

The Sword AND Staff

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

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

—A Lesson Over the Sixteenth Chapter of Romans—

● By **JAMES E. GIBBONS**

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Blest Be the Tie

John Fawcett.

Hans G. Naegeli.

1. Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Chris-tian love; The fel - low-
2. Be - fore our Fa-ther's throne, We pour our ar-dent prayers; Our fears, our
3. We share our mu - tual woes, Our mu - tual bur-dens bear; And oft - en
4. When we a - sun - der part, It gives us in - ward pain; But we shall

ship of kin - dred minds Is like to that a - bove.
hopes, our aims are one, Our com - forts and our cares.
for each oth - er flows The sym - pa - thiz - ing tear.
still be joined in heart, And hope to meet a - gain. A - MEN.

THE SIXTEENTH chapter of Romans is a tremendous section of Scripture, although many times we have a tendency to overlook this. Very much so, it is an appropriate way to end this great book. After the initial salutation and introduction in the first chapter, Paul most effectively establishes the universal need of salvation by all of mankind and sums it up by saying, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). (It is not a lovely picture he paints. The crying need is there). The answer: Justification by faith through the gospel "to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to

the Greek (Gentile)" (Romans 1:16; 3:22). Having developed and expounded this great theme of justification by faith, he reaches the climax of his crescendo of thought at the end of the eleventh chapter. Here he expresses himself in the most wonderful doxology of praise. Beginning with chapter 12 (the second part of the book), he makes practical application of these wonderful truths to the lives of his readers. Chapters 14 and 15 deal with potential problems and Paul's personal plans respectively. We now approach the concluding chapter, chapter 16. It is full of personal salutations and greetings involving Paul, the brethren at Rome, and those who are with Paul. Expressive and meaningful words of warmth and endearment fill the page. They are not just miscellaneous nothings.

Although perhaps Paul did not consciously intend it at the time, these informal words of warmth and greeting re-enforce in a mighty way everything that he has written in the early part of this epistle. The people who exchange these cordialities are flesh and blood people who have accepted the great thesis of the book of Romans into their lives in a personal way. As sinners, their human backgrounds had been varied, "for *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Paul had declared that "the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to *every one* that believeth," to the Jew and to the Gentile (Romans 1:16). Now having accepted that great message, their need of salvation had been met, hope of eternal life guided their lives, and they were bound

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—Thank you—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

PREACHER, in preaching remember that the apostle Paul said "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (II Cor. 4:5)—**GET YOURSELF OUT OF THE PICTURE.**

"He who keeps his face toward the sun shall find that the shadows fall behind him."

If you present yourself as a painted sex object (Jeremiah 4:30; Ezekiel 23:40; Proverbs 6:25), you may find it hard to let your light shine (Matthew 5:16) through a face smothered with make-up (I Timothy 2:9,10).

"If a care is too small to be made into a prayer, it is too small to be made into a burden."

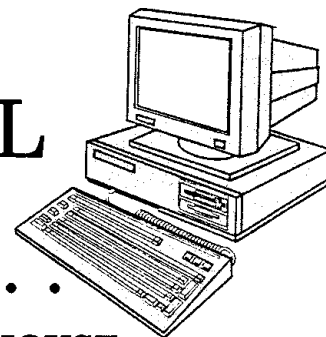
You do not hear complaints of "cramming it down their throats" from people who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness

"You often find big apples on top of the basket, but you must remember the little ones that are holding them up."

Self-consciousness is a complex combination of humility and pride, humility in feeling inferior and pride in being self-conscious about it.

"If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow."

EDITORIAL COMMENTS...



"BEHOLD, YOUR HOUSE IS LEFT UNTO YOU DESOLATE"

ISRAEL had the unique experience of God dealing with them in a direct, personal way. His Shekinah presence in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire had led them into the Promised Land and had taken its residence between the cherubim on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. This was in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle. As time passed in the history of the nation and David was king, he wanted to build God a house (II Samuel 7:1-17). God allowed his son Solomon to build the temple (I Kings 6:1). With the dedication of the temple, God's Shekinah presence entered the building (I Kings 8:10,11; II Chronicles 7:1). It was indeed the house of God. Needless to say, this holy place was most sacred and dear to the Israelites. It was the heartthrob of their national and religious life. The thrill of such a unique situation and relationship is expressed in Psalms 122:1, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the LORD."

Although the temple standing in the time of Christ was not the original one built in the days of Solomon, it was still recognized as the house of God. The nation had gone through turbulent times and changes. Although the experience of the Babylonian Captivity had weaned them from idolatry, religion in the time of Christ was in a bad state (and especially among its leaders). Politics and materialism had reduced their religion to a mere formality. Early in his ministry Jesus had run the money changers out of the temple, saying, "Take these things hence; make not *my Father's house* an house of merchandise" (John 2:13-17). Three years later the situation was no better and a second cleansing of the temple occurred. As Jesus "cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers," he quotes Scripture and says, "It is written, *my house* shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:12,13).

Sometime before this, the religious leaders had decided that Jesus must die (John 11:47-53). They said, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both *our place* and nation." On one of those eventful days that week leading up to his crucifixion, the Lord had wept over Jerusalem, and then said, "Behold, *your house* is

left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:37,38). Following this, the disciples are amazed at the things the Lord said in reference to the temple: "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). When Jesus died on the cross "the veil of the temple was rent in the midst" (Luke 23:45). Then with the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans there was not one stone left unturned of the temple. It was left desolate.

Did you notice the change in the mode of expression in reference to the temple? In the Old Testament the temple was called the *house of God*. Jesus called it, "*My Father's house*." But the religious leaders spoke of "*our place*," and finally Jesus declared, "Behold, *your house* is left unto you desolate." They looked upon the temple as their own personal possession to do with as they pleased. It was center stage (along with their religion) for their own personal purposes, ambitions, and aggrandizement. (Their religion was dominated by their own traditions, Matthew 15:1-9). Jesus, God Incarnate, could not stand in their way. He must be eliminated. Thus, Jesus simply tells it like it is. It is no longer God's house, but their house. God had left it. Thus, Jesus made the solemn statement.

Perhaps there are many lessons here for us if we have a mind to learn them. God has a house today in which He dwells, and that house is the church (not the physical church building, but the people). Paul addressed the Corinthians, "Know ye not that ye [plural] are the *temple of God*, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God [the church], him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (I Cor. 3:16,17). This truth is also brought out when Paul instructed Timothy about the public life of the church. He said, "These things I write unto thee...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the *house of God*, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:14,15).

That being the case that the church is the house of God, that means it is not our house. But the "our house" mentality abounds all about us today. In the diverse denominational world in which we find ourselves, it is not uncommon to hear people speak of "our church" and "your church," i.e., as "our church" (denomination) believes this as opposed to "your church" (denomination) believing that. Of course along with this comes all of their traditions,

systems, and peculiarities which they look upon as distinctively being their own. With such a mind-set it seems to have never occurred to them to think simply in terms of the "Lord's church" and that alone. In fact, it would be hard (impossible) for them to do this. This mentality is further seen today when we hear of "churches" voting on whether to accept premarital sex, homosexuality, women preachers, or what-have-you (as if the "church" had a right to do this—how presumptuous!). The true church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," and there is no voting on the truth (it is either accepted or rejected). It never changes. The supposed church has become "our house."

On a lesser scale some are controlled by this kind of mentality who in a sense talk about New Testament Christianity and the undenominational church. They talk about "our movement," "our brotherhood," "our fellowship," "our people," etc. Theoretically some people may have come out of denominationalism, but the denominational way of thinking has not come out of them. The human element dominates. Consequently some have set up denominational conventions and gatherings for "our people" and "our brotherhood" (even putting national and regional names for the gatherings). Where they get the authority thus to speak for everyone, we know not. (Is the church looked upon as "our house"?) Let's get back to the "house of God" mentality. There is nothing wrong with being

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ALLEGIANCE AND LOYALTY TO CHRIST, HIS WORD, AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

MOST denominational and related church problems have to do with allegiance and loyalty. If the allegiance and loyalty of professed Christians was only to Christ, his Word, and his church (meaning the local church; that's all that is found in the New Testament), instead of looking beyond and having a fixation of loyalty on some denominational system, some religious movement (whatever it is called), some religious convention (or gathering), some college (or school), or even some religious publication (or publishing house), most of the problems of apostasy and division confronting us today would be solved and vanish away. This is true of supposed New Testament churches too. There is one Lord. Let Christ be the Lord of all (and over all), and all of our problems will be taken care of. Amen!—*J.E.G.* □

EDITORIAL COMMENTS. . .

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right (although some would try to make a person feel guilty for having strong convictions).

The “our house” mentality is not absent in local church situations today either. Reference to “our church” in the exchange of words is not always harmless and innocent. Indeed, it may have become just that as people use the church for whatever purposes that please them. When we look upon the portfolio of offices and functions of some churches, with a mind disciplined to think only in terms of the Scriptures, we are completely at a loss to understand what is going on. What has happened to the Lord’s elders and deacons? Where is the New Testament evangelist? Have churches lost the distinctive concept of their unique and spiritual mission? Self-indulgence seems to preoccupy the modern church. Instead of the church being “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15), it has become the pillow and lounge of mirth. What about worship that is indeed spiritual (instead of the church being an entertainment center)? Let the church be the church. Let it be the house of God.

The theme of this article is of such a nature that many applications can be made, but one more thing comes to mind before we close. It is not uncommon to hear people speak of “our minister.” The denominational concept of minister seems to have been fully accepted in most churches. The “our” in this reference may seem relatively harmless, but is he a hireling (John 10:11,12) that he may be thus spoken of? And from the other perspective, we have heard preachers talk about what “my church” is doing and “my elders.” It gets wearisome.

The whole point of this article is to call us back to a “house of God” mentality when thinking about the church. Christ purchased the church with his own blood; it is his (Acts 20:28). Human desecration of that which is the Lord’s, his church, is a very serious matter (I Cor. 3:16,17). Let us not take over possession of the Lord’s house. Remember ancient Israel. Let us be the Lord’s church in word and in deed. □

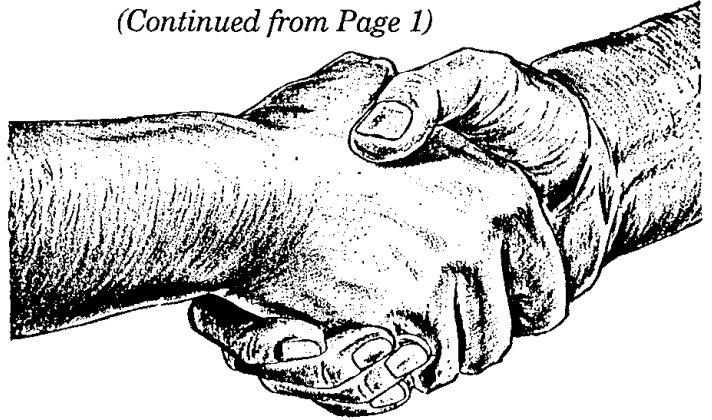
A Crisp Old Man Writes

WHEN we read John’s writings, we get the impression of a crisp old man. He is to the point. Everything is “cut and dried.” There is no flexibility or turning with him. Yes, he definitely is set in his ways, but his ways are the ways of Christ. They are the ways of love and of truth. He is still a “son of thunder,” but decidedly in a different sort of way. And John expresses himself in such a simple way

that it throws us off guard. He is really very complex. We find ourselves pondering for hours upon his Spirit-inspired writings. May his clear-cut concepts of love and truth be ours.—J.E.G. □

“Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

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together by love. They were a living embodiment of what the gospel message could accomplish.

The Immediate Situation and Circumstance

Let us “zero” in on the immediate situation and circumstance as found in the sixteenth chapter of Romans. Paul is at Corinth and in the house of Gaius (16:23). The contribution taken up among the Gentile churches for the relief of the suffering Christians in Palestine had been successful. Accompanied by the messengers of the churches (II Cor. 8:19,23; Acts 20:4), he was now prepared to go to Jerusalem with this offering (Romans 15:25-27). He looked beyond that with eager anticipation to visiting Rome (1:10-16) and Spain (15:23,24,28). He had never been to Rome (and Spain). Swelling thoughts on the universal significance of the gospel for all mankind filled his mind, and especially thoughts on this significance stood out since he was going to Rome, the capital of the world in which he lived. How appropriate to have such a profound document as the book of Romans as a witness in the hands of the Christians in the very center of the Gentile world!

In this chapter Phebe, who was from the eastern seaport of Corinth (Cenchrea), is first mentioned (evidently the one who carried the letter to Rome). Then Paul personally greets twenty-some people at Rome, implying that they are personal acquaintances or in some way known to him. After the listing of Paul’s personal cordialities, the churches of Christ send greetings (verse 16). These greetings could well have come from the messengers of the Gentile churches who were with Paul on their way to Jerusalem (II Cor. 8:19,23; Acts 20:4). After Paul expressed concern about division, seven brethren

who are with him likewise send their greetings (including Tertius who wrote down Paul's dictation of the book of Romans, 16:22). Imagine the picture. Paul and these other brethren are in the house of Gaius, and after many hours of writing, this weighty epistle is concluded. Paul, now more informally, reaches across the many miles of the Adrian Sea and personally addresses these people by name who are dear to him in the Lord. The others, having been seated in the room while the letter was being written, but now drawn more closely to look upon the concluded epistle, feel moved to send their warm Christian greetings too. Perhaps the people in Rome had never met them (or at least some of them), but their love in Christ bound them together as one. They felt a close affinity with them. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

I. IN CHRIST: "THE TIE THAT BINDS"

Throughout this chapter the expression "in the Lord" is found seven times (16:2,8,12a,12b,13,22). "In Christ Jesus" is found one time (16:3), and "in Christ" three times (16:7,9,10). This is the sphere into which people enter upon accepting Christ and the forgiveness of sins. It is the sphere in which they live, and move, and have their being. It suggests union and communion with Christ, and the interrelated vital and living relationships in which we find ourselves (all brought about and sustained by love). Being "in Christ" was the common, but highly uncommon, denominator of all the people named in this chapter. It is the opposite of being "in sin" (which separates) and is accomplished when we die to sin and are baptized "into Christ" (Romans 6:1-6; Galatians 3:27; II Cor. 5:17). What a wonderful situation it is in which Christians find themselves for Paul said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). In this experience we are united with every other Christian. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love"—this "tie" is "in Christ."

Jew and Gentile

Being "in Christ" produced union and unity of the most wonderful sort. Such an unlikely thing as Jew and Gentile being made one is accomplished "in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:13). He reconciles "both unto God *in one body* by the cross" (Ephesians 2:16). The human family in its origin was one, and God's selective dealings with Israel had the well-being of all in mind. God selected Abraham so that eventually through him (and his descendants) "all families of the earth" would "be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 3:25,26). Now with the advent of Christ, Peter de-

clared to the household of Cornelius, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34b,35).

All One in Christ Jesus

This thought is expanded more in Galatians 3:27 and 28, "For as many of you as have been baptized *into Christ* have put on Christ: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye all one *in Christ Jesus*." Colossians 3:11 further states that "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." In the Roman Empire diverse peoples were forged, bound, and held together by unwanted and brutal force. Likewise in Christ diverse peoples of every race, circumstance, and station in life are brought together. However, the situation is extremely different. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [kinds of] men unto me" (John 12:32). All kinds of people of their own free will, drawn by divine love, come. They are made one in Christ. And they are drawn to one another by this love that they experience. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love." They really mean something to one another.

Showcase of Truth

What we read in the sixteenth chapter of Romans is a showcase of all of these wonderful truths. We don't know how the church got started in Rome, but there is a representation of all kinds of people here. Even from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10), the gospel could have been carried to Rome. Some Gentile converts of Paul perhaps are in the number. Upon moving to such a metropolitan area, there being no church, they immediately became the church. That is the way Christianity works. In this chapter are found Jewish, Greek, and Latin names. Even a name signifying "woman of Persia" is found (Persis, 16:12). Single women, married women, and mothers are named with Christian dignity. The extremes of the social spectrum are in evidence. Several names are recognized as common names for slaves. Reference to those of the household of Aristobulus and Narcissus is thought to mean slaves (16:10,11). Then on the other end of the spectrum were people more well-to-do as Phebe (evidently a business woman) (16:1,2) and Gaius who was able to accommodate the whole church in his house (16:23). Aquila and Priscilla had been in the tent making business. Erastus was treasurer of the city of Corinth (16:23). God is no respecter of persons. All of these were made one in

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Christ. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

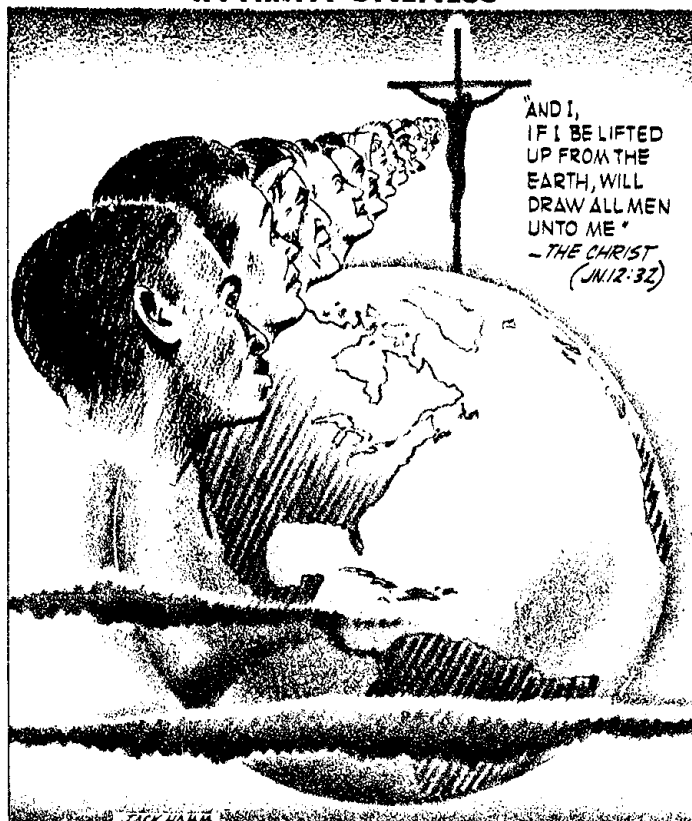
II. CHRIST IN US: "THE TIE THAT BINDS"

Yes, we are made one in Christ, but there is likewise another outstanding and impressive element that makes this possible. We are in Christ, and at the same time Christ is *in us*. Paul said that the Colossians had "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and *in all*" (Colossians 3:10,11). Paul declared in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." He also personally stated, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I but *Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). The outworking of the dynamic of Christ is evident in our lives. Cleansed and forgiven, we experience self respect. Our bodies have become a temple (Acts 2:38; I Cor. 6:19,20). The dignity that has become ours is experienced by every Christian. With Christ, the Spirit, dwelling in our hearts, we are therewith "rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:16,17). We experience mutual love and respect with and for every Christian as our hearts are "knit together in love" (Colossians 2:2). The fulfillment of Paul's admonition in Romans 12:10 comes natural as part of our lives. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honour preferring one another."

Many wonderful things take place in our lives and in our human relationships when we are in Christ, and Christ is in us. Being a Christian (Christ-like and of Christ), we are a new person, and there are new relationships (and every relationship becomes sacred and meaningful). In the context of love, being right with God, our lives are filled with purpose. Because our lives are filled with meaning, Christians mean much to one another. In the salutations and greetings of Romans chapter 16 this is so evident.

First consider the dignity and respect in evidence simply in the way Paul addresses the different ones. By his very words he fulfills his own admonition given in 12:10, i.e., "in honour preferring one another." Flattery is very much out of place among Christians, but an honest compliment is always appropriate. Paul addresses them in such a way so

IN HIM A 'ONENESS'



as to show their wonderful relationship in Christ and to say something praiseworthy about them.

Our Sister, Brethren, and His Mother and Mine

Notice. Phebe is called "our sister" (16:1). The designation "brethren" is used in verse 14. Paul extends salutations to Rufus in verse 13 and further extends it to "his mother and mine." The term in the Greek for "sister" and "brethren" is the same except for the singular and plural endings and the gender. The word literally means from the same womb. How expressive in showing the affinity of Christians! And Paul speaks of the mother of Rufus as "mine." Of course Jesus taught that "whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:50). Also Jesus could foresee cleavages in families that were to come. Christianity would actually break up families. He reassured his disciples by saying, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29,30). With the estrangement in earthly family ties, perhaps even the severing of them, he had found many spiritual mothers (and brothers and sisters) dear to him in the

Lord. (And as a matter of interest, this mother of Rufus may have been the wife of Simon, the man who was forced to carry the cross of Jesus, Mark 15:21, Romans 16:13).

"As Becometh Saints"

The Christians at Rome were admonished to "receive her [Phebe] as becometh *saints*" (16:2). The term "saints" is further used in verse 15 where different ones are greeted by name along with "all the *saints* that are with them." Although people may have been the most depraved of sinners (and we are not saying these particular people had been), Christianity makes them the objects of mutual respect and dignity of the highest order. Consider the unlovely and repulsive list of sinners named by Paul in I Corinthians 6:9 and 10, which after, he was quick to say to the Corinthian Christians, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord, and the Spirit of our God" (I Cor. 6:11; Acts 2:38). How wonderful! Such people were now saints! Their sins were now all gone, and they had the strongest spiritual bond and relationship to everyone else who had experienced the same thing. They were now living decent lives. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

"Phebe a Servant"

Paul called Phebe a "*servant*," and he elaborated by saying "she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also" (16:1,2). That's not all. This matter of being a servant was true of every woman and man listed here (even if not noted). Paul said, "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us" (16:6). The apparent sisters Tryphena and Tryphosa are identified as those "who labour in the Lord," as well as the lady Persis who "laboured much in the Lord" (16:12). Of the first ones named in this chapter receiving greetings, Paul said, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their necks..." (16:3,4). Christians are like their Master, "even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28; I John 3:16; Titus 2:14). The Lord taught, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14,15). The New Testament concept of ministry and what we see today may be two different things. In becoming Christians we become servants of Christ, and thereby mutually become servants one of another. Isn't Christianity the most wonderful religion? "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

"Beloved in the Lord"

The expressions "*my wellbeloved*," (16:5), "*my beloved in the Lord*," (16:8), and "*my beloved*," (16:9) stand out in Paul's greetings. Of course the main stem in all of these words suggesting love comes from *agapé* (that great distinguishing word of Christianity). It includes everything that we have said so far under the caption of, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." *Agapé* is the love of higher intelligence and corresponding noble purpose. This love, produced by the Holy Spirit (I Peter 1:22; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22), produces esteem and respect in the Christian (being totally unselfish). Yes, it controls and invigorates the Christian's life, and is stronger than death itself. Paul well uses a variant form of this word in "beloved." It is the tie that binds in Christ as Christ is in us.

Others Greeted and Greeters

Other interesting words are found in greeting those at Rome and in identifying those with Paul sending greetings. Words like "fellowprisoners" (16:7), "approved" (16:10), and "chosen" (16:13) are seen. Being a prisoner becomes a shared honor and a dignified thing in Christ (yes, if it is in Christ, for Christ, Ephesians 3:1; 4:1). Apelles in some way had been tried (and approved) in Christ (16:10). Rufus was a choice and distinguished Christian (16:13). Paul mentions "kinsmen" at Rome (16:7,11); also "kinsmen" who sent greetings (16:21). Whether of close kin, of the same tribe, or meaning simply a Jew, we know not; but being in Christ can even make physical ties more meaningful. Paul identified Gaius as "mine *host*, and of the whole church" (who sent his regards too). Christianity does things like that—how natural, spiritually speaking, for a Christian to be given to hospitality. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

Greet One Another

With verse 16, after Paul has personally sent salutations and the warmest Christian greetings, he gives the Christians at Rome a general (yet specific) admonition, "Salute one another with an holy kiss" (16:16a). It is almost as if, after personally greeting everyone in this letter that would be publicly read to them, he wants them to turn around and greet one another with a holy kiss. The warm feelings that he had for them and the responsive, reciprocal feelings that they would have could be shared with one another. Then perhaps all of this prompted him to think of the larger brotherhood in Christ, and the appropriate greeting follows, "The churches of Christ salute you" (16:16b). What a wonderful host of people! Redeemed and in Christ! What precious and

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meaningful ties! How he loved these people! "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

III. DANGER OF DISRUPTION TO "THE TIE THAT BINDS"

It is not without significance that we now read verses 17 through 20. In fact, in its context is the only way to understand this section of Scripture. These verses of mutual salutation and greeting that we have studied, which exhibit the most wonderful brotherhood of people who have been made one in Christ, serve as a backdrop to what Paul now says. Disturbing thoughts on the possibility of its disruption prompts him to write what he now does. It had happened in Galatia. It could happen in Rome.

With feelings of great warmth, yet with guarded apprehension, Paul writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them [note, watch those] which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (16:17-20).

The Admonition

Literally, Paul is saying, "I call you to my side ('beseech you'), brothers." Listen. Be on the lookout for those who cause divisions and entrapments (who would ensnare you). Division was contrary to the doctrine they had learned (that was being lived out daily in their lives as brothers and sisters in Christ). Also an alien doctrine would cause the division. If the teachings of Christ had made them one, a departure from the teachings of Christ would result in division. In fact, it would cause the division. These variant and disruptive teachers were to be avoided. Their motives were self-seeking and not spiritual. By their "good words and fair speeches" they would "deceive the hearts of the simple [the naive, the unthinking]." (How could such sincere and smooth talkers be wrong?) Also flattery is involved. The person who uses flattery is self-seeking in one way or another (and his object is to "use" you in some way). Look out, Romans (and twentieth century Christians)!

Confidence and Victory

Paul is confident that the Christians at Rome will not be taken in by these false teachers. In the first

chapter of Romans he had said, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (1:8). Now he

(Continued on Page 11)

BIBLE QUESTIONS

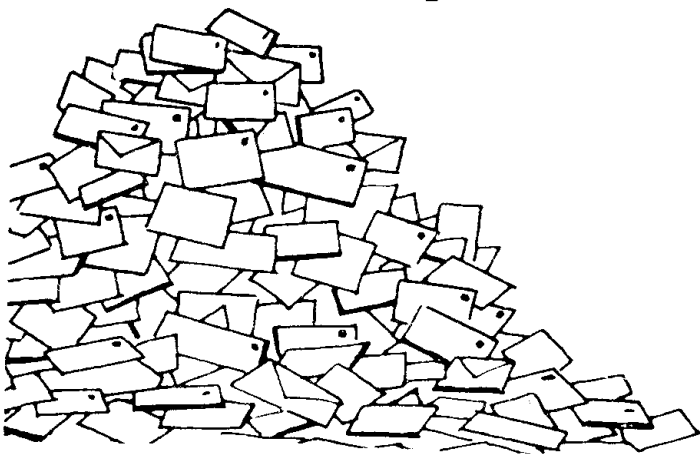
(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. Under what circumstances did God say, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease"?
2. What covenant did God make with Abraham when he was 99 years old (and its seal became an established practice among his descendants thereafter)?
3. What happened (and what were the circumstances) that resulted in Jacob's name being changed to Israel?
4. Which was the first of the ten plagues God sent upon Egypt, and which was the last one?
5. What men in Old Testament times were noted for wearing golden earrings?
6. What place in the ancient world was noted for its gold in the Bible?
7. When the kingdom of Israel divided following the death of Solomon, who became the king of the southern kingdom of Judah, and who became the king of the northern kingdom now called Israel?
8. What king of Israel (northern kingdom) bought the hill of Samaria, built a city there, and made it his residence (and why is it called Samaria)?
9. What king of Judah was killed in battle with an Egyptian Pharaoh at Megiddo, and his body was carried in a chariot to Jerusalem where he was buried in his own sepulchre?
10. Who were the Nethinim mentioned in the O.T. in connection with the Levites, priests, and the temple?
11. Which two of the Psalms are almost identical (evidently God is trying to get a point across)?
12. Which is the longest chapter in the Bible?
13. What prophet saw the vision of four living creatures in connection with four wheels?
14. What is the Hebrew word for Christ, and what is its literal meaning in English?
15. Which one of the four gospel accounts is sort of a supplement to the others, telling mainly about the Judean ministry of Jesus?
16. Which one of the gospel accounts is the only one that tells about Jesus being brought before Herod in the process of his being tried?
17. What two-fold purpose of N.T. baptism is brought out in Acts 2:38?
18. Which one of Paul's epistles is a circular letter, written to be read among many churches?
19. In which of the epistles of Paul did he feel compelled to defend his apostleship?
20. Which N.T. writer says to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"?

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

READERS'

... Response



GEORGIA:

■ *"Thank you once again for mailing me such a fine church paper. I do enjoy it."*

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"Thank you so very much for the great work you are doing. I am so thankful that there are still people like you who will tell it like it is. Please keep it up..."*

VIRGINIA:

■ *"Best wishes to you and yours. We appreciate your work. Looking forward to your poem book."*

■ *"...I also think it would be good to print the poems in book form. We really like the poem, 'I Saw Him Standing There,' and we thank you. We think your paper, THE SWORD AND STAFF, is a great paper; it contains what people need to read and understand."*

WEST VIRGINIA:

■ *"Here is a little something to help with the publication of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I really enjoy reading the paper. Keep up the good writing and may God give you many more years in His service."*

TENNESSEE:

■ *"...we get your paper. You have some excellent material. May we have permission to use your articles and/or art work in our bulletin, local newspaper, etc.?...God bless you and yours."*

(Editor's Note: You are welcome to use any of the material that is ours in a non-commercial context if it is for the glory of God and honoring truth).

KENTUCKY:

■ *"...THE SWORD AND STAFF is the best that comes to my box; keep up the good work. Thank you so much."*

INDIANA:

■ *"Thanks for your strong stand upon the Word of God and New Testament Christianity. We receive your publication to our church. I read each issue and hope this small*

gift will help and encourage you..."

■ *"Last week I came across your last issue and picked it up to read. As I read through some of your articles, I found it very devotional. There were many articles I wanted to cut out to keep, but the magazine did not belong to me."*

"I do not know if there is a set fee for your magazine or just a donation accepted; if you could send me information about your magazine or just add me to your mailing list, this would be much appreciated. How often do you publish your magazine? Is there a set price for your magazine? Your time is greatly appreciated. Thanks for your help"

(Editor's Note: The little box on the second page of this paper supplies some of the answers to your questions. There is no set fee, but donations are much needed and gladly accepted as several thousand dollars are necessary each time this publication goes into the mail. This is not a commercial endeavor; our primary concern is paying our bills to "keep on keeping on"—and even expanding our humble efforts for the LORD as we are financially able.)

ILLINOIS:

■ *"I have just come in contact with your publication THE SWORD AND STAFF and found it to be most enlightening..."*

IOWA:

■ *"I received THE SWORD AND STAFF, which I'm reading now, because it was delivered accidentally, incorrectly to me. This is the first I've heard of this magazine and would like **very much** to be put on your mailing list..."*

"I'll return THE SWORD AND STAFF to the one it was addressed to, and thank God for the mistake."

"Ecclesiastes 11:1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days'..."

MISSOURI:

■ *"Please delete us from your mailing list. Thanks."*

■ *"I deeply appreciate THE SWORD AND STAFF, so please keep sending it to me..."*

■ *"We just wanted to let you know how much we enjoy THE SWORD AND STAFF. It is a very informative publication. We love the plain, simple, understandable way*

(Continued on Next Page)

Answers to:

BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 8:15-22; 2. Genesis 17; 3. Genesis 32;
4. Exodus 7:14-25; 11:1,4-10; 12:29-33; 5. Judges 8:24;
6. I Kings 9:26-28; I Chronicles 29:4; Job 22:24;
- Isaiah 13:12; 7. I Kings 12; 8. I Kings 16:23,24;
9. II Kings 23:29,30; 10. I Chronicles 9:2; Ezra 8:17-20; etc.;
11. Psalms 14 and 53; 12. Psalms 119;
13. Ezekiel 1; 14. Hebrew: Messiah; English meaning, anointed;
15. John; 16. Luke 23; 17. Acts 2:38—Remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit;
18. Galatians 1:2; 19. I & II Corinthians; Galatians;
20. Jude 3.

□

READERS' . . . *Response*

(Continued from Previous Page)

you bring out the Word of God.

"We just received a new copy and especially like the article on the Beatitudes. We have been studying these in our church; also the article 'Riches.'

Each day I count my riches for the wonderful husband I have. The memories we have and shared over the 50 years together. Our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Especially the little things that make life so wonderful. The fresh foods that grow in our garden. The birds that come to bathe and drink in our birdbath. Their songs from day break to dark. All kinds of little animals we see. Especially the freedom we have to worship and not be disturbed in our church of Christ. Our brothers and sisters. Another thing that's so amazing is the beautiful clouds and different formations they take. The cool breeze of the evenings and the night sounds. The fields of wheat waving in the wind. Or the corn fields so tall and stately. We have so much beauty and riches that money can never buy. God has so blessed us. I wish all the people could take the time to smell the roses. Life is so precious.

"I could go on and on, but brother Gibbons, you are doing a wonderful job. Just keep up the good work. I would like to have a copy of your POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS when it is ready. May God bless you always."

ARKANSAS:

■ *"I have just read THE SWORD AND STAFF for the first time and enjoyed it very much. Very few publications stick with the Bible as you do.*

"I am enclosing my contribution plus the price of the 1989-90 bound volume of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I would like to be put on your mailing list and would also like a copy of the poem 'The Old Gospel Preacher' if it is still available."

KANSAS:

■ *"Thank you for a **great** publication."*

■ *"Find enclosed check to help with expenses. May the Lord give you strength and courage to keep up the good work. I read THE SWORD AND STAFF from cover to cover then reread it. Those who refuse the publication don't want the truth. So many are going the **broad way**."*

CALIFORNIA:

■ *"Please remove us from your mailing list"*

IDAHO:

■ *"Please remove our name from your mailing list."*

OREGON:

■ *"In your Editorial comments in the 1992 issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF Volume 30, Number 2, page 3, after making a good analogy between physical and spiritual birth, you then wrote, 'There must be a birth before there is life...' Was this an oversight? or have you, in an effort to show how the unimmersed are not really a part of God's family, compromised the Biblical position on life from con-*

ception on? In an attempt to champion an OBVIOUS Biblical teaching, baptism as non-negotiable, have you not indirectly (if not directly) joined the ranks of those who believe abortion to be acceptable?

"Perhaps your editorial would have been equally as strong and more Biblically accurate had you simply left that portion of the sentence out.

"Continue to hold up the Word."

Editor's Reply:

Thank you for writing. You are very alert, to say the least. Evidently your mind is attune to such issues involving the unimmersed and abortion. Neither subject was before me as I tried to bring out some positive spiritual lessons concerning life and growing. Perhaps my wording could have been better, as you have gotten the wrong impression. However, the over-all article and the immediate context of the paragraph should have made clear what was meant.

You singled out the words, "There must be a birth before there is life..." In this you see support for abortion. Read the whole paragraph again. Consider the context. Looking back from our perspective now, if we had never been born, we would have never come into this world. If we had never been born, there would have been no life to live. From the Christian viewpoint, we had to become a Christian before there could be Christian growth. As the context of the paragraph indicates, there had to be a birth before the life could be lived. We could not be "newborn babes" desiring the "sincere milk of the Word" without first being born (that is the life that is meant in this sentence). The birth comes before the life can be lived, then we can think in terms of spiritual growth and maturity (as the paragraph indicates).

In making parallels and analogies we need to exercise caution. In most cases, parallels are only suggestive and somewhat similar (and not absolute). Such parallels, illustrations, or analogies should not be pressed beyond what the Scriptures allow (or a meaning should not be forced into them that would contradict the Scriptures). This is obviously true in reference to the new birth and the life that follows.

Notice:

(1) In being born again (spiritually), there is a Father (God) but no mother. If the analogy was absolute, there would have to be a mother.

(2) In the spiritual conception, there is no womb nor an awaiting egg that is fertilized.

(3) Pain associated with natural birth is more evident in connection with the travail of the mother (this doesn't fit the spiritual birth; the sinner experiences this). Our application was only suggestive, not absolute.

(4) In the physical birth there is no joy on the part of the baby that is born. But in making a parallel spiritual lesson, the one who is "born again" experiences intense joy. Our application was only suggestive.

(5) In natural birth, newborn babies get their milk from their Mother's body. In spiritual birth, there is no such parallel.

(6) In physical birth and life, a person is always a child

of their parents. They cannot be otherwise. Contrary to Calvinism, a person can reach the point where, spiritually speaking, he is no longer a child of God. He is no longer in a saved relationship to God. The parallelism doesn't work here.

We could go on, but the point is very plain. Isn't it? Physical birth and spiritual birth are not the same, although there are similarities at different points. There can be life before spiritual birth in the sense of spiritual awareness, not in the sense of having become a child of God yet. It is not the same as human life that has actually been formed in the womb. The Scriptures make no parallel application in reference to this. Cornelius indeed was a person who showed signs of spiritual "life" (awareness, sensitivity) (Acts 10:1,2), but he was to be told words whereby he and all his house would be saved (Acts 11:14). And, as Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, "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)" (Acts 2:38). When they did this, they were added to the church, the family of God (Acts 2:41,47). Consider I Peter 1:22 and 23 in the light of Acts 2:38 and John 3:5.

The Day of Judgment belongs to God, not me. I only know what His Word says. I can only preach it, and He will take care of the Day of Judgment.

Applications or illustrations we make should be within the bounds of God's Word.

Thank you for taking the time to write.—*J. Gibbons*

CANADA:

■ *"Please remove my name from your mailing list as I am not all that interested in your magazine and this represents an unnecessary expense..."* □

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.

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

(Continued from Page 8)

enlarges upon this compliment to say, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men" (16:19a). This is in contrast with the false teachers just mentioned of whom he said "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." The Christians at Rome could be relied upon as obedient servants of Christ. Paul had faith in them. And consequently he assuredly concluded, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly [swiftly]. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

The reference to God bruising Satan under their feet brings to mind Genesis 3:15 and the Garden of Eden. Evidently the prospects of Christians being deceived by false teachers made Paul think of the original deception in the Garden of Eden (II Cor. 11:13-15). The language of the first reference to the

coming Savior and his victory over Satan is used to depict the victory that would be theirs over false teachers. The "God of peace" would give the victory. Division is of the devil (sin separates, divides), but peace is from above (James 3:14-18). It is evident when there is unity. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (I Cor. 14:33).

Admonitions for Today

In passing, let us comment on this and let it relate to us today. There are talks of unity (trying to solve the problems of division), and the very talks show the denominational mentality of those talking at times. The nature of the unity in the early church can be seen in this sixteenth chapter of Romans. It was a spiritual unity, not a denominational one. It involved those who were "in Christ" (and their mutual love and respect for one another). "Christian unity" is accomplished when we are united with Christ (and stay that way). In becoming a Christian we are called into "ONE BODY" (Colossians 3:15) and therewith "baptized into ONE BODY" (I Cor. 12:13). Thereafter, with this action accomplished, "Christian unity" was something to be "kept," not sought after, in the early church. Paul admonished the Ephesian Christians "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). How did they "keep the unity of the Spirit"? By supporting denominational organizations and conventions beyond the local church? By being aligned with one bloc of churches as opposed to others (thinking in terms of "our people" and "you [your] people")? No! The local church, organizationally speaking, was all there was to the church in the New Testament. Without these organizations and this mentality, they had the unity the Lord wanted and were admonished to keep it. Consequently, "Christian unity" is realized within the bounds of the local church and in personal relationships. In brotherly love, we practice this unity by putting into practice the teachings of Christ (in association with the local church). The local church is independent and autonomous under Christ, and the extent of its relationship to other churches, within the bounds of the Scriptures, is a matter of choice and opinion. Since love is outreaching, we are quick to follow Peter's instructions in I Peter 2:17 to "love the brotherhood" (but not to organize it into some denominational system).

Conclusion

"Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love." The words of that great hymn have continually come to mind as we have studied this sixteenth chapter of Romans. Yes, that which initially seemed

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"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

(Continued from Previous Page)

like an uninteresting collection of miscellaneous salutations and greetings of obscure Christians has become a rich experience in making the Christianity of the first century come alive. A checkered pattern of diverse peoples dynamically "knit together in love" emerges. As we have noticed, "the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love" was brought about by them being united in Christ and Christ being in them. These are amazing truths when looked into.

Of most of the people listed here, we know nothing except the few words found here (but, oh, how impressive!). Perhaps little did those sending greetings think that their short message would be part of a document recorded for time and eternity (and read all over the world). It is likely that they would have said more, and perhaps would have said it a little differently, if they had known this. But the record stands as a great testimony to the warmth and vitality of their religion. Would we have said more? Well, we have a chance to say our part. Every day another document is being written, and everything we say and do is being recorded in it. Yes, it will be opened in that great day of Judgment (Revelation 20:12; Matthew 12:36,37; 25:31-46). Wouldn't it be wonderful if it likewise spoke of brotherhood, love and service. "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love" (and for eternity). Amen! □

The Paradox of the Cross

THE CROSS of Christ is the greatest of all paradoxes. It was the most tragic event in the history of the world, yet the most wonderful thing that ever happened. It was the saddest spectacle man ever beheld, yet out of it came the greatest joy. The cross was Satan's greatest victory and Christ's most humiliating defeat, yet it was the most stunning defeat Satan ever suffered and the most glorious victory Christ ever won. Christ won by losing. He conquered by surrendering.

The cross was the greatest exhibition of divine justice in condemning sin, yet the most wonderful demonstration of divine mercy in pardoning sin. It was God's greatest manifestation of hatred for sin, yet his supreme proof of love for the sinner. The cross was the means by which God's justice condemned sin, and His mercy forgave it.

The cross was the darkest hour in history, yet it was the time of the greatest light. Though the sun refused to shine and God hid his face from Christ, the cross was the means by which Christ really became the "light of the world." In the cross we see

Christ's love for man. There we see human vengeance as they cry for his blood, yet we see divine forgiveness as Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

The cross portrays man's sinfulness and God's holiness; human weakness and divine strength. It demonstrates man's inability to save himself, and God's ability and power to do this for him. The cross, from the human standpoint, is foolishness, yet it is a revelation of the highest wisdom of God.

—John H. Banister □

Pithy Points to Ponder (Proverbially Speaking)

"IF YOU are patient in one moment of anger you will escape a hundred days of sorrow."

Parents, if you talk about church problems in front of your children, and are always finding fault with the church, don't be surprised if your children grow up with no respect for the church.

"If prayer does not remove the mountain, then climb it."

Marriage is not a game we play until someone else comes along that we think would make a better playmate.

"We must remember that we have two ears, to hear both sides before we give judgment."

When bad things happen in your life, let it be just so much water that has passed under the bridge; don't dam it up to make a pool of lingering stagnation

"Rumors never need a leg to stand on because they are always flying."

He who made the dumb to speak, and even used a donkey to speak His Word, surely can use me to speak forth His eternal Truth.

"A person cannot teach what he does not know nor lead where he has not been." □

"Make St. Louis the Capital of Missouri"

SOME PEOPLE in applying the Bible to their lives are like the little boy with his geography. He prayed as he went to bed, "Bless my mama and papa, and please make St. Louis the capital of Missouri." When his mother asked him why he said such a thing in his prayers, he replied, "Well, Mama, that is what I put on my test paper."

Some people act in religion without studying and then pray that they are right. The study should come first, and when we follow the will of God, we will

then know how to pray aright. God will not rewrite the Bible to fit our situation.—*Adapted* □



PRECIOUS DEATH

● *“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints” (PSALMS 116:15)*

THIS IS one of the many comforting and blessed statements in Holy Scripture concerning the great event from which the flesh so much shrinks. If the Lord’s people would more frequently make a prayerful and believing study of what the Word says about their departure out of this world, death would lose much if not all its terrors for them. But, instead of doing this, they let their imaginations run wild, give way to carnal fears, and walk by sight instead of by faith (II Corinthians 5:7).

Looking to the Holy Scriptures for guidance, let us endeavor to dispel, by the light of Divine revelation, some of the gloom unbelief casts around the death of a Christian. “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” These words show that a dying saint is an object of special notice to the Lord, for note the words “in the sight of.”

It is true that the eyes of the Lord are always on us, for He never slumbers or sleeps. It is true that we may say at all times, “Thou God seest me.” But it appears from Scripture that there are occasions when He notices and cares for us in a special man-

ner. Psalms 46:1, “God is our refuge and strength, a very special help in trouble.” Again (Isaiah 43:2), “When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee...” In particular (Hebrews 13:5), “Let your conversation [manner of living] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.” This brings before us an aspect of death rarely considered by many of us (believers). It gives us what may be termed the Godward side of the subject. All too often, we look at death like most other things, from our side. The text tells us that from the viewpoint of heaven the death of a saint is neither hideous nor horrible, tragic nor terrible—but “precious.”

This raises the question, why is the death of His people precious in the sight of the Lord? What is there in the last great crisis which is so dear to Him? Without attempting an exhaustive reply, let us suggest four possible answers.

I. Because Their Persons Are Precious to the Lord

Their persons are precious to the Lord. They ever were and always will be dear to Him. “His saints”! They were the ones on whom His love was set before the earth was formed or the heavens made. These are they for whose sake Jesus left his home on high and whom he bought with his precious blood, cheerfully laying down his life for them. They are his Father’s love gifts to him, his children, members of his body; therefore, everything that concerns them is precious in His sight. And because their persons are precious so also are their deaths.

II. Because Death Terminates the Saint’s Sorrow and Suffering

There is a necessity for our sufferings, for through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Nevertheless, the Lord does not afflict willingly (Lamentations 3:33). God is neither unmindful nor indifferent to our trials and troubles. Concerning His people of old it is written (Isaiah 63:9), “In all their afflictions He was afflicted...” Psalms 103:13, “Like a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him.” So we are told that our Great High Priest is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15). Here, then, may be another reason the death of a saint is precious in the sight of the Lord: because it marks the termination of his sorrows and sufferings.

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PRECIOUS DEATH

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III. Because Death Affords the Lord An Opportunity to Display His Sufficiency

Love is never so happy as when ministering to the needs of its cherished object, and never is the Christian so needy and so helpless as in the hour of death. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. It is then that the Father says to His trembling child, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10). It is because of this that the child of God may confidently reply: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Psalms 23:4). Our very weakness appeals to His strength, our emergency to His sufficiency. This happens when we as God's children realize how little we can do, or accomplish in and of ourselves. This causes us to put our full faith and trust in God, with the realization that He can do all things and that He has always been concerned about man's well-being.

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11). How tender, how loving such passages are to all who are trying to walk in the way of the Lord God. Therefore is the death of the saints "precious" in His sight because it affords the Lord a blessed occasion for His love, grace, and power to minister and to undertake for His helpless people.

IV. Because There Is A Separation of the Body and Spirit at Death

In Genesis 35:18 we read, "And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin." In Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." There will be a judgment day in the which all that are in the graves will come forth and be judged (John 5:28,29). Also Matthew 25:31-46. Try to picture in your mind (see with the eye of faith) what an awesome scene that will be! But still the Christian (saint) has nothing to worry about. Some of the most beautiful reading in the Bible is found in John 14:1-6. Jesus made a promise here, and we can rest assured he will keep that promise. He has gone to prepare a place, and has given us the promise, "I will come again...that where I am there ye may be also." Do we believe this? If we really believe this, most of the sting will be removed

from this thing we call death.

Please read Hebrews 9:27 and Revelation 21:4.

—Willie Tharp □

"In the Cross of Christ I Glory"

ON THE SOUTH coast of China and on a hill overlooking the harbor of Macao, many years ago some Portuguese settlers built a large cathedral. Later it was destroyed by a great storm except for a single front wall. That wall stood tall and firm for many generations. Towering at the very top of the wall was a huge bronze cross.

Sir John Bowring was shipwrecked off the coast near there in 1825. Clinging to some wreckage, he caught a glimpse of the front of the old church structure and his eye fastened on the cross. By keeping his eye on the cross, and by careful maneuvering (lest he be carried out to sea), he was able to land himself and the piece of wreckage. The cross had saved his life. Later he would write:

**"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story,
Gathers round its head sublime."**

**"When the woes of life o'er-take me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me:
Lo! it glows with peace and joy."**

**"When the sun of bliss is beaming
Light and love upon my way,
From the cross the radiance streaming
Adds new luster to the day."**

**"Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that thro' all time abide."**

This is a great hymn, and only eternity will tell how many shipwrecked lives have been saved by the cross of Christ. Jesus declared, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [kinds of] men unto me" (John 12:32). Paul wrote that the "preaching of the cross" was the power of God unto salvation (I Corinthians 1:18), then he said to the Corinthians, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2). Shipwrecked lives had been changed at Corinth (I Corinthians 6:9-11). It is no wonder that Paul would later say, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).—Adapted □

"SHE HATH DONE WHAT SHE COULD"

"SHE HATH done what she could" (Mark 14:8). There is no station in life, however obscure; no condition, however humble; but that something may be done for the Lord. Mary was judged on the grounds that she had done what she could. It was not a great act when compared with Deborah or Esther, but it was the best she could do. One penny's worth, if it is the limit of self denial, is as good as thousands of dollars. Jesus recognized this in what He said of the two mites the widow cast into the treasury.

Mary could not write like the apostle John, or preach like the apostle Peter, or plant churches like the apostle Paul, but in her humble station, she did her best. Everyone can do that. If this is done, the humble disciple can count himself committed to Christ. God is present in small opportunities and activities as well as where power is great, talents many, and opportunities unlimited.

What are you doing? It is a personal matter. Have you done anything in the past? Are you doing anything now to advance the glory of God? God will ask nothing beyond your power. Ask yourself, "Have I done what I could?" Am I ready to stand before the judgment bar of God and answer that question? God promises to help us do more as soon as we are willing to do something. He forgives us, as we forgive our debtors. The Lord expects some fruit from every tree.

—*Ralph Jones* □

Which Bricks Would You Steal?

SUPPOSE you are a thief. You come upon a construction site. There is a pile of unused bricks, and there are those the bricklayers have already used to make a wall. No one is there. Here is an opportunity for you to take some bricks. Which ones will you take? Will you take some from the pile of unused bricks? Or, will you tear the wall down and take some of those cemented together?

The answer is obvious. Anyone would take from the unused pile because they are unattached. It would be very difficult even with tools to remove a brick from the center of the wall.

Perhaps you can see the lesson. Some Christians are very active in the church and are very close to their brothers and sisters in Christ. Then there are some who seem very indifferent to Jesus Christ. They seldom associate with their brothers and sisters in Christ because their interests lie elsewhere.

Now, which Christian do you think Satan will try

first? Again, of course, those unattached to the church will be much easier. And those uncommitted Christians are the first at which Satan strikes.

Let us all be dedicated; and bonded together in love so that we can stand steadfastly against the devil.—*Adapted* □

ARE THESE SYMPTOMS OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING ILL OF MODERN SOCIETY (IN THE U.S.A.)?

THINK this over. Can you figure it out? The following three things, which are itemized, may well be glaring symptoms of the most outstanding ill that plagues modern society in the U.S.A.:

- (1) Day care centers;
- (2) Fast food restaurants;
- (3) Rest homes/nursing homes (in excessive numbers).

Hum-m-m-m? □

What the Church Is Not and Is

THE CHURCH IS never a place, but always a people. It is never a fold, but always a flock. Never a sacred building, but always a faithful assembly. The church is not a refrigerator for the preserving of perishable piety; it's a dynamo for charging the human will with the power of the Gospel. The object of the church is not to tell men how to dodge difficulties, but to furnish strength and courage to meet them. The business of the church is not to furnish hammocks for the lazy. It is rather to offer fitting yokes for drawing life's loads. There is in this world no sanctuary for God but the human soul. The man who does not support the church practically casts a vote for its abolition.—*Selected* □

How to Read the Bible

READ the Bible, not as a newspaper, but as a home letter.

If a cluster of heavenly fruit hangs within reach, gather it.

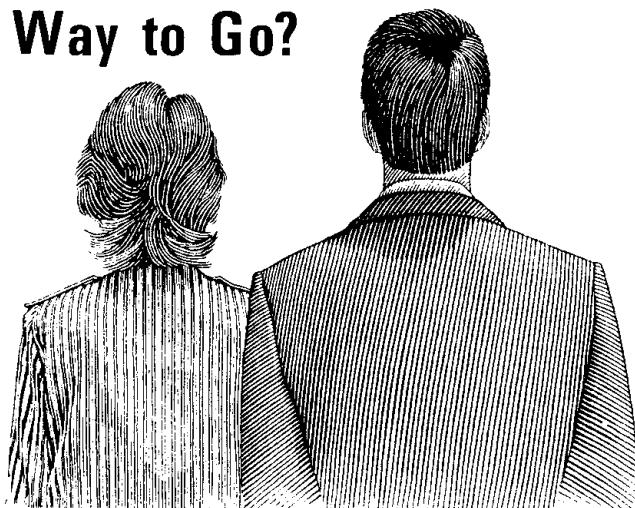
If a promise lies upon the pages as a blank check, cash it.

If a prayer is recorded, appropriate it, and launch it as a feathered arrow from the bow of your desire.

If an example of holiness gleams before you, ask God to do as much for you.

If the truth is revealed in all its intrinsic splendor, entreat that its brilliance may ever irradiate the hemisphere of your life.—*F.B. Meyer* □

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.

Put on the Armour of God

Put on the armour of God, friend;
The devil is lurking nearby.
Take up the Sword of the Spirit,
And watch for his darts swiftly fly!

Gird up your loins with truth, friend;
Your breastplate of righteousness don;
Having feet shod with the gospel of peace,
Up, let us be gone.

No armour is found for the back of man;
God's soldiers know not of retreat.
With salvation's helmet and the shield of faith,
We're sure to see Satan's defeat.

Be watching and praying
With supplication for saints;
On guard—every step of the way,
Trusting the One who knows all of our needs,
And victory will be ours some day.

—Lois McPhail

(CLIP AND MAIL)

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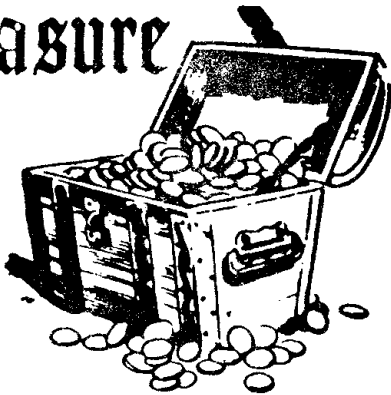
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