Sword and Staff

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

"Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?"



• By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 W. Fairfield Drive Mount Airy, NC 27030 USA

wherein a lot of bad things happen. Sometimes people become very disturbed and perplexed about this. Distraught, they ask, "Why do bad things happen? Why do bad things happen to good people?" And, more specifically, "Why do bad things happen even to Christians?" Is there any particular meaning or significance to all of this? How do we explain it?

In the light of the Scriptures, perhaps there are several different ways to look at this. There is a general way of looking at it. And, also, there is a more specific way. In this more specific way God and the devil are more personally and directly involved in what may be happening to us.

I. LOOKING AT IT IN A GENERAL AND A SPECIFIC WAY A. In A General Way Living in A World of Sin and Death

Bad things that happen in our lives may not mean anything at all beyond the fact that we are living in a world of sin and death. Adam and Eve sinned. Consequently, death came into the world with all of the hardships and bad experiences that lead up to and accompany it. We are fallen creatures and live in a world that is under the curse of sin (Genesis 2:17; 3:16-19). Universally, we read in Hebrews 9:27, that it is appointed unto men once to die. And the apostle Paul declared, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22). Being sinful, man was expelled from the Garden of Eden. It was not fitting that imperfect man should continue to live in a perfect environment. We believe that even our uneven weather patterns reflect this. A cursed world would remind man that he was imperfect and under the curse of sin (and that he needed a Savior).

(And the next verse that comes after Romans 8:22, reads, "And not only they [the world at large], but ourselves also [Christians], which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit [know], the redemption of our body." Yes, after becoming a Christian, we are still living in a world of sin and death and are a part of this world that is still groaning and travailing in pain. But this only enhances and serves to intensify our hope as we look forward to our new eternal body and a "world" free from sin and death. Notice. Romans 8:24 further verifies what we are saying. The same imperfect world that accented our need of a Savior now enhances our anticipation of something better.)

"On the Just and on the Unjust"

Of significance to what we are writing about in this article is what Jesus said about the heavenly Father. Jesus said that "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Yes, the righteous and the unrighteous alike experience the blessings of the sunshine and the rain. The flipside

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

RIGHTEOUSNESS exalts the nation that exalts righteousness.

A man's visible behavior mirrors and reflects the invisible reality of his relationship to God.

You cannot be saved until you realize that you are really lost.

If we are living close to God, and others are also living close to God, we should feel close to one another.

It takes a lot of kneeling to keep in good standing with God.

It is easy for the person who has experienced forgiveness to forgive.

You are not as likely to get "cold feet" if you have a "warm heart."

Let your speech be better than silence or be silent.

Before he would go through a day without prayer, Daniel spent a night in the lion's den (Daniel 6).

A doting love is not a healthy and a wholesome love.

If a workman is no better than his tools, just think how well equipped the Christian must be (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

The Bible promises no loaves for the loafer (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

EDITORIAL COMMENTS





"INASMUCH AS... YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME"

ATTHEW 25:31-46 is a great section of Scripture. Here the Day of Judgment is depicted. The Lord is pictured as coming with all of his holy angels. Before him all nations are gathered. In the judgment what takes place is like a shepherd dividing his sheep from the goats. Those on the right hand hear the words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." They are recognized for what they have done, as the Lord said, "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat [food]: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited men: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Then the righteous, perhaps being somewhat perplexed at what they had heard, inquiringly ask as to when this took place. The Lord's answer is most revealing. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And to those on the left hand, who had done nothing, he said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Then he went on to say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

An interesting Old Testament backdrop to this is found in the book of Proverbs. Taking these verses as we come to them in this book, let us notice. Proverbs 14:31, "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor." Proverbs 17:5, "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished." And Proverbs 19:17, which ties in more explicitly with Matthew 25, reads, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."

In another place in the New Testament, Jesus said, "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13,14). Speaking more generally, yet including this, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (Matthew 6:19,20a).

The apostle Paul carries these thoughts a step further. He speaks to the servants, who were actually slaves, but there is such a thing as "hired servants" (Mark 1:20). In one way or an-

other, most all of us are in this category. So, what he says includes us. Listen. "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons" (Colossians 3:22-25).

Everything that a Christian does should be entered into and looked upon "as to the Lord." And didn't the apostle Paul say, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)?

Everything that a Christian does is filled with purpose and meaning. Let us never forget our high and holy calling as we live our lives every hour and every minute of every day. Amen!

"Amazing Grace"

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound That sav'd a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears reliev'd; How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believ'd!

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promis'd good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be, As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail, And mortal life shall cease; I shall possess, within the veil, A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow The sun forbear to shine; But God, who call'd me here below, Will be forever mine.

By John Newton as it appeared in Olney Hymns (London: W. Oliver, 1779)

This is "Amazing Grace" by John Newton as it appeared in *Olney Hymns* (London: W. Oliver, 1779). The current song in the present day hymn books will be found worded a little differently. One stanza in use today is not found in the original version of the song at all. This stanza is traced from the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, dating back to the earlier part of the 1800s. Following are the words.

When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we first begun.

We understand that John Newton was born in London in 1725. His early life seems to have been anything but religious, morally speaking. He eventually became a servant of a slave trader, in charge of transporting slaves. In 1748, after a near disaster on the high seas, he began to turn toward a Christian outlook on things. But he continued in the slave business and it took him about 40 years to really get away from slavery and speak against it. It was toward the end of this period that "Amazing Grace" and other hymns appeared. It was during this time that he became a friend of the poet William Cowper. Regardless, the hymn is a powerful and moving song.

Overtures Rejected

CHILDHOOD ACCIDENT caused poet Elizabeth A Barrett to lead a life of semi-invalidism before she married Robert Browning in 1846. There's more to the story. In her youth, Elizabeth had been watched over by her tyrannical father. When she and Robert were married, their wedding was held in secret because of her father's disapproval. After the wedding the Brownings sailed for Italy, where they lived for the rest of their lives. But even though her parents had disowned her, Elizabeth never gave up on the relationship. Almost weekly she wrote them letters. Not once did they reply. After 10 years, she received a large box in the mail. Inside, Elizabeth found all of her letters; not one had been opened! Today those letters are among the most beautiful in classical English literature. Had her parents only read a few of them, their relationship with Elizabeth might have been restored.—Selected

If Christ is not in our lives, the more that we seem to succeed, the more evident our failure becomes.



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of this line of thinking would take notice that the just and the unjust likewise experience the consequences of living in a world that's cursed. We live in the same environment. And to extend this thought a little further, when being perplexed about why bad things happen to good people, we ask, "Why do good things happen to bad people?"

"Ye Shall All Likewise Perish"

Likewise notice Luke 13:1-5. "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ve that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ve that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." These bad and catastrophic things that had happened were not to be looked upon as signifying anything special. The Jews seemed to look upon this as the hand of God bringing judgment upon sinners who were especially wicked. But the Lord brought them back to reality when he said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Yes, Paul said, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23). In addition to death because of Adam and Eve's sin, we have been under the sentence of death ever since we committed our first sin (Romans 5:12; 6:23). Instead of crying out, "Why me, Lord?!" many times it would be just as fitting to say, "Why not me, Lord?" It is just a matter of time and circumstance.

B. In A Specific Way

We read of various things taking place in Bible times. This may mean something and it may not as far as we personally are concerned. Obviously, during this time of progressive revelation and the unfolding of God's scheme of redemption to mankind, his dealings with man would be and were a little different than after this has been completed. And because God and the devil have been directly, personally and uniquely involved with a few selected people doesn't imply this happens to everyone in the same way. Nonetheless, it is profitable

to study these cases and see if there is anything for us to learn that would be applicable to our situation. And in doing this, Job and the apostle Paul come to the forefront as good illustrations. And there are others.

II. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MAN JOB God, Satan and Job

Read the first two chapters of the book of Job (and the last chapter). In an atmosphere of holy intrigue we are brought behind the visible scenes of that which will be taking place to get a glimpse of that which was going on. Interestingly, and perhaps to our surprise, we find God and Satan jointly involved in the things that happen to Job. Job is a God-fearing man who has been richly blessed by God. God points out "that there is none like him in [all] the earth, a perfect [blameless] and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth [turns away from] evil" (Job 1:8). "Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought [nothing]? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD" (1:9-12).



Bad Things Begin to Happen

In rapid succession, one after another, bad things begin to take place in Job's world (as it seems to be coming apart). Bad and violent things begin to happen, instigated by other human beings, which repeatedly result in the loss of life, loss of Job's property and his livestock. Natural calamities likewise take their toll as fire falls from heaven (evidently, lightning). And getting closer to Job all of the time, finally, "there came a great wind from the wilderness," destroying the house

where his children were "eating and drinking." The house fell upon them, bringing death to all except one person who fled to tell about it. "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (1:20-22).

"He Is in Thy Hand"

Sometime later God again points out Job's integrity and uprightness. In response, the devil lets it be known that he wants to take the harassment of Job a step farther. He wants to "get at" the very person of Job himself. Saying that "all that a man hath will he give for his life" (2:4-5), he thought he could bring Job to a breaking point. In subjecting him to what would personally be thrown at him. the devil believed he would curse God. "And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (2:6-7). We know the rest of the story as Job's wife wants him to curse God and die. "But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (2:9-10). He endured the grueling experience, along with the self-righteous lecturing of his "friends," to come out victorious and vindicated before God. He was tried and not found wanting.

Some Lessons Learned in Job

(1) Although "bad things" happening may be universal (and experienced by all of mankind at times), the reasons and the circumstances behind them are not necessarily the same as that of Job. Job was uniquely pointed out by God and picked out by Satan for what happened to him. As we noticed, the Lord said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect [blameless] and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" (1:8; 2:3) Satan contends that the reason for Job being such a good person is because God has blessed him so much. Most people don't have the status of Job, nor is the reason behind their suffering so specific. In the Bible account, of all the people on the earth the devil singles out Job to put to the test. And the Bible does not teach that every godly person is subjected to what Job went through.

(2) Clearly and simply, Job's grueling experience and ordeal was a great trial of faith. He was put to the test, tried and not found wanting. He was proved to be genuine. He retained his faith and came out victorious. He was not serving God for selfish reasons, as the devil implied. He was serving God because God is God. Although our immediate circumstance may not be the same (our situation may be more general), all can look to Job as an example of perseverance and find a lesson in enduring trials. What a wonderful attitude he had! Here are some of his remarks spoken while experiencing trauma and stress. "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (1:20-22). "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil [bad]?" (2:9-10). "Though he [the LORD] slav me, vet will I trust him..." (13:15). Let's do more than evaluate Job's example as a desirable theme for study, but emulate and imitate it in our lives!

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WHO?

WHO made the earth and then decorated it so exquisitely? Who painted the light blue sky splashed with vibrant hues of purple, pink, and **o**range at sunset? Who colored the leaves that are sprinkled with an array of yellow, brown, red, and green?

Who created emotions? Who made the touch of a warm embrace that washes a wave of comfort over you? Who gave you bittersweet tears that fill your eyes and trickle down your face? Who placed the giggles and screams of delight into children at play?

Who designed the seasons? Who made the white winter snow that floats gently on your eyelashes? Who directed the spring months to melt away the snow? Who brought the flowers out of hiding and woke up the trees, then dashed away? Who gave you carefree summer days of bright sunshine that warm your heart? Who ushered in the autumn days when summer says, "good bye," and fall winds say, "Hi"?

Who made the twilight sky? Who formed the moon that glows so bright and commands the tides to stand and bow? Who arranged the tiny, twinkling stars that adorn the dark canvas of the sky?

Who?

Who made everything for you? He signed everything He created. Do you see His signature on you, too?—Nikki Walker

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(3) Then, if perchance our "behind-the-scene" situation is in a measure like Job's (that the devil esteems us godly and that he wants to single us out personally to put us to the test, and God allows it), it really amounts to a back-handed compliment. Something "bad" is happening to us because we are a "good" person. Evidently God considers us a person who can hold up under adverse circumstances, and thereby by our example bring glory to His Name. Thus, be of courage and good cheer. If that is the case, you have been chosen by God for a special mission. Try to be equal to the task.

James Brings Out Some More Lessons from Job

In James 5:11, Job is held up as an example of patience. This reads, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience [perseverance] of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful [compassionate], and of tender mercy." Looking at the context of this 5th chapter of James a little more closely, we find much of it has to do with the oppression of the poor by the rich (and especially the oppression of poor Christians). Not only are their salaries not paid, they suffer affliction even to the point of death from their rich oppressors. In such a harrowing circumstance they are admonished not to grumble and vent their frustration against one another. That is when they are told to look to Job (and the prophets) as an example (and examples). Then they are admonished, "Above all things" not to swear (James 5:12). How does that fit and tie into the context of Job? Remember, his wife wanted him to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). Like Job, maintaining the same attitude (2:10), with patience we are to persevere in our troubles. James says to remember the outcome of the story of Job. God is merciful. The story has a good ending.

III. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE APOSTLE Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

The apostle Paul is another excellent illustration of "bad" things happening to "good" people. We find his personal testimony in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. It reads, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my

strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Strength through Weakness

As an apostle, with its unique mission, Paul had been given special and extraordinary revelations and insights. He had gone through the most amazing experiences. Being human, there was always the possibility that all of this might "go to his head." This had happened to the Corinthians, even though they were on a more limited and inferior scale, as they became "puffed up," thinking they had spiritual gifts that were superior to others. Paul was subjected to a most aggravating physical problem that he calls a "thorn in the flesh." (And, interestingly, Paul thought of this lingering and piercing ailment as a "messenger of Satan," buffeting him. We do not fully understand this statement, but we remember that Satan was likewise involved with what happened to Job.) "Bad things" happened to Paul, not because he was bad, but to keep him "good." By his problem, evidently a health problem, he was continually made aware of his limitations as a human being and his need for complete reliance on the Lord. Consequently, this infirmity in the flesh became a great source of spiritual strength to him. And God's strength was made perfect in weakness. Coming from this flawed human vessel, the display of God's message and power was the more auspicious.

Applicable to All of Us

We are not apostles today. We have not seen the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1). Supernatural powers have not been channeled through us in miracles (2) Corinthians 12:12). Nor have we received revelations from the Lord (Ephesians 3:5). Yet from the general way of looking at it, not even taking the specific into consideration as a factor, we can gain the same results from our "thorn in the flesh" experience as the apostle Paul. We learn to live with our health problems. We learn to look to the Lord and trust him as never before. God has taken that which seems bad and made something good out of it. In being weak we have become spiritually strong. God's strength is made perfect in weakness. It can accomplish that if we let it. The worst thing that ever happened to us could be the best thing that ever happened to us if we don't let it get the best of us.

"All Things Are Yours"

In view of his continuing experience, Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9b). Then he goes beyond his immediate "thorn in the flesh" experience to include all negative experiences to make something positive out of them. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong" (12:10). And in 1 Corinthians 3:21-23 he takes this application a step further, applying it to everything and to every Christian, "Therefore let no man glory in men [as the Corinthians were doing, and not in the Lord]. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." They were inappropriately elevating men (Paul, Apollos and Cephas) who were simply servants and mutually belonged to all of them; these men had introduced them to Christianity (1 Corinthians 3:5-6). Paul goes beyond them to say that "all things are yours," to serve Christians in God's scheme of things. "All things" literally (even good and bad) were theirs in living the Christian life and accomplishing the glory of God. "All things" were to be accepted as challenges within the context of the purpose and will of God. Christianity is to be experienced in the arena of life as it is (and even death itself is a servant to Christians).

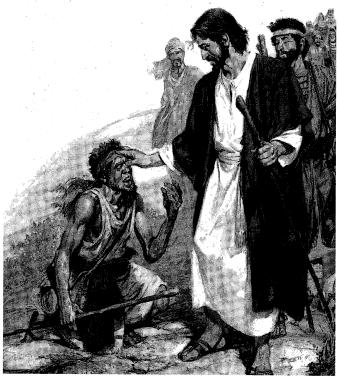
"All Things Work Together for Good"

No doubt, Paul's "thorn in the flesh" experience, along with everything else, led him to assuredly say, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). He approached everything from the viewpoint of the will of God being done (Acts 18:21; 21:14; 1 Corinthians 4:19). He even looked upon "bad" things, whether in the general or specific category, as having the potential for good. They could and would be used for good, if we would but let them. He said. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). When in his first Roman imprisonment, and facing an uncertain future, he said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). In his second Roman imprisonment, facing certain death, he said, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a

good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Now he could claim death as his servant (1 Corinthians 3:21-22), ushering him into the very presence of God and all the wonderful things that God has in store.

IV. OTHER SCRIPTURAL CONSIDERATIONS Those "Oppressed by the Devil"

The apostle Peter, when he visited the household of Cornelius, told these Gentiles that Jesus "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). These words, "oppressed of the devil," could have been spoken in a general way (as all of humanity are subject to the curse), and some sins have their harmful consequences "built" into them. And, no doubt, some of



those the Lord healed were directly "oppressed of the devil," although we may not know the "particulars." Evidently, there was a relationship between the paralytic man's paralysis and his sins (the man who was let down through the roof and healed by Jesus). When the critics pondered that Jesus had forgiven this man's sins, he replied, "For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" (Matthew 9:5). To the man he healed who couldn't walk down to the pool, Jesus said, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more,

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lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). Jesus healed a woman that was "bowed together," "whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years" (Luke 13:11-16). So, Satan was involved in the bad things that happened, whether directly or indirectly. The devil is out to work as much havoc as he can get by with.

The Phenomenon of Demon Possession

We know little about the phenomenon of demon possession, but this seems to have been widespread when Christ was here. Evidently the devil wanted to defiantly "kick up his heels" in the face of God. We do know it brought torture and misery to people's lives. It even happened to good people. Demon possession didn't necessarily mean that the person was wicked who experienced it. The Syrophenician woman's "young daughter had an unclean spirit" and she besought the Lord to cast it out (Mark 7:24-30). When Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, a man approached him about his son who was demon possessed. "And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father. How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child" (Mark 9:14-21). Because Mary Magdalene had seven demons cast out of her (Luke 8:2) does not mean she had been a bad woman. But this was one way that the devil was making bad things happen to people.

Chastised of the Lord

Another thing to be considered is the chastening of the Lord. This is taught in the Scriptures. Read Hebrews 12:4-13. Here the writer states, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Chastisement may be looked upon as specific and direct involvement of God in our lives, and it also can be considered in a general sense. With Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, it took the form of direct and immediate punishment that was irrevocable and final. Likewise, the Corinthians were eating and drinking damnation to their souls by desecrating the Lord's Supper. Paul wrote, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). Obviously, what happened to Ananias and Sapphira (and the Corinthians) does not take place every time these sins are committed again. Perhaps

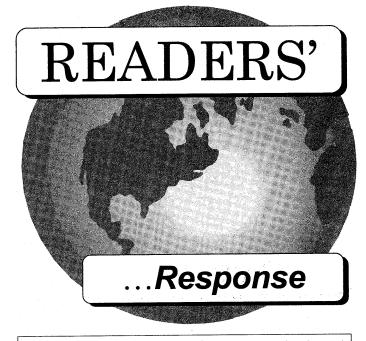
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BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

- In the Old Testament, who sold his birthright, and who was disenfranchised by his father and did not receive his birthright?
- 2. Although the land of Canaan was promised to and given to the children of Israel by God, how much of it was actually owned by Israel before the conquest?
- 3. When Jacob died, how many days did the Egyptians mourn for him?
- 4. When Aaron died, and when Moses died, how many days did Israel mourn for them?
- 5. Where did Israelite people camp during their conquest of Canaan?
- When the children of Israel settled in the Promised Land, where was the tabernacle set up?
- 7. What is the Sea of Galilee called in the Old Testament Scriptures?
- 8. Where were the bones of Joseph finally buried when the children of Israel settled in the Promised Land?
- 9. Although the land of Canaan was occupied by seven heathen Gentile tribes that are named, it was many times called by what single name from among these tribes?
- 10. What are the names of the first three judges of Israel who are mentioned by name?
- 11. According to the book of Proverbs, what is the beginning of wisdom?
- 12. Where is the only place in the Bible where the word "seraphims" is used in reference to angelic beings?
- 13. In speaking to the prophet Ezekiel in the book of Ezekiel, how is the prophet addressed by God?
- 14. Which New Testament writer is the only one who calls Christ "the Word"?
- 15. What example of Christ did Paul fail to follow when smitten in the mouth while standing before a Jewish court (for which he apologized)?
- 16. Where is the only place that the benevolent offering, which the apostle Paul was preoccupied with taking up among the Gentile churches for the poor Jewish Christians back in Palestine, mentioned in the book of Acts?
- 17. Philemon, the owner of the runaway slave Onesimus, was a "member" of what local church that met in his house?
- 18. What "member" of the church at Philippi visited Paul at Rome during his first imprisonment there and became very sick while he was there?
- 19. Which two epistles in the New Testament have no author's name attached to them?
- 20. What three people are mentioned by name in the epistle of 3rd John?

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



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:

■ "Please discontinue sending us THE SWORD AND STAFF as we no longer wish to receive it... A former minister here subscribed to THE SWORD AND STAFF but he was terminated two pastors ago. Members here say they no longer want the magazine and didn't in the first place."

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ "I appreciate you and your faithful efforts in the Lord's kingdom. The materials you sent me are now packed in my bags and ready for the trip...Lord willing, they will be distributed to those in need in that country.

"I am sending a little to help with the postage and the cost of mailing. It is not very much but I hope it will be helpful in your continuing efforts. Thank you for your timely response to my request.

"Please remember our efforts in your prayers and may God continue to richly bless you."

TENNESSEE:

■ "Received my SWORD AND STAFF today. Wonderful! As always..."

VIRGINIA:

■ "We enjoy THE SWORD AND STAFF. Keep up the good work."

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "Please send me the 2005-2006 bound volumes... May God bless you and your efforts to tell it like it is."

KENTUCKY:

■ "I enjoy your SWORD AND STAFF magazine more than words can express. May God richly bless you for encouragement and inspiration you have bestowed on so many readers over the past years.

"Enclosed is a contribution. Would you please send me a copy of your 2005-2006 bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF?"

MISSOURI:

■ "Keep up the good work. You have a lot of good stuff on the Bible."

TEXAS:

- "Please send your bound volumes...We derive much benefit from your paper and use excerpts in our sermons and classes."
- "A friend and brother of mine...recently gave me some SWORD AND STAFF pamphlets to read and I enjoyed many things in them...The articles on suffering and rock music were well written..."

OKLAHOMA:

Thank you for your service to the body of Christ. We don't want to be wasteful of your funding so we're requesting to be taken off of your mailing list. Our college students don't take advantage of this newsletter anymore."

WYOMING:

■ "Many thanks for such a great publication and timely articles true to the Word!"

IDAHO:

■ "I wanted to update you with my new home address that I may keep receiving your fine paper, THE SWORD AND STAFF."

OREGON:

■ "It is 4:30 A.M. and I have been blessed so much by God. I am reading THE SWORD AND STAFF that came in the mail yesterday. I am so thankful God raised up you and you have written the 'paper' under His direction.

"Both of you are such a blessing in my life.
"THANK YOU!"

UNITED STATES:

"Thank you so much for your good article about wine. It is good to see someone 'standing on their hind legs' and speaking out against this terrible evil in our society. Keep up the good work!

"I have preached on this subject many times and have had articles in my newsletters also, but I still keep finding 'members' of the church that think that it is okay to drink. We could really have a revival in this country if we could get the alcohol out of our country." (E-mail)

The said article, "Did Jesus Turn Water into Wine?" that appeared in the last issue of this paper was a "reprint" from another source that we ran for your consideration.—*Editor*



"Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?"

(Continued from Page 8)

this happened so that for time and eternity we would know what God thinks about such flagrant wrongs.

Chastisement Generically

But, getting back to the Scripture in Hebrews 12, it may be that this chastisement was more in the general category. The writer seems to be even talking about persecution. According to verse 4. they had "not yet resisted unto blood." But they had endured "afflictions," along with their property being confiscated (Hebrews 10:32-34). Paul tells us that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). And Hebrews 12:7, talking about the same thing from another angle, reads, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" To our amazement, God was using what was adversely happening to them, coming from hostile non-Christians, as chastisement for their spiritual well-being. This is not altogether unusual for God used heathen nations, like Assyria and Babylon, to bring judgment and chastisement upon Israel in Old Testament times. All things are at God's disposal to be used for our good (and "all things" are ours). Therefore, when "bad" things happen, we should make an effort to look at them in a positive way.

An Amazing Injunction

That brings us to a most amazing injunction, fittingly, with which to cap off our thoughts in this article. We are talking about James 1:2-5. Admittedly, what James commands here is hard to obey, but he gives us helpful instructions in implementing our obedience. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [all kinds of trials]; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect, work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." What is he saying here? "Count it all joy when you fall into" various trials! This word "fall" in the language of the New Testament means to fall into something that is all around you. You are engulfed in trials. Incredible! And to think of this in terms of joy?! But he envisions spiritual good coming from our experience. And if we are having problems seeing the spiritual

outcome, we are instructed to pray for wisdom. God will help us through our trials. "Bad things" do happen to "good people," but God can make a most meaningful experience out of it. That is the kind of God that we serve. Trust Him.

The Anvil of God's Word

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime; Then looking in, I saw upon the floor, Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"to wear and batter on these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he, and then with twinkling eyes,
"The anvil wears the hammers out you know."

"And so," I thought, "the anvil of God's Word For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon, Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard The anvil is unmarred, the hammers gone."

—By John Clifford

Why Affliction Comes

AFFLICTION comes to us all not to make us sad, but sober, not to make us worry, but wise; not to make us despondent, but by its darkness to refresh us, as the night refreshes the day; not to impoverish, but to enrich us, as the plough enriches the field; to multiply our joy, as the seed, by planting, is multiplied a thousand-fold.—**Beecher**

What Your Absence Will Do (Hebrews 10:25)

- 1. It will cause some to question the reality of your religion.
- 2. It will make some think you are a pretender and not really sincere.
- 3. It will make many think that you regard your spiritual welfare and that of others as a small concern.
 - 4. It will weaken the effect of the church service.
- 5. It will make it harder for the preacher to preach and the singers to sing.
- 6. It will discourage some of the brethren, and therefore, rob them of the spiritual blessings that they could have received.
- 7. It will cause others to stay away, and give the devil more power over lost souls.
- 8. It will make it harder for you to meet the temptations of the devil, and will encourage the habit of non-church going.
- 9. It will rob you of many blessings, and may even cause you to lose your soul. —*Selected*

Expressions of Erroneous and Misplaced Love (and True Love)



A STUDY and meditation on the following Scriptures, as we have listed them, should prove very worthwhile and rewarding spiritually. Consider each one in its context and all that is implied, making present day applications. This should supply you with many hours of edifying thought.

I. ERRONEOUS LOVE

Old Testament Scriptures

● Love Vanity (Worthlessness):

"O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye *love vanity* [worthlessness], and seek after leasing [falsehood]?" (Psalms 4:2)

Love Simplicity (Being Simple):

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye *love simplicity* [being simple, dumb]? And the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" (Proverbs 1:22)

• My People Love to Have It So:

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means: and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jeremiah 5:31)

• Much Love from the Mouth:

"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ezekiel 33:31).

New Testament Scriptures

Men Loved Darkness:

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness* rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

• Love of the World:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

Lovers of Their Own Selves:

"For men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" (2 Timothy 3:2).

• Love of Family More Than for God:

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37).

Lovers of Pleasures:

"For men shall be...Traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2-4).

■ Love of Money:

"For the love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10).

• Loved to Have the Pre-eminence:

"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not" (3 John, verse 9).

• Loved the Praise of Men:

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43).

Loved to Pray Standing:

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they *love to pray standing* in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Matthew 6:5).

Loved the Uppermost Seats:

"Woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye *love the uppermost seats* in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets" (Luke 11:43).

Loved to Go in Long Clothing:

"And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places" (Mark 12:38; Luke 20:46).

Loved the Wages of Unrighteousness:

"Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who *loved the wages of unrighteousness*" (2 Peter 2:15).

• Loved This Present World:

"For Demas hath forsaken me, having *loved this* present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia" (2 Timothy 4:10).

II. TRUE LOVE

Old Testament Scriptures

Love God with All Your Heart:

"Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God is one LORD; And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:4-5). (Continued on Next Page)

Expressions of Erroneous and Misplaced Love (and True Love)

(Continued from Previous Page)

Love God and Keep His Commandments:

"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9; 10:12-13; 30:20).

Love God's Commandments, Hate Every False Way:

"Therefore *I love thy commandments* above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and *I hate every false way*" (Psalms 119:127-128; Psalms 97:10).

New Testament Scriptures

Love God with All Your Heart:

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind [might]. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38)

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself:

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt *love thy* neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39).

Love Your Enemies:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, *Love your enemies*, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-32).

Love One Another as Christ Has Loved Us:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

Lay Down Your Life for Your Friends:

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13).

• Keeping the Lord's Commandments:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15; 15:9-10). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [burdensome]" (1 John 5:3).

• Keeping the Lord's Words:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, *If a man love me, he will keep my words:* and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23; 1 John 2:5).

Walk in Love:

"Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:1-2). "Let all your things be done with charity [love]" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Love without Dissimulation (Pretense):

"Let love be without dissimulation [pretense, hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9).

• Unfeigned Love of the Brethren:

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto *unfeigned love of the brethren*, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22).

• We Love the Brethren:

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:14-15).

• Let Brotherly Love Continue:

"Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10).

By Love Serve One Another:

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:13-14).

Love in Deed and in Truth:

"But whose hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18).

• Knit Together in Love:

"That their hearts might be comforted, being *knit* together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ" (Colossians 2:2).

Fervent Love Among Yourselves:

"And above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8).

• Forbearing One Another in Love:

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation [calling] wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness, and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:1-2).

Love of the Truth:

"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in

(Continued on Page 14)

Intolerant of Intolerance

which means to respect everyone's opinions, no matter how bizarre they might be. If you should disagree, those preaching tolerance will immediately despise you for being intolerant, which makes *them* intolerant. They are intolerant of intolerant people. That's as hypocritical as someone saying, "Your impatience is driving me crazy!"—Selected



IT TAKES two to have a quarrel.

The most foolish people are those who have fooled themselves.

God made us for Himself, in His image and likeness, and we are not right until and unless we are right with God.

When our values are gauged by material things, we are thereby devalued as human beings.

Denominational dogma in its presentation, along with its sectarian wrangling, is about like the barking and snarling of a dog.

You don't count unless you have been added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:38, 47).

Life will become more and more out of control, demeaning and meaningless, unless we accept responsibility and live within our means.

If it makes no difference what you believe, it makes no difference if you believe.

If we think and feel that God's commands are burdensome ("grievous"), that may be an indication of a rebellious, unrepentant, and even an unconverted heart, that does not know God (1 John 2:3-5; 5:3).

If you have a constant diet of television, your moral perception will become tasteless.

Preachers can experience "burn out" when they are on fire for the Lord but are unable to ignite this flame in others.

When we are lifted up with pride, we are really on the way down (Proverbs 16:18).

It is a disgrace how some would pervert grace by (1) permissive license (Jude, v. 4) and by (2) a stilted legalism (Galatians 2:21).

A "hot head" and a "cold heart" are a bad combination in one person.

Some people think that they have all of the answers until they have children, then they find that their children have all of the answers.

Christian "is" as Christian "does," and Christian "does" as Christian "is.".

There is something wrong with our brand of religion if it doesn't fill our lives with hope and change the way that we live.

You will get nowhere with the Lord riding "hobby horses" (preach all of God's Word).

Many times homosexual molesters are people who have themselves been molested at an early age (thereby experiencing their first sexual awakenings and having their sexual orientation unnaturally programmed in the wrong direction).

Much of modern worship, so-called, is glaringly man-centered and entertainment oriented (as evidenced by the applause).

To say that the coming together of two people of the same sex (even legally) is marriage is to mock God and what God said (Genesis 2:18-24), but God is not mocked (Galatians 6:7).

Making noise and worshipping God are not necessarily synonymous.

Christianity is not at work in our lives, nor does it work at all, unless it works every day in the workaday world.

It is hard for the person who has not experienced love to love.

It has been said that all things come to them who wait, but then again if we wait too long, life may just pass us by.

Sometimes we are not even committed to being committed to the Lord.

The trouble with addiction, and like problems, is that we become further wrapped up in ourselves, and thereby our problems are doubled.

Fleas in a Fruit Jar

N EXPERIMENT was done once with fleas and an ordinary canning jar. A group of fleas was placed in the jar and the lid was left off. After a short time, all the fleas had successfully jumped out of the jar. Another group was then placed in the jar, but this time the lid was placed on the top. For a while, the fleas consistently jumped high enough to hit the lid, but could not get out. Soon all the fleas were still jumping, but they were jumping just short of the lid. Once this happened, the lid was removed. None of the fleas made it out of the jar. They had found their comfort zone and refused to challenge themselves. Many times we as Christians put lids on our own lives. Worse yet, we are sometimes guilty of putting lids on the minds of others.—The Gospel Message

Expressions of Erroneous and Misplaced Love (and True Love)

(Continued from Page 12)

them that perish; because they received not the *love of* the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10).

Speaking the Truth in Love:

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the *edifying of itself in love*" (Ephesians 4:15-16).

• Husbands Love Wives as Christ Loved the Church:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Ephesians 5:28). "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3:19).

• Wives Love Their Husbands and Children:

"That they may teach the young women to be sober, to *love their husbands*, to *love their children*, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient [submissive] to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4-5).

Esteem Them Very Highly in Love:

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to *esteem them very highly in love* for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

• Kiss of Charity (Love):

"Greet ye one another with a *kiss of charity* [love]. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen" (1 Peter 5:14).

Love His Appearing:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that *love his appearing*" (2 Timothy 4:8).

Work and Labor of Love:

"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10).

Loved Not Their Lives unto Death:

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11; Revelation 2:10).

Not listed in these Scriptures above are 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 John 4. Any consideration of the subject of love would be incomplete without studying them. We invite you now to turn there and absorb all of the great and wonderful spiritual truths that are awaiting you. Let us get out of our lives all feelings and expressions of erroneous love and be genuinely engulfed in experiencing and expressing true love.

The Christian version of self-reliance:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

What Does It Take To Develop Better Harmony in A Congregation?

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OH, **HOW everyone** longs for the congregation of which they are a part to blend in wonderful harmony. To accomplish such a goal takes time and mature development. Just like parents in the home, so must leaders in the church work to create this kind of environment. With a good understanding of the scriptures and the cooperation of all, harmony can be enjoyed. Here are a few pointers that gives us direction:

- 1. A patience for each others weaknesses. Everyone has weaknesses along with remarkable strengths. To understand the personality traits of others (and their corresponding strengths and weaknesses) can be helpful in any congregation. Believe it or not, we all have weaknesses and blind spots. Others have to be patient with us as we feel our patience is tried by them. It is best to see others with our heart, not just our eyes.
- 2. Encourage all you can. Make encouraging others a way of life. We enjoy encouragement ourselves, why not bring that joy to others? Encouragement is like oxygen to the soul. Others are going through the battles of life just as we; make their load a little lighter. A few words, a card and even a phone call goes a long way. Weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.
- 3. Acknowledge that each of us has something to offer. Someone has said that I can do what you cannot do and you can do what I cannot do. So, when we combine our efforts we can do some great things together. God has a reason for all of us, not just some special ones. This will help make a harmonious church.
- 4. Be aware that we need each other. We certainly can compliment and complete each other. We all have special roles, and in the total picture of life, we do need each other. This is so true in the home and in the church.

John Wesley once said, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can. At all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can."

It isn't just that we work, or that we work hard, but that we work hard together for Jesus in each congregation. This is what truly counts as we blend with others to accomplish the greatest task on earth.

-Dick Ellis

A Smile...Gives Much

A SMILE costs nothing, but gives much. It enriches those who receive, without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment, but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. None is so rich or mighty that they can get along without it, and none is so poor but that they can be made rich by it. A smile creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in business, and is the countersign of friendship. It brings rest to the weary, cheer to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and it is nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen, for it is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away. Some people are too tired to give you a smile. Give them one of yours, as none needs a smile so much as the one who has no more to give.—Author Unknown

Back to the Original Church

THE CHURCH as established by Christ through his apostles in the first century was not a denomination, but simply and purely the church and spiritual body of Christ upon the earth. On this most all will agree. But on the necessity of returning to that status, and on the means of doing this, few will agree. Divesting ourselves of denominationalism does not come easy. But, if we really want to be acceptable with the Lord, it is necessary (John 17:20-22; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-4, 17; Ephesians 4:1-6; Galatians 1:6-8). Let us stop trying to justify our denominations, organizations and traditions of men not found in the New Testament. God gives no one the right to believe one thing and his neighbor to believe another. In that Great Day all of us are going to be judged by the same Book, and we know what that Book is. No man has authority from God to form a denomination or even invite others to join such a denomination. No one has such authority for it has not been divinely given. In fact, when we truly obey God, we are made one, not a part of any denominational division (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 2:38-41, 47). Let us search out the old "land marks." Let us humbly return to the "old paths." Yes, let us get back to the one church that has already been established in the first century (against such, Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail, Matthew 16:18). Truly, there is much divesting and returning that needs to be done. We have no other option that is acceptable in the sight of God. The question is, are we up to it?

New Booklets, Reprints, Etc.

EVERAL issues ago we featured an article, enti-Otled, "What Is the Meaning of John 4:24?" This concerned worshipping God in spirit and truth. This article turned out to be a "bell ringer." Telephone calls were received. We got letters and e-mails. Additional copies were requested. Evidently, this article touched upon a definite problem and pointed out the need for the problem to be addressed. In the name of worship, it seems the world has invaded the church. That which is called worship is man-centered and is more like worldly entertainment. Taking the response to this article as a "cue," we have put this material in the form of a little booklet. It is listed on the back page with other printed material. Also, along with this we have reprinted some other titles and added another new one, "Baptism for the Remission of Sins." We invite you and suggest that you order a supply of all of these and put them to good use. All represent an urgent appeal to get back to the Word of God.

In the last issue of this paper we mentioned how that lightning had messed up our computer, and we lost all that was on our hard drive. Thankfully, our mailing list was saved externally. However, we may have lost correspondence that we were in the process of answering. If you have written us, and have not received a reply, this may be the reason. We are sorry if this is the case. Try writing us again.

→ E-MAIL ADDRESS:

theswordandstaff@embargmail.com

→ Web Site: http://jgibbons.8m.com

Answers to:

BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 25:31-33; 1 Chronicles 5:1 (Genesis 49:3-4); 2. Genesis 23:1-20 and Genesis 33:18-19 (Joshua 24:32); 3. Genesis 50:1-3; 4. Numbers 20:29; Deuteronomy 34:8; 5. Joshua 4:19; 5:10; 9:6; 10:6,7,15,43; 14:6; 6. Joshua 18:1,10; 19:51; 1 Samuel 1:3; 7. Joshua 12:3; Deuteronomy 3:17 (Genesis 14:3; Deuteronomy 4:49); 8. Joshua 24:32; 9. Joshua 24:8,11,15—Genesis 15:16 (the land of the Amorites); 10. Othniel (Judges 3:8-11), Ehud (Judges 3:12-30), and Shamgar (Judges 3:31); 11. Proverbs 9:10; 15:33 1:7; 12. Isaiah 6; 13. Son of man (Ezekiel 2:1,3,6,8; 3:1; etc.); 14. John (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1; etc.); 15. Acts 23:1-5 (John 18:22; 1 Peter 2:21-23); 16. Acts 24:17; 17. The Colossian Church (Philemon, verses 1-2,10-12, 23; Colossians 4:9,12,17); 18. Philippians 2:25-30; 19. Hebrews and 1 John; 20: 3 John, verses 1, 9 and 12. □

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