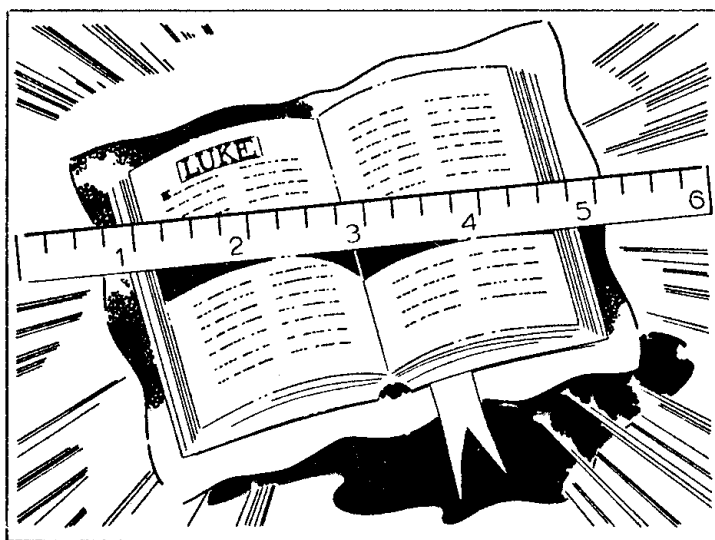


The Sword AND Staff

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

THE LOVE OF GOD

Measuring That Which Is Beyond Measurement



● By **JAMES E. GIBBONS**

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AS WE STUDY the Bible, we are soon made to realize that God has two sides or natures, wrath and love. We see His wrath against sin. Consequently, we see our need for godly living and a wholesome fear and respect for God. The writer of the book of Hebrews admonishes that we should "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28b,29). However, at the same time in the Bible the love of God stands out in bold relief. More than once John says that "God is love" (I John 4:8,16). This is the **agape** love, the love of intelligence and corresponding purpose (in keeping with God's holiness and righteousness). In reference to sinful man, this love is manifested in connection with His Son, Jesus Christ. "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). We are saved from the

wrath of God through the love of God (if we can comprehend this). There is more involved in this love than we will ever know (yet we are commanded to know it).

Paul, writing to the Ephesians, had some very interesting things to say about this. From eternity it had been God's plan that the church be entrusted with this wonderful message of love through Christ. Now Paul was one of its chief spokesmen. All men were to hear this message of love and grace. The Ephesian Christians were among those who had heard and accepted it. This love was an ongoing thing in their lives, and Paul prays for them in this connection. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:14-19).

Paul wants them to be spiritually strong in the inner man. This is accomplished by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. At the same time he speaks of this as Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith. This resulted in them being "rooted and grounded in love." This outcome would be very natural since love is the chief fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Thereby they would be able to grasp and comprehend with all other Christians "the breadth, and length, and depth,

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THE SWORD AND STAFF
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Proverbially
SPEAKING...

THE BEST WAY to get anything done is to do it.

"All change is not growth, as all movement is not forward."

Grace is unmerited favor in the forgiveness of sins that enables us to live the good and godly life, not license for unrestrained behavior.

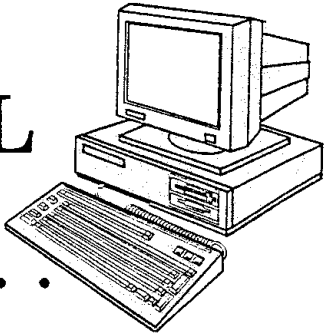
"If you want to leave footprints on the sands of time, don't drag your feet."

What some denominations lack in religion they try to make up for in cathedrals, elaborate church buildings, ecclesiastical garb, robes, and crosses.

"Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility."



EDITORIAL
COMMENTS...



THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORD

PETER, as he brought his message to a close on the day of Pentecost, declared, "Therefore let all of the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). He asserts that Jesus, on the basis of his resurrection from the dead, is now both **LORD** and **CHRIST**. Many want the benefits of Jesus being their Savior as the Christ, but they are weak on him being their Lord (the Lord of their lives). Perhaps too many times we do not fully realize, understand, or appreciate the extent of the Lordship of Christ. The truth is that we cannot have Jesus as our Savior unless he is the Lord of our lives.

Even before his resurrection from the dead, the authority and Lordship of Christ were evident (and recognized). A great illustration of this is found in Mark 2:1-12. In healing the paralytic let down through the roof, Jesus simply said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Was this man's sickness the result of sin, or did his sickness make him aware of his sins? We don't know, but Jesus had something else in mind too. The scribes and Pharisees fully saw the implications of what Jesus said, as they reasoned in their hearts, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" Acknowledging their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath **power** on earth to forgive sins. . . ." Then he said to the paralytic, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." Everyone was amazed and glorified God when they saw this.

Jesus stated that he had "**POWER**" on earth to forgive sins. This is a translation of the Greek word *exousia* and is also rendered "authority" elsewhere in the New Testament. Authority and power represent the meaning of the word. It is the kind of authority or right that is backed by the might. The right is inherent in the might. One validates the other. Christ forgives this man's sins and proves it by the miracle. As they could not deny the miracle, they should not try to deny that forgiveness actually took place. The might and consequent right together are in evidence. The scribes and Pharisees were

right in coupling God and forgiveness. They were wrong in discounting the deity of Jesus: that he was indeed God in human form (and thus could forgive sins). Jesus was and is the Lord.

Yes, the miracles Christ performed during his ministry confirmed his Lordship and deity as the Son of God (John 20:30,31); but Jesus came into the world to die on the old rugged cross for sinners, and the greatest miracle was yet to come. Peter preached about it on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-36). Paul later wrote that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead*” (Romans 1:4). In Ephesians 1:20-22, he further said that God “raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.” Also, read Colossians 1:16-18. It is no wonder that Christ said in Matthew 28:18, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

The Lordship (and authority) of Christ is over all. As noticed, Christ said that it included heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). Peter preached Christ to the household of Cornelius, and said, “But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him” (Acts 10:35). Then he was quick to say, “He is Lord of all” (yes, over *all* of mankind, not just the Jews). Paul includes the living and the dead in the scope of this Lordship. “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living” (Romans 14:8-10). Consequently, Christ as Lord will be our judge in that last day as “every knee shall bow. . . and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:11,12; II Corinthians 5:10,11). Then, in more of a general sense (including the present), we read, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God” (Philippians 2:10,11). Men may not recognize it, but Jesus is “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (I Timothy 6:15) The book of Revelation acclaims this (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

The concept of Christ being “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” has its backdrop in such references as Daniel 2:37 and Ezekiel 26:7 where Nebuchadnezzar was called a “king of kings.” He conquered and ruled many countries with kings under subjection to him. In Revelation 19:11-16 the One who went forth on the white horse in victorious conquest had on his head “many crowns,” “And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” The hymn, “Crown Him with Many Crowns,” seizes upon this thought to urge the crowning of Christ in every circumstance of life and eternity. He is the Lord of all and of all things.

As was stated in the first of this article, perhaps there is more involved in Christ being the Lord, and being the Lord in our lives, than most realize. He is the “KING OF KINGS AND THE LORD OF LORDS” any way you choose to look at it (and he must be that in every facet of our lives). Paul said that our “body. . . is for the Lord: and the Lord for the body” (I Corinthians 6:13,19,20). He admonished the Colossians (and consequently us), “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (3:17). Furthermore: “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (3:23). It is no wonder that James said, “For that we ought to say, If the Lord will we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:15).

Yes, Christ must be Lord of all in our lives, or he is not Lord at all. He cannot be our Savior unless we let him be our Lord. □

What My Absence Did

1. It made some question the reality of my religion.
2. It made some think that I was a pretender.
3. It made many think that I regarded my spiritual welfare and that of others as a matter of small concern.
4. It weakened the effect of the church services.
5. It made it harder for the preacher to preach.
6. It discouraged the brethren, and therefore robbed them of a blessing.
7. It caused others to stay away from church.
8. It made it harder for me to meet the temptations of the devil.
9. It gave the devil more power over lost souls.
10. It encouraged the habit of non-church going.

—Selected □

Jesus said, “Love One Another.”

THE LOVE OF GOD

(Continued from Page 1)

and height” of the love of God. They would “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” In a sense they could measure that which was beyond measurement (i.e., grasp the “breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of God’s love).

This word “know” in “*know* the love of Christ which passeth knowledge” is *gnonai* (the kind of knowing that comes through experience). Some things are best understood through experience. This is true of love. Love is very familiar. It is like the blue sky about us. We think that we know all about it. Yet, when we move through the sky into space and outer space, do we know all that much? Pretty soon that which is familiar is no longer so. The known blends into the unknown. And how can you measure it? Can we say that the sky is so wide, or so long, or so deep, or so high? And what about the love of God? In the final sense it cannot be measured. We can only experimentally know that which “passeth knowledge.”

Nonetheless, seizing upon this expression involving “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of the love of God, let us seek to measure that which is beyond measurement. We will use this as an outline as we try to “nail down” some wonderful truths.

I. HOW BROAD IS THE LOVE OF GOD?

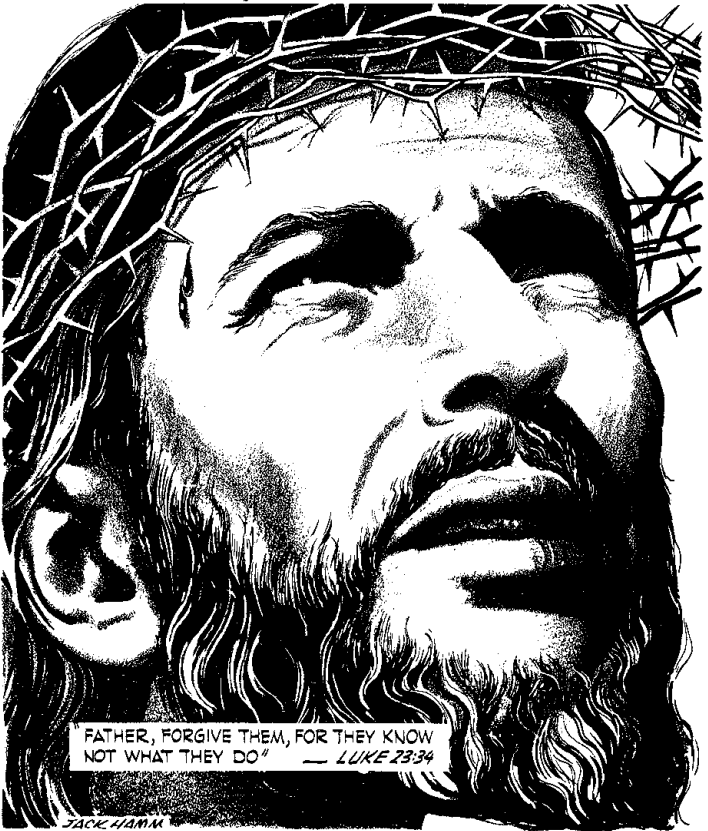
It Takes in the Whole World

In times past Calvinistic predestination has sought to limit God’s love, and the availability of salvation, to a certain number who were arbitrarily picked out before the world began. This school of thought has influenced several denominations to different degrees (some more, some less). However, such a view must be looked upon as unenlightened when we read the golden text of the Bible, John 3:16. “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.” In I Timothy 2:4-6, speaking of God, Paul writes, “Who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself *for all*, to be testified in due time.” Peter tells us why the Lord Jesus has delayed his Second Coming, and it has to do with his desire for all men to be saved. Listen: “The Lord is not slackness concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). Then the book of Revelation ends with

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

For emphasis we have italicized *the world*, *whosoever*, *all men*, *for all*, *any*, *all*, and *whosoever will* in these Scripture references. In His desire for man’s salvation, the love of God is universal. If the New Testament teaches anything, it teaches that God is no respecter of persons. “Whosoever will” may come. God loves all of us.

Prayer of the Crucified



From the Least to the Greatest Sinner

We may think that our sins are few and small; that we consequently are not the objects of God’s wrath. However, the Bible teaches that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). As Paul said, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). One sin in the Garden of Eden made the human race a dying race. Sin is sin in the sight of God. We must all flee to God for grace. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 declare, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” All of us need this.

Many times we are appalled at the extent of man’s depravity—the wickedness that man is capable of, and just how engrossed in sin that he may become.

However, the scope of God's love is so broad that it extends from the least to the greatest of sinners. There is hope for all. Think about those who crucified Jesus. Although God used this to bring about our salvation, this must be regarded as one of the most heinous sins. Yet on the cross of Calvary Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, *whom ye have crucified*, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36ff). Then when they wanted to know how to rid themselves of their guilt, they were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. We get the impression that even among the 3,000 baptized on this day were some who had been involved with the crucifixion. The Lord's prayer from the cross was answered. During his ministry, Jesus forgave the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3-11)—and all kinds of sinners. Paul considered himself the "chief" of sinners. In unbelief he had been responsible for the persecution and death of Christians before his conversion. Here is what he had to say about it. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (I Timothy 1:15,16). A "pattern" for all is to be seen in the bestowal of God's love and grace upon Paul. Christ came into the world to save sinners. The "breadth" of God's love includes the greatest of sinners. How reassuring to know that there is forgiveness, a new start; hope! (And for all!)

II. HOW LONG IS THE LOVE OF GOD?

From the Foundation of the World

John 3:16 is God's message of love; however, when this became a historical fact, that was not the beginning of it. Peter tells us that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot." Then he continued, "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Peter 1:18-20). God foreknew that man would need a Savior. In love from eternity He has provided for man's salvation.

It Will Continue Hereafter

John said, "God is love" (I John 4:8,16). In addressing God, Psalms 90:2 relates that "from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." If "God is love," and if "from everlasting to everlasting" He is God, that means the love of God is from everlasting to

everlasting. God's children will experience the length of God's love throughout eternity.

That reassuring Scripture in John 14:1-3 comes to mind. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 3:1-3 talks about God's love and that new eternal body we will have in this eternal home. Paul states in I Corinthians 13:13, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love)." In eternity faith and hope will be no more, for faith will become sight and that which we have hoped for will have been realized. Then love, the greatest, will continue throughout eternity (and, "God is love").

Accept This Love Now

We must accept God's love now to enjoy it hereafter. God's love and grace must be continued in after we have accepted it. Paul admonished the Corinthians, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)" (II Corinthians 6:1,2). Any way that you choose to look at it, "now is the accepted *time*; behold, now is the *day of salvation*" (whether speaking of the Christian or the non-Christian). The word translated "time" here means season. We are living during the time (period, or season) of man's spiritual restoration to God. It is the most wonderful (and favored) of times in which to be alive. The Savior has come. We have grace and forgiveness (and can bask in the love of God). How tragic if the Corinthians should botch this, with everything in their favor, so as to "receive...the grace of God in vain." That is what Paul is saying.

Yes, God would have "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4). But during this acceptable time, this day of salvation, we must come unto repentance (II Peter 3:9). The reason: "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). When that Great Day has come it will be too late then: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11).

Accept God's love today. Then continue in God's love, lest we "receive...the grace of God in vain." The

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heavenly home will be an eternal expression of the love of God. That is how long the love of God is.

III. HOW DEEP IS THE LOVE OF GOD?

Man Not Left Without Hope

God's love is so deep that He couldn't leave man without hope. Adam and Eve sinned and humanity fell, but God promised a Savior. That first promise, somewhat in veiled language at the time, is found in Genesis 3:15 where God said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Centuries later God, in essence, renewed this promise to Abraham when He said, "In thee (thy seed) shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 2:25,26). In getting mankind ready for the Savior, God gave the Law (Galatians 3:19,24; Hebrews 10:1). Time and time again the prophecies get more specific, letting us know that the Someone is coming. God could not leave man utterly without hope. In time the Savior would be born.

The Only Begotten Son of God

God's love is so deep that He finally sent His only begotten Son into this old world of sin. The times were "full" and everything was ready when he was born of the "seed" of woman (Mark 1:15; Galatians 4:4). The Word became flesh (John 1:1-18), taking the form of a man to dwell among us; experiencing life as we do (Philippians 2:5-9). God surely must love us for Christ to have emptied himself of the glory of heaven and his deity to become our Savior (John 17:4,5). Think about what he went through to accomplish our salvation. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:10,11). Paul tells us that "Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6ff). Then he continued, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The death he died was that awful death on the old rugged cross. Then Jesus himself said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus is the friend of sinners. That means he is your friend and my friend—Oh how much he loved (and loves) us!

Deep Enough to

Move the Heart of a Sinner

No one can dislike Jesus. He is pure, sinless, and claims to have died just for you (and me). In the

crucifixion we see the depths of the love of God as Jesus died to bring us back to God. Paul tells us that the "preaching of the cross" is the "power of God" unto salvation (I Corinthians 1:18). Surely no one can look upon the crucified Savior without being

The Love of God

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall for ever more endure—
The saints' and angels' song.

When hoary time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall;
When men who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hill and mountains call;
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam' race—
The saints' and angels' song.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall for ever more endure—
The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho stretched from sky to sky.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall for ever more endure—
The saint's and angel's song.

—F.M. LeHMAN

touched, stirred, and moved emotionally? God's love is so deep that it will move the heart of the sinner. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4) Yes, it brings about conviction of sin.

The hardest of hearts have been melted by this story of love to be made anew.



IV. HOW HIGH IS THE LOVE OF GOD? Lifts Us Out of Sin

All of us "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). More than one person has really made a mess out of their lives. However, Hebrews 7:25 reads, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him (Christ), seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Yes, as someone has said, he is able to save to the "uttermost" and the "guttermost." He lifts us from the miry clay of sin as we are forgiven, made pure, and freed from sin. With a cleared record, we have a new start in life. From baptism we arise to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). We are now even called "saints."

Paul writes in I Corinthians 6:9-11, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor effeminate, or abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

How wonderful! As that old hymn says, "Love Lifted Me!"

In Heavenly Places in Christ Jesus

Listen to Ephesians 2:1-7. "And you hath he quickened (made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation (manner of living) in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened (made alive) us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Children of "the Highest"

Luke seems to be fond of calling God "the Highest" and using this expression (Luke 1:32,35,76; 2:14; 6:35;19:38). Christ would be called "the Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:32). Jesus said to his disciples, "Your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest" (Luke 6:35). John exclaims, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not" (I John 3:1). In that moving hymn, we sing out, "I'm the child of a king, the child of the a king, with Jesus my Savior, I'm the child of a king." Surely this love is highly exalted that we should be called the children of God. What dignity!

Closing Remarks

As we conclude this article, let us get back to the Scripture we brought out in the beginning (Ephesians 3:14-19). With Christ dwelling in them, "being rooted and grounded in love," Paul wanted the Ephesians to grasp "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of the love of God "which passeth knowledge" that they "might be filled with all the fulness of God." Using the reference to the "breadth, and length, and depth, and height," we have attempted to get across some great truths. Thus understanding in a measure that which is beyond understanding, we are in a better position to attain unto that which Paul admonishes, i.e., "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Encompassed by all the factors presented here, this should be well on the way to being realized. The Holy Spirit (Christ) dwells in us, whose chief fruit is love (Galatians 5:22). In this we are "rooted and

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grounded in love" (the roots of a Christian's life are anchored in love, and with the figure of "grounded," we are made aware that the Christian's life is built on the foundation of love). As we comprehend more and more this love, and as we experimentally know that "which passeth knowledge," how can we help but attain unto the "fulness of God" (which is love, I John 4:16)?

With Paul we are made to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-35) □

The Church as A Team

THE STORY is told of a horse pull in Canada. One horse pulled 9,000 pounds, another 8,000. Together you would expect them to pull 17,000 pounds. Not so! When teamed together, they pulled 30,000 pounds.

The principle is called synergism. By definition the simultaneous action of separate agents working together has a greater total effect than the sum of their individual efforts. More can be done in a team effort than can be accomplished solo. In order for the principle of synergism to work like it should there has to be teamwork.

Everything we do takes teamwork and trust. Every person in the local church is valuable and needed. The church is a team and together we can build for the Lord.—*Adapted* □

The Verdict of the Majority

SOMEONE is ready to say: "I'm willing to follow the thought of the majority in religious matters. What most of the people believe must be right."

May we ask for a moment, the majority of the people *where*? The majority in the world as a whole are heathen. The majority of many nations are Roman Catholic. The majority in Hawaii are Buddhist. If you find yourself in Utah, you would have to become a Mormon.

We must remember that the majority is not always right. In fact, in religious matters, the majority is not always right. The majority crucified Christ. The majority allowed the reign of terror in France.

The majority established slavery.

God warns, "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil" (Exodus 23:2). Note what Jesus had to say about the majority in Matthew 7:13.—*Selected* □

BIBLE QUESTIONS

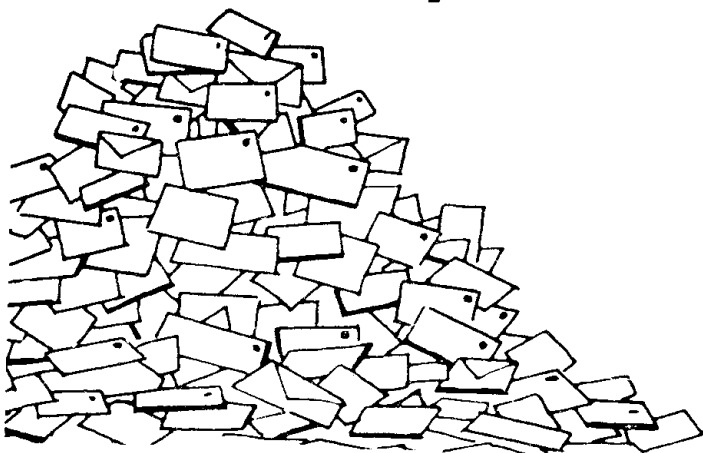
(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. Although under the sentence of death, how old was Adam when he died?
2. Why didn't God lead the children of Israel into the promised land through "the way of the land of the Philistines," which would have been the shortest route?
3. In King David's reign, who was commander over all of the Army of Israel?
4. What was the occasion wherein some men were greatly humiliated in having half of their beards cut off and their garments cut off in the middle that brought on a war with thousands of men being killed?
5. During King David's reign, how many times did someone try to take (or usurp) the throne from him (and who were they)?
6. When King David numbered Israel and Judah, how long did it take for them to do the census?
7. For numbering the people, what three options as to his punishment did God give David (and which one did David choose)?
8. In King Solomon's reign, who was made commander over all the army of Israel?
9. When Solomon started to build the temple, how many years had passed since the children of Israel had come out of Egypt?
10. Why was King David not allowed (by God) to build the temple (although this was David's desire), but Solomon was allowed to do this?
11. How many years was Solomon involved in building the temple (and how many years his own house)?
12. To what city did the LORD tell the prophet Jonah to go and preach (and to what city in the opposite direction did he flee)?
13. What prophet said that Israel was like a "backsliding heifer"?
14. What prophet presents Christ as the suffering servant?
15. Although the scribes and Pharisees were careful to tithe even of mint, anise, and cummin (small garden herbs), what weightier matters of the law did Christ say they omitted?
16. On what two different occasions did Jesus say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not"?
17. After Paul's conversion in Damascus, where did he go before he returned to Jerusalem?
18. What three different times (or places) in the New Testament is the name Christian used?
19. Where was Timothy when Paul wrote the epistle of I Timothy to him?
20. In the book of Revelation, what symbolism is used to represent the seven churches in Asia?

(NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper)

READERS'

... Response



APOLOGY: Please accept our humble apology for slowness in getting correspondence answered. "We" have no staff of secretaries, etc. to handle such, and this is done by the "editor" as time allows. Be it known that you are sincerely appreciated.

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ "Sorry that I have been so delinquent in sending some support. I really appreciate the paper. From my address label I have been receiving *THE SWORD AND STAFF* since '79. That is some time for you to keep up the consistent good work. . . Hope to try to send more in the future."

■ "I hope this will help you as you continue to publish *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I am looking forward to the bound volumes of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I really appreciate reading materials such as yours, that I don't need to question the doctrine."

■ "Please remove my name from the mailing list of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*."

VIRGINIA:

■ "Thank you for *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I enjoy it. The Bible questions are so educational. I do like them. It's all good. God bless you in your work."

■ "I have just finished reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF* on 'God's Kind of Leaders' Enclosed is a check. . . for the magazine I love to read and to be lifted up by the true Word of God. May God bless you for sharing the gospel with others."

■ "I do so much love the edification received from *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I pray that you can continue it and train up others to do the same as you. . ."

TENNESSEE:

■ "Please find enclosed a check for. . . the 1989-90 bound volumes. I really enjoy these books and appreciate the efforts that are put into them. Thanks for some of the best reading material available."

KENTUCKY:

■ "I considered your poem 'I Saw Him Standing There' outstanding. If you have any left (the 8 x 10 suitable for

framing) we would appreciate your sharing such with us. We are going to put them in glassed frames and make presentations. . ."

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "...The people here love your paper and really appreciate the work you are doing for the Lord."

OHIO:

■ "Enclosed is my check. . . which I hope will help you to continue the marvelous work for our Lord that you do. I learn from each of your issues and am delighted to be able to be a part of your work! May our Lord bless you and keep you."

■ "Please send me the copy 8 x10 of 'I Saw Him Standing There' suitable for framing. I have used this item many times in preaching and would enjoy a copy so that I can frame it. Thanks for your assistance."

MICHIGAN:

■ "We thank God for your articles in the latest edition of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. . ."

INDIANA:

■ "Thank you so much for your hard work and dedication in making *THE SWORD AND STAFF* available to us. It is always a real learning experience to receive and study it. We pray for you. . ."

■ "I just want to let you know that I am praying for you in the work you do for the Lord Jesus by preaching the truth in *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. . . I see by my address you have a date affixed 'OCT-79-Re.' What does that mean? Keep up the good work for Christ. God bless you."

(Editor's Note: The date beside your address indicates when you initially started receiving the paper or when your name was re-entered into our records--like with a change of address. In our new address system all addresses will automatically have the date affixed when they are typed. This may be used as a point of reference for sending a contribution, etc. The initial date remains with your address unless there is a change of address, etc.).

ILLINOIS:

■ "Please cancel!"

MINNESOTA:

■ "Please take our name off your mailing list. We disagree with some of your articles and do not wish to get *THE SWORD AND STAFF* anymore."

MISSOURI:

■ "Please find a check for...*THE SWORD AND STAFF*. . . Your paper is the best I know for printing and upholding the one church we read about in God's Word, the only church that Jesus was nailed to the cross for. . ."

NEBRASKA:

■ "We all appreciate the much work that you put into *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. It is a blessing to our souls. Please, never grow weary in your well-doing for the Lord in this endeavor." (Continued on Next Page)

READERS' . . . Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

OKLAHOMA:

■ "I just finished reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. It is just wonderful. I really enjoyed your stance for the Truth. I am so thankful that I received this complimentary copy and wish to receive this publication for the duration of this journal or my lifetime, whichever ends first. I should like very much to have 3 copies of the poem dedicated to faithful gospel preachers. It is one of the best that I have heard. . ."

TEXAS:

■ "A few days ago I received the latest issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* and last night I read it through for the second time and was richly blessed. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, Bless His holy name.'

"I especially like your article, 'God's Kind of Leaders.' Everything in the issue is worth reading again and again. I have used in our church bulletins several times the sketches, 'Confused about which way to go?' I hope it is all right with you; if not tell me, and I'll cease to do so.

"I do love the poem, 'I Saw Him Standing There.' I could use about one dozen copies and make good use of them. . ."

"I already have the bound volumes 18-20 through 27-28. If you have any other bound volumes ready I would love to have them. It's such an addition to any preacher's library. . ."

■ "Thank you for the especially good issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. All of your writing is excellent, and I thank God for you. We have neglected sending some support for your outstanding publication, and we hope and pray this small contribution will help you continue your good work. . ."

■ "We enjoy your newsletter on back to basics of truth in the New Testament very much. Please send us the bound volumes. . ."

■ "We have greatly enjoyed your paper. We have found it to be very enlightening."

NEVADA:

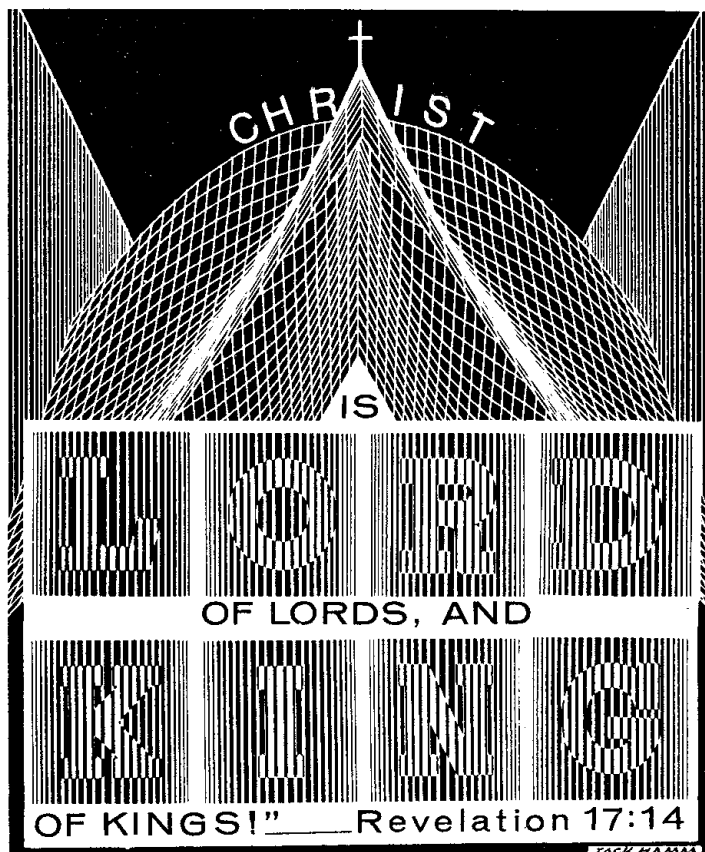
■ "We really do appreciate getting your fine, solid, Bible-based paper and it goes about as fast as it is put out. Keep up the good work. . ."

CANADA:

■ "Recently I was reading your magazine called *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Years ago. . . I received this paper and have missed receiving it. I am writing to ask if it might be possible in receiving it again. . ." □

Free Poem/Plaque

THERE has been a great response for the poem, about "The Old Gospel Preacher," which was featured in the last issue of *The Sword and Staff*. We still have a good supply available on 8 x 10 sheets suitable for framing. There is no charge.



Is Your Wife A Devil?

IS your wife a devil? Don't be alarmed by such a question. We just wanted to get your attention. There is a Scripture to that effect. It should be taken seriously.

In I Timothy 3, Paul having written about the elders and deacons, continued by saying, "Even so must their wives be grave, not *slanderers*, sober, faithful in all things" (I Timothy 3:11). The word translated "slanderers" here is *diabolous*, the same word being represented in English by "devil" in verses 6 and 7 of this same chapter. This word is used in Matthew 4 to identify the wicked one who confronted Jesus (and also in Revelation 12:9).

Diabolos is a two-part word made up of *dia* (meaning through) and *ballo* (meaning to throw). Thus the word for devil means one who throws things through you. It has found its way into modern English in our word diabolical. In its application (and consequent translation in the Bible) it means accuser or slanderer. That is what the devil is (and does) as he causes trouble. That is what the wives of the leaders in the church are charged not to do (and not to be). Likewise, speaking to the older women in Titus 2:3, Paul urged them not to be devils (rendered "false accusers," KJV). A sharp, uncontrolled tongue is a bad thing to have and puts us in the same category with the devil.

How detrimental it is to the cause of Christ when

the wives of preachers, elders, and deacons can be classified with the devil in the use and misuse of the tongue (I Timothy 3:11)! A wise person will show forth his conduct in meekness and with words of wisdom (having a subdued tongue). "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, *devilish*. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:14-16). In contrast to this, how good it is to have a good and godly wife who also has a "meek and quiet spirit" (I Peter 3:3)! Amen.

—J.E.G. □

Soul Winning: The Real Work of the Church

THE GREATEST NEED in the church today, or any other day, is that of soul winning. The church needs people who are willing to talk about Christ and his gospel. However, the kind of passion for souls as displayed by the first century Christians seems to be completely lacking in most congregations today. The early church was involved in a daily evangelism. They "ceased not" to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ. Even when persecution came upon the church, "they therefore that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

Somehow, we have misplaced our values. It seems that many are more interested in impressing people than implanting principles. Some, it seems, are afraid of offending folk with plain talk about the commands of the gospel. We must, however, get our values in perspective. Nothing is more valuable than a soul (Matthew 16:26). Our personal popularity is worthless compared to the soul of a friend or relative. Jesus was not running a popularity contest and neither must we!

The mission of the Master is the mission of the church. Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Soul winning is therefore the real work of the church. The various acts of worship as singing and praying are important, but the real work of the church is not passing the communion trays or ushering. These are helpful and necessary, but the work of the church is to seek the lost!

There is no such thing as a congregation where there is no work for everyone. There is something for every member of the body to do (Ephesians 4:16)... each one can win one. This does not mean every member must teach a "cottage class." One can tell the story of Jesus on the job, at coffee break, at play, over the backyard fence, or in the privacy of the home.

There are opportunities every day to influence someone for good and to direct one's thinking toward God and His Word. Our problem, oftentimes, is that we do not see and seize the opportunity.

We need to "think souls" as we go about the business of life. It would help us if we would think about people as souls that need to be saved. How can we win people to Christ? This question should always be upon our heart.

May we overcome fear and discouragement through constant prayer and persistent effort. Realizing the urgency and importance of soul winning, let us not hesitate to speak to others concerning their need of salvation. Soul winning is the real work of the church!

—*The Way of Life* □

Strengthened by Trials

HOW OFTEN have you complained of your "hard lot in life"? Have you bemoaned the fact that everything seems to cause you discomfort and pain? Have you suffered life's pangs? Perhaps those very discomforts may make you strong in the end; don't bemoan them, but use them to develop character. We have all heard the adage, "When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade out of it!" Well, do it!

Paul knew many forms of suffering. (Read II Corinthians 11:22-33.) How did he cope? He learned to use these disadvantages to his advantage. He had a good attitude!

"And lest I be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure... Therefore most gladly I will rather boast of my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. 12:7-9).

"...for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. . . I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11,13).

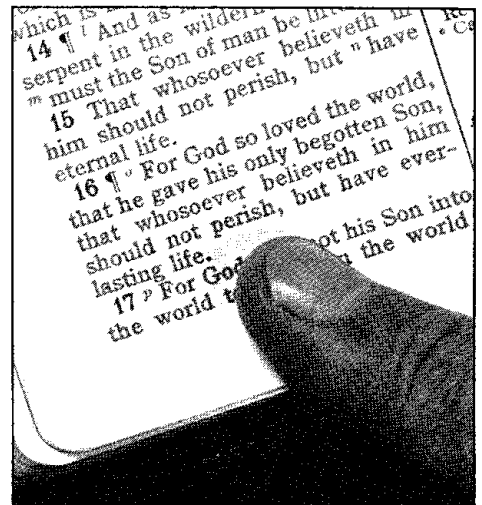
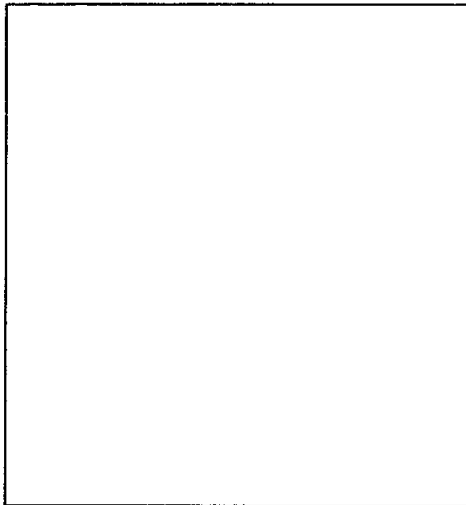
The poet expressed well the proper use of those things we often complain about:

**For every hill I've had to climb,
For every stone that bruised my feet,
For all the blood and sweat and grime,
For blinding storms and burning heat,
My heart sings but a grateful song—
These were the things that made me strong.**

The value of the gold comes out by the refining of fire. The value of the Christian, likewise, is enhanced by trial and suffering (and overcoming). (See James 1:2-4.)

The final consideration is the Christ. Consider what he had to suffer, and his willingness to do so. How much easier it will become to grow through trial! —*Selected* □

Do You “Get” the Picture?



DO YOU “get” the picture? Take a look at these frames. The first one is all highlight. The second has no highlighting at all and is completely dark. The third is a proper balance of light and shadows with half-tones in between. A distinct image can be seen. We “get” the picture.

This is a good illustration of the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. We are living in times when much emphasis is placed on the positive. Preach only the positive. Never be against anything. Never rebuke. However, that is like the first frame above. It is all highlight. We can’t see anything. We don’t “get” the picture.

Number two is no better. Preaching that is all negative does not get across the message of God’s Word. Preaching that is always against, that is always rebuking, is a failure. It is much like the second frame. It is just a black block wherein nothing can be distinguished. It can be rather dismal to look at. We don’t “get” the true picture.

We now come to the third frame. Here is a distinct picture. The proper distribution and fusing of highlight and shadows is what makes the picture possible. With the darkness as a backdrop, the highlighting does its work. As the dark and the light are fused into half-tones, the image is defined and made possible.

This is the way it is in faithful Bible preaching. The positive truth must be preached, but without the negative background it can never be understood (or seen) for what it is. We can’t and don’t get the picture. People won’t know the difference between right and wrong. As sin is rebuked, and as we are actually against the wrong, that which is right becomes apparent. Truth stands out in bold relief. We “get” the picture.

It is much like the battery in your car. The battery

is made up of positive and negative elements. One without the other won’t work. Put them together, and you have a spark. Things began to happen.

Understandably, there will be times when more of one kind of preaching, as compared to another, is needed. Circumstances may call for more negative preaching, or more positive preaching, as situations and problems are dealt with. However, the overall lesson of this article is true. The point of preaching is for people to “get” the picture. Let us not fall short in getting the job done.

—J.E.G. □

Six Things You Will Never Regret

1. Showing Kindness to An Aged Person

Leviticus 19:32—“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord.”

Job 12:12—“With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.”

Proverbs 23:22—“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.”

2. Destroying a Letter Written in Anger

Ephesians 4:26,31,32—“Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath...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, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Proverbs 15:18—“A wrathful man stirreth up strife; but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.”

3. Offering the Apology that Saves a Friendship

Proverbs 15:1—"A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger."

Matthew 5:23-25—"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. Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him."

4. Stopping a Scandal that Would Wreck a Reputation

Proverbs 12:23—"A prudent man concealeth knowledge; but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness."

Proverbs 17:9—"He that covereth transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends."

Proverbs 11:9—"An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour."

5. Taking Time to Show Loved Ones Consideration

Proverbs 1:8,9—"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."

I Timothy 5:8—"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of this own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Ephesians 6:2,3—"Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

6. Showing Reverence for Your Maker

Proverbs 1:7—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."

Proverbs 3:5-7—"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy way acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil."

Ecclesiastes 12:13—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

—Selected □

A Dude with An Attitude

WE FIND a very interesting story that is recorded in three of the four gospels. This story is commonly referred to as, "The Rich Young Ruler." We find this story in Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-

31, and Luke 18:18-30. This story is not recorded in the gospel of John. Let's examine it using the account given in Mark. In Mark chapter 10 verse 17 we find that a "dude" ran up to see Jesus Christ. (We can call him "dude" because we are never given his name in either of the three accounts of this story in the Bible). At this point, we may think that this "dude" had a good attitude; not only did the "dude" run up to Jesus, but he knelt down before Jesus and called him Good Master.

Jesus' first statement was, "Why do you call me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." This is a good lesson for us. When we think we are good, let's remember that there is none good, but one, that is God.

Jesus' second statement to this "dude" was, "Thou knowest the commandments, 1) Do not commit adultery, 2) Do not kill, 3) Do not steal, 4) Do not bear false witness, 5) Defraud not, 6) Honour thy father and mother." These are six of the Ten Commandments given to Moses. If someone were to live by these six commandments we would have to say that, morally, he was a pretty good "dude."

The second thing we find out about the "dude" is that morally he is all right. This "dude" told Jesus that he had obeyed all of these commandments from his youth. Can we say that? Have we obeyed all of these from our youth? So far, this "dude" still has a good attitude.

Jesus' third statement to this "dude" was, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." This was a hard saying! The "dude" realized that he was going to have to give up his wealth. It is one thing to obey all the commandments of God, but why did Jesus tell this "dude" to give his earthly possessions away? Jesus knew that this "dude's" wealth was the only thing standing between him and God. This "dude" was not willing to give up his earthly possessions, so he went away from Christ grieved. Now this "dude" had a bad attitude.

Do we have things that stand in our way that keep us from God? Are we not willing to let them go? The "dude" in this story was told that he would receive treasures in heaven if he would sell his earthly treasures and give to the poor. Today we have the opportunity to have treasures in heaven if we are willing to do as Jesus has commanded us. Jesus asked the "dude" if he had obeyed six commandments. There are five in the plan of salvation:

1) **Believe**—we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 16:16).

(Continued on Next Page)

A Dude with An Attitude

(Continued from Previous Page)

2) **Repent**—we must repent of all our sins and be willing not to do them again (Acts 2:38).

3) **Confess**—we make this confession, “I believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God” (Matthew 16:16; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9,10).

4) **Be Baptized** (immersed in water)—we must be immersed to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:1-4) and to receive God’s Spirit within us (Acts 2:38).

5) **Rise to Walk in Newness of Life**—remain faithful to the teachings of the New Testament (Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 3:1; I John 5:3).

What kind of an attitude do you have?

—**Hank Ballinger** □

Growing New Wood

CHRISTIAN GROWTH: when does it stop? It would be well for us to say that it never does while we live, but oft-times growth does stop and decay sets in. Why?

When Longfellow was well along in years, his head as white as snow, but with cheeks as red as a rose, he was asked by an ardent admirer how it was that he was able to stay so vigorous and write so beautifully. He pointed to a nearby apple tree that was in full bloom, and replied: “That apple tree is very old, but I never saw prettier blossoms upon it than those it now bears. The tree grows a little new wood every year, and I suppose it is out of that new wood that those blossoms come. Like the apple tree, I try to grow a little new wood every year.”

What Longfellow said about his continuing to grow should surely be the attitude of the Christian. It is only when we stop growing a little new wood that we die, or are already dead (spiritually). “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day” (II Corinthians 4:16).

But how different that one who does not grow new wood with which to produce those beautiful blooms. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God’s word. . .It is impossible to restore again to repentance. . .who have tasted the heavenly gift. . .if they commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God. . .and hold him up to contempt” (Hebrews 5:12; 6:4,6).

While what we have said primarily refers to the individual child of God, the same can be said of the congregation of the Lord’s people. What happens

when the congregation fails to “grow new wood” “I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead” (Revelation 3:1).

David graphically describes the difference between continued growth, and failure to continue in growth. “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season. . .he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff [the dead stocks of the grain] which the wind drives away” (Psalms 1:3,4).

Are you ready to grow new wood? Are we ready for the growth?—**Leroy Sedgwick** □

My Prayer for the Day

Just one more day, dear Lord,
Pray, help me make it through;
I just know that I can make it,
So long as I walk with You.

It’s better not to live our lives
By the week, month, or year;
But rather in terms of each new day,
In light of every smile and tear.

May our days be filled with faith,
As we face our fearsome foe;
For Satan would rob from us the victory,
Should we choose his way to go.

So start each day more soberly,
Knowing full well what’s at stake;
Our hope of Heaven hangs in the balance,
As we choose the path our souls must take.

May we know what dangers lurk
Amid the struggles of the day,
And rejoice in the battles won,
When from His will we do not stray.

Please, dear Lord, help me!
Help me make it through this day;
Just help me keep my eyes on Jesus,
And I know that I can make it
All the rest of the way.

—**By Bob Wickline**

Pithy Points to Ponder

“**THE PLEASURES** of sin are but for a season; but its wages are eternal.”

Unless we truly repent of our sins, and forsake them, our baptism is a farce.

“If you make an excuse for sin, your sin will never be excused.”

To forsake the assembly (Hebrews 10:25) is to forsake Christ for the church is the body of Christ

(Colossians 1:18).

"The right relation to God automatically produces the right conduct."

If a Christian is irregular in his church attendance, it indicates there are other irregularities in his life (and of a more serious nature).

"He who is indulgent toward his child when he ought to be strict, acts as if he really wished his child ruin."

People sometimes change churches because they don't like what is preached, but changing churches won't change the Word of God (and really what needs to be changed is people's lives).

"Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us."

When we take a decided stand for the LORD, we need to spend a lot of time on our knees

"An empty tomb proves Christianity; an empty church house denies it." □

Don't Stop or You'll Drop!

DON'T STOP—When I was taking lessons to fly an airplane, I learned early in the training that in order to keep it flying you had to keep your speed up. If you didn't, down you would come.

Christianity is much like an airplane—**WHEN YOU STOP, YOU DROP!**

- When you stop praying, you go down!
- When you stop studying your Bible, you go down!
- When you stop attending, you go down!
- When you stop being involved, you go down!

No wonder Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain, in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). What was the one talent man's problem in Matthew 25? He did nothing! Whatever you do, don't stop or you'll drop! —*The Biblical Messenger* □

The Christian and Gambling

GAMBLING is very much a part of American life. *Time* magazine has said gambling is among the "biggest and fastest growing commercial activities in the United States." It was estimated that illegal gambling takes in as much as \$50 billion every year. Add to this all the "legal" (such as bingo games and lotteries sponsored by churches and political organizations) and "innocent" (like football pools, golf games, etc.), and we are not surprised to hear that 80% of our population considers gambling to be an

acceptable activity. We are informed there are 6 million "compulsive gamblers" in the U.S., and nearly 500 chapters of Gamblers Anonymous to help them deal with their "affliction." With all the gambling going on around us, what should the Christian's attitude be toward it?

(1) We should not shrug it off as an "innocent pass-time," and seek to justify it on the basis that "everybody takes chances" (by buying stocks, crossing streets or planting crops, etc.). Gambling is more than merely taking a chance; it is making a chance of winning the losses of others. Gambling winnings only occur on the backs of gambling losses! Even though the losers may have been willing participants in the scheme, it amounts to robbery by consent.

(2) We should not fall for the "get something for nothing" appeal. Gambling appeals to man's selfish interests, and encourages covetousness. Gambling flourishes where materialism abounds. Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Paul said "the love of money is the root of all evils: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:10; cf. Colossians 3:5). Gambling appeals to man's desire for more and more.

(3) Gambling is morally wrong because it violates the law of labor and exchange. The Bible teaches us to earn our bread by the "sweat of our faces" (Genesis 3:19), to "labor with our hands" (Ephesians 3:28).

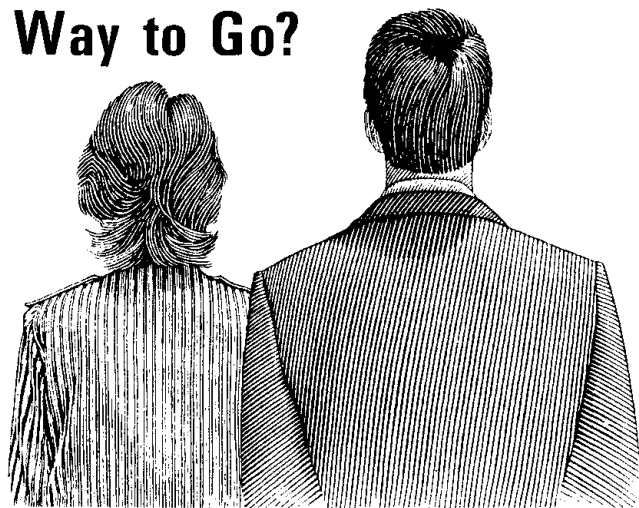
There are but three legitimate means of transferring property: (1) *the law of labor*, (2) *the law of exchange*, where a commodity is exchanged for its value in money or goods; or (3) *the law of love*, where money is given without any expectation or desire for return. Gambling does not qualify in any of these. The gambler earns nothing and produces nothing. He lives off the earnings of others; he is a parasite on society.—*Words of Life* □

Answers to:

BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 5:5; 2. Exodus 13:17,18; 3. II Samuel 8:15,16; 20:23; 4. II Samuel 10; 5. II Samuel 15-18; II Samuel 20; I Kings 1; 6. II Samuel 24:1-9; 7. II Samuel 24:10-25; 8. I Kings 2:25; 4:4; 9. I Kings 6:1; 10. I Chronicles 22:6-16; 28:3; 11. I Kings 6:38; 7:1; 12. Jonah 1:1-3; 13. Hosea 4:16; 14. Isaiah 52:13-53:12; 15. Matthew 23:23; 16. (1) On his way to Jerusalem (Luke 13:31-35); (2) In Jerusalem the last week (Matthew 23:37); 17. Galatians 1:15-18; 18. Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16; 19. I Timothy 1:1-3; 20. Revelation 1:11-20

Confused About Which Way to Go?



Go back to the Bible and the local
UNDENOMINATIONAL NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH
and you will be right on course.

The Local Church

TOO MANY today are set on building up denominational machinery rather than functioning through and by means of the local, undenominational church (the only organization the LORD has given for getting his work done). □

More Pithy Points to Ponder

- “**WHEN** truth stands in our way, it’s time to change directions.”
- If we are outside of Christ, the more we succeed (in the world), the more glaringly evident our failure becomes.*
- “All knowledge separated from righteousness and other virtue appears to be cunning and not wisdom.”
- Sick and anemic religion cannot change a sin-sick and dying world.*
- “You can’t walk with God when you’re running with the world.” □

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