

# The Sword AND Staff

*"Preach the Word" (II Timothy 4:2) • "Feed the Flock" (I Peter 5:2)*

## First Things **FIRST**



By **JAMES E. GIBBONS** — 1535 Fairfield Drive  
Mount Airy, North Carolina 27030 U.S.A.

**IF YOU ARE LIKE** this writer you can get your work done better by making a list of things that need to be done, then mark through each thing on the list as it is done. Not only does this make for certainty in getting the work done, it gives you more of a sense of accomplishment as the work is done. However, after the list is initially made you must decide which things are the most important and are to be done first. If there is no priority, exercising self-discipline to do the harder things first usually is the best way to go about it. Otherwise, first things must come first (that being determined by importance and urgency).

Consider the following situations and circumstances. *Situation A:* (1) The refrigerator needs defrosting; (2) A picture is crooked on the wall; (3) The house is

on fire. What should be done first? *Situation B:* (1) You must go on a business trip; (2) The car must be packed; (3) You discover the gas tank is empty, and to complicate matters (4) you have a flat tire. What should be done first? *Situation C:* (1) You must go to work; (2) You have to get up; (3) You need to put on your clothes; (4) You need to eat breakfast. What do you do first?

Then again, what comes first (and what is wrong here)? (1) You want to bake a cake; (2) You add all the ingredients, except one (you forget the eggs); (3) After it is baked, you crack the eggs and pour them on the top. Will this work? Has the end result been accomplished? Have you made the actual cake you started out to bake? And what about this? (1) You want to become a Christian; (2) You must trust in Jesus Christ; (3) You must repent of all sins; (4) You must confess your faith; (5) You must be immersed into Christ for the remission of your sins. But along the way you don't do all of these things—one or more of the ingredients is left left. Have you become a Christian?

Yes, there are certain things that by way of priority should come first, and there are other things that by way of necessity must come first. It is like the Lord Jesus said about the seed planted in the ground: "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28). And we can't get the baseball player home until we first get him on the base. But even before that he must get up to bat. First things must come first.

And in matters of religion and our relationship to the eternal God it is interesting to notice that many Scriptures emphasize there are certain things that must come first. These verses actually come right out and say this. First things come first (and must come first) if we are to get anywhere with God and realize salvation. Although we may not have arranged the following Scriptures in sequence or systematically, each is full of vital truth. May we take heed to what is said.

**I. "But seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).**

This is a great verse of Scripture, and there is a sense in which every other "first" is actually included in this one.

Man is a dual personality, spiritual and physical.

(Continued on Page 3)

## THE SWORD AND STAFF

Post Office Box 147  
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030 U.S.A.

### 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 are definitely needed along in order for us to continue this unselfish labor of love for God and spiritual 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 all considered as an offering).—**THANK YOU.**

## Proverbially SPEAKING...

"Lord, I do not ask for faith to move mountains; I pray, Lord, for enough faith to move me."

*When people become preoccupied with methods rather than the all-important message—look out! Trouble is in store for the church.*

"A man may make mistakes, but he is not a failure until he starts blaming others."

*Woe unto them who love entertainment and not truth, for truth will not be theirs for long.*

"The best way to keep from stepping on other people's toes is to put yourself in their shoes."

*What some people call "contending for the faith" could really be called "being contentious about the faith" (or, better still, about their own opinions).*

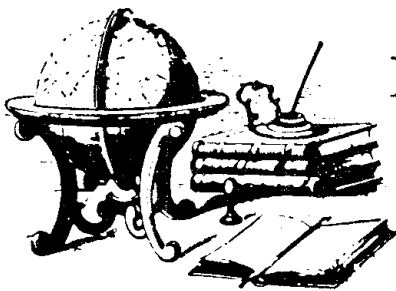
"Any old dead fish can float down stream; it takes a live one to go up stream."

*Supposedly "belonging" to the "right" church can never take the place of being right with God.*

"Every evening I turn my worries over to God because He is going to be up all night anyway."

*The person who gives us the impression that he knows it all is really telling us that he has a lot to learn.*

"He who believes that God is pledged to provide for him cannot be greedy, anxious, or covetous; he can only be liberal, even magnanimous."



## EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

### SPEAK, EXHORT, AND THEN REBUKE

*"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:15).*

TITUS, as an associate preacher working with the apostle Paul, had been left on the isle of Crete to "set in order the things that are wanting" among the churches. Different Spirit-inspired instructions are given, then Paul writes the above words (2:15). He was to "speak, and exhort, and rebuke," letting no man disregard what he had to say. What he was doing on Crete was part of the over-all work of an evangelist.

Why say "speak, and exhort, and rebuke" (and in that order)? Each word seems to become stronger and more intensified. What is meant? (1) He starts out with "*speak*." This word (the Greek) basically means to give utterance to. Thus, he was simply to tell them what God's will was involving the various things under consideration (in setting the churches in order). (2) Next we have the word "*exhort*." This word means to admonish, beseech, entreat, implore, etc. It is a little stronger than "*speak*." After first teaching them (informing them), as seen in "*speak*," he was now to urge these teachings upon them. They were to be admonished to put them into practice. (3) Last comes "*rebuke*," the strongest word. It is obvious as to what is meant here. After teaching and exhorting, now rebuke was to be resorted to, to accomplish obedience in their lives (to get them to put these things into practice). And all of this was to be done in the context of authority (not compromise), for he was speaking the authoritative Word of God (not man's).

This speaking, exhorting, and rebuking may be done all at one time (as in one sermon), or it may be carried out over a period of time. The situation would seem to determine the procedure. However, we are of the opinion that it would usually be best to spread this over a period of time. After teaching the people, and perhaps exhorting them, give them time and a chance to put it into practice. Let it "sink in." Many people don't do any better because they don't know any better. If they are sincere (and have good and honest hearts), and they have been properly taught, it will be only a matter of time until they put it into practice. If they are a little slow in doing this, then rebuke (with love) may become necessary.

If you walked up to a stranger on the street and punched him in the nose for seemingly no apparent reason, he

would wonder what in the world was coming off. However, if you had talked to him and he knew there was some “just” grievance, his reaction would be different. Our preaching can be that way. Most people don’t even really know God’s Word, and we rebuke them for not putting it into practice. We have the cart before the horse. It would be better to try to patiently teach them first. If they are really sincere, then we can expect results.

That is the basis on which we proceed in the printing of this paper. We believe that a lot of people don’t do any better because they don’t know any better. *The Sword and Staff* is a teaching/preaching publication. We believe there are many neglected New Testament teachings. We appeal directly to the Word of God, and we humbly share with you our studies of what it teaches. We believe that we commend ourselves to you who love the Word of God in doing this. Like Cornelius of old, both of us stand before God together; we want to “hear all things that are commanded” of God (Acts 10:33). “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## First Things **FIRST**

(Continued from Page 1)

The spiritual has to do with the eternal whereas the physical has to do with the temporal. Man was made by God and for God—made in the very image and likeness of God. This image of God involves the eternal. When man puts God first in his life, the over-riding emphasis will be on the spiritual (and consequently the eternal). When the physical dominates, and the spiritual is neglected and disregarded, his “value” system is geared to this world (and the flesh). He becomes more and more like the beast of the field, no more than an animal.

The first book of the Bible, the first chapter, and the first verse of that chapter reads, “In the beginning God. . .” (Genesis 1:1). God is before everything (first), and the first cause of every resultant cause. In reference to time He was the beginning. And in reference to our lives He is the beginning. Not only that, “in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). How logical, as well as Scriptural, to conclude that He should have the first place in everything involving our lives. Having futilely tried most everything “under the sun” (good and bad), the writer of Ecclesiastes now from the vantage point of experience and hard-earned wisdom declared, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For

God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14). God made us for Himself, and we are like a fish out of water until we are right with our Creator. He must have first place or no place.

And (in the context of Matthew 6:33) when we put God first, He will put us first (and from the other side of the picture, leave Him out and He will leave us out). Although the New Testament puts the emphasis upon the spiritual and the eternal, still Jesus here says the needful material things will be “added.” To get an Old Testament background to this thought, consider Psalms 37 (a psalm of David). Listen: “Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (verses 3-5). Then this man David (who is described as a man after God’s own heart, Acts 13:22) further said, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (verses 23-25).

Oh! That men would seek the things of God first (the giver of life), then their lives would not be so empty and barren! The Lord Jesus taught, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25). And Paul echoed this truth when he said that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (I Timothy 4:8b).

**II. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse FIRST that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matthew 23:25,26).**

The ministry of Jesus was one running encounter of conflict with the scribes and Pharisees. Early in his ministry in the Sermon on the Mount, he had said (and that with strong emphasis), “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Now as he has entered into the final week of his ministry, we read the great climaxing clash in Matthew 23. He could be very patient with publicans and sinners (even harlots) who were seeking, but with religious hypocrites, never! His most scorching words of rebuke (like coming from John the Baptist) were reserved for them. Listen: “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33).

Christianity as a religion is not something that we “add” to our lives, it is life itself. We don’t just “polish up” the outside a little, mouth pious (but empty) words, and put our “best foot” forward to impress people. No

(Continued on Next Page)

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

(Continued from Last Page)

real Christianity (the real thing) starts from the inside and works out. It involves the "heart." There must be a change from within, a total surrender to God. This must come first, or all acts of religion are meaningless. This is what is called being "born again." "Jesus answered and said unto him (Nicodemus), Verily, verily, (amen, amen), I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3,5—this takes place when one repents and is immersed into Christ—Acts 2:38). We enter into a living and vital relationship with Christ. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

First things must come first. If you have never repented of your sins (and gotten things straightened out on the inside of you), regardless how religious you may appear, you are still in your sins. You may have even been baptized. You must personally give your heart to God. Otherwise you are phony. God knows all. He is "a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12b,13).

**III. "And this they did, not as we had hoped, but FIRST gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (II Corinthians 8:5).**

Paul is talking about giving here. For a considerable time during his ministry he was especially preoccupied with this offering that was being taken up among the Gentile churches for the poor saints back in Palestine (they had lost their worldly possessions in becoming a Christian, Hebrews 10:32-34). Here in II Corinthians he mentions the eagerness of the churches of Macedonia, although in poverty themselves, giving liberally to this cause. But he is pleased that he can observe that they had first given themselves to the Lord.

This is a must in our giving. "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" (John 3:16). "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). We have freely received, and should freely give. There is nothing stingy about Christianity. This giving is made easy when we have first given ourselves unreservedly to the Lord (he gave his all). This is a prerequisite. This is a must.

Giving is to be looked upon as an act of worship just like the Lord's supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2; Philippians 1:3-5; 4:18). It is a shame and a disgrace when church people merely look upon it as a matter of "raising money" to pay the church's "bills" (how degrading). And it is even more shameful and disgraceful when religious people attempt to "raise" this money from the world. This may be done by direct solicitation (begging), bake sales, yard sales—you name it! True Christians will gladly reach down into their hearts and their pockets and give liberally (regularly

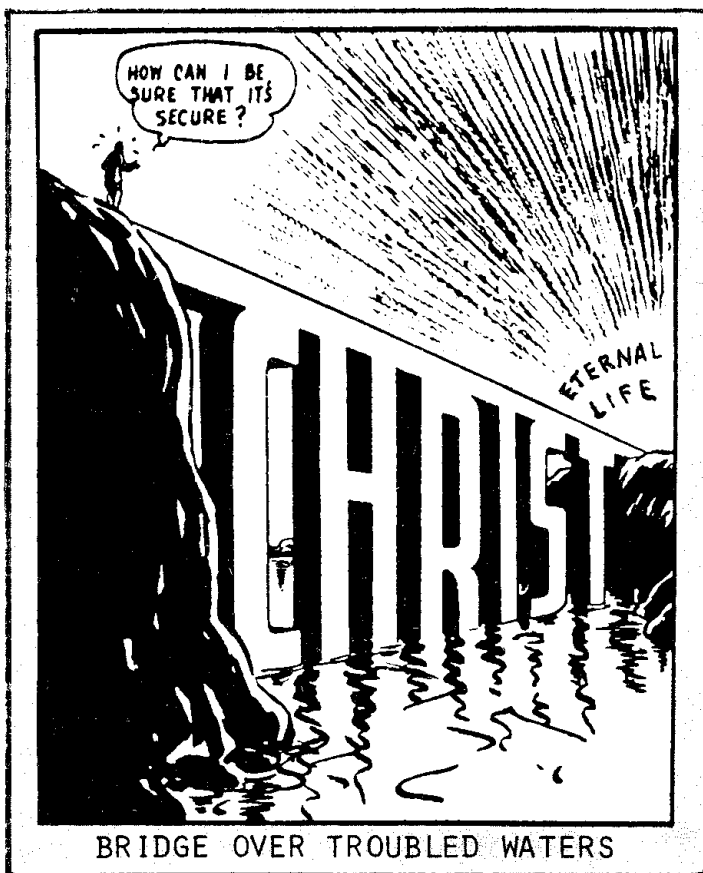
and systematically). This will be no problem because they have first given themselves to the one who gave his all. What they are and what they have are at His disposal. How unchristian to expect the world to pay our "bills." How degrading to the concept of giving being an act of divine worship.

And while we are at it, what we are saying about *first giving ourselves to God* applies to all worship. When a Christian gets up on Sunday morning (or any other time the church is meeting), he doesn't even have to think about whether he is going to church or not. That was settled when he was baptized. He unquestionably and unconditionally gave himself to God. If God is first in your life and the church meets upon the first day of the week (or any other appointed time), your first pre-determined thought will be to assemble with those of kindred minds (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7; Acts 2:46). What a blessed privilege!

Have you first given yourself to God? It makes all the difference in the world (and in reference to the world to come).

**IV. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; FIRST be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23,24).**

The setting of this Scripture is the Sermon on the Mount, and the Law of Moses was still in force. What the Lord said here involves worship in connection with the sacrificial system that was carried out in the temple area. Although what he says here is in the context of the Old Testament, we know the Sermon on the Mount anticipates the coming kingdom (and the prin-



ciple laid down here hold true today). In other words, if there is ill-will (hatred, malice) between brethren they cannot worship God acceptably until they get their problem resolved. This is as true today as it was then.

The apostle Paul wrote: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting" (I Timothy 2:8). We can't do this with an unforgiving heart. The Lord Jesus taught: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14,15). No doubt Paul had this in mind in Ephesians 4:31 and 32 when he admonished, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

People cannot hold grudges, come to church and supposedly worship, and still expect God to accept it as true worship. First, before worship, before partaking of the Lord's supper, go and be reconciled to your brother. Otherwise your worship is in vain and you stand in constant jeopardy before the eternal Judge of heaven and earth.

First things must come first.

**V. "I exhort therefore, that, FIRST OF ALL, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (I Timothy 2:1).**

This is fitting and true anyway you choose to look at it. Whether Paul used "FIRST OF ALL" to mean first in the sense of things dealt with in order in this epistle, first in reference to importance, worship, or what-have-you, all are true. To pray, to honor God, to seek His will first in this personal way is in keeping with all we have found out so far about "FIRST THINGS FIRST." Someone has aptly said: Until a Christian has prayed, the most important thing that a Christian can do is to pray. How we need to honor God, thank God, and pray to Him for wisdom and guidance. Then we can move on into what we have to do with more confidence and assurance.

The Lord Jesus fasted and prayed before entering into his public ministry. He prayed before he chose his disciples. He prayed before his crucifixion (and what an experience of prayer that was in the Garden of Gethsemane). There was prayer that anteceded the coming of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the church. There was prayer and fasting before Christian workers were sent out from Antioch in Acts 13. This was likewise true with the setting aside of elders in local situations. Paul, in almost all of his epistles, mentions first that he is praying for them in one way or another. To the Christians at Rome he wrote, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all. . ." (Romans 1:8). Notice I Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 1:15-17; Philippians 1:3-5; Colossians 1:3; I Thessalonians 1:2; II Thessalonians 1:3; II Timothy 1:3.

The early Christians were described and characterized as "them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (II Timothy 2:22). Could that honestly be said to be the distinguishing mark today of modern

Christians? No doubt there are those who not only do not pray first, but neither later, or hardly ever at all. In this day of advanced technology and apparent human self-sufficiency, perhaps even the most devout do not pray as they should.

Prayer is nonetheless a very essential ingredient in the life of a Christian. Remember: Until a Christian has prayed, the most important thing that a Christian can do is to pray.

**VI. "Thou hypocrite, FIRST cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5).**

Read Matthew 7:1-5 to get the whole picture of what Jesus said here. What he said was aimed at the scribes and Pharisees (and anyone else if "the shoe fits"). They were guilty of censorious, self-righteous, hypocritical judgment of others. Although they set themselves up as religious teachers, they badly needed to first get their own lives straightened out. Like the Lord said, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is thine own eye?" In other words, they were like a person trying to get a tiny speck (as saw dust) out of their friend's eye when at the same time a whole beam of wood (as a "2 by 4") was projecting from their own. How grotesque! While pointing a single finger at another they had three pointing back at themselves.

The Lord is teaching that before trying to teach others our own house must be set in order. David realized that in the 51st Psalm. In his prayer of repentance he wants things to be as they once were before with the Lord, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners will be converted unto thee" (verse 13). Even then we must be humble. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

Oh, could that all leaders in the church say with Paul, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). Elders are to be examples to the flock (I Peter 5:3). The writer of Hebrews admonishes, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation (the end-results of their life-style)" (Hebrews 13:7).

What about you, elder, preacher, teacher, Christian? Does what you do speak so loudly that people can't hear what you say?

Remember. First get your own life straight, then God can use you.

**VII. "And let these also FIRST be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless" (I Timothy 3:10).**

This third chapter of I Timothy gives the qualifications of elders and deacons. This list of qualifications was not put here as optional guide lines in the selection of these men. Verse 2 starts out by saying an elder (bishop) "must" be thus and so. In the original language of the New Testament, the Greek word here for "must" is the same one that is found in John 3:7 where Jesus

(Continued on Next Page)

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

(Continued from Last Page)

said, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye *must* be born again.” That is pretty strong language. According to Acts 20:28, men from Ephesus had been made “overseers” (bishops, elders) by the Holy Spirit. One aspect involved in this is in meeting the qualifications laid down by the Holy Spirit (and especially today in the Spirit-inspired Word). Prospective elders and deacons first must meet these qualifying prerequisites. Then they are to be tested and tried to prove that they do—“And let these (deacons) also (as well as the elders) **FIRST BE PROVED.**” Paul admonished the evangelist Timothy, “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (I Timothy 5:22).

A plightful and pathetic situation exists today in certain traditional and unindoctrinated circles, and the guilt can largely be laid at the door of compromising leaders. This writer sat in a class where a college professor taught that these qualifications were the ideal, just like the Lord Jesus was the ideal, but it was not necessary that they be met as such. Men were to strive for them just like we strive to be like Jesus (but never can really be like him in the absolute because he is perfect). Another professor taught that these qualifications didn’t have to all be in one man; they could be distributed among the eldership as a group. We have run into cases where preachers have “put men in” as elders (although they didn’t qualify), saying it would make better men out of them (the cart before the horse). Others put prestigious men from the business world into these positions as a showcase for the church in the community (how unspiritual! What they are trying to prove, I know not). Then some have said that they didn’t have to have faithful children (Titus 1:6) or any children at all; others have said that they didn’t have to be married, and still others have even gone so far as to say that they didn’t have to be a man to be an elder.

How tragic! Misunderstanding and confusion reign in reference to the eldership today. In the place of it has arisen the professional, denominational minister (CLERGYMAN) who usually is insensitive and insipid (and even ignorant) to what the New Testament teaches on the subject of the elders. Minister (aside from the deacon) is not an office in the New Testament church.

This subject deserves further study. But, “Let these also **FIRST BE PROVED.**” First things must come first. Then we go from there.

**VIII. “And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14).**

The apostle Peter also said, “And above all things have fervent charity (love) among yourselves; for charity (love) shall cover a multitude of sins” (I Peter 4:8).

If something is “above all things,” it is first. Actually the words for above in Colossians 3:14 and I Peter 4:8 are two different words in the Greek New Testament. *Epi* is the word in Colossians, and *pro* in I Peter. *Epi* signifies upon or above whereas *pro* means before. Peter’s word *pro* would really tie in better with

the literal thought of first. But, any way you look at it, love takes priority. Paul has us above all things to put on love (as we put on Christ), which binds all of the rest of it together in perfectness. Peter has the fervent manifestation of it to be first in our relations with one another (even to the point of covering “a multitude of sins”).

Truly love, the unselfish consideration of others, is first. It must precede and accompany everything in our dealings and relationships. Paul instructed the Corinthians, “Let all your things be done with charity (love)” (I Corinthians 16:14). That great chapter on love, I Corinthians 13, is unsurpassed in its treatment of this subject. If we have great faith and good works, but no love, we are still nothing. Giving all to the poor, and even self in the ultimate gift of martyrdom, will profit us nothing without love.

Love is the necessary prerequisite in the right kind of obedience. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

May we have more of this.

**OF THAT GREAT ETERNAL DAY** to come, our Lord said, “But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first” (Matthew 19:30). Many are first in this world who will be last (nobodies) in the world to come, but one thing is for certain, God will put those first who have put Him first (and those who have left God out will be left out). And those who have put God first must have first done many things as we have pointed out in this article. The Lord Jesus declared, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down **FIRST**, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down **FIRST**, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27-33).

**BELOVED**, none of us is perfect, but have you put first things first in your life (in your relationship to God)? Let us get things in proper perspective. First things **MUST** come first. There is no other way. □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## Life in the Blood

**A LITTLE BOY** was told by his doctor that he could save his sister’s life only by giving her some blood. She was near death—a victim of a disease from which the boy had made a marvelous recovery two years before. Her only chance for restoration was a blood transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the disease. Since the two children had the same rare blood type, the boy was the ideal donor.

“Johnny, would you give your blood for Mary?” the



doctor asked. The boy hesitated, his upper lip started to tremble. Then he smiled and said, "Sure, Doc, I'll give my blood for my sister."

Soon the two children were wheeled into the operating room—Mary, pale and thin; Johnny, robust and a picture of health. Neither spoke, but when their eyes met, Johnny grinned.

As his blood siphoned into Mary's veins one could almost see new life come into her tired body. The ordeal was almost over when Johnny's brave little voice broke the silence. "Say, Doc, when will I die?"

It was only then that the doctor realized what the moment of hesitation, the trembling of the lip had meant. Little Johnny actually thought that in giving his blood to his sister he was giving up his life! In that brief moment he had made his great decision.

You see, that's really the kind of decision we make in receiving Christ. It is commitment unto death. His blood for our blood. Of course, the analogy breaks down when describing what our Lord did when He gave His blood for us. He did go all the way. But it does point up the nature of our response to His sacrifice. There is an unlimited supply in the incorruptible blood of the Son of God. Its life-giving power is as strong today as it was when it was given at the cross. It matches every type, avails for every need, and is free to all who will receive it into their heart by faith.

If for any reason your life has not known this divine transfusion, receive it now. There is life in the blood. Offer yourself to Jesus in baptism, in newness of life, in a godly walk, and in the use of all your gifts. And in this holy outpouring of your life your heart will feel the throb of the heart of God. The life is in the blood.

In one of our beautiful hymns Charlotte Elliott expressed it best:

Just as I am, without one plea  
But that thy blood was shed for me  
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

—Richard Rogers

★★★★★★

## How Mature Are You?

**IF YOU CAN** see work which you've begun taken from you and given to another without feeling bitterness, that is maturity.

If you can listen to someone criticize you, even unkindly, and receive instruction from it without hard feelings, that is maturity.

If you can see a person do an act which is against your Christian standards and react without self-righteousness, that is maturity.

If you can see others chosen for a job which you are better qualified to do without feeling hurt, that is maturity.

If you can hear another person argue a point of view which is contrary to your own without a feeling of smugness, that is maturity.

If you can suffer nagging pain and hide your feelings for the sake of others, that is maturity.

If you can go out of your way to help another without feeling you are a pretty good person, that is maturity.

If you can see someone you know well deliberately snub you, and you can make allowance for his actions, that is maturity.

If you can rise out of bed at an early hour to pray and commune with God, realizing that therein you find strength for the day, that is maturity.

If you can listen with your heart, your eyes and your ears, evaluate the other person's conversation with love and understanding, and go away without opening your mouth, that is maturity.

If you can be maligned, falsely accused, publicly ridiculed and branded with the transgressors without growing bitter, that is maturity.—*Selected* □

★★★★★★

## MEMORANDUM FOR PARENTS "From Your Child"

**DON'T** be afraid to be firm with me. I prefer it. It lets me know where I stand.

Don't spoil me. I know quite well that I ought not to have all I ask for. I'm only teasing you.

Don't let my "bad habits" get me a lot of your attention. It only encourages me to continue them.

Don't demand explanations for my wrong behavior. I really don't know why I did it.

Don't forget that I love and use experimenting. I learn from it, so please put up with it.

Don't put me off when I ask honest questions. If you do, you will find that I stop asking and seek my information elsewhere.

Don't let my fears arouse you anxiety. Then I will become more afraid. Show me courage.

Don't forget that I can't thrive without lots of understanding and encouragement; but I don't need to tell you that, do I?

Don't make me feel smaller than I am. I will make up for it by behaving like a "big shot."

Don't be inconsistent. That confuses me and makes me try harder to get away with everything that I can.

Don't nag. If you do, I shall have to protect myself by appearing deaf.

Treat me the way you treat your friends, then I will be your friend, too.—*Selected*

★★★★★★

## Our Life and the Clock

**OUR LIFE** is like the dial of a clock. The hands are God's hands passing over and over again. The short hand, the hand of discipline; the long hand, the hand of mercy. Slowly and surely the hand of discipline must pass. And God speaks at each stroke; but over and over passes the hand of mercy, showering down sixty-fold blessing for each stroke of discipline or trial; and both hands are fastened to one secure pivot, the great unchanging heart of the God of love.—*Selected*

★★★★★★

# Today is Here

**TODAY** is here, I will start with a smile, and resolve to be agreeable. I will not criticize. I refuse to waste my valuable time.

**TODAY** has one thing in which I know I am equal with others—*time*. All of us draw the same salary in seconds, minutes and hours.

**TODAY** I refuse to spend time worrying about what might happen. I am going to spend my time making things happen.

**TODAY** I am determined to study to improve myself, for tomorrow I may be wanted, and I must not be found lacking.

**TODAY** I am determined to do things I should do. I firmly determine to stop doing the things I should not do.—*The Exhorter* □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## “The Lord Sent It”

**YEARS AGO** an old lady had no money to buy food. She prayed, “Dear Lord, please send me a side of bacon and a sack of corn meal.” Over and over again she prayed the same prayer aloud. One of the town’s unscrupulous citizens decided to play a trick on her. He dropped a side of bacon and a sack of corn meal down her chimney. It landed in front of her as she knelt in prayer.

Jumping to her feet, she exclaimed, “Oh, Lord! You have answered my prayer!” Then she went all over town telling everyone the good news.

This was too much for the scoundrel who dropped the food down her chimney. He ridiculed her publicly and told her that God did not answer her prayer; he did. The old lady replied, “Well, the devil may have brought it, but it was the Lord who sent it!”

God answers prayer in many ways.—*Selected* □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## God Calls Busy People

**GOD HAS** always called busy people into His service. Maybe, it’s because idle people never have time—and, if you really want a job done well, get a busy person to do it.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew, they were casting a net into the sea. “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). They left their nets and became fishers of men.

When Jesus called James and John they were busy fishermen, mending their nets.

Matthew, a tax collector, was at his post of duty when summoned to follow the Lord.

Saul was actively persecuting the church (Acts 8:1-3).

Back in Old Testament times, God called on busy people to do his bidding.

Moses was tending his father-in-law Jethro’s flocks when the Lord called him to lead his people out of bondage.

Elisha was busy plowing when the Lord called him to the office of a prophet.

David was brought from the fields and flocks to be

anointed king over Israel.

Amos was working as a herdsman and a gather of sycamore fruit when appointed to prophesy.

When God wished to announce the birth of His Son, He chose to release the news to the shepherds who were busily engaged in watching their flocks by night.

God used busy people to accomplish His purpose.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).—*Selected* □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## Regular Church Attendance May Save Your Life

**PAUL HARVEY** recently reported of a 73-year-old man who had been pinned beneath his farm tractor for four days and nights in driving rain and a terrible storm. Concerned friends went to see about him just in time. It seems that he is going to survive the ordeal, but he will lose a leg below the knee.

Several newspapers have picked up on this little story and have centered upon the amazing fact that a 73-year-old man could live after being pinned beneath a tractor for four days and nights in such inclement weather.

But what is even more amazing is the reason why his friends were caused to check on him. One fellow said it best: “He missed prayer meeting on Wednesday night!” That is all! Yes! Simply missing one service at church compelled his friends to check on him.

This man’s faithfulness to the church saved his life.

### SHAKE IT, BRETHREN, SHAKE IT!

O Christians, here, there and everywhere,

We surely are the Salt of the Earth!

So shake it on in sufficient a share,

That lost souls may see salvation’s worth.

Good and salty—that’s what it’ll take

To stifle sin’s taste-tempting flavor.

What a difference just a little faith can make,

When we don’t let our salt lose its savor.

The Church needs seasoned and salty saints

Who’ll stand and serve whatever the cost,

Forever faithful to Christ and His Church,

Aflame with unfailing love for the lost.

Pray, don’t cut down on God’s good salt—

Fear not, it can’t be shaken to excess;

For ‘tis saltless solutions that be at fault,

When the Church slows is upward progress.

Yea, shake it, Brethren, shake it!

Of short-seasoning be ye not to blame,

That you be worth your salt as you witness

Of God’s love and grace in Jesus’ name.

—*By Bob Wickline*

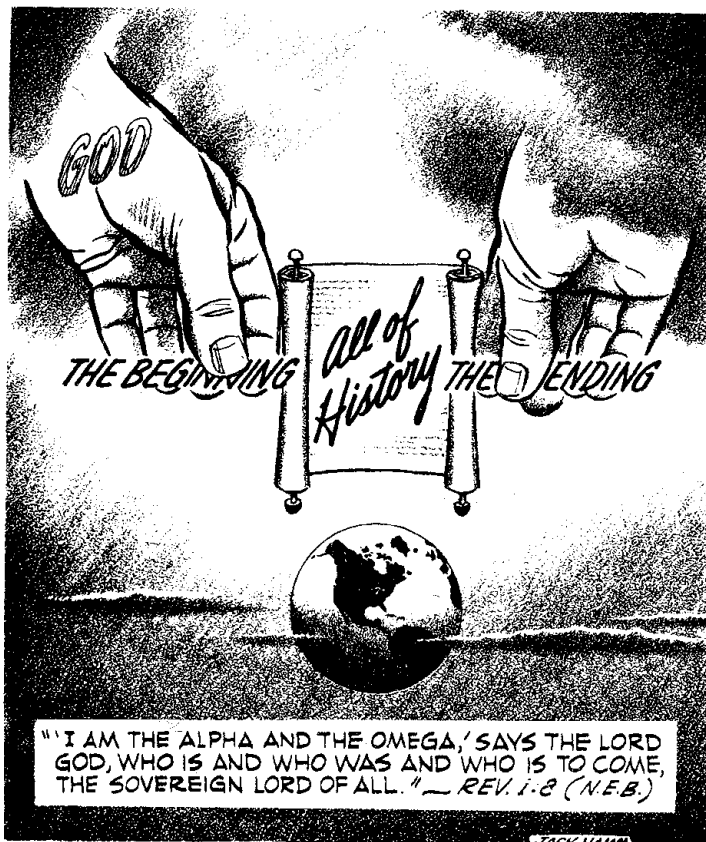
“... YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH. ...”

(Matthew 5:13)



# Unchanging Things in a Changing World

(A reprint from the past, appearing in the September, 1960 issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF).



**WE ARE LIVING** in a changing world. Perhaps that is the least disputed assertion that we could make. The changes that have been wrought in this world and within our country, looking back in the life time of some, are astounding. Nationally, within a little more than a century, America has leaped from an unexplored frontier to become one of the most modern countries in the world, and during the same time has taken the position of world leadership. Perhaps during this time, scientifically, there has been more rapid and intensified progress in the field of learning than in all others centuries put together. Man has left the horse and buggy to take wings and fly with supersonic speed. The old oil lamp has been replaced by electricity. Modern inventions and discoveries have placed man at the brink of mass annihilation. One sudden uncalculated move could usher much of humanity suddenly and unceremoniously into eternity. During the same period many things have been happening within the religious world too. One hundred or more years ago men were bound behind denominational walls with iron-clad creeds. The doctrine of Calvinism was strongly felt in the circles of denominationalism. Men's convictions were strong although wrong.

Today religious tolerance is the fad of the day. Denominational walls have somewhat disintegrated, but the element of pride still remains, and convictions seem to be a thing of the past, and many denominations find themselves with leaders who are nothing more than infidels hiding behind the word "scholarship" and "higher education."

In the midst of all this we are certainly made to exclaim that we are living in a changing world. Change has brought good things, but change has brought many evil things. Things of man are subject to change. He is shifting, moving with the sands of time. Everything is being questioned, and man is found to be like a ship at sea with no anchor or sail. Ancient landmarks have been removed. But there is something we can anchor our weary souls to. The things of God do not change. They are eternal.

## I. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE.

The Psalmist speaks of God in this fashion: "But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations" (Psalms 102:12). Then he continues in reference to the things of earth, "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou are the same, and thy years shall have no end" (Psalms 102:26,27). James has this to say about God: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Upon examining these Scriptures, here is the teaching. The things of earth shall fade away and become old and be no more, but God shall go on and on throughout all eternity. God is from everlasting to everlasting. Not only that, James tells us more. He is the same from everlasting to everlasting. He used the figure of no shadow cast by God's turning. In other words, God is the same in His nature at all times. He can be depended on. And it is not a matter of pantheism. God is the Father of man and exists as a definite personality.

God is the great Power behind the universe. As long as time is, He can be depended on to enforce His natural laws. The law of gravity holds true, and the earth turns and we see the sun "rise" every morning. Man in his scientific ventures is only finding out the natural laws of God—discovering the laws of God set into operation eons ago with His great acts of creation. The exact function of these natural laws is continuously a marvel.

God is always the same as the loving heavenly Father. James well said, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father. . ." The old preacher's version of God making man was that God was lonely and He wanted someone to love, thus He made man in His likeness. God loves man and is concerned about His well-being. One unbelieving religious leader has accused God of being "an old bully" in the Old Testament, and speaks of the "idea" of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The love of God is expressed in the Old Testament. Certainly He had patience with such a stiff-necked people as the Jews. He

(Continued on Next Page)

# UNCHANGING THINGS IN A CHANGING WORLD

*(Continued from Last Page)*

spared and showed mercy unto the Gentiles when they would sincerely repent and turn from idolatry. It is hard for us to conceive how degenerate their idolatry was. God wants everyone to go to heaven, and if they don't it will be in spite of what He has done.

God is unchangeable in His attitude toward sin. . . God is the embodiment of all that is pure and good. He has a holy distaste and hatred for all that is wicked and evil. He cannot tolerate sin in any form. Sin always brings a separation from God, which is death. Sin does not go unpunished, although it may seem that way upon earth at times. The day of judgment is coming for all of mankind. God is Holy and He says, "Be thou Holy for I am Holy." Only the pure in heart will see God, and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

## II. CHRIST IS UNCHANGEABLE.

The Hebrew writer declares: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). This verse shows the unchangeable nature of Christ, the only begotten Son of God. Of course Christ took the form of man, being clothed in flesh, as he lived upon this earth and identified with mankind. He lived life just as human beings, yet without sin. He tasted death like every man and for every man on the cross of Calvary. But unlike man he was victorious over the grave and was not confined long to the abode of the dead. Christ was the Son of man and the Son of God. Now He is back in heaven, living for ever to make intercession for the Christians. He came to prove His Deity and to save the human family from the awful consequence of sin. That is still His purpose on the earth. Christ is unchanging, and the part about Him that is unchangeable is His Divine purpose and nature.

Therefore, inasmuch as Christ is unchanging, that means the gospel is changeless. Christ is the gospel (good news), and the gospel hinges around His death, burial and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:1-4). (Thus, to preach Jesus is also to preach baptism since that pertains to his death, burial and resurrection—Acts 8:35,36; Romans 6:3-6). But many today say, "Let's streamline the gospel." They claim that we have too much of a "slaughter house" religion (how blasphemous!). A man dying on a cross for the sins of the world is just too crude for the modern mind, it is claimed. Let us hear "nice" things. Hence, men come up with the social gospel, which has been defined as the gospel of "soap, soup and science;" a moral, do-good religion without the blood of Christ. But, may I say, dear friend? The gospel of Christ does not need streamlining. It is far ahead of this age, or any age to come, for Jesus said it would be "unto the end of the world." Degenerate and fallen man needs to conform his life to the streamline pattern of Jesus. The world is out of step with that which is right, not the Christian. Perhaps we are using the wrong terms when we say "Old-fashioned Gospel" or "Old-time Religion." There is nothing "old-fashioned" about the gospel of Christ. It does not

have the mark of time upon it. (Religions of men do, though). It is always new, vital, and the timeless good news. It should be just as fresh as if the apostles penned the message this morning. Men need to bring their lives up to date with the gospel of Jesus.

## III. THE WORD IS UNCHANGEABLE.

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Jesus further said, "...the Scripture cannot be broken." In I Peter 1:25 we read, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is

**"Heaven and earth  
shall pass away,  
but my words  
shall  
not pass away."**

**Matthew 24:35**

preached unto you." Yes, friend, when God speaks, it is for all eternity. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). If God is perfect, His word is perfect. If God is eternal, His word is eternal. I have no doubts about the Bible being the Word of God. We have the Divine promise that the Word of the Lord would be with us for ever. God has communicated His Divine will unto us, and He will keep in contact with every generation with His recorded Word.

But, oh how men have reproached God and His word! Men imply that God's Word is not plain enough. They formulate their creeds and crystalized religious prejudices into a man-made book, usurping the authority of the Bible. This man-made creed afflicts oncoming generations. Their thinking and study of the Bible is stifled by preconceived dogmas. False doctrine has been endeared and canonized in the hearts of people because loved ones have died in that religion. Thereafter their descendants have a closed mind to any new idea or further investigation of the Bible. How sad the situation becomes as men seek to justify denominational divisions, saying that it doesn't actually matter what one believes.

Then modern theologians have terribly disgraced God's Word. Along came the theory of evolution. Theologians revised their thinking to fit the situation of the human theory and thus have destroyed the Bible. Many are so obsessed with the idea that they are trying to make the Bible itself fit into an evolutionary pattern. The

theory of evolution is falling into the background today as unproved and irrational, and these "change-with-the-weather" theologians will be left holding the bag. The Word of God is Unchangeable.

Jude says to "...earnestly contend for the faith which was once (and for all) delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The wrath of heaven is pronounced against any who will add or take away from the words of the Book (Revelation 22:18,19). It is a very, very serious matter. Paul charged: "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 1:8). Yes, God's Word is unchangeable, and it shall be opened at the day of judgment. The unlearned and unstable wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction (II Peter 3:16).

In the midst of uncertainty and change let us keep our souls anchored to the Rock. Our whole social pattern of civilization has been and is in the process of change. People change constantly. They may say one thing one day and do another thing the next day. But in the midst of an uprooted society, a restless, moving modern world, let us ever keep in mind that God is unchangeable. He is still in His heaven, and His purpose is still the same with the human race. The earth still moves on its axis. While man may think that the gospel needs streamlining and that he is his own saviour, there is no getting around the fact of Christ. He is the unchanging Son of God and the only way under heaven whereby we may be saved (Acts 4:12). Men need to streamline their lives to fit the plan of Christ, which is way ahead of this age, looking forward to the age to come. Men may say they no longer believe the Bible, that it is a book of fables, but CHRISTIANS BELIEVE IT! It would be mighty stupid to think that Supreme Deity could not reveal His will to mankind. Yes, the Bible is still that grand old Book read by our mothers, setting forth God's road map to heaven. If we anchor our souls to these truths, we will find them anchored to eternity, and a home that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for us. If we sincerely believe these things, we will find ourselves being obedient unto every good work. The cares of this life will be of little importance in relation to the over-all view of God's plan. These are unchanging things in a changing world!

— By JAMES E. GIBBONS

★★★★★★

# "Religious Tolerance"

**THE MESSAGE** of Jesus was one of love, but He never taught religious tolerance, that was a fabrication of man. Jesus, speaking to the Pharisees and teachers of the law, said, "You hypocrites, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you. . .they worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men" (Matthew 15:7-9). Does that ring of placability? Jesus conversing, again with the Pharisees, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God. . .you belong to your Father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. . ." (John 8:42-47). Does that reveal an indulgent Jesus?

If Jesus did not teach religious tolerance, then where do Christians get their directive for mingling with false teachers in our assorted union fellowships? Can you imagine the apostle Paul participating in a Good Friday communion service with the Judaizers, Sadducees and Pharisees? No. He said the exact opposite. "I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them" (Romans 16:17). Does that sound like a resolution to endure erroneous religious instructors?

The absence of a Biblical directive authorizing inter-religious activities in which Christians may participate seems of little consequence to the contemporary church. For example men join in interdenominational and interreligious worship. It may take the form of Good Friday communion, a musical concert, a teaching seminar, or other ways in which we show our tolerance, if not out-right acceptance of those who pervert the doctrines of God! Why would we want to give credence to those who deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus, pray to the Virgin Mary, negate the essentiality of water baptism, claim sprinkling is valid Biblical baptism, advocate once saved always saved, or deny Jesus as the Christ and the only Son of the living God?

How important is doctrinal purity? Can we deny the central principles of the Gospel and still be saved? What do the Scriptures say in that regard? Many of the religious groups with whom some fraternize deny the following Scriptures.

The Resurrection (Romans 10:9): "That if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Water Baptism (John 3:5): "Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (also see: Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; Mark 16:16).

Immersion (Romans 6:4,5): "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly be united with him in his resurrection" (also see: Acts 8:38,39; Mark 1:9,10).

One Mediator (I Timothy 2:5): "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

One Way (John 14:6): "Jesus answered, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'."

Once Saved Always Saved (Luke 8:13): "Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for awhile, but in the time of testing they fall away."

The Scriptures teach that there will be false apostles who will masquerade as apostles of Christ (II Corinthians 11:4-15). The Living Bible paraphrased says it well. "Let God's curse fall on anyone, including myself, who preaches any other way to be saved than the one we told you about, yes, if an angel comes from heaven and preaches any other message, let him be

(Continued on Next Page)

“RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE”

(Continued from Last Page)

forever cursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Considering what the Bible clearly teaches about religious tolerance, we can only conclude that Jesus taught us to love those in error, to pray for them, to study God’s Word with them, but He never suggested we accept them in their present state as joint heirs, heaven bound. There are those who would excuse the honestly ignorant, but will self-imposed ignorance be excused come judgment day? However, ignorance is not the problem with most, after having read the Scriptures they simply reject what does not suit their particular tradition or concept of Truth!

Religious tolerance may help us cultivate friendships, but will it save anyone?—by S. P. Finnel □

★★★★★★

HOMOSEXUAL RIGHTS  
The Bible is Very Plain  
Concerning This Subject!

HOMSEXUALS have a right to:

- 1. Hear the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15,16; I Corinthians 6:9,10).
- 2. Know that God does not regard homosexuality or libbianism as an “alternate lifestyle” (Hebrews 13:4; Romans 1:26,27).
- 3. Know that this kind of conduct is sinful before God (I Corinthians 6:9,10).
- 4. Know that they will suffer in their own bodies and personalities the consequences of their sin (Romans 1:26,27).
- 5. Know that in the Bible they are called “dogs” because of their sin (Deuteronomy 23:17,18; Revelation 22:15).
- 6. Know that their companions (husband/wife) have a right to put them away because of such sin (Matthew 19:9; Jude 7; Genesis 19:4,5).
- 7. Repent of their sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 24:47).
- 8. Know that homosexuality is NOT a DISEASE, but a sinful way of life that can be changed by obedience the gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 1:26,27).
- 9. Know that they were not BORN homosexuals, and homosexuality is not to be accepted as normal lifestyle before God in heaven (Romans 1:26; I Corinthians 6:9,10).—D. Townlsey □

★★★★★★

WORSHIPPING THE DEVIL

SOME TWENTY YEARS AGO, a man by the name of Anton LaVey formed a group who called themselves the CHURCH OF SATAN. This was in California. For centuries, mankind had been “living like the devil,” but so far as I can find, 1976 marks a somewhat formal establishment of his “church” (unless the occult in other forms qualifies). About seven years earlier, LaVey had produced a book called *The Satanic Bible*. The 272 page volume was designed to completely reverse the meaning of Christian prin-

ciples found in God’s Word. The main form of worship (called the Black Mass) is filled with Satanic and lustful rituals. The emphasis is that Satan must rule, and the flesh must be gratified.

Sin and its slime are not new, but it is horrifying when humanity openly worships the very enemy of Almighty God. We read of the degradation of Sodom, the repulsiveness of Gomorrah, and think nothing could be more detestable. But now—and openly—we have our fellows indulging in the most insolent and God-dishonoring practices conceivable. (And *conceivable* is the wrong word—most of us can’t conceive of all that goes on as humanity so debases itself). Peter warns us “the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8). But what does man do? Worship his *own* enemy—his arch-enemy! Folks, that’s not too smart!

What caused devil worship; where did it start? Be assured it didn’t erupt over night. Sin has a corrupting influence (I Corinthians 5:1-6). Open flagrant sin often has its secret beginning. Witchcraft, black magic, the occult, and other things related to the Satanic world, have been around for centuries. But they haven’t been so openly promoted in America until the past few years. Our permissive society has brought them out of the woodwork.

But what corrupted LaVey? What influenced him to worship Satan? I suppose no one really knows, but whatever corrupting influences affected the man, a major factor, strangely enough, came through “Christians.” It is said Mr. LaVey was a former organ player at carnivals and at Sunday tent revivals. He saw many at church on Sunday, whom he had seen the night before at the burlesque and dancing girl carnival attractions. All he could see was hypocrisy. His disdain was evidently the beginning of his cult. At the very foundation of the CHURCH OF SATAN then, is hypocrisy among “Christians.” This is the devastating influence of the careless and insincere. Here were church members unwittingly fueling the fires of infidelity. My friends, you may think your carelessness hurts no one. You may live the hypocrite. But look how a few just like you influenced the life of Anton LaVey.

—The Minute Messenger

★★★★★★

Advice from An Old Man

AN OLD ENGLISHMAN, known as father Graham in his village, was loved very much because of his positive influence. One day an angry man who had just been badly insulted came to see father Graham. As he explained the situation, he said he was on his way to demand an apology from the one who had wronged him. “My dear man,” Graham said, “take a word of advice from an old man who loves peace. An insult is like mud. It will brush off much better when it is dry. Wait a little, till he and you are both cool, and the problem will be easily solved. If you go now, you will only quarrel.” The young man heeded the wise advice, and soon he was able to go to the other person and resolve the problem.—Selected □

★★★★★★



**An early version of the Corinthian Column**

CORINTH not only was an important Greek city mentioned in the New Testament, having two epistles bearing its name, but a beautiful style of columns in architecture also bears its name. Above is a picture of an early version of the Corinthian columns taken by the editor in the ruins of Corinth. Paul in his travels saw many impressive buildings which did not impress him at all (Acts 17:24,25,30—they were given to idolatry).

Among the Greeks three distinctive styles of columns were used in their structure. The oldest and most simple was the Doric, being used first in the 7th century B.C. Next came the Ionic with a base and two scroll-like carvings in its capital. The last to appear (in the 4th century B.C.), the Corinthian order, was a modification of the Ionic, but (in our opinion) much more beautiful. Its capital took the shape of an inverted bell with two staggered rows of acanthus leaves and four small diagonal scrolls under the corner of its abacus.

Needless to say, these impressive styles and structures influenced the Romans and subsequent generations of people, and in many ways serve as standards to the world yet today.—J.E.G. □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# SELFISHNESS

**THE BIBLE** severely condemns selfishness. Paul lists selfishness as a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20). He urged the Philippians to “do nothing through selfish ambition” (Philippians 2:3). He expressed his fear that “selfish ambition” might be found in the Corinthian church (II Corinthians 12:20).

Nothing good is ever said about selfishness in the Bible. The reason is quite apparent. The selfish person is interested only in himself, wants everything for himself, feels no pleasure in giving, but only in taking. The world outside is looked at only from the standpoint of what he can get out of it; he lacks interest in the needs of others and respect for their dignity and integrity. He can see nothing but himself; he judges everyone and everything from its usefulness to him.

Selfishness is a sort of slow poison. One dose leads

to another, until the system becomes so saturated with it that one's whole life becomes bitter and disappointing. Nobody has ever found real and lasting happiness in being selfish.

The cure for selfishness is for us to crucify the “I” in our lives, so that “it is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Let us put selfishness to death!—T. Kelton □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# What Is Your Life?

(1) **IT IS A GIFT**, a blessing from God; recognize its source and be grateful to Him who made it possible (Acts 17:24,25; Job 12:10; Daniel 5:23). Don't regard it as a mistake or an accident.

(2) It is a great opportunity for good; diligently use each golden moment (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 4:13). You can do so much with it.

(3) It is a solemn responsibility. You must try to faithfully discharge it (Acts 9:6; 22:10; Ecclesiastes 12:13). God who gave you your life has a right to tell you how to use it. Don't make the mistake of doing as you please.

(4) It is a precious commodity; be conscious of its value and resolve not to waste it (Matthew 16:26). Life is priceless. Each moment is valuable; don't misuse or waste time.

(5) It is what you make of it; make of it what it should be (II Chronicles 21:20; 35:24; Matthew 26:24; II Timothy 4:6-8). Our thoughts, ideals, desires, aims, ambitions, words, deeds, and characters are what we make them.

(6) It is an example for other to follow; make it an example that is absolutely safe to follow (I Corinthians 11:1; I Timothy 4:12). You have no right to set for others a bad example (Matthew 18:6).

(7) It is a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away; consider its brevity and use each today in the right way (James 4:14; I Peter 1:23,24; Job 14:1,2). Don't count on a long life, intending to serve God later.

(8) It is the seedtime of an eternal harvest; use it to make your eternal destiny a happy one (Galatians 6:7,8; II Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 16:27). Our lives cannot be what they should be until we see them in their relation to eternity. Your destiny is in your hand (Psalms 119:109).—Selected □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# Take It Seriously

**THE STORY** is told of a little boy who listened intently to a sermon on the death of Christ. As his scourging, humiliation and crucifixion were graphically described, the youngster began to cry and was soon sobbing. The mother, embarrassed by her son's behavior, whispered to him, “Don't take it so seriously.” Could this be the principle problem in the church? Many do not take the Lord seriously and do not want others to, lest it make them look bad.—The Edifier □

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# BEATITUDES for a MARRIED COUPLE

**BLESSED** are the husband and wife who continue to be affectionate, considerate and loving after the wedding bells have stopped ringing.

Blessed are the husband and wife who are as polite and courteous to one another as they are to their friends.

Blessed are they who have a sense of humor, for their marriage shall be much brighter.

Blessed are the parents who abstain from alcohol, for their children will surely follow their example.

Blessed are they who are faithful to each other and mutually helpful. God will surely guide them.

Blessed are the husband and wife who thank God for the good things which come to them. They shall receive both good things and thankful children.

Blessed are the parents who recognize their children as gifts from God, for their home shall be filled with love.

Blessed are the parents who make their home a place "where seldom is heard a discouraging word." They shall inspire others to do likewise.

Blessed are the parents who attend and support God's church. Their children shall develop a strong faith.

Blessed are the couple who are good stewards of all God's gifts, for their children will bless them and follow their example.

Blessed are all those whose lives are a testimony of faith in God, for they shall be the channels through which God's kingdom shall spread on earth.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow them all the days of their lives and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.—*Selected*

★★★★★★

# TV Test Sheet

(IN WHAT DIRECTION are you going spiritually? How spiritual is your TV watching? Here is a test for you to take to see just what influence this has been in your life. Answer YES or NO).

1. I have watched TV programs in my home which I would not go into a building outside my home to watch.
2. When I am alone, I have watched programs I would not like others to know I had seen.
3. Various forms of our family life have been hindered, including conversation.
4. I find I am often tempted to watch programs which I know a Christian should not watch.
5. I have taken on added responsibilities in the Lord's work since we got our TV.
6. Time spent in our family devotions has remained equal to, or above that prior to our having a TV.
7. All of us, including our children, tend to talk more of what we have seen on TV, rather than what we learned at church.

8. I have found myself thinking of TV programs or characters more often during the day than of Christ or the Scriptures.
  9. The time I have spent watching TV has cut down my time calling on others in behalf of Christ.
  10. Some programs get such a hold of me, and I stay up so late watching TV, that I have postponed—sometimes for weeks—work that should be done around home.
  11. TV commercials have caused us to purchase, or attempt to purchase, things which have caused problems in our home (including finances).
  12. TV viewing has decreased my attendance at mid-week meetings, as well as other meetings of the church.
  13. I have resented people paying me visits while favorite programs were on which we had to miss.
  14. My reading of the Bible, Christian books and other forms of good Bible literature, has suffered through time spent watching TV.
  15. Everything considered (time, money, church attendance, giving to the cause of evangelism, prayer, reading), I feel that my spiritual growth has been benefited by our having a television in our home.—*Selected*
- What about it, my friend?

★★★★★★

# On the Way to the Barn

THERE'S an old story about a farmer who one morning decided to plow the south forty acres. His tractor needed oil, so he started for the barn to get it, but on the way he noticed that the pigs hadn't been fed. Near the corn crib was a pile of sacks, reminding him that the potatoes were sprouting. But on his way to the potato pit, he passed the woodpile and remembered that the kitchen stove was burning low. While picking up wood, he saw that one of his chickens was ailing, so he dropped the wood to doctor the chicken...and so it went to the end of the day, and he still hadn't oiled the tractor or plowed the south field.

Is your Christian life like this trip to the barn? Do you have grand visions of great service that never gets done? Have you found too many "other things" to do that interfered with your goal of being a productive servant in God's kingdom?

The only way you and I will ever "get to the barn" of Christian service is to get our priorities in order. The farmer in the story didn't have any priorities. He just flowed with the tide of events around him.

Our life contains plenty of "pigs to feed," "wood to cut," and "chickens to doctor." But we can't allow them to get in our way of serving God. If we will make the commitment and extend our effort, God will make a way for us to "get to the barn."—*Selected*

# Think it Over

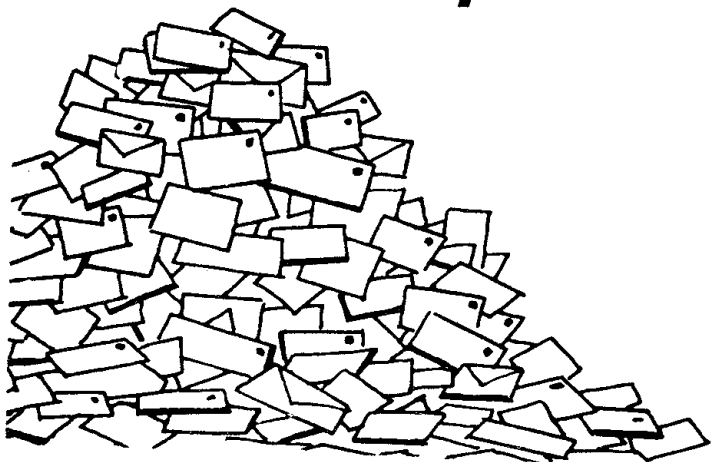
IT MATTERS little what you lose if you save your soul.

It matters not what you save if you lose it!—*Selected*



# READERS'

## ... Response



### ALABAMA:

—“Please discontinue my subscription to *THE SWORD AND STAFF*.”

### NORTH CAROLINA:

—“My minister introduced me to your fine publication, *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I can’t tell you how much I’ve enjoyed reading and studying this inspiring work of the Holy Spirit. There’s got to be many, many more Christians that are hungering to know the truth of God’s Word as set forth in this publication. Please keep the press going!!!!...”

—“Enclosed is my contribution. Please put me on your mailing list. . . As a Christian sister (and ex-Eastern Star) I am ever grateful to *THE SWORD AND STAFF* and Mr. Snell for your Masonic articles. Let’s keep on ‘keeping on’ with the truth.”

### VIRGINIA:

—“I have thoroughly enjoyed reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Your articles are thought-provoking, soul-searching, convicting and informative! God bless you for telling the gospel truth like it is!”

### MARYLAND:

—“Enclosed you will find a check for long overdue payment for *THE SWORD AND STAFF* you’ve continued sending which (by everyone) is enjoyed to the fullest.”

### WEST VIRGINIA:

—“...May God bless you in your efforts to serve Him. Thank you for producing a magazine worth reading.”

### TENNESSEE:

—“Thanks for sending us *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. My wife and I look forward to receiving it, and enjoy every word. It is a great blessing.”

### OHIO:

—“Just a note to let you know how much I enjoy each issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Brother, I just returned from the N.A.C.C. (NORTH AMERICAN CHRISTIAN CONVENTION) in Indiana—what a joke that thing was. The so-called executive committee of the N.A.C.C. decided that it is alright to have women deacons, elders, and preachers. I ask who are they anyway? Those so-called ‘Christian Churches’ and their convention in no way represent the church of Christ where I preach. It’s time for us, so-called ‘legalists,’ to

take a greater stand than ever before for the Lord and his church.

“Again, I appreciate your work; keep it up. I leave you with these words from His precious Word: Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations (Jeremiah 1:5). Brother Gibbons, keep being a modern day Jeremiah, ‘always warning the church about the evils of denominationalism’.”

### INDIANA:

—“When I stopped paying for *THE SWORD AND STAFF* I thought you would stop sending it. Most publications do that. I have come to the conclusion that it is the best small Christian magazine I have seen; so I want to pay you for all the past copies. . . Please forgive me.”

—“Right on, brother, preach the Word. It’s encouraging to know that someone...will still preach the Word in its revealing truth. Most preachers have been taken up with toleration and compromise, and no longer believe, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ God bless you.”

### MISSOURI:

—“I just finished reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF* that I received today. And, as always I enjoy every part of it, and as many have done, I thought this time I will do it. We know good intentions will not get anyone to heaven, neither will good intentions help you pay your bills to publish such a good paper. . .”

### TEXAS:

—“Please send me the following: 1000 ‘What Must I Do To Be Saved?’ . . This material is used in our prison ministry. If you have any other, please send sample.”

### OKLAHOMA:

—“Your paper (*THE SWORD AND STAFF*) is absolutely the most helpful paper that I receive. And I do get a lot of religious papers. I just simply can’t express how appreciative I am of the work you are doing. Thank you. . .”

### KANSAS:

—“We consider the articles in *THE SWORD AND STAFF* the finest articles we have ever had the privilege of reading. We do miss it; enclosed is an offering for a subscription. . .”

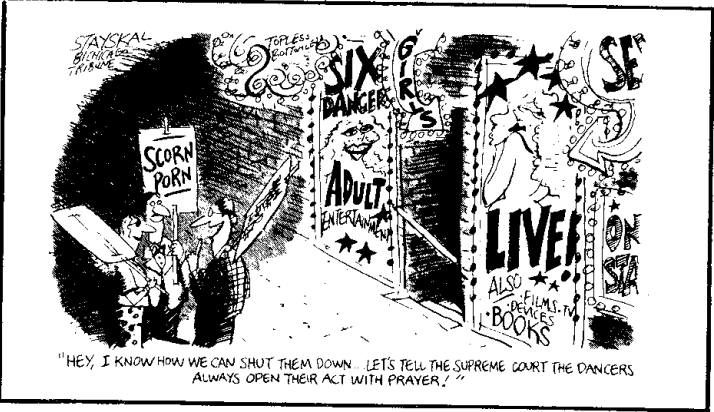
—“We enjoy your paper and agree with you. We thank God for men as you, that take your stand and write it to the people. . .”

### OREGON:

—“...I surely do enjoy this paper and read it from cover as soon as I get it. Thank you for all your work. . .”

—“Please remove this name from your mailing list. . .”

★★★★★★



Have You Obeyed Acts 2:38?

“THEN PETER SAID to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized (immersed) in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

Meddling Old Fool

THIS IS a wonderful life. There are folks on every hand that seem to just thrive on helping. Just yesterday my lawyer called and pointed out a flaw in the title to my property. I commissioned him to correct it immediately. Whatever would I have done if I had lost my house in a court case.

Last year a sanitary engineer found a number of dead rodents in our water supply. He told us of the danger. Do you realize it could have cost us our lives, but he was at his post of duty and his warning turned impending disaster into just another adjustment.

Then there is the doctor. Our family physician is just the greatest. Not once or twice, but three times he has discovered potential dangers. One time my blood pressure had gone over 240, and another occasion he removed some skin cancers that could have been very hurtful. Just a year ago this week he ordered me to the hospital and without a lot of warning performed a surgery that will extend my life for many years. He is just the greatest. I appreciate him most for his unique ability to see what is coming and his desire to help me before it is too late.

But I must mention the banker. Four times in the last year he spotted an overdraft and called me direct. It could have been a real embarrassment if any of those four checks had bounced. You really appreciate nice folks like that who warn us in time to correct the situation.

Church? Oh, I quit about five years ago. The preacher we had was something else. He always seemed to be prying into my personal affairs—always warning folks about sin and transgressions. He sure was negative. People have a mind of their own—why couldn't he just leave 'em alone? “The wages of sin is death” is what he preached. I just got tired of hearing about it, so I quit. Who does he think he is anyway, always finding disease and diagnosing every case? I figure it this way, “When I need advice, I'll just ask for it.”

To me there is nothing as bad as a “MEDDLING OLD FOOL!”—*The Sowers Source Book (The Builder)*

(Clip and Mail)

Gentlemen:

Enclosed find my contribution. Please put me on the mailing list of *The Sword and Staff*. ☐ New; ☐ Renew.

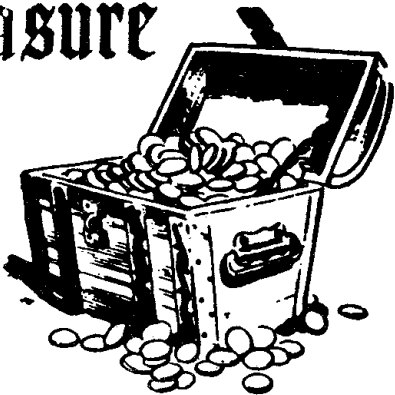
Name: .....

Address (with zip): .....

(Check for bound volumes of *The Sword and Staff*)

- ☐ 1975-76 bound volumes of *The Sword & Staff*—\$4.25
- ☐ 77-78-79 bound volumes of *The Sword & Staff*—\$4.50
- ☐ 80-81-82 bound volumes of *The Sword & Staff*—\$4.75
- ☐ 83-84 bound volumes of *The Sword & Staff* —\$4.95

Treasure



MANY WHO love the Word of God have discovered Treasure much to their liking when they bought the bound volumes of the back issues of *The Sword and Staff*. Therein is to be found the much variegated treasure of sound gospel sermons, Bible expositions, Bible questions, poetry, and just good spiritual reading. If you like this issue of *The Sword and Staff*, you will likewise be thrilled with the volumes in book form. Notice those still available (while they are available), and place your order for good reading. Make them a part of your library and your life.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

FAITHFUL church attendance is not determined by how far you live from church, but rather by how close you live to God.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

—HELP US REACH OUT TO MORE PEOPLE AND CHURCHES WITH THIS PUBLICATION—Thanks!

THE SWORD AND STAFF  
Post Office Box 147  
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030  
U. S. A.  
Telephone: (919) 789-1044

Non-Profit Organ.  
U. S. POSTAGE  
P A I D  
Permit No. 25