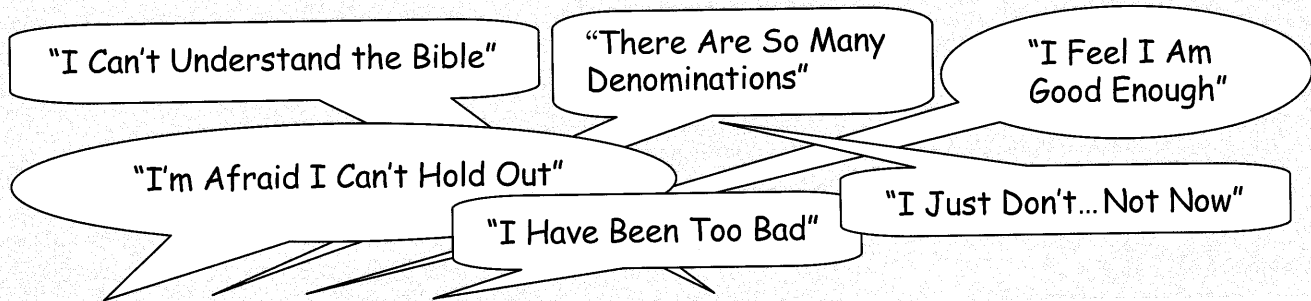


The Sword AND Staff

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

EXCUSES ANSWERED

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



THERE ARE two parables Jesus gave that seem to deal with making excuses in one way or another. In the first one (Matthew 22:1-13), the king invites people to the wedding feast of his son. Those invited make light of it and turn the invitation down. They spitefully treat the servants of the king who brought the invitation and even kill them. The king has the murderers and their city destroyed. Servants are sent out again and the marriage celebration is filled with guests. Then an extended application is made in this parable as one is found in attendance without having on the proper wedding garment. He was cast into outer darkness and there was “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The second parable is recorded in Luke 14:15-24. Here a certain rich man provided “a great supper, and bade many.” Their response is one of indifference, and apparent disrespect, as they are all wrapped up in their own personal affairs. They turned down the privileged invitation that had been extended to them by making excuses. There-with the invitation was thrown open to all, “the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” Those that were “bidden” and would not and did not come would have no part in the supper.

The book of Revelation ends with a great invitation. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him

that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelations 22:17). This follows reference to the heavenly city that John saw coming down and the marriage supper of the Lamb. There is an invitation open to all. It involves salvation and our eternal well-being.

It seems highly unreasonable, and actually foolish, that people would turn down such a generous invitation. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). All must die and face the judgment seat (Hebrews 9:27). All need a Savior. How we respond to Christ and this invitation will determine our eternal destiny, whether it will be in heaven or hell. It is just that simple.

In this article we would like to notice some common excuses made by many today as to why they have not responded to the gospel invitation. It may be that you are in this category and need to consider what we have to say. Read on. This wonderful invitation is open to all.

I. “I CAN’T UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE”

What Should Bother Us

Many today make excuse, saying, “I can’t understand the Bible.” Let us say that no one completely understands all of the Bible. There are some things that we will probably never be able to fully understand until that great and final day (like, some prophecy). But all things that are essential to our

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

CHRISTIANITY sanctifies everything it touches.

The closer I follow the Bible and the closer you follow the Bible, the closer it should draw us one to another.

It is in getting ready to die that we really learn how to live.

Never loan more money than what you would be willing to give away, and never borrow more money than that you can repay.

When people say that you are wrong when you are standing for the right, there is something wrong.

In singing hymns, the purpose is to be understood (Colossians 3:16), not to drown out the words with noise (1 Corinthians 14:15-16, 40).

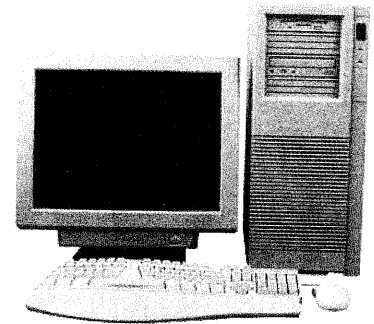
If we resist the truth, it will only make our hearts more hardened and set in error.

We are living in a time when morals are not only eroding; they are deliberately being bulldozed aside.

The best way to get rid of your enemies is to make them your friends.

When the church meets, a Christian doesn't have to think whether he will attend or not; that was taken care of when he was baptized.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



THE POSITIVE THRUST OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

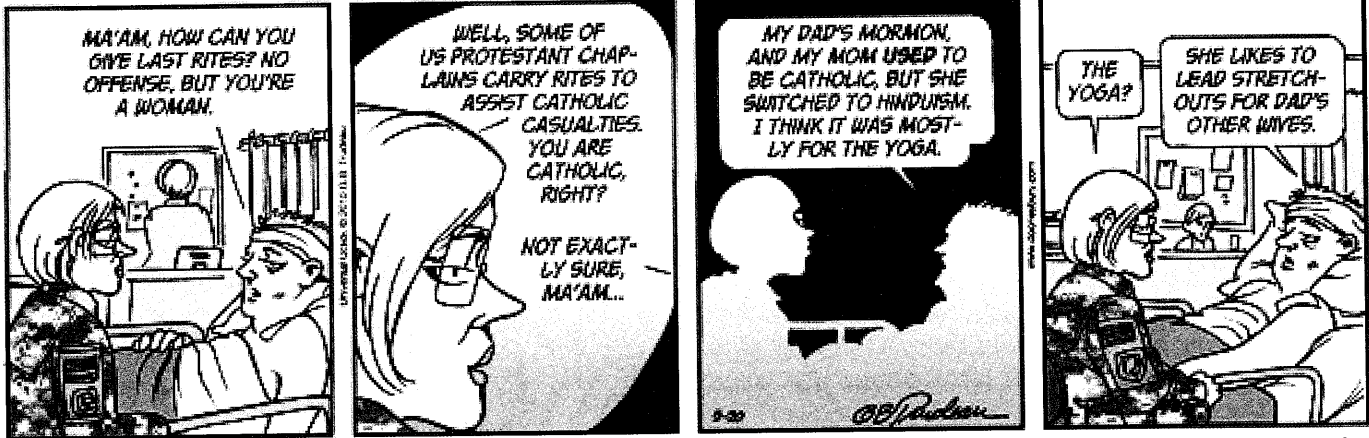
EVERYTHING about Christianity and the Christian message has a positive thrust and ring to it. The key words of Christianity are distinctly vibrant, alive and upbeat, dispelling gloom and pushing back the negative. The fact that God is God, and that we are right with him, puts us in the most desirable position possible and imaginable.

The Christian message itself is called the *gospel*. Gospel means good news or glad tidings, and who does not like to hear good news? Mark starts his account of the ministry of Christ with these words, "The beginning of the gospel [good news] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). And then the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, likewise using the term "gospel," highlights the grand climax of it all. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." In this same chapter, Paul tells us that Christ is "the first-fruits of them that slept" (15:20), implying the resurrection of all who are to follow. He came to "deliver them [us] who through fear of death were all their [our] lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:15). With death and the sin problem taken care of, we can enjoy the fullness of living in an atmosphere of freedom. How reassuring to read and to know that we are included in this statement of Christ: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Being right with God (2 Corinthians 5:21), and living accordingly in the context of God's grace and mercy (Romans 5:1-2; Hebrews 4:16), our lives are now filled with utmost meaning and purpose (Galatians 2:20; Titus 2:11-13), climaxing in eternity with God. Yes, such good news, and it embraced, dispels the negative and accents the positive.

With that said, there are many words that begin to stack up, one upon another. Here, above, we just unconsciously said two additional ones, *grace* (unmerited favor bestowed) and *mercy* (punishment withheld). Coupled with the word "gospel," how great and wonderful are these words! The apostle

Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



This “comic” strip is quasi-political in nature and appears in many newspapers throughout the United States. Its views, it seems, tend to be far to the left politically. Regardless of its viewpoint politically, this particular edition of the strip above that came out May 20th pretty much represents the mess our multi-cultural society has gotten into today with its superficial regard for religion. Permission requested for use, we share this with you.

Paul underscores three more of these wonderful words in 1 Corinthians 13:13 (and all of them, by their very nature, are distinctly positive). Here is what Paul said. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three: but the greatest of these is charity [love].” **Faith** is decidedly positive, being in sharp contrast with unbelief (Mark 16:15-16). It procures salvation and all of the good things in Christianity. Faith that is real is alive, and, thus activated, it becomes hope. **Hope** stabilizes our lives, and moves us on with confidence and assurance to the desired end. But **love**, if it is genuine, caps them all. It is the epitome of unselfishness, reaching out with a caring and positive thrust in all directions. After faith and hope are no more, having been realized, this great positive force of good will, moderation and unselfish kindness will go on throughout all eternity.

And we are the church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2), the great God of eternity who brought it all into being. Being intimately connected and associated with him in this relationship is to have our lives impacted in the most positive way. As we think of God, John 3:16 immediately comes to mind. Romans 8:28-39 is great to consider. In this section of Scripture, Paul starts out by saying, “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” (8:28). Then he writes, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (8:31-32) (Paul will later say in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For all the promises of God in him

are yea and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us”—*nothing negative about this!*). Some other great Scriptures that we could add to a seemingly unending list are Hebrews 11:6, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Peter 3:9, Philippians 4:6-9, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Romans 15:13, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 Peter 5:6-7 and Ephesians 3:20. And the listing goes on.

Yes, we are continually confronted by the negative and a world that is filled with overwhelming problems every day. That is the nature of a world given over to sin and ungodliness. But if we believe in the God of the Bible, have embraced the Christian message, and are living it out every day, there is every reason that we should have a positive mental attitude. We have noticed a few of these reasons. The lives of Christians should be cheery and disposed toward optimism. □



Precious Truth

O Precious Truth,
 Thou art as clear as morning sky
 And simple as a little child;
 My weary spirit lingers nigh
 To breath thy freedom with a sigh.

O Precious Truth,
 On thee my soul desires to fill;
 I thirst and hunger for thy Word;
 To taste the true my being thrills,
 And it demands that thou be heard

By James E. Gibbons

EXCUSES ANSWERED

(Continued from Page 1)

salvation are plain enough. Mark Twain, that great American humorist, said a great truth, which he meant to be sarcasm coming from him as an unbeliever, but it is more than contemptible wit. He reportedly said that it wasn't what he didn't understand about the Bible that bothered him, but it was what he did understand.

The Things We Understand

Yes, the things we do understand should bother every one of us. We understand there is an Almighty God. We understand that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, that we need a Savior. We understand that Christ died for our sins, that he was raised from the dead. We understand there is an eternal heaven for the saved and a corresponding place for the lost. We understand that the Bible says there is no hope unless we accept and obey Christ. It is not hard to recognize these truths, is it? In the most elementary language, the Bible is plain on these matters. The big question is, really, how we are going to respond to these truths.

Not Required to Know It All

Although it is desirable to know all that we can before accepting Christ, especially enough to count the cost (Luke 14:27-33), it is not required of us to understand all of the Bible to become a Christian. The Bible makes this clear enough. In the 2nd chapter of Acts, the people on the day of Pentecost upon hearing one gospel sermon wanted to know what they must do. The same day about 3000 became Christians as they were baptized into Christ (Acts 2:36-41; Galatians 3:27). They did have a Jewish background, but they understood very little of God's plan involving Christ. They were aware that they were lost and needed their sins taken care of. The pagan Philippian jailor in the 16th chapter of Acts knew very little about Christianity (Acts 16:30-34), except that Jesus was the Savior and that he was a lost man. There was much to learn. After all, the great commission said, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded..." (Matthew 28:20), and this came after baptism.

Grow in Grace and Knowledge

The truth of the matter is that we become Christians through a simple trust and an obedient faith as we surrender our all to Christ. (He "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Becoming a Christian involves being born of the water and the Spirit (John 3:5), which takes place when we repent and are buried with Christ in baptism to be raised to walk in newness of life (Acts 2:38; 1 Corin-

thians 6:11; Romans 6:1-6). We are born as babes into the kingdom, and then we grow in grace and knowledge of all the wonderful things in Christianity (1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Peter 1:3-10).



II. "THERE ARE SO MANY DENOMINATIONS"

A Legitimate Excuse

Another excuse that we have heard, which comes closer to being a reason, is, "There are so many denominations." And this represents a real problem. Jesus prayed the night before his crucifixion, "Neither pray I for these alone [the apostles], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21). Certainly the situation today is confusing to the people of the world. There are Catholics. There are Protestants. There are old line denominations, and newer upstarts and divisions, each with their distinctive beliefs and unbelief; each with their traditions and doctrines. "If I profess Christianity, what should I do? Which denomination should I join?" These are legitimate questions.

Denominations Not of God

First, let us make clear, denominationalism is not of God. Denominationalism means division, and division means denominationalism. Christ said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). He said there would be "one fold," even as there was "one shepherd" (John 10:16). The apostle Paul lays out the Lord's simple plan of oneness, not denominationalism, in

Ephesians 4:4-6. "There is one body [church, Colossians 1:18], and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism; One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Disruption of this oneness and unity is sharply condemned in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13. They were saying, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." Paul prodigally asks, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" In 3:4, he further asks, "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" This is so serious that Paul went on to say, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye [plural] are" (3:17). So, there is no way that we can say that denominationalism is right.

Be Added to the One Church

You are not being asked to "join" a denomination. Denominations are contrary to the will of God. You are being invited to accept Christ as your Savior. He said that if we came to him, he would in "no wise cast" us out. When the church came into being in the 2nd chapter of Acts, people were convicted of their sins and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (2:37) "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call...Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were *added* unto them about three thousand souls" (2:38-40). The last verse of this chapter makes it plain that the Lord is the one who "added" them to the church; you don't "join" it. It is not a denomination to be joined. We are "called in one body" (Colossians 3:15). We are "baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Lord adds us to his one church.

Become a New Testament Christian

Neither we, nor does anyone else, have authority to invite you to join a denomination. The Great Commission does not allow that (Matthew 28:18-20). Accept Christ as your Savior in accordance with the Scriptures. He therewith adds you to his one church that was started in the first century, which was not and is not a denomination. Take your stand with others who have taken the same stand that you have taken, just being simple "undenominational," New Testament Christians; just being the Lord's church and that alone, uncluttered by denominational names, man-made doctrines and traditions of men. When you are doing what is right, you know there is no way that it can be wrong. This is right.

III. "I FEEL I AM GOOD ENOUGH"

The Awfulness of Sin

When we attempt to share the good news of the gospel with some people, their response is not all that cordial, and they come back with, "I feel I am good enough already." They think we are personally implying that they are wicked. Obviously there is much misunderstanding. The awfulness of sin has not been realized. One sin in the Garden of Eden made the human race a dying race. The apostle Paul in Romans 6:23 tells us that "the wages of sin is death..." The word for sin here is singular. The "wages" of one sin brought and brings about death. That is how bad sin is in the sight of the Almighty God, who is sinless perfection, and who said, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). And Paul, furthermore, said in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." That includes the writer of this article; that includes you. The sin problem is universal, as well as its consequence, "as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). We need a Savior.

"Not by Works of Righteousness"

The purpose of the Old Testament law was to prove that man is not "good enough," that he needed a Savior. Personally, we are incapable of perfection, it would seem. The law made this glaringly evident, and got us ready for Christ. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Read the context. The apostle Paul plainly states in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Again, in Titus 3:5-6 he writes, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Then 2 Corinthians 5:21 asserts this cardinal truth, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." To say that we are good enough already is to fly in the face of all of these Scriptures (and human experience). It is to say that Christ made a mistake in dying on the cross of Calvary; that we don't need a Savior.

Convicted of Our Sins

When the gospel message is preached, and our hearts are open to God, we are convicted of our sins by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11; Hebrews 4:12; Acts 2:37). We must realize that we are wrong before we can get right. Jesus said to the Jews that "if you believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Then he emphatically spoke in John 10:1, "Ver-

(Continued on Next Page)

EXCUSES ANSWERED

(Continued from Previous Page)

ily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth us some other way, the same is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1). "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). In unbelief to spurn Christ and go our own way, thinking we are good enough as we are, is but to add insult to injury. It is but to further lock ourselves into the wrong and alienate ourselves from God.

IV. "I HAVE BEEN TOO BAD"

"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound"

Although most are reluctant to admit the enormity and guilt of their sins, at times we run into people who have so messed up their lives that they will unhesitatingly acknowledge it. They have forsaken the guide of their youth and have given themselves over to ungodly, abandoned living. They have made shipwreck of their lives. When approached about becoming a Christian, they shake their heads and say that they have been too bad, that the Lord would never think of forgiving and accepting them. Just like the person who thinks that he is good enough already doesn't know how great and awful that sin is, so the person who thinks that he is too bad to become a Christian doesn't know how great and wonderful the grace of God is. The whole point of God's relationship to man through Christ is that he wants to save us. That is why Christ came into the world (Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10). Remember John 3:16. God loves us and has our eternal well-being in mind. It is now left up to us. How are we going to respond to that great love? Are we going to accept his grace?

People With Great Sins Forgiven

Please take note. People with great sins in the Bible were forgiven. Remember what the Lord said to the woman taken in adultery, as he forgave her. "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more" (John 8:3-11). Although God used it to bring about our salvation, can you think of anything more heinous than crucifying the very Son of God? Some of those Peter addressed on the Day of Pentecost had actually been involved with the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2:36), and we have reason to believe that they were among those who cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And, subsequently, were among those who were baptized (Acts 2:37-41). Do these people in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 sound like "nice" sinners, as Paul makes an emphatic pronouncement about them? "Be not deceived: neither *fornicators*, nor *idolaters*, nor *adulterers*, nor *effeminate* [those who practice homosexuality], nor *abusers of themselves with man-*

kind [those who submit to homosexual acts], Nor *thieves*, nor *covetous*, nor *drunkards*, nor *revilers*, nor *extortioners*, shall inherit the kingdom of God." No, but notice the following verse (9:11). "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." These sins now were past tense in their lives. They were forgiven and now were Christians. There is hope.

An Example for All

Let us cap this off with what Paul said about himself in 1 Timothy 1:15-16, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Paul called himself the "chief" of sinners. We know what the infant church suffered at the hands of Paul before his conversion. The mercy that he experienced in forgiveness serves as an example to all sinners for all time. There is hope. God will forgive. Your life can be turned around. With Christ as Savior, and now mediator in heaven, Hebrews 7:25 stands out in bold relief. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He can save to the uttermost and the "guttermost." How reassuring to read: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). Accept Christ as your Savior and the forgiveness he has to offer. Having done that, let us forgive ourselves and move on out in the good life now and in the world to come.

V. "I'M AFRAID I CAN'T HOLD OUT"

"Hold Out"—"Hold On"

Many people when confronted with the prospects of becoming a Christian shrink back under the cover of this negative response: "I'm afraid I can't hold out." Maybe they are afraid that they would make a mess of things, like so many have. And hypocrites are not unknown in church circles. But, be assured, if you really repent and turn to God, he will more than do his part to help you make a go of it in being a real Christian. If you never give up, he will never give up on you. You are not left alone to "pull your own little red wagon." Instead of all this talk about holding out, let's just think in terms of holding on. Yes, holding on to the "hand" that made heaven and earth. We "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). By means of faith we tap on to the power of God to keep us. It is a two sided endeavor. By faith we hold on.

The Past and the Future

When we become a Christian, two things take place, involving the past and the future. Acts 2:38 says, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]." God takes care of the past with the forgiveness of sins ("And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," Hebrews 10:17), and he gets us ready for the future with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, the Holy Spirit pervades our lives more and more. Possessing the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit soon possesses us. We are "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" as Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:16-17). And, as Paul stated, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:1-13). Then John sort of sums up what we are trying to get across by saying, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).



The Throne of Grace

We read in Ephesians 2:18, "For through him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." What does this mean and how does it relate to what we are saying? Hebrews 4:14-16 explains it well. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For

we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need." Access to the throne of grace enables us to stand, to persevere, and to continue on in the Christian life (Romans 5:2; 1 Peter 5:12). Subsequently, Hebrews 7:25 reads, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Therefore, as we frequent the throne of grace, that is our lifeline. You can, through the grace and power of God, hold out as you hold on, even abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

A Way to Escape Promised

In closing out this point, remember 1 Corinthians 10:13 as you consider the full context, starting with verse 1. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Amen. Take advantage of this.

VI. "I JUST DON'T...NOT NOW"

The "Non-Excuse" Excuse

Then, again, when some people are approached about their soul's salvation and the need of becoming a Christian, they really are at a loss as what to say. They definitely know that it is the right thing to do, and that they indeed need a Savior. But they just mutter, "I just don't...not now," thus implying that someday they will take this great step. For now it is just a matter of procrastination and lack of resolve to follow through. This really is just a "non-excuse" excuse. It is a defenseless answer. Perhaps some who are reading this are at this stage in their lives.

"Now is the Day of Salvation"

Please realize the seriousness of the situation, "as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Salvation must be taken care of in the here and now, this side of eternity. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). We have no promise of tomorrow. James wrote, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). Death comes to the young and to the old. Sometimes it comes at the most unexpected time. Our soul's salvation must be taken care of now. We must be right with God before we can die right. Eternity is at stake. Obey the Lord now and enter into the good life. □

EDITORIAL

Byways

UNUSUAL AND STRANGE THINGS IN A CRAZY WORLD

THIS HEADLINE of an Associated Press news release got our attention back in April: “**PENNSYLVANIA WOMAN GETS HOUSE ARREST FOR PIERCING KITTENS.**” It was reported to have happened in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The exact words of the news item follow.

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. (AP) — A northeastern Pennsylvania woman convicted of animal cruelty for marketing “gothic kittens” with ear and neck piercings has been sentenced to six months of house arrest.

Luzerne County Judge Tina Polachek Gartley also ordered 35-year-old Holly Crawford of Ross Township to close her dog grooming business for more than two years.

Gartley allowed her to keep her pets, which include a dog, three cats and three snakes.

A jury convicted Crawford in February of animal cruelty. Prosecutors alleged that Crawford pierced three black kittens because “she thought it was neat” to sell gothic kittens on the Internet. Defense attorneys argued that parents allow children to get pierced ears at young ages, and it would be wrong to hold cat owners to a higher standard.

What the defense lawyer said here likewise got our attention, bringing to remembrance something we personally had witnessed sometime ago in the local Wal-Mart store. While shopping, suddenly the shrill of screaming and yelling pierced our ears coming from the other end of the massive building. It sounded like some child was being subjected to torture and death. Alarmed, this writer went to see what was happening. There, screaming and kicking like crazy, was a poor helpless little baby, whose mother was having its ears pierced.

All of this talk about piercing made us think about another news article that we also had read a good while ago. A 39-year old English woman died after achieving her goal of having more than 100 piercings for jewelry. She ended up with 118 piercings involving her ears, nose, lip, belly, and body. In fact, she had scheduled a torso piercing on the day she became ill with overwhelming infection and collapsed into a coma, from which she never recovered.

Another such news item tells of another woman dying after getting her tongue pierced to anchor some fixture of jewelry.

Being not of this world (we are part of the kingdom of heaven), all of this seemed odd and a little strange to this writer.

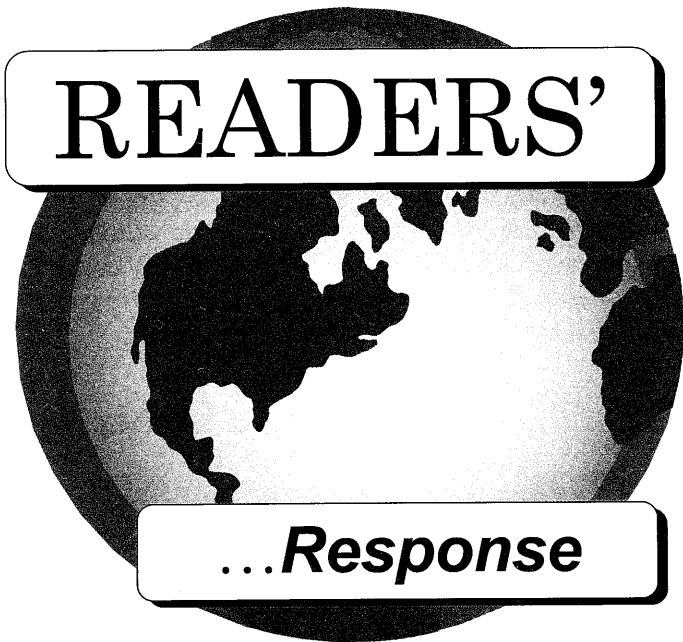
Are there any Christian teachings or Scriptures that have a bearing upon all of this? □

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. Who in the Bible said, “I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame”?
2. Although God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants, how much of it did they actually possess before the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of the Promised Land?
3. What were the circumstances under which Jacob’s name was changed to Israel?
4. What was the first thing Joseph did upon being brought from the dungeon to appear before Pharaoh to explain his dreams?
5. Who were the Kenites mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures?
6. Who in the Bible is spoken of as a man after God’s own heart?
7. What three times in the Bible do we read of people being let down through a window to escape?
8. What two men in the Bible “cursed” the day wherein they were born?
9. “The _____ flee when no man pursueth: but the _____ are as bold as a lion.”
10. What one word especially stands out in the book of Ecclesiastes?
11. Where are some Scriptures where the juice is called wine when it is still in the grapes and the gathering of grapes is called gathering of wine?
12. Which book in the Old Testament has only one chapter in it?
13. What Old Testament prophet sent a letter to the Jews who had already been taken into Babylonian Captivity, telling them to settle down and accept the situation and that after 70 years they would be returned to their homeland?
14. When the Bible speaks of the day of visitation, what are two ways this expression is used when it speaks of God visiting man?
15. Which gospel writer is the only one that tells about the first cleansing of the temple by Christ early in his ministry?
16. What was the name of the blind man who cried out to Jesus as he came through Jericho on the way to Jerusalem (evidently the most outstanding of the two)?
17. Where were the disciples (followers) of Christ first called Christians?
18. Where is the last time the word “disciple” is found in the New Testament (and whose name is used in this connection)?
19. From prison in Rome Paul wrote: “For _____ hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...”
20. Which books in the New Testament have only one chapter in them?

(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:

■ *"We would very much like to be on your mailing list for THE SWORD AND STAFF. You have a most excellent Bible-based publication, and we pray that the Lord will bless you as you continue this work..."*

"We are enclosing a donation to help you with your ministry and defray postage and printing expenses. Thank you for your time and trouble and may the Lord keep you strong and encouraged as you continue your faithful service to Him."

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"Thanks for being so faithful to our Lord by your great articles in THE SWORD AND STAFF. May God continue to bless you."*

VIRGINIA:

■ *"Would you please send me the 10 volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF? Enclosed is a check for shipping."*

■ *"I really enjoyed your last magazine. Read it through the day I got it. May God bless and supply all your needs."*

TENNESSEE:

■ *"I would love to have at least two sets of the bound volumes you talked about...God bless your continued service in His kingdom..."*

■ *"Please send the following tracts for distribution and sharing among Christians and non-Christians. I am enclosing a gift to defray the expenses. May God bless you in the continued work of spreading the Word until Jesus comes. Please keep my family and me in prayer. Your publication is always welcome at my house."*

■ *"I have read a lot of your work in THE SWORD AND STAFF publication. It is good to read articles that are right and right along with the Bible. Keep up the good work...We are looking at some of your pamphlets to possibly order and use as a ministry tool in our area. I would like to get a copy of your book NOBODY LEFT BEHIND..."*

KENTUCKY:

■ *"Please cancel my subscription."*

■ *"Your booklets, tracts are very helpful. We are battling the Thousand Year, the Preterist scheme and the Rapture. We have many strong evangelists in our area that have given over to a "we want to get along" attitude..."*

"Thank you and GOD BLESS."

OHIO:

■ *"Thank you for the TRUTH."*

MISSOURI:

■ *"In your response to the guy who said that he was a 'Mid-Acts' dispensationalist, your last paragraph was so well stated."*

"I have been battling those who would 'relegate baptism to a work' for more than 60 years of preaching the old Jerusalem Gospel, and have never seen it better said."

"In addition to the arsenal of resources that I have ordered for the church here and my own renewal, I would like to add a new name to your mailing list."

ARKANSAS:

■ *"My husband passed away...but I still enjoy receiving THE SWORD AND STAFF. You do a marvelous work in writing, editing and publishing..."*

TEXAS:

■ *"You are providing us with a source of rich material for preaching and teaching. Churches with preachers who hold outside jobs would do well to get them [the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF]..."*

■ *"Thank you so much for the many great articles you have written over the years. I have enjoyed many of them and would like to have a set of all of the bound volumes you have available. Please send two of 2007-2008. The included check is for shipping and cost. Thank you for your efforts. May God bless you."*

■ *"I would like to tell you how much I have enjoyed reading your articles and how much they have encouraged my walk with the Lord. I believe and pray that he will richly reward you and all your staff as his faithful servants..."*

"Again thank you and may our wonderful God and Savior bless you."

■ *"I received your letter and I am sending a... contribution for the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I would like the very oldest that you have, if possible."*

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

"The paper is very good. I appreciate you not trying to push a following for a group, but just giving good sound first principle's teaching..."

"Thanks for a good paper."

■ *"Just wanted to let you know that I received the bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF and I am very pleased with them and the other literature that you sent. I can see why you would say that they are a treasure..."*

"The book written by brother Elliot is a treasure also, NOBODY LEFT BEHIND. He has done the church and the world a great service in publishing his work.

"Again thank you very much for the bound volumes."

KANSAS:

■ *"God bless you for your ministry and faithfulness to our God. The TRUE God. Please add to your mailing list... I would also like to get the Bound Volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF... I would also like to order the following booklets, tracts, etc..."*

"Reading THE SWORD AND STAFF has blessed me in examining my personal life to be in tune with God's Word. Some has been reinforcement, edification, matter of doctrine and repentance with change. May my LORD GOD ALMIGHTY bless you and yours for making a difference in my life. I have an attitude of gratitude for those who do God's will.

"I also want to take time to let you know that I have prayed genuinely, seriously, with deep concern about your health and the ministry of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I'm sorry to say, I have not expressed this sooner than now, because I have been fasting and praying for quite some time..." (E-mail)

NEBRASKA:

■ *"I enjoy the paper and your good work..."*

■ *"I received Volume 48—2010—Number 2...What wonderful teaching and study of the Word.*

"I moved back...in 2003 and have not found a true Christian home church—YET! ... I also am not a fancier of Contemporary Services and I think this has taken a HUGE toll on Christianity in America. Although I am 77 years old, I still yearn for the Christian forefathers of my youth. I too do not understand why most churches baptize by sprinkling. I just simply cannot join a church with sprinkling and the lack of communion weekly. Sadly many my age have stopped going to church because of the liberal unscriptural teachings. A United Church of Christ here regularly preaches that the Bible stories really couldn't have happened and are not true. And God should be called 'mother.' Many of the various denominations are down to a few old people and have ended up in this huge UCC church, which is like joining a club. Sprinkling of infants is a 'funny,' and most sermons are 'funnies'!

Yet the people laugh and pack the church!

"Enclosed find my gift and I wish it could be more. Thank you so much. God bless!"

PHILIPPINES:

■ *"Thank you so much for sending us copies of THE SWORD AND STAFF and booklets. These are so valuable and beneficial for our Bible studies and prayer meetings in the church. We are badly in need of this literature, if you can send us more. We are going to add this to our few books for our church..."* □



The Old Electric Chair



WE SING about "The Old Rugged Cross," saying, "So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down..." This singing channels our feelings of tender love and of the utmost esteem and respect. The cross is a symbol of dignity highly regarded in our society. And in the first century, the apostle Paul strongly asserted, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). However, he says in 1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." Why would the preaching of the cross seem foolish to the people of the world back then? Answer: In the Roman Empire as a means of capital punishment only slaves and the worst kind of criminals were put to death on a cross. In decent society to have a conversation about a cross was not the most dignified one in which a person could be engaged. And then along comes Christianity with the cross as the very center of its doctrine and message. Paul said to the Corinthians, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). How unthinkable that we would even think that the great God of eternity would take the form of a man and then would allow himself to die the most degrading death on an old rugged cross! How foolish to entertain such a thought! That is how the people reacted

in the first century. Just convey the situation to a modern setting. Let us sing about "The Old Electric Chair." "So I'll cherish the old electric chair, Till my trophies at last I lay down; I will cling to the old electric chair, And exchange it some day for a crown." Now you get a little feeling of how the world reacted in the first century.—*J. E. G.* □

☞

The Dash Poem

I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning to the end.

He noted that first came the date of her birth
And spoke of the following date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time
That she spent alive on earth
And now only those who loved her
Know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own,
The cars, the house, the cash,
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard;
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
That can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough
To consider what's true and real
And always try to understand
The way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger
And show appreciation more
And love the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect
And more often wear a smile,
Remembering that this special dash
Might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read
With your life's actions to rehash
Would you be proud of the things they say
About how you spent your dash?

—By *Linda Ellis*

"Baptism" Is Immersion

THE WORD "BAPTIZE" derives from *baptizo*, the transliterated form of the Greek word *βαπτειν* or *βαπτίζω*. In a historical context, it means to "dip, plunge, or immerse" something in its entirety. Although commonly associated with Christianity, the word is known to have been used in other contexts. For example, a 2nd century author named Nicander wrote down a pickle recipe which illustrates the common use of the word. He first says that the pickle should be dipped (*bapto*) into boiling water, followed by a complete submersion (*baptizo*) in a vinegar solution. The word was also used to explain the process of submerging cloth into a colored dye. In the Scriptures, John the Baptist immersed in the Jordan River, which included even the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17). With the inception of the church, 3000 were baptized in one day (Acts 2:38-41). As the Ethiopian was baptized by Philip, we read, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch [Ethiopian]; and he baptized him." Then they "come up out of the water..." (Acts 8:35-39). Paul says that "we are buried with him by baptism" and "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:4-5). None of this depicts sprinkling or pouring as baptism. It is a misnomer to call anything except immersion, baptism.—*Adapted* □



☞

A Great Verse Amplified (John 14:6)

FOLLOW thou me. I am the way and the truth and the life. Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope. I am the inviolable way; the infallible truth; the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life, blessed, life uncreated. If thou remain in my way thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on eternal life. □

—*Thomas à Kempis*

☞

The world says: "Jews, Christians, and Muslims worship the same God."

God says: "Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father."—Selected

☞

Satanic Principles

(Some things Satan would have you believe today as implied in his conversation with Eve in the Garden of Eden. Check it out.—*Genesis 3:1-6*)

SATAN'S temptation of Eve serves as a paradigm for all subsequent methods of temptation. If Christians are familiar with Satan's philosophy they will be able to recognize the voice of Satan as he speaks through his children throughout history.

1. The Bible is full of lies. It is myth and legend. It is *not* God's inspired-infallible revelation to man. Rather, it is an unreliable, uninspired, inaccurate, sub-historical record of the evolution of the people of Israel.

2. The Word of God is vague, unclear and ambiguous. Therefore no one can really know and understand what God has said. Everyone has their own personal, subjective opinion regarding the Bible's teaching; therefore, no one really knows the truth.

3. The God of the Bible and the Bible itself is evil. God's laws are unfair, unjust, harsh and mean. The Bible is anti-environmental, racist, sexist, homophobic, and anti-egalitarian and so on.

4. Man can only achieve truth, wisdom and knowledge by forsaking God's Word and discovering truth autonomously. Beelzebub 6:16 says, "Lean not upon the Lord God and His Word but trust in yourself with all of your heart."

5. Freedom and blessing comes through casting off God's law-Word. Breaking God's law leads to great blessings and rewards. Regeneration flows from chaos. Salvation and peace is attained through lawlessness.

6. The path to power and success is *not* through humble submission to God and His Word. It is only attained by creating your own law. You must become your own God and determine for yourself what is good and evil, right and wrong. Sin-mantra 3:36 says, "I did it *my way*."

7. Man's problem is not ethical but metaphysical. Man should not try to obey God, but to become God. There is no creator-creature distinction. Everything is on the same scale of being. Get off your rear end and move up the scale.

8. Man deserves godhood, blessings, power, enlightenment and salvation by right and not by grace. Don't ask for mercy—take what is yours! (The Biblical doctrine that says the sovereign God gives grace and salvation is anathema to Satan and his followers. Satan is the father of entitlements.)

9. Sin and rebellion against God does not lead to judgment either in history or the hereafter. "Don't deprive yourself of the fun things of life because of the stupid, fictional, outmoded concept of judgment and hell." (Satan was the first universalist. His slogans are popular with the youth culture today: Don't fear

the reaper, no fear, if it feels good to do it, sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll, etc.)

Believers who have a knowledge of Satan's worldview should not be surprised to find that Satan's children reflect his doctrine in their thinking, speech and life. Christians are to reject all such satanic thinking and are to think God's thoughts after Him. Biblical doctrine should be the foundation of all our thinking, speaking and behavior. "For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light" (Psalms 36:9). □

—Selected

Understanding Foreknowledge and Predestination

(Romans 8:29-30)

THE PERSONS whom he [God] foreknew were the persons who he foresaw would do his will...But he did not foreknow these and accept them because of his predetermination that they should obey him. In the matter of their obedience, he left them wholly uninfluenced by any predetermining act of his; that is, he left them free. Yet he foreknew that they would do his will; and it was because of this, their own voluntary act, that he predetermined them. In other words, their obedience was not determined by his act of predetermination; but his act of predetermination was determined by their voluntary act of obedience. Had he not foreseen their act, this act would never have taken place. —*Moses E. Lard*

(Ephesians 1:3-5; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Acts 15:18; John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 2 Peter 3:9)

SCRIPTURES THAT ARE PARALLEL AND EQUAL ONE TO ANOTHER IN WHAT THEY ARE SAYING

(Having Reference to the Same Thing)

Matthew 28:19 =	Mark 16:16 =
John 3:5 =	Acts 2:38 =
Romans 6:3-5 =	1 Corinthians 6:11 =
1 Corinthians 12:13 =	Galatians 3:26-27 =
Ephesians 5:25-26 =	Titus 3:5 =
1 Peter 1:22-23 =	1 Peter 3:21

From Vision of Sir Launfal

Not that which we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who bestows himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and me*.

(*Christ)

—James Russell Lowell

How to Be Miserable

- *Think about yourself; use "T" as often as possible.*
- *Talk about how good you are.*
- *Expect to be appreciated.*
- *Be suspicious; be jealous and envious.*
- *Be sensitive to slights.*
- *Never forgive a criticism.*
- *Insist on consideration for yourself.*

—Selected



BARBS

...with a POINT

GRACE does not exempt us from obedience.

The law of gravity may seem to be intolerant, but it is still the law of gravity.

A spendthrift is not thrifty and such will soon find himself expended.

If something is right, it is right, and if it is wrong, it is wrong; and no amount of rationalizing, wishing or even praying can change it.

Life is not always fair because people don't play by the rules.

Problems that are not dealt with do not go away, but only become bigger and more complex with the passing of time.

If we fail to count the cost now, we may find ourselves shortchanged in eternity.

Genuine Christian counseling can only be given by a genuine Christian and in keeping with the teachings of Christianity.

To be high-minded is not to have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5-8).

The trouble with reactionaries is that they overstate their case, although many times legitimate, and set the stage for more reaction.

When something is wrong, you don't correct the situation by continuing in it.

If we lift ourselves up in pride, we cannot reach up to God; but if we humble ourselves in lowliness, he will reach down to us.

When all of the "old heads" have passed away, where will the church be headed?

The best sermon illustration is one that can be seen in the life of the one doing the speaking.

Many people today know a little about everything, but not much about anything.

Much of so-called "worship" in modern churches is nothing more than entertainment with the accompanying applause and clapping of hands.

People who talk about others to you will talk about you to others.

The amount that we should give is not determined by how much we give, but by how much we have left over after we give (Luke 21:1-4).

The person who will not forgive others burns the bridge over which he himself must cross.

Part of wisdom is knowing that you are not wise; and the more you know, the more you know just how little you really do know.

A long life lived without God only extends a bad experience that ends in hopelessness.

Let us not put extreme interpretations upon the Scriptures, trying to explain and justify our extreme behavior.

I exclaimed, "Why doesn't somebody do something?!" Then I realized that I was somebody.

We don't have the picture until we get the big picture of all the corresponding components in a given situation.

Man devalues himself when he gauges his value system to material things.

If you are not an honest person, you have destroyed the very foundation upon which all virtue and character rests.

To drown your problems with strong drink is only to multiply and accent them.

Jesus was not crucified for saying, "Consider the lilies how they grow"; it was more like for saying, "Consider the Pharisees how they live." □



McGarvey on "Pastor"

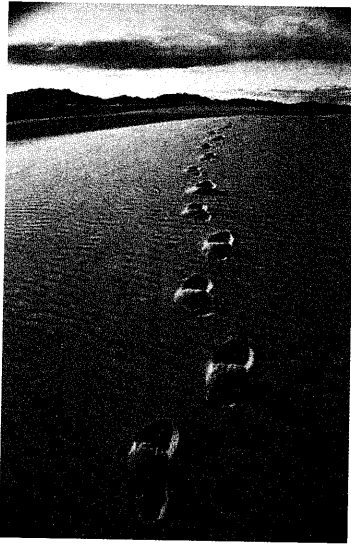
THE TERM PASTOR furnishes a striking example of the power with which sectarian usage forces itself upon us. We now have all the facts before us necessary to a proper estimate of the term pastor.

To apply it to a preacher who is not a regularly appointed elder of the church is a misnomer; as much as to call the Lord's day Sabbath, or to call sprinkling baptism. It is a violation of the law that we must speak as the oracles of God; it is letting go of the form of sound words which we have heard from the apostles.

Again: to style a preacher the pastor is still more unscriptural, for it robs the eldership entirely of this title, and makes it appear that there is but one pastor to the congregation, whereas the apostolic churches all had a plurality of them. If we use the term at all we must apply it to the eldership and may speak of "the pastors of a church," and of a pastor, but never of "the Pastor," unless, indeed, a church is so ill organized as to have but one elder. —**J. W. McGarvey** □

Footsteps in The Sand

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord.



When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it: "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The Lord replied: "My son, My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you, During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you. □

—Author Unknown

The Seven Sticks

1. A man had seven sons, who were always quarreling. They left their studies and work, to quarrel among themselves. Some bad men were looking forward to the death of their father, to cheat them out of their property by making them quarrel about it.

2. The good old man, one day, called his sons around him. He laid before them seven sticks, which were bound together. He said, "I will pay a hundred dollars to the one who can break this bundle."

3. Each one strained every nerve to break the bundle. After a long but vain trial, they all said that it could not be done.

4. "And yet, my boys," said the father, "nothing is easier to do." He then untied the bundle, and broke the sticks, one by one, with perfect ease.

5. "Ah!" said his sons, "it is easy enough to do it so; anybody could do it in that way."

6. Their father replied, "As it is with these sticks, so is it with you, my sons. So long as you hold fast together and aid each other, you will prosper, and none

can injure you.

7. "But if the bond of union be broken, it will happen to you just as it has to these sticks, which lie here broken on the ground."

—From *McGUFFEY'S Readers used in American School systems in the 18 and 19 hundreds.* □

Afraid to Die?

Afraid to die?

Of what?

To fear the spirit's sweet release,
To pass from pain to perfect peace,
The strife and strain of life to cease.
Afraid of that?!

Afraid to die?

Of what?

Afraid to see the Savior's face,
To feel with sweetness his embrace,
To know no sorrow, no not a trace.
Afraid of that?!

Afraid to die?

Of what?

Afraid to sing with angels, then
To praise and love and honor Him,
With life the fullest to the brim.
Afraid of that?!

Afraid to die?

Of what?

Afraid to gain this glad release,
To never fear again decease,
To live with God in perfect peace.
Afraid of that?!

—Author Unknown

"Backsliding"

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

WE have heard this passage of Scripture all of our lives. As we take inventory of our lives, we must realize the importance of this Scripture. Another word that we do not use frequently in our vocabulary is "backsliding."

Backsliding in Hebrew has the idea of "going back" or "turning back" to the old life of idolatry. Yes, backsliding is possible. What are some evidences of backsliding, we might ask, in our lives?

- Neglecting God's Word

- Little desire for prayer and communion with God (Matthew 6:1-8)
- A growing fondness for worldly pleasure (2 Timothy 3:4)
- A decreasing anxiety for the salvation of others (Psalms 126:5-6)

As we look at some evidences of backsliding, we then begin to uncover the causes.

- Mixed marriages. Let me encourage you to marry in the Lord's body. So many problems arise when you marry outside of the body of Christ.
- Love of money (Matthew 26:14-25). Money problems can cause all kinds of problems.
- Reverting to sinful practices. Almost always apostasy is caused by reverting to a former practice rather than through the development of a new vice. Did Peter revert to cursing when he denied the Lord? (Matthew 26:74).
- Returning to false religion. The entire book of Hebrews was written to prevent the apostasy of converted Jews. Pressure from relatives can become great; and, due to insufficient instruction and/or strength, babes in Christ at times return to a false religion.

May we take inventory of our personal lives and never allow such words as backsliding to come up on the inventory list. May we stand tall and strong for the cause of Christ in our lives.

—Jerry McKey

The "Whatever" Society

GEORGE BARNA of The Barna Group, a market research firm specializing in studying the religious beliefs and behavior of Americans, and the intersection of faith and culture, revealed sometime ago a fact that provides an interesting barometer of so-called religion in America: "For the first time since he's been doing research, the most oft quoted verse was not, 'For God so loved the world...' (John 3:16). It was, 'Judge not, lest you too be judged' (Matthew 7:1). He goes on to say, "Even among evangelicals, we have succumbed to the hypnotic drumbeat of the incessant mantra: 'Who are you to judge?'" An author commenting on this said the clear implication, among people of faith, is that none of us has the right to say, "That lifestyle is wrong, or that preacher is a false teacher or that doctrine is heresy." In fact, this commentator goes on to say that the one word that could describe our society is "WHATEVER." (!)

The Knots Prayer

Dear God,

Please untie the knots that are in my mind, my heart and my life. Remove the "have nots," the "can nots" and the "do nots" that I have in my mind. Erase the "will nots," "may nots," "might nots" that may find a home in my heart. Release me from the "could nots," "would nots," and "should nots" that obstruct my life. And most of all, Dear God, I ask that you remove from my mind, my heart, and my life all of the "am nots" that I have allowed to hold me back.

Amen—*Selected*

An Arsenal of Printed Material Now Available—No Charge!

WE have an arsenal of booklets and tracts now available for use in the Lord's work. They cover a wide spectrum. We have booklets helpful in winning people to Christ, indoctrinating them in what the Bible teaches, and helping them in their growth as a new Christian. Those available are listed on the back page. Order a supply, or request a sample packet to peruse. What we said on the back about the bound volumes applies to this material also (no charge for the materials, just help with the expense of mailing). Order a supply and put them to good use.

HELP US get out the message of God's Word. If this publication has been a blessing to you, help us increase our mailing list by enrolling others to receive this paper.—*Editor*

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→ Web Site: <http://jgibbons.8m.com>

Answers to:

BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Job 29:15;
2. Genesis 23:1-20; Genesis 33:18-20 (Joshua 24:32);
3. Genesis 32:24-32;
4. Genesis 41:14;
5. Judges 1:16; 1 Samuel 15:6;
6. Acts 13:22 (1 Samuel 13:14);
7. (1) Joshua 2:1-16; (2) 1 Samuel 19:12-18; Acts 9:23-25 (2 Corinthians 11:32-33);
8. Job 3:1-3 and Jeremiah 20:14-18;
9. Proverbs 28:1;
10. Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2, etc.—found 33 times);
11. Isaiah 65:8; Isaiah 36:17; Jer-emiah 40:10; etc.;
12. Obadiah;
13. Jeremiah 29;
14. (1) God is bringing judgment; (2) Something good is going to happen coming from God;
15. John 2:13-17;
16. Mark 10:46-52 (Matthew 20:30-34);
17. Acts 11:26;
18. Acts 21:16;
19. 2 Timothy 4:10;
20. Philemon; 2 John; 3 John, and Jude;

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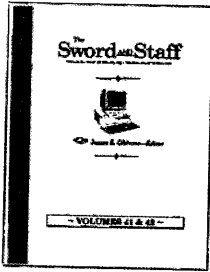
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