The

Sword AND Staff

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

When You Do Your Alms, When You Pray, and When You Fast

WE HEAR the word "when," and we think in terms of the time, occasion, or point that something happens. The word can be used to state a fact that such has taken place or is anticipated. Like the word "whenever," it can sometimes indicate that it happens every time. It can imply that what takes place is the ordinary and expected course of action or is usual under the circumstances. This is especially obvious when our background knowledge of such occurrences all points in this direction. What we know has simply been verified.

With all of this in mind, let us look into several verses of Scripture that make use of the word "when" in this way. Things are spoken of taking place as a matter of course, as that which is expected, and as that which is usual. This study should make the truths considered more emphatic and obvious. The Lord intended for them to be universal and commonly practiced.—Editor



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

THE SERMON on the Mount (Matthew 5,6,7) is about attaining the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:6,10,20; 6:33; 7:21). The behavior that is expected in being a disciple of Christ is set forth here. What the Lord says in Matthew 5:20 stands out as a key verse, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no

case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (As is common knowledge, the scribes and Pharisees were the religious leaders of that day, and they were many times hypocritical). Having said this, the Lord proceeds to tell how that our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. The remainder of this chapter shows that it must be more than a legal, letter-of-the-law righteousness. It must be spiritual, all-inclusive, coming from the heart. Then the first 18 verses of chapter six, again in contrast with the scribes and Pharisees, shows that our righteousness must be more than a showy, pretentious righteousness. This section of Scripture, Matthew 6:1-18, brings us to our present study. This involves use of the word "when."

I. "WHEN THOU DOEST THINE ALMS" (Matthew 6:1-4)

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore *when* thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.

(Continued on Page 5)

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

INFORMATION:

We are totally dependent upon your financial backing in the publication of this religious paper. To get on the mailing list, send a contribution. Subsidizing gifts are definitely needed along for us to continue this unselfish labor of love for God and truth. You may use the date affixed beside your address as a reminder to send an offering (perhaps annually). No notices are sent. Make out your checks to CHURCH IN MOUNT AIRY. The extent (and frequency) of publication is determined by incoming support. James E. Gibbons is editor. (Money received for printed material is all considered as an offer-—THANK YOU—

Proverbially *SPEAKING...*

ANTICIPATION and hope bring stability and motivation to our lives.

"Those who can see God's hand in everything can best leave everything in God's hand."

Better reconsider if you think you are "burned out" on religion; there is another place that has not burned out and where "the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48).

"The only real way to 'prepare to meet thy God' is to live with thy God, so that to meet Him shall be nothing strange."

As God is perfect, His judgment will be perfect in that great and final day; all will be amazed by the wisdom of it, and none will find occasion to find fault with it.

"The lake must be calm if the heavens are to be reflected on its surface."

Death can be a beautiful thing when it closes the last chapter of a beautiful life, one that has been godly and lived for Christ.

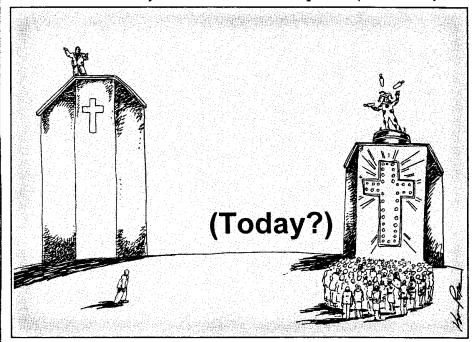
"A Christian must keep the faith, but not to himself."

Be kind for kindness begets kindness (each kind after its kind).

"To have a friend be a friend."



HOW THE EARLY CHURCH TOLD OF ITS GROWTH "But the Word of God Grew and Multiplied" (Acts 12:24)



IN THE EARLY DAYS of the church when people were converted to Christ, and victories were won, different words were used to express the event (and all of them were most meaningful and expressive). But of the most outstanding way that such a happening was recorded was simply by saying that "the word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24). On the day of Pentecost when the church of Christ initially "got off the ground," the apostles preached (and among them Peter). Acts 2:41 (42) reads. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The high priest and Sanhedrin were much disturbed because the apostles "filled Jerusalem" with their doctrine (Acts 5:28). Then we read in Acts 6:7 these exciting words: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly: and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Acts 19:20, recording victories in Ephesus, said, "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

True victories (and church growth), as far as the true church is concerned, are accomplished and understood only in relationship to the Word of God. As we noticed, the Word of God grows and is multiplied. This is not to be taken in a crudely naive and literal sense as if the Bible became a bigger and bigger Book. No, the meaning is that the impact and influence of the Word grows. As Jesus many times taught in his simple (but not simplistic) parables, the word is the seed of the kingdom. Growth and harvest in the kingdom are understood only in relationship to the Word, the seed that produces the kingdom. The good and honest heart enters into how the Word is received. In Acts 2, they that gladly received the Word were baptized. The Word was received and assimilated into their lives as they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. The Word of God continued to grow as evil forces were defeated, and the cause of truth and right prevailed. The Word of God is what produced and produces all of this.

In the light of all of this we can only urge the most extensive use and study of the Word of God by the church (and at the same time we have the utmost disgust for anything which detracts from the Word of God). May the Bible increasingly be the text that we study in the church (be done with weak, watered-down anemic literature!). It is not enough to study about the Bible with our little prefabricated lessons on telling us how nice it is to be nice. Let us actually study the Bible. Let us preach the Bible. Although others may belittle it as being old fashioned, don't be afraid to give chapter and verse. Convert them on a healthy diet of the Word of God, and they will still be around after you are gone. How disrespectful and utterly disgusting is the use of "gimmicks, goodies, and gumdrops." Men are wiser than God it seems (and want to take some short cuts). While the use of the Word of God is reduced to a minimum, slick promotional gimmicks are used to expedite church growth. It would appear that some are so skilled in this that they can swell the church rolls, and slide them on in without even converting them. But, can it be said of their conversion, indoctrination (?), loyalty, and spirituality that "the word of God grew and multiplied"? If we "convert" them on gimmicks and entertainment, we will have to have the same to keep them coming.

The kind of church growth that God wants is accomplished by His Word and in connection with His Word. Oh, that we could hear more of the Word of God increasing, growing, and multiplying!

(Thank you, Almighty God, for your Word and those who still love it and preach it!).

-Reprint from The Sword and Staff

PITHY POINTS TO PONDER

(Proverbially Speaking)

WHEN we find Jesus, we find the missing *piece* (and the missing *peace*) in our lives.

The purpose of preaching is not to hit people between their eyes, but to open their eyes.

Let us keep our eyes on Christ and not on men; too many times yesterday's religious leaders are today's religious apostates and compromisers.

We live in the era of the mega-church and the mini-Christian.

Let us not polish the sepulchres of the prophets (Matthew 23:39), but embellish the message that they preached.

Don't be unduly flattered when flowers are strewn along your way; flowers wilt so soon.

We sin and are out of favor with God when we are a respecter of persons, showing partiality and favoritism (James 2:1-9; 3:17).

False religion thrives on ignorance, and the worst kind is educated ignorance.

I get very impatient with people who have no patience.

Doonesbury







BY GARRY TRUDEAU



THE WORLD LOOKS ON AND LAUGHS AT MODERN CHURCH GROWTH TACTICS.

The Great "I WILL"

OUR GOD is not only the great "I AM," who is, who knows, who cares. but He is also the great "I WILL" as shown by the following Scripture passages, and what a wealth of COMFORT they contain.

I WILL bless thee...Genesis 12:2

I WILL not fail thee...Joshua 1:5

I WILL heal thee...II Kings 20:5

I WILL guide thee...Psalms 32:8

I WILL help thee...Isaiah 41:10

I WILL deliver thee...Psalms 50:15

I WILL give you a new heart... Ezekiel 36:26

I WILL hold thine hand...Isaiah 42:6

I WILL not forget thee...Isaiah 49:15

I WILL comfort thee...Isaiah 66:13

I WILL forgive thee...Jeremiah 31:34

I WILL restore thee...Jeremiah 30:17

-Selected \square \mathbf{m}

Boll Weevil Monument

IN ENTERPRISE, Alabama, there is a monument honoring the boll weevil. Before 1915 cotton was king in the South. Farmers depended on cotton to survive. It was their money crop. Then along came this destructive little creature, the boll weevil, and it destroyed the cotton crop. Farmers were in danger of losing everything so they began to raise peanuts instead. Within three years they were more prosperous than ever.

If the boll weevil had not come along they would never have discovered the peanut and prosperity. So they built a monument to this destructive little creature.

Many of our greatest blessings are disguised as tragedies. When Christ died on the cross the disciples were heartbroken. They thought that all was lost, the Redeemer had failed. The tragedy of his death set the stage for the joy of his resurrection.

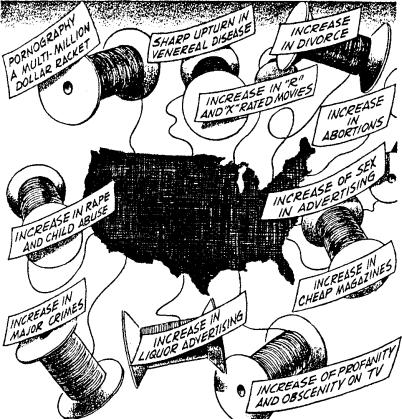
When the boll weevils of life move in and threaten to destroy us, let us remember that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). The cross is a monument to the world's darkest hour and yet it is the hope of our greatest blessings (Galatians 6:14; Philippians 3:7,8).

—Rudy Senn

Spiritual Food for Thought

By Andrew Gibbons

Rotten Thread Put Into The American Fabric



THERE IS NO PEACE, SAITH THE LORD, UNTO THE WICKED. _ 154.48: 22 Des Meemon Carallana Caral

SOME years ago I knew a man who worked for a thread manufacturing company that sold thread to shoe manufacturing companies. You will realize how long by the topic of our conversation. It went like this, "You know Converse makes a better tennis shoe than Nike, because Converse uses a higher grade of thread." His observation was based on the durability. not the style, and on the practicality, not the market position.

Be that as it may, many things aren't made the way they once were. Cheaper inferior threads are being used. This is also true in regards to our nation. The tough threads of purity, morality and honesty are being replaced with the threads of sexual perversion, anything goes (no standards of right and wrong), lying and cheating.

Threads of righteousness have been replaced with the rotten threads of sin. Whether or not you are engaged in it, our country has become a country that glorifies every social ill as norm. If we aren't careful, this great nation is going to self-destruct.

We need not worry about an external enemy, we are going to achieve it from within. Wake up America! Remember the great Roman Empire fell because of the following reasons according to historian Edward Gibbon 1788:

- 1. The rapid increase in divorce, causing a breakdown of the family unit.
- 2. Higher and higher taxes to support the government in its efforts to give free bread and serv-
 - 3. A mad craze for pleasure.
- 4. The focus on building great armaments while the true enemy was within.
- 5. The decay of religion. Faith was a mere form, losing touch with

Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.'

When You Do Your Alms When You Pray, and When You Fast

(Continued from Page 1)

Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

The Wonderful Teachings of Christ

Notice the Lord said, "When thou doest thine alms..." By saying "when" it is implied that they will do alms. This was all part of the normal and expected course of action in being a faithful follower of Christ. Here the Lord lays out the non-ostentatious manner in which all almsgiving should be done.

This word rendered alms simply means mercy-deeds. They are benevolent acts of kindness in giving, sharing, and helping those less fortunate. Indirectly this section of Scripture also teaches tithing. Almsgiving was in addition to the tithe. Among the Jews, the tithe was brought into the storehouse of the Lord. Almsgiving came from above the tithe in everyday life as the opportunity to be helpful presented itself. Now Christians, as compassionate people, will excel in responding to human needs.

The apostle Paul admonished in Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Stressing the need of works, not just words, James questioned, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James 2:15,16). John takes this thought a step further, putting the emphasis upon love. "But whose hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth" (I John 3:17.18).

Jesus, who went about doing good (Acts 10:38; Matthew 4:23,24), exemplified all that he taught and expected in his disciples. A classic example of his teaching involving mercy-deeds (and being a neighbor) is seen in the parable of the good Samaritan (Read Luke 10:30-37). When his critic agreed on

who had done the right thing in this parable by saying, "He that shewed mercy on him," the Lord said, "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37).

The Wonderful Teachings Implemented

As the book of Acts unfolds, we see the early church following through on what the Lord taught in being compassionate toward the needy. In the time immediately following Pentecost, we read of an interesting and exciting episode involving Peter and John. "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple: Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:1-6). This poor beggar received immediate healing, of far greater value than silver and gold. The early church collectively took care of the needs of the poor widows in their midst (Acts 6). Acts 9:36-42 records a beautiful and typical story of a Christian lady named Dorcas. She is described as a woman "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Her works followed her in death as the widows she had helped displayed her goodness. They were "weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them." In Acts 11:27-30 when the Christians at Antioch heard of the hard times that were coming upon their Judean brethren, they responded as Christ would have them respond. We read, "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul [Paul]." And thus the wonderful story of love goes on and on as the followers of Christ walk in the steps of their Master, spontaneously implementing the "when" of almsgiving.

God Does Not Forget

The writer of Hebrews says that "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10; cf. Matthew 10:42). All of this is vividly brought out in how the Lord depicted that Great and Final Day of Judgment in Matthew

(Continued on Next Page)

When You Do Your Alms, When You Pray, and When You Fast

(Continued from Previous Page)

25:31-46. Men will stand before him on the right and the left and be divided as sheep and goats. Almsdeeds and all deeds of benevolence will be a great factor in the final judgment. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34-40).

II. "WHEN THOU PRAYEST" (Matthew 6:5-15)

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly..."

Jesus Taught and Practiced Prayer

Notice the Lord repeatedly spoke of "when thou prayest." He looked upon prayer as being a regular and vital part of the disciple's life. Again, like with almsgiving, when his disciples prayed, it must not be showy and pretentious. Private prayer is encouraged, being alone with God, and even a model prayer is outlined so they would know what to pray about and how to express themselves. God is personal. He is our heavenly Father, and we are to talk to Him. He wants us to look to Him in every way.

Jesus prayed. Being the only begotten Son of God (God in human form), he was on the most personal basis with the heavenly Father. The gospel of John has much to say about the relationship of the Father and the Son. Luke says a lot about prayer and Jesus praying. No doubt, what his disciples observed profoundly impressed them. We read, "And

it came to pass that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord teach us to pray..." (Luke 11:1). It is no wonder that his disciples requested this. Beside of Jesus they felt that they knew nothing about prayer at all.

Let us highlight some of the references to Jesus and prayer. As he was baptized and began his ministry, he prayed (Luke 3:21). Mark tells us that "in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). Luke says, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer



to God" (Luke 6:12). Before eating food, he customarily prayed with the breaking of bread (Mark 8:6). He was alone praying with his disciples when Peter made that great confession (Luke 9:18-20). When the transfiguration took place, Jesus was up in the mountain praying with Peter, James and John (Luke 9:26-36). He prayed before raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41-44). The great high priestly prayer of Jesus is found in John 17. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before the crucifixion when he said "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:39-46). And he prayed on the cross. His ministry, and whole life, was hemmed in by prayer.

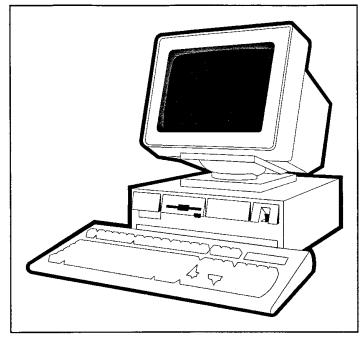
When the Early Church Prayed

It is revealing to survey the book of Acts and see when the early church prayed. What we find here has significant implications as to when we should be praying, too. Notice.

(1) The followers of Christ prayed in the upper (Continued on Page 10)

EDITORIAL **Byways**

DEFAULT SETTINGS IN COMPUTERS AND OTHER THINGS



THIS WRITER is a Johnny-come-lately in the computer world. This fascinating world almost passed us by before we acknowledged it, and there is a lot of catching up to do. But, believe it or not, we are getting out *The Sword and Staff* by this means now.

We found the computer world has a language all its own, computerese, an artificial jargon whose meaning is not always apparent. One such word in this language is "default."

In using a computer, there is that which is called default settings. The computer and software programs operate on these predetermined settings unless they are changed. The C prompt is the basic default setting which remains the same. The hard disk drive that operates the system is always accessed by this means. Then your word processor program, among other things, has default settings all its own. Such settings are the type font used, size, etc. You may change the default settings, but left to itself, the computer always comes up or goes back to its default settings.

As we mused on these matters, it occurred to us there are default settings in the religious world. There is that which comes from God. There is that which is of man. The default setting of the true church and religion is the Bible, the Word of God. We want a "thus saith the Lord." The default setting of apostasy always centers in man, man-made organizations, and the traditions and doctrines of man. This is quite simply spoken, but it is true.

The first major apostasy in the early church, which climaxed in the great apostasy and Catholicism, was a departure from the simple organization and autonomy of the local church. One elder was exalted above another. These elders started meeting with exalted elders from other local churches. District and regional councils came into being, superseding the local church. Eventually the bishop of the church at Rome claimed authority over everyone else, claiming to be the head of the church. Beware of all organizational movements beyond the local church. This is the default setting of apostasy.

The mind of the genuine New Testament Christian is programmed to follow the New Testament and that alone. If we sincerely claim to be identified with the nondenominational and undenominational New Testament church, our mind-set will always be in that direction. The local undenominational church is all that we find in the New Testament. We will not tolerate innovations or deviations. Men may change, but the truth of God does not change.

The default setting of the real Christian, simply stated, is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33a). God and the church always come first in his life. This prompts him to lay aside every weight and every sin (Hebrews 12:1). He abstains from "all appearance of evil" (I Thessalonians 5:22). Even that which is questionable must not be in his life. He is out to please God in all things.

What is your default setting, religiously speaking? What you believe and practice will all be determined by this setting. Let us be programmed to follow the Word of God and that alone.—*J.E.G.* \Box

The Lord's Way NO DENOMINATIONS Just His Church

Matthew 16:16-18; Ephesians 4:4-6; Colossians 1:18 I Corinthians 1:10-13; Galatians 1:8; I Timothy 3:15; 4:16

 \Box

Man divorced from God builds beautiful temples to himself.

Guidelines on How to Dress Modestly From a Prison Handbook

THERE ARE some religious people who are reluctant to take the Bible seriously when it speaks of modest apparel (I Timothy 2:8,9). And if you suggest that the Christian's body be decently covered, they tend to look upon you as a prude. They disregard the fact that immodest dress is a contributing factor in producing immodest and improper thoughts (and actions). Jesus warned, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-30). Even in times more ancient, Job mused the same question, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1). King David was less fortunate. The lust of the eyes led him into the overt act of adultery (II Samuel 11:2-4). His story is tragic history.

It seems at times some people of the world are wiser than the supposed children of light. The following comes from a handbook for visitors to the prison system of the state of Florida. Read it and realize the truthfulness of this article. God will hold you accountable if you are a stumbling block to others. This is a serious matter.

From the handbook:

WHAT TO WEAR WHEN YOU VISIT

It is not our purpose to pass judgment of any kind in limiting the kinds of clothing that may be allowed in the visitation area. These limits are designed to prevent harassment, discomfort and embarrassing incidents that may spoil your visit. Some examples of clothing that are not appropriate for the visitation area are:

- 1. Mini or micro skirts
- 2. Shorts or cutoffs
- 3. Halter tops and tank tops
- 4. Fishnet jerseys
- 5. Excessively tight fitting pants or jeans
- 6. Any clothing with suggestive slogans or illustrations

We also ask that men wear shirts at all times and that ladies wear bras or other suitable garments. If for comforts sake you find it necessary to travel to the center in clothing mentioned above as not appropriate, we invite you to bring a change of clothing and use the restroom in the waiting area to change before entering visitation.

(Thanks to Ben Bradmon for this information).

The "Macho" Image

____M_

MEN in our society are less and less interested in the gospel and the salvation of their souls. The "macho" image has caused men to be less and less interested in spiritual things. The "macho man" drinks in bars, wears his shirt open to his belt buckle, and seduces all the women he can. His temper is hot, and he will break your head if you get in his way! Now isn't that a terrible "role model" for our young men? Our young men need to see fathers and grandfathers who strive to do the will of the Lord, and be taught to honor and respect them. They need to be taught that real strength comes from striving to follow the example of our Master, Jesus Christ.—Selected

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

- 1. Who was the original builder of the city of Ninevah?
- 2. Who became the wife of Abraham after the death of Sarah?
- 3 While on his deathbed what unusual thing did Jacob do in reference to the sons of Joseph?
- 4. What are the names of four different men and four different women in the Bible who are said to be "fair," "goodly," or "beautiful" (and there are others)?
- 5. Which tribe of Israel was Moses from?
- 6. Which of the twelve tribes of Israel settled on the east of the Jordan River?
- 7. Who was the father of Joshua?
- 8. What was the name of a left-handed judge who delivered ancient Israel from the oppression of the Moabites?
- 9. What prophet was commanded to speak unto dry bones and they became alive?
- 10. What is the Old Testament name that means the same as Jesus?
- 11. What gifts did the wise men present to baby Jesus?
- 12. What was the message of the preaching of John the Baotist?
- 13. How many baskets full of food were left after Jesus fed the 5000, and how many were left after he fed the 4000?
- 14. In the story that Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus, how many brothers did the rich man have?
- 15. What is the only recorded occasion of Jesus ever writing anything?
- 16. Of the seven men selected to "serve tables" in the early church, which one had been a Gentile proselyte to the Jewish religion before becoming a Christian?
- 17. After what happening did a great persecution take place against the early church in Jerusalem?
- 18. What prompted Paul and Silas to be cast into prison while preaching in Philippi?
- 19. What N.T. epistle was written to a church that was exemplary and seemed to be free from problems except for two women who were somewhat at odds?
- 20. The epistle of III John was written to whom?

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

READERS'



KENTUCKY:

■ "I enjoy your SWORD AND STAFF so-o much.

"In an 'evil generation' you have displayed much courage to speak boldly on various subjects others may smooth over to please itching ears.

"God bless and keep going."

■ "Please find check enclosed to renew my subscription to THE SWORD AND STAFF and also please send me a copy of POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS. I enjoy your publication and ask God to continue to bless you and all your endeavors."

INDIANA:

■ "Please remove our name from your mailing list. Thank you."

ILLINOIS:

■ "Enclosed, check for work well done. We enjoy THE SWORD AND STAFF very much and pass it around for others to read.

"Please add...and also send me POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS..."

IOWA:

■ "Keep up the good work with your publication. We look forward to each issue, and read, and sometimes reread many of the articles.

"Your paper is, by far, the most truth filled and encouraging paper that we receive. We pass it on ...

"May our Lord surely bless you all in your efforts to keep your paper before the people."

MISSOURI:

■ "Please take my name off the mailing list."

NEBRASKA:

■ "Thank you for the work in the Lord to get the Truth out. We at...support your efforts."

OKLAHOMA:

"...Thanks again for the messages of truth in THE SWORD AND STAFF. May God bless you with a long life and sound mind in order that the truth will continue to reach out to so many."

■ "I have just realized that I have stopped receiving your fine magazine, THE SWORD AND STAFF. Please renew my subscription if it is possible. Your magazine is a valuable tool for spiritual growth in our household.

"Also please send bound volumes...

"I always enjoy the long article by James E. Gibbons. Keep up the good work. I also enjoy the poems..."

TEXAS:

- "Thank you for an excellent treasure, good truthful reading from the Word."
- "For several years I have been receiving THE SWORD AND STAFF. I want to send a check...although I know it will not begin to pay for all the issues I have received. I enjoy reading it very much and usually agree with what you print.

"I do so appreciate what you have had in the last two issues concerning I Timothy 2:9-10 that the 'not' means 'not'...but most members still chose to ignore the 'not' and explain it away and run 'moderation' all the way through these verses instead of the 'in' and 'with' and 'not with,' the contrast that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write...

"I really do appreciate you not 'pushing' for things that many of us consider doubtful. There is a safe course that all of us can take without offending our consciences for we all know it would not harm anyone to do these things or to leave off certain things. I believe this is the Scriptural way for unity. Many would gladly give up a kidney for a transplant for a loved one but would not give up one practice that is questionable for love and unity in the church Christ died for.

"Thank you again for the paper."

Answers to: BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Nimrod, Genesis 10:8-12 (the KJV is a little confusing here); 2. Genesis 25:1; 3. He in essence adopted them and gave them patriarchal blessings as sons, Genesis 48; 4. MEN: Joseph, Genesis 39:6; Moses, Exodus 2:2 (Acts 7:20); David, I Samuel 16:11-13 (17:42); Absalom, Il Samuel 14:25; WOMEN: Sarah, Genesis 12:11, 14; Rebekah, Genesis 24:15,16 (26:7); Rachel, Genesis 29:17; Vashti, Esther 1:11; OTHERS: I Samuel 9:2; Il Samuel 13:1; Il Samuel 14:27; I Kings 1:3,4; Esther 2:7; Job 42:15; etc.; 5. Exodus 2:1ff; 6. Numbers 32; 7. Joshua 1:1; 8. Judges 3:12-30; 9. Ezekiel 37; 10. Joshua; 11. Matthew 2:11; 12. Matthew 3:1-3; 13. Matthew 14:15-21; Matthew 15:32-38; 14. Luke 16:28; 15. John 8:1-8; 16. Acts 6:1-6; 17. Acts 8:1; 18. Acts 16:16-24; 19. Philippians 4:2; 20. III John 1.

When You Do Your Alms, When You Pray, and When You Fast

(Continued from Page 6)

room in the time leading up to Pentecost after his ascension (Acts 1:12-14). On the day of Pentecost the church came into being. It has been said that the church was born in a prayer meeting and always thrives in an atmosphere of prayer.

- (2) After the 3,000 were baptized on the day of Pentecost, we read, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:37-42). It is very important that prayer be among the many things in which we continue steadfast as a new Christian.
- (3) "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour" (Acts 3:1; cf. Acts 10:9). It is good to have a time set aside for prayer each day.
- (4) The early church prayed in connection with the preaching of the gospel when confronted by adverse and unfavorable circumstances (Acts 4:23-33). The prayer was not for deliverance from personal danger but boldness in preaching the gospel.
- (5) In taking care of the poor widows, the apostles desired that men be set aside to serve tables. They said, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:1-4). To be an effective worker for Christ, prayer and the ministry of the Word cannot be separated.
- (6) Whether it be seven men selected to serve tables, evangelists being sent out to preach the gospel, or the ordination of elders, prayer accompanied the setting aside of workers in the church (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 14:23).
- (7) Stephen, as he was suffering martyrdom and death, prayed. We read, "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he feel asleep" (Acts 7:59,60).
- (8) The church met in the house of Mary the mother of John Mark, and prayed for Peter who was in prison possibly facing execution (Acts 12:5,12). Evidently they were praying for his faithfulness rather than his release as the story unfolds. Special circumstances and needs bring forth special prayers in the church.
- (9) Paul and Silas, after being severely beaten, were committed to prison in Philippi. We read, "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang

A MOST PROFITABLE PRAYER



praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25). In this connection, James 5:13 comes to mind, "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms."

- (10) Christians in parting company one from another prayed. The moving scene of Paul leaving the Ephesian elders comes before us. "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him..." (Acts 20:36-38).
- (11) Paul prayed in thanksgiving before eating. "And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat" (Acts 27:35).
- (12) Paul prayed in thanksgiving for fellow Christians and the encouragement that he derived from them. "And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The Three Taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage" (Acts 28:15).

Next we could turn to the epistles and amplify more in detail these great truths gleaned from the book of Acts. But our point has been made about the "when" of prayer. Prayer is always appropriate. Paul stated in I Timothy 2:8, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Peter encourages his readers to cast "all your care upon him [God]; for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7). Then Paul further admonishes, "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17). The practice of prayer will always be a part of the life of a real Christian. This is a great privilege, and this sums it up.

III. "WHEN THOU FASTEST" (Matthew 6:16-18)

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

Again the word "when" confronts us. There is much feasting and playing going on today in church circles, but for some reason fasting never comes up as an option. Yes, the early church ate food together (Acts 2:46), but they also fasted (Acts 13:1-3). When the Lord said, "Moreover, when ye fast," he anticipated the practice of fasting among his followers. He even lays out guidelines for them in order to avoid the pitfalls of the scribes and Pharisees.

The teaching of Jesus on fasting can be seen in his answer to the question of the disciples of John the Baptist. "Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft. but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridegroom mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Matthew 9:14-17).

We see that fasting arises out of the urgency and spiritual intensity of the situation. When Jesus was with his disciples it was occasion for much celebration, not fasting. After his crucifixion and he had gone back to heaven the situation would change. Their circumstances would be more somber. The apostle Paul later wrote, "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in *fastings*" (II Corinthians 6:4,5). Jesus would not put old wine into new bottles. He would not follow the practice of John the Baptist and the

Pharisees, artificially imposing fasting upon his followers. It would come from within, being more spiritual, and at the appropriate time.

Fasting, as such, is not commanded in the New Testament. Rather, it is expected. As we said, it should arise out of the urgency or spiritual intensity of the situation in which we find ourselves (or we wish to find ourselves). It is a personal matter. This was true of the Son of God in fasting following his baptism and facing his earthly ministry (Matthew 4; Luke 4). This was true of the brethren as they ministered to the Lord at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3), workers being sent out, and as elders are ordained (Acts 14:23). It is likewise true of husband and wife as they individually feel the need of aloneness to give themselves "to fasting and prayer" (I Corinthians 7:5). Sometimes spiritual intensity takes away the desire for marital relations and physical food. Jesus said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," when his disciples tried to get him to eat (John 4:31-34). Ideally, this is the way that fasting should occur, natural, spontaneous, without being externally imposed on people.

But there is reason for much concern today. The modern church knows much about feasting and playing, but little about fasting and praying. Spiritually, these are somber times in which we live. Who is concerned? The warning of the prophet of old should quicken our hearts, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1). In essence we are saying that we "have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17). Like the rich farmer that God called a fool and who had "goods laid up for many years," we have said to ourselves, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19). Does this describe us: "Whose God is their belly" (Philippians 3:19)? As James said, have we "nourished our hearts as in the day of slaughter" (James 5:5)?

Yes, there is much over-indulgence and feasting going on today. But where is the fasting? Have we ever fasted? Do we know anyone who does? The "when" of fasting should be a reality in our lives. The Lord expected (and expects) it.

THREE GOOD RULES

 \square

I WILL say nothing that I would not want to be saying when Jesus comes.

I will do nothing that I would not want to be doing when Jesus comes.

I will go to no place that I would not want to be when Jesus comes.

 \square

Pertinent Thoughts

WHAT IS A MISSIONARY?

IN COMMON USAGE, there are 3 classes of preachers. A *minister* works in a local congregation; an *evangelist* moves about holding meetings; a *missionary* [usually working in a foreign country] also commonly covers other workers: doctors, nurses, secretaries, orphanage personnel, etc. and the spouses of each.

Where is all of this found in Scripture? Nowhere! Some will say that the word is from Latin for "one sent," which is the same as the Greek "apostle." They cite a few texts in which others besides the 12 and Paul are called apostles. All of this is true and worthy of study, but has little to do with today's common usage.

Consider. Would you call an elder and his wife "elders"? Then why call a foreign evangelist and his wife "missionaries"? Would an elder's wife give an elders' report to the whole church? Then why should a female missionary (wife or single) give a report to the whole church? If a "local" evangelist dies, will his wife carry on his work? In the denominations, yes. In churches of Christ, no—unless she is a missionary. I know cases; do you?

Conferring on the foreign evangelist's wife the same "office" ("missionary") as her husband is only one of the many anti-Scriptural practices connected with the present day use of this term. For people who claim to "call Bible things by Bible names" there needs to be a re-examination.

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

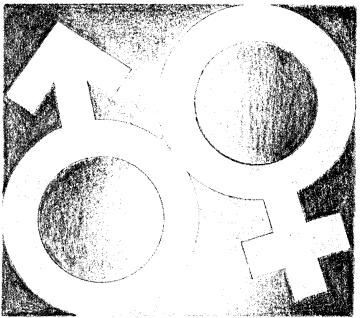
MANY people do not know why Sunday is the main day the church gathers together. Our English "day of the sun" gives no hint. Spanish "domingo" is much better. It refers to the day of the Lord, coming from Latin like our English "A.D." (from "Anno Domini": in the year of the Lord)...the Russian word for the first day of the week is "resurrection"! How correct!

Some English-speaking people know that "Easter" comes from Old English "Eastre," the goddess of spring: and so they refuse to use the term, preferring instead to speak of "Resurrection Sunday." But where in the Bible do we find such an annual celebration? Such annual holidays belong to Catholicism and Protestantism, not to the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As "Christians only," we know the texts which refer to the first day of the week, and we know that it is the Lord's Day and that *every* Sunday is resurrection Sunday. The resurrection of Jesus is far too important to relegate to once a year. Since the days of the apostles, true Christians have celebrated the resurrection 52 times a year! Do we?

—David Vaughn Elliott, Guatemala

Church Without Gender?



FOR SOME TIME now our society has seemed bent on getting rid of gender (something that is not going to be easily accomplished).

These pressures in society at large also effect religion. For example, the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible has done everything possible, it seems, to avoid gender-oriented language. Thus we read of "humankind," "Person/person," "mortals," "human species," etc., to get rid of words that have gender connotations. Even such a thing as "armed man" in Proverbs 6:11 has become "armed warrior." And "parents" is sometimes used to replace "fathers" and "a man." I don't know about you, but this all seems somewhat ridiculous to me...

Unfortunately, these attitudes often influence the church. I have always believed Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." But I have never interpreted it, as some have, to mean that there is now unisex in the church, or that women can be elders, or preach if they want to. There is equality in salvation. All have put on Christ; all belong to Christ. In Christ women come to faith, baptism, and salvation on the same terms as men. They are equally acceptable to God, but their gender has not changed. Paul knew, too, that slaves were still slaves even after becoming Christians, but in Christ they enjoyed a common salvation with free men.

An interpretation of Galatians 3:28 which would cancel out the separate and distinct roles of men and women in the home or in the church is untenable. If becoming a Christian does away with gender, why did Paul draw a line and put certain restrictions on women in the assembly (I Corinthians 11:3-16; 14:33-36; I Timothy 2:8-15)?

We need to be careful with our interpretation of Scripture lest we walk down the street and fall into a personhole.—John Gipson

The Mule That Wouldn't Be Buried

_____M

ONE DAY a mule fell into a dry well. The farmer directed his boys to bury the mule, but the mule refused to be buried. As the boys threw dirt down on him, he simply shrugged it off and tramped on it. Soon he had tramped so much dirt under him that he just walked out of the well. That which was intended to bury him was the very means by which he arose.

All great people have climbed up through difficulties. If their lives had been easy we would have never heard of them. In overcoming obstacles, one develops courage, strength, determination, and a ruffedness that may be needed for some great responsibility and opportunity farther up the road.

Don't shy away from difficulties. They are so often the very means by which we are proven to be worthy of God given responsibilities. Rejoice in the difficulty, knowing that God has counted you worthy of the test. "We are tried by fire."

Difficulties are God's errands; and when we are sent upon them, we should esteem it proof of God's confidence.—Beecher

"I Don't Love Her Anymore"

A FORTY SOME year old man, suffering from the classic "mid-life crisis," sat down to talk to a preacher about his problems. He explained how his marriage of twenty years was no longer satisfying or fulfilling. Finally, he reached the "bottom line." "I just don't love her anymore," he said. "What can I do?"

After a brief moment of reflection, the preacher said decisively, "As I see it, you have only one option." The man perked up with anticipation. Was the preacher going to suggest a divorce? Would he be free to pursue the thrilling lifestyle of the younger generation that he had come to admire? Would this be his chance to regain his fleeting youth? What was the preacher's advice? "Seems to

me that the only thing left for you to is repent and start loving her again."

So often we hear of married couples who complain that they have "fallen out of love." That's sad, but it happens. The real issue is: What do you do when you realize that such a situation exists? The Bible still says the same thing that it has always said. Husbands "love your wives" (Ephesians 5:25), and wives are to "love their husbands" (Titus 2:4).

Please note that these are not just suggestions. They are commands. To fail to love your mate is to commit sin! And sin always requires repentance if there is to be forgiveness. Be careful. Do not confuse commanded love with silly infatuation that soon fades. It is far more than that. It is sacrificial love that seeks the interest of the one loved more than self. It is the kind of love Jesus has shown to us (Ephesians 5:2).—Selected

"Bring the Books"

PAUL was a prisoner in Rome. Winter was coming on, and he had left his cloak with Carpus at Troas. Therefore, when he wrote to Timothy to come, he made a request for him to bring the cloak, but especially his books and parchments.

What a significant request. Paul says in effect:

Let the winter come!

Let me shiver!

Let me freeze!

I would like a cloak, but if there is a shortage of baggage space, bring the books. My study must not be neglected!

Christians who think for one reason or another that they can afford to neglect Bible study are mistaken. Nothing on this earth is more important than a thorough knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures.

"Bring the books" (II Timothy 4:13).—Selected 🗖

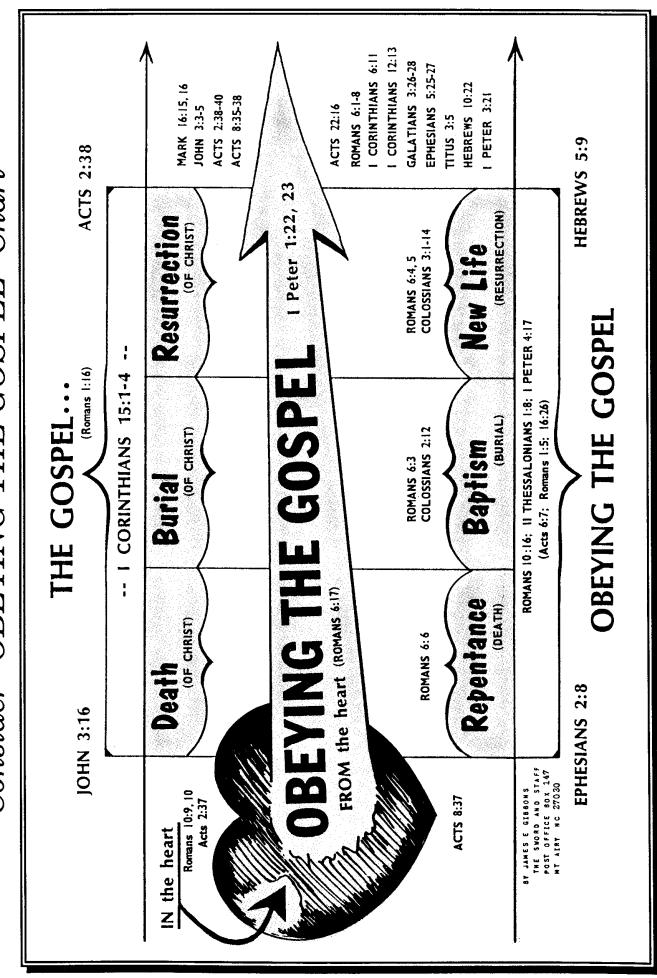
Worse Than a Fool

THE OLD GERMAN spoke to the point when he told an atheistic lecturer that he was worse than a fool, and he proved it by saying, "The Bible says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' but you blab it right out."—Selected

What the Sign Said

THE SIGN said, "If I can't go to Heaven, let me go to Myrtle Beach," but that is not the other option (Matthew 25:46).

Consider "OBEYING THE GOSPEL" Chart



All of this is to be understood in the context of GRACE.

President Garfield's Rules for Living

ONE OF the most illustrious careers found in the pages of American history is that of James Abram Garfield, 20th President of the United States. Before his election to this country's highest office, he was a college president, state senator, major-general, U.S. Congressman and U.S. Senator, a combination of honors without parallel in the national annals.

When Garfield was a young man, someone placed in his hand one day a slip of paper, which he carried with him all of his life. Inscribed on this paper were the following lines:

Make few promises. Always speak the truth. Live within your income. Never speak evil of anyone. Keep good company or none. Never play games of chance. Drink no intoxicating drinks. Good character is above everything else. Keep your own secrets if you have any. Never borrow if you can possibly avoid it. Do not marry until you are able to support a wife. Keep yourself honest if you would be happy. When you speak to a person, look into his eyes. Make not haste to be rich, if you would prosper. Save when you are young to spend when you are old. Never run into debt, unless you see a way out again.

Good company and good conversation are the sinews of virtue.

Your character cannot be hadly but except by your own

Your character cannot be badly hurt except by your own vices.

If anybody speaks evil of you, let your life be so that no one will believe it.

Never be idle. If your hands cannot be employed usefully, attend to the culture of your mind.

As one thinks of this great and successful man, it is well to remember that he was devotedly religious. From his mother, Garfield learned the value of prayer and daily Bible reading. It was his practice through life to pause each evening at sunset and read the Scriptures. Moreover, he always faithfully met with the church for worship. Garfield firmly believed "there is nothing that can make youth so shapeful, manhood so strong, and old age so beautiful as the religion of Jesus Christ."

While yet a teenager, he espoused the cause of Christ and took his stand. A few months after preaching his first sermon, Garfield wrote to a friend: "I tell you, my dear brother, the cause in which we are engaged must take the world. It fills my soul when I reflect upon the light, joy and love of the ancient gospel."

Christ and his gospel can give real meaning and purpose for your life. Without him, no life can be truly successful. Give your life to him today, for he says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).—Selected

The Manly Modern Macho Man

The manly modern macho man, His hairy chest inlaid in tan, With open shirt and chain of gold Is really something to behold.

His hair all sprayed and set in place Helps compliment his lovely face; As does the jewel in his ear, All badges of his manly gear.

Erect and tall he takes his stand, The manly modern macho man; On hands all smooth and soft and white His rings all glitter in the light.

-By James E. Gibbons

The Real Dangers

HOMOSEXUALITY is not what threatens the fabric of society. It has been with us for thousands of years. When homosexuality is considered normal, not wrong, an alternative lifestyle, society is threatened. Divorce is not the great threat to our country and the church. It has been with us almost from the beginning also. But when there is no stigma, when divorce is acceptable, the first option rather than the last resort [for the right reason, Matthew 19:9]. we are in trouble. Fornication or promiscuity does not threaten us. This sin is as old as mankind. Yet when fornicators become our role models, our heroes, we need to ask ourselves what direction we are going. Unscriptural teachings or bad attitudes will not destroy the church. But when those who are loose with the Scriptures become our ideal, and those who have bad attitudes are our defenders of the faith, then we had better take inventory of the future of the church.

In short, sin as such is not going to destroy us. Sin has been with us since Adam and Eve. When we no longer think of sin as sin, God's patience will run out.—Author Unknown

Have You Ordered Yet? Poems of the Soul and Proverbs

By James E. Gibbons

THIS different format in expressing truth makes for interest and appeal. Thus, people are ordering and keep ordering this little book of poems and proverbs by the editor. Here are some ways it is being used.

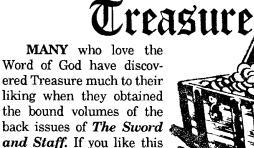
- For personal reading
- For personal gifts to friends
- To give to whole churches
- To use in preparing church bulletins
- To give to the sick and people in hospitals

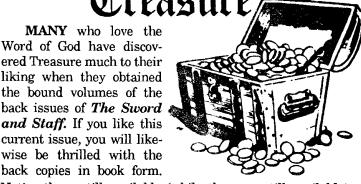
It is suggested that you send \$5.00 for a single book, and if you order five or more, \$4.00 per book to help with the printing and mailing cost.

Help Increase Outreach

HAS this paper been a blessing and a positive spiritual force in your life? Do you think the message we present in this paper is needed in today's world? Would you like to help turn the tide of ungodliness that engulfs our land? We put many long and hard hours (and dollars) into getting one issue into the mail. The paper is sent to thousands nationwide and worldwide. However, we would be pleased for our outreach to be greater. Help us increase our potential for good in these wicked times. Send a contribution and a list of new names and addresses of people to receive The Sword and Staff. Tell others about this publication. Remember us in your prayers. Thank you.—J.E.G.

	(Clip, Fill in, Mail/or Write Otherwise) Gentlemen: Enclosed find my contribution. Please put me on the mailing list of The Sword and Staff. Name:	
Ad	dress:	
••••		
(Check for bound volumes of The Sword and Staff)	
	1985-86 bound volume of The Sword and Staff—\$6.95	
0	1987-88 bound volume of The Sword and Staff—\$7.25	
	1989-90 bound volume of The Sword and Staff—\$7.25	
	1991-92 bound volume of The Sword and Staff—\$7.25	
O	POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS by James	
	E. Gibbons—\$5.00 each; 5 or more copies, \$4.00 each.	





Notice those still available (while they are still available), and place your order now for good reading. Make them part of your library and part of your life. You will be glad that you ordered them.

The Souls Are There

IN OUR worship services we sing, "Lead me to some soul today," and march right out the doors, get into our cars, drive by thousands who are lost, stand with them in the cafeteria line, work with them. and even have lost souls living under our roof, but never say a word about the Lord and the gospel. What would God have to do, more than He's doing. to lead us to a soul? The souls are there. All we need to do is confront them with a gospel conversation. We must not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the ONLY POWER of God unto salvation (Romans 1:14-16).—Selected

PEOPLE WITH THIS PUBLICATION—Thank you HELP US REACH OUT TO MORE CHURCHES Telephone: (910) 789-1044