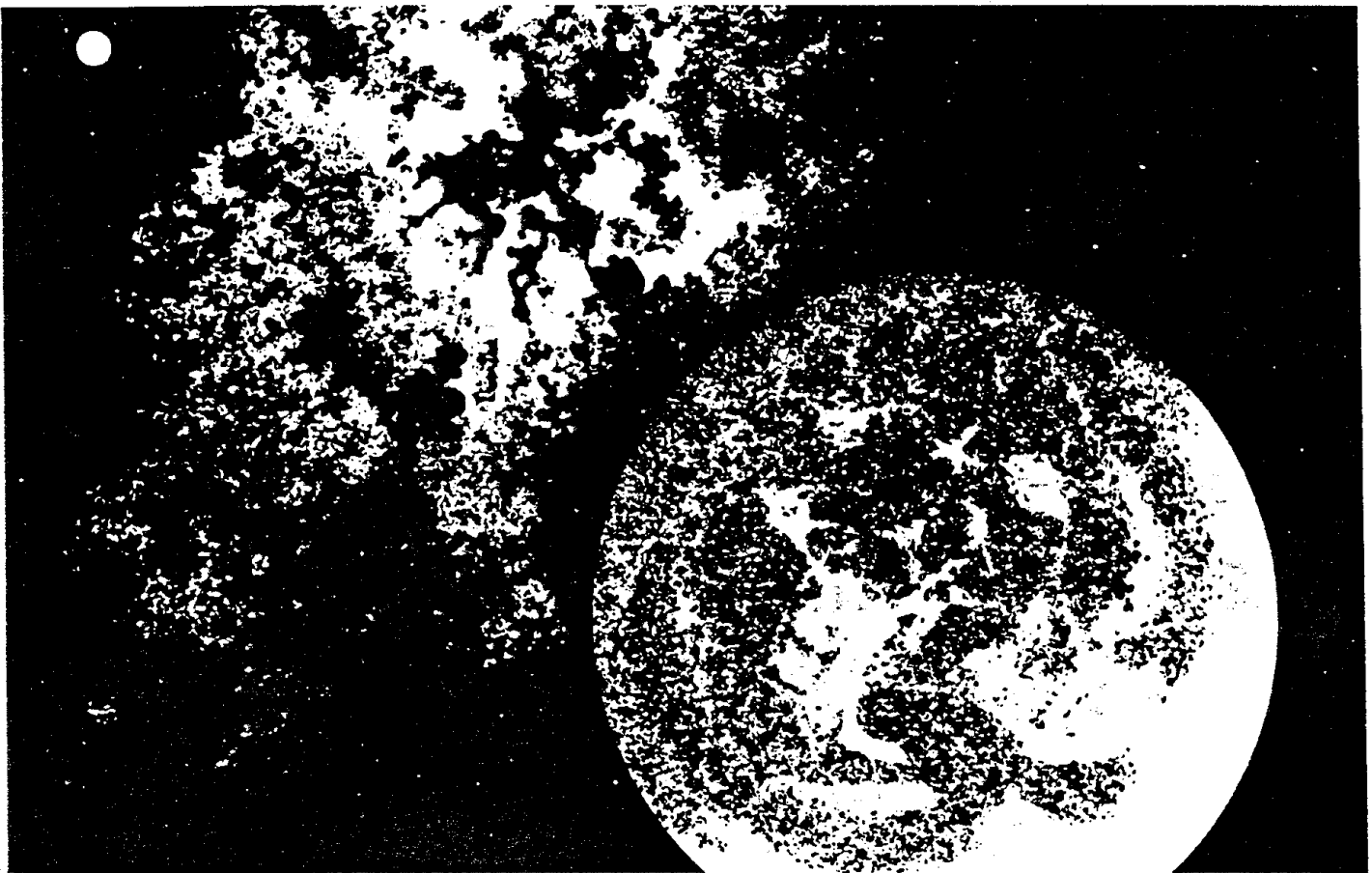


The Sword AND Staff

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

HOW TO LIVE IN VIEW OF THE END OF ALL THINGS BEING AT HAND (I Peter 4:7-11)



● By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 Fairfield Drive—Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030 U.S.A.

THE APOSTLE PETER asserts that "the end of all things is at hand" (I Peter 4:7). This is a sobering thought, but there is an end coming, and it is at hand. One time the world became so wicked that God destroyed it with the Flood. The next time, Peter says (II Peter 3:6,7), it will be with fire, and it will be final.

The apostle Paul, as well as the apostle Peter, seems to write about the second coming of Christ with a sense of imminence and urgency. Scoffers

have seized upon this, trying to discredit the Bible, and said that they expected an early return of Christ (but he didn't come). In I Thessalonians, Paul quite vividly wrote about the second coming of Christ (I Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-5:11,23). The imagination of the Thessalonians was so stirred, it seems, that they thought it would happen in just a matter of days. Some even stopped working. Paul corrects this misunderstanding in II

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THE SWORD AND STAFF
Post Office Box 147
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030 U.S.A.

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—Thank you—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

IF YOU WIN the rat race, what have you won? You are still a rat.

"It is human to stand with the crowd; it is divine to stand alone."

Joy comes from a heart that is overflowing with faith, love, and hope.

"There are two kinds of men who never amount to anything; one cannot do what he is told, and the other cannot do anything unless he is told."

You may go to college and get a B.A. degree, but out in the world is where you learn the rest of the alphabet.

"The true measure of a man's love of God is the intensity with which he hates evil" (Romans 12:9; Psalms 97:10; 119:97,104,127,128).

If you practice partiality in your family relations, related family problems will not be impartial in coming to your door.

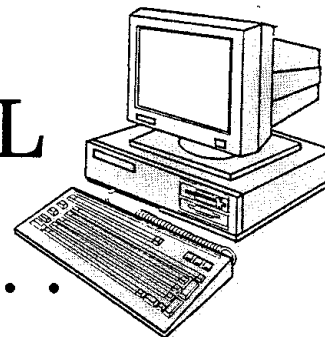
"The man who falls down gets up a lot quicker than the one who lies down."

To put on Christ (Galatians 3:27) is to put on a coat of many beautiful colors (Galatians 5:22,23).

"Few blame themselves until they have exhausted all other possibilities."

Inferior concepts of God can only produce inferior results in our lives.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS...



"...PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME..."

THE APOSTLE PAUL wrote long ago (and may we listen), "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come..." (II Timothy 3:1).


There is a question mark about what Paul had in mind here. The last days have been upon us ever since Christ went back to heaven. Then, there were the last days of the nation of Israel leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Also, aside from the Christian age being the last days, the end of this age just before Christ's second coming is called the last days. Again, speaking of the last days fitting into more of an immediate context involving the apostle Paul is a possibility. Regardless what Paul had in mind, perilous times were in store. And anytime that conditions like he describes prevail, potentially and eventually it will be dangerous to be alive.

From what Paul writes in the next several verses in II Timothy 3, we see that the "perilous times" involved danger morally and otherwise. Hard times were in store for the church. The sorry state described in verses 2 through 4 has reference to "religious" people, for Paul speaks of them as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof..." (verse 5). He said they were "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (verse 7). Then he went on to say that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and be deceived" (verse 13). In the midst of

this ungodly environment, and with the presence of religious hypocrites, true Christians could expect problems. Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (verse 12). Paul himself was at that time facing execution and martyrdom (4:6-8).

When there are perilous times morally speaking, it won't be long until there are perilous times physically speaking. When men no longer fear God, there is every reason that we should fear men (for the restraining influence of God will no longer be in or upon them). In that part of the Bible leading up to the Great Flood, we read in Genesis 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his [man's] heart was only evil continually." As an appendage to the thought of this verse, verse 11 says, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." With moral danger and decay there comes physical danger and violence. It is one step from being an errorist to becoming a terrorist. If we live like animals, we will eventually act and react like animals.

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS



EXPLAINING THE DECLINE AND FALL: Comedian Steve Allen said one word symbolizes the decline of contemporary Western culture: **Madonna**. "We live in a very sick society in which rudeness, sadism and sex have all become commodities," Mr. Allen told a crowd of kitchen help, social workers and receptionists at Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Grand Rapids, Mich., on Wednesday, a day before a hospital fund-raiser. "It wouldn't have occurred to actors and comedians in the '50s to be so objectionable," he said, mentioning Madonna. "American humor has never been as filthy as it is now." He also criticized **Andrew Dice Clay**, **Eddie Murphy** and **Robin Williams** for raunchy humor.

We live in perilous times, morally speaking, today. Besides the basic error of traditional denominationalism that floods the land, religion seems to have lost its moral restraint upon people. Long ago its moral vitality was neutralized, sapped, and zapped by modernistic unbelief. Humanism

largely prevails in our land. Those grand laws placed in the statute books by Bible believing statesmen of another generation have been targeted by resentful humanists. Some of the laws have been removed; others rendered useless. God has been put out of the public schools (even in a casual, non-denominational sense)—no Bible reading, no prayer. Abortion, which heretofore had been legally classified with murder, is no longer so regarded. The state is in the liquor and gambling business. Political leaders now champion the cause of the homosexual (sodomite), whose practice in the law books is called "crime against nature," as if a person's civil rights were at stake. While belittling Christians, and old fashioned values, the TV networks spew out their anti-family entertainment. Pornography and filthy literature flood the land. There is danger, morally speaking, at every turn. Even speaking from a non-religious position, a doctor involved locally with a teen-age sex study (Bowman Gray School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, N.C.) said that "parents must be more vigilant in learning about their children's friends, the songs they listen to, the TV shows and movies they watch and the places they go." In times past, children even in non-Christian homes brought up in the community would turn out half-way decent, morally speaking—but not any more! Yes, even the public school experience has become death valley to many young people as far as their Christianity is concerned. Many older parents have not realized it is not the same world in which they grew up. Shipwrecked lives are all about us. Many are involved with drugs. Our society is not a place for innocence. We are told that 40% of all girls, nationally, have had an abortion before they get out of their teen years (in some places it is even higher). One out of every two marriages ends in divorce. Simple concepts of right and wrong, the work ethic, and just plain everyday honesty are on the decline. Crimes of violence seem to be on the increase. State prisons are overcrowded (at least in North Carolina).

Yes, as we stated, when times are perilous morally speaking, the perilous times physically speaking inevitably follow. Our religion (and consequent morality) is what keeps us from being animals. But as far as the public schools are concerned, God and religion are non-entities in our society, in the universe. Prohibiting reference to God and the Bible makes a morally dangerous climate. The situation does not remain a vacuum. An amoral atmosphere soon becomes an immoral one. Then it moves from becoming morally dangerous to being physi-

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

(Continued from Previous Page)

cally dangerous. The nations public school systems are in trouble because of drugs, violence, and unwanted pregnancies. (Recent headlines in the *Winston-Salem Journal* read, "Schools Struggle to Meet Pregnancy Crisis"). Some schools must have policemen. Others are providing nurseries for unwed mothers. One has moved from the morally perilous position to the morally disastrous one and consequently to the physically perilous position when abortion is considered and entered into or AIDS is contacted. Physical danger in a moral vacuum is seen when there is physical abuse in a family. With the decline of morals there is the increase of the danger from crime on the streets (and elsewhere). And in an atmosphere that is becoming increasingly unfriendly (and even hostile) to Christian concepts and values, and consequently to Christians, we need to remember that Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12). John told of "Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Then he said, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (I John 3:12,13).

We are not saying there are not Christians out there, or people who respect morality, but we are saying that we are living in perilous times. Evil is on the ascendancy. We need to be "on our toes." Jesus warned his disciples, and continued, saying, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:11-13). Speaking more generically about the Christian life, the writer of Hebrews warns, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God...For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:12,14). Beware of all the sources of moral danger that would assail us. A constant diet of television will jeopardize your soul and distort your concepts of right and wrong. And not only is there the spiritual danger, an amoral and immoral society is wrought with physical danger. Beware (for time and eternity)! There is too much at stake to do otherwise. Let's make heaven our home.



If the practice of homosexuality is not wrong, then there is no such thing as right and wrong.



HOW TO LIVE IN THE VIEW OF



THE END OF ALL THINGS BE- ING AT HAND *(Continued from Page 1)*

Thessalonians when he exhorted them to "be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first..." (2:1-11). Certain things would take place before Christ would return. Likewise, Peter qualifies what he had to say about the imminence of the second coming and the end in II Peter, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise [the promise of his second coming and end of the world], as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Peter 3:8-10).

Yes, the apostle Peter said, "But the end of all things is at hand." It has been at hand ever since Christ went back to heaven. We have been living in the last days ever since Christ came (Hebrews 1:1-3; 9:26). This is the culminating chapter of God's dealings with mankind wherein He will "wind up" all things. The Great Commission is to be carried out "unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). This dispensation of grace will conclude with the second coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the Judgment. That great day of His wrath will come. If John the Baptist and Jesus preached, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17), to prepare people for the beginning of the last days, how much more we should take heed to what

is said about the end of these days. This should be a great controlling and motivating factor in how we live. The end could come at any time.

With this in mind, the apostle Peter wrote, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye *therefore* sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (I Peter 4:7-11).

The “therefore” makes it plain that “the end of all things” being at hand is the basis of the exhortation that follows. This is sort of a composite statement supplying guidelines on how to live in view of the end of all things being upon us. We need this. Let us make a study of it.

I. WATCH: “Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (4:7).

The Lord Spoke on This

What Peter admonished here was first spoken by Christ. The Lord spoke much of the end of all things and the necessity of being ready. In answering the disciples’ questions in Matthew 24:3, part involving the second coming and the end of the world, he said, “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come...be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (24:42,44). He tells of the fate of the servant who became slack and drunken because he thought the Lord delayed his coming (24:48-51). The parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents show the need of watchfulness, being ready, and working in view of the Lord’s return and the end of the world (Matthew 25:1-30).

What Peter Said

Now let us get right into what Peter is saying, then make application. The word translated “sober” here is *sophroneo*, which literally means “to be of a sound mind, be in one’s right mind, be sane” (so rendered in Mark 5:15). The word translated “watch” (*nepho*) likewise literally means to be sober, not intoxicated (with the acquired secondary significance of being vigilant, circumspect—hence, “watch”). We get the impression that the King James scholars used the word “sober” sometimes in the sense of sane (i.e., II Corinthians 5:13, “For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to

God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause”; also notice Acts 26:25). Perhaps the American Standard Version affords the best translation of I Peter 4:7, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer.”

**Sanity and Sobriety
Literally and Spiritually Speaking**

This matter of being in ones right mind and not being intoxicated can be taken literally, and it can be taken spiritually. If the prospects of this old world suddenly and unexpectedly ending at anytime in one great explosive roar as the elements melt with fervent heat and it is consumed by fire, doesn’t bring us to our senses, what will? (And along with that the Day of Judgment, and eternal heaven and hell). Physically and spiritually it should “sober us up” and make us live a life of sobriety. This is serious business.

The Ways of the World

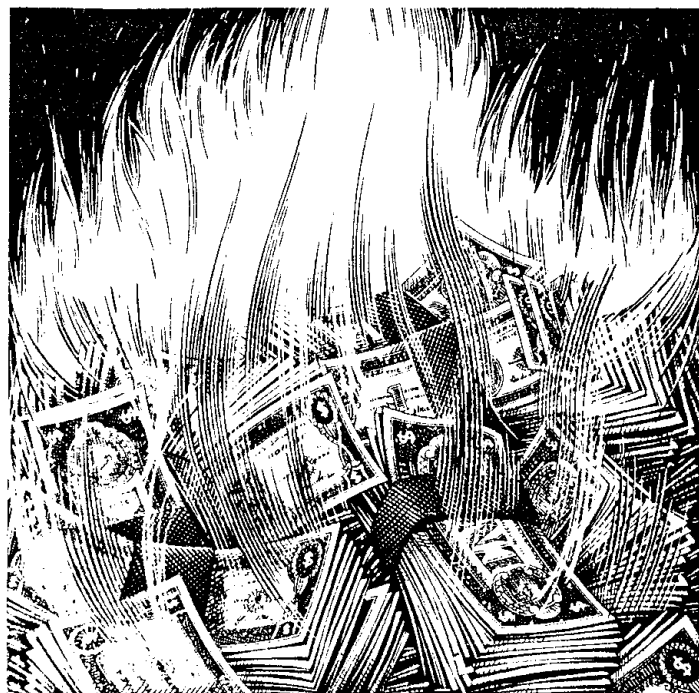
The former “lifestyle” of those receiving the epistle of I Peter was anything but what Peter admonishes here. Peter said they had “wrought the will of the Gentiles [heathen]” when they “walked in lasciviousness [wantonness], lusts, excess of wine [drunkenness], revellings [partying], banqueting [carousing], and abominable idolatries” (4:3). Their unrestrained lives he called “excess of riot [waste]” (4:4). (Not much sanity here!) And the apostle Paul, with much the same thought in mind (looking to the end), said to the Roman Christians that their salvation was nearer than when they first believed. They should “therefore cast off the works of darkness”; then he admonished, “Let us walk honestly [becomingly], as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness [carousing and drinking], not in chambering and wantonness [cohabiting and sensual behavior], not in strife and envying” (Romans 13:11-13).

**Being Sane and Sober Minded
in a Dangerous World**

We must maintain our sanity. The danger is ever present that we will not. We must be sober minded, alert, lest we shift our attention from eternity. The apostle John, likewise looking to the end, warned his readers, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I

(Continued on Next Page)

HOW TO LIVE IN THE VIEW OF THE END OF ALL THINGS BEING AT HAND *(from Previous Page)*



John 2:15-17). We can get wrapped up in this world, as the self-indulgent widow of I Timothy 5:6 (also, notice verse 5). It reads, "But she that liveth in pleasure [lives luxuriously] is dead while she liveth." The rich farmer that Jesus told about thought that he "had it made." Because of his prosperity he tore down his barns and built greater ones. He said to himself (in essence), "Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou has provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:15-21). What God called this man was "fool" (*aphron*: *a* + *phron* = no mind, stupid), just the opposite of what Peter admonished Christians to be (i.e., of a sound mind, sane). A person is pretty stupid to leave God out in view of certain death and the impending end of all things. Let us keep our "heads on straight" about what really matters. There are a lot of foolish people out there today. Remember Matthew 6:33 (and Colossians 3:1-4).

More Admonitions

There are so many good Scriptural admonitions on this subject that we hesitate to go on without pointing out one or two more. Titus 2:11-13 gives a wonderful overview of our present situation with anticipation of its grand climax in the second com-

ing of Christ. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Then the sobering reality of the accompanying destruction of the world by fire is highlighted in II Peter 3 with this warning, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [holy living] and godliness" (II Peter 3:11). Truly these are great contributing factors to the living of the Christian life and how we should live it!

Watching unto Prayer

In I Peter 4:7, as we noticed, the apostle said, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and *watch unto prayer*." Jesus had admonished his disciples, including Peter, while praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Prayer and watching are coupled together throughout the New Testament. After instructing the Ephesian Christians to "put on the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:10-18), Paul urged them to be, "*Praying* always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and *watching* thereunto with all perseverance [persistence] and supplication for all saints" (6:18). Their lives needed to be hemmed in by prayer as they readied themselves for battle with the devil. The sobering reality of our situation is ever before us, and in prayer we thereby acknowledge that we are dependent upon Power from beyond ourselves for survival. And as we look to the end of all things our lives definitely need to be hemmed in by prayer so that they will not become unraveled.

No Use to Pray Then

When the Lord returns it will be of no use to pray then. The foolish virgins prayed, but to no avail (Matthew 25:6-13). When the Lord returns it will be too late. Revelation 22:10-12 pictures that day as being upon us (as if it had happened), then says, "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." Yes, "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:20,21), but that is something that has been going on every day in anticipation of the Lord's coming (Acts 9:14,21; I Corinthians 1:2; II Timothy 2:22; I Peter 1:17; Hebrews 9:28). Right now let us be watching unto prayer.

The Lord's Supper Included

Also included under this injunction to "watch unto prayer" would be the faithful observance of the Lord's Supper every Sunday (Acts 20:7). Didn't Paul say in I Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death *till he come*"? Therefore, let us be watching unto prayer as we regularly and properly partake of the Lord's supper week after week.

II. LOVE: "*And above all things have fervent charity (love) among yourselves...*" (4:8,9).

The Great Distinguishing Element of Christianity

Love is the great distinguishing element and principle of Christianity. Whether we are contemplating God, Christ (the Son of God), or Christians (his followers), love is what stands out. While love was not absent in God's Old Testament revelation, love is not what distinguished it. God's righteous anger and wrath against sin are predominate (and consequently, judgment against sinners). This anger and wrath against sin has not changed (for God is still holy), but what impresses us now in the New Testament is the magnitude of His love (and grace) as expressed in His desire to save us from our sins. God is love (I John 4:8,16). This love prompted Him to take the initiative (in the ultimate sense) in bringing about our salvation (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). This love is the great compelling factor in our conversion. Conversion is an experience of love (I Peter 1:22,23). We love Him because He first loved us (I John 4:10,19). Then John says "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren..." (I John 3:14). Jesus had said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34,35). This is the *agapé* love, the totally unselfish love governed by intelligence and corresponding noble purpose. This lofty concept (as totally exemplified in Christ) is not to be found in non-Christian religions. If people are real Christians, this quality will not be absent in their lives today.

Above All Things Love

Looking to the end, and second coming of Christ, Peter urges his readers to "above all things have fervent [intense, earnest] love among yourselves" (and we will soon readily see why). It was to be first or above everything else. Paul likewise admonished the Colossian Christians, "And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14). In I Corinthians

16:14 he also said, "Let all your things be done with charity [love]."

The pre-eminence of love (and why it is pre-eminent) can be seen in what Jesus said in reply to the question of "which is the great[est] commandment" (Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-31). Paul taught that Christians are governed by the law of love which resulted in them keeping all of the other laws, but not from a legalistic stance (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:13,14). So, if we truly love (as Jesus said), we will "keep" his commandments (John 14:15; I John 5:2,3), and, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour." Consequently, Paul says that we are "nothing" without love. (Cf. I Corinthians 13).

Love Covers the Multitude of Sins

As Peter continues in I Peter 4:8, he asserts that among Christians "love shall cover the multitude of sins." This is true in more ways than one. Christians are not quick to find fault with one another, for love is optimistic and puts everything in the best light (I Corinthians 13:7). They are long-suffering and helpful as they seek to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). But when love is thin, the faults of others become thick (they are exaggerated). However, love does not rejoice in iniquity (I Corinthians 13:6). Consequently, love becomes instrumental in covering "the multitude of sins" in another way when we do what is said in James 5:19,20. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, *and shall hide a multitude of sins.*" Galatians 6:1 tells us how this is to be done: "in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Love will certainly seek to reclaim an erring brother and in the complete sense "hide the multitude of sins."

Practice Hospitality

The next verse in I Peter 4, verse 9, seems to follow as an extension of his admonition on love. It reads, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." In this day when hospitality is increasingly becoming a thing of the past, this needs to be emphasized (and especially among Christians). If we are Christians, we should not be selfish with ourselves in being involved in brotherly relationships with others. Hospitality is tied in with "brotherly love" in Hebrews 13:1,2. The qualifications of elders, who are to be examples to the rest of the church, include "given to hospitality" (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). In Romans 12:13, all Christians in general are instructed to be "given to hospitality." Therefore, let us practice this demonstration of

(Continued on Next Page)

HOW TO LIVE IN THE VIEW OF THE END OF ALL THINGS BEING AT HAND *(from Previous Page)*

brotherly love as we open the doors of our homes to fellow Christians. The "end of all things is at hand," and in eternity we will be as one.

The Greatest of These

Love does not stand alone as being important in Christianity (and especially in view of the end of all things). In I Thessalonians 5 Paul urges readiness in reference to the second coming of Christ. Then in verse 8 he says, "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of *faith* and *love*: and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation." Here, and throughout the New Testament, faith and hope are outstanding along with love. In that great chapter on love, I Corinthians 13, Paul concludes by saying, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love]" (13:13). Love is the greatest. In eternity faith and hope will be no more as far as our salvation is concerned. Faith will have turned into sight (II Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 11:1), and we will have received that for which we hoped (Romans 8:23-25). But love will go on throughout eternity.

III. MINISTER: "*Minister...one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God...*" (4:10,11).

All Ministering According to Their Abilities

In these two verses (I Peter 4:10,11), Peter rounds out his admonition on how Christians should live in view of the end of all things. It involves ministering. He writes, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles [utterances] of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This injunction is complete as it takes in every Christian. Instead of thinking just in terms of being the object of ministering, as is so common today, everyone is to be involved in ministering "one to another." This is to be done according to our abilities. The end result of all of this, as we look to the end of all things, will be the glory of God. Amen.

This Truth and Two Parables

The parables of the talents and that of the pounds certainly emphasize the truths brought out

here. In the parable of the talents every man was given responsibility according to his ability. While

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BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. What well known man in the Bible had a son whose name meant appointed?
2. Where is reference to the "last days" (as such) first mentioned in the Bible?
3. What was the size of the bedstead of king Og of Bashan, the giant who was killed by the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan?
4. What five things did King Solomon's ships bring back from Tarshish when they went there every three years?
5. Of which king of Judah was it said: "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him"?
6. Of which king of Judah was it said: "And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him"?
7. What tributary king of Judah, who rebelled against Babylon, upon being captured experienced seeing his sons slaughtered before his eyes, then his eyes were put out and he was carried into Babylonian Captivity?
8. The book of Proverbs says that "a word fitly spoken" is like what?
9. In what two books of the Bible is reference to God not found anywhere?
10. What O.T. book is quoted more in the New Testament Scriptures than any other O.T. book?
11. What are the only two times recorded that Jesus went outside of the bounds of what we think of as Israel?
12. Which of the original twelve disciples was the only one not from Galilee?
13. At what time and place in his ministry did Jesus began plainly to tell his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, and be put to death?
14. What happened to the thirty pieces of silver that was paid Judas for betraying the Lord?
15. After preaching in what city was Paul stoned, taken out, and left for dead?
16. Where was Paul when he had a vision of a man of Macedonia pleading for him to come over and help?
17. What were the circumstances two different times that prompted Paul to write, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"?
18. Who said the following and to whom: "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved"?
19. What does Jude tell involving the death of Moses that is not found in the Old Testament Scriptures?
20. Of which one of the seven churches of Asia in the book of Revelation does it say that because they had kept the Word of Christ he would keep them in the hour of trial?

NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper.

READERS'

...Response



ALABAMA:

■ "Do you still have a supply of the poem, 'The Old Gospel Preacher'? If so, would you please send me five copies, one for myself and the others...Thank you so much."

(Reply: Yes, we still have a good supply of this poem available, although requests have been received from all over the country. We printed several thousand copies for this purpose. It is free for the asking, even in multiple numbers. It serves a good purpose in recognizing those who have been faithful and in encouraging others to be.)

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ "I would like a copy of *POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS* as soon as you have it."

■ "Please take my mother's name off your mailing list. She passed away...She enjoyed reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for many years—up until the time she became unable to concentrate on reading, about a year before her passing...I am sending a small donation to help with your many expenses in memory of my mother."

VIRGINIA:

■ "I've received and read *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for many years, and I just realized I'd never sent anything to assist in publishing your delightful paper. I appreciate the fine quality of both your messages and the paper."

MARYLAND:

■ "Keep up the good work! Your paper is my kind of reading material. Please mail any bound copies you have available."

KENTUCKY:

■ "Keep up the good work! I look forward to every publication. The information is excellent."

OHIO:

■ "Enclosed find our contribution. Please keep us on your mailing list. We enjoy your magazine and want to

see it continue to teach Scriptural concepts."

■ "Your magazine *THE SWORD AND STAFF* is the best magazine available today for the Christian. You never fail to print the Word as it is in all your articles, true to His Word, and we need that more in our world today. Thank you so much, and keep on keeping on for Christ!...Enclosed are names and addresses for your publication. Please find check enclosed..."

MICHIGAN:

■ "I'm sorry—I'm sorry! I love *THE SWORD AND STAFF* and would feel bad if I didn't receive it. Enclosed is my contribution for a good work. Thank you for your stand for Christ and against the evil in the world. God bless you."

INDIANA:

■ "Please take us off your mailing list."

■ "I appreciate *THE SWORD AND STAFF* very much. The article on false teaching is superb, very well done..."

■ "I see my subscription is way overdue. I do enjoy your magazine. It sticks to the truth of the Scriptures..."

ILLINOIS:

■ "I really enjoy reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Excellent doctrinal teaching, and I do appreciate the good illustrations in each issue. Keep up the good work!

■ "When I read *THE SWORD AND STAFF* I believe that God is talking to me. Keep up the good work that you are doing for Christ and his kingdom."

IOWA:

■ "I've received *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for several years, and I've been enjoying the articles on Christianity and God's Word. It's good to hear the truth about Jesus and his love for us. We can never repay the debt we owe to him, but we sure can read and study, and be better examples to those outside of Christ. I have every copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* since it first started coming here. This small donation will help keep them coming. The Lord bless and strengthen you each day."

MINNESOTA:

■ "I am writing to you today to request that we be taken off your mailing list. Thank you for your quick attention on this matter." (Continued on Next Page)

Answers to:

BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 4:25; 2. Genesis 49:1; 3. Deuteronomy 3:11; 4. II Chronicles 9:21; 5. II Kings 18:1,5; 6. II Kings 23:24,25; 7. II Kings 25:7; 8. Proverbs 25:11; 9. Esther & Song of Solomon; 10. Psalms; 11. Matthew 2:13-15; 15:21-29; 12. Judas Iscariot, meaning "man of Kerioth" (a place in Judah), it is thought; 13. Matthew 16:13,21; 14. Matthew 27:3-8; Acts 1:18,19; 15. Acts 14:8-19; 16. Acts 16:8,9; 17. I Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9; 18. II Corinthians 12:15; 19. Jude 9; 20. Revelation 3:7-10. □

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

SOUTH DAKOTA:

■ *"Enclosed...for 4 volumes and subscription. Your magazine is really great and I know the bound volumes will be also."*

ARKANSAS:

■ *"I accidentally obtained a copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF, and I have read it twice and am reading it again. Please put me on the mailing list. Also please send me the poem 'I Saw Him Standing There,' and I will eagerly be watching for the POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS. Keep up the good work, and you have my prayers."*

TEXAS:

■ *"Enclosed you will find a personal check...Please send the copies of your bound volumes for 1983 through 1989...Use the rest of the check for postage or whatever you find a need. We enjoy your paper very much. I wanted to place these papers in our church study."*

CALIFORNIA:

■ *"...I sure do enjoy your paper. So glad you were able to get the new press. Notice the difference in the new edition."*

CANADA:

■ *"I received volume 30 [number 4] of THE SWORD AND STAFF a few days ago, and I also have the bound volumes 27 and 28 which contained 'Thoughts on the Ten Commandments,' which I enjoyed reading. I would appreciate receiving another bound volume. Enclosed you can find my donation...Thank you."*

NOTE:

We do not recommend the so-called "Living Bible." It is not a true Bible, but is a paraphrase (more like a commentary on the Bible). As such it may be read, but not looked upon and used as a supposed translation of the Scriptures.—**J.E.G.**

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.



I Was There Too

IN A PAINTING of the crucifixion by the famous Dutch artist Rembrandt, your attention, of course, is drawn first of all to the cross and to him who hangs there. Then you look at the crowd that is gathered around the cross and note the attitudes and actions of these people. As your eyes drift to the edge of the picture you see another figure standing in the shadow. This is Rembrandt himself—Rembrandt helping to crucify Jesus! How true that is!

The crucifixion is not merely an historical fact. It's a personal experience. It may be an interesting pas-time to point fingers at those who crucified Jesus, but it is a shocking thought that I can be as indifferent as Pilate, as scheming as Caiaphas, as callous as the soldiers, as ruthless as the mob, as cowardly as the disciples. It isn't just what they did...

*'Twas I that shed the sacred blood,
I nailed him to the tree.
I crucified the Christ of God,
I joined the mockery!*

I look again and in the shadows with Rembrandt,
I am there!—**Selected** □



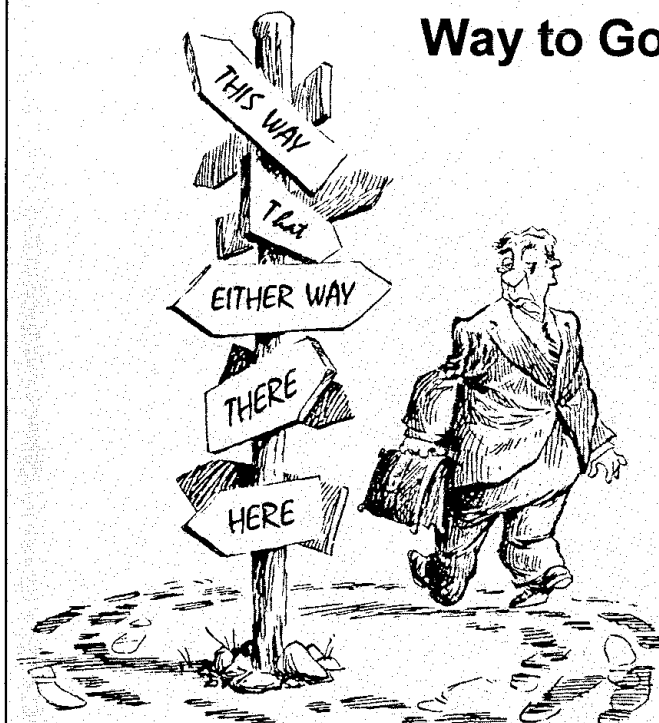
HOW TO LIVE IN THE VIEW OF THE END OF ALL THINGS BEING AT HAND (Continued from Page 8)

their Lord was away they were expected to be busy and were held accountable for that which they had received (Matthew 25:14-30). In the parable of the pounds, "he [the nobleman] called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy [do business] till I come" (Luke 19:13). In both parables the man who did nothing suffered an awful fate (Matthew 25:24-30; Luke 19:20-22). They were accountable and were expected to be busy. The remainder of the 25th chapter of Matthew, following the parable of the talents, suggests some of the ways in which we should be busy, be ministering (Matthew 25:31-46).

The Great Commission "Unto the End of the World"

The work laid out in the Great Commission was set within a time frame, climaxing with the "end of the world." The resurrected Lord said to his disciples, "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even *unto the end of the world* [age]" (Matthew 28:18b-20). The disciples stood gazing as Jesus ascended into heaven. But their attention was abruptly brought back to earth when the two angels said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11). The Lord was coming back, yes, but they had work to do in the meantime. The Great Commission was to be carried out until that time ("unto the end of the

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.**

world"). The Lord has not come back, and the job still is to be done. Men are lost.

Preachers and Elders

Preachers and elders alike are singled out in emphasizing their ministry in view of the end of the world (and second coming of Christ). Paul charged Timothy, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, *who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead at his appearing and kingdom*; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables..." (II Timothy 4:1ff). The second coming of Christ is also mentioned in connection with Paul's injunction to Timothy in I Timothy 6:14. Preaching is serious business. His work was to be done with the second coming and the Day of Judgment in mind. Preachers and elders alike will have to give an account in that day (Acts 20:26,27; James 3:1; Hebrews 13:17), and alike they will receive a "crown" (*stephanos*, victory crown) for a job well done (II Timothy 4:7,8; I Peter 5:4). Yes, let us "occupy" until he comes.

Good Stewards of God

Peter states that in ministering we are simply being "good stewards of the manifold grace of God." He is talking about every Christian. This figure of a steward is likewise used in reference to preachers and elders (I Corinthians 4:1,2; Titus 1:7). Paul asserts, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:2). Jesus had taught (in essence) the same thing: "And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing..." (Read Luke 12:35-48). In that last day all of us will be called upon to give account of our stewardship. Realizing this, and that the end of all things is at hand, let us be good stewards now.

Conclusion

Yes, as the old hymn goes, "There's a great day coming, a great day coming; There's a great day coming by and by." The possibility of the second coming, the Judgment, and the end of all things is ever upon us. This could happen at any moment. Just because it hasn't yet doesn't mean that it won't. Recalling the destruction of the world by the Flood, and anticipating the final destruction, Peter writes, "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (II Peter 3:7). As John the Baptist preached, there is a great day of God's wrath coming (Matthew 3:7). Then Peter continued in II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise [of the second coming and the end of all things], as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (In connection with this, read Romans 2:4-11). To be forewarned is to be forearmed. What an opportunity we have to be ready and living for him! Peter has given us the guidelines in I Peter 4:7-11. Let us follow them, and remember the words of that hymn, "Will Jesus Find Us Watching?" Amen! □



Apology Again

BECAUSE of a lack of space we were unable to include questions and answers relating to the Bible. We do not solicit questions as we do not have all of the answers. However, we hope to be able to comment on said questions in a forthcoming issue. □



You, Your **INSECURITIES**, and GOD

● By JAMES E. GIBBONS

IN PROVERBS 30:21-23 we come across some very interesting Scripture which gives insight into human nature. It has to do with various insecure people. We see how they react (especially after being repressed) when suddenly propelled to higher elevations above their peers when obviously they are not prepared for it psychologically, emotionally, or otherwise. Not many can handle a situation like this with a level head.

This Scripture reads: "For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear. For a servant when he reigneth: and a fool when he is filled with meat: For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress." This "King James" wording is very good, but perhaps the Revised and the New American Standard Versions are even better: "Under three things the earth trembles; under four it cannot bear up: a slave when he becomes king, and a fool when he is filled with food; an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maid when she succeeds her mistress" (RSV).

Very interesting, but this Scripture does not represent isolated instances of bygone things. Whether we like to admit it or not, all of us have insecurities of one kind or another in one way or another. No one is perfect. Thus, it is well for us to consider this matter a little more.

Different Kinds of Insecurities (Feelings of Insecurity)

A person may feel insecure because of low self-esteem, which may be caused by a variety of things (known and unknown). A person may have pegged himself low on the social scale. He may think he has come from the wrong side of the "tracks." He may feel insecure because of being poor or having come out of a background of poverty. He may feel insecure because of a lack of education (or for failure to do his best). An unstable home situation, or having come from one, may cause such feelings. A person may feel insecure because of some physical characteristic or imagined imperfection in this respect. For some not having what they regard as nice clothes, or thinking they are not dressed properly, may cause feelings of insecurity. Wrong living, secret sin, and not being right with God (living under a dark impending cloud) are causes of deep insecurities.

Because of question marks about ones salvation and relationship to God a life may be plagued with insecurity. Uncertainty about the future, etc.—yes, we could go on; there are so many different kinds of insecurities. And, all lives are touched in some way



with them.

I. HOW INSECURITIES MANIFEST THEMSELVES (WITH RESULTANT PROBLEMS)

In General

Some people who feel insecure become quiet and withdrawn while others become loud, boastful, and domineering (put up a front). (What strange creatures we human beings are!) The know-it-all person has to show how much he knows because he feels so insecure. And snobbery really is but a display of insecurity.

Young people feel insecure. The young person who is not quite a man or woman (but almost) is subject to insecurity (and can be a sitting duck for the devil and all kinds of problems). He or she may be loud and blustery. Many feel the need of popularity. They want to prove themselves to the group, and be accepted, and are open to all kinds of problems involving drugs, drink, and sex. Many times girls who feel insecure will want to wear makeup (and a lot of it) and will display themselves (and their bodies) to prove that they are a woman. And what boys will do! But only the weak must prove that they are strong. Only the person who is in doubt about his or her manhood/womanhood must prove it.

The wearing of makeup, jewelry, and a preoccupation with being in style are evidence of insecurity. Cosmetic industries try to make women feel insecure (and unhappy with themselves) so they will buy their products. Many women would not think of facing the world with the face that God gave them (I Corinthians 12:24). They are made to feel insecure

unless they are painted sex objects.

Men and women who are not faithful to their mates are insecure people. It is not always just a matter of simple lust, but insecurity enters the picture. They must keep proving to themselves that they are desirable. (Think how insecure the many times married and divorced person must be!). The man who faces the so-called middle age crisis and chases younger women really is insecure. He must prove to himself that he is still a man.

We are suspicious that the so-called "WOMEN'S LIB" movement is but the outcropping of insecurity. The hyper-sensitivity about the use of the word "man" is really a joke. We are not supposed to say "chairman" anymore; it is now "chairperson," etc. But anyone can see that you can't say "woman" without saying "man" (and the word "woman" literally means a man with a womb). However, the word "man" not only has reference to gender, it is used in the more general sense of humanity or mankind (but, we can't use these words without saying "man" either: hu-man-ity, man-kind; likewise with fe-male).

This writer firmly believes that RACISM (being down on other races) is a form or expression of insecurity. Insecure people seem to be the most racially conscious and discriminating (as well as being class conscious).

The insecure man must continually assert that he is the head of the house and be overbearing with his little wife.

Jealousy is many times evidence of insecurity.
On the job, the insecure boss is the "bossy" boss.
The insecure person over-reacts.
Etc.

In the Bible

Proverbs 30:21-23 has already been called to your attention. The earth trembles when these insecure people are elevated: (1) When the slave becomes a king; (2) When a fool (*nabal*, empty person—a pun) is filled with food (not accustomed to such fancy eating, he further makes a fool of himself when invited to a banquet); (3) When an unloved or odious woman finally gets a husband (odious means arousing or deserving hatred or loathing; disgusting; offensive)—thus the woman who has become an old maid because she is so hateful that no one will have her finally gets a man. Look out! (4) When a handmaid (servant girl) falls heir to her mistress (an illustration of this, up to a point, can be seen in Hagar the handmaid of Sarah. Abraham and Sarah, being childless, followed a custom of their times. Sarah's handmaid Hagar was to bear children for her. When Hagar had conceived by Abraham, we read that "her mistress was despised in her eyes," Genesis 16:4. Then after the son of Hagar was born,

and years later when Abraham and Sarah finally did have a son, Ishmael son of Hagar mocked the baby Isaac—Genesis 21:9-11).

Saul responded in apparent humility to Samuel, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest tribe of Benjamin?...Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (I Samuel 9:21). But it seems that insecurities are mixed with his humility for when Samuel would publicly present him as the new king of Israel, he "hid himself among the stuff [baggage]" (I Samuel 10:22). Saul at first did a good job of being king of Israel, but it seems that his insecurities later played a part in his downfall. He took things into his own hands in offering sacrifices and circumventing the commands of God (I Samuel 12:13,14; 15:10-31). Perhaps the exalted position of the monarchy was too much for him to handle. It went to his head.

The principle of the earth trembling when the servant reigns can be seen in Herod and many of the Caesars. The original Herod (the one who had the babies killed when Jesus was born) was not a king by birth. He was a private citizen whom the Romans made a king, but he had to take his kingdom and consolidate his rule. Consequently his life was one of insecurity; he trusted no one. The fortresses and embellished places of retreat about the land are standing evidence of this. His tyrannical rule testifies to this. Not only did he have the babies killed when Jesus was born, a wife (his most beloved), three sons, two high priests, most of the Sanhedrin, and others suffered the same fate. And the story is the same with so many of the Roman emperors with the demise of the republic. Their position really was an unlawful one, and some of them seem to have been just common soldiers who made it to the top. Their insecurities are seen in their excessive living and tyrannical rule.

We could go on. Not many people can handle sudden and high promotion; a gradual coming up the ladder is better. Even the disciples (apostles to be) of Jesus suffered from this. Most of them were just everyday ordinary people, i.e. fishermen, etc. Their misconception of the kingdom of the Christ is common knowledge. More than once there was bickering among them as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom, or who would get to sit in the positions of greatest honor on the right or left side of Jesus. Of course with their spiritual change and enlightenment, these thoughts vanished. Of all the Bible characters, Joseph in the Old Testament presents a superb example of a man who could handle his insecurities.

In the Church

It is hard for the insecure person (one overly so) to be a real Christian (if his insecurities are not

(Continued on Next Page)

You, Your INSECURITIES, and GOD

(Continued from Previous Page)

brought under control). Romans 12:2 plainly says: "BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD." There is so much in this present world at variance with God (I John 2:15-17; I Peter 4:1-5). "Broad is the way that leads to destruction" (Matthew 7:13). But the insecure person will feel that he must go along with the crowd. He can't say "no" when offered a drink and will laugh at the dirty jokes. If the women of the world are wearing indecent "mini-skirt" dresses, the insecure Christian will be under great pressure and want to comply. If the men of the world are letting their hair grow long (like a woman), the insecure Christian will want to do the same (although the Bible says it is a shame for men to have long hair). Usually I Timothy 2:9,10 and I Peter 3:1-6 are totally disregarded (but they are as much a part of the Bible as John 3:16 and Acts 2:38).

Many leaders in the church, who think of themselves as self-respecting free men in a free society, may really have the heart of a slave (Proverbs 30:22). When preachers and elders like to be the "boss" and lord it over their brethren, they are really showing how insecure and unqualified they are. Jesus plainly said that such a procedure would not be in his kingdom (Mark 10:42-45; Matthew 24:45-51). Elders are not to be "lords over God's heritage, but... ensamples to the flock" (I Peter 5:3). Diotrephes well illustrates this negative element (III John 9). Even though Paul had the authority of an inspired apostle, it was used with restraint (II Corinthians 13:10; 10:8-18; etc.). These thoughts make us recall the qualifications of the elder, one of them being, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (I Timothy 3:6). Spiritual preparation was necessary for him to handle/rid himself of his insecurities. The church is a priesthood of believers (a kingdom of kings and priests unto God, Revelation 1:6), and having weak, insecure persons lording it over others is very much out of place.

No doubt insecurities account for much apostasy in connection with the church (among leaders and the rank and file membership). Some cannot cope with their insecurities in being associated with a small church group, and they desire something bigger. Some preachers may crave denominational status or recognition (which the simplicity of the Lord's church does not afford), so they seek it elsewhere. In reference to some of Paul's writings, the apostle Peter said "they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (II Peter 3:16). Instability and insecurity seem to enter into their misapplica-

tion of the Scriptures. They try to force meanings that are not there to meet their own fancies. A stable person will handle the Word of God aright and not be likely to be carried away with the different winds of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). An interesting Scripture that has a bearing on this is found in II Timothy 3:6. The wording in some of the older translations is confusing here, but the idea in the original is how gullible insecure and guilt-laden women are to false teachers who go from house to house. Actually the word translated "silly women" (KJV) is the diminutive for women, meaning little women. It is used as a word of contempt. They are so weak and insecure and open to false teachers, "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (verse 7). They who are right with God and know it (really knowing God's Word), have nothing to fear from false teachers. They are happy, well-adjusted, and content. Apostasy is far from them.

II. FACING UP TO AND GETTING OUR INSECURITIES UNDER CONTROL

We need to face up to our insecurities and get them under control. God knows who and what we are (and what we are not), and all of us basically are the same (sinful human beings). Hebrews 4:12 tells us that God is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and the next verse reads that "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). All basically have the same fears, the same problems, the same needs (similar insecurities—some more, some less than others). There is no room for snobbery. There is no room for self-righteousness or conceit. There are no big "I's" or little "U's" before God. In the language addressed to the Corinthians, we ask, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (I Corinthians 4:7). And that is true any way you want to look at it. We need to stop being uptight and defuse our feelings of insecurity. We need to be honest with ourselves. Face yourself with all your imperfections and insecurities. Be honest, and go from there. Like the alcoholic at the AA meeting who finally has come face to face with himself, stripping away all the veneer, publicly states: "I am an alcoholic," you say: I am a sinner, I am a weak human being with problems and needs. This may not be a lovely sight. In fact, it may be a traumatic and soul-shattering experience, but you will be glad that you did. Jesus said, "Blessed [happy, fortunate] are the poor in spirit [they who declare spiritual bankruptcy, acknowledge their need]: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). The strong man can talk about his weaknesses; the weak man cannot—he is devastated. Be devastated! Get your values straight

I Stood with Book Extended High

I stood above the crazy crowd
With Book extended high;
But their blind eyes beheld it not
As vainly they went by!

I cried aloud with voice so clear,
So loud, so bold it seemed;
But their deaf ears refused to hear,
To heed and be redeemed!

I stood amid the crazy crowd
With Bible opened wide,
I vied again for their regard;
They hastened in their stride!

O world, are you so far astray
As not to notice wrong?
So much engrossed in mad pursuit
of vanity's strange song?

But still we have to preach the Word
To warn the sons of man
That none may say they haven't heard
Of God's salvation plan.

—By James E. Gibbons

about what really matters, and go from there.

God and his amazing grace will help us get back on the track here. Through Jesus Christ He will take away all of our sins (I Timothy 1:15; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38). No more hidden insecurities here. "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). Think of that! God who knows all things chooses not to know (remember no more) my sins when He looks at me! He forgives and forgets (and may we do the same—to self and to others). Christ becomes our all. Paul declared, "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). Self with all of its insecurities has been discarded. There are no reasons for us to have defensive insecure feelings for "of him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (I Corinthians 1:30). We are not the object of attention and focus now; Jesus Christ is. We glory in him.

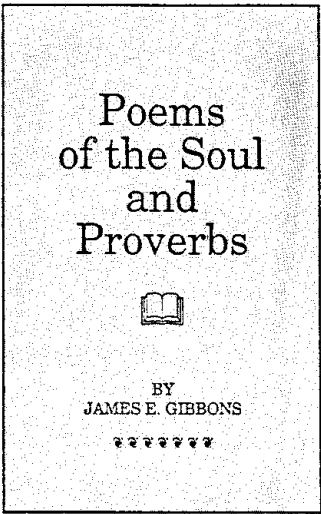
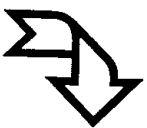
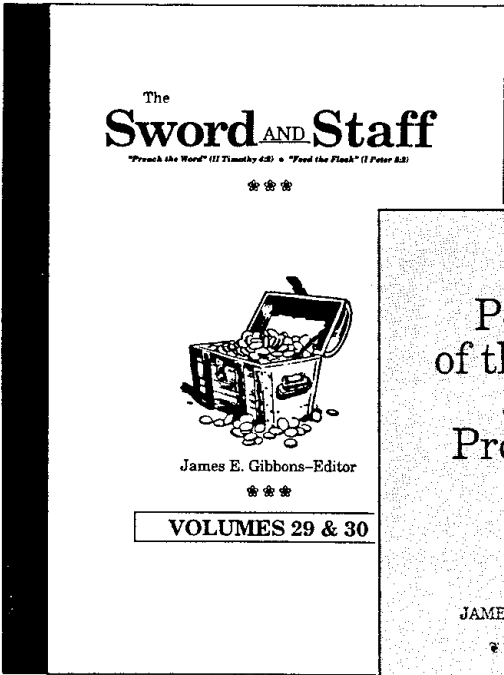
We have peace; we have hope; we have security (and it is all engulfed in love). "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God...And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts of the Holy Ghost (Spirit) which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-5). The apostle John further tells us that "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him...There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment..." (I John 4:16-18). You know that when you pray "the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ" (Philippians 4:6,7,13), and that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. "...For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5,6). In being a Christian you know you are a winner even if you "lose."

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Psalms 23).

With self gotten out of the way, and all of its unlovely limitations, God is all and in all. Insecurities will be under control; even subside and go away. Self-consciousness involved with insecurities is really evidence of too much self, pride. Actually self-consciousness is inverted pride (perhaps mingled with humility). If pride was not there we would not even think about what people thought. But as a Christian it really doesn't matter. Our values are straight. Christ is all. He is everything. □

NOTE: *Our reading audience has doubled and increased many, many times since this article appeared in THE SWORD AND STAFF several years ago. We have now shared it with you, our expanded reading audience (both new and old), trusting that it will be helpful to all. Truth is ever timeless and timely.—Editor*

Compromising the Truth does not solve church problems, it only compounds them.



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