

The Way of Truth

Vol. 76 "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." No. 1

As a New Year Dawns, It Is Time to Reflect...

*How Sincere Is
My Devotion to God?*

January
2018

See, "Kiss of Love or
Kiss of Indifference?"

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EDITORIAL

IT SEEMS like about the time we get used to saying 2017, it is about over. This January Editorial is being written in 2017, but some of our readers will not get this issue of *The Way of Truth* until 2018.

Time is passing so fast. Where will you go when you leave this world? The Hebrew writers said, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (9:27). The judgment is yet to come, but it will come, and everyone shall be there: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:31, 32). That includes the infidel who says that there is no God.

If there be those reading this who are not ready to meet the Lord in peace—

Why Carelessly Wait?

*O come to the Lord today,
Come, sinner, without delay;
O give him your heart, I pray,
Why carelessly wait?*

*Soon you will be called to die,
Poor soul, to the Savior fly;
You know that the end is nigh,
Why carelessly wait?*

—Barney E. Warren

Whether the end of time be near or not, you have an appointment with death. Some years ago, I was holding a revival for the late R. L. Erwin in Foxworth, Mississippi. One evening he said to me, "Bro. Craig, over half of the people buried over there are young people." A cemetery was across the road from the house of worship, so I walked over and looked, and it was as he said.

"A number of years ago, in the midst of a powerful revival, the preacher observed a young lady under deep conviction. He was moved by the Holy Spirit to urge her to give her heart to God at once. He pled with her and urged her not to grieve the Holy Spirit, but she replied, 'Not tonight.' As she started for home, the man of God followed her to the door of the church and urged her again not to leave without salvation. Again she replied, 'Not tonight.' ... She went home under deep conviction and told her parents what a feeling she had. ... Her father and mother were unsaved people, ... they had no sympathy with their daughter's interest in religion. She asked their opinion about becoming a Christian. In reply they said, 'You are young, and will have plenty of time' ...

"She yielded to the advice of her ungodly parents and the devil and decided to wait awhile. ... In a short time, she was taken very sick. Every effort to restore her failed. Her parents knew that they could only have her with them for a few hours longer. They went to the bedside and informed her that she had but a short time to live. They told her that if she wished to be a Christian they were willing. In fact, they advised her that it was time now to make preparations for eternity. She looked

up at her parents in surprise. Her eyes stared, and her face was the very picture of despair. 'You advised me to wait until some other opportunity. I listened to your counsel, and now it is too late. My heart is as hard as stone. I have no feeling. The Spirit of God has left me.'"—*Dying Testimonies of Saved and Unsaved* compiled by S. B. Shaw. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). Some years ago, I read that records show that over half of all deaths in a year's time are people who are 17 or younger.

Most people in the United States think they are going to heaven when they die. This is not according to what Jesus taught! "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, *and many there be which go in thereat*: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, *and few there be that find it*" (Matthew 7:13, 14). Jesus also taught that if we die in our sins, where He is, there we cannot come.

Jesus was not born on December 25, but we do know He was born! And He was born for a purpose:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6). "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Isaiah 61:1, 2). In Luke 4, we read where Jesus went into the synagogue at Nazareth, and the scroll of Isaiah was handed to Him. He read this passage from Isaiah 61, and He told the people: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

John 3:16 also tells us why Jesus came. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:34-36).

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Jesus did not come into this world just to die on the cross to save us from our sins, but He came to give

ABOUT THE COVER

The picture on our front is a sunrise in Tuscany, Italy. It sparks thoughts of hope and anticipation for the day ahead. As 2018 dawns, we have a brand new year before us. What does it hold? Only God knows. Let us encourage one another to press on to deeper devotion to the King of kings and Lord of lords. We trust this issue will inspire you!

THE WAY OF TRUTH

(Registered Trademark)

Vol. 76 January 2018 No. 1

Devoted to the gospel of our loving Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave freely His life-blood, to save us from our many sins, to sanctify our fallen nature and to bring into one body all true believers, by whose stripes we are healed.

Published the fifteenth of the month prior to the date of issue by the Church of God which assembles at 12819 Point Salem Road in Hagerstown, Maryland. Publishing office: 12811 Point Salem Road, Hagerstown, Maryland, U.S.A.

The Way of Truth is published without any given subscription price, and is supported by freewill offerings from our readers and funds supplied by the local congregation. It is sent out free to anyone who is interested enough to ask for it. We shall continue this policy as long as God sees fit to make it possible. FOREIGN READERS are requested to write us at least once a year if they wish to continue receiving the paper the following year. Address all correspondence to: The Way of Truth, P. O. Box 88, Hagerstown, Maryland 21741, U.S.A. Always when writing, give your name and address clearly, please.

—Alvin A. Craig, Editor

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us eternal life: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

The apostle Paul wrote, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Corinthians 15:51-54). †

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

2018

"Each New Year, we have before us a brand new book containing 365 blank pages. Let us fill them with all the forgotten things from last year—the words we forgot to say, the love we forgot to show, and the charity we forgot to offer."

—Peggy Toney Horton

OUR SERVICES ON CD'S

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TO THE STRANGERS SCATTERED ABROAD

By Bro. Darrell Sanford

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ...”



ND, WITH that introduction, Peter began his letter to the many saints who had been scattered abroad among different countries; countries in which they were indeed, strangers—foreigners, pilgrims, sojourners—in non-native lands. All of these, however, had a certain commonality, for even though they were scattered, and not physically together, they were the, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” No amount of distance between them could erase that bond forged by the blood of Christ and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Their hearts were knit together in love, not by knowledge or by personal experience with one another, but by their sharing of the Holy Ghost within their purified souls. Love, peace, and joy are the natural conditions of one walking in the Spirit. We need not have any man teach us to love one another, for we are taught of God to love one another. Only man will teach us to be suspicious of one another or to hold one another at arms length because of some minor differences.

We have a people today that are scattered from one another. They, too, share a commonality brought about by the blood of Christ and infilling of the Holy Spirit. They have experienced the righteousness, peace, and joy which is inherent in the kingdom of God, as well as the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. They have the same Father and the same spiritual mother—they themselves are brothers and sisters in Christ, yet they are divided by a space created by animosity, religious tradition, and even fear! They are afraid to offer fellowship to “those other groups” for fear that they may taint them in some way.

Now, having said that, some may note how Paul warned the brethren in his day against various people, even admonishing them to beware of, or to avoid them altogether. This is so, but he was referring to those who were acknowledged enemies of the truth, and who were clearly teaching false doctrine or seeking to cause spiritual injury of some kind to the saints of God. I am not speaking of they who “serve their own belly,” or “preach another gospel,” for I too will defend the flock under my care against groups or individuals who are a danger to their well being. I am speaking of true ministers of the gospel and true saints of God who want only to serve God in holiness and righteousness and have fellowship with others whose goal is the same. Such who are already ONE in the Spirit, but are separated by camps; the walls of which have been erected by men—sometimes well-intentioned, sometimes not, but always misguided. Jesus Christ never built a wall between His sheep and never will. He who “hath broken

down the middle wall of partition” which existed between Jew and Gentile, expected that they should dwell together in peace and harmony, regardless of the many differences which still existed between them. I don’t believe that the people of God’s church, dwelling in the light and understanding we have today, could have any greater differences among us than did the Jewish and Gentile Christians of the first century!

An Experiment In Unity

We held a revival meeting this past Labor Day weekend (2017) at our congregation in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and invited others from various congregations to join us. Many of these were saints and ministers with which we had only recently began associating. When I say “recently began associating,” I mean that these congregations were part of a “fellowship” (I regret having to use that term in such a context) with which “our fellowship” had been estranged for some 50 or 60 years! Lo and behold, the saints from these various “groups” had a wonderful time together. They fed upon the messages of ministers with whom they were familiar, and some with whom they were not. They were fed well and truthfully by BOTH, and all departed that meeting edified, encouraged, and strengthened in the things of God!

How Did This Come to Be?

Bro. Greg Tyler, from Hagerstown, Maryland, and myself had begun communicating in December 2016, concerning the state of the church and the need for unity to be practiced as it should be. God had, throughout that year, and through various means, convicted me of this travesty of unity which exists among His church. I was particularly stirred and troubled by John 17:21-23: “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. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

Believing fully that these other “fellowships” scattered about the church of God landscape contained true and faithful saints, just as ours did, I could no longer in good conscience continue to participate in that condition. Desiring to share my burden with another minister, the Lord laid Bro. Greg Tyler upon my heart, and, though I knew him only casually, I sent him an email, not really knowing what to expect from him. Would he tell me, “Well, that’s just the way things are,” or perhaps, “You just need to stick with your group, because there’s no way this will ever change”? To say I was elated at his response is an understatement. In his reply, he expressed to me how he also had carried that same burden for true and unhindered unity among the church for many years.

It didn’t take a dozen ministers meeting together in a counsel, hashing things out for weeks or months to try to come to agreement about maybe starting the process of perhaps seeing if we might accept one another. No, it merely took the voice of God speaking to a couple of willing hearts, along with two e-mails, mine to Bro.

Greg, and his to me, for us to realize that we were ONE in the Spirit of God! The Holy Spirit witnessed that we were brothers! Further communication only confirmed it to a greater extent. That one communication not only tore down a wall of separation which had existed between two brothers, from two non-unified “fellowships” who had been “scattered” about from one another for their entire saved lives, it completely delegitimized the widely accepted notion that this condition of “Division Unity” is in any way acceptable among the church of God, AT ALL! For one saint of God to be separated from another saint of God by such means as we have been, is unequivocally out of the order of God! There is NO justification for it and it will not pass muster at the judgment. Such a condition is not characteristic of God’s divinely built church, and only He knows how long He will forebear with it until it is openly and manifestly condemned by whatever means He chooses.

The Wall of Division Begins to Crumble

Continuing now with our personal experiences leading up to our Labor Day revival. I, along with several saints from Hattiesburg, attended a revival being preached by Bro. Greg in Jonesville, Louisiana, the spring following our initial communications. We were warmly welcomed by Bro. Marion Trisler, Jr., and the saints there, as well as by Bro. Terry Deville and saints from Deville, who were also attending the services. All who were there could attest to the definite and beautiful manifestation of the Spirit of God in that revival. Any inhibitions which many have existed, by simply being in a new, unfamiliar situation, were quickly dispensed with as God witnessed to all that truly, the love of God was shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost! Were we all alike in every practice or detail of doing things? No. But it was evident that they were a saved, pure-hearted people and we were a saved, pure-hearted people. Saints, THAT ALONE is the basis of godly fellowship, not conformity to all of anyone’s practices!

At Bro. Tyler’s invitation, some of our congregation, my wife, and myself attended the 2017 Hagerstown Convention, and again received a warm welcome from all. (By this time our article, “Is Christ Divided?” had been printed in *The Way of Truth* and had been well-received by many.) There, I met ministers and saints from Jamaica, the Philippines, and various other places and states; people whom I had never known; people who were saints of God, just as we were saints of God! Those scriptural and vital things which adorn holiness, they were already doing. Those sound and doctrinal things which proclaim and defend the gospel, they were already preaching! It is quite possible that I could have found something to be critical of among them, and they me, but I was not LOOKING to be critical; I was looking for unity, and I saw plenty of what was good and true and right!

The Wall of Division Is Torn Down

Which brings us back to our Labor Day revival. Many of those saints who we met at the convention attended our meeting and contributed to strengthening the bond of peace between us. Yes, they saw that we were a little different in some minor ways, just as we had them, but what we all saw was far greater and

more precious than any inconsequential differences; we saw that all our hearts were filled with true devotion to God, our spirits were pure and our love was genuine! We worshiped the one true God together, as one people. Some clapped hands, some didn’t, some perhaps shouted praise more than others, but those things were soon of little concern once we realized that whatever we did, or did not do, was from a pure heart of praise to God! As one sister from Hagerstown said, “I looked around and I thought, they look just like us.”

The saints at that meeting, and the other meetings I’ve mentioned, learned that they had brothers and sisters in Christ whom they had never known. Brothers and sisters for whom they instantly held an affinity, and furthermore, with whom they quite easily and naturally developed a spiritual kinship! To find family that you did not know you had is a rich treasure, indeed.

We also learned something else, and to illustrate that, I would that we reflect upon two things, 1) a barrier called the Iron Curtain, which once divided Europe, and particularly the Berlin Wall; a wall which, for nearly 30 years, held people in bondage and separated them from their families and friends on the other side. And, 2) a former United States president named Ronald Reagan who had a desire to see the people of Eastern Europe free from the harsh rule of their communist dictators, and able to enjoy simple human liberty.

President Reagan, while giving a speech at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on June 12, 1987, famously challenged the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and therefore the head of state, with these words: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this Wall!” I do not, by any means, liken pastors and ministers of the gospel to communist dictators, but I do implore all who have the power to act that they might receive this admonition: “Pastors of the church of God, tear down THIS wall of division!” We have the stewardship in this age, and we will either act or refuse to act upon this matter. Thank God for those who are acting in the affirmative. Either way we choose, we will all bear the responsibility of our choice, and the eternal ramifications which will result.

I have learned that the saints associated with the Hagerstown “fellowship” are true, faithful saints of God. I know that the saints I have associated with for over 37 years are true, faithful saints of God. I believe that other saints we once associated with, but from whom we were estranged over 30 years ago, are still true saints. How many more are there!? How many more groups or fellowships, or whatever we want to call them, are scattered around the world, who are ONE in Christ, but are not one because of man!?

It is not right! Everything from whether we wear neckties or not, to whether we wear beards or not, to whether we clap or shout or not, to whether we believe every scripture in Revelation the same or not—should not separate us! God has ONE FOLD and ONE SHEPHERD.

This Is our Stewardship and the Responsibility Rests Upon Us

Brethren, we are straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel here, as we tout all our prerequisites for fel-

lowship. There are ministers who will not accept me in their fellowship because I do not teach brethren must be clean shaven. There are others who would not accept me because I wear short sleeves, a necktie, or have musical instruments in worship service. There are yet more who would not accept me because I don't teach every scripture in Revelation as they do. I say "I", but do not intend only myself, rather merely using myself as an example of a condition which is endemic among us. Where does it end? It doesn't! It doesn't end! It goes on and on and on! Many of these would call me a compromiser, and probably have, because of these very things. Some may even call me apostate because of these things! Yet I know that I and the saints sitting under my ministry are living holy, devoted lives to our Lord Jesus Christ. I know that! I see the fruit of THAT, and that is how I have learned to have confidence in others who do not hold every conviction and every standard just as I do. Because, I know I do not follow every detail as they do, and yet I know I am saved. So is it not reasonable to believe that the same applies to them?

God help us, church of God! God help us! I do not intend to berate, but I am passionate about this! It stirs my heart to the very depths of my soul! The Word and the Spirit of God have convicted me that this atrocious error which has been tolerated and perpetrated among us for decades must end! If we were half as concerned about possibly cutting someone off who may really be a child of God, as we are about having everyone toe the line to our exact specifications, we wouldn't have ump-teen groups running around all calling themselves, "the true church of God"! We teach the same things concerning salvation and the unity of God's people! We are far more alike than different! Yet, we are divided into little groups of 5, 15 or 20 congregations and expect everyone else to come to OUR group if they want to have fellowship with US!? We are thinking wrong, wrong, wrong, and I plea to God to wipe the scales from our eyes before it is too late! Many have already expressed that they want this Division Unity put away, and genuine scriptural unity reinstated. The One who wants it more than anyone is Jesus Christ, the Head of the church! Let us look in the Word and see the church—read of its character and construct, its attributes and characteristics. They are plainly and clearly delineated! God has a church—it is holy, it is beautiful, it is glorious, and it is ONE, ONE, ONE! So, let us ask ourselves, are WE one with it!? If we are, then we should be one with one another! †

OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Sir,

I am writing to say how much I love *The Way of Truth*. I read it every night. Sometimes I read the old ones. It is good to learn things I did not know. ... Please keep sending it to me each month.

—A. J., North Carolina

Sin Is a Reproach

2017 Hagerstown Convention Message

By Bro. Doug Shenberger

WE HAVE a verse before us that should be very familiar to us by now: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). I would like to speak on the second part of that verse: "Sin Is a Reproach."



The word *reproach* means, "disgrace; shame." You're familiar with those words, but *disgrace* means, "a loss of reputation or respect." That defines it a little more completely, I believe. The word *shame* means, "a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior."

In our world today, Satan, the enemy of our souls, and a lot of modern religions have worked very hard to cover up the reality that sin is indeed a reproach. That's not the view that a lot of people have of sin. As a result, we find many people who are very comfortable in sin, and often people glory in sin and claim it as their right, and as something that's just as good as any other way. We live in a day and age where people are worshipping at the altar of human thinking.

In different parts of the world, and in past ages, we had people who worshiped many different gods. They've worshiped many different things: things they made with their hands, gods that they set up and worshiped. There are a lot of people today who are worshipping at the altar of human thinking and human desires. Indeed, they believe that whatever they desire should be right; and in essence, they're making that their god. Proper feelings of reproach, of disgrace and shame for the wrong of sin are often very late in coming to people's hearts and minds.

SIN IS DEFINITELY A REPROACH

The Bible tells us that sin is a reproach; a very simple statement. It doesn't say that sin could be a reproach if you get into the wrong thing; it doesn't say that sin might be a reproach, or some day it will be a reproach. The Bible just says, ... "sin is a reproach." Sin is a disgrace. It's a shame; it's wrong. Isn't that what sin is? It's a violation of God's law.

Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." We know that God made man upright. We also know from Genesis that God made the world and man, and what did He say? "It's very good." He didn't make something bad. He made a world that was good, and then He made a man that was good and upright. He was someone with whom God was very pleased with. I believe that God was proud to have the opportunity to walk in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day with Adam and Eve. God enjoyed it. He enjoyed their presence. There was no sin in the garden. There was no shame and disgrace.

God did not make humanity to live in sin. That was not His design or His intention. It's not God's expectation or plan that people live in rebellion against their Creator. Sin is a reproach, a disgrace, and a shame. The Bible has quite a lot to say about sin. We could have an exhaustive study of sin this morning, and talk about what it is, what it does, and the examples of the suffering that it has caused.

SOME THINGS GOD HATES

I want to look briefly at a few things that the Bible tells us that God hates. If you will turn to Proverbs, chapter 6, you will find some verses there that detail some things that God hates. I'd like for you to consider these with me for a few minutes. Proverbs 6:16, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him." Now, if the Bible starts out with that kind of terminology, it's worth paying attention to. Something that God hates deserves our focus and attention. It's an abomination to God. It's not going to dwell in His presence. He has no good for it.

The first one—Proverbs 6:17—"A proud look." That doesn't sound so bad. The first one mentioned on the list is something that God hates, and it's an abomination to Him. Pride causes mankind to lift himself up above God. It causes mankind to be able to rebel against his Creator, because pride is an improper view of who I am. That's the reality of pride. It's an improper view of who I am. It's looking at me, and me looking at myself, and seeing myself differently than I truly am. I see myself more powerful than I really am. I'm seeing myself as wiser, or smarter, or better looking. Whatever it might be, it is an unrealistic view of myself that causes a person to have a proud look. Did you ever see someone with a proud look? Yes, we have. It's obvious. It stands out, and it's a dangerous thing. It can be a subtle thing. This world today encourages it.

We have a right to feel good about ourselves when we do something right. When we put forth effort and accomplish something, there's nothing wrong about feeling good about it. That's a natural reward of doing what's right and good; but when we have pride and begin to lift ourselves up, make ourselves the authority about what's right and wrong in life, make ourselves the authority over God and His Word, we begin to believe we can establish our own way to heaven. That's why the tower of Babel was such an abomination to God. Those people became so proud that they thought they could build a tower to heaven themselves. They thought they could get there their own way. They didn't need God. They didn't need to do what was right. They were just going to take it by force, but God confounded them in their pride. He separated the people, confused the language, and stopped that effort.

A proud look is a dangerous thing. It puts you in a place where it's hard for God to really work with you. It's very hard for God to work with a proud person. When Jesus Himself ran across the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes, and the hypocrites, was He able to touch them? They were too proud to just humble themselves and be reached by the Son of God. They were so proud that they could not be helped and could not see their need. So pride has a way of blinding the eyes of people to their true need.

The second one that's mentioned in Proverbs 6:17, is: "a lying tongue." Damage has been done in this world by a lying tongue. You know, sin is a reproach, and a proud look is a reproach to a person; but a person who lies, you talk about reproach? Sooner or later, if you lie often enough, you're going to get caught. Someone's going to know that you're not telling the truth. Oh, the destruction, the reproach, the destruction of your character and reputation! I mentioned earlier, *disgrace*—"a loss of reputation, of respect." Sin is a reproach. It causes people to lose respect for you because they see that there are things that are inconsistent. There's more than one way of lying, you know. The only people who lie aren't the ones that you ask a direct question to, and they tell you something that's not true. There are people who lie with their lives. They claim one thing and live something else that's not true.

The third one that's mentioned in Proverbs 6:17, is: "hands that shed innocent blood." Of course, we know that if someone actually kills someone, it is something that God hates. We need to be careful we don't destroy someone's character. People have been damaged in this world and in this life almost worse than death by the things people say and do. Sometimes it's possible for people to do the damage that they have in their hearts. They don't have the opportunity or the courage or whatever to actually kill someone, but they're willing to shed that person's blood, in a sense, by attacking that person's reputation. They do what they can to hurt that person.

The fourth one is mentioned in Proverbs 6:18: "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations." We have so much of that in the world today. We have a lot of people who are busy devising wickedness, imagining up new ways of doing wickedly, and new things that bring people into bondage. There are people who are constantly trying new ways to sell someone drugs and to entice him into the bondage of sin. One of the greatest reproaches of sin is that it binds people. It's not just a one-time thing. It's progressive. One reproach leads to another reproach. There are people who are actually devising wickedness for their own advantage, for their financial benefit, or for whatever the reason is. There are people who are devising wickedness and imagining wicked things.

The fifth one is mentioned in Proverbs 6:18: "feet that be swift in running to mischief." What a world we live in! People will run in a hurry for all kinds of things. *Mischief*—things that get you into trouble; things that are more dangerous than they should be; things that are just seeking for a thrill in life, rather than the things of God. Do you know God wants to have the first place in His creation's affection? He doesn't want us to fill up our lives with all kinds of other things.

The sixth one is mentioned in Proverbs 6:19: "A false witness that speaketh lies." This is someone who says something about someone that's not true.

DISCORD AMONG BRETHREN

The seventh one mentioned in Verse 19 of Proverbs 6, is: "he that soweth discord among brethren." God hates that. It's an abomination before Him. I have six young children, and sometimes there's discord. When there's discord, a lot of times you want to figure out

why there's discord. One of the most common things is: "It's not my fault." Have you heard that before? "It's not my fault." One of the questions that I like to ask my children is, What did you do to fix the problem? What did you do to make peace? Everybody has a bad moment sometimes; everybody makes mistakes sometimes; everybody is tired sometimes. If you have a little child who's tired and exhausted, it doesn't take much to irritate that child. "I didn't do anything. It's not my fault that he tripped over my foot. I only had it sticking out a little bit." This is real life. Did you make peace? Were you watching out for the one that was in trouble?

Sometimes there's a person who's in trouble and he has a knife stuck in himself, as it were, because of hurting. What do you do? Do you just twist the knife a little bit, or do you pull it out and help bind up the wound? You must realize the weakness and the need. You have opportunity when people are in need to be a peacemaker, a helper. God hates someone who is sowing discord. People are doing this in their marriage relationship. There is too much discord in people's homes. You don't have to have discord in your home. You can make peace. With things in life, sometimes it's like someone just lit a bomb and is sitting there waiting for it to go off. You can just stand back and say, "There's going to be quite an explosion here in a minute"; or, sometimes you can take and just put the fuse out. You can make peace.

There are people who are going through preparations for a divorce. I look at their lives and I think, *You know, if that wife would just learn what it means to reverence her husband, and that husband would just learn what it means to love his wife "as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," how can they not get along?*

God hates discord among brethren. It's the devil's work. It's a reproach. It's on the family of man. They're living in reproach and in sin. Sin is destroying people's lives, their future, and their happiness. The reproach of sin accumulates. It stains and affects a person. Sin binds a soul. It brings a soul that's created by almighty God, designed to be upright and beautiful, under the control and influence of Satan, God's enemy. That's what sin does. God planned for His creation to be able to stand upright, to walk with Him in righteousness.

People are being reduced to crawling around, as it were, in the mock and the shame and the reproach of sin. It's like, there's a beautiful painting and someone throws some ink on it. There's a spot on it now. It stains it. You can still see some of the painting and it still has beauty to it, but if you keep accumulating more and more stains, after awhile, it's not very beautiful. You really don't want to show it to no one. You're not proud of it. There's a reproach there. It's shameful what's been done to that beautiful painting. The devil rejoices to be able to take God's creation and put upon them the reproach of sin. What a shame!

WHY IS SIN A REPROACH?

You can't clean the reproach of sin from yourself. You can't do it. There's a verse in the Bible in Jeremiah, chapter two. There's a lot of what I'm saying that could be supported by many scriptures. We don't have time

to refer to them in detail, but I'd like for you to hear this verse: Jeremiah 2:22, "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God." You can't clean it off. Sin is a reproach on a person, on a country, on a community, and it makes something that could be far more beautiful to be tainted with shame and disgrace. If you tried to clean ink off that beautiful painting, a lot of times you're going to smudge it around and make it even worse.

Sin is a reproach because it does actual damage to humanity. We know that it causes spiritual death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). But there is a lot of other damage that sin does. It causes hardness. It hardens the heart. It causes a lack of feeling. You might say, "Well, I still feel." Yes, you're human. You still have feelings, but sin causes a lack and the ability to feel what you could feel. It causes depression. Feelings of guilt and reproach are not uplifting. I know that a lot of people get accustomed to living in sin. That's just a reality. A lot of times human beings adjust to their condition. They get accustomed to it.

Sin destroys your character and reputation. You might not acknowledge what all it has done in your life, but I'm here to tell you that if you have sin in your heart, if you've sinned against God, whether you acknowledge Him or not, it's affecting you. Reproach of sin upon a person affects that person. One of the ways you can tell that it does, people spend a tremendous amount of time and energy trying to cover it up. They try to cover up reality; cover up who they really are. They pretend. That's one of the reasons why people need to wear so much makeup sometimes. They're trying to cover up the physical reality of who they are. They're not comfortable of who they are. They feel condemned; they feel degraded. There's a physical degradation in sin and in the reproach of sin.

One of the saddest things though, I believe, about sin and the reproach that it causes is: it robs you of your capacity to fully enjoy life. Now, the Bible talks about the pleasures of sin, and there are pleasures of the flesh that you can go out and experience in the world, but sin robs you of the capacity to *truly* enjoy life. The reproach—the guilt before God—people try to deny that and overcome it, usually, with more activity. They get busy doing something else, something more. They need more excitement and entertainment, more people to be around and meet.

If you're living under the reproach of sin, the disgrace and shame of sin, you've lost something priceless: the ability to enjoy the presence of God. Adam and Eve lost the presence of God when they sinned in the garden. Up until that time, they enjoyed the end of the day. They walked with God in the cool of the evening. They spent time with Him. They enjoyed the fellowship they had together in the cool of the evening. When they sinned, they lost that joy from God's presence. They wanted to run and hide. They wanted to cover themselves up. They didn't want God to see them. They didn't want to walk and to be with God.

ONLY JESUS' BLOOD CAN CLEANSE

If you're without God this morning, I don't believe you really realize how much you're missing by not hav-

ing communion with God. It's priceless! You can just weep with joy at the presence of God. You can feel that thrill in your soul and feel the floods of gratitude springing up in your heart in praise to be in the presence of God. There's no reproach and shame in His presence. You'll enjoy being in His house of worship; you'll enjoy being with God and spending time with Him. What a reproach, a shame that the majority of God's creation has lost the best, the highest enjoyment that God has planned for the family of man! Men are sorting through the dregs, as it were, trying to satisfy the needs of their souls.

It is no wonder that the prodigal son finally came to himself. He saw himself in the situation he was in. He was hungry and dirty. He was in need. Finally, he looked and saw himself for what his true condition really was. He was able to look up. He said, "I'm going home. I'm going back to my father's house. There's something better than this. There's something worth living for. I don't want to just die and end it like this. I want to live."

What did Jesus say when He was here? "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." God made man in His own image and likeness. He designed for him to be upright, happy, to be blessed, and to have communion with his God and Maker.

I said before that you cannot cleanse yourself of the reproach of sin. You can search the whole world over. You can pile up wealth, honor, fame, and indulge yourself in every pleasure you can think of; you can try to block out your mind to where you don't feel or think about the realities, but there's nothing that's going to ever cleanse you of the reproach of sin other than the blood of Jesus Christ. What a plan of salvation—the plan that Jesus Christ would come, bleed and die to take away the sin and reproach, the shame and disgrace from any person who was willing to receive His salvation!

Jesus doesn't clean you up a little bit. He doesn't just put a little paint on top to make it look better. He makes you a new creature in Christ. He wipes out the past. He makes you anew. Even if there are other people who know what you have done, it doesn't matter any more, because Christ has forgiven you. He has made you anew. He has set you free and broke the bonds of sin. Your soul is alive. You'll have a heart that feels the presence of God and responds to it like a plant to sunlight. A new creature in Christ!

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I'd like to ask you, Can you see the reproach of sin on some around you in your life? Some are more obvious than others. Some have been bound longer than others. Some sins are easier to try to cover up than others, but they are still there. Sin is a reproach, a disgrace, a shame on your life. It's hurting you. Did you know that? It's hurting you. It's costing you something. It's costing you lost time, lost opportunity, hurts, and pain. Wasted years! If you continue that way, it's going to get worse. Rejecting God's Holy Spirit is a reproach. It hurts you. It's not just a simple choice. There's a cost in rejecting God's Spirit. It's a shame and disgrace for the Holy Spirit to talk with the unsaved

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and they reject Him. It's a shame that they refuse to listen. It's a reproach. If God's Holy Spirit has helped you to see yourself, to realize the reproach that's upon your life, you need to come to Christ and ask Him to make you clean. "Wash you, make you clean," the Bible says. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Christ, through His death on the cross, purchased salvation for mankind. He paid the price. He took that reproach upon Himself. He made it possible for us to escape sin. He wants to make you clean and beautiful and upright. Christ wants to walk and talk with you. He wants to spend time with you and make your life anew. He wants to make it to where you can truly enjoy living in a more beautiful world and live in a more beautiful home, but you have to be willing to come to Him just as you are. You can't clean off the spots; you can't turn over a new leaf; you can't make it right.

The reproach of sin can only be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. You have to come just as you are, without one plea. You have to come dirty; you have to come broken; you have to come hurting. Come just the way you are. Come with all the problems, with the things unsolved, with the needs, the reproach, and the guilt. You have to come to Christ like that. That's humility.

It's a humble way to be a Christian. You have to humble yourself.

I said in the beginning of the message about the danger of a proud person and how hard it makes it for God to work with that person. This is where some are. You have to be able to acknowledge that you're not all you should be, that God made you upright but you've gotten off track. You have to be honest with yourself and with God about your need. You have to give it to Him. You have to let Him fix it. It's out of your control to fix it. What's in your control is that you can come. †

BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

SIN, MAN'S GREATEST ENEMY THE SIN OF COMMISSION

Scriptures: Matthew 26:47-50; 27:3-5; Galatians 5:16-21.

Matthew 26:47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

Matthew 27:3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Memory Verse: He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.—I John 3:8.

Aim: To show that when we do that which is contrary to a known law of God, we are guilty of the sin of commission.

INTRODUCTION

First, let me point out that imputed sin involves a person's will. Contrary to what some people may teach in regard to predestination, mankind has the responsibility of choosing, and he then must give an account of the decisions he makes.

Joshua instructed the children of Israel:

"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14, 15).

It is said of Moses:

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Sin is of two types: committed and inherited. In a later quarter, we will present inherited sin, but in this lesson we desire to impress upon the student the truth in regard to the sin which man is guilty of and responsible for. When a soul comes to the place where he knows and understands right and wrong, and by this we mean what is right and wrong according to the teachings of God's Word, and he chooses to do wrong, then he commits an imputed sin. The known transgression of the law of God is sin, and every sin carries the death penalty.

Imputed sin involves the will. Once a soul has chosen sin he becomes a sinner and a servant to sin. Then he may voluntarily, and often involuntarily, do things that are contrary to the Word of God. Therefore, we see the urgency of clearly pointing out the truth concerning the committed sins and seeking to warn every soul we can against them.

MEDITATIONS

HISTORY'S ASTONISHING CRIME—Matthew 26:47—A great multitude—The people in general were, without doubt, acquainted with the fact that Jesus had been able to escape mysteriously from the hands of those who sought to capture Him. Therefore, they gathered together a multitude intent upon the purpose of making sure he did not escape this time. They gave little attention to the seriousness of the sin they were about to commit.

SIN OF DECEIT—Matthew 26:48—I shall kiss—Judas posed as a friend of Jesus, yet was His enemy. All through history, this sin has caused the human family great trouble. Judas was well-acquainted with the miraculous power of Jesus. Just what he expected when the mob laid hold on Him we cannot tell. That he expected something is evidenced by the statement of Judas when he said to hold Him fast.

A PROPER GREETING—Matthew 26:49—Hail, Master—Psalm 103:19 declares that God has

The Way of Truth

prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all. True, He was the Master of Judas and of the situation in which He found Himself. He did not, at this time, administer judgment and rewards, but in due time He will. All who participated in the crucifixion of Jesus will be properly and justly rewarded. Many millions today are trampling the blood of Christ underfoot and denying the Lord Jesus Christ. Judgment is deferred, but be sure of this: the time is coming when every man shall be rewarded according to his deeds.

FALSE FRIENDS—Matthew 26:50—Friend—Jesus had always been a true Friend to Judas, as He has been to all of us. Only the hateful, ungodly spirit of the devil compelling a man could cause him to do such a thing as Judas did in betraying Christ.

REPENTANCE, BUT TOO LATE—Matthew 27:3—Repented himself—Jesus was now condemned, but what could Judas do about it? He had set in motion something that could not be stopped. What good could money do anyone who had cut himself off from the favor and good will of the Lord Jesus?

HATRED DEEP-SEATED—Matthew 27:4—What is that to us?—Little did they care about the innocence of Jesus. His holy teachings were a rebuke to their ungodly lives and false religious conceptions; therefore, they viciously gave vent to their depraved natures.

APITIFUL END—Matthew 27:5—Hanged himself—The pitiful state of the man who has so conducted himself that the best he can see in life is self-destruction is not describable by the human tongue. The sinner does not know how soon he may be led by his master, the devil, into a like situation. Therefore, when any man awakens to the fact that he is the servant of sin, he should at once seek deliverance at the hand of Jesus.

THE PATH OF SAFETY—Galatians 5:16—Walk in the Spirit—If the Holy Ghost, the great and eternal Spirit of the living God, is permitted to guide our steps, we shall ever be found walking in the paths of righteousness. The lust of the flesh shall not dominate.

THE INWARD WARFARE—Galatians 5:17—Contrary the one to the other—All activities of the flesh, though legal, may be perverted, and this the devil seeks to do, thus hindering and eventually completely destroying the spiritual life. The Word of God outlines the proper use of the flesh, and departure from the divine instruction results in sickness, loss, and death.

ESCAPE FROM THE LAW—Galatians 5:18—If ye be led—If the Spirit is permitted to lead us, He will lead us in a path that does not break the law of God. Thus, we do not come under the law; it has no power over us. If we follow the lusts of the flesh, we are certain to transgress the law of God and, consequently, come under its penalty.

PERVERTED FLESHLY ACTIVITIES—Galatians 5:19-21—Works of the flesh—Committed sins. **Adultery and fornication—**The wrong use of the sexual powers. These are destructive to the soul and body. Sexual powers used as directed by God are pure and holy and beneficial. **Uncleanness—**Carelessness

in spiritual and physical living. **Lasciviousness—**Lewdness, unclean thinking and action. **Idolatry—**Improper worship of images or real things. We are permitted to worship God only! **Witchcraft—**Doing supernatural things by the power of Satan. Supernatural things are permissible only in the name of Jesus. **Hatred—**Intense dislike for anyone who may have given offense. Hatred is permitted by God only against sin and the devil. **Variance—**Taking an opposite viewpoint in scriptural or everyday matters, generating strife and division. We must all be at variance with evil and Satan. **Wrath—**Excessive anger manifest in the trying scenes of life. Wrath may be exhibited against the devil and his angels (Paul smote a servant of Satan with blindness). **Heresies—**The wrong interpretation and application of the Scriptures. This is done to get disciples or to cover up and allow for sin in the hearts of men. **Murders—**Murders are committed to satisfy the lusts of the flesh and in no case are permissible in a physical sense. **Drunkennes—**Under no condition is intoxicating liquor to be taken into the human body. It is destructive to the body and punishable by death. **Revellings—**Excessive lightness in the flesh. To revel in the Spirit and to rejoice in the love of God is permissible. He who gives his flesh over to any of the above practices shuts himself out of the kingdom of God.

CONCLUSION

It is the devil's business to induce men and women, by every power at his command, to indulge the flesh in the above forbidden practices. It becomes our duty as Christians to influence people, by every means possible, not to yield their bodies to these practices. Religion, in many instances, has degenerated to such a low plane that many of these things are condoned. This does not in any way soften the penalty that awaits the offender; so we who know the truth must be more earnest and faithful in warning people and preaching and living the truth.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What are the two types of sin?
2. Why was a multitude brought to take captive the Man, Jesus?
3. When Judas kissed Jesus, of what sin was he guilty?
4. In what sense was Jesus Judas' master?
5. Why did Judas kill himself?
6. What is one of the benefits derived from walking in the Spirit?
7. What is the inward warfare?
8. How do we escape from the power of the law? †

SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE

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KISS OF LOVE OR KISS OF INDIFFERENCE?

2017 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Harley McClung

I AM VERY thankful to be here. We have had a glorious week. We have been truly sitting together in heavenly places. When we are in such rich services as we've been in, I'm telling you, God has favored us this week. Also, when we have the privilege to sit in heavenly places like we have, and then when it's over and we go home, sometimes there's a big let down; but one thing we all need to remember is what Jesus said, though He's been with us in a marked way: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So when we're not sitting and feasting like we have this week, we have to just keep mindful that Jesus Christ is right there with us, no matter where we are, as long as we stay true to Him. He's always true to His promises. They'll never fail us. Great is His faithfulness toward His people!

Jesus loves us more than we understand. He loves us more than we can comprehend. He wants us to be successful every day of our lives. That's why He has given us all the provisions that we need to live victorious every day. Every day we can be overcomers. It has indeed been rich sitting here, basking in the feast and in the glory of God that is so present. When we go back to our homes and get in the routine of every day life, let us keep mindful that God is still there to help us, no matter what we encounter and face. He wants us to be successful. He wants us to live a life so that every day we know that we're victorious, because that brings to Him glory. That's what He wants. He wants us to do what He has commanded us to do for our well-being and benefit and to His glory. So we thank and praise Him. Even if we had 10,000 lives, we could not enough our blessed Lord adore for blessing us this week.

We want to do our little bit in this service and ask God to help us. I think about the talent that has been used this week to the glory of God.

INTRODUCTION OF TEXT

If you have your Bibles, turn to Luke, chapter 7, verses 36-39: "And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." This woman, it says in verse 38, "Stood at

his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." I would like to entitle my thoughts, "Kiss of Love or Kiss of Indifference?"



The word *kiss* means, "to touch or caress with lips to express affection, greeting, and respect." Kissing is not universal among human beings, and, even today, there are some cultures that have no place for it. This suggests that it is not innate or intuitive, as it so often seems to be. Kissing may be learned behavior that has evolved from mothers to children. Whatever the case, kissing behavior is not unique to human beings. Dogs lick and nuzzle one another, and even their masters.

I have been told that in Rome there is a statue of Peter. There are people around the world who are Catholics who go there and see that statue. They go up and kiss the toe of that statue. I think I was told that it's worn slick from people kissing the big toe. I was told (I didn't see this) that when the pope came on a tour to the United States, there were people lined up to bow down to kiss the pope's toe.

We find here, in our text, a woman who was a sinner. When she heard that Jesus was at this certain Pharisee's house (Simon's), she had something she wanted to do. She had something that really meant a great deal to her. She had some ointment. From what I understand, that ointment was very, very expensive. She took this to do a good deed to Somebody who had done a great and wonderful deed to her. Now, everybody is not like that, you know. It used to be in this country that there was a sense of payback. I had a class one time on negotiation. One of the things that was taught in this class was, if you're dealing with people who had this deep sense of payback, then they were a people who were really easy to negotiate with; that is, if you were willing to give something to them, that sense of payback then meant that they were willing to negotiate, because they would give back to you and it would become a win-win situation. Well, I believe that is what God wants. God is looking for a win-win situation.

God did not send His Son into this world to condemn this world, no! He came to this world to save the people of this world. He didn't bring condemnation to the people. He didn't kill or destroy them. He came for the purpose of saving them. Christ came to give to us the light, the truth, the grace, the mercy, and the love. He came to give us everything and to show us that He's willing to reason with us, if we'll just come and be will-

ing to reason with Him. It seems to me like this woman in Luke, chapter 7, was willing to reason with Jesus.

Jesus was not implying that the mere act of this woman coming and kissing His feet was what was necessary for her to be saved. No, He wasn't teaching that, for it takes more than just a simple act to save a soul. Jesus' love kissed her very soul. That's what Jesus came to this sin-sick, sin-cursed world to do. He came to demonstrate and to show firsthand the great love of almighty God toward mankind. He showed it. God commended His love toward us while we were yet His enemy. That means He got it to us. He got to us by the way of His dear Son. Jesus Christ came into this world. Let me tell you something, everywhere Jesus went, He did good.

Do you know when Jesus spoke to those scribes and Pharisees that they were a generation of vipers? When He was telling them that they were snakes, He was doing them good. Now, that might not sound like He was doing them good. Listen to me, sometimes Jesus had to get people's attention. He had to say some things that would awaken them. "What?" Well, if you'll just listen to me, I'll tell you what He was saying to them: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. If you're willing to listen to Me, you're something you ought not to be; but if you'll listen to Me, I can change your life to what you ought to be."

Somehow this woman, in our text, got ahold of Jesus' teaching. She believed it, and she came to do Him a favor. She came to make it a win situation for Him. He made a win situation for her. Jesus changed her heart, and that heart acted benevolently toward Jesus. That's why she came and did the things she did. Jesus had changed her heart. That's what Jesus Christ does. He will make all things new, if you'll allow Him to change your heart. Jesus came into this world to seek and to save those trapped in sin. This woman was ensnared by her own actions and evil spirits. Perhaps, this woman was like the demoniac of Gadara, with no way of escape, but "Then Jesus Came"—

*From home and friends the evil spirits drove him,
Among the tombs he dwelt in misery;
He cut himself as demon pow'rs possessed him,
Then Jesus came and set the captive free.*

*When Jesus comes the tempter's pow'r is broken;
When Jesus comes the tears are wiped away.
He takes the gloom and fills the life with glory,
For all is changed when Jesus comes to stay.*

Jesus gave that woman a new life, a changed heart. He gave her His Word, His grace, His love. He gave her power, peace, and joy. Listen to me, Jesus gave her a hope that anchored her soul, not only during the time she lived, but through the ceaseless ages of eternity.

WE OWE GOD A GREAT DEBT

Now, we come to Simon the Pharisee. Adam Clarke suggests that this Pharisee, Simon, was the leper. Whether he was or wasn't, he owed Jesus a great debt, because Jesus came to visit him. Everyone here owes Jesus a great debt, because He has come here to visit us tonight. We owe Him, and I trust that we still have

that sense of payback. I trust we have that sense deep within us that we owe God something; and not only owe Him, but we're willing to give to Him His just due. What He wants is our heart. He wants the center of our affection so that we'll serve Him, worship Him, and bring glory and honor to Him, and that we can let our light so shine in this sin-sick, sin-cursed world to glorify our Father in heaven. So, whether this Pharisee was Simon the leper, or not, he owed Jesus a great debt of gratitude. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Every single promise that God gave to us from the Bible, we can stand and count on. We owe God a great debt of gratitude for it. Do you know what? A lot of people take it for granted.

Bro. Mick said something a little bit ago about the pearl of great price. I once gave a person a very, very valuable thing. The value of it when I gave it was just so much, but it went up in value as the years passed. So today, it would be far, far more valuable than when I gave it, but he didn't appreciate it, and he gave it away. So many people do not appreciate God's gift. Jesus came to visit Simon, but he couldn't see the value of doing what this woman came to do. One's love and adoration is not proven by mere words but actions. God proved His love by His actions. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE GOD

When it comes to loving God, there are no shortcuts. In Luke 9:23, we read, "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily [Notice it says, 'daily'], and follow me." You know, some people can do a little bit here or there, but when it comes to every day life, there is a cross that we are to carry every day. I mentioned earlier that God has made it possible for us to live a victorious life every day; but the way we live a victorious life is to carry the cross every day that He gives us. This Christian thing is not just a once-in-awhile thing. It's 24/7. This is a life that we live. This is something where we love God and adore God all the time. We don't take vacations from it.

Some shortcuts are fine, and some are even practical; but when it comes to pleasing God, there are no shortcuts. He's worthy of our best because He gave us His best. Now, we talk again about a win-win situation. If God gave us His best, does He not deserve our best to make it a win-win situation for both of us. No shortcuts! He's worthy of our best and will never accept second place. Don't be presumptuous thinking that we can give Him second place, for we just cannot. He will have first place in our hearts and lives or He won't have any part with us.

One may desire to please God, but only when it's convenient and not difficult. That won't work. That's a shortcut that a lot of people in the world are trying to get by with, but that's not what this woman was doing. This woman was giving to Jesus something that was from the depths of her heart. She really, really loved Jesus to do what she was doing. Unfeigned love, agape

love forgave the great debt all of us owed. That's what Jesus did for this woman and for us.

Listen to this: Luke 7:40-43, "And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

There is the place some people don't think they have done so bad. All of us have sinned. All of us have come short of the glory of God. Someone has said, "If we're guilty of one sin, we're guilty of them all." How despicable it is in God's sight when a person is obeying God's arch-enemy! That's what sin is. That's when people are obeying Satan instead of obeying God. That's why it is such a deplorable thing in the sight of God, because here we have two forces—good and evil. People are running after evil and obeying evil instead of God.

Jesus pointed out a valuable lesson on real love: Luke 7:44-48, "And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with [expensive] ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."

I take from this tonight that if you want to be forgiven, you have to come to the place where you love God, where you love Jesus Christ. Why shouldn't you love Jesus Christ? He's the good Shepherd who gave His life for you. He's the good Shepherd who came to give you life, and life more abundantly. But Satan comes for the purpose of stealing, killing, and destroying. Love is a powerful force motivating one to act from within. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Why shouldn't we and everyone love Jesus? Do you love Jesus tonight? I know there are people who say, "Yes, I love Him," but they don't act that way. Love comes from action, not just words.

Did Simon feel he didn't know Jesus, or didn't want to do much for Him? Well, that's the way it seems to me. Well, he did. He made a token suggestion. Simon made a token suggestion by inviting Jesus to his house, but what was his motive? You know, if Jesus came to his house, maybe there was some prestige that he was seeking for. Maybe Simon was wanting something to be noticed. I don't know, but did Simon really, really want to worship Jesus? Did he really love Jesus? Would he have done what this woman did? I don't think so. Why didn't he offer to do what the woman did?

NOT EVERYONE GOES TO HEAVEN

Many offer tokens at some time, but few in reality here tonight. Few in reality. That's what Jesus was

talking about. He said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Only a few are really willing to love Him to the degree to do whatever it takes to get on, and stay on, that strait and narrow way that leads them to eternal glory. Many offer a token of some kind, but few love Him as this woman did. Therefore, everyone is not forgiven.

I know we read obituaries in the newspaper that every one who died went on to be with his Lord in glory. Let me tell you something, that is not true. Only those who truly love Jesus Christ, and die in that love, go to be with Him in glory. As a matter of fact, we've been sitting in heavenly places this week. I've been basking in it. I've just been flooded by the joy and the peace. Those who are not in love with this don't enjoy this. If they did, there would be more coming. Therefore, those who don't genuinely love God and what we've been enjoying this week are not going to enjoy heaven. As a matter of fact, if they went to heaven, they would start complaining about heaven. Whenever they get there and start complaining, it would make heaven less than heaven is, and God's not going to allow that to happen. Heaven is real!

*Heaven is a holy place
Filled with glory and with grace;
Sin can never enter there: ...
It will stop you at the door,
Bar you out forevermore,
Sin can never enter there.*

What eradicates sin from the heart is coming to the place where you love God. The question here is: Do you want to be forgiven as this woman was? Do you want to be pardoned as she was? Do you want to have your burden of sin lifted?

I was listening to the choir singing, "Glorious Freedom." The reason why people are difficult to get persuaded to come and taste and see that the Lord is good, is because they really can't comprehend this glorious freedom. You have to come to the place where you're willing to try it. Come and defeat Satan. Get Satan out of the way and be determined to press into this thing. Then come to the place where you can realize the glory of it and can really start enjoying what God sent His only Son into this sin-sick world to enable you to do. If you want to be forgiven and want to have your burden of sin lifted from your heart and life, you have to come to the place where you'll let Him have first place. The only way to do that is to come and ask Him to forgive you and accept Him. Make the surrender that you need to make so that the Lord Jesus will come in.

Listen to me tonight: The door to your heart has the door knob on the inside. You have to open the door. Jesus is not going to force you. The rich ruler came to Him and said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus told him what he needed to do. He said, "You need to keep all the commandments." "Well, I've done all of those things." Jesus said, "You need to go and sell all that you have and give to the poor. That's an act of proving that you love Me." The rich young ruler only lacked one thing, and so it is with

so many. He went away sorrowful, because really, what a lot of people want is welfare. In our nation today, many people are on welfare, and they don't have any sense whatsoever of repayment. "Now, the country owes me. God owes me." Let me tell you something, God doesn't owe you anything. You owe God.

A FAKE KISS

One of the greatest hypocrisies is a fake kiss. One hypocrisy most evident is politicians kissing babies. Indeed, some kiss for deceptive reasons, for a kiss is very powerful. Did you know that? A kiss is very powerful. People knowingly use it. Proverbs 27:6b, "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Such was an enemy of Jesus Christ. "And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" That's what Judas did. Judas' kiss—"deceitful and treacherous; an act appearing to be a friend, but proving to be harmful to the recipient." That in reality is to Jesus Christ with someone who just pretends.

Judas experienced Jesus' love firsthand. Yes, he did! He saw what Jesus was all about. Judas saw all of the good Jesus did; and yet, he came to the place where he became greedy. He wanted to have just a little bit of money, and he started leaning to his own understanding. Judas started figuring out things for his own, and he sold his Master for just a little bit. That's what a lot of people in the world today are doing. They're selling their souls because they're selling their Master for just a little bit of nothing. Judas betrayed Him. He delivered Jesus to an enemy. He deserted Jesus and turned Him over to another.

With this same thought, Judas is not the only one who betrayed Jesus. Jesus fed the multitude and they turned away from Him. They followed Jesus out into the wilderness. He took a few loaves of bread and fishes and took care of them. He gave them all they needed. The next day, Jesus started teaching them what would be beneficial and what would be helpful to them. He started telling them what they needed to do so that they could have a continuation of food coming and coming to them, but they said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" And they turned away. So it is with people. They come and hear the gospel to benefit them, but they get up and leave.

The whole world of sinners is somewhat like Simon. They take God's blessings, but give Him nothing in return. God blesses all. "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). His grace appears to all men, and He loves all the people of the world. Christ died for His enemies. Yes, Dear Ones, Jesus Christ died while we were yet His enemy.

What does Christ get in return? A few like the woman who worshiped Him. A few would give their very lives. I believe Bro. Alvin has. I believe Bro. Alvin would do anything for his Master. Bro. Junior does. I believe he would do anything for his Lord and Savior, because He and Bro. Alvin have seen what good their Savior has done for them.

Mostly, in our world today, people are rebellious and are indifferent toward Christ. They're stiff-necked, disrespectful, and unloving to all that's good. They are "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Some people are highly educated, but they never come to know truth. They're reprobates concerning the faith. They're like Simon and Judas. They play up to God. They get all that they can get, and then they go and betray the Master.

Let's be honest tonight. Is there anyone here who is like Simon or Judas? If you are, you need to come to the place where you see that it is a great detriment to you. It's not something that will help you in life, and certainly, it will not help you in the judgment. It will take you to eternal torment, misery, and woe. All of us here are investing in something. What is the return on that investment? If you've invested in loving Jesus Christ, then your return is going to be very, very glorious.

This sinful woman, in our text, was forgiven, pardoned, elevated, and regenerated. She was translated, reconciled, filled with joy, peace, contentment, and hope. I call that a pretty good return on the investment she made. She was given God's love, became His child and a joint-heir with Christ. She was born into a happy family, in the bond of perfect love. She was blessed.

Here's a narrative entitled, "I Love Him, Too"—

An old country man, visiting London for the first time in his life, went into one of the great picture galleries to look around. Presently, he came to a wonderful painting of the Lord Jesus hanging upon the cross. He stopped before it and he gazed at the picture of the great love hanging there on the cross. The great love for the One who hung there flooded his heart, and he said aloud, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Oh, how I love Him, Oh, how I love Him!"

Others in the gallery heard the old man's words, and seeing the tears trickling down his old furred cheeks as he stood beside the painting, hat in hand, forgetful of all else, others were touched and stopped before the picture, too. Presently, one of the strangers drew near. Grasping his hand, he said, "Sir, I love Him, too."

Seeing what had taken place, the third stepped forward, saying, "So do I." Then the fourth joined them, and the fifth, until there stood before the painting of the Savior a little knot of men, perfect strangers, but drawn together by perfect love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, loving God yields love for everyone. There's a common interest; there's a bond. That's what we've been experiencing this week. We have been experiencing the love of God in action. There hasn't been any turmoil. There's been harmony, unity, and a glorious place for us to be. If God's love rules not in the heart, we bid you come and take part in this tonight.

*How sweet this bond of perfectness,
The wondrous love of Jesus!
A pure foretaste of heaven's bliss,
O fellowship so precious!*

*O praise the Lord for love divine
That binds us all together!
A thousand chords our hearts entwine
Forever and forever.*

*"God over all and in us all,"
And thro' each holy brother;
No pow'r of earth or hell, withal,
Can rend us from each other.*

*O mystery of heaven's peace!
O bond of heaven's union!
Our souls in fellowship embrace,
And live in sweet communion.*

*O brethren, how this perfect love
Unites us all in Jesus!
One heart, and soul, and mind we prove
The [unity] heaven gave us.*

CONCLUSION

Sinner Friend, you don't know anything about that love. You can't comprehend that love. You're not experiencing that love. You're not in this bond of perfectness. You're in a bond with Satan, the adversary of your soul. He's the one that doesn't allow you to love as you ought to love. He wants you to actually hate and be indifferent. He wants you to actually be in misery. He wants you to have conflict with your neighbor, not love your neighbor; but this week we have been experiencing the bond of divine, genuine Christian love. This is a love that God has imparted to us.

Here tonight, you can come and experience this love, if you will accept this great Gift, the Pearl of great price, the love, the mercy, and the grace of Jesus Christ. If you will come and give your heart to God and invest your heart, life, and soul, time and talent, I promise you, on the authority of God's Word, that your return will be far more than this feeble preacher can give a description to you. You'll be blessed. All you need to do when the invitation song is given is to come and give your heart to God.

God bless you. †

REMINDER TO OUR READERS

We DO NOT publish, produce nor send out the following:

The Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments)
Bible concordances, dictionaries, atlases, commentaries, pictures, calendars etc., nor offer correspondence courses

Hymnals nor other religious songs
Names of persons for pen pal correspondence
Cassettes or CD's unless paid for in advance in US currency

Videos, cassette tape and video recorders
Scholarships for the training of students in the United States or any other country

Financial support for individuals
Tracts to foreign countries due to high postage rates

We want to hear from you but keep this in mind.

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



HOLD YOUR NOSE!

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

"The snow is coming down heavier by the minute!" said Uncle Ernie, frowning as he squinted his eyes to see through the flakes that fell on the windshield of the car.

"Is that as fast as the wipers will go?" asked my grandmother from the back seat where she and I were sitting. "They're hardly keeping up with the snow."

"That's the best they will do," Uncle Ernie answered.

"Well, I think we should stop for the night," said Aunt Pearl. She was sitting in the front passenger seat next to Uncle Ernie. "It's foolish to keep going. You're liable to drive right off the road. Then what would we do, stuck in a ditch all this long way from home?"

Where can we stop? I wondered to myself. *We don't know anybody around here.* This was the longest road trip I had ever taken. A few days ago, Uncle Ernie, Grandma, and I had driven from Maryland to Illinois to pick up their sister, Aunt Pearl. She was coming back with us to spend a few weeks with my grandmother.

It was a twelve-hour trip, and we had gotten a late start this morning. Uncle Ernie had planned to drive straight through to Maryland, not stopping for the night, but now it was late afternoon and we were only halfway home. Soon the darkness would descend, and it would be even harder to see the road.

"I see a motel," said my grandmother, pointing to a brightly colored neon sign up ahead. "I think we'd better stop there."

"What's it like in a 'motel'?" I asked. I was only eight years old, and I had seldom even heard the word.

"I guess you're about to find out," said Aunt Pearl. I was a little afraid of Aunt Pearl with her deep voice and tart responses, even though she seemed a jolly soul.

Uncle Ernie eased the car off the highway and into the parking lot of the motel. He got out of the car and headed for the motel office. I stared out the window with interest. Through the thickly falling snow I could barely see the outline of a long row of small cabins. "Are we going to stay in one of those?" I asked.

"Yes," said my grandmother, "if they have any vacancies."

"What's a 'vacancy'?" I asked.

"A vacancy is an empty cabin," Grandma explained patiently. "If all of the cabins are occupied, we'll have to drive on and look for another motel."



"At this rate, we'll be sledding, not driving," said Aunt Pearl.

Just then Uncle Ernie opened the car door. "Good news," he said, sliding into the driver's seat. "They had one empty cabin left." He grinned. "And it's ours."

"Thank the Lord!" said my grandmother.

Uncle Ernie drove slowly down the line of cabins until he came to the one that matched the number on the key the motel manager had given him.

Inside the cabin, I looked around with curiosity. There were two big beds, a couple of chairs, a dresser, and a bathroom.

While Grandma and Aunt Pearl looked for essentials in their suitcases, I explored every corner of the tiny cabin. In the bathroom, there was a small tin cup. "I'm thirsty," I said to Grandma. "May I use this cup to get a drink?"

"Help yourself," Grandma answered. "You can just get some water out of the tap."

I turned on the faucet and filled my cup. But the first sip of water stopped me cold. "Grandma!" I exclaimed. "What's wrong with this water? It tastes terrible!"

"Well, honey," said Grandma, "the water in this place is different from ours. But it's all we've got right now, and so we'll have to just grin and bear it."

Grandma was always ready to "grin and bear" whatever troubles came along. But I didn't see how I could grin and bear this water.

"I don't want any water," I said. "It tastes too bad. I'll wait until tomorrow and drink water when we get home."

"Nonsense!" said Aunt Pearl. "You can't wait that long to drink water." She marched into the bathroom. "Here," she said, "I'll show you what we'll do." She took the cup of water and lifted it to her lips. Holding her nose, she drained the cup. "There!" she said. "I didn't taste a thing!"

"You didn't taste anything?" I asked Aunt Pearl in amazement. She shook her head. "Not a thing," she said. "Didn't you know that holding your nose keeps you from tasting?"

I had never heard of such a thing, but I was willing to try it. I poured another cup of water and held my nose tightly as I took the first sip. Sure enough, the water had no taste!

This is a valuable trick! I said to myself. *I can use it every time I have to eat something I don't like!*

We soon settled in for a good night's sleep, and in the morning, after the snowplows had done their work, we were on our way again. By that afternoon, we were finally home.

But even after the trip had become a distant memory, I still thought about the trick I had learned from Aunt Pearl. Occasionally I used it when I had to eat or drink something distasteful.

Holding your nose is one way to avoid a bad taste or smell. Hiding your eyes is one way to avoid seeing something unpleasant. But there is One who sees and knows all things. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

January 2018

God is not happy with many of the things He sees as He looks down upon this earth. He is not happy when He sees people hurting each other. He is not happy when He hears people using foul language. He is not happy when He sees people behaving selfishly. But He does not hide His eyes. He beholds both the evil and the good, and He keeps a record of every word and action.

It is important for us to be sure that God sees only righteous deeds and hears only good words from us.

Activity

There is another verse in the Bible that tells us about the eyes of the Lord. See if you can fill in the blanks with the missing words in this verse.

"The eyes of the Lord are upon the _____, and his _____ are open unto their _____."

Answer to Last Month's Activity

We read in the Bible of a young man who made the right choice, even though it was difficult. Were you able to guess his name after reading this verse in Hebrews 11? *Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*

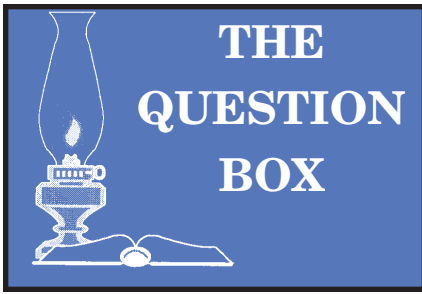
Answer: His name was Moses. †

THE CHURCH OF GOD STANDS FOR

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| An eternal God | Psalm 90:2 |
| A divine Christ | John 1:1, 14 |
| An infallibly inspired Bible | II Timothy 3:16 |
| Salvation from sin | Matthew 1:21 |
| The new birth | John 3:1-7 |
| Entire Sanctification | Ephesians 5:25, 26 |
| A holy life | Titus 2:11, 12 |
| | Hebrews 12:10-14 |
| Unity of God's people | John 17:21 |
| | I Corinthians 12:13 |
| Divine Healing | James 5:14, 15 |
| The ordinances | Matthew 28:19, 20 |
| Eternal life | Matthew 25:46 |
| | John 3:15; 6:54; 10:28 |
| Eternal punishment | Mark 9:43-46 |
| | Revelation 20:15 |

YOU SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT THE CHURCH OF GOD

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Jesus bought it with His own blood | Acts 20:28 |
| It has a good foundation | Ephesians 2:20 |
| | I Corinthians 3:11 |
| Christ is the Head | Ephesians 1:22; 5:23 |
| | Isaiah 9:6 |
| Christ is the Door | John 10:9 |
| | John 10:1 |
| | Acts 2:47 |
| Only the saved are members | John 15:2-6 |
| | I John 3:8, 9 |
| Membership is offered to all | II Peter 3:9 |
| | Revelation 22:17 |
| Membership is rewarded | John 14:2, 3 |



Answered by the Editor

QUESTION: Luke 13:24 says, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” I know the rich man had his heart set on his riches and that kept him out of the kingdom of God. I know false preachers don’t teach how to properly come to God with godly sorrow and a willingness to forsake a life of sin. Are there any other reasons than those that would keep people who are seeking to enter in from being able?

—K. C., North Carolina

ANSWER: I suppose there are a number of ways that could be listed, but one I would call your attention to is the parable Jesus gave of the two who went to the temple to pray. “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican [sinner]. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:10-14). Many shall miss the narrow way by depending on their self-righteousness.

QUESTION: Also, do you know if there is any specific reason why the way to eternal life is a “narrow way” and the way to hell a “wide way”?

—K. C., North Carolina

ANSWER: The way to heaven is a holy way. Isaiah said that the “unclean” shall not pass over it. It is for the redeemed. We are not to understand that the “narrow way” is speaking of a literal highway, but it is “strait” because it is a holy way. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord [in peace].” The broad way is broad because many are on that way.

QUESTION: Jesus said that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. Are the “gates of hell” all the different false denominations and false religions? If yes, then wouldn’t that make the “gates of hell” and “gog and magog” synonymous?—K. C., North Carolina

ANSWER: I don’t think the “gates of hell” would be limited to just false religions, although it would include them. The devil and all his evil forces are opposed to the church Jesus is building. Yes, we understand that “gog and magog” includes all false religions.

QUESTION: II Corinthians 11:14 says, “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.” How does Satan transform himself into an angel of light?—K. C., North Carolina

ANSWER: Notice verse 13: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.” How do these false apostles change themselves into “the apostles of Christ?” They do not really do so, but they come in “sheep’s clothing” while inwardly they are ravening wolves. Satan cannot really become an angel of light. We understand the word *angel* to mean, at times, “messenger,” but he can appear to people as a true messenger while he comes to deceive. Jesus said, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (1:8). Paul also speaks of some being sent a strong delusion and believing a lie, because they did not receive a love for the truth—See II Thessalonians 2:9-12.

QUESTION: What is the standard of the church concerning weddings?—P. P., Nigeria

ANSWER: Is there any difference between the two? I realize a wedding does not need to be a church service, but if it is a Church of God wedding, the couple should be modest in dress, and the songs sung should be songs of truth. There should be no strong drink used in any way. Even if a member of the wedding party is not a Christian, he or she should meet the standard of modesty.

The Bible teaches that all things are to be done decently and in order, and that would include weddings.

QUESTION: The Bible says that you are our epistle. Can this translate to one’s character building from where the person worships?—O. O., Nigeria

ANSWER: The word *epistle* in the New Testament is used to refer to the various books. Paul speaks of his books as epistles, not as persons. To apply it to a person, he or she would have to be living the Word out in his or her life. It would, of course, include his or her character. Where the person worships would have an affect on his or her life.

QUESTION: If the Sabbath ended with the death of Christ, then are Christians free to live any worldly way they please?—e-mail

ANSWER: Christians are not free to “do any worldly thing” any day of the week! Christians are to live holy every day of the week, not just one.

The Old Testament Sabbath was a rest day given to the nation of Israel who were slaves in Egypt and had to work every day. It was a type of the soul rest the Christian has in Christ. “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”

The first day of the week is called "The Lord's Day" in memory of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). †



Greetings, Precious Young People!

As we begin this new year, it's a good time to look back on all that the Lord has done for us—how He has protected us, given us grace and strength each day, and supplied all of our needs and many of our wants. He has answered prayer.

The Lord has been so good to us all!

Our article this month is an exhortation by Bro. Thomas Harris of our local congregation. He is a fine young man who is endeavoring to live his life pleasing to the Lord. I trust the Lord will bless him for his efforts, and I trust the Lord will use his words to bring encouragement to your soul.

May the Lord bless you, keep you, and prosper you in His work!

With Christian love,
Sis. Crystal Gossard

FINISHING

By Thomas Harris

WHEN I used to run long distances, I learned an interesting lesson. Before beginning a long run, I have a perfect picture of exactly how it should proceed. I discovered that it is easiest, and most tempting, to quit whenever things aren't going exactly as I pictured. During difficult runs, it is sometimes necessary to take a break and walk for awhile. In my perfect picture, I never walk. It is at this point, realizing things aren't going the way I wanted, that I want to quit.



I've realized as Christians, something similar can happen to us. At the beginning of the week, having attended services, I usually am very positive and excited. I look at the coming week and feel as though I can face the world head on with ease. I can picture myself in top spirits, dealing easily with every potential problem.

At the beginning of a run, full of energy and determination, it is simple to picture myself doing well. However, as the miles go by and the muscles begin to cramp, the body lets you know that it needs a bit of a break. Knowing how I want the run to go, this is not an easy realization. In my mind I think that if I'm going to walk, then I might as well quit because I haven't lived up to my expectation.

Similarly, as Christians, we will not always be able to face every trial with ease. Our week may start out

easy, but then things can start to go wrong. We all know we will have trials, but sometimes they can discourage us and be more of an obstacle than we would have thought. Whenever we stumble, we break the expectation we had set for ourselves. It's then that it is easiest to become discouraged in ourselves and just give up the fight.

In my last run, I realized that if I wanted to finish the race, I was going to have to do some walking. In my mind I felt as though it would have been easier to quit than to admit to myself I wasn't able to complete the run perfectly. Despite myself, I kept going. I kept on going even though I had to walk. I kept going even though it wasn't the perfect race in my mind. The feeling of finishing was far superior to the feeling I would have gotten had I simply quit.

This lesson pertains to every aspect of our lives. Always keep going even if it isn't the perfect picture you wanted: never just give up. Spiritually, when we see that we are not able to face every trial with ease, we must not quit. The Christian life is not a testament to a life of ease. We will face trials that will bring us to our knees. If we could effortlessly and flawlessly overcome every trial, how could we ever grow? It doesn't matter that we stumble: it matters that we keep going. I want to encourage everyone to stay in the Christian race. Even if you must walk, don't give up. The reward for the Christian is given at the end—but you must finish. †

VIEW OUR WORSHIP SERVICES LIVE!

As many of our readers know, we can be found on the internet at www.wayoftruth.org where in addition to reading past issues and other information, you can view our general services every Sunday LIVE at 10:40 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. E.S.T. Enjoy Spirit-filled singing and preaching. Also, our mid-week service at 7:00 P.M. Wednesdays is aired live. There is a chatroom where you can interact with us and share your prayer requests. Tune in and worship with us!

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OFFERINGS GRATEFULLY RECEIVED

Although there is no subscription price for this magazine, our readers must realize that there is substantial expense involved with producing and mailing our literature. Postage alone requires tens of thousands of dollars each year. We would encourage our readership to help bear the load by sharing with this ministry. Your tax-deductible offerings are greatly appreciated. And please remember this ministry in your prayers!

THE POETRY PAGE

TAKE MY HAND, O BLESSED MASTER

Connie Calenberg

Take my hand, yea, in the valley,
Through the shadow, lead me, Lord,
Through the vale and through the darkness,
Let Thy blessing be outpoured!
O'er life's journey, through its trial,
Take my hand, O Lord, I pray,
Lead me gently, lead me sweetly to Thy home;
Lead me all the way!

ONLY TRUST HIM

Lucena C. Byrum

Fear not, only trust Him,
How precious to know
His angels are guarding
Your steps as you go.
Ere long you shall see Him,
The Savior of men.
You'll soon cross the threshold
To be there with Him.

MY PRAYER

Peggy Dennis

Help me, Lord, Thy will to do,
That I might to others be true;
Help me be in word and deed
Just the one whom sinners need.

Help me other souls to win
From the depths of awful sin,
Help me find the sheep that's lost,
Bring it back at any cost.

Help me lift a burden today,
Drive the cares of life away,
Help me follow in Thy steps
That someone's soul may be truly blest.

Help me be a friend in need,
Help me go where Thou dost lead;
Help me bear the cross Thou bore
Till I reach the yonder shore.

I'M TRUSTING IN THEE

Donnave Gardner

The storms of life are sweeping o'er my soul,
Beating me constantly;
But, like a bird within its nest secure,
I'm resting so sweetly in Thee.

Yes, there had never been a test so great,
Since I have trusted Thee,
But that Thy loving, tender, watchful care
Has kept me unfettered and free.

Tomorrow's sun may bring its weight of woe,
I will not anxious be;
For, if I trust in God, who loves me so,
He'll make all a blessing to me.

I rest content, for He has mighty pow'r,
I will not fearful be;
For He, who brought me safely to this hour,
Will never forget to keep me.

THE PATHWAY

Albert Emerson Brown

We cannot see
Beyond the nearest hills
Of life, and so we doubt.
If we could see,
As God, beyond the hills,
We'd find Faith's pathway out.



THROUGH PEACE TO LIGHT

Adelaide A. Procter

I do not ask, O Lord,
That life may be a pleasant road;
I do not ask that Thou wouldst take
From me aught of its load.
I do not ask my cross to understand,
My way to see;
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand,
And follow Thee.
Joy is like the restless day,
But peace divine like quiet night;
Lead me, O Lord,
Till perfect day shall shine
Through peace to light. †

MAY GOD'S BLESSINGS BE UPON THE NEW YEAR!

WE CHOOSE OUR DESTINY

By the late H. M. Riggle



MAN IS NOT a mere machine, the creature of uncertain destiny. He has a will and can choose the right or wrong. When responsible years come upon us, we choose the road we travel, either the broad way of sin or the narrow way of righteousness. I am what I am today, not by a sovereign eternal decree independent of my own will, but by a personal choice of my own. Through Jesus Christ, God made such a choice possible, and I selected the way of life. If I am faithful until death I shall receive a crown of life. It is up to me to make good. If through unfaithfulness I forfeit my crown, who but myself is responsible?

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Whatsoever else this meant to Israel, it shows that they were responsible. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). "I have *chosen* the way of truth" (Psalm 119:30). "Refuse the evil, and *choose* the good" (Isaiah 7:15). "Mary hath *chosen* that good part" (Luke 10:42). Life, then, is the result of a choice, and we ourselves make it.

But suppose people reject the good and choose the evil. Will not certain punishment fall upon them? Here is the Bible answer: "Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did *choose* that wherein I delighted not" (Isaiah 65:12). They brought judgment upon their own heads. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not *choose* the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (Proverbs 1:22-31). Comment could not make stronger the fact expressed in this scripture that we choose our destiny, and when unmitigated wrath and judgment fall in awful severity we are simply eating

the fruits of OUR OWN WAY. It is our selection, the result of our own devices.

"Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to *his own place*" (Acts 1:25). *First*—Every person has his own place here and hereafter. There is a place that God intends us all to fill, and there is room for all, room and place in the covenant of promise, in the great plan of salvation, in the provisions of divine grace, in the kingdom of heaven, in the church of God, in the great harvest-field of work and endeavor, and at Lord's rich table. We differ in talents and opportunities yet all can find a place of usefulness and efficiency. There is a place of responsibility in every home, community, and in the world at large. No one can fill *our* place, so we should be satisfied and faithfully fill it. But many, like Judas Iscariot, forfeit their place, and deliberately choose another.

Second—Every person really makes his own place here and hereafter. Ours is a self-made destiny. Men, by hard work, self-sacrificing, and sterling character have created for themselves a place in government, in inventive and commercial fields, and in the religious realm. It is in the power of every one of us to make a place for himself among the noble and pure, or among the low, vile, and wicked—to be a real success, or a miserable failure. And just as truly we are making our own destiny in heaven or hell.

Third—Every person finds his place here and hereafter. You will notice some rushing to the race-course, the card-table, the gambling-dens, the red-light district, the loafers' corner, the dance, and the theater. They are simply finding their place. Others go to the place of honest business, the library, the study-room, the family circle, and the church. Question—Where may those who know you best most reasonably expect to find you? The answer is an index to your character. The place does not make the man; he just finds his proper place, that is all, the place best suited to him.

Some people's place in the local, visible church seems to be that of grumblers, pickers, fault-finders, and retarders of spiritual progress. Such individuals easily and quickly find their company—folks just like them. And the deeply spiritual, devoted, and hard workers among the Lord's people naturally flow together. Judas felt more at home with a band of murderers that night than with Jesus and his true disciples. "He went out quickly, and it was dark." This will be true hereafter. Judas committed suicide and died in disgrace, "that he might go to *his own place*," a place best suited and fitted for one who betrayed and sold his Christ. At death he found "his place." "He which is filthy [here], let him be filthy STILL [in the eternal world]" (Revelation 22:11). Righteous Noah and the wicked antediluvians could not go to the same place. Neither Lot and the Sodomites, King Saul and David, Judas Iscariot and the beloved disciple John, Herod and James, nor Nero and Paul. It is the law of spiritual gravitation.

Fourth—Every person will feel that it is his place when he gets there. This is true now. A gambler or sensualist feels at home in the company of like characters, and such people certainly feel out of place in a red-hot, Holy Ghost religious service. And a devout saint of God feels at home in a spiritual meeting and

enjoys spiritual work. Such a one feels clear out of place in a modern dance hall or red-light district. In such a place and with such company he is like a bird in the water or a fish in the tree-top, clear out of his element, away from his true environment. Thus we all *make* our place, *find* our place, and feel at home when we get there. †

—Reprinted from the book, *Beyond the Tomb*, (printed 1929)

ONE WAY

By the late M. H. Craig

THE LORD said through the prophet Jeremiah, “I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them” (Jeremiah 32:39). The prophet was speaking directly of the plan and way of salvation, because he spoke of the time when God would give man a new heart. God said through the prophet Ezekiel, “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh” (11:19). “I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 36:27).

As we look out over the world today and see the many ways and religions of the world, we would be tempted to believe that God had failed to fulfill the predictions of the prophets, that He would give the one heart and one way, as He had promised He would do, but when we turn to the New Testament, we see that the prophecies were fulfilled. Christ Himself declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Peter said, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). So Christ is the way; not one of the ways, but THE way, the only way man can be saved. So God fulfilled His promise to give them one way.

Turning to the experience of the apostles and the early Christians of the morning time of the gospel age, we find they received the heart experience that the prophets prophesied of. We read in Acts 4:32, “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.” As they were assembled together in the upper room praying in one accord, God poured out the Holy Ghost upon them, fulfilling the prediction of the prophets, “I will give them one heart, and one way, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them.” These prophecies were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

God has done His part. In the very beginning of the gospel day, the things God had spoken through the

prophets came to pass. God said He would do these things for the good of them and their children. Peter said when he preached that great sermon on the day of Pentecost, “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. 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” (Acts 2:38, 39). Christ also said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19, 20). From the reading of the scripture, we must conclude God’s plan was to continue to the end of the world.

The same experience the apostles and early church received was to be the experience of all those who believed afterward on Christ. We hear Christ praying in the 17th chapter of John, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth: As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” (17:17-20).

From the condition that exists in the world, we must conclude there is something wrong. The fact is that man has departed from God’s plan. Christian leaders have failed to perpetuate the religion of the apostles and of the early church. Professed Christian leaders have subsumed many other things, which have failed to keep the experience of God alive in the heart. Church joining, signing a card, water baptism, and many other things that do not affect the soul. Bring back the old time mourner’s bench where sinners weep and pray through to God, and get a real heart experience of Bible salvation, and praise the Lord for freedom from sin. Repent and believe the gospel was the message of John the baptizer, and of Christ and the early church. Men need to repent, which includes a forsaking of sin, and a straightening up of their crooked lives. Paying honest debts, giving again that which he has robbed, if there be anything.

Then consecrate their all to God, just as the apostles and early Christians did. Paul said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2). If people will obey God’s Word, they can have a Bible experience, be saved from sin, filled with the Spirit of God, and have power over all the powers of the enemy. They can have joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It will pay well to obey God, for after all, this is the only kind of an experience that is worthwhile. Men may profess without obeying God, but it is worthless to do so. At the judgment, they will find they have missed the one essential thing. This is a real heart experience of Bible salvation. †

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Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

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Presently, the copies we have available are from the years 2001 through 2016.



North Cascades National Park, Washington

Photo by G. Tyler