

# The Sword AND Staff

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

*Perfecting and Exercising Faith—No. 5*

## Faith Defined and Illustrated



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**WE ENCOURAGE** you to study Hebrews 11, that great chapter on faith. It will be very rewarding as we are trying to go on unto perfection with our faith. We need to learn all that we can about faith in order to do this and then, having learned it, put it into practice. Actually the context of chapter 11 begins in the latter part of chapter 10 where the writer deals with their hardships since being a Christian (and ends in the first few verses of the 12th chapter). Starting with 10:35, he encourages them on by saying, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." He reminds them that the "just shall live by faith," as he admon-

ishes them to continue on, and expressed concern about the possibility of them drawing "back unto perdition." He wants them to "believe to the saving of the soul" (verse 39). With that in mind, the stage is set for chapter 11. Then faith and its practical outworking are dealt with. Wonderful examples are given of heroes of faith of old, whose faith they were to emulate.

This article will hit upon and attempt to highlight some of the great truths seen in this chapter, bringing in other Scripture to bear upon the subject. In Hebrews 11 faith is defined and illustrated (very simple truths, but profound).

### I. FAITH INVOLVES THAT WHICH IS NOT SEEN

First, the writer defines faith. "Now faith is the substance [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [proof, conviction] of things not seen" (verse 1).

#### A Doubly Stated Definition

In reality, he asserts the same thing twice here, but the first part seems to be more narrowly stated than the second. The first part zeroes in on assurance of things "hoped for." The second part of the definition could be looked upon as the more general conviction behind it all. Perhaps these two angles are brought out in verse 6, although in reverse order, which reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God [1] *must believe that he is*, and [2] *that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*." The broader conviction underlying the hope is the fact that God is, and the more narrowed assurance is that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (this has to do with our hope, being assured that God will come through with what He has promised).

(Or, in asserting the same thing twice, does the second part of the double definition represent the firm conviction of that which is "hoped for" being fulfilled, yet unseen? Either emphasis is true)

#### Three Facets of Faith

Really, perhaps we could divide faith into three categories, or facets, as a Christian. They are all the same, but different. These three facets of faith are belief, trust

(Continued on Page 4)

## THE SWORD AND STAFF

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—THANK YOU—

## Proverbially *SPEAKING...*

*LOVE generates love.*

All I know is what the Bible says, and as a Bible believer I accept it all.

*Hope is faith that is alive and well.*

God seeks for men to seek after Him (Luke 19:10; Hebrews 11:6 John 4:23).

*If you would be distinctive, be yourself.*

If we are walking in the light, we are not as likely to stumble, and if perchance we should stumble, we can more easily see how to get up and keep on walking.

*Opportunity plus ability equals responsibility.*

There is no reason to fear tomorrow when our lives are in the hands of One who knows the end from the beginning.

*In God's mathematics of marriage, one plus one equals one (Genesis 2:24).*

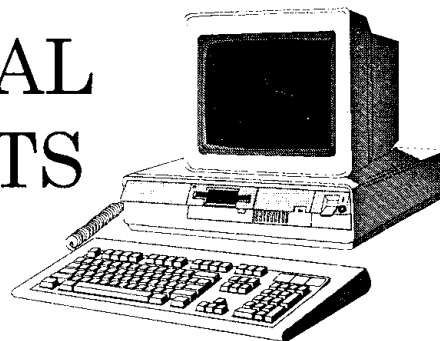
Trust in the Lord, and lean not upon your own understanding, and you will find life less demanding.

*You can't go back on a one-way street without serious consequences.*

No Scripture can mean anything less than what it says, but it can mean more in the light of other Scripture.

*Christianity is authenticated only by authentic Christians.* ☐

# EDITORIAL COMMENTS



## IS IT TIME FOR SOME RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TO HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THEIR RELIGION?

**R**ECENTLY VARIOUS RELIGIONS in an uncomplicated way have been highlighted in the media headlines (not unjustly, but just as a matter of factual reporting). Muslims hijacked passenger planes with the sole purpose of causing massive destruction, misery and the taking of thousands of innocent lives. Roman Catholic priests on a rather wide scale are being sued by those who have experienced sexual abuse and molestation at their hands. Leaders in an increasing number of mainline "Protestant" denominations, and even whole denominations, it seems, have officially accepted the homosexual "lifestyle" and the concept of same sex marriages.

In view of these statements, we have some questions. What we have to say will be a "no! no!" in a pluralistic society preoccupied with being politically correct in what is said (with little concern about details of right and wrong). To a fuzzy mentality permeated by humanism, truth is looked upon as relative, and not absolute. "If it 'works' for you, it is truth to you." In essence, everybody is right. But if everybody is right, nobody is right. Truth must be absolute, or it is not truth at all. It does not contradict itself. On that premise we continue this article.

### Second Thoughts for Muslims

Can a religion that inspires men to do the awful things that happened on September 11, 2001 be of God? Can a religion that had to depend on the ravaging sword in its inception and expansion have much going for it? What about the teachings of the Koran that would encourage this? Does this religion feel so inadequate that it must threaten its adherents with death if they should change their beliefs? Can't it stand alone on its own two feet in the arena of thought? Must those who believe otherwise ever be subject to oppression and persecution? It boils down to the question, are radical Muslims radical because they are radical or because their religion is radical?

On a web site of secular Muslims, a former Muslim speaking of Mohammed, asks, "How can a man of more than 50 years old have sexual feelings for a girl of only 6 [Ayesha, one of his many wives]?" He goes on to say, "As a normal and respectable human being I can't believe in a man who is a pedophile." He further asks, "Why is it that a woman is lower than a man?...Why is it that a Muslim can have 4 wives? Can a woman not have 4 husbands then? And why did Mohammed have more than 4 wives?" Yes, why didn't God take four ribs from Adam to make

him four wives, instead of just one? Becoming one flesh, they mutually were to respect one another in dignity.

These are just second thoughts in passing, the edge of the iceberg, in considering the Muslim religion. There are more prodding questions about salvation from sin and the grace of God that need to be asked. What about the Lord Jesus Christ (born of the virgin Mary) aside from whom there is no salvation? (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8,9)

**Second Thoughts for Catholics**

Could there be something basically wrong with a religious system that sanctimoniously and universally prohibits marriage among its leaders and at the same time glaring sexual irregularities are found to be practiced among them on a rather wide scale? The implication is that the unmarried state of the supposedly celibate priest is more holy and that being married is less honorable, but is that what the Bible teaches? Didn't God's creation of everything climax with Him making man, described as being "male and female" (Genesis 1:26,27), and with the observation that everything He had made was "very good" (Genesis 1:31)? Didn't God say that it was not good that man should be alone (Genesis 2:18)? Didn't the New Testament writer in Hebrews 13:4 say, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers [fornicators] and adulterers God will judge"?

And consider this. Although the apostle Paul was unmarried, he asserted, "Have we not power [the right] to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas [Peter]?" (1 Corinthians 9:5). How is this explained when Peter, whom Catholics claim to be the first pope, was married (and other apostles were married)? (Mark 1:30) And according to the New Testament, one of the qualifications of a bishop was that he be a married man with children (1 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 1:6,7), and furthermore, his jurisdiction was simply a local church (Philippians 1:1). How does Catholic practice measure up to this?

Furthermore, does history bear out the fulfillment of such prophecies as found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 and 1 Timothy 4:1-5? Paul foretells a falling away from the original church with a human personality at the head exalting himself as God. Has anything like that come to pass? And in this falling away, some of the tenets of their faith and practice would be "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" (1 Timothy 4:3). Are celibacy and such supposed asceticism being practiced today in the name of religion?

While we are having second thoughts, what about the claim of apostolic succession? It is claimed that Peter was bishop of Rome and the first pope. Ac-

cording to the New Testament, apostles were the official spokesmen and eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ in getting his church going (Acts 1:1-8,22; 2:32; 4:33; 1 Corinthians 9:1). We ask, do eyewitnesses have successors? Consequently, can there be any such thing as apostolic succession? And if Peter started the church at Rome, and was its first bishop and the first pope as claimed, why was Paul so discourteous as to not even mention his name when he wrote the Roman epistle? Twenty-four people are greeted by name in Romans 16, and Peter's name is not to be found.

When a person honestly considers all of the ramifications and implications of these thoughts, conclusions that must be reached are very disturbing. If the major premise is wrong, that which follows can not be right. We could ask many other questions, but the big question is whether we will accept these second thoughts that have been thrust upon us.

**Second Thoughts for  
Some Denominational Bodies**

As stated, leaders in an increasing number of old mainline "Protestant" denominations, and even whole religious bodies, look upon the homosexual "lifestyle" as acceptable and have in essence accepted the concept of same sex marriages. We will not bother to identify them. The news media keeps us informed and posted on this.

But for the Bible believer, all of the afore said is utterly unthinkable! Consider all of these Scriptures, beginning with the account of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis and ending with the New Testament Scriptures: Genesis 19:1-25; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Romans 1:24-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 1 Timothy 1:9,10; and Jude verse 3. Read all of them. Among them Leviticus 18:22 stands out, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination." (Is there a problem in understanding this? Obviously not!). And in the New Testament Romans 1:26 and 27 stand out, being hard to misunderstand, "...God gave them up [the pagan Gentile world] unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense [penalty] of their error which was meet [due]." Other sins are listed, and this section is concluded with Paul saying "that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them [consent with them] that do them" (1:32). In 1 Corinthians 6:9 Paul does not hesitate to tell us that the practicing homosexual will not go to heaven.

(Continued on Next Page)

# EDITORIAL COMMENTS...

(Continued from Previous Page)

So, how can religious leaders, or anyone, put their stamp of approval and acceptance on such perverted practices (practices that will cause a person to be eternally lost)? It would seem to us that for at least two reasons they could do this. (1) They don't believe and respect the Bible anymore, and (2) they are ignorant of what the Bible teaches. It is hard for us to believe that educated, religious leaders are that ignorant of what the Bible says. Therefore, unbelief must be the factor. But with many in the rank and file membership of these denominational bodies, not knowing the Bible may be involved (coupled with the corroding influence of unbelief).

The gravity of the situation must be realized. People caught up in these bodies need to have second thoughts about their religion. But with many it may be hard to do this, for the distinctive vitals of their faith have long been sapped. Yes, the old denominationalism was wrong, but this takes apostasy to a new low. The very acceptance of the inspiration of the Scripture, the virgin birth and the deity of Christ are involved (as well as holiness of life). □

## An Onion Is A Rose

**T**HE PREACHER reached into a paper sack and pulled out an *onion*. He held it up for all to see and said: "*This is a rose.*"

In an age when being cool is hot and being bad is good and being really great is wicked, *this is a rose*.

When you have to be low life to lead the high life, and children choose to take their own lives, *this is a rose*.

When a so-called Christian nation refuses to pray, when heaven can only be had on earth and when hell is only a joke, *this is a rose*.

To a generation that thinks that fornication is love and a drunken stupor is a good time, *this is a rose*.

When the right to kill an unwanted baby is called the right to choose, and when what God calls an abomination, man calls gay, *this is a rose*.

In a place where liquor referendum is a restaurant referendum, and more sin means more prosperity, *this is a rose*.

When fathers no longer try to be Dads, and mothers refuse to be Moms, and families are defined as unmarried single moms and dads, *this is a rose*.

When shepherds scatter the sheep, when the blind see the light but choose darkness, when the stained can be washed but the individual returns to the mire, when the thirsty refuse to drink from the fountain of life, *this is a rose*.

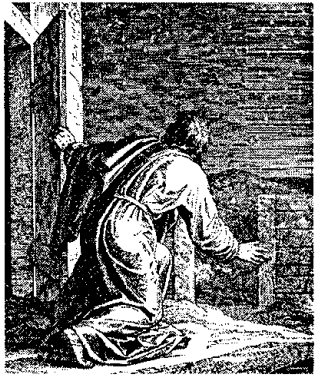
*"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter"*(Isaiah 5:20).

Dear Lord, help us know the difference between your truth and the lies Satan tells us every day.—Ben Flatt



# Faith Defined and Illustrated

(Continued from Page 1)



and hope. (1) We believe in the reality of the living God. (2) Thus, having come to that conviction, we are brought to trust Him. (3) Then because we have trusted Him, we live in hope. Just believing in the reality of God is not enough. The "devils" believe and tremble (James 2:19), yet are lost. We must

trust God for salvation—we can't save ourselves—and therein respond to Him in obedience (James 2:19-26). Then the great hope for us, as a Christian is the resurrection from the dead. Paul says that we "groan within ourselves, waiting for...the redemption of our body [the resurrection, the new eternal bodies]. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:23-25; also notice 1 John 3:1-3 and Philippians 3:20,21). Hope is faith that is alive and well, an anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:18,19). All three facets of faith are in evidence throughout our lives as Christians. They must be if we are to "believe to the saving of the soul."

## In Particular, What Is the Unseen?

Yes, faith involves the unseen. But, more in particular, what is the unseen? From Hebrews 11 and other references we can answer this. Hebrews 11 deals primarily with faith from the perspective and experience of people in pre-Christian times. Their experience involved believing in the reality of the invisible God and believing in what He said (His promises, their fulfillment as yet unseen by them at the time). Let us get an overview of this and then some particular aspects.

## Ancient Man and God

The Bible does not try to prove the existence of God; it simply states it. Genesis 1:1 reads, "In the beginning God..." Ancient man had no problem believing in God. In fact, before the fall, Adam and Eve had direct communication with their Creator. To the ancients, only a fool would say there is no God (Psalms 14). However, with the passing of time, although "they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Romans 1:21). With their inferior thoughts of God, they slipped into idolatry (the word "idolatry" means to worship that which is seen). Paul said this was inexcusable, asserting, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal

power and Godhead [Deity]: so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). Such a display of awesome, almighty power in nature harnessed by intelligent design points to the reality of a Higher Being, God (one God). The writer in Hebrews 11:3, bringing his readers in on the testimony of faith, declares, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

**"God is Spirit"**

Although the great God of eternity kept in touch with sinful man through theophanic representation of Himself by angels in the unfolding of his plan of redemption, He is called the "invisible" God (1 Timothy 1:17). The apostle John in his epistle, 1 John 4:12, tells us plainly that "no man hath seen God at any time..." However, Paul told those on Mar's Hill in Athens that this God, although unseen, was "not far from everyone of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being..." (Acts 17:27,28). Jesus told the Samaritan woman that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). Then later in emphasizing his actual bodily resurrection from the dead, and that they were not experiencing some spiritual apparition in what they saw, he said that "a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). So, from our human perspective God's essence is in a different dimension from that of our immediate physical being. Consequently, He is spoken of as "invisible." Faith is the connecting element between man and God. Moses, in exercising this faith, is spoken of "as seeing him [God] *who is invisible*" (Hebrews 11:27).



**"The Image of the Invisible God"**

The amazing truth of the New Testament is that God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. John in his gospel account declares in his own unique way, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). Paul likewise asserts that Christ "is the image of *the invisible God*" (Colossians 1:15). Then again in the next chapter (Colossians 2:9) he accents the same truth by saying, "For in him

[Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead [Deity] bodily [in body form]"(Colossians 2:9).

How wonderful! By taking upon himself a body by means of the virgin birth, in living a sinless life, and in being put to death in that body as a sacrifice for our sins, Jesus not only became our Savior, he bridged the gap of the world of the unseen. Now there is something tangible for us to "hang onto" when we think of God. Philip pressed the Lord, saying, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us [it will be enough]." Jesus answered, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father?" (John 14:8,9) Paul further expounds and expands on this truth in these marvelous words: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). How amazing that the Word actually became flesh! (John 1:1-14)

**The Concluding  
and Central Aspect of Faith**

Therefore, now in the New Testament another wonderful aspect is added to believing that "God is." Not only is it added, it is central. It is the message of Christianity itself, the climax of God's revelation to mankind. It is believing that God has "spoken unto us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1-3)—yes, *spoken by Jesus Christ, who was God Incarnate*. After Christ's resurrection, Thomas, not being present when Jesus appeared to the disciples, was slow to believe. But when Christ did appear again, all of his unbelief instantly vanished, and he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" Then we read, "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:28-31). This declaration of faith became part of accepting Christ and salvation. The Lord had plainly said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). When Philip preached Christ to the Ethiopian, the Ethiopian responded, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"(Acts 8:35-37). The Lord had said in the Great Commission, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:15,16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

**Summing Up This Point**

Therefore, to sum up this point, the thrust of the 11th chapter of Hebrews is that the ancients not only believed in the reality of God, whom they could not see, they lived a life of faith, looking to God in different

(Continued on Next Page)

## Faith Defined and Illustrated

(Continued from Previous Page)

ways. The great emphasis of faith in this chapter is trusting what God says. Hebrews 11:13 reads, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The chapter ends telling of many wonderful and unique things happening involving other believers (Hebrews 11:32-40). But these people didn't live to see the fulfillment of that to which all of these promises pointed. That is what we are now experiencing in Christianity (salvation and hope of eternal life).

Christianity is "the faith" (Acts 16:5; Colossians 2:7; 1 Timothy 4:1; Jude, verse 3); and it is "the faith" from beginning to end (Galatians 3:26; Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). Of Jesus we confess and assuredly believe, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16; Acts 8:37). Affirming this, we believe that "God is" and that "Jesus Christ is" God Incarnate, the Savior of the world. We trust Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:36-38; Hebrews 8:12). Entering into a new life, now day by day "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). "Seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27) through faith, "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18; Colossians 3:1-4). And thus the affirmation of faith goes on. Christianity is "the faith." It is a life of belief, trust and hope. It is the outworking of the definition of Hebrews 11:1 in our lives.

### II. FAITH IS PERFECTED IN THAT WHICH IS SEEN

Yes, faith involves that which is not seen. But the actual possession of faith, and it being perfected, is just the opposite. It can be seen.

#### James Illustrated in Hebrews 11

Read James 2:14-26. To James, if you have faith, it can be seen, "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and *I will shew thee my faith by my works.*" He goes on to say, "*Seest thou how faith wrought with...works, and by works was faith made perfect.*" The truth of these statements is illustrated in Hebrew 11. Let us pinpoint some of these illustrations.

- "*By faith Abel offered* unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain..." (11:4).
- "*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared* an ark to the saving of his house..." (11:7).
- "*By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed...By faith he sojourned...By faith Abraham...offered up Isaac...*" (11:8,9,17).
- "*By faith Isaac blessed* Jacob and Esau concerning things to come" (11:20).

- "*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter...*By faith he forsook Egypt*, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (11:24, 27).

#### "Jesus Saw Their Faith"

An interesting section of Scripture is found in Mark 2:1-12. In the midst of his busy Galilean ministry, Jesus was back in Capernaum, and the word got out that he was in Simon Peter's house. "Straightway" the place became so filled and surrounded with people that no one else could make it through the door. In spite of the obstacles, there were four who were determined that their paralytic friend would be brought to the Lord for healing. "And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay." Then the writer Mark tells us what was said and done "*when Jesus saw their faith...*" But how could faith, which involves the unseen, be seen? In the bringing of the paralytic; in the breaking up of the roof; in the lowering of the sick man in the presence of Jesus. There was no question mark that they believed Jesus could heal him. And as a bonus, he was forgiven, too.

#### "He Saw the Wind"



A likewise interesting and similar use of words is found in Matthew 14:30. In their returning from the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, after Jesus had fed the 5000, the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water. In connection with this startling experience, and being assured that it was really the Lord, Peter wanted to get out of the boat and walk to Jesus. The Lord said, "Come." Peter attempted to do this, "But *when he saw the wind* boisterous, he was afraid: and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." Did Peter actually see the wind? No, not really. He saw the effects of the wind blowing upon the boisterous waves. In that sense he saw the wind.



### Those Born of the Spirit

This thought can be carried a step further when we read about Jesus telling Nicodemus that a person must be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:1-8). He goes on to say, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: **so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**" As James said, saving faith is obedient faith. It can be seen. And in becoming a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes into our lives (Acts 2:38). According to the apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit thereafter dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:16,17). People cannot see this indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But like the wind that cannot be seen, yet can be seen, it is manifested in our good deeds and godly living. It can be seen in the fruit of the Holy Spirit, of which Paul says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [faithfulness], meekness, temperance [self control]..." (Galatians 5:22,23). The outworking of faith is manifested in our lives in many other and marvelous ways. As James said, by works faith is made perfect (complete) (James 2:22).

### Concluding Remarks

As pointed out, the context of Hebrews 11 found the writer encouraging and admonishing his readers to not cast off their "confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." He warned about drawing "back unto perdition," as he urged them to continue on, to "believe to the saving of the soul." The writer defines faith and points them to the heroes of faith of old who persevered. What great illustrations of faith for them to follow! The first part of the 12th chapter fittingly looks back to chapter 11. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Then he points them to the Lord himself, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." The object of their faith inspires more faith. With all of that said, they should "believe to the saving of the soul." (To put a closing exclamation mark on all of these wonderful truths, read 1 Peter 1:3-9). Amen! □

### The Paradox of the Cross

**T**HE CROSS OF CHRIST is the greatest of all paradoxes. It was the most tragic event in the history of the world, yet the most wonderful thing that every happened. It was the saddest spectacle man ever beheld, yet out of it came the greatest joy. The cross was Satan's greatest victory and Christ's most humiliating defeat, yet it was the most stunning defeat Satan ever suffered and the most glorious victory Christ ever won. Christ won by losing. He conquered by surrendering.

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

The cross was the darkest hour in history, yet it was the time of the greatest light. Though the sun refused to shine and God hid his face from Christ, the cross was the means by which Christ really became the "light of the world." In the cross we see Christ's love for man. There we see human vengeance as they cry for his blood, yet we see divine forgiveness as Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

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



*A Series Involving the Bible and Prophecy...*

## "Satan Bound"

● By **DAVID VAUGHN ELLIOTT**  
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Methuen, MA 01844-3783

**S**ATAN IS PUBLIC ENEMY number one. Among the most important issues in life are the relationships between Satan, God and man. Does God control Satan? To what extent? Are we stronger than Satan or is Satan stronger than we are? What is meant by the binding of Satan in Revelation 20?

### Symbols of Spiritual Realities

Chapter 20, like all of Revelation, is filled with symbolism. In 20:2, we have "the **dragon**, that **serpent** of old" (bold emphasis supplied). This is not simply a literal snake-in-the-grass or a literal Chinese-like dragon, anymore than the Lamb of Revelation is a literal four-legged mammal. Surely, "that serpent of old" takes our minds back to Eden. Also, "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). He comes in many disguises. In the case before us, Revelation itself interprets the figure: "the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan" (20:2).

Another symbol is the "key to the bottomless pit" (Revelation 9:1; 20:1). "**Key**" appears six times in the New Testament. Not once does it refer to a literal, physical key. The "keys of the kingdom" (Matthew 16:19), are surely not physical keys to physical doors. The "key of knowledge" (Luke 11:52), is obviously a spiritual concept. Jesus possesses the keys

(Continued on Next Page)

# “Satan Bound”

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

of Hades, of death and of David (Revelation 1:18; 3:7). Who would claim that a physical key was passed down from David to Jesus? Nor can there be any physical key to death.

“Keys” in the above cases are clearly the power to make available (to open) and to restrict (to shut). We need not question the shape or size of the “key to the bottomless pit.” It is all symbolic of great restrictions placed upon Satan.

“Bound” is another leading word in Revelation 20. “Binding” expresses limitations or obligations. “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives”(1 Corinthians 7:39). Whether God’s or men’s laws, we often speak of something being (or not being) binding. A wife being bound in no way implies inactivity or inability to influence others. The binding refers to one circumstance only—she cannot leave her husband for another man.

Jesus said of the future teaching of the apostles: “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven” (Matthew 18:18). This binding neither physically limits anyone nor even forces anyone to do God’s will. Rather, the apostles’ doctrine is binding spiritually with eternal consequences.

To understand Revelation’s symbols, we must consider how they are used elsewhere. To understand the admittedly difficult concept of binding Satan, we must consider all that the New Testament teaches regarding limits placed on Satan.

## Jesus Resisted Satan’s Temptations

The great war between God and Satan, which is at least as old as the earth, entered an entirely new phase when Jesus came. Among other things, He came to battle Satan, our archenemy.

Just before the start of His ministry, Jesus was confronted by Satan. Two temptations were initiated with the challenge: “If you are the Son of God” (Matthew 4:3,6). Satan must have known he could not tempt God. He certainly did know he had succeeded in tempting (and causing to sin) every human being who ever lived. Now Satan had a totally new challenge: Deity in the flesh. Thus, these two temptations were challenges for Jesus to prove Himself. “Let’s see,” says Satan, “if you are really the Son of God. Prove it.” Jesus resisted.

The third temptation went at it a different way: “If You will fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). Falling down to worship Satan would disprove Jesus’ Deity, since He would be making himself inferior to Satan. Satan and the Word were in fierce combat. Jesus won all three rounds.

## Jesus Overpowered Satan’s Demons

Nearly every case of demon possession recorded in Scripture took place during Jesus’ ministry. Satan must have realized that Jesus in the flesh was an extremely serious threat to his power. He therefore “pulled out all the stops.” He tried everything to overcome Jesus. However, his plans backfired.

*(Continued on Page 10)*

# BIBLE QUESTIONS

*(Random Questions Over the Bible)*

1. What mountain in the Bible is called “the mountain of God,” or “the mount of the LORD”?
2. On what two occasions were men told to take the shoes off their feet because they were standing on holy ground?
3. The fire in connection with what kind of sacrifice (offering) was never to be allowed to go out on the altar of sacrifice?
4. In the Old Testament only men could take the Nazarite vow and be a Nazarite?. (1) True; (2) False
5. What was the priestly benediction by which Aaron and his sons were to bless the children of Israel?
6. Aaron’s rod that budded was of what kind of wood?
7. How was the ownership of land and its sale determined in ancient Israel?
8. When the land of Canaan was first divided among the tribes of Israel, which tribe had “too much” land and which tribe had “too little” in that which was allotted to them?
9. Who were the Kenites?
10. What two books of the Bible bear the name of a woman?
11. Who was the scribe and friend of the prophet Jeremiah who wrote down the Word of the LORD as given to Jeremiah?
12. Belteshazzar was the Gentile name given to what outstanding person in the Bible?
13. What were the names of several apparently wealthy women who “ministered unto Jesus of their substance”?
14. In the gospel of John the name “Jew” seems to be used much of the time in a more limited sense, referring to what people?
15. What is the only record of Jesus ever writing anything?
16. From where did Christ ascend to heaven forty days after his resurrection from the dead?
17. When was the apostle Paul no longer called Saul, and thereafter called Paul, in the New Testament Scriptures?
18. Who, very likely, carried the Romans epistle to the Christians at Rome?
19. In which two epistles of the New Testament are the qualifications of an elder given?
20. What New Testament epistle was written about a “run away” slave who had become a Christian and was being sent back home?

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



# READERS'

## ...Response

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

### NORTH CAROLINA:

■ "We enjoy your publication...Keep up the good work. God bless."

■ "We pray that God will continue to bless you in your printed ministry."

### TENNESSEE:

■ "Please remove this congregation from your mailing list of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Thank you."

■ "Many years ago I received your publication. I think some friend subscribed for me and had it sent to me. If *THE SWORD AND STAFF* is still published, I would like to start receiving it again..."

■ "We enjoy your publication *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. We also receive the twenty-five copies and pass them out...Our people need to arm themselves with the truth, and be ready at all times to defend the Word. We thank you for your great work and may God continue His blessings on us all."

### VIRGINIA:

■ "...Thank you so much for your work. Your papers are a blessing and my Dad gets a lot of ideas for lessons from them. God bless you."

■ "Finally I have found your contact information, and I thank God that I have. I certainly would like to have a copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I read some back issues from the church library and all I can say is AMEN!!!...Thank you so much! May God richly bless you in this ministry!" (E-mail)

■ "I have been reading your publication from a brother in Christ. I have found it exceedingly helpful and would like to be put on your mailing list to receive them. As you are aware, I am incarcerated, and for the last several years I have had such a hunger for the truth. Thank you and God bless you."

### PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "Enclosed gift for work. Keep up the good work!"

■ "...God bless you for your writings in *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. God has to be with you and in you—you writing that 'Answer (An Honest Reply)' to the gentleman who stated his opinion of you and asked for an honest reply. You surely gave him one and the only one. Your reply was excellent, truthful and from the Bible. It was the perfect answer."

### MAINE:

■ "...We really appreciate the encouragement and teaching *THE SWORD AND STAFF* brings—Bible based and edifying."

### OHIO:

■ "Enclosed is payment for one book of *POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS*...I am also sending a small donation to help with the publishing of your paper. It truly blesses my soul. May God bless you."

■ "I have been reading your publication for a while (off and on) and I have always appreciated your candid approach to your beliefs."

"I always turn to the Readers' Response page first because I enjoy seeing what others have to say. I appreciate that you even include when people write simply to say 'remove me.' Honesty in ministry is important even if others do not understand. So I was particularly thrilled to read the rather long letter and response that you included in the most recent issue...The letter was about your views on baptism..."

"I wonder if the person who sent you a letter has considered that perhaps Swindoll and the whole lot of them might have their doctrinal teachings wrong. For the record, how hard is it to understand Acts 2:38? Evidently 3,000 people understood Peter's words clearly that day of Pentecost..."

"Thank you for defending the truth...It is good to know that not everyone in the world is satisfied with a form of the gospel that is not the gospel at all. Continue to strengthen the saints as I have received some encouragement from you this month." (E-mail)

### INDIANA:

■ "We think *THE SWORD AND STAFF* is the best paper of its type. It is good to see real Christians holding the line when so many are falling back."

"Just found your web site. Didn't know it was there. Praise the Lord."

"Thank God for your work." (E-mail)

### MISSOURI:

■ "Please take me off your mailing list."

■ "I recently came across a copy of your magazine and fell instantly in love with it. I am in prison and cannot send a contribution to you to be able to receive your magazine, but would like to be placed on your mailing list if at all possible..."

### NEBRASKA:

■ "Thank you so much for your Bible and God honoring publication."

(Continued on Next Page)

## READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

■ "We...have been enjoying *THE SWORD AND STAFF* very much. We appreciate your faithful stand for the Word. We use some of the articles for adult Bible study class. Enclosed is a token of our appreciation...thank you and may the Lord bless your work."

### KANSAS:

■ "My dad introduced your web site to me and I am very interested. I believe I will visit it often. I was wondering if you have something like a monthly newsletter or something for e-mail. Also, how much would it cost to subscribe to *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Thank you." (E-mail, Web page response)

### TEXAS:

■ "I enjoy your publication so much. Keep it coming!"

■ "Please remove my name from your mailing list." (E-mail)

■ "Please renew my subscription. Thanks for the good work you are doing. I pray God you will be able to continue this great work."

■ "Thank you for *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I appreciate the work you are doing. I am enclosing a donation. Please keep me on your mailing list."

■ "Enclosed is a contribution...to the paper I receive...I read it, and find a lot of spiritual food for thought. And at a time so needed in this troubled world. Thank you."

### WYOMING:

■ "Somehow we let our subscription lapse—and that is the last thing we wanted to do!

"May God continue to bless the ministry he has granted you."

### IDAHO:

■ "For years now we have received your publication for no reason. Not only do we believe that your publication is a waste of trees, we don't believe in anything that you say in it. Your thoughts are random, as is your writing. You never seem to commit in your writing to one faith but slam them all from time to time. Every faith I have talked to tells me that they are not the ones that have your publication sent to us. Whoever the well-meaning person was, but lacks common sense, that put our name on the list needs to realize that we have a life and that it has nothing to do with them...I don't believe in the Bible. I believe it has good teachings, but I am not a Christian. I don't doubt that someone sent the name in with good intentions, it's just really annoying when you really don't want to be saved..." (E-mail)

### CALIFORNIA:

■ "...I do so enjoy reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Keep up the good work."

### OREGON:

■ "Will you please remove the below name from your mailing list? This should save you some money, as we do not read the material you send. I am a Christian and do not need to be converted...I prefer to read material of my own selection, period." (E-mail)

### UNITED STATES:

■ "I enjoyed your web site *SWORD AND STAFF* and plan on visiting back..." (E-mail, Web page response)

### GHANA:

■ "Christian greetings from Africa to you in the name of our Lord and King Jesus Christ.

"I am a pastor in this part of Africa and seriously laboring for the Lord in his vineyard. In fact, in spite of my effort to win souls for Christ and help them grow in him, I lack gospel materials to help this way effectively. I hereby plead that you kindly send me books by James Gibbons which I believe can help in discipline converts.

"I am praying for you always!"

### PHILIPPINES:

■ "Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am blessed and very thankful for your publication. I have received them for many years now. They are very useful in my personal studies and sharing the truth to the blind.

"I am praying that God may continually bless you with more strength, health and abilities to successfully reach the world, especially the lost and the blind through your enlightening publication.

"I appreciate very much if you will not remove my name in your mailing list." □

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## "Satan Bound"

(Continued from Page 8)



The multitudes were so taken with Jesus' power that they seriously considered He could be the promised "son of David" (Matthew 12:22,23). The Pharisees, quite unsettled, replied that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub (verses 24-27). Their remark offered Jesus the perfect opportunity to make two amazing declarations.

First, Jesus said: "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (verse 28). Jesus' power over demons was evidence of the arrival of God's kingdom. It was evidence that Satan could not stop the kingdom that had been promised by Israel's prophets. No Jewish

rejection would stop the kingdom from arriving. Satan himself could not stop it. Indeed, God's spiritual kingdom is precisely involved in overcoming Satan's power in men's lives.

#### Jesus Bound Satan

Jesus made a second amazing declaration that day: "How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first **binds the strong man**?" (Matthew 12:29; bold emphasis supplied). In the context, the strong man is Satan, the house is his sphere of influence (compare Matthew 4:8,9) and the one who plunders the house is Jesus. Casting out demons, as He had just done, is an example of the plundering. In order to plunder Satan's house, Jesus "first binds the strong man." Jesus was right then in the business of "binding" Satan.

"Binds" here is precisely the same English (and Greek) word used in Revelation 20:2! Thus, the concept of binding Satan is *not* new to Revelation. The binding of Satan need *not* be relegated to our future. Even before Calvary and the open tomb, the powerful Word of Life was walking this planet, placing limitations upon Satan—"binding" him.

Mark 3:27 reads basically the same as Matthew 12:29. In Luke's parallel text, Jesus' words are stated differently: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils" (11: 21,22). Jesus says He is "stronger than" Satan, that Satan is no longer "in peace," and that Jesus "overcomes him." Jesus "takes from him all his armor in which he trusted." Jesus "divides his spoils." The Word in flesh was overpowering Satan!

The problem with many believers is that they only think of the "binding of Satan" in connection with Revelation 20. They overlook the "binding of Satan" in the Gospels. The book of Revelation is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1). This Jesus Christ is the same Jesus Christ who spoke of binding Satan 65 years earlier in the presence of the same John who wrote Revelation. Matthew 12, Mark 3, Luke 11 and Revelation 20 cannot be isolated from one another. Jesus overcame and bound Satan the *first* time He came to earth!

#### "Binding" is Not an Absolute Term

There is much discussion as to how absolute the "binding" of Satan was, is, or will be. An examination of Jesus' earthly ministry furnishes us with important clues. In spite of Jesus talking about binding Satan, Satan still had enormous power at that time. The demon-possessed people showed Satan's power. Satan was working even in the lives of Jesus' apostles. We mourn over hypocrites in the

### New E-Mail Address

**WE HAVE** a new e-mail address for *The Sword and Staff* and personal use, which follows. No longer use the old one. The new one is case sensitive, so use the small letters just as they are written when typing in the address.

**jamesgibbons@earthlink.net**

church today, yet even Jesus had His Judas. Look at how the mobs turned against Jesus and pushed Pilate to allow His crucifixion.

In spite of all Satan's activity during Jesus' ministry, Jesus referred to himself as binding Satan at that time. Therefore, there is no Scriptural warrant for forcing the "binding" of Satan in Revelation 20 to be a situation in which Satan is totally inactive, with no more influence over people. Such an interpretation of "binding" is a doctrine of men, with not one Bible text to back it up. Throughout Scripture, spiritual binding refers to placing certain limitations and gaining certain victories. It does *not* refer to causing a cessation of all power and influence.

Being "chained" does limit a person, but in no way does it restrain the person from all activity and influence. This is readily illustrated in the imprisonment of Paul. While Paul was chained, he converted Onesimus (Philemon 10). In Philippians 1:12-14 Paul says that his being in chains "actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel." Five of Paul's epistles were written while he was in chains. Chains and imprisonment limit people, but in no way do they make them powerless.

#### Satan Cast Out

Jesus used more expressions to declare His victory over Satan. For example, "The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw **Satan fall like lightning from heaven**'" (Luke 10:17,18; bold emphasis supplied). Once again, it is power over demons that causes Jesus to announce victory over Satan. Jesus added, "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (verse 19). But lest the disciples, past and present, think that physical power is what it is all about, Jesus continued: "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (verse 20). This is the real victory over Satan!

The week of His crucifixion, Jesus said: "'Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.' This He

(Continued on Next Page)

# “Satan Bound”

(Continued from Previous Page)

said, signifying by what death He would die” (John 12:31-33). Satan cast out! When? “Now...will be cast out.” By what means? The “death He would die.” We cannot escape the conclusion that at Calvary, Jesus triumphed over Satan, casting him out.

Revelation 12:7-10 teaches the same thing, telling of war in heaven that resulted in Satan being cast out. Verse 11 explains that “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” “Overcame.” That is the same English (and Greek) word we saw in Luke 11:22, where Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27 say “bound.” Thus consider: “Overcame him [bound him] by the blood of the Lamb.”

Revelation 12:10 further says: “For the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.” Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, Satan can no longer accuse men of deserving the death penalty. That is what Romans 8 says: “If God is for us, who can be against us?...Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies...It is Christ who died...who also makes intercession for us” (31-34). Satan is no longer before God to accuse us! Remember Job? Jesus is now before God to intercede for us! Hallelujah!

Calvary was not defeat. Calvary was victory! Jesus was lifted up. Satan was cast out. The two events are inseparable. It is impossible to interpret Revelation 20 correctly if we ignore the great victory that Jesus *has already won* over Satan.

## The Devil Destroyed

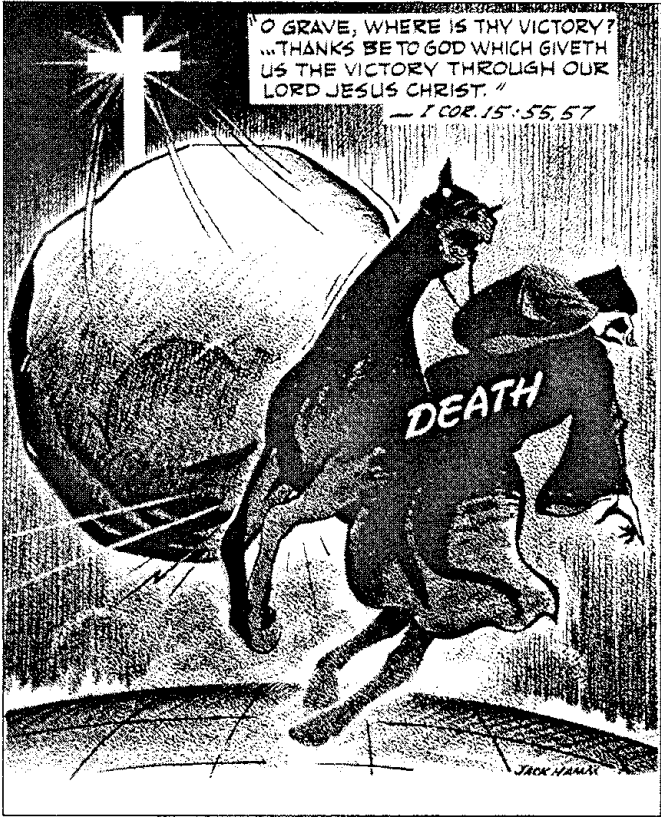
Jesus took on flesh like us, Hebrews says, “that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (2:14). In Jesus’ death, Satan is destroyed. This writer does not comprehend it all; but these are strong words. “Destroy” is obviously stronger than “bind,” “cast out” or “overcome.” Are there some future elements involved here? No doubt. Even when we say that Jesus “saves,” there is a future eternal element involved.

However, there is definitely a present element. Verse 15 continues the sentence, “and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” “Were” all their lifetime. Surely, the implication is that through Christ we are not in bondage to death as the world is. As Paul wrote: “I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13,14). The death and resurrection of Jesus forever changed the dynamics of the universe.

The same John who wrote Revelation, also wrote in his first epistle: “The Son of God was manifested,

that He might destroy the works of the devil” (3:8). Why did Jesus come to the world? To seek and to save our lost souls? Surely. But that includes destroying the works of the devil!

## THE KNOCKOUT BLOW



Elaborating many of the things involved when Jesus went to the cross, Paul included: “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:13-15). Jesus disarmed His enemies, of whom Satan is number one. He made a public spectacle of His enemies. Jesus triumphed! Satan was disarmed and made a public spectacle! May God help us all to comprehend better the depth and breadth of what happened on Calvary that fateful day when even the sun hid its face and the ground shook at the momentous event taking place.

## Victory over Satan Now

The same John who wrote Revelation, triumphantly proclaimed in his first epistle, “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (4:4). Is Satan still active in this world? You had better believe it. However, since Calvary, there is a new dynamic. Our Jesus is greater than the world’s devil!

Two chapters earlier, John wrote: “I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14). “Have overcome.” Not in the future. Now! John says it even stronger in

(Continued on Page 14)

# Things That Made Me Strong

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

—Anonymous



# BARBS...

with a Point



**RELIGION** without love is not from above.

*The statutes of limitation do not run out on sin.*

Sinner, **you** must make a **U-turn (YOU-turn)** before **you** can go to heaven.

*If the preaching of God's Word offends you, you are an offense to God.*

If we settle for something less than the Bible, we will be something less than what God wants us to be.

*We do not inherit depravity, but can become that way through abandoned living.*

Zeal without knowledge is about like a train going full steam ahead without being clearly on a track upon which to run.

*Our sins are not covered by the blood of Christ—they are washed away!*

Friction and faction are the fruit of argumentation without love (even though the argument is the truth and about the truth).

*If it makes no difference what we believe, it makes no difference if we believe.*

If you put your children before God, they will put themselves before God when they are grown (if God is in their lives at all).

*Grace is not a license to sin (Romans 6:1,2; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11,12).*

Our forefathers set up this country with the practice of freedom of religion, not freedom from religion as secular humanists are trying to impose upon us.

*When the influence of humanism impacts a society, subhuman behavior soon abounds.*

Beware! Much of the modern media and television is not just so much "innocent" reading and entertainment, although it may appear in this guise, but it represents a most radical agenda that subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) is trying to brainwash us, distort our thinking and to be imposed upon us.

*All other problems have their roots, directly or indirectly, in one basic problem, sin.*

Much of modern art and modern music have this in common, both are "disconcertant" (reflecting the bewildered state of modern man).

*Weak people drink strong drink and thereby become weaker.*

If "gay" is okay, then wrong is right and right is wrong—and mankind has lost its way!

*A person clothed with Christ will be decently clothed otherwise.*

Some sin can't be forgiven, not because of a lack of God's mercy, but because of the hardness of the sinner's heart and the lack of a capacity to repent.

*The person who is living only just to gratify his own pleasures is a selfish person.*

Distance from the Lord is more of a factor in some people not coming to church than the distance from the church building.

*When all is said and done, there is usually more said than done.*

Honest and straight forward preaching spoken from a heart stripped of the deceptive veneer of ostentatious humility, feigned love and flattery is the kind that is really impressive.

*Baptism removed from the context of grace and faith becomes a work of man.*

It is hard for the old ship of Zion to navigate in the waters of shallow preaching and teaching.

*It seems that the church is always just one sermon away from apostasy.*

Before burning all of the bridges behind you, better make sure that you are on the right road. □



# I Had a "Drug" Problem

I **HAD** a "drug" problem when I was a young person and teenager.

I was "drug" to church on Sunday morning, I was "drug" to church on Sunday night, I was "drug" to church on Wednesday night.

I was "drug" to Sunday school every week. I was "drug" to Vacation Bible School.

I was "drug" to family devotions to read the Bible and pray.

I was also "drug" to the woodshed when I disobeyed my parents.

Those "drugs" are still in my veins, and they affect my behavior in every thing I do and say, and think. They are stronger than cocaine, crack or heroin. If our children had this "drug" problem, America would certainly be a better place. □

—Selected



# “Satan Bound”

(Continued from Page 12))

5:18. “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin...and the wicked one does not touch him.” No, this writer does not believe that Christians live in sinless perfection. Nor does he believe in “eternal security.” But neither does he wish to erase 1 John 5:18 out of the Bible. Whatever exact interpretation a student gives to the verse, it speaks of great power over “the wicked one” in our lives today.

Do not forget the armor of God with “the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (Ephesians 6:16). “Will be able.” And God “will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Yes, Satan can still tempt us. However, God puts a limit on the strength of the temptations. God has “delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13). We are in the kingdom now! We have been delivered from the satanic power of darkness now!

Jesus told Paul that He would send him to the Gentiles, “to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:17,18). How receive forgiveness? By loosing them from Satan’s power.

All these statements of victory over Satan are for those who are born again. Notice the contrast Paul presents in Ephesians. “Dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked...according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience...even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (2:1-5). The “before” life was according to Satan. The “now” life is in Christ Jesus. The sons of the kingdom are promised life with power over Satan. The sons of disobedience receive no such promise—unless they turn to Christ.

## “Deceive the Nations No More”

The only explanation that Revelation 20 gives as to the meaning of the binding of Satan is that “he should deceive the nations no more” (verse 3). What does that mean?

A great change came upon the world through Jesus’ *first* coming. “Remember that you, once Gentiles...at that time you were without Christ... having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:11-13). Before Christ, the Gentiles were without God; they had no hope. Before Christ, God’s revelation was given to one nation; He had little to say to the Gentiles. Satan’s power was everywhere. The

eternal Word entered this world to totally change that situation. True, Satan is still powerful today. However, he is greatly limited in comparison to his influence before Christ’s *first* coming.

“Once Gentiles...without God.” The Greek word *ethnos* is sometimes translated “Gentiles” and sometimes, “nations.” Ephesians is talking about the condition of the *ethnos* before Jesus’ *first* coming. Revelation 20:3 says that Satan is bound “so that he should deceive the nations [*ethnos*, Gentiles] no more.” Is not Ephesians 2 an excellent commentary on Revelation 20?

Had it been possible to have the Gospel in Noah’s time, the ark could not have held all the righteous people. Speculation? Perhaps. How about homosexual Sodom? If they had had the Gospel, God would have found more than ten righteous people and, honoring Abraham’s prayer, would have spared the city. Speculation? Not at all! Speaking of Capernaum, Jesus said that “if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day” (Matthew 11:23). Amazing! Before Jesus came, the nations were deceived and almost totally under Satan’s power. With Jesus’ *first* coming, all that changed.

Since the first century, the gospel “is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). That power did not exist before Christ came. Christ conquered Satan and unmasked him. We no longer need to be deceived. As Paul wrote: “lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). That is

## We Thank Thee, Lord

We thank Thee, Lord, for all the good that we have had this year;

For raiment, shelter, and for food, for all the friends so dear.

We praise Thee for Thy Only Son, who died to set us free.

We praise Thee for the victories won, and for the light we see.

We praise Thee for the peace and rest that fills our very heart;

For blessing us with all the best that heaven can impart.

We thank Thee for Thy precious Word that feeds our hungry soul.

We thank and praise Thee, Blessed Lord, who keeps us well and whole.

—Author Unknown



saying, "we understand how he works; we are not deceived by him." None of which is to deny that we can choose to reject God's Word and therefore fall into deception.

**What of Satan's Present Power?**

Both Scripture and experience teach that Satan still has tremendous power in today's world. This is the principal argument futurist premillennialists use to claim that Satan surely is not bound today. This is a strong argument. However, it is not the complete story, as has been seen in this article. Their argument ignores several important facts:

- 1) The New Testament is filled with declarations of limits already placed upon Satan as a result of Jesus' first coming.
- 2) Because of the spread of the Gospel in the world, Satan's power over the nations today is considerably less than it was before Christ's first coming.
- 3) Aside from the admittedly difficult text in Revelation 20, all the texts that mention great limitations being placed upon Satan, are either speaking of the limitations now enjoyed in this age or those to be enjoyed in the New Jerusalem.

One of the futurists favorite verses is 1 Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." This is correct. But this verse does not present the Christian as a helpless victim. On the contrary, it is an exhortation to be vigilant precisely because Christians have the necessary defenses. The very next verse says, "Resist him, steadfast in the faith." As our brother James said: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). What a precious and powerful promise!

As a result of the incarnation, as a result of Calvary, as a result of the open tomb, King Jesus offers victory over Satan now. Yes, many in the world remain deceived. However, in all nations there are those who are no longer deceived by Satan. Before the prophecies begin in Revelation, the Lamb is found worthy to open the seals because "You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (5:9). Satan can no longer deceive the nations in the way he did before Jesus came to earth to bind him. □

(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.)

**Strong Medicine**

**O**NCE UPON A TIME there was a man who was gravely ill. His wife brought him the strong medicine ordered by the doctor, but he complained tht it tasted bitter and caused him some pain. So, to spare him, his wife watered it down. He was so happy. It almost tasted good and his tummy didn't hurt any

more. She was so kind to him. But there was a catch. All was not well. The diluted medicine was no longer strong enough to do its job. So the germs got the upper hand, causing the man's illness to get worse. The man grew weaker and weaker, and one day he died, now free from the harsh taste and minor discomfort from which his wife had spared him.

The faithful preaching of God's Word sometimes is strong medicine. To some it may even seem bitter and sometimes even painful, but obeyed it is the sure-cure for the most deadly disease of all, sin, and it assures eternal life.—*Adapted* □

**Answers to:  
BIBLE QUESTIONS**

1. Exodus 3:1; 4:27; Numbers 10:33; 1 Kings 19:8; 2. Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:13-15; 3. Leviticus 6:8-13; 4. Numbers 6:1,2; 5. Numbers 6:22-27; 6. Numbers 17:8; 7. Numbers 26:52-56; 33:54; Leviticus 25:23-28; Numbers 36:7-9; 8. Joshua 19:9,47; 9. Judges 1:16; 4:11; 1 Samuel 15:6; 10. Ruth and Esther; 11. Jeremiah 36:1-10; 45:1; 12. Daniel 1:7; 13. Luke 8:1-3; 14. The Jewish leaders and Jews who lived in Judea—John 7:1; 15. John 8:3-11; 16. Acts 1:1-12; 17. Acts 13:1-13; 18. Romans 16:1,2; 19. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1; 20. Philemon. □

**How to Be Happy**

**L**IVING IN THIS WORLD with all of its trouble and unrest, it would seem next to impossible to be happy. But there is a way that you can be happy even when these conditions exist. Would you like to know the way to be happy? Keep your heart free from hate, your mind from worry (worry just pulls tomorrow's clouds over today's sunshine), live simply, expect little, give much, sing often, pray always, fill your life with love, scatter sunshine, forget self, think of others and their feelings. Do to others what you want them to do to you. These are tried links in the golden chain of contentment. Try it. You'll like it.—*Selected* □

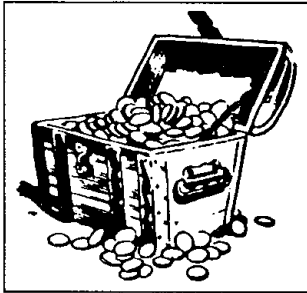
**Another Engagement**

**T**HE STORY IS TOLD of how on President Garfield's first Saturday in Washington as President a member of the Cabinet insisted that a Cabinet meeting must be called at 10:00 a.m., the following day, to handle a matter that threatened a national crisis. Garfield refused on the ground of another engagement. The Cabinet member then insisted that the national matter was of such grave importance that the President should break the engagement. Garfield refused. Then the Cabinet member remarked, "I should be interested to know with whom you could have an engagement so important that it could not be broken."

Garfield replied, "I will be as frank as you are. My engagement is with my Lord to meet Him at His house and at His table at 10:30 tomorrow, and I shall be there." He was there. The crisis passed. The nation survived. And President Garfield was found faithful to his higher obligation.—*Selected* □

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***Are You A Selfish Person?* (No. 2)**

If you can see the stars aglow at night  
And all that you have seen are specks of light...

If you can live to see the light of day  
And lack for words in things that you could say...

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 stop to bear another's load...

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

If you can read of Christ upon the cross,  
And reading, never contemplate the 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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