I could give you. It is the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without it, though you had everything else, you could not be happy.”

Napoleon is said to have proclaimed: “Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself have founded empires, but upon what did these creations of genius depend? They depended upon force! Jesus Christ founded His kingdom upon love, and to this day there are millions who would die for Him.”

It is claimed that Martin Luther once said: “I have so much work to do today that I don’t see how I’ll be able to get it done with less than four hours of prayer.”

Shakespeare said: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

Woodrow Wilson has been quoted as saying: "When you have read the Bible, you will know it is the Word of God, because you will have found the key to your own heart, your own happiness and your own duty."

Horace Mann wrote: "Keep one thing forever in view—the truth; and if you do this, though it may seem to lead you away from the opinions of men, it will assuredly conduct you to the throne of God."

To Eusebius is ascribed the following: "May I be no man's enemy. May I be the friend of that which is eternal and abides. May I never quarrel with those nearest me. May I never devise evil against any man. May I love, seek and attain only that which is good. May I wish for all men's happiness and envy none. May I never rejoice in the ill fortune of one who has wronged me. When I have said or done that which is wrong, may I never wait for the rebuke of others, but always rebuke myself until I make amends. May I win no victory that harms either me or my opponent. May I reconcile friends who are wroth with one another. May I, to the extent of my power, give all needful help to my friends and to all who are in want. May I never fail a friend in danger. When visiting those in grief, may I be able by gentle and healing words to soften their pain. May I respect myself. May I always keep tame that which rages within me. May I accustom myself to be gentle, and never be angry with people because of circumstances. May I never discuss who is wicked and what wicked things he has done, but know good men and follow their footsteps."—*The Gospel Message* □

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## HYPOCRITICAL SINGING

THE SINGING of a hymn should be a great experience. It can be as a prayer, a testimony, a praise, or an invitation. Someone has written some interesting comparisons on the hymns we sing.

We sing *Sweet Hour of Prayer*, but content ourselves with five or ten minutes a day (if that).

We sing *Onward Christian Soldiers*, but wait to be drafted into God's service.

We sing *Oh, For a Thousand Tongue*, but don't use the one we have for God

We sing *There Shall be Showers of Blessing*, but do not serve His Son, the supreme blessing.

We sing *Blest Be the Tie that Binds*, but let the least offense sever it.

We sing *Serve the Lord With Gladness*, but complain about all we have to do.

We sing *We're Marching to Zion*, but fail to march to the services of the church.

We sing *I Love to Tell the Story*, but never mention it to our neighbors and friends.

We sing *Cast Thy Burden on the Lord*, but worry ourselves into nervous breakdowns.

We sing *The Whole Wide World for Jesus*, but never invite even our next-door neighbors to church.

We sing *O Day of Rest and Gladness*, and wear ourselves out with secular things on the Lord's day.

We sing *Throw Out the Life Line*, but content ourselves with throwing out a fishing line!—*Selected* □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## WHAT ABOUT ABORTION?

A MOTHER stepped into the doctor's office carrying a bright and beautiful baby, only a year old. Seating herself near her family physician, she said, "Doctor, I want you to help me out of trouble. My baby is only one year old, and I have conceived again, and I do not want to have children so close together."

"What do you expect me to do?" asked the physician.

"Oh, anything to get rid of it for me," she replied.

After thinking seriously for a moment, the doctor said, "I think I can suggest a better method of helping you out. If you object to having two children so near together, the best way would be to kill the one in your lap and let the other one come on. It is easy to get the one on your lap, and it makes no difference to me which one I kill for you. Besides, it might be dangerous for you if I undertook to kill the younger one."

As the doctor finished speaking, he reached for a knife and continued by asking the mother to lay the baby out on her lap and turn her head the other way.

The woman almost fainted away as she jumped from her chair and uttered one word: "*Murderer!*"

A few words of explanation from the doctor soon convinced her that his offer to commit murder was not worse than her request for the destruction of the unborn child. In either case it would be murder. The only difference would be the age of the victim.

—*Samuel Voisard*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## THE WAY TO GET IT DONE

THE TREASURER of a certain church resigned. Another man, the manager of a grain elevator, was asked to take the position. He agreed to do so if, for one full year, the church would require no report from him and no one would ask any questions about the church's finances. The church members were puzzled at this strange request, but they finally granted it. Most of them had him process their grain, so they knew he was an honest man. At the end of the year, the treasurer gave a glowing report. The church's indebtedness of \$25,000 on the building had been paid in full. What the preacher received had been increased, there were no outstanding bills and there was even a cash balance of \$12,000 on hand. A pleasantly surprised congregation wanted an explanation. "Most of you bring your grain to my elevator," the man replied. "When I paid you, I simply withheld 10 percent on your behalf and gave it to the church in your name. You never missed it. Do you see what we could do for the Lord if we were willing to give the first tithe to the LORD like we should?"

—*Selected*

**THE HALF-HEARTED SINNER**

*He said, "I am through with sin forever!"  
(But Satan said, "No. . .never!")  
He said, "Well, at least I'll give it a try."  
("That's it. . .never say goodbye.")*

—By A. BROTHER

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**IT HAS BEEN SAID. . .**

LOVE IS the key that fits all locks.  
Defending your faults shows that you have no intentions of quitting them.  
What one admires indicates what he is.  
Sin is the most costly thing in the world.  
Beware of the company you keep, for if you lie with dogs you will arise with fleas.  
Faith and obedience to God save the soul.  
If you can't pay as you go, better reconsider going.  
Time spent in pitying oneself is the worst kind of idleness.  
Labor is a Christian characteristic and a natural necessity.  
Only a little person is for ever agitated by little things.  
We cannot hug our sin and have our Saviour.  
Most of our sorrows spring from our follies.  
If you think you are defeated, you are.  
What a grand world this would be if we could forget our troubles as easily as we forget our blessings! □

—Selected

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**SMOKING COSTS A LOT OF \$\$\$**

NUMEROUS MEDICAL STUDIES have shown that the costs of smoking far exceed the cost of a pack or carton of cigarettes. In fact, health science has shown smoking can cost you your life since it increases the risk of an early death from lung or other forms of cancer or heart disease.  
But leading up to that ultimate cost are the other costs of smoking that many people don't realize. In fact, a Minnesota study released in 1983 shows that most cigarette smokers pay twice for the cigarettes they smoke in a lifetime; once for the cigarettes themselves and an equal amount for health and related problems that result from smoking.  
Other costs of smoking include. . .  
—\$12.9 billion spent per year treating health problems directly attributable to heavy cigarette smoking (a pack or more per day). These heavy smokers statistically have a hospitalization rate 50% greater than non-smokers. (*American Lung Association, 1982*)  
—\$56,000 in a lifetime in health care costs for the average smoker who does not become a victim of a form of cancer or heart disease. For heavy smokers who do fall victim to a serious ailment, the lifetime cost is must higher. (*Oster, Colditz and Kelly, 1984*)

—\$13.5 billion per year in lost productivity due to heavy smokers dying prematurely from smoking-related illnesses. (*American Lung Association, 1982*)  
—\$7.03 billion per year in lost productivity and wages from heavy smokers who are absent or spend time smoking on the job. National estimates are that smokers are absent 80 million days more than the absenteeism total for non-smokers and spend up to 30 minutes a day smoking which is lost from production. (*American Lung Association, 1982*)  
—\$624 per smoker per year that is spent or lost by the employer to cover the costs of the heavy smoker in the workplace. (*Marvin Kristein, 1980*)

IT'S rather expensive, isn't it?

—Information put out by an insurance company

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF  
HOW to GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE**

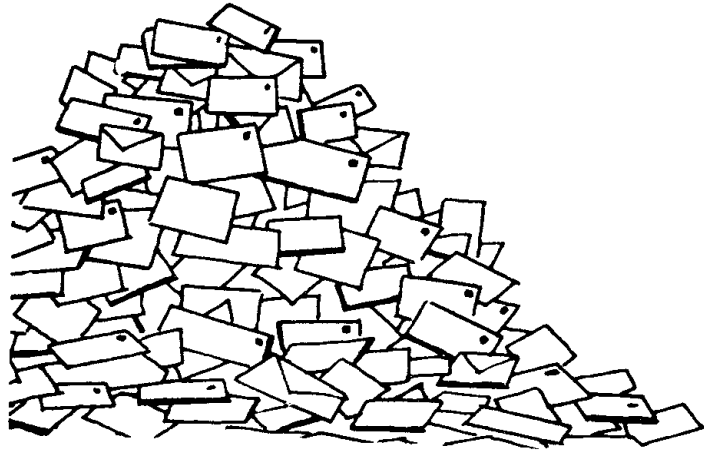
1. KEEP SKID CHAINS on your tongue; always say less than you think. Cultivate a low persuasive voice. How you say it often counts more than what you say.
2. Make promises sparingly and keep them faithfully, no matter what it costs you.
3. Never let an opportunity pass to say a kind and encouraging thing to or about somebody. Praise good work done, regardless of who did it. If criticism is needed, criticize helpfully, never spitefully.
4. Be interested in others; interested in their pursuits, their welfare, their homes and families. Make merry with those that rejoice; with those who weep, mourn. Let everybody you meet, however humble, feel that you regard him as one of importance (for he is).
5. Be cheerful. Keep the corners of your mouth turned up. Hide your pains, worries and disappointments under a smile. Laugh at good stories and learn to tell them.
6. Preserve an open mind on all debatable questions. Discuss, but do not argue. It is a mark of superior minds to disagree and yet be friendly.
7. Let your virtues, if you have any, speak for themselves, and refuse to talk of another's vices. Discourage gossip. Make it a rule to say nothing of another unless it is something good.
8. Be careful of another's feelings. Wit and humor at the other fellow's expense are rarely worth the effort and may hurt where least expected.
9. Pay no attention to ill-natured remarks about you. Simply live that nobody will believe them. Disordered nerves, and a bad digestion, are common causes of backbiting.
10. Don't be too anxious about your dues. Do your work, be patient and keep your disposition sweet, forget self, and you will be rewarded.—*Author Unknown*

**—PUT GOD FIRST—**



# READERS'

## ... Response



**VIRGINIA:**

—“Thanks so much for *THE SWORD AND STAFF* magazine. I love the teaching of God’s Word and the way you explain it so real. This one is one of the best yet. Thanks for your love and concern for me.”

**NEW HAMPSHIRE:**

—“I just received volume 22, number 4, of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*, and I think it’s one of the best I’ve seen. Of course it had a large amount of information I wanted. Most every article in it, gives me a booklet of information. I shall use it as a reference on several subjects. . .”

**OHIO:**

—“...I don’t want to be without *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I think it to be one of the best publications in the brotherhood. Thank you for the many good and uplifting articles you publish.”

**INDIANA:**

—“I don’t know how my name got on the list of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* but am much delighted to receive it. I find your articles very interesting and to the point. Christ is the only hope for mankind, and nothing else really matters. . .”

**KANSAS:**

—“Will you please stop sending this paper to this address?... No one here wants it now. PLEASE TAKE THIS ADDRESS OFF YOUR LIST. This mail box is very small—not big enough for our. . .mail. . .”

★★★★★★

## YOU CAN BE JUST A CHRISTIAN

HAS IT EVER OCCURRED to you that you can be just a Christian. . .nothing more or less than a plain Christian? Yes, even in the midst of the religious confusion of our creed-bound, denomination-divided age, it is possible for you to be just a plain Christian.

What does it mean to be just a Christian? Well, being a Christian means so much more than merely being a good moral person. . .more than giving mental assent to a certain belief. . .more than having one’s name on a

church role.

Being just a Christian means to trust and obey Jesus Christ just as Paul and Phillip and the early Christians did in the first century after Christ. It means going back beyond all the distinctive Catholic and Protestant doctrines of today to find Christ just as He is revealed in the inspired New Testament. You see, there were no different denominations in the beginning of true Christianity. The early disciples were all one body. They were called simply “Christians” (Acts 11:26). They didn’t follow different creeds but were guided by the “faith once and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The New Testament, first as the spoken word and later as it was written down by “holy men of God” as they were guided by the Holy Spirit was their only rule of faith and practice (2 Peter 1:21). We have this same New Testament today and can reproduce the same pure Christianity which flourished in the first century after Christ. We can be just plain Christians.

TO FIND OUT the details of just how you can become and remain just a plain Christian like Peter and Barnabas and Acquila, you must open your own New Testament and you must read for yourself. We suggest that you begin with the Acts of the Apostles. You will find that Jesus built only one church, and God added everyone who obeyed the gospel of Christ to this undenominational church, the body of Christ (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47). The Bible teaches that you will be added to this same body today when you believe in Jesus Christ as God’s Son, repent of your sins, and are baptized (Acts 2:38). Why not become just a Christian and worship and work in the fellowship of those who are just Christians?—*Lexington Lamplighter* □

★★★★★★

## WORK DOESN’T DO IT

IT IS NOT WORK that kills men; it is worry. Work is healthy; you can hardly put more upon a man than he can bear. Worry is rust upon the blade. It is not the revolution that destroys the machinery, but the friction. Fear secretes acids; but love and trust are sweet juices.—*Henry Ward Beecher* □

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A FEW MONTHS AGO we made a mistake. A whole printing of several thousand of the valuable booklet, *THE SUBJECT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MADE SIMPLE*, was cut the wrong way. We are making you a special offer on this. Pages are usually folded with the staples in the fold of the booklets. In this case, it will be stapled from the side since the paper was cut where the fold was supposed to be. Instead of .35¢ for one copy (and .25¢ and .20¢ for quantities), we are "selling" these for .10¢ each in any number. All the information is here—just cut and stapled differently. You may place your order now. —Editor □

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