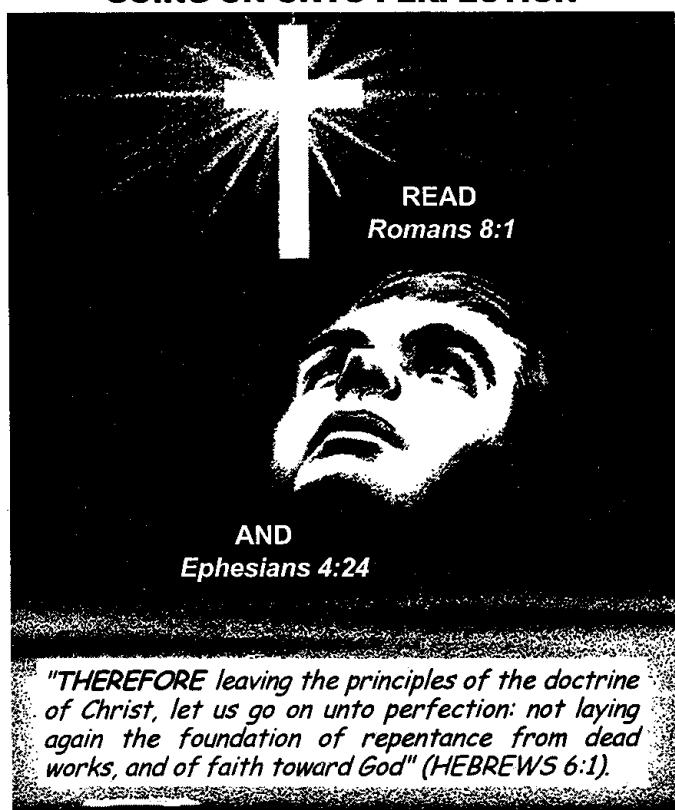


# The Sword AND Staff

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

## *"Let Us Go On Unto Perfection"*

### GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION



● By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 Fairfield Drive  
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**T**HE WRITER of the book of Hebrews gives a forceful admonition in Hebrews 6:1-3 that would be "good" for all of us to heed. It reads, "Therefore leaving the principles [beginning] of the doctrine of Christ, *let us go on unto perfection*; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God...And this will we do, if God permit." In the context of the chapter right before he had chided his readers by saying, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the

first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12).

#### I. WHAT IS MEANT BY "PERFECTION"?

##### "Full Age," Maturity = Perfection

In view of this, what does he mean by "perfection" when he said, "Let us go on unto perfection"? Does he have a sinless state in mind that they will attain or what? A clue is found in 5:14, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of *full age*, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Of this expression "full age," a simple amplifying footnote, "perfect," is supplied in the margin of our Bibles. The Greek word behind this is *teleios* and comes from the same stem that is translated "perfection" (*teleiotes*) in 6:1. Both retain the idea of completion, reaching the goal, according to the lexicons. Perfection indicates reaching maturity in Christ. And the writer of the book of Hebrews humbly identifies himself with his readers, after admonishing them to "go on unto perfection," by saying, "And this *will we do*, if God permit" (6:3). We are ever reaching toward greater maturity.

##### "Teleios," Good, and Righteous

The use of this word (*teleios*), usually translated "perfect" in the King James Version of the Bible, is much like the use of the words "good" and "righteous" in the Scriptures at times. All of these words can be used in an absolute sense and in a limited, relative sense. Let us verify this assertion.

##### None "Good" But God

We are told about the rich young ruler who came running to Jesus. He "asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark

(Continued on Page 4)

## THE SWORD AND STAFF

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—THANK YOU—

## Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

*A MAN of principles is a prince of a man.*

Christ died alone so that no one else need ever have to experience this.

*People are more inclined to love the truth when we speak the truth in love.*

One good thing about a straight and narrow road, you can see where it goes (and in our case, it goes to heaven).

*If being right makes you proud, you are in the wrong.*

A meaningful relationship with God will put meaning into all of our relationships.

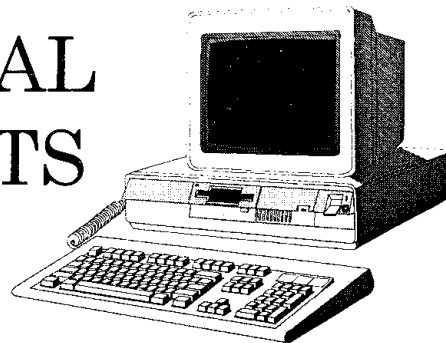
*By getting on our knees we can better ascertain where we stand with God.*

To be thankful concentrate on what you have and not on what you don't have.

*A person cannot do all that he can until he tries to do more than he can.*

Our conscience is the most sensitive when it has the least to be sensitive about; in other words, when it has not been callused by sinning. □

# EDITORIAL COMMENTS



## CALLED INTO AND BEING THE LORD'S ONE CHURCH

**T**HERE IS ONLY one church taught and found in the New Testament Scriptures (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4-6). It's "membership" is constituted of those who are saved, as salvation and being in the Lord's church in the true sense are synonymous. It is not a man-made, human denomination. In fact, no man has the authority to start a denomination or the right to invite anyone to join one. The only authority that we have is to invite people to accept Christ to be a part of this one church that has already been established in the first century. A person may join a human denomination, but in reality no one can join the church of Christ. To be acceptable to the Lord, we must be that church and be in that church today. Are we being presumptuous, Pharisaical or self-righteous in saying this? No, not at all, it is the Word of God. Actually a person is being presumptuous in promoting and trying to defend denominationalism. Let us consider this.

Religiously, we work under the authority of the Great Commission. After his resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly gave this commission to his followers. What he had to say was prefixed with the declaration, "**All power** [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). "And he said unto them, Go ye **into all the world**, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:15,16). Matthew's account reads, "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 always, even unto the end of the world [age]. Amen" (Matthew 28:19,20). Luke 24:47 narrows it down another step, saying that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem.**"

Here in Jerusalem on the first Jewish Pentecost after his resurrection (Acts 1:8 and chapter 2) the gospel was preached for the first time in all of its fullness. Men who were convicted of their sins were told to, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (Acts 2:38). "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were **added** unto them about three thou-

sand souls” (2:41). Jesus had said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18), and now it was a reality. Consequently we read, “And the Lord **added** to the church daily such as should be saved [*Greek*: were being saved]” (2:47). In anticipation of this time, earlier in his ministry Jesus had told Nicodemus that a man had to be “**born** of water and of the Spirit” to enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

This church came into being as a result of preaching the gospel and carrying out the Great Commission. It was simply the Lord’s church, not a human denomination or division. When people repented and were baptized (immersed) for the remission of their sins, the Lord “added” them to his church. When they did this, they were “born of water and of the Spirit.” They were “born” into the kingdom. You cannot “join” the church of the New Testament, the Lord **adds** you to it; you are **born** into it. Acts 20:28 speaks of “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Ephesians 5:23 tells us that Christ is “the saviour of the body,” the church. The same transaction that saves a person from his sins thereby puts him into the one church we read about in the Scriptures. Being saved and becoming a part of the one church are synonymous. Yes, we are all “called in one body” (Colossians 3:15), and we are “all baptized into one body” (I Corinthians 12:13), if we have accepted Christ in accordance to the Scriptures. If we are working under the authority of the Great Commission, we have no authority to invite anyone to join any denomination. In fact, the promise of, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age]” is only for those fulfilling the terms of the Great Commission. Denominationalism and denominational doctrines are excluded.

It is so simple, becoming and being a part of the Lord’s one, undenominational church. One does not have to trace an unbroken lineage all the way back to the first century. To grow watermelons in North Carolina, one would not have to have a vine coming all the way from Georgia. No, we would simply plant the seed. When the seed of the gospel is planted and men properly respond to it, the Lord adds them to the one church already started on the day of Pentecost. (However the Lord said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up,” Matthew 15:13). Now being simply Christians, the Lord’s church (and that alone), we press on like those on the day of Pentecost who “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). We have divested ourselves of denominational names (Colossians 1:18; I Corin-

thians 1:10-13; 3:4) and doctrines. The creed books and traditions of men have been discarded (Mark 7:7-9; Galatians 1:8; II John 9-11). This oneness and unity is practiced in the context of the local church as we “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). We are simply being and doing what the Lord wants us to do. There is nothing Pharisaical about this. To do otherwise is to be presumptuous. □

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## The Unfolding of A Rose

**A** YOUNG, inexperienced preacher was walking with an older, more seasoned preacher in the garden one day, and feeling a bit insecure about what God had in store for him to do, he was inquiring of the older preacher about it. The older preacher walked up to a rosebush, and handing the young preacher a rosebud, told him to open it without tearing off any petals.

The young preacher looked in disbelief at the older preacher and was trying to figure out what a rosebud could possibly have to do with his wanting to know the will of God for his life and for his work for the Lord. Because of his high respect for the older preacher, he proceeded to try to unfold the rose, while keeping every petal intact. It wasn’t very long before he realized how impossible it was for him to do this.

Noticing the younger preacher’s inability to unfold the rosebud and keep it intact, the older preacher began to recite the following poem.

### UNFOLDING THE ROSEBUD

*It is only a tiny rosebud,  
A flower of God’s design;  
But I cannot unfold the petals  
With these clumsy hands of mine.*

*The secret of unfolding flowers  
Is not known to such as I;  
God opens this flower so sweetly,  
When in my hands they fade and die.*

*If I cannot unfold a rosebud,  
This flower of God’s design,  
Then how can I think I have wisdom  
To unfold this life of mine?*

*So, I’ll trust in Him for His leading  
Each moment of every day;  
I will look to him for His guidance  
Each step of the pilgrim way.*

*The pathway that lies before me,  
Only my Heavenly Father knows;  
I’ll trust Him to unfold the moments,  
Just as He unfolds the rose.*

—Author Unknown



(Continued from Page 1)

10:17,18). What is the meaning of Jesus' answer? He had called Jesus "Good Master." Is Jesus disclaiming deity by asking him why he had asked such a question, since only God was good? No! The Lord is wanting him to think about what he has just said. He had unwittingly confessed the deity of Christ. Now, to obey what the Lord is about to require of him, he will have to believe in what he has thoughtlessly affirmed. By calling Jesus "Good Master," he had called him God. In the absolute and final sense there is none good except God.

#### "A Good Man"

But wait! There are people who are called "good" in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Examples: Psalms 37:23; Proverbs 12:2; Matthew 12:35; Luke 23:50; Acts 11:24. Putting the "good man" and the wicked in sharp contrast, Proverbs 12:2 declares, "A **good man** obtaineth favor of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn." Acts 11:24 beautifully describes Barnabas by saying that "he was a **good man**, and full of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]."

#### Absolute and Relative Sense

Therefore, "good" is used in an absolute sense and in a relative sense in the Scriptures. It is absolute when we are talking about God. His goodness is perfect and without flaw. But when man is called "good," it is in a limited, relative sense. Some people, when compared to others, are "good." But, put along beside of God, "There is none good but one, that is, God."

#### "None Righteous, No, Not One"—But...

Furthermore, claiming that "all are under sin" (Romans 3:9), the apostle Paul strongly asserts to the Romans, "There is none righteous, no, not one" (3:10). Then further on in this chapter he declares that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (3:23). However, in this same epistle Paul speaks of a righteous man. Romans 5:7 and 8 read, "For scarcely for a **righteous man** will one die: yet peradventure [perhaps] for a **good man** [hey, there's that "good man" again] some would even

dare to die. But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." James tells us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a **righteous man** availeth much" (James 5:16). Yes, like in the usage of the word "good," man is righteous only in a relative sense.

#### Spoken Of As Being "Perfect"

We think of God as being perfect. But the word "perfect" (*teleios*) is also used in reference to man. Although Christ told the rich young ruler there was none good but God, he instructed him, "If thou wilt be **perfect** [*teleios*], go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21). In contrast with worldly wisdom, and having reference to spiritual wisdom, Paul said that "we speak wisdom among them [Christians] that are **perfect** [*teleios*]" (I Corinthians 2:6). The word "perfect" (*teleios*) likewise appears in Philippians 3:15 when Paul wrote, "Let us therefore, as many as be **perfect**, be thus minded..."

#### Significance of "Perfect" Illustrated

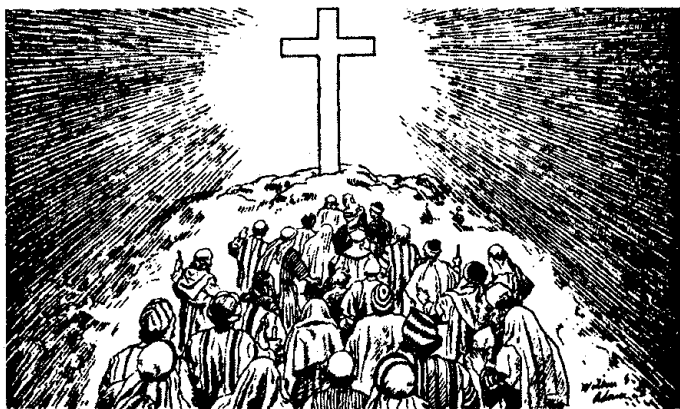
Again, what is the significance of this word **perfect** (*teleios*)? As we have already stated, the word basically means to be complete or to finish something, to reach the goal. And it is used in reference to reaching a degree of maturity in Christ. So attest the lexicons. In this same book where Paul speaks of Christians who are "perfect" (I Corinthians 2:6; KJV rendering), the word is found two other times (I Corinthians 13:10; 14:20). These references well illustrate the meaning of the word. I Corinthians 13:10 reads, "But when that which is **perfect** is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." The verse before says, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." Here we have the coming of the "perfect" (that which is complete, it has been finished). It is put in sharp contrast with the "in part" situation. Like Hebrews 5:14, I Corinthians 14:20 well illustrates the meaning of maturity. It reads, "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be **men** [*teleios*]." Here "children" and "men" are put in vivid contrast, emphasizing the meaning of each word. "Men" is the same word that is elsewhere translated "perfect."

#### "Perfect" Equals Attaining Maturity

Yes, it is much like the Scriptural use of the words "good" and "righteous." When speaking of God, these words are absolute in their meaning. When talking about man, they are limited and relative. God is perfect; He is complete, total in every way and in everything. Man is not. His moral attainment must ever be thought of in the relative

sense as he grows in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. He can only be "perfect" in the sense of reaching a more settled and advanced stage of maturity, as he becomes more and more like Christ.

## II. THE IMPUTED PERFECTION OF CHRIST



An Overview of This

Many times we don't realize just how wonderful Christianity really is. It is a twofold wonder. (1) By God's grace the perfection and righteousness of Christ are imputed to us in forgiveness and as we live the Christian life. (2) Then there is the dynamic of the "new man" with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to enable and move us on unto "perfection" (not just in the imputed sense alone, but in actually becoming like Christ).

### Sin and Imputed Righteousness

Sin is an awful thing, and the book of Romans tells us that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). *"There is none righteous, no, not one"* (3:10). In the first chapter we see the Gentile sins and depravity (1:18-32). In the second chapter the Jews likewise are found unrighteous and guilty before God. Thus, the conclusion, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

The law saved no one. It just condemned man and showed his need of a Savior. Abraham, long ago, aside from the law and through faith had been declared righteous. Paul draws from this to point to Christ and his imputed righteousness. "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was *counted* unto him for righteousness...Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But *for us* also, to whom it shall be *imputed*, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:3,23-25; James 2:20-23). We are clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ when we through faith are baptized into Christ (Romans 10:4-10; 6:3-5,17; Galatians 3:26,27; Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38; Revelation 1:5).

### A Lamb Without Spot

This same Paul later in II Corinthians 5:19 and 21 tells us that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, *not imputing* their trespasses unto them: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation...For he hath made him to be sin for us, *who knew no sin*; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Here is the key as to why we can be declared righteous through Christ. He "knew no sin." And parallel with the Old Testament lamb that had to be without blemish physically, we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:19). He was without blemish or spot spiritually. Repeatedly we are told: Christ "*who did no sin*" (I Peter 2:22); "in him is *no sin*" (I John 3:5). With the inferior Old Testament sacrifice in mind, the writer of Hebrews says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself *without spot* to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

### The Righteousness By Faith

Now in reference to their continuing state as Christians, Paul could write to the Corinthians, "But 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). To the Philippians he personally could declare his desire to "be found in him [Christ], not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the *righteousness* which is of God by faith." And John testifies to the practical outworking of this. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But *if we walk in the light*, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from *all unrighteousness*" (I John 1:6-9).

### The New Man in Christ

What a blessed assurance it is to know, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). We are now in the context of grace. But the purpose of grace is not to save us in our sins, but from our sins. We are not to continue passively in defeat. Entering into God's grace, born anew, we receive the Holy Spirit (John 3:5; Acts 2:38). As new creatures in Christ (II Corin-

(Continued on Next Page)

## ***“Let Us Go On Unto Perfection”***

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

thians 5:17), we are admonished to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). With a renewed impetus, walking in the Spirit, we will not “fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:14). Victory is intended to be ours. The apostle John affirmed why. “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (I John 4:4). Not only are we forgiven when we become Christians, we now have access to the power and potential to overcome and become. We possess salvation, and if our surrender is complete, we will soon find that salvation possesses us.

### **The Most Favored of Times**

We live in the most favored of times. It was with this in mind that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. He was concerned that they may have received the grace of God in vain (II Corinthians 6:1). He tells them that “now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation” (6:2). In other words, they had everything going for them. They were living in the most acceptable time in history. This is the age of grace and mercy. In spite of all of this, the Corinthians seemed to have botched it with all of the sins and divisions that were in the church there. Beloved, let us take full advantage of God’s grace and mercy, the imputed righteousness, and the power at our disposal to make a go of it in living for God. “Let us go on unto perfection” (Hebrews 6:1).

## **III. GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION**

### **A Great Verse of Scripture**

I Timothy 1:5 is a great Scripture. It gets right at the heart of what God says it is all about. It reads, “Now the end of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” The word translated “end” here is *telos*. It means end in the sense of the goal, the aim, or end of that which is trying to be accomplished. Cognate with this word, and coming from it, is the word *teleios* (meaning complete and rendered “perfect,” KJV, as we have already noticed). So, this verse (I Timothy 1:5) should ever be before us, representing that which we are trying to attain as we “go on unto perfection.”

### **I Thessalonians Chapter 3**

With this in mind, read the third chapter of I Thessalonians. In his evangelistic endeavors, initially, Paul had stayed but a short time in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10). Persecution prompted them to send Paul away, leaving many new converts in an immature and troubled state with little instruction in Christianity. When Silas and Timothy finally got

up with Paul later at Athens, it seems they were sent back to encourage these new Christians (and perhaps others in Macedonia). Paul was deeply concerned about them. Now at Corinth, Silas and Timothy have rejoined Paul with word of their well being.

### **Perfecting Faith**

In this chapter (I Thessalonians 3), we see that Paul was deeply concerned about their faith. Many of them had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (I Thessalonians 1:9), but there was so much that they didn’t understand. Paul had been praying for them “night and day.” He wished to be with them again that, as he said, that he “might *perfect* that which is lacking in your *faith*” (3:10). But not going himself, He sent Timothy, as he said, “to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your *faith*,” (3:2) and “to know your *faith*, lest by some means the temper have tempted you, and our labour be in vain” (3:5). Now with Timothy returning and bringing “good tidings” of their faith, Paul was greatly encouraged (3:6,7). Therefore, we conclude that attention to faith is very basic as we would “go on unto perfection.” If we don’t have this right, nothing else can be realized “unto perfection.”

### **Perfecting Love**

Along with word about their faith, Timothy had brought “good tidings” of their love (3:6). Paul would like to see this love further developed and perfected. He wrote of this pressing desire, when he said, “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in *love* one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you” (3:12). In II Thessalonians, a follow-up letter, he was disposed to thank God for their progress. “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet [fitting], because that your *faith* groweth exceedingly, and the charity [*love*] of everyone of you all toward each other aboundeth”(1:3). Beloved, this is basic in our going “on unto perfection.”

### **Perfecting Holiness**

In this chapter Paul has another goal in mind for the Thessalonians, as he sums up the thoughts found here. He said: “To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in *holiness* before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints [holy ones]” (3:13). Holiness is another “must” to be considered as we “go on unto perfection.”

### **Going On Unto Perfection**

From this we learn that faith, love, and holiness are top priorities in being a real Christian. With the admonition, “Let us go on unto perfection,” these truths should ever be kept in mind. We need to

perfect our faith, our love, and holiness. We should make a conscious, concerted, and continued effort to learn all that we can about each. In the process we should continually be examining ourselves in the light of what we learn, and drawing from the power of God, put it into practice, going "on unto perfection" (maturity in Christ). May we not have received the grace of God in vain. □

(NOTE: The Lord willing, we plan to have other articles in forthcoming issues of this paper about going on unto perfection in faith, love, and holiness.)



A Series Involving the Bible and Prophecy...

# “The Rapture”



● By DAVID VAUGHN ELLIOTT  
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**T**HEY TELL US planes will fall out of the sky. Automobiles will careen and crash. Surgeries will be halted mid-way. Communications systems will be in shambles. Husbands will frantically search for their wives. Why? Because all believers instantly and mysteriously vanished. In spite of such chaos, they tell us life on earth will continue for years. They call it the rapture. They claim Jesus predicted it when He said, "Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:40).

Some people emphasize that the word "rapture" is not found in the Bible. This is true; but it is not the real problem. First Thessalonians 4:17 says that believers "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord." "Caught up." The dictionary gives one meaning of rapture as "the carrying of a person to another place or sphere of existence." If by "rapture" one simply means that Christians will be carried up to be with Christ, then there is little objection to the word "rapture."

## The Real Problem

However, "rapture," as used by religious teachers today, means far more than the simple definition given above. Indeed, there is a whole body of doctrine wrapped up in today's word "rapture."

One obvious problem with the modern rapture theory is the portraying of dramatic scenes of plane crashes, missing babies and all such. There is not one verse in the Bible that hints at such a scenario. No verse teaches that after the "rapture," regular life will continue in this world. One of the most cited texts, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, is totally silent about conditions on earth when the saints are lifted up.

Another frequently cited text, Matthew 24:37-42, contains the famous "one will be taken and the other left." But did Jesus have the modern rapture scenario in mind? Let the context decide. Starting just 5 verses earlier, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away...but as the days of Noah *were*...the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken..." Jesus' return will be like Noah's time. The flood was the end of that old world. Either you were safe in the ark or you perished under the wrath of God. That is how it will be when Jesus returns.

Did you notice in the context who was taken away? It was not Noah and his family that were "taken." Speaking of the wicked, verse 39 says "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away." The wicked were taken away. Noah remained. This is the complete opposite of the modern rapture theory.

The context of "one will be taken and the other left" is "as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." The rapture will be like Noah's time. Did Noah mysteriously disappear? When Noah entered the ark, did the world continue with normal daily life? We all know better. "The world *that* then existed perished" (2 Peter 3:6).

Jesus did not have the modern rapture doctrine in mind. Rather, He said that when He returns, the earth will pass away.

## What Jesus "Should" Have Said

If the popular rapture theory were correct, Jesus would have used totally different examples. Jesus would have said, "As the days of Enoch were," "as the days of Elijah were." Righteous Enoch disappeared out of this world and the world continued on. Elijah's case is even more striking. After the whirlwind took him up into heaven, 50 men went searching for him for three days. Now there is the flavor of today's rapture doctrine! There is only one problem. Jesus never said, "as the days of Elijah

(Continued on Next Page)



# “The Rapture”

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

were”! Jesus said, “as the days of Noah were.”

Jesus never said, “As the days of Enoch were.” However, He did say, “Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot...it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed *them* all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (Luke 17:28-30).

The comparisons that Jesus made are with Lot and Noah. Both involved the immediate destruction of the wicked, while the righteous were saved. Both canceled out any possibility of second chances. Both were the end. The case of Sodom, of course, was not the end of the world; but it certainly was the end of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those cities have never been found. Those people never lived long enough to wonder what happened to Lot. There were no chariot wrecks or search parties. God simply blotted them off the face of the earth with fire and brimstone. Jesus said His coming would be like that.

## “Come as a Thief”

The “secret rapture” theory uses as a proof the statement that Jesus will come as a thief. Yes, but what does this mean? Figures of speech can be tricky. Both Jesus and Satan are likened to lions. A red flag goes up: “Interpret with caution.” Jesus is called both a lion and a lamb. Another red flag. We dare not wring every possible meaning out of any figure of speech. To do so is to make the Bible a plaything for our every imagination.

How do thieves come? Consider two ideas. A thief may come and go secretly, without being detected at the moment. On the other hand, a thief may come openly, but suddenly, without warning. Which of these two ideas does the Bible teach regarding Jesus’ coming? If the figure were never explained in the Bible, your guess would be as good as mine.

Out of six New Testament texts that use this figure, only one does not state which meaning is intended. In the other five, the idea is always lack of warning. Secrecy is never an issue. Example: “If the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Luke 12:39,40). The message is clear: Jesus will come as a thief, when you least expect Him. Be ready at all times.

Notice 2 Peter 3:10: “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the

works that are in it will be burned up.” “Thief...great noise...earth...burned up.” Hardly secret. It is the end of the world!

No Bible text hints that “coming as a thief” contains the idea of secrecy. No Bible text hints that Jesus’ coming will be hidden from the eyes and understanding of the masses. When Jesus comes, there will be no secrecy and no second chances. Eternity will have arrived. Everyone will know it.

## “Shout...Voice...Trumpet”

The only text that speaks directly of being “caught up” (raptured) makes it clear that it is anything but a covert operation. “For the Lord Himself

*(Continued on Page 10)*

# BIBLE QUESTIONS

*(Random Questions Over the Bible)*

1. What unusual military assistance did God provide Israel in the conquest of Canaan?
2. What is the significance of being called “children,” “sons,” “daughters,” etc. “of Belial” in the Bible?
3. Reference to every man sitting under his vine and under his fig tree depicts what in the Old Testament?
4. What king in the Bible got into trouble with God by taking a census of the people?
5. Although David wanted to build a temple for God, why was he not allowed to build it?
6. What was Esther’s Jewish name?
7. What Old Testament prophet said, “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind”?
8. Which is the shortest book in the Old Testament?
9. What Old Testament prophet was called to his work before he was born?
10. Name two prophets who wrote books of prophecy in the Old Testament who were priests.
11. Where is soap mentioned in the Bible (and in what connection)?
12. In which book of prophecy does God continually address the prophet as “son of man”?
13. In the life of Christ on earth, where did he go to live after leaving Nazareth?
14. Which disciple was the only one of the twelve disciples who was not from Galilee?
15. Where in the New Testament are found the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son (and what prompted Jesus to give these parables)?
16. What is the rock upon which Christ said he would build his church?
17. Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy \_\_\_\_\_ is truth.”
18. What school in what city did Paul use as a focal point in presenting the gospel after leaving the synagogue?
19. Who served as Paul’s scribe in writing the epistle to the Romans?
20. What Christian couple is mentioned in the New Testament as having a church in their house?

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



# READERS'

## ...Response

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

### FLORIDA:

■ "[I] appreciate your [web] site. Excellent teaching tool. God bless you and yours." (E-mail, web page response)

### ALABAMA:

■ "Please send me bound volumes...Thanks. You are doing a good work. May God bless."

■ "I have read various editions of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. And I have found it to be very good. I am a teacher and preacher, and I would like to receive it at my home..."

### SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ "Thanks for a Scriptural gospel paper. Keep up the good work."

### NORTH CAROLINA:

■ "[I] have enjoyed *THE SWORD AND STAFF* so much since 1971. May the Lord richly bless you and keep you..."

### TENNESSEE:

■ "Keep up the good work! God bless you!"

### KENTUCKY:

■ "I am now...years old. I have used your charts and articles countless times. Thank you for your 'one of a kind' paper."

■ "I enjoy *THE SWORD AND STAFF* more than words can convey. Your explanations of the Word are plain and simple (even to a beginner!) Keep up the Great work! May God richly bless you."

### VIRGINIA:

■ "...You have a beautiful home page. Reaching around the world is now even more possible than ever. You

have a message that needs to get out..." (E-mail, web page response)

■ "I hope this finds you in good health and I pray the Lord to bless and strengthen you and supply all your needs. It is encouraging to know a few Christians are still preaching the whole council of God. Just keep on keeping on for the Lord..."

■ "[I] enjoy your publication very much. I don't understand the 'please take me off your mailing list' [responses]. I could never learn enough about my Lord, and as far as truth is concerned, all I need to do is compare what I read in your articles to the inspired Word. Enclosed is a small contribution..."

### WEST VIRGINIA:

■ "Thank you for years of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* which I have always enjoyed..."

### PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "I just received the latest issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. The 'Man of Sin' is a terrific article. Thank you for including such a truthful article. I pray many outside of Christ will read this article. The truth is right there, the reality of the antichrist. Many are blind to the truth. The 'Man of Sin' is an eye opener! Thank you for printing that article."

### NEW YORK:

■ "I would like to receive your publication on a regular basis..." (E-mail, web page response)

### MASSACHUSETTS:

■ "Please remove me from your mailing list."

■ "Thank you and all who help with the work of telling God's Word."

### INDIANA:

■ "Please remove us from your mailing list. We are... church...Thank you."

■ "I am sending you a donation to help with your work. I sincerely believe in what you publish and I am so glad that so many are contacted by your paper, *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I enjoy every bit of it and I know it is from the Bible. Keep up the good work..."

### MISSOURI:

■ "I enjoy your paper very much, think it's always thought provoking, and the printing is so neat and plain. Enjoy the 'Barbs with a point' also. Sorry that I haven't sent in something to help with the printing sooner."

■ "Please send me *THE SWORD AND STAFF* paper. If it would be possible also send me the one issue with the Part III of Man of Sin. I have the first two. I enjoy the work you have done for so long. It's been loaned to me now and then."

### ARKANSAS:

■ "I want to congratulate you for your writings, especially for 'Easter Every Sunday.' The church needs to hear about this." (E-mail, web page response)

(Continued on Next Page)

## READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

■ "Enclosed is my check for one bound volume of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*...The balance of the check is to help with the expenses as you folks continue to publish the best Bible commentary that I have ever read. Thank you so very much..."

■ "Thank you for continuing to send your paper. We really enjoy it and every time it arrives we tell ourselves we need to send money. But we forget and the next time it arrives, we say the same thing. So today I said to myself, 'Sit down and write a check.' Keep up the good work!"

### LOUISIANA:

■ "I wanted to say thanks for the insightful articles. I am new to *THE SWORD AND STAFF* publication. However, I can see that I will enjoy reading it very much..." (E-mail)

### OKLAHOMA:

■ "Your paper is marvelous with such variety that anyone can glean so much food for thought. We need all the help we can get to survive the satanic influence attacking us daily..."

■ "Sorry I haven't sent a contribution sooner. I certainly enjoy reading and re-reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Have been receiving it for years and save to read again and again."

### CALIFORNIA:

■ "Please send me a copy of your wonderful magazine." (E-mail, web page response)

■ "My name is...and I just wanted to thank the Lord for using you, spreading the truth through *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I grew up in the Philippines and first saw my first copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* at our preacher's study room. I have since moved to the United States and would like to be included in your mailing list...May God bless you and your family."

### OREGON:

■ "Please remove from your mailing list."

■ "We are NOT interested in your literature. Please discontinue sending it to our address. Thank you."

■ "What is the charge to send me part 1 of 'An Examination and An Overview of Ephesians 4:11'? A friend shared part 2 with me, so I'm very interested in getting to read part 1."

■ "May God continue to bless your work. I am so thankful God still has a remnant of people that will preach and teach the truth. So much of the preaching and teaching is so watered down and so much extra stuff added to church activities not mentioned in the Scriptures it is very discouraging to me at times. Again I say, God bless you."

### UNITED STATES:

■ "I enjoy reading from your material. Keep up the good work" (E-mail, web page response)

■ "Thank you for doing God's work. I receive *THE SWORD AND STAFF* because I am now renting a post office box that had been used by this church. I enjoy reading your messages and passing them along to my co-workers.

"Thank you again for the great Bible studies.

"I have bookmarked your web site and will enjoy what you post there as well." (E-mail)

### AUSTRALIA:

■ "We thank you for your publication *THE SWORD AND STAFF* and the very interesting and informative articles..." (E-mail)

### INDIA:

■ "I am encouraged by your [web] site. Thank you, and God bless you." (E-mail, web page response)

■ "It was a privilege and joy to learn about you on the web. Your web site is touching. God bless your heart that seeks His kingdom..." (E-mail, web page response)



## "The Rapture"

(Continued from Page 8)

will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up" (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). *Shout! Voice of an archangel! Trumpet of God!* Jesus' coming certainly will not be secret.

In fact, Jesus specifically warned us not to believe those people who claim His return is a private, secret, hidden affair. "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:26,27).

If someone tries to explain to you that Jesus has come again, don't believe it. If he tries to convince you that Jesus came in 1914, don't believe him. If he tries to convince you that Jesus will secretly rapture away the believers and the world will not know what happened, don't believe him. No TV news person will have to tell anybody of the return of Jesus. Neither will any self-appointed prophet have to explain it to anybody when Jesus returns. It will be like the lightning from the east to the west. All will see for themselves. Everyone will know.

### Two "Second" Comings?

Today's rapture theory says that Jesus is going to return to earth two more times: once before and once after "the tribulation." Some refer to the supposed two future events as "the rapture," followed by "the second coming." Others prefer to teach "two

phases” to the “second” coming. None seem willing to openly admit that they really believe in: a “second” and “third” coming.

Various arguments are used to sustain the concept of two future comings. For example, it is said that two comings are required because the Word says that Jesus will come “for the saints” and also that He will come “with the saints.” They say “for the saints” refers to the next time He comes, to take Christians to heaven. They say that “with the saints” refers to seven years later when He returns with those same saints.

Although no text uses the exact expression “for the saints,” there is no problem here. All believers have as their hope that Jesus will return to receive us unto Himself.

But 1 Thessalonians 3:13 talks about “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **with** all His saints.” Jude 14 also says, “Behold, the Lord comes **with** ten thousands of His saints” (bold emphasis supplied). The problem is to understand what coming “**with** His saints” means. Does it mean that Jesus will first come to get His saints and then bring them back with him seven years later? Or, is there some other explanation?

**With the souls of the dead saints.** Some believers find in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 the explanation of Jesus coming “with” the saints. “Even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” They believe Jesus will come to earth bringing with him the souls of the departed saints in order to unite those souls with their bodies in the resurrection.

Some, however, object to this view of “bring.” The Thessalonians text does not say that “Jesus will bring with Him to earth.” It says, “God will bring with Him.” “Bring” depends on the viewpoint involved. Jesus, not the Father, returns to earth. The Father will bring the resurrected saints with Jesus to heaven. Just like John 14:3: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.” Both expressions—“bring” and “receive”—are from the viewpoint of heaven.

**With the holy angels.** This may be a better explanation of “with the saints.” In 2 Thessalonians 1:7, Paul speaks of “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.” Mark 8:38 says, “when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Clearly Jesus will come with the angels and the angels are “holy.”

For the benefit of “the common man,” I seldom appeal to the original Greek. In this case, however, it is especially helpful for English readers. Spanish, by the way, requires no Greek explanation here, because the Spanish closely follows the Greek. The

Greek word “hagios” is always translated into Spanish “santo(s).” But in English, it is sometimes translated “saint(s)” and sometimes “holy.” In other words, the two English words, “saint” and “holy” come from just one Greek word.

Angels are “holy.” Thus, they are saints (same word in the Greek). Therefore, when Scripture says that Jesus will come **with** the saints—the holy ones—we have a book-chapter-and-verse clarification that this may well refer to His holy angels.

It is debatable whether Jesus will come “with the souls of the dead saints.” It is not debatable whether Jesus will come “with the holy angels.” Whichever view seems the best, Jesus’ coming “for” and “with” the saints in no way necessitates two more comings. “For” and “with” easily harmonize with just one future second coming of Christ.

No verse of Scripture says that Jesus will come a third time, bringing “with” Him human saints whom he came “for” some seven years earlier. The Bible clearly says of Jesus, in Hebrews 9:28, that “He will appear a second time.” No verse says he will appear a third time.

**Two Resurrections?**

According to the rapture theory, there will be several future resurrections of the body from the grave. They claim 1 Thessalonians 4:16 teaches that Christians will be raised long before the wicked are. Paul indeed wrote that “the dead in Christ will rise first.” But, “first” what?

If I tell you, out of the clear blue sky, “I am going to the mall first,” you have no clue about where I will go next. But put some context to it. Such as, “Are you going to the post office?” “Yes, but I am going to the mall first.” Now “first” has meaning.

So with Paul’s text. Do not try to guess what is second unless you look at the context. “The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.” “First. Then...” Paul is not talking about dead saints and dead sinners. He is talking

(Continued on Next Page)

**Answers to:  
BIBLE QUESTIONS**

1. Exodus 23:20-23; 33:1,2; Joshua 24:11,12; 2. It means a worthless person (not a proper name)—Deuteronomy 13:13; Judges 19:22; I Samuel 1:16; 2:12; II Corinthians 6:15; 3. I Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4; Isaiah 36:16; 4. II Samuel 24; 5. I Chronicles 22:7-9; 6. Esther 2:7; 7. Hosea 8:7; 8. Obadiah; 9. Jeremiah 1:1-5; 10. Jeremiah 1:1,2; Ezekiel 1:1-3; 11. Jeremiah 2:22; Malachi 3:2; 12. Ezekiel; 13. Matthew 4:13; 14. Judas Iscariot (Matthew 10:1-4)—Iscariot is thought to mean one from Kerioth, a place in Judah (Joshua 15:25); 15. Luke chapter 15; 16. The truth of the great confession (Matthew 16:13-18; I Corinthians 3:11); 17. John 17:17; 18. Acts 19:1,9,10; 19. Romans 16:22; 20. Romans 16:2-4; I Corinthians 16:19. □

# “The Rapture”

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

about dead saints and live saints. He is saying that before the live saints are caught up in the clouds, the dead saints will first be raised. Nothing whatsoever is said about two resurrections.

Jesus did speak of two resurrections, but not in reference to time. He spoke of the condition of two groups. Some participate in “the resurrection of life,” while others experience “the resurrection of condemnation.” However, these two resurrections will take place at the same time. “The **hour** is coming in which **all** who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28,29; bold emphasis supplied).

Revelation 20, on the other hand, does speak of “the first resurrection.” However, since no text speaks of a “second resurrection,” care must be exercised in determining the identity of the “first.” *(Space does not permit a full discussion of Revelation 20:1-7. Watch for future article(s) on the millennium.)* Suffice it now to point out the following:

- 1) Revelation is highly figurative. Who takes literally the dragon, the key, the chain or the seal?
- 2) Futurists believe that the resurrection of Revelation 20 will occur after “the tribulation.” According to them, that is seven years after the resurrection of “the rapture.” Therefore, by their own doctrine, this “first” resurrection is actually the second.
- 3) A better explanation seems to be found in New Testament first principles. “Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were **raised** with *Him* through faith in the working of God...If then you were **raised** with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is” (Colossians 2:12; 3:1; bold emphasis supplied). “Raised”—past tense. See also Romans 6. Just as conversion is “a new birth,” so is it also “a death, burial and resurrection.” For the Christian, this is the first resurrection.

## “The Day of the Lord”

The rapture theory holds that “the day of the Lord” (or “day of Christ”) is neither the Second Coming nor the Third Coming. Rather, they say, it is something in between the Second and Third. As in many other matters, they lean heavily on Old Testament usage to uphold their claim. In the New Testament, however, how did the apostle Peter use the term? “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works

that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). Clearly, “the day of the Lord” to Peter was the end of the world.

Follow Peter’s argument throughout chapter 3. He warns of “scoffers” who will mock Jesus’ return by saying: “Where is the promise of His coming?” Peter replies by arguing that these men “willfully forget” all about the flood in Noah’s day. Then Peter affirms that the earth will next be consumed by fire on “the day of judgment.” Peter further says that “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise.” What promise? In the context (verse 4), it’s “the promise of His coming.”

Peter continues (verse 10): “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise.” Since this is so, we should be prepared for “the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.” You see, Peter builds his argument about the “coming” of the Lord by discussing “the day of the Lord,” which is the end of the world.

## “The Last Day”

The expression “the last day” appears six times in Scripture, all in the Gospel of John. Four times in the sixth chapter, Jesus says of the believer, “I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40,44,54, and with slight variation in verse 39). In 11:24, Martha affirms her belief in this truth: “I know that he [Lazarus] will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” The resurrection of the righteous clearly will take place “at the last day.”

According to the modern “rapture” doctrine, the resurrection of the righteous is followed by the tribulation and the millennium. Only after that, so the theory goes, will there be a resurrection and judgment of the wicked.

However, the remaining “last day” verse in John denies such a scenario. Again Jesus is speaking—this time, not of the righteous but of the wicked. He says, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Thus Jesus taught that both the resurrection of the righteous and the judgment of the wicked would take place in “the last day.”

The parable of the tares in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, teaches the same truth. Notice in verse 38 that the field is the world. This parable is not a contradiction of Jesus’ teaching on church discipline. It is a parable about the entire world. It is a parable about good people and bad people living together until the end: “the harvest is the end of the age” (verse 39).

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## Matthew Henry Robbed

**A**S AN OLD MAN, Matthew Henry, author of a well-known commentary on the Bible, was once robbed. That night the elderly scholar entered the following into his diary.

"Let me be thankful: First, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

In adversity all of us have much more to be thankful for than we sometimes think. The admonition of the old song is good: "Count your blessings, Name them one by one, And it will surprise you, What the Lord hath done." □

## BARBS... with a Point

**WITH LESS USE** we become useless.

*There is something fishy about the Christianity of a selfish person.*

There are people who would like to live for ever that haven't learned how to live here yet.

*Example speaks louder than words.*

If "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalms 110:10), a lot of people haven't begun to get smart yet.

*People who can't find themselves really are lost.*

As human beings, if we take sex out of the context of morals, and thus marriage, we are reduced to the level of animals.

*Killing time is murdering opportunities.*

It is hard for people to recognize and accept the truth in religion today because they refuse to recognize and believe there is anything false.

*I don't have much use for people who use people.*

Things that don't matter don't matter, so don't make a big issue out of every little matter.

*Ill will poisons the atmosphere and makes an unhealthy religious climate.*

It is better to get out of some people's way than to rub them the wrong way and mess up your day.

*It is hard to do well when you become weary in well doing.*

The straw that broke the camel's back under other circumstances would have been the provender that kept him going (it's just how you handle your situation that makes the difference).

*Woe unto them who practice compromise in the name of unity.*

If we really want to "restore" the New Testament church, we must *move* beyond the "MOVEMENT" mentality, set things in order, and simply be the Lord's church.

*It is hard to be clothed with Christ when we are all wrapped up in ourselves.*

Consistency is a pearl of great price for which most people are not willing to pay the price of being consistent.

*Woe unto them who practice division in the name of unity.*

Men with a fixation on men like to recognize men and emphasize men, religious movements, and what men have done; however, our fixation should be on Christ, and the church of Christ for which he shed his blood, without human detraction.

*It is hard to walk with the Lord when you are dragging your feet.*

Many times to **make us** God must **take us** and **break us**, and He **must bruise** us before He can **use us**, or otherwise He would **lose us**.

*It is hard for a man with a chip on his shoulder to shoulder his load.*

Many who are always wanting to be politically correct are usually playing politics.

*Truth may seem stranger than fiction to people who are strangers to truth.*

Without the wholesome restraint and adhesiveness of religion people's lives, homes, and society itself will fall apart. □

### Was Your Day Well Spent?

If you sit down at set of sun  
And count the acts that you have done,  
And, counting find  
One self-denying deed, one word  
That eased the heart of him who heard—  
One glance most kind,  
That fell like sunshine where it went—  
Then you may count that day well spent.  
But if, through all the livelong day,  
You've cheered no heart, by yea or nay—  
If, through it all  
You've nothing done that you can trace  
That brought the sunshine to one face—  
No act most small  
That helped some soul and nothing cost—  
Then count that day as worse than lost.

—Selected

# “The Rapture”

(Continued from Page 12)

“Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn’ ” (verse 30). Saint and sinner are in this world together until the end. I do not understand it all; but did you notice who is taken out first? The popular rapture theory says, “First gather the wheat.” However, Jesus said, “First gather together the tares.”

We may not understand it all, nor may we be able to explain the exact sequence and timing of all the events. Nevertheless, if the parable of the tares teaches anything, it teaches that the righteous and the wicked live together until the end of the world. At that time, the wicked are cast into “the furnace of fire.” Their judgement has come; they are finished forever. It is truly “the last day.”

## The Beginning or the End?

According to the modern rapture theory, Jesus’ next coming will just be the beginning. According to the theory, most of the book of Revelation and large amounts of both Old and New Testament prophecies cannot be fulfilled until after the rapture. They say the rapture is just the beginning of at least 1007 years of world history.

A careful look at Scripture, however, presents a totally different picture. Jesus’ next coming (there is only one more coming) will be the end of this world, the end of history, the end of time, the end of “life as we know it,” the end of the wicked living unpunished, the end of tears and death, the end of the battle between God and Satan, the end of the antichrist, the end of opportunity to get right with God.

On the other hand, His return will be the beginning—the beginning of eternity. “Prepare to meet your God!” “Watch and pray!” □

(Scripture in the preceding article is taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)

## A Story: More Rattlesnakes Needed

ONCE UPON A TIME, the story goes, there was a family of wayward “church members.” One day while Jim, John and Sam were in the woods a large rattlesnake bit Sam and he became violently ill. The doctor was summoned and did what he could, but said they would need divine help, too, if Sam were to recover. So the preacher and the elders of the church were sent for, and they

came rushing to Sam’s bedside.

The preacher was asked to pray and did so as follows:

“Oh, wise and righteous Father, we thank Thee that in Thy wisdom Thou has sent this rattlesnake to bite Sam, in order to bring him to his senses. He has not been in the church house for years, and it is doubtful that he has in all these years, until now, felt the need of prayer. It seems, therefore, that what our combined efforts could not do, this rattlesnake has done. We trust, O Father, that Thou wilt send another to bite John and Jim, and a big one to bite their father, for we conclude the only thing that will help this family is rattlesnakes. So send us, we pray Thee, three bigger and better rattlesnakes.”—*Selected*

(It sounds like conversion was needed more than rattlesnakes—*Editor*). □

## Forgive Me When I Whine

Today upon a bus I saw  
A lovely maid with golden hair;  
I envied her—she seemed so gay—  
And oh, I wished I were so fair.  
When suddenly she rose to leave,  
I saw her hobble down the aisle,  
She had one foot and wore a crutch,  
But as she passed she gave a smile.  
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine;  
I have two feet—the world is mine.

And when I stopped to buy some sweets,  
The lad who served me had such charm;  
He seemed to radiate good cheer;  
His manner was so kind and warm.  
I said, “It’s nice to deal with you,  
Such courtesy I seldom find.”  
He turned and said, “Oh, thank you, sir?”  
And then I saw that he was blind.  
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine;  
I have two eyes—the world is mine.

And then when I walked down the street,  
I saw a child with eyes of blue.  
He stood and watched the others play;  
It seemed he knew not what to do.  
I stopped a moment, then I said,  
“Why don’t you join the others, dear?”  
He looked ahead without a word,  
And then I knew he could not hear.  
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine;  
I have two ears—the world is mine.

With feet to take me where I’d go,  
With eyes to see the sunset’s glow,  
With ears to hear what I should know:  
I’m blessed indeed, the world is mine;  
Oh, God, forgive me when I whine.

—*Author Unknown*  
*Via Roger & Ruth Wall*

## A Prophecy of the Apostasy of the Papacy

**READ** II Thessalonians 2:1-12 (and for good measure, I Timothy 4:1-6 and II Timothy 3:1-9) and then the following words written almost a hundred years ago by noted Bible scholar J. W. McGarvey. This is from his commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans. His words were not restrained by timid thoughts of being politically correct.—*Editor*

**WE ARE CONSTRAINED** to contend...that the Papacy has already fulfilled the prophecy [found in II Thessalonians 2:1-12], for it agrees in all the points as follows:

1. It has one official man ever at its head, and the arrogancy of its claims is centered in him.

2. That man came with and out of an apostasy, and the very kind of an apostasy which Paul elsewhere describes (I Timothy 4:1-3; II Timothy 3:1-9). Can that apostasy exist for all these centuries, and antichrist be still unborn of it?

3. The spiritual pride and lawlessness which worked and would have produced antichrist in Paul's day, was curbed by the person of the Caesar whose superior spiritual pride and lawlessness restrained that of the church by contempt and persecution.

4. When, notwithstanding the overshadowing emperor, the bishops of Rome began to assert themselves *spiritually*, they were still checked and restrained from revealing themselves as *earthly potentates* by the temporal power of the empire, just as the language of verses 6 and 7 so carefully distinguishes.

5. When the power of the Roman Empire was taken away, the pope appeared, and has since been unceasingly in evidence. Paul's readers could readily see how the emperor and the empire would check the antichrist; but Paul could not openly write that emperor and empire were to fall, for, had he done so, the Romans would have appealed to his words as affording a just cause for persecuting the church. So thought Tertullian (A.D. 150-240), Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386), Ambrose (340-397), Jerome (342-420), Chrysostom (347-407), Augustine (354-430), etc.

6. The pope is careful to keep up his line of succession, so as to establish his identity and claims; and arising out of the fall of Rome and the apostasy of the church, which accompanied that event, he has continued for centuries with little change, and certainly none for the better.

7. He exalts himself against God and Christ, calling himself the vicar, or infallible substitute for Christ, and permitting and encouraging his followers to speak of him thus: "Our Lord God the Pope, another God upon earth...doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things unlawful, and is more than

God." Under these titles he presumes to set aside divine laws in favor of his own. Thus as a substitute person he makes substitute laws, and arrogates to himself divine power, as did Pope Clement VI, when he commanded the angels to admit certain souls to paradise.

8. He sits in the temple of God, *i.e.*, he has his sphere of dominion in the church, and the temple or church which he occupies is still a temple erected to God, albeit the Spirit and presence of God may have long since departed from it.

9. He proves his supreme claims by fraudulent miracles, signs and wonders; of which cures effected by relics and shrines and pictures; prayers, made effectual by blessed beads; indulgences; souls prayed out of purgatory for money; absolution, and transubstantiation are fair samples. □

—J.W. McGarvey



### The King James Bible Scholars Believed the Papacy Was the "Man of Sin" of II Thessalonians 2:1-12

**WORDS OF PRAISE** and commendation addressed to King James of England are found as sort of a preface in the front of unabridged editions of the King James Bible. The scholars who wrote these words back around 1611 are pleased that the king has lent his support to the translation of the Bible and used his influence for the advancement of religion in the land. They see this gesture as knitting the hearts of the people to the king and producing contentment. Then we read, "And this their contentment doth not diminish or decay, but every day increaseth and taketh strength, when they observe, that the zeal of Your Majesty toward the house of God doth not slack or go backward, but is more and more kindled, manifesting itself abroad in the farthest parts of Christendom, by writing in defence of the Truth, (*which has given such a blow unto that man of sin, as will not be healed,*) and every day at home, by religious and learned discourse, by frequenting the house of God, by hearing the Word preached, by cherishing the Teachers thereof, by caring for the Church, as a most tender and loving nursing Father."

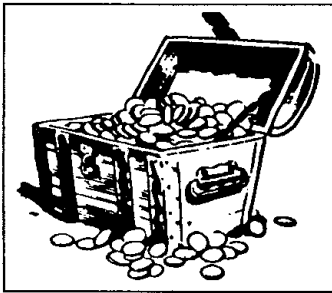
It is interesting that the scholars and people who produced the King James Version of the Bible (as we call it today) believed that the papacy was the "man of sin" (as implied above in the print which we have made bold and italicized). So many today who are zealously wed to the King James Version (and it only) don't even believe this, but have fanciful ideas of a "man of sin" yet to come. How interesting. □





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***WE SHOULD love the truth (II Thesalonians 2:10-12) and speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).***

**Gossip, Remember Me?**

**T**HEY CALL me gossip. I have no respect for justice. I maim without killing. I break hearts and ruin lives. I am cunning and malicious, and gather strength with age. The more I am quoted, the more I am believed. I flourish at every level of society. My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face. To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become. I am nobody's friend. Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same. I make innocent people cry in their pillows. Yes, they call me gossip! —*Adapted* ☐

- ☐ 1995-1996 volumen encuadernado de "La Espada y El Cayado" (en español) —\$7.75; ☐ 1997-98 —\$7.75

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—*Flavel* ☐

**Are You A Selfish Person?**

If you can see blue skies and fields of green,  
And seeing, travel on as if unseen...

If you can travel down life's rugged road  
And never help another bear his load...

If you can hear God's Word of love and truth,  
And hearing, never contemplate its worth...

If you can read of Christ upon the cross,  
And reading, never count the awful cost...

If you can live your life from day to day  
And never take the time to stop and pray...

... You are a selfish person!

—*By James E. Gibbons*

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