

The Sword AND Staff

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

***DIVORCE* is not the Solution**



(This timely material was originally presented as a spoken message by the author and retains almost all of the spoken style—slightly adapted.—EDITOR)

divorce is a great problem in this country, and a growing problem—and a growing problem in churches. It is a growing problem in denominational churches and a growing problem in strictly the Lord's church.

Rather than putting the emphasis on divorce after it happens, I thought that rather our emphasis in this message would be in the other direction: in the direction of "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." What we need to zero-in on and think about is the fact that divorce is not a solution to marriage problems. Divorce is not God's way. Rather than thinking about what to do after there is a divorce, we should think about how awful divorce is. Let's forget about thinking of divorce as being a possibility, as being a way out. Rather than divorce being the solution to problems in marriage, love is the solution to problems in marriage.

I. GOD HATES DIVORCE—SO IT IS NOT AN OPTION

I would like to share with you, first of all, that God hates divorce. GOD HATES DIVORCE. We're going to read Malachi, the second chapter, and we'll begin with verse 13. "The Old Testament," you say. Yes, as a matter of fact it's the Old Testament in which divorce was allowed in the law of Moses. That actually makes the statement even stronger that we're going to read here regarding God's attitude toward divorce. "And this is the second thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with good will from your hands. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your

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■ By **DAVID VAUGHN ELLIOTT**
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IN THE U.S. *News and World Report* for June 3, 1963, we were told that about 10% of all adults in the United States of America had been divorced at least once. Now it is many years later. Other statistics have been coming out regularly for the past number of years: for every two marriages in this country there is one divorce. With that kind of thing taking place I'm sure that we're a way beyond 10% now, and if we keep that up long enough, it's going to be up to 50%. At any rate, I'm sure that all of us are aware of the fact that

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Proverbially SPEAKING...

Grace does not nullify the commands of God—it gives forgiveness, motivation and strength whereby we can keep them.

"If you want to leave footprints in the sands of time, wear work shoes."

The problem of a lot of Christians being used of the Lord does not involve ability but availability.

"We can never profit from our mistakes as long as we blame other for them."

If some religious people aren't fussing about one thing, they are fussing about another: how strange to have people fussing about people who fuss (why can't we present the truth for the truth's sake, and enjoy it for what it is rather than fussing about it?).

"He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help."

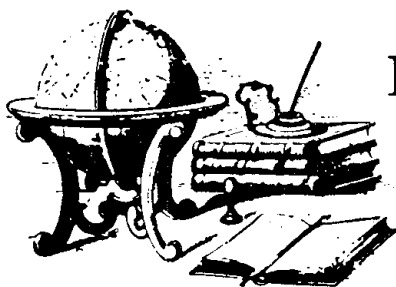
If people who know you the best are the hardest ones for you to get along with, you need to re-examine your brand of Christianity.

"Feed your faith and your fears will starve to death."

If you love the Lord God with ALL your heart, and with ALL your soul, and with ALL your mind (Matthew 22:37), you will have no problem coming to ALL of the services of the church.

"When you can't sleep, talk to the Shepherd, don't count sheep."

As a man grows wiser, he talks less and says more.



EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

WHAT REACTIONARIES TEACH US

REACTIONARIES are people who over-react in a given situation. What they stand for, or what they oppose, may largely be right (or at least some truth to it). They have a just grievance. But in their opposition to the wrong they have become like the pendulum in the old grandfather clock. They have gone to the extreme in the other direction. In trying to correct one evil, they have unintentionally become responsible for the introduction of another.

This can be seen throughout history. It can be seen in modern times. This is in evidence in religion as well as politics. It is to be found in the form of great movements, as well as on an individual basis.

The rise of monastic orders in ancient times was of a reactionary nature. Whether one investigates the Jewish Essenes of some 2,000 or so years ago, or the monasteries which came into being after the church had been here a few centuries, the truth is the same. The world, and even the supposed church, became so corrupt that sensitive and pious souls wanted no part of it. So they withdrew from society. A false asceticism came into being. But Christianity is to be lived in the world. Jesus prayed, "I pray not that thou wouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil" (John 17:15). They were to be Christ's witness in the world, but they were not to be of the world. (In reference to the rise of this false asceticism, read Paul's prophecy in I Timothy 4:1-4).

The Protestant Reformation turned out to be a reactionary movement in many ways. If anyone ever had a legitimate and just grievance, those who spoke out against Roman Catholic apostasy did. In Catholicism they found God dethroned with the pope and priests in His place, the pope claiming to be the head of the church (and called "Lord God the Pope") and the whole synthetic cleric system claiming the power to absolve sins. Men were supposedly justified by prescribed works of man as issued by the Catholic church. By all means the sovereignty of God needed to be restored among men, the great doctrine of justification by faith needed to be heralded forth again, along with many other things. But the proverbial pendulum made its decided swing. Reactionary reformers began to preach the sovereignty of the Almighty God to the point of total predestination (Calvinistic style). Everything was so ordered that man's responsive works did not enter in. The characteristic doctrine of Protestantism became "faith only." And of course, although having a grain of great truths, all of these doctrines are out of harmony with the Scriptures (II Peter 3:0; James 2:14-26; Romans 1:5; etc.). Man most surely is justified by faith, but not by an inactive "faith only."

The world today is in upheaval because of a reactionary polit-

ical philosophy introduced by Karl Marx and others. No doubt abuses that this man pointed out were to a large extent true at the time. No doubt much of the religion, masquerading as Christianity, which Marx came in contact with needed criticizing. (It is a shame that this man was not exposed to real New Testament Christianity). From his feelings of desperation and hate has come what we know as Communism. It proposes, in essence, to enslave man and his spirit (at least that has been its record) and to remake the world after its own atheistic image. As it has been said, two wrongs don't make a right. What a shame! Mankind selling its soul (birthright) for a measly mess of potage, and in the end it may end up having neither.

Many modern religious movements are reactionary movements. This can be said of the so-called "charismatic movement."

This can also be said of certain ideas some would circulate among supposed New Testament churches. Being tired of divisions and problems which seem unsolvable, some seemingly have thrown themselves open to unrestricted fellowship with almost anyone religiously. Correct doctrinal teaching is de-emphasized, it seems, to realize this longed for fellowship. Certainly improper attitudes and sectarian concepts may be barriers to fellowship, but we do not want to throw out respect for the truth to accomplish our goals. Certainly deep feelings go out from this writer toward anyone who is genuinely concerned about restoring the New Testament church among men. (But the problem is that many do not really consistently back up their claim). If we have really been "born again," we have entered the kingdom of God (John 3:5; Acts 2:38ff). However, we must go from there to be in reality the Lord's church, to set things in order. There are teachings that some are presenting and others are not. There are truths that are being neglected. Through this publication it is our aim to share our Bible convictions with different people of different backgrounds. If we present the truth, accept it. If not, forget about it. But let us reach out to practice the unity of the faith, not by compromise, but by sincerely examining the Scriptures and putting them into practice. Let us practice them in love and humility, not with a sectarian slant. The truth is for all to enjoy (as truth and not as a tool for sectarianism).

Then reactionaryism is a matter of individual experience. Men have gone forth preaching the truth of God, but perhaps with the wrong motive or attitude. Their being "strong" for the truth has been a youthful phase they have been going through. Really what some have thought to be strong preachers have been preachers with per-

sonality problems—they enjoyed the attention they got by making abrasive, dogmatic statements in their flamboyancy. Then one day they grew up. They looked back over their lives. They didn't like what they saw. So, they changed their preaching. Really there basically had been nothing wrong with their message (just the man). It was their attitude and the way they presented what they said. But the pendulum has made its swing, and we have a reactionary liberal who has lost his mooring and sense of direction.

And, so we could go on pointing out different kinds of reactionaries. But what lesson, or lessons, do we learn from reactionaries? What do reactionaries teach us?

First, reactionaries teach us that a basic truth has been neglected. When we hear someone preach that we think is a little extreme in his views, it would be wise for us to listen instead of completely discounting and discrediting him. Almost all reactionaries have a legitimate point (up to a point) which needs to be considered. Look for it, and learn from it.

Second, it behooves us to be level-headed students of God's Word. Take a strong and decided (but mature) stand for the truth of God, but don't be unchristian in the way you present it or the way you treat other people. (Sometimes the rebuke is in order, but not always). Someday you will be unhappy with yourself. And you may find yourself as a reactionary turning from the truth to become a compromiser. God forbid!

We can learn from reactionaries. □

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EDITORIAL

Byways

AN ANONYMOUS TELEPHONE CALLER

A TELEPHONE CALL received recently was different to say the least. The person who called was a woman, her voice sounded like perhaps she was in her middle age, but she would not divulge her name (even though she talked about an hour). When asked, she would not give it.

Questions, Questions

She sounded sincere and friendly enough, although perturbed, as she fired one question right after another at me (a total stranger). Was I a preacher? What church? What is the church of Christ? How does a person get to heaven? Did I believe that baptism was essential to salvation? Did I believe that a person could become unsaved after being saved (or could a person become "unborn," could a person "fall from grace")? And as she began to speak I could tell that her interest was not as much in wanting to find out truth as it was in wanting me to expose what I believed for some rea-

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son. (The scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus many questions, not for the sake of truth, but for the purpose of “tempting” him—trying to ensnare him in something that he might say).

“Was I a preacher?” Yes. “What church?” Just the Lord’s church; we don’t believe in denominationalism. In the New Testament in the beginning there were no denominations—just the church—and we want to be identified with that church and that church alone. We just want to be the undenominational church of Christ. (All of this and more was given in response to the question: “What is the church of Christ?”).

The next question was fired: “How does a person get to heaven?” My reply: Through God’s grace and the blood of Christ. However, I could tell this did not satisfy her. She wanted me to commit myself on something with which she could disagree. So in rapid succession she continued, “Do you believe that baptism is essential to salvation?” I said: All I know is what the Bible says. Then before I could say more, with this perturbed tone in her voice, she asked (and answered it at the same time), “Do you believe that a person can be lost after having once been saved? Surely you believe that God is able to keep a person from falling?”

Once Saved, Anyway Saved?

I said: It is not a question of the power of God, or what God is able to do, but a question of what the Bible says—what God will do. God will certainly do His part, but He has made us free moral agents. We are not robots or little tin soldiers. All I know is what the Bible says. In Galatians 5:4 Paul said to these Galatian Christians, “Ye are fallen from grace.” In order to fall from something, you have to be in it before you can fall from it. (Also consider Hebrews 12:14,15). All I know is that in Revelation 3:5 Jesus said that our names (the names of Christians) could be blotted out of the book of life (and would if we didn’t overcome). (He also said, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,” Revelation 2:10). Then Revelation 22:19 tells us that if we take away from God’s book, He will take away our part out of the book of life. Here my anonymous caller broke in by saying, “Oh, I know all those Scriptures. I know about the book of Revelation.” I tried to press the point further, but she couldn’t seem to get hold of what I was trying to say. If you come to the day of judgment with your name not on the book of life, you are not going to heaven—you will be cast into the lake of fire. It is that simple. Revelation 20:15 reads, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

After talking further about not falling, she tried to nullify what was said in Galatians 5:4 (where it said they were fallen from grace) by pointing out that this had reference to Christians going back under the law of Moses. Then she was bold to say that if Christians actually did fall away into sin, they wouldn’t have anything to worry about (if they died that way). Their evil works would be burned, but they themselves would be saved. They would not receive a reward, but they would be saved, so as by fire.

At this point I said: Wait a minute. Do you really understand this Scripture you are making allusion to (that of their works being burned, but being saved in spite of it)? It’s not talking about what you are saying. I asked her if she had time to get her Bible and follow along with me. We would turn to where this Scripture was found, I Corinthians chapter 3, and notice its context. In an effort to defuse a tense atmosphere and make her relax, I said: Follow me in what I am trying to say. If it’s the truth, accept it; if it is not, forget about it. Thereupon she got her Bible and followed as I read this chapter over the telephone and commented on it.



It has always been hard (and confusing) for me to try to understand these Calvinistic people who say Christians cannot fall. They speak loud and long about God being able to keep us—that it is impossible to fall. Then someone falls. It must be accounted for. There must be an explanation.

All right, here is what they say: *It is impossible to fall*. But someone does fall, so something else must be said. There must be an explanation. Here are three things I have heard them say: (1) The person was never saved to start with—that is why he fell. (2) The person will be chastised and come back to the Lord before he dies. (3) The fallen person’s sinful works will be burned, but he himself will be saved (but no reward). Really all of this is so contradictory (which these people in their sectarian zeal do not see). To have to explain about a person falling is to deny the original statement which said that he could not fall. It calls for a modification which finally says that he can fall, but he will remain in God’s grace although in sin.

Works Burned, But Saved?

The last statement (number 3, about his sinful works being burned and him still being saved) is a new explanation that has surfaced more recently in an attempt by these sectarian zealots to justify their doctrine—and what a dangerous doctrine it is! Sometime ago my wife and I got a young man out of the middle of the highway as the cars and tractor-trailer trucks “whizzed” by in the night. Later at our house we talked to him. He had problems, was pretty much intoxicated, and what he had been trying to do was commit suicide. He said, “Why didn’t you leave me alone? That big tractor-trailer truck would have solved all of my

problems.” I said, “Man, you wouldn’t want that to happen! Die and go out to meet God like that!” Although intoxicated, he smugly said (in a tone of annoyance), “I would have gone to heaven—once in grace always in grace, you know. My problems would have all been over.” Whereupon he insisted that he wanted to leave and find the highway. What an awful doctrine this is!

Back to our anonymous telephone caller and our examination of I Corinthians chapter 3. I said (and please patiently follow what is written here): You understand the problem in the church at Corinth with all the divisions surrounding preachers, right? “Yes” was her answer. Well, understanding that, let’s start reading with verse 5: “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; But God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.” Here I stopped and pointed out the “we” and the “ye” references, and asked if she saw who Paul was talking about. Getting this clear in our minds was necessary to a proper understanding of the rest of the chapter (and especially the references I believed that she had misapplied). The “we” here is talking about the preachers (Paul, Apollos, etc.), who are identified as the “labourers together with God” in connection with the planting and watering figure (which is dropped) and the “builders” (which is continued)—and even with the planting and watering figure, every man receiving his reward according to his own labour is talking about the preachers (notice verses 5-9 again). The “ye” here is talking about the Corinthians (as distinguished from the preachers): “Ye are God’s building.” They constituted God’s building (later called a temple), which the builders (the preachers) were constructing.

We continue reading: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Do you get the picture? Keep the “we” and the “ye” separate in your mind, and just what is represented by each. “Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.” What is he talking about? The various workers (builders) putting up the building on the foundation of Christ and the kind of materials going into that building. As we have noticed the preachers (and such workers) were the builders. The converts, the people, the Corinthians, made up the building which he will call the temple of God. The different preachers might incorporate different kinds of materials into the building (“gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble”). The materials going into the

building were the different kinds of converts who collectively made up the building, the temple of God. Some were of the best quality (real and faithful converts) and others were not.

We continue (the part we believe that was misapplied): “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” This was what our anonymous caller was referring to to prove “once in grace always in grace.” We were told that the sinful works of a fallen believer would be burned, but he himself would be saved—however without any reward. But this is not what Paul has been or is talking about (as we have seen). He is talking about the materials (converts) preachers have built upon the foundation of Christ in the construction of this building. The works being tried by fire are the converts being tested to see if they are the real thing (the desirable material to be in God’s building, God’s temple). In Paul’s illustration, the preacher will suffer loss but will still be saved even if his converts are not faithful.

The next two verses (verses 16 and 17) read: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” This further verifies what we have said in that the “ye” in these two verses is plural (in the Greek) as all of the Corinthian Christians collectively made up the temple of God (in this figure here).

Upon seeing where what I was pointing out about I Corinthians chapter 3 was leading, our anonymous caller strongly responded by saying that this was not the way she believed. However, that is what the apostle Paul is teaching here. (Think it through and see the fallacy of this awful doctrine of “once in grace always in grace” with all of its implications).



(Let us be more noble—Acts 17:11)

Can't Be Separated from God's Love

In the process of our talking about this doctrine, our anonymous telephone talker asked me to turn to Romans 8:35-39 to follow as she read. She finished the last two verses (38 and 39), reading, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,

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shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” She was applying this as support of “once in grace always in grace,” but disagreeing with her application, I said: Do you believe that God loves sinners? “Yes.” Do you believe that they are saved? “No.” (Obviously they are separated from God, but not separated from the love of God, because they still are in their sins). It follows then that because God loves us (and we may not even be able to cut that love off), yes, it follows then that this does not prove anything about our relationship to God. We can be separated from God (sin does this, and for the person who professes to be a Christian, too—our caller acknowledged this), but we are not separated from the love of God.

Is Baptism Essential to Salvation?

She pressed the other question she had asked (but at the time didn’t give me time to answer): Did I believe that baptism was essential to salvation (and how unreasonable to believe this). I said: All I know is what the Bible says (and I didn’t write the Bible). Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Peter told those on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38ff, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Spirit). 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.” As many as the Lord would call (as many as would ever be saved) would come to Christ in this way: Repent and be baptized everyone of you for the remission of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. I asked: Do you know what “remission” means? “No” (not really). Well, it means the same thing as when the writer of Hebrews said “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). It involves the taking away or the forgiveness of our sins. We are baptized for the forgiveness of sins, to get them taken away. Did you know, although Paul had been praying for three days, he still had his sins? Then Ananias came to him and 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). The blood of Christ is what washes away our sins in baptism (Revelation 1:5)—if we truly are believing and repentant. Galatians 3:27 says, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” That is what it says. I am not just dreaming this up. All I know is what the Bible says.

With emotion she responded: “What if I’m up in this airplane and sitting next to this person. He is not a Christian. We get to talking about the Bible, Christ, and his need of a Saviour. He becomes convicted. He wants to be saved. What about that? There is no water up there to baptize him, and then suppose the plane crashes. What about that? Would he be saved?”

My answer: All I know is what the Bible says, and I didn’t write the Bible. “Well, would he be saved? Tell me!” All I know is what the Bible says. Are you trying to make me be God? That’s His department, not mine.

I’m not that person’s Judge. All I know is what the Bible says. That’s all that I can tell people. The rest I leave in God’s hands.”

She was very disturbed that I would not deny these Scriptures (or try to get around them in some way), but the Word of God is all that we have to go by (unless we want to become denominationalists and elevate human creeds, traditions, and opinions of men on a plain with the Bible).

Our anonymous caller evidently ran out of time and wanted to bring our unexpected dialogue (at least unexpected to me) to a close. I still wanted to know her name, but she wouldn’t give it. I invited her to listen to our daily radio program, “Truth for the Day” at 11:25 each morning over WPAQ, 740 on the AM dial, Mt. Airy, but I doubt if she ever did (or will).

Strange are the things that sometimes happen in the course of a day. □

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the
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spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. ‘For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.’ You have wearied the Lord with your words; yet you say, ‘In what way have we wearied Him?’ In that you say, ‘Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them,’ or, ‘Where is the God of justice?’ ”

Our land is filled—our churches are filled—with those who say that it’s good to do evil. God says divorce is evil. God hates divorce. When someone says that divorce is good, you see, then he is calling good evil, turning God’s whole plan around.

What does it mean to hate? I don’t know what that conjures up in your mind. Just try to work it over in your mind. Try to think of what you hate. Maybe it’s when the teacher scratches on the blackboard with the chalk. Maybe it’s dirty diapers. Maybe it’s having to go to work on Monday. Maybe it’s having to study for an exam over vacation. Maybe it’s rock-and-roll. Maybe it’s when somebody lies to you. Maybe it’s your next door neighbor. I don’t know what it is that you hate. Some people say, “Well, I don’t hate anything. I’m a loving person.” If you don’t hate anything, you’re just an old blob of a jellyfish that doesn’t amount to a thing. The Bible is filled with teaching about hate. And

if we're going to be people of God we've got to hate. You try to build that up in your mind and however you can think about hate in your own experience. Maybe you've hated when you shouldn't have; but whatever it is, get a concept of what hate is and a feeling of what hate is. I mean, when you hate someone or something you don't want to be around it; you can't stand it. Everything you think about it is bad. You can't think of anything good about it. You want to get rid of it. That's how God feels about divorce. God hates divorce. And we as the people of God, if we're going to be God's people, if we're going to be godly and godlike, then we must also hate divorce.

Now if you think divorce is all right, if you think divorce is a possible way out of problems in your marriage, if you think divorce is something maybe you'd like or maybe a possibility, do you know what you have proved about yourself? You've proved that you have a hard heart. Let's turn to Matthew the 19th chapter and verse 8. We usually don't think of it that way when we read this verse. We just read it and think about something, relating the Old Testament to the New Testament, and so forth. Most of you, not all of you, but I know most of you are well-acquainted with the whole context here in Matthew 19. In 19:8 Jesus is speaking, "And He said to them, 'Moses because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives'." Now we usually just get into that and talk about how things were in the old covenant and how things are in the new covenant, and so forth. I guess it really wasn't until I was preparing this subject that it just all of a sudden dawned upon me—Let's just make that personal. Let's not just talk about the Jews. Let's not just talk about the times before Jesus. Let's make things personal. If you divorce your husband or your wife you have a hard heart.

But you know what Jesus teaches over and over again in His Word: it's not just what you do, but what you want to do. It's not just that you kill somebody, but that you hate them. It's not just that you commit fornication, but that you lust after a woman. And so if you want to divorce, you have a hard heart. If you think that a divorce is a possible way out of problems in marriage, your heart is hard. And if your heart is hard, you're not a Christian. You may outwardly still try to be a part of the body of Christ, but if you have a hardened heart you're not in the will of God. I've talked to people who want a divorce, and I've found them to be hardhearted. Often, when people come for counselling sessions, what they want is help on their divorce, not help on their marriage. I say, "Well, you make the connections and do what's needed so I can talk to your mate." They don't come through. Their mind's made up. I've counselled in situations and found even that when the mate has gone off and committed fornication and therefore that the other person could have a Scriptural right for divorce, yet the "innocent" party's heart is so hardened that they're going out to commit their own fornication before they get their divorce. A hard heart. "Oh, we tried and there's no way to patch it up." That's a hard heart. "It just won't work." That's a hard heart. God wants people who are humble, people with soft hearts, people with tender hearts.

Now the New Testament gives one reason for divorce. I'd like for us to think about that just a little bit in comparison and contrast to the Old Testament. It's right here in verse 9—Matthew 19 and verse 9: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." Now fornication is sexual relations outside of marriage whatever the case may be: whether a person is married or not married, or a harlot, whether it's homosexuality, or lesbianism, or whatever it is, that's fornication. Some versions translate it "sexual immorality." And then there's adultery. What's adultery? Well, adultery is when a married person goes out and has relations with somebody who is married. That's the way we always define it, isn't it? I don't know why we always define it that way when we read this verse over and over and over again. Why do we define it that way? Well that definition is partially right; but if we're going to define it the way Jesus defined it: when you divorce your mate and it isn't for fornication, and you marry somebody else, that's adultery. That's what Jesus is saying here. Now the other is adultery, too, when somebody who is not married goes and has relations with somebody who is, that's adultery. But add to that Jesus' definition of adultery. When you get a divorce and it is not for fornication and you marry somebody else, that marriage is adultery.

Now we get into discussions as to whether or not Christians should go ahead and get a divorce when a mate has fornicated, or if they should forgive. There are things to be said on both sides of that question and it depends on circumstances, when fornication has been committed, as to whether or not the innocent party should forgive that one who sinned. There are things to be said in both directions, depending on the circumstances. But I just want to say this, whatever we say about the possibilities of reconciliation and forgiveness, let us not minimize the gravity of the sin that has been committed. Let us realize that Jesus under the New Covenant does permit divorce; but it's only where under the Old Covenant the death penalty was the punishment. Deuteronomy 22:22: "If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die, both the man that lay with the woman and the woman; so you shall put away the evil person from Israel." There was capital punishment not only for the murderer; there was capital punishment for the adulterer. This is the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders who brought that woman taken in adultery to Jesus. Where was the man? Why did they just bring her? Where was the man? Both were supposed to be put to death. Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you." The only way that this can possibly be understood is in the light of Deuteronomy 22:22. Not that Jesus did not condemn adultery. Not that Jesus did not condemn the woman's sin. Jesus said to the woman, "Go and sin no more." Jesus simply at that time was not going to invoke the law of Moses to put the woman to death.

Under the New Covenant we don't put people to death for sin. But, my brethren, please understand that this does not mean that the sin is any less grave. Today

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God allows divorce in a situation in which the Old Testament the offending party was to be put to death, so that the evil would be put out of his house. I guess as Christians we shouldn't want the death of anybody, but it shows us God's attitude about it. God hates divorce. He allowed divorce in the Old Testament; in the New Testament He doesn't. So, since we're not killing people under the New Testament, we can get a divorce from the person that deserves death. What the person deserves is death. But God says we're not doing that under the New Covenant. The church is not putting people to death. They didn't have to get a divorce for adultery under the Old Covenant, you see. The adulterer was punished with death. There was no question of divorce. Now God says under the New Covenant that we're not going to kill people. Nevertheless, the sin of fornication is so grave that you can get a divorce for it. But for any other cause, for which God permitted divorce under the Old Testament, such as wife-beating, drunkenness, and lack of support, to name some of the more grave ones without naming the silly ones, God allowed the divorce only because their hearts were hard. People who want a divorce today want it because their hearts are hard. God hates divorce. God still hates divorce. Do you hate divorce?

II. MARRIAGE IS A COVENANT FOR LIFE—SO NOBODY CAN BREAK IT

Divorce is not the way out. Marriage is a covenant for life, a covenant which no man is to break. Turn to Romans the 7th chapter and verse 2: "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband." It makes it plain. Now some people misuse this verse, making it deny Jesus' exception. This is not talking about the exception here. It's talking about the rule. There is an exception. Jesus has given it. But this is the rule, that the woman is bound to her husband until death. Of course, that was what Jesus was indicating back in Matthew 19. We'll read verses 4, 5, and 6. "And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate'."

Is this a divorce picture? He says, "Repeat after me," and you repeat after the preacher, "For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness or in health, till death do us part." You notice back in Malachi in the verses that we read that it's called a "covenant." We usually call it "marriage vows." You call it a covenant, a vow, a promise, or whatever you want to call it. When a man and a woman give their word in about the most solemn situation that any of us in life give our word, "before God and these witnesses," it's your word to live with that person until death.

What is your word worth? We live in a society where people do not keep their word, from the politicians all

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Over Angels in the Bible

1. What does the word "angel" literally mean?
2. What are angels?
3. How is man described in contrast with angels?
4. How will human beings be like angels in the resurrection?
5. What were the angelic beings called who were placed east of the garden of Eden to guard the way of the tree of life?
6. How was the angel many times called "the angel of the LORD" different from other angels in the Old Testament?
7. What unusual dream did Jacob have at Bethel (Luz) that involved angels as he was fleeing to Padanaram from his brother Essau?
8. In what unusual way did the angel of the LORD appear and speak to Moses about the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage?
9. How was the angel of the LORD involved in the children of Israel going to the promised land of Canaan?
10. How did the angel of the LORD show God's disapproval of the false prophet Balaam's intention to curse the children of Israel?
11. Actually how did God give the Old Testament law to Moses?
12. How did the angel of the LORD make his departure after telling Manoah and his wife they would be the parents of an unusual son (Samson)?
13. Who did the Psalmist say the angel of the LORD was encamped around about (what people)?
14. What were the angelic beings called that were seen by Isaiah in his vision in the temple?
15. How were angels involved in the birth of Jesus and John the Baptist?
16. What two times did angels appear to Jesus, strengthening him and ministering to him?
17. How does Luke in his writings describe angels?
18. How are angels involved in the death and judgment of a person?
19. For whom was hell originally prepared?
20. Do we know the names of any angels?

(NOTE: Check the Scriptural references that are given with the answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper).

the way down. I mean, I can report the things I remember: people used to get excited years ago when politicians didn't keep their promises. But nowadays you read comments about it and it's just accepted. People know very well that politicians are not going to keep their promises. We know it's just "election rhetoric" coming forth. We don't expect them to keep their promises. We just expect them to say a whole lot of things so they can get elected. We live in that kind of

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Once in Grace, Always in Grace?

■ By JAMES E. GIBBONS

THIS OUTLINE STUDY appeared in an early edition of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* many, many years ago. We are rerunning it below for your consideration. This touches upon just a few of the Scriptures which throw an unfavorable light on the doctrine of "once in grace always in grace." Also, as this material is read, let it be fully realized that there is every reason why a Christian should remain saved and be saved in the end. He has the Holy Spirit within, he has the Word of God to nurture his soul, and he has the throne of grace to which to flee—just to name a few of his great advantages. The Christian life is not lived alone.

INTRODUCTION:

1. What is meant by "once in grace always in grace"?

- (1) Those saying this mean, "once saved always saved"—there is not the possibility of being lost after having once become a Christian.
- (2) Thus, it is said that a person cannot fall from grace—"once in grace always in grace."

2. Where did this doctrine originate?

- (1) In modern times with John Calvin (1509-64), in *Calvinism*, which included such doctrines as: "election or predestination, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistibility of grace, and the *perseverance of the saints*" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*).
- (2) Calvin revived many theories that had been first introduced by Augustine in the 4th century.

3. Is "once in grace always in grace" true?

- (1) If it is religiously true it will be found in the Bible because this Book contains all truth in the realm of religion (John 16:13; II Timothy 3:16).
- (2) If it is not found in the Bible that means it is a false doctrine and an addition to the Word of God (Revelation 22:18).

I. IS SALVATION CONDITIONAL AFTER A PERSON HAS BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

A. The Doctrine of "Once in Grace Always in Grace Tends to Take Away Man's Free-Moral Agency.

1. Man was a free-moral agent in becoming a Christian; if the doctrine being considered is true, after becoming a Christian he must lose this and be reduced to a machine, a robot, and he is not responsible for what he does.
2. As a proof text, John 10:29 is quoted, "...no man is able to pluck them from my Father's hand."
3. True, no man, or outside force in itself, could pluck the sheep out of the Father's hand, but the sheep may go out on their own accord.
4. Isaiah said, "All we like sheep have gone astray..." (Isaiah 53:6).
5. Jesus said, "But go rather to the LOST sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6).

B. Use of the Word IF Shows that Salvation is Still Conditional After Becoming a Christian.

1. IF a man abides not in Christ he is cast out as a branch and burned (John 15:6).
2. A Christian is saved by the gospel IF he keeps in memory, or holds fast, to that which he has heard (I Corinthians 15:1,2).
3. Christian mothers will be saved, "IF they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (I Timothy 2:15).
4. Christians will not escape, "IF we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25).
5. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for IF ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Peter 1:10).

II. CAN A PERSON CAST OFF FAITH AFTER BECOMING A CHRISTIAN?

A. The Said Doctrine Would Suggest That a Person Cannot Become an Unbeliever.

1. The Bible teaches that a man is saved by faith (but not faith only) (Romans 10:9,10).
2. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).
3. The unbelievers, those without faith, will be found in the eternal lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).
4. As a proof text, John 3:16 is quoted, and they say the one who believes then and there has eternal life, and thus cannot be lost.
5. If we can Scripturally show that a Christian can cast off faith, it will prove that he can be lost.

B. The Following Scriptures Show That a Christian Can Cast Off His Faith.

1. In reference to some backslidden widows, Paul said, "Having DAMNATION because they have CAST OFF THEIR FIRST FAITH" (I Timothy 5:12).
2. The writer of Hebrews said that they were Christ's "IF we hold fast the CONFIDENCE (faith) and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6, also 14).
3. Christians are not to have, "an evil heart of UNBELIEF, in DEPARTING from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).
4. The Jewish Christians were admonished: "CAST NOT AWAY therefore your CONFIDENCE (faith) which hath great recompense of reward," then they were warned about drawing back unto PERDITION (damnation) (Hebrews 10:35-39).
5. If Christians deny Christ, he will deny them before His Father in Heaven (II Timothy 2:12; Matthew 10:33).

III. DOES THE N.T. SAY THAT A CHRISTIAN CAN FALL FROM GRACE?

A. The Proponents of This Doctrine Label It, "Once in Grace Always in Grace."

1. The Bible teaches that we are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5).
2. Therefore, if a person can fall from grace that means he is in an unsaved condition because he has fallen from that which saved him.
3. A single Scripture saying that a man can fall from grace should settle this question once and for all.

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B. The New Testament Teaches That We Can Fall From Grace.

1. Paul said to the Galatians, "...ye are **FALLEN FROM GRACE**" (Galatians 5:4).
2. The Hebrew Christians were warned, "Looking diligently lest any fail of the grace of God (margin: **FALL FROM THE GRACE OF GOD**). . ." (Hebrews 12:14,15).
3. The Gentile Christians would be **CUT OFF** if they didn't continue in God's **GOODNESS** (grace) (Romans 11:21,22).
4. The apostle Peter says that it is possible for Christians to fall back into the world, then said it would have been better for them if they had not known the way of righteousness (II Peter 2:20-22).
5. Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, In myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27).

IV. WHEN DOES EVERLASTING LIFE BEGIN FOR THE CHRISTIAN?

A. Advocates of the Said Doctrine Must Say That Everlasting Life Is a Complete Actuality Now.

1. In one sense Christians are now saved—they are saved from their past sins (I Corinthians 1:18).
2. In another sense Christians are in a process of being saved—salvation is conditional, and they are proving themselves (Hebrews 2:3).
3. In a third sense Christians will be saved in the future—they are not secure in heaven itself yet (Matthew 24:13; Romans 13:11).

B. Everlasting Life, While in a Sense Attained Here, Is Conditional and Is to Be Gained Hereafter.

1. Christians may have their names removed from the Book of Life by not overcoming the world and by subtracting from God's teachings (Revelation 3:5; 22:19; Revelation 20:15).
2. We shall **REAP EVERLASTING LIFE**, **IF** we sow to the Spirit, and **IF** we faint not (Galatians 6:8,9).
3. Timothy was to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life (I Timothy 6:12; Note 6:19).
4. Christians will receive a crown of life after being faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).
5. Christians are to receive the salvation of their souls at the second coming of Christ (I Peter 1:7-9).

V. DOES SIN BRING DEATH TO A CHRISTIAN AS TO A NON-CHRISTIAN?

A. To Say, "Once in Grace Always in Grace" Is to Imply That Our **PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE Sins Are All Forgiven at One Time**, Or to Say That a Christian Does Not Sin, or Else to Say That Sin Does Not Bring Spiritual Death to A Christian.

1. When one becomes a Christian only his **PAST** (committed) sins are forgiven—sins committed thereafter must be repented of and confessed (I John 1:9).
2. The Scripture I John 3:9 has been abused in effort to prove "once in grace always in grace"—"Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because

he is born of God."

3. John in the same epistle says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8).
4. This sounds like a contradiction—What is he saying? A better wording of I John 3:9 would be, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit willful, continual and habitual sins; for his seed remaineth in him: and he does not make a practice of sin, because he is born of God" (in essence). This verse does not mean it is impossible for a Christian to sin, the whole N.T. shows otherwise, but the Christian does not make a practice of it. It is not in keeping with his nature. Thus, there are no "contradictions," and this is not a "proof text" for "once in grace always in grace."
5. Therefore, the other question remains: will the sins that a man commits after he becomes a Christian bring spiritual death?

B. Christians Can Commit Sins, Die Spiritually, and If Not Forgiven (Restored), Be Lost.

1. James warns Christians that sin, when it is finished, brings forth **DEATH** (James 1:12-16).
2. Also, if a brother does err from the truth, and one convert him back, a soul has been saved from **DEATH** (James 5:19,20).
3. Paul said to the Romans, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall **DIE**. . ." (Romans 8:12,13).
4. Regarding women who had been Christians, Paul said, "But she that liveth in pleasure is **DEAD** while she liveth" (I Timothy 5:6).
5. Jude speaks of men being **TWICE DEAD** (spiritually) (Jude 12).
6. "...**IF** the righteous scarcely (barely) be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (I Peter 4:17,18).

(NOTE: however in the midst of all these sobering truths, remember Hebrews 4:14-16; I John 1:8-10; and II Peter 1:3-11).

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society, where people say, "Yes, sure, I'll be there in church tomorrow." They don't show up. Where somebody says, (maybe even a Christian), "Lend me \$20. I need it badly, and I'll pay you when I get my next pay check." Fifteen pay checks go by and it's not paid back yet. "Lend me your book. I'd like to read it." The word was "lend," but it stays in your library for years. Stolen material! We live in a society where people do not keep their word. We live in a society of covenant breakers where you can make a promise and if it's convenient, you keep it. If it's not convenient, you forget about it.

Now over and over again, if you noticed back in Malachi 2, (you can turn to it again if you forgot), there's a word that's repeated over and over again. It's "treacherous." That's what God says about this man who puts away the wife of his youth. He is treacherous. You know what treacherous means? Ever go hiking and walk on a treacherous trail? You know what a treacherous trail is? That's one that looks all right but under-

neath it's not solid. It may look as nice and smooth as it can possibly be, but underneath there's a hole, or a stone, or something slippery, or whatever else it might be. It's a treacherous trail, because it betrays you. It presented itself as something which it was not. A treacherous person is a traitor. A related word is treason. When you divorce your wife or when you divorce your husband, you're committing treason. You're a traitor. You're an untrustworthy person. You're an unsafe person. That's what God says. That's what the Bible says.

"Yes, but I wasn't thinking when I got married. If I'd had my senses about me, I never would have married her to begin with. So I made a mistake. Everybody makes a mistake. So I'll get out of it, and God will forgive me, and I'll try something else." Turn with me to Psalms 15: "Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; he who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change; he who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved."

People, understand what it means in the Word of God when it says, "suffer hardship." Brother, sister, if that's what it means in your marriage, then may it be so. We would hope that nobody's marriage would be that. But certainly one of the clear teachings of the Word of God is the call to suffer hardship for Jesus Christ, to take up our cross daily to serve Jesus Christ. And if that's what it means in order for your to remain married, if that's what it means for you to keep your word to the wife of your youth, (to the husband of your youth), if that's what it means so as not to break up your home—to bear a cross, to suffer hardship, to die daily—then so be it. Because God says that divorce is not the way out.

Divorce isn't the solution anyway. You know that. Those who have made studies of emotional experiences that people have, say that the second most traumatic experience that people go through in life (the first one being the death of a close loved one), the second most traumatic experience is divorce. There are scars there that are not ever lived down. There are usually children involved. Now you've got your family and your kids over yonder. It doesn't solve anything. Now you've got an ex-wife and a wife. You've got a mess. It doesn't solve anything. Divorce is not the solution. The solution is keeping one's word. If it means to suffer, then suffer to keep your word. Don't break your word that you made at the "altar," as we say.

But that command of Jesus, "let no man put asunder," is not just talking to the pair that gets married. It's also talking to everybody else. Don't let anybody else put them asunder either. That means you, mother-in-law. That means you, father. Your kids are married before God. They made a promise to live together until death. Mother, dad, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandmother, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, don't

"BUT seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—CHRIST

be a party to their separation. Don't be a party to breaking them up. One's in-laws and one's own family are usually not the ones who can help out when there's a real problem in the marriage. Now sometimes they can, but usually they can't. If you've got problems and you run home to mom, that's probably the worst place to go. Unless your mother is a really true honest-to-goodness godly woman, she will not tell you to go back to be under subjection to your husband and to suffer. You see, most moms are too tenderhearted for that. They don't want to see their "little baby" suffering.

That's one part of the problem. Another part of the problem is that when you go back to mom and dad to tell them the whole story, you know what's going to happen? They're going to believe you. And they're probably in no position to talk to your mate. You're talking to your mom and dad, and your mate doesn't want to talk to your mom and dad. Your mom and dad are probably in no position to counsel your mate. So what happens is that your mom and your dad are listening to your side and starting to give you advice. The book of Proverbs warns about that. Proverbs the 18th chapter and verse 13 says: "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." Now listen everyone of you who get involved in counselling people, whether it's marriage sounselling or any other kind, please take this to heart. Have you ever been guilty of that, of second-guessing the person who comes to talk to you? I've been guilty of it. When they just start talking a little bit, you say, "Sure, sure, I know what you're talking about. Listen to what I've got to tell you," and you give your spiel. They patiently listen to you, and after you're done, they say, "No, that's not what I'm talking about. That's not what the problem is." And they start explaining to you what the problem is. You made a fool of yourself, because you answered it before you heard it.

Listen, parents and in-laws. You say, "Oh, I listened. I listened for hours. I didn't give any advice until I heard the whole story." Oh, no, that's not true. You listened for hours on hours and all you heard was half of it. That's all you heard. Therefore, you can't help, unless you are one of those unusual people who, whatever help you give, it is going to be directed just toward the person who came to you, toward the faults that he must correct. But a lot of counselors aren't capable of that kind of thing. Do you understand what I'm talking about? You just tell that person what *he* needs to correct. All right, if you're capable of doing that, then you can hear half and possibly give some fairly good advice. You see, the person complaining is going to give themselves away in a lot of cases as to how they're a part of the problem.

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We read Proverbs 13:18 about a person answering before he hears a matter being folly, right? Let's just look on down here in verse 17, "The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him." Have any of you found a marriage problem ever to be any different? You listen to one person and you make up your mind. You know what the problem is, and you know what the solution is. You know the whole thing. You're ready to solve it. And then you go listen to the other party, and you say, "Oh, no, what did I get into? This thing's a mess." Relatives usually, not always, but relatives usually are not in a position to counsel both sides. The one who is being counselled by in-laws is probably going to resent it, and fight it. So, parents, be extremely careful that you don't go around sympathizing with your suffering married child and thereby become a party to their eventual divorce. The Bible says, "Let no man separate," and that includes the mother and the father.

That also includes preachers and marriage counselors. "Let no man separate." Not even a preacher. Oh, preachers wouldn't do that, would they? A lot of preachers can be guilty, just like we've talked about, of not wanting someone "to suffer," or listening to only one side when counselling people. If I get involved in counselling a couple, the very first session I make it known that I want to talk to the other person. I've found so many times that they don't want that. They don't really want help. They just want sympathy. But I want to talk to the other person. All right, so preachers or anybody else who's counselling marriage problems need to keep that in mind.

But there's something else that has to be kept in mind, because preachers get to counselling with women who are aggrieved by their mean husbands. My brethren, that situation is as dangerous as dynamite. You'd better have your wife in on that 100%. When you as a man get to counselling with an aggrieved woman, you put yourself in the place of her helper, her hero, her good guy. Her husband is the bad guy. That's why single men should never get involved in marriage counselling. I've seen it happen. The single man gets involved as the good guy and protector of the girl. He gets involved, and then he really gets involved, and he becomes a part of breaking up a marriage. Often a man counsels a woman and they're alone: alone in her home, alone in his office, or alone in a car. I'm not talking about something that might just possibly take place. I'm talking about reality. Not just in denominationalism. In real church situations. The preacher runs off and fornicates with the girl. Or he goes off and marries her. He's a preacher, and he's a professional marriage counsellor; he gets involved in counselling with a woman with her problems, falls in love with this woman, divorces his wife and marries the woman that he was counselling. Brethren, when the New Testament says to "flee fornication," that's talking to preachers too—and when you are dealing with women who have marriage problems. If you're going to flee fornication, you've got to be in there 100%

PROTECTS THE FAMILY UNIT



with your wife in that situation. "Oh, I'm strong; no problem for me," you say. "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12). There are too many who have fallen already, my brethren.

Are you a part of the solution, or are you a part of the problem? When people are having problems in their marriage, we need to go help them, we need to go counsel them; we need to go and see how we can share with them and how they can share with us. We need to help bring the solution. So many times people get involved in other's marriage problems (even Christians, even parents, and even preachers) and make the situation worse instead of better.

Then there's the matter of going to court. I learned this a long time ago the hard way, dealing with a couple. One of their kids was a Christian, and we were with them, dealing and trying to get them to church, teaching them, and so forth. The man had a problem with drugs, and with this problem he'd steal money that was in the house—and then he might even threaten his wife. And, well, to make a long story short, I went with the wife to court to get a court order for him not to come in the house so that she could have protection against this beast of a man. (Family court). I'm a big protector, see, of this woman who is likely to be beaten up by this man under the influence of drugs. You want to know the true results of me helping her get that court protection? The first result was that the guy comes up to the door and knocks and talks to her nicely, and she lets him in anyhow. The second result was he never wanted to talk to me again. I lost my influence and my opportunity with him, and I heard years later that he was converted to the Pentecostal

church. I learned my lesson the hard way. You just usually don't help anything when you take sides, you see. In a marriage problem that's not the way it's solved. Rather the way it's solved is by getting people together. The way to solve the situation is not by divorce, not by your evil protection; the way it is solved is by love. . . by love.

III. LOVE IS A COMMAND—SO WORK ON YOUR PROBLEM

"Oh, but I don't love her anymore!" That's all right, just go and do it anyway. "But you can't tell me I have to love somebody! I have to feel it." Is that so? Whose book have you been reading? Where did you learn what love is all about? "You can't command love. Love's got to come out of the heart, and you can't command it."

And they said to Jesus, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" and Jesus said, "You shall love..." (Matthew 22:36,37). The greatest what? The greatest feeling? The greatest thing that just flows up out of your heart? It's the greatest commandment. Love is a matter of the will. Love is a matter of making up your mind as to how you're going to feel about that person. I remember the first time I got involved with counselling with somebody who said, "You know, I just don't love my wife anymore." And I tried to reason with him and everything else, but he said, "You can't make me love. Love is not a commandment. I don't feel anything for her anymore." Well, if you don't love her because she's your wife, and you don't love her because she's your neighbor, and you don't love her because she's your sister in Christ, then at least love her as your enemy. (All such love is commanded).

What is love? We live in a society where people fall into love, and they fall out of love. They fall into love; so they get married, and everything's wonderful. A few years later they fall out of love and think they need to get a divorce. Listen, my friends, we've got it all mixed up in our society. You "know" that love sustains a marriage, right? Well, that's what they teach you. That's what young people say: "You know, everything's bad. He doesn't have a job. He can't hold down a job, you know, all kinds of problems and everything. But it's all right, our love will sustain us." Think about it for a minute: love doesn't sustain a marriage. If you look at it from God's way, marriage sustains love. Now you think that one over. You have to chew on that one for a while. Just think about that. Because we're in a crazy-sex-romantic age, you see, and the proposition today is that if love is gone, the marriage has got to stop. "I don't feel love anymore. That's it. It's all over. I've got to get a divorce. You can't manufacture love." But if you look at it from God's way, love doesn't sustain a marriage. According to God's way, marriage sustains love, because the kind of love that God talks about is not an if-love but a regardless-love. "I'll love him *if* he brings home enough money." "I'll love him *if* he'll put his shoes away when he comes home." "I'll love him *if* he says nice, sweet words to me." "I'll love her *if* she cooks my favorite meals." "I'll love her *if* she'll give me sex every time I want it." "I'll love her *if*..." Bible love isn't if-love. Bible love is regardless-love. "Whether she upsets me or not, I'll love her."

"Whether she keeps a tidy house or not, I'll love her." "Whether she's growing old and gray-haired and wrinkled or not, I'll love her." "Whether she burns the meals or not, I'll love her." "Whether he squeezes his toothpaste all over the bathroom or not, I'll love him." "Whether he keeps me awake by his snoring or not, I'll love him." "Even if he makes stupid statements from the pulpit, I'll love him regardless." That's Bible love.

When we're talking about Bible love, it's not a question of whether she attracts him anymore or whether he attracts her anymore. If it's Bible love, it's a question of "what can I do to please my mate?" That's when we put love in the right place in marriage. "What can I do to please my mate?" Let's go to the Bible, please. First Corinthians, the 7th chapter, verses 33 and 34: "But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife." Now those of you who are familiar with this passage, I'm sure that most of you if not all of you agree with me that Paul is not condemning anything here. He's just telling it like it is. This is the way it is: "he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband."

If you're having trouble with your marriage, your marriage is shaky and you're wondering what is going to happen to your marriage, then start today, not tomorrow. Start today to see how many things you can do, husband, to please your wife. See how many things you can do, wife, to please your husband. That's the business of loving in marriage.

Did you know that sex is a command of God? Now if it's totally devoid of romance, there's going to be a problem there, too. But, if you're human, number one; if you're unselfish (that's a big number two), and if you want to please your mate instead of yourself, then you'll obey God's command about sex. I don't see how romance is going to stay out of it very long. Now if you just want to think about yourself, O.K., yes; if you just want self-gratification, yes; maybe you can go on for a long time without romance. But if you're a human being at all, and if you're concerned with the other person, the romance is going to get in there so that it's going to be completely fulfilling the command of God. Here in I Corinthians, the same book, the same chapter 7 and beginning with verse 1, it says: "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband." It's talking about affection, talking about feeling. Your wife needs that. Your wife wants that, and God commands the husband to render that to his wife.

And then it says that "the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another"

(Continued on Next Page)

DIVORCE is not the Solution

(Continued from Last Page)

...“unless you don’t feel love for her anymore.” Is that the way your version reads? No. That’s the way the version of the world reads. You see it’s a command of God for a husband and a wife not to deprive one another. It’s a command of God to love one another. In Romans the 15th chapter and verses 2 and 3: “Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself.” Do you want your marriage to get better? Do you want to be heading toward a new honeymoon, instead of a divorce? Start pleasing your mate.

I’m sure a lot of you are familiar with the book, *The Total Woman*. My wife recommends the book, not that everything in it is perfect, but there’s a lot of good in it. I read the first part of the book in which she tells how the things came about to begin with. I mean she was madly in love with this guy. It was a wonderful romance, a wonderful marriage, and everything was just great; but little by little things started falling apart. And they got worse, and they got worse, and they got worse. Well, a lot of different things happened, and she spends the whole book talking about it. What I got out of the book basically is this: what happened is that she stopped thinking about herself and started thinking about him. Some people have spoken against—I think it’s in regard to this book—the idea of a woman manipulating a man. They say manipulating isn’t right, and so forth. Listen, if you want to call pleasing somebody manipulation, you go ahead and call it that. But my God says that’s what we’re supposed to do: please people. Didn’t somebody a while back even write a book on *How to Win Friends and Influence People*? I remember reading that book. Sometimes I’d come to something in it and say, “What is he really talking about?” The next paragraph would open up saying something like, “Some of you reading this think I’m whacky saying this.” Then he’d sock you in the middle of your eyes with a Scripture verse. Yes, that’s what God had said. That’s what God said. Let’s get involved in the business of pleasing one another.

Maybe we’ve heard too much preaching about not being men-pleasers. No, I’m sure we haven’t heard too much preaching about that, but maybe we’ve missed the point in some of the preaching we’re heard because we’re egotistical, proud and selfish. We’ve got to do our own thing in our own way without caring about the feelings of somebody else, without caring about the desires of somebody else, and even without caring about the needs of somebody else. There are a lot of practical books that have been written. Have you read some of them? If you need them, or if you think you don’t need them, there are a lot of good materials available. You have to compare them with the Word of God to make sure what they say is right. One of the more recent writers that I have found, (some people don’t like him because he doesn’t put very much Scripture in there; but I find that most of what’s in there is according to the Scripture, if you think about it), and that’s James Dobson. He has written a lot. He’s got “Focus on the Family.” I’ve seen some of his films which were

taken when he was presenting a series, and there’s just a world of good in them. There are a lot of other good books that are being written today to give practical down-to-earth day-to-day helps to wife, to husband, to mom, to dad. If you need something like that, get a hold of it. If you need some older person to counsel you, get a hold of that person. If you just need to study your Bible more, do that. If you need just to get down on your knees and repent of your selfish, egotistical, me-first attitude, then do that.

But whatever it is, do whatever is necessary, because divorce is not the answer. Love is the answer. What you therefore need is a deep-down commitment to make your marriage work. If it has to be on the level “to make the best of it, here we are; we’re stuck for life. . .” I mean, if that’s the level it’s got to be on, then let it be on that level. “We’re stuck, nothing we can do. We’re married, so let’s make the best of it.” If it’s got to be just at that level, then let it be at that level. But, Lord willing, it can be at a much better level if you determine to put God first in your life, your mate second in your life, and yourself third. Will you make that commitment today? That’s love, you see. That loving God first, and loving your mate before yourself. Do that, will you? You’ll be amazed at the happiness that God can give you in marriage. What a wonderful game, if you want to call it a game, it can be to see how many things you can do to make your mate happy, how many ways you can make your mate happy, how many ways you can make your husband happy, how many ways you can please your wife. Do that, will you? God first, your mate second, and yourself last. And live happily ever after. God bless you. □

ANSWERS TO: Questions over Angels in the Bible

1. Hebrew *malak*: messenger; Greek *angelos*: messenger. 2. Hebrews 1:13,14. 3. Psalms 8. 4. Matthew 22:30; Luke 20:34-36. 5. Genesis 3:24. 6. He spoke in the first person representing God (Genesis 16:7-13; 18:1,13-33; 22:15-18; etc.). 7. Genesis 28. 8. Exodus 3. 9. Exodus 23:20ff; 33:2. 10. Numbers 22:22-35. 11. Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2. 12. Judges 13:20. 13. Psalms 34:7. 14. Isaiah 6. 15. Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:8-15; Luke 1:5-25. 16. Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13; Luke 22:43. 17. Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10. 18. Luke 16:22; Matthew 13:39,41; 25:31,32; II Thessalonians 1:7-9. 19. Matthew 25:41. 20. Luke 1:19,26; Jude 9.

“ONE DAY on a bus, a man gave his seat to a woman. She fainted. Upon recovering, she thanked him. Then he fainted.”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

NOTE: The new feature “SOUND WORDS” will be resumed in future issues of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*—not enough room this time.

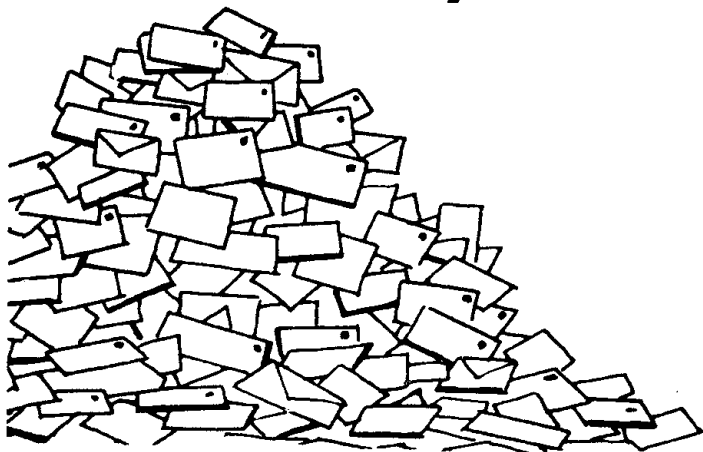
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“IT IS just as incorrect to say there is more than one church as it would be to say there is more than one kingdom of God.”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

READERS'

... Response



GEORGIA:

- "I enjoyed reading your publication very much, especially your tendency to 'tell it like it is.' I am looking forward to being put on your mailing list. . ."

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- "I thank God for your continuing with straight-strong teaching in *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. . ."

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- "I very much appreciate your magazine's emphasis on holiness, Christ our Saviour, and the one body of Christ on earth today. Its writing style is personable and its subject matter understandable. . ."
- "Please remove my name from your mailing list! Thanks."

DELAWARE:

- "A sample copy of your publication fell into my hand today, (article) entitled 'The Body of Christ': I have read many such publications in the past, however I was amazed at the excellent and simple manner in which you proclaimed the Word of God through the printed word in this issue I have before me. I would like to investigate this publication further as this is the first copy I have ever read. . ."

KENTUCKY:

- "Please keep putting out *THE SWORD AND STAFF* paper. It has so much good in it. We really enjoy it and learn from your writings, sermons, etc. May God bless you and your work. . ."
- "Loved the sample copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. What I've seen in this copy is the best printed paper on God's Word, second only to the Bible. . ."

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- "We have been enjoying *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for over 10 years. Keep up the good work."
- "We thank God every day for your boldness in your paper. Now days I find even Christ's church is holding back not telling the truth. God bless you in your work in the Lord. Our prayers are with you. . ."
- "Would you please send us a subscription of your magazine (*THE SWORD AND STAFF*). We read one and really enjoyed it. And we learned things from it too. It is a very good magazine; everyone should get it and read it."
- "Please remove our names from your mailing list. . ."

INDIANA:

- "Thank you for your fine publication. It has truly blessed my ministry. . ."

MINNESOTA:

- "Enclosed find. . . a contribution to your much needed, much appreciated noble work and efforts. We certainly enjoy receiving your paper, *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. . . It stimulates and challenges us every time we read it. Thanks, and may the Lord bless you to continue with your publishing efforts until we meet Him in the air."

IDAHO:

- "I just finished reading for the first time an issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I enjoyed it and thought it was good food (meat). I think I would enjoy receiving it on a regular basis. I'm in prison and its difficult to get my hands on good Christian reading. Thank you for your labor in the Lord."

COLORADO:

- "I am grateful to my friend in Nebraska who introduced me to your publication. Please continue to send it to me—It's excellent! Am enclosing a check. May God continue to bless this work—proclaiming the Truth."

OKLAHOMA:

- "We already have received and read the latest issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*, and as always it was the 'best one yet.' We do appreciate all the good information in it, and we need every word of it, in order to be faithful like the Lord would have us be. . . So from our house to your house, thank you so much. . ."

PHILIPPINES:

- "Greetings to you in the name of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I wish to inform you that I work with a Christian High School where the Bible is taught daily to our students. I have learned about your magazine, *THE SWORD AND STAFF*, and I thought that that Christian magazine would be an enriching material for our Bible teaching. At the time my co-workers and I, and the students, would benefit from it when placed at the library for our reading consumption. . ."

★★★★★★

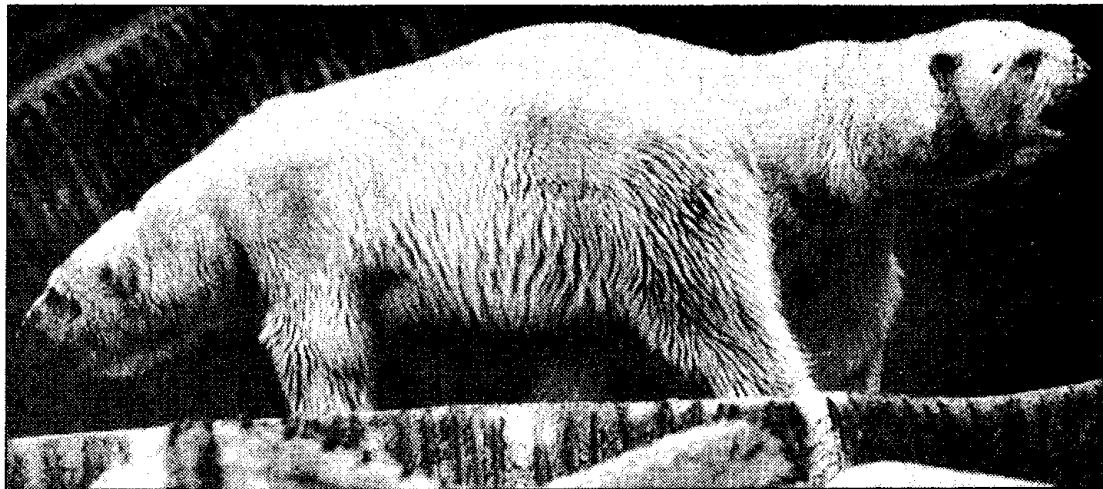
Are You Helping or Honking?

A WOMAN DRIVER was having difficulties getting her automobile started after it had stalled in traffic. The gentleman (?) in the car behind her insisted on expressing his impatience with her by blowing his horn every few seconds. Finally, the lady, worn out by his thoughtlessness, stepped out of her automobile, walked back to the honker's car and said, "I'm having a little trouble starting my car. If you'll try to start it for me, I'll stay back here and honk your horn for you."

A lot of folks in the church do more honking than helping. There are more talkers than workers, and more criticism than labor. The ones who do the most honking generally do the least working. They may have never preached a sermon, led a song or prayer, or served as an elder, but they know just how it should be done. They are like the chronic objector who was asked for his suggestion on a project being discussed in a business meeting. He said, "You go ahead and make the plans, and I'll tell you what's wrong with them."—*The Light* □

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Treasure: Many have discovered treasure much to their liking when they ordered the back issues of the bound volumes of *The Sword and Staff*. Notice those available.

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