

The Way of Truth

Vol. 77

“Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

No. 12

All nature proclaims...

"He Is the Wonderful"

See page 4

December
2019



THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY REMAIN THE SAME

“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.”—Psalm 102:25-28.



AS 2019 comes to a close, I want to reflect on time and change. The scriptures above speak of things changing but God remaining the same through the years. How quickly this past year has run its course! It was a blur. How true is James 4:14, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Now we are looking at the year 2020 squarely in the face.

While time has brought many changes through the centuries, there has been one constant—the Lord God and His truth ever abides the same! Things change but God does not. Hebrews 13:8 declares, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Let us consider just a few historic events that have impacted humanity.

Icelandic explorer Leif Ericson is believed to have been one of the first Europeans to set foot on North America. Ericson may have reached the North Atlantic coast, naming it Vinland, around 1000.

During and after the 10th century a deadly new weapon found its way into the European arsenal. The crossbow was capable of flinging a missile about 1000 feet and piercing chain mail. It remained in use well into the 15th century, when it was displaced by firearms.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus “discovered” America. However, American Indians already inhabited the land, and Norsemen had visited the shores of present-day Canada almost 500 years before Columbus reached the Caribbean islands. Spanish support made possible his initial voyage and three others. But when Columbus failed to bring back the treasures of the Orient, he lost favor at the Spanish court.

German theologian Martin Luther wrote 95 theses in 1517 criticizing the contemporary Catholic church and nailed them to the church door in Wittenberg. His life was transformed by his reading of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 1:17: “The just shall live by faith.”

In 1607, the English established their first colony in America, at Jamestown, Virginia. Both names indicate the colony’s English roots. Virginia had been named a few years before in honor of Queen Elizabeth, the “Virgin Queen.” Jamestown was named for the current ruler, King James. The colony was small in comparison

to Spanish communities to the south in Latin America.

In 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of separation. Thomas Jefferson took the lead in writing the Declaration of Independence. It proclaimed America’s new status as an independent nation and laid forth the fundamental political values of the new nation: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness ...”

In 1804 two American explorers, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, were commissioned to explore the territory west of the Mississippi River acquired by the United States from France in the Louisiana Purchase.

The Napoleonic Wars came to an end at the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815. Fought near present-day Brussels, Belgium, the battle was one of the most important in history.

In 1830, the world’s first important railroad opened between Liverpool and Manchester in England. The first American-built train was operated by the South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company which also began operations in 1830.

In 1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published the Communist Manifesto.

In 1859 Charles Darwin published a book commonly known as *The Origin of Species*, which set forth the theory of evolution.

During the bloody American civil war, President Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the Gettysburg National Cemetery in Pennsylvania.

On November 20, 1877, Thomas Edison shouted “Mary had a little lamb” into a machine he had built in Menlo Park, New Jersey, then played the sound back. It was the first time anyone had ever recorded and reproduced a sound.

The prototype for the first practical, gasoline-powered automobile was a three-wheeled German vehicle built in 1885 in a factory owned by Karl Benz. Benz went on to manufacture automobiles.

During the late nineteenth century Daniel Sidney Warner separated himself from the creeds of men and proclaimed the truth of the Church of God. The same truths upon which the early morning church had built upon were made known in the evening light.

Before 1903 people had flown in hot air balloons and in motorless gliders, but until that year no one had ever flown in a power-driven, heavier-than-air machine, or what came to be known as an airplane. Two brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright, invented and tested the first practical airplane on December 17, 1903.

World War I began July 28, 1914.

ABOUT THE COVER

In the midst of an unbelieving world, all nature proclaims that there is an eternal God and that this God of the universe is a wonderful Lord. The Scriptures also declare the existence of the same Creator and His Son Jesus who gave His life a ransom for every soul. Do you know Him today?

THE WAY OF TRUTH

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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.

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—Gregory E. Tyler, Editor

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it possible for human beings to be delivered from sin and have fellowship with their Creator. No matter what happened throughout history, this remained in place.

What about the future? Things of the world will change. Technology will continue to usher in changes. But, for as long as there is life on earth, God will be the same. The promises of God will be the same. God's power will be the same. His love and grace will be the same. Christ will continue to build His church. God will continue to call but few will answer. God will continue to require man's supreme love and devotion. God will continue to require obedience. God will continue to require man's will to be submitted to His own. God will never force people to serve Him. God's mercy will continue to rewrite lives. Every prodigal son and daughter will receive a call from God to return home.

These things will never change! Time continues to march on towards eternity. And while events bring about change in the world in which we live, God ever remains constant and faithful!

Hebrews 13:8 declares, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." You can count on it!

So, the more things change in the world around us, the more they stay the same with God. There is comfort in that thought as we wave good-bye to 2019. †

In the 1930's, the great depression gripped the world.

On December 7, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor plunging the world into World War II.

In 1945 the B-29 bomber Enola Gay dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

In 1969 human beings landed on the moon for the first time. The United States launched Apollo 11 toward the moon on July 16. On July 20, astronauts Neil A. Armstrong and Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., walked on the moon's surface. As Armstrong took his first step, he radioed a message to the world: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Computers came into common usage in government and industry during the 1960's, but for many years they were not available to most consumers. The 1980's brought small, powerful, and inexpensive computers to American households. Now, in the 21st century, cell phones are commonplace for instant communication.

On September 11, 2001 came the destruction of the twin towers, after which the world seemed less safe.

All during the course of history there were changes. Political powers changed. Religious powers changed. Inventions and discoveries changed humanity for good and bad.

But certain things remained constant. Through all the swift changes wrought by history, the constant was the existence of almighty God, His Son Jesus Christ, and God's holy Word. The ebbs and flows of history did not affect the faithfulness of God at all. While all the world was changing drastically, the truth of the gospel remained intact. Christ's death and resurrection made

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THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



LOUD AND CLEAR

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

I sat in the church pew with my family, the music of the old, familiar Christmas carol surrounding us.

*"Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"*

It was the time of year when we turned to the front of our hymnals and sang songs about Jesus' birth. I always looked forward to the melodies that were heard only at this season.

*Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"*

A little boy sitting three pews ahead of us turned and stared back in our direction. I frowned, because I knew exactly why he was staring. It was my mother's fault. I looked sideways at her, wishing she would not sing so loudly.

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

My mother hit the high E with abandon, her face shining with rapture the way it always did when she sang. I slouched in my seat, trying not to notice that another child had now turned and was looking back at us.

Why can't my mother sing like other people do? I wondered glumly to myself. Why does she have to sing so loudly? It's embarrassing!

My mother loved to sing. She sang as she did the dishes. She sang as she ironed clothes. She sang as she worked in the garden. She sang to her babies as she rocked them to sleep. That was the only time she ever sang softly. The rest of the time, she sang at the top of her voice.

My sisters felt the same way about it that I did. "Why does Mom have to sing so loudly in church?" we sometimes whispered to each other. "Don't you wish she would stop it?"

The years passed. Although we never said anything to her about it, our mother most likely realized that her enthusiastic singing annoyed us, because it showed in our faces. She didn't let that stop her. The only thing that could quiet my mother was a head cold. Once, after I was a grown woman, and no longer annoyed by her loud singing, my mother said to me, "I hate having a cold! It's so hard to sit in church and not be able to sing!"

Today I am ashamed of the way I allowed myself to be embarrassed by my mother's loud singing. It was

her way of glorifying God. She sang loud and clear, and with all of her heart. Her singing was pleasing in the eyes of the Lord; my inward grumbling was not.

This month's wise saying comes from Proverbs 23:22, which says, "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." We should never despise our parents, whether or not they are old. The word *despise* means to "look down" upon. Our parents are to be looked up to as our role models, especially if they are Christian parents who are living godly examples before us.

It was my mother who taught me about Jesus' coming to earth as a little baby. She was the one who assembled a manger scene on a little table by the window in our house each Christmas season and explained how Jesus' birth brought the promise of heaven to all mankind. Her teaching was loud and clear, just like her singing voice, and I will always be grateful for it.

Activity

Fill in the missing words for each scripture that tells us to honor our parents.

1. "Children, obey your parents in all _____: for this is well _____ unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:20).

2. "_____ thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be _____ upon the _____ which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

3. "Children, obey your _____ in the Lord: for this is _____" (Ephesians 6:1).

4. "My son, hear the _____ of thy father, and forsake not the _____ of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8).

Answer to Last Month's Activity

I Thessalonians 4:11, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you." †

THE HIGH COST OF POSTAGE RATES

We seldom say anything about the cost of publishing this magazine. But postage rates continue to climb. Especially expensive are international rates. We have a vision to increase our readership, not cut back. It is important to hear from international readers once each year to remain on our mailing list.

Though there is no subscription price to our magazine, we would like our readers to know that your offerings to help defray expenses are gratefully received!

THE POETRY PAGE

**"For unto us a child is
born"**



WONDERFUL JESUS

F. W. Davis

Wonderful Jesus, our Savior at birth!
Wonderful indeed our Maker on earth!
So wonderful too were the words of the Lord;
Worthy His Name to be ever adored!
Wonderful teacher, wonderful in prayer;
Healing the sick and diseased everywhere!
Wonderful in love and forgiveness of sin,
Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of men.

Wonderful in death, our Christ on the cross,
Giving His life for a world that was lost!
Wonderful in victory over death and the grave
In glorious power lost sinners to save!
Wonderful Jesus, High Priest in the sky,
Soon to return from His glory on high;
Our final redemption to us He will bring
Wonderful Jesus, Redeemer and King!

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

Ruth Williams

When the vespers chime in the evening time
With a sweetly soft refrain,
When the sun is low, from the long ago
Comes the angel song again.
When the stars peep through and the sky is blue,
With a tinge of golden light—
Then a glowing star flings its beams afar
Just to guide our steps aright.
With a song of cheer while I journey here,
With a faith Time cannot dim,
I will lift my eyes to the evening skies
And the star of Bethlehem.

LOVE CAME DOWN

Amy C. Ellis

Though at birth the Savior lay
In a lowly bed of hay,
Starlight streaming from above
Circled Him with bonds of Love.

Humble shepherds in the night
Heard the angels, saw the Light;
So they left their fields to go
To the Blessed Child below.

Mary's arms were round Him there;
Joseph, too, showed tender care.
Love came down to Earth that night
Bringing Joy and Peace and Light.

WHAT CAN WE GIVE

A. H. Smith

What can we give, in return for His gift?
Naught but ourselves would do.
He gave His all that we might live,
Does He ask too much of you?
Let us give as He has given,
His all for us alone.
There are those who need the gift of self
To light the way back home.

GIFTS TO JESUS

Michael Dubina

If you would give a gift to Jesus—
Give it to the poor of earth;
If you would serve His love and missions—
Serve by deeds of Christian worth;
If you would give Him gifts of comfort—
Comfort others, with His grace;
If you would dry His tears of sorrow—
Dry them on another's face.

Every act of love and kindness
You bestow on one, in need,
Is a precious gift to Jesus
And a service, in His creed.
Give of heart and hand and spirit
Every gift you can afford
For—in giving unto others—
You are giving to the Lord. †

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and
his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The
mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of
Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace
there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and
upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it
with judgment and with justice from henceforth
even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will per-
form this."—Isaiah 9:6, 7.*

HE IS THE WONDERFUL

By the late Bro. Hoyt Matthews

*Isn't He wonderful, Isn't He wonderful,
Isn't Jesus, my Lord, wonderful!
Eyes have seen, ears have heard,
'Tis recorded in God's Word,
Isn't Jesus, my Lord, wonderful!*

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6, 7). This is speaking of Jesus Christ, for there is no other of which this could be spoken.

Dear Reader, do we know Him? Are we closely acquainted with Him? Is He our Wonderful, our Counsellor, our mighty God, our everlasting Father, our Prince of Peace? If we know Him, if we are closely acquainted with Him, He will be all these things to us. If He is all these things to us, is He not the wonderful?

If the government is upon His shoulder, He would necessarily be a governor; if a governor, He must be seated upon a throne (a place of power and authority) from which He reigns. He is a benevolent sovereign; meaning that He is superior to all others, and His reign is characterized by goodness and kindness. The reign of Jesus Christ is unique, for it is said of Him, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11). “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book [plan of redemption], and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9, 10). This means that we shall reign over sin as long as we dwell on the earth. Following this, we shall reign in glory forever and forever.

Since the Lord is unique in all these things, let us open the Scriptures, beginning with Matthew 1:21, and learn of many of His wonderful acts to the family of man: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” This is the greatest wonder of them all. What could be more wonderful than being “delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”? (Colossians 1:13). What could be more wonderful than “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old

things are passed away; behold all things are become new”? (II Corinthians 5:17).

But what about the wonders that were performed to make possible the wonder of them all? “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” (Isaiah 53:5).

*Jesus paid it all,
All to him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain:
He washed it white as snow.*

John 3:16, 17, “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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

Hebrews 2:9, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

As Jesus approached the cross, He prayed in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, and saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). As Jesus trod the path toward Golgotha carrying His cross, could He not have called ten thousand angels to set Him free? “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Just as sin entered the world because of the disobedience in the Garden of Eden, even so, did sickness and disease pass upon all men because of the same disobedience; and just as Jesus came into the world to save His people from their sins, even so He came into the world to minister healing to the sick and suffering. I Peter 2:24, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” Matthew 14:14, “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”

Let us look to the Scriptures now and let our minds be refreshed by all Jesus' acts and deeds of love and kindness that He ministered to the people among whom He walked. “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up” (Matthew 4:16). This is where His earthly ministry of love and kindness began. His first message that He preached was a message which echoes down through the ages of time: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Soon He would call His twelve apostles, which at the close of their three and one half years of training, they would be commissioned to “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Their textbook began with the Sermon on the Mount, accompanied by on-the-job training.

Matthew 8:1-3, “When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus [the Wonderful] put forth his hand, and touched him, saying,

I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

There was brought to Jesus a sinner who was sick of the palsy. Jesus, looking deep into his heart, saw a broken and contrite spirit, and said unto him, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” After some difficulty with unbelievers, Jesus said to the sick of the palsy, “Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house” (Matthew 9:6).

The wonderful love of Jesus is reflected in the parable of the shepherd who had one hundred sheep. Ninety and nine sheep were safe in the fold, but one had gone astray and was lost in the wilderness. The shepherd (Jesus) left the ninety and nine in the safety of the fold and went in search of the one that had gone astray. When He had found him, He gathered him up in his arms and placed him on His shoulders, carried him to the fold and restored him to the ninety and nine that had not gone astray.

Dear Reader, you were the one, I was the one who had gone astray. The good Shepherd left the flock, as it were, and came in search of you, in search of me. He did not leave us there in the wilderness of sin to perish, but lovingly took us up in His arms of love and protection and carried us gently back to the fold.

As Jesus lay in the hinder part of the boat sleeping, His disciples became alarmed as the storm raged threatening their safety. They awoke Jesus, and said, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” As Jesus arose, He spoke to the angry sea, saying, “Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:38, 39). He gently scolded His disciples for their lack of faith. When we are passing through the storms of life, let us remember that with Jesus in the boat, we are always safe.

It was now three days since Jesus had gone up into a mountain near the sea of Galilee and sat down there. A great multitude had come unto him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the dumb, even those that were maimed, and Jesus healed them. This being the third day without food, Jesus called His disciples unto Him and this is what He said: “I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.” The disciples told Jesus that they had only seven loaves and a few small fishes. Jesus had the multitude, which was four thousand men, beside women and children, to be seated, and He multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed the multitude, with seven baskets full remaining. Jesus did not only supply the natural man with food for the body on the third day, but He supplied the inner man with the food that nourished the soul.

Does Jesus not feed His people today? “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Lazarus had been in the tomb four days before Jesus arrived at the gravesite. Nevertheless, Jesus commanded, “Take ye away the stone.” Martha, sister to Lazarus, remonstrated by saying, “Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days”; but death

was no sound barrier to the voice of Jesus. When Jesus commanded, “Lazarus, come forth,” Lazarus who “was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes.” He did not come out of the tomb by the strength of his own legs and feet, for he was bound by grave-clothes. Jesus said, “Loose him, and let him go.”

In our day, the unbelievers spew out their father’s (Satan’s) lies that all these works of love bestowed on mankind by “the Wonderful” ceased as the lifespan of Jesus’ twelve apostles expired. Can we not believe the Word of God? “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are still being bestowed in our lifetime, and these include the gift of miracles and the gifts of healing. These gifts are an expression of the works of the “Wonderful” in this present generation. Every soul that has been raised from the dead state of sin to life in Christ is truly a miracle wrought by the hand of “The Wonderful.” †

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

Radio Message by Bro. Greg Tyler
(aired 12/18/94)

I WOULD like to speak to you from the book of Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 6 and 7: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

At this time of year, more than any other time of year, we hear about the coming of the Christ-child. I appreciate the fact that our society has not become so degenerate that there is no mention of Jesus Christ. We don’t know what the future holds, but if things continue in the direction that they are going, doubtless, the time will come when the name of Christ will not be able to be spoken in public by public officials. The authorities have removed the Bible from our public schools, and now there’s much controversy about manager scenes in front of the courthouse, etc. It grieves me deeply, because the reality of Jesus Christ coming into the world is the single most important thing that men should know; not only just the coming of Christ, but what He did and what He means to you and me.

It was foretold in prophecy that a Savior would be born. When Adam and Eve transgressed and were cast out of the Garden of Eden, God gave them a promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. God fulfilled His promise generations later when He sent a host of angels to the hillside of Judea with the message “peace on earth, good will to all men.” A Savior was born, One who was wrapped in swaddling clothes, One who was born of a humble birth, and the shepherds went from the hillside into the city and found

the Savior. "... unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ..." This Child, the Son of God, had a mission; and He fulfilled His mission, My Friends. He did the Father's bidding.

The government of His church is upon His shoulder, and His name is called "Wonderful." Truly, *Jesus* is a wonderful name. "Counsellor"—He is the greatest of all counselors; "Everlasting Father"—He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is God incarnate, in the flesh; "The mighty God" He is, and "The Prince of Peace."

What I would like to focus on in the remaining few moments of our broadcast is the thought of "The Prince of Peace." Jesus said in St. John 14:1, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." John 16:33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The world has its type of peace, which is a temporary, fleeting type of peace. Jesus doesn't give us that type of peace. His peace is deep; His peace is rich; His peace is pure. He is the Prince of Peace.

Part of a verse of "O Holy Night" says, "Truly He taught us to love one another." Let those words sink into your heart. "Truly He taught us to love one another"; not just in the month of December, but all year long. One thing that disappoints me so is, there seems to be an atmosphere of good will at this time of year. There's an effort on the part of some to feed the poor, to help those less fortunate than themselves. There are tokens and gifts of appreciation and tokens of affection, but it seems like once this season is over with, then the world changes direction and it becomes dog-eat-dog again. Shame, shame, shame on humanity! This is not why Jesus Christ came into the world. He taught us to love one another. He taught us to be kind one to another. He taught us to feed the poor and to do good unto others, all year long. I believe a true Christian will endeavor to have a Christian spirit all year long; not temporarily, and not just a face, or a presentation of a heart of love, but bearing the real fruits of love as given from the Prince of Peace.

Someone who knows the Prince of Peace has peace with God, with his fellow man, and peace with himself. Why are there so many riots? Why is there so much bloodshed? Why is there so much turmoil in the world? It is because people do not allow the Prince of Peace to come into their lives and rule and reign therein.

May I challenge you to let the Prince of Peace come into your heart? Don't worship a manger scene and a plastic child, as it were, but worship Jesus Christ who is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and the Prince of Peace. He wants to have His way in your life, and He will if you'll let Him. Won't you let Him come in? Won't you open your heart at this season of the year? Won't you consider the place that you are giving Christ in your life? He wants to love you, He wants to bestow His love upon you, and through you, 365 days a year.

We trust that God will bless you with His richest blessings, both today, and always. †

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Philippians 4:7.

WINNING A CROWN

By the late C. W. Naylor



Part XVI

Sin

Sin Under the Old Testament

UNDER the Old Testament there was an absolute standard of sin. All violation of the law, no matter of what nature nor under what circumstances, was imputed as sin, except in some specific instances. Sometimes a person had to violate one law in order to keep from violating another, as, for instance, when a priest did servile work on the Sabbath in offering the sacrifices commanded.

In such and similar cases the person was not counted guilty. Ordinarily, however, all breaking of the law, no matter of what nature, was considered sin. Whether it was done wilfully or ignorantly, purposely or accidentally, it brought guilt upon the individual. "Every transgression ... received a just recompense of reward" (Hebrews 2:2), says Paul. Not only was this true of those wilful transgressions which were so common among the Israelites and which drew down the vengeance of God upon them so frequently, but it was also true of the sins of ignorance and their "unwitting" sins. Of these sins of ignorance we read: "And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth somewhat against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done, and be guilty; or if his sin, which he has sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering ... for the sin which he hath sinned" (Leviticus 4:27, 28). In Numbers 15:27, 28, we read: "If any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin-offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him." Practically the same thing is said of the whole congregation of Israel in Leviticus 4:13-15 and Numbers 15:22-26. Nor were the priest and the ruler forgotten. Provision was made for their cleansing from the sins of ignorance (see Leviticus 4:3, 22, 23).

Thus, we observe that there was no excuse made for sin, but that a man became guilty of sin if he violated any of the precepts of the law. That law did not take into consideration any of the circumstances attending the act. It judged the act as an act, and the man was either condemned or approved because of the act. If he kept the law, he lived by keeping it; if he broke it, the penalty must be reaped.

Two Classes of Sin

Considered from the standpoint of the nature, there were two classes of sin under the old covenant. One class were those sins which involved a breaking of the moral law, or which in their nature involved the violation of moral principles. These were such as adultery,

murder, lying, theft, and the like. They were such things as in their nature are wrong regardless of whether there is a law given that forbids them. The other class of sins were ceremonial sins, such as breaking the law of the Sabbath, eating unclean meat, the neglect of any of the ceremonies commanded, and, in fact, any violation of the ceremonial law. The Israelites might neglect some of the holy days or the ceremonies of purification, or omit some of the feasts, but no matter what they did or omitted to do that broke the ceremonial law, the violation was a ceremonial sin and they had to make atonement for it the same as for those moral evils which they might do. This twofold classification of sin as relates to its nature we must keep in mind if we are to understand the Old Testament, or if we are to compare its teaching with that of the New Testament and see the two in their true relation.

Two Types of Guilt

Under the Mosaic law there was one class of sin of which the individual became immediately guilty, and another of which he did not become guilty until he learned of the sin. Of the first class we have an account in Leviticus 6:1-7. These were such sins as the transgressor knew to be sins when he committed the acts. He sinned against knowledge and therefore became immediately guilty. The other class were those sins done ignorantly and unwittingly. Of these we read in Leviticus 5:3-6, 10, 13, 17-19. I quote verses 17-19: "And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. ... And the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist it not, and it shall be forgiven him. It is a trespass-offering; he hath certainly trespassed against the Lord" Of this class of sins it is said, "When he knoweth of it, then shall he be guilty" (verse 3). The same is repeated in verse 4.

These two types of guilt, immediate and deferred, we must keep in mind if we are to understand the difference between sin in the Old Testament and sin in the New, for the New Testament regards no such classification. The standards of sin being different, we should naturally expect the language concerning sin to be different in the two Testaments; so unless we observe this difference of standards, we cannot make the proper distinction between the teachings of the two books, nor have a clear understanding of the subject of sin.

Three Classes of Sin

As relates to guilt, there were three classes of sin under the Old Testament. The first class consisted of presumptuous or high-handed sins. These were the grosser sins, as murder, blasphemy, adultery, and others of like nature. For these there was no forgiveness. He who sinned presumptuously, or despised God's commandment and sinned "with a high hand," had to meet the death penalty. The only question was his guilt; if that was once established, the penalty must be inflicted. The next class were sins wilful in their nature, though less serious than the former. They were such as lying, stealing, swearing, cheating, and sins of a like nature. They were forgivable. There were certain penalties

attached, but not the death penalty. They were forgiven if proper atonement was made. The third class was ignorant or unwitting sins, and these also were forgivable. The acts were sins and brought guilt whether the will was involved or not, yes, even if they were accidental or unavoidable. (It might be noted here that accidental defilement when not known became sin when known, probably because the person had omitted the prescribed cleansing when cleansing was required and had perhaps done things when so defiled that were forbidden to the unclean. Such uncleanness was not ordinarily sinful. See Leviticus 11:24, 25, 31, 39, 40.) This classification of sins is not extended into the New Testament.

Imperfect Standard of Sin in Old Testament

In speaking of the old covenant, Paul said that it was weak and faulty, and that it was because of this that God took it out of the way and gave us a better one. Because of its weak and faulty nature, it was not fitted to be a permanent standard. It was not based on exact standards of justice and could not be under the circumstances. The Israelites had not yet developed to a state of spiritual or moral understanding that would render it possible to reveal to them such a law as the New Testament. It was necessary first to develop in them a sense of holiness and purity. This they possessed in some degree, but in a very low degree. A perfect standard, therefore, would have been too high for their attainment, and would have defeated its own end. For this reason, it was necessary for God to give them a less perfect standard, that he might develop them and bring them to the point to receive this higher standard which he had for all the race.

To develop in them this sense of holiness and purity, he hedged them around with all sorts of restrictions, things which seem to us entirely unnecessary and which would be unnecessary to people as highly developed in knowledge as we are. The division of meats into clean and unclean was a great step in this direction. The ceremonial defilement produced by touching a dead body or an unclean thing, or by being a leper or having some other unclean disease, went far to establish in their minds the idea of holiness. Under the New Testament we have no such distinctions, there being no need of them; but they were absolutely necessary to bring Israel to understand the meaning of holiness and purity. The New Testament standard is based on the true principles of right and justice; it contains no such arbitrary elements. Right is right because it is right, and wrong is wrong because it violates some principle of right.

Again, the old law was a civil as well as a moral law, and so in many things it had to be of an arbitrary nature. The New Testament law is fundamentally a moral law, with but few ceremonial observances added. It leaves to the civil powers the making and enforcing of civil laws. Sin under the old covenant was of necessity a very different thing in many respects from sin under the New Testament. It was to emphasize this distinction that I have gone so far into the subject and given such a lengthy analysis. It all leads upward to a correct understanding of the New Testament view of sin. †

REPORT OF HAGERSTOWN FALL WEEKEND REVIVAL

Our Fall Revival took place on the weekend of October 4-6, 2019. Our speaker for the four services was Bro. Matt Deville from Deville, Louisiana. We were happy to have, not only him, but his wife, Sis. Wenda, and their children with us.

The messages were very uplifting and encouraging. The young people were in charge of the singing on Friday night which blessed our hearts as they used their talents for the Lord. The congregational singing and other special selections in all of our services were also blessed of the Lord.

We trust the seed that has been sown will one day produce fruit. May the Lord bless those who were helped spiritually and keep us all encouraged in our walk with the Lord.

We have available CD's of these services. When ordering, please include the number by the title of the message. Price is \$3.00 each; complete set is \$10 postpaid. Send to: The Way of Truth, CD Ministry, P. O. Box 88, Hagerstown, MD 21741.

- ___ #1086 What Manner of Love!
- ___ #1087 The Far Reaching Effects of Our Decisions
- ___ #1088 The Will of the Father
- ___ #1089 Our Work Is Not in Vain

The Will of the Father

2019 Fall Revival Message
by Bro. Matt Deville

THANK the Lord for our time here. Everyone has certainly made us feel so welcomed. It's been a blessing to be here with you. I really could have sat here and listened to the singing a lot longer. It's good to hear songs I haven't heard in a while. I appreciate the talent that is here, but most of all, I appreciate that it is used for God. You know, God gives us a talent, and it's good that we use it for His glory and for His honor.

I desire to bring to you what God has laid upon my heart. I'll say this: without God's help, we're nothing; but I find it a great honor, a privilege, and a great responsibility to be given the task of preaching the Word of God, because we need to hear from God.

Turn with me, if you will, to Matthew, chapter 7. We see our Lord is speaking here and what He's saying is of the utmost importance. Let me start by asking a question. You don't have to raise your hand or respond, but I want you to consider: How many of us here want to make heaven our home? That should be our greatest desire. When we look at our lives, we think of the day

we want to retire. There are things we'd like to do, but preparation has to be made for retirement. There are steps we have to take to get to where we want to be. If we're going to make heaven our home, we must take the proper steps to get there. Starting with verse 21 of Matthew 7: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." I'd like to entitle my thoughts, "The Will of the Father."

If we'd look around, we'd see many people doing many different things in the name of religion, in the name of Christ. We see charities that are set up. It is good that there are charities, and I'm glad there are people who want to try to help others. There are a lot of needs in the world. We see orphanages, outreaches, different programs in trying to help people with their problems and needs. I think those are good things, but it is going to take more than just those to make heaven our home. That is what the Lord was dealing with here in Matthew 7. He was referring to people who had done things in the name of Christ, but they had left some things undone that needed to be done. The Lord is also saying here that on the day of judgment there will be those who did some really good works. Think about that carefully. "Lord, have we not prophesied? Have we not spoken to others about you? Haven't we done this and that and the other?" And, it goes on to say that the Lord will say unto them, "Depart from me; I never knew you." Somewhere in their lives they had failed to do the whole will of the Father.

For us to make heaven our home, we must do as our Lord and Savior would have us to do. We must make preparations. We must follow the teachings and the commandments of our Lord. With all those wonderful things that those people did, according to Matthew 7, they left the most important things out. They did not obey the will of the Father.

We read in Matthew 23:23, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin." That was a good thing they did. That was part of the requirement God had for them; but it goes on to say "and have omitted the weightier matters." You see, we can't just do the part that God commands that we want to do. It is sad today that so many people are doing the part they want to do. "I'll obey this part of the Bible, but I don't want to obey this part." I'm not saying these things to put people under a crush. I'm not saying these things to be critical, but it is my job to tell you the truth, to be honest with you. If we want to make heaven our home, we must do the whole will of the Father. The Bible says that we must count the cost.

Sometimes doing God's will is not always the easiest thing. Now, understand what I'm saying. Sometimes it takes some effort and prayer, but we want to do the

will of the Father to make heaven our home. It's worth the effort and time that we put into it, because the reward is to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Don't you want to hear those words? Don't you want to hear Him say, "Nancy, I'm proud of you; you've lived for me and fought for me, and you went through some trials and troubles, but you fulfilled the will that I had for your life?"

Jesus said, "Some honor me with their lips." Look all around us today. Again, I'm not condemning people. I'm not a condemning person, but I want to tell you the truth. It takes more than just saying, "I love the Lord." It takes more than just having a bumper sticker that says, "I love Jesus." People honored Him with their lips, but it says that their hearts were far from Him. In other words, what they said did not match up with the life that they were living. If we truly love the Lord, we're going to obey His commandments. It's good to praise the Lord with our lips. It's good to say, "Thank you, Lord," but it takes something in our hearts that causes us to live out the commandments of God in our day-to-day lives. Fulfilling the will of the Father is what it's going to take for us to make heaven our home.

GOD WILLS ALL TO BE SAVED

It is God's will that we be saved to make heaven our home. There's no other way to make heaven our home but through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I can't help what everybody else says. It has nothing to do with me, but this is the Word of God. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). That is speaking of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If we're going to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," we must be saved (born again). I Timothy 2:3, 4, tells us, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved"; not just a few, not just those who live a good moral life, but "all men to be saved." God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," for *all* people. Is it for those we think deserve it, or for those we think that are so bad? No! Christ died for all. He died for each one. He died to make available the way that we could be redeemed from our sins. It is God's will for us to be saved. "... he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

John tells us in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, ..." What sins? Do I need to confess them to Bro. Doug? Do I need to confess them to my wife? No! I need to confess my sins to God, the fair and righteous Judge. "But, Bro. Matt, you don't know what I've done in my life. You don't know the evil I've done." It doesn't matter. Jesus' blood is able to cleanse you from the very vilest of sin. We serve a loving merciful God who cares for us. He said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, ..." No matter how bad they are, He is just and faithful to forgive us of those sins. And what else? "... and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." All the wrong that we have done, all the evil that we have done, it doesn't matter, God is able to wipe it all away.

The Bible says, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." You see, God has requirements, but joy comes with those requirements. It's not a miserable and a terrible life. It's a wonderful

life to live! "The way of transgressors is hard," but Christ, His way, elevates you. It gives you a good and a wonderful life; a life worth living. We can do many wonderful works that even go along with the teachings of the Bible, but those deeds within themselves fall short if we're not connected to the Vine. We need to be connected to our Lord and Savior.

We read in Isaiah 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses [within ourselves] are as filthy rags." Let's understand what this is saying, because we all could take that as saying, "Well, you're saying the good that I do is no good?" Are we condemning people who endeavor to do good things? No. What it is saying here is, "Our righteousness, when compared to the righteousness of God, falls so short." There's no comparison. God's righteousness is pure and holy. Within ourselves, we don't measure up to God. We need the righteousness of God in our lives. We need to be connected to the Vine. God is pure, He is holy and wonderful. Do we love Him?

Where would we be without God in our lives? How many of us would have taken the path that we took had Christ not saved us? I might have been in prison this morning. I might have been homeless on the street, but God, in His great love and mercy, spoke to my heart and called me to Him. Is it because I'm some great intellectual person? Is it because I can do this and I can do that? No. It is because He loves me. God loves you, no matter how evil you are, or how good you may be, He wants your heart. We read in Hebrews 13:21, "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will [Again, to make heaven our home, we must fulfill the will of the Father.], working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES

What is God's will for our lives? It doesn't mean that we read the Bible all day long and we have to understand every little detail of it. What God is wanting from us is to have a heart that says, "Lord, teach me your way. Show me what you would have me to do and I'll obey. Lord, where you lead me, I will follow. The requirements you have for my life, Lord, I'm willing to do them. Lord, have your way. You know what is best for me. Lord, I want to do your will." Is that our heart's desire? If we want to make heaven our home, we must have a heart that is surrendered to the will of God.

We don't have to have any reserve for God. We don't have to worry if God's going to require something of us that's going to be difficult, or something we can't do. There's nothing that God requires of us that He will not give us the grace to fulfill what He requires of us. God's grace is sufficient for any need, for any problem. Anything we come up against, God's going to be right there standing beside us to help us through that problem and trial. I'm glad to have God helping me in my life, because I can't go through life without Him. Life can be tough sometimes. We come up against some difficult things, but God said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." God is there to hold and to lift us up. No matter what our problem may be, God will see us through.

The Egyptians came up against the Red Sea. "It's over. There's no hope. There's no way for us to go," but that wasn't the end, because God came on the scene. The waters divided and they went across on dry ground. "Got any rivers you think are uncrossable? Got any mountains you can't tunnel through? God specializes in things thought impossible; He does the things others cannot do." Whatever you're facing in your life, whatever you're going through, whatever you may come up against in the future, God will always have the answer and the grace to see you through. We can trust in God.

WE MUST BE WILLING

It is God's will that we come unto the knowledge of His truth. I gave my heart to the Lord this past August twelfth, twenty years ago. I love the truth. I appreciate the truth. The truth of God's Word is good for us. I've not read in the Bible and saw the truth of God's Word and thought, "Well, this isn't going to be good for me." You see, God's Word, His will, His laws that He has set up are really given to benefit us in this life. He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." God offers the abundant life, but we must live and do the things in our lives according to His will. If we're going to take on a job with good benefits, and really get paid well, we have to follow the rules that have been set forth. It is the same with God. God offers so much, but He has some requirements for our lives. We must fulfill the requirements that He has for us.

We read in Isaiah 1:19, "If ye be willing and obedient [Again, there's the word *willing*. That doesn't mean we have to understand every little detail, but be willing and obedient.], ye shall eat the good of the land." I love to sit and feast at Jesus' table. I love to feel the Spirit of God so strong that it brings tears to my eyes. I love to see when the Lord saves a precious soul. It's wonderful! The things of this world do not compare to all that God offers. It falls short. All the money, wealth, and honor doesn't compare to being able to commune and fellowship and go through this life with our Lord and Savior. Verse 20: "But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

I know we live in a day and time where a lot of people do not want to believe that there's a hell. It is not something that's pleasant to think about. It's sad. It wasn't prepared for humans. It was prepared for the devil and his angels. Regardless of how many people try to put it away, take it out of the gospel, it is still part of God's Word. Heaven or hell you are choosing. We have to choose whether we're going to obey God or not. God has given us a choice. He doesn't make us do it. If we're going to eat the good of the land, we have to be obedient to God's Word.

WE MUST BE SUBMISSIVE

We have to have an attitude of submission, but God is patient with us. He's patient with us. I love seeing these precious little children. Sometimes when they're saying their memory verse, they may stumble a little, but I don't see Bro. Ralph jumping all over them for doing so, does he? It's a blessing seeing them put forth their best effort. It's a blessing to us. When God sees

His children doing the very best they can, even though they may stumble a little bit, or even fall, He's right there to pick them up and uphold them. We're God's children. He's longsuffering and patient with us, but He wants to see that determination to stay true to Him and fulfill His will in our lives. This brings a smile to the face of God. II Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We need to know all we can of the Lord, of His precious way.

DENY UNGODLINESS

Titus 2:11, 12, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us [What is He teaching us? The will of God, what He requires of us.] that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly [When?], in this present world." These are some of God's requirements. He requires us to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Listen again to the first verse: "For the grace of God ..." It doesn't say that you have to do this within yourself. The same grace that saved my soul, the same grace that brought a Savior to this world who died upon that old rugged cross, the same power that was with Jesus when He said, "Lazarus, come forth," is available to help us to do these things: "to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It is available to us.

The word *denying* tells me that we will, at times, be tempted to do things that we shouldn't do. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14). Does the devil ever entice you to do something you shouldn't do? If we're honest, he does. Even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" and, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." So we're all going to be tempted. Temptation is not sin. We cannot live free of temptations coming our way. It says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

I want us to understand this: When a temptation comes to do something wrong, you're then faced with a decision, "Am I going to do God's will, or am I going to do what the devil is tempting me with?" It really comes down to that. When lust is conceived, will we give in? Will we make the decision that we're going to do this, even though we know it's not according to God's will? Sin is willful transgression of the law of God. When sin is finished, it bringeth forth death—spiritual death. The devil said to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die," but when she partook of the fruit that was before her, she knew that it wasn't God's will for her to eat of that fruit. She had been told not to eat of that fruit. "But, Bro. Matt, what's wrong with fruit? I don't see what's wrong in doing that? It looked good. It appealed to her." We can reason in our own minds and make things seem okay, but if God says "don't do it," He means what He says. I don't care if we understand it fully, I don't care if we get the depth of what it says, our hearts need to say, "No, God said not to do it." That needs to be our attitude. That is fulfilling the will of the Father.

John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." As we look over our land

today, we see the effects of this. God has a better way. Is it a better way? Am I just making this up? You know, there are a lot of athletes and movie stars who will endorse something. They might not even like what the product is, but if they're paid enough, they're going to endorse that product.

I'm here to tell you this morning that my reason for telling you these things is because I've tasted. I've seen that all God has to offer is precious and wonderful. I want the world to know, because the way of God is a wonderful way. It's a precious way; not only at the end, but now in this time world. When people follow their own ways, look at the results. The songwriter says, "Sin will take you farther than you want to go." Sin will cause people to do acts that they thought they would never do. We can think to ourselves, "That's not going to happen to me. I'll never do that." Do you think the man who lived among the tombs ever planned on being possessed and cutting himself? "Sin will take you farther than you want to go." But, on the flip side of that, God will take you to places you would never have imagined. I Corinthians 2:9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"; not just in the world to come, but in this life. God has pleasures abounding for us; wonderful pleasures, but we must fulfill the will of the Father.

I Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful [Is He faithful?], who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able [God's going to be there for us. As I've said before, temptations to go against the will of God will come.]; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God's going to be there to help you. God's going to be there to see you through. What I'm getting at is: the devil tries to paint a picture of the Christian life. "Well, I can't live the Christian life. I can't do that." Well, you can't without the grace of God; but with the grace of God, we don't know what we're capable of doing. Look at Stephen as he was being put to death. The grace of God was there with him and he was able to say, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." God's grace is powerful and wonderful. It's available to help us to fulfill the commandments of the Lord.

WHAT THE WORLD IS FOCUSED ON

Worldly lusts, worldly pleasure, worldly affairs, and worldly honor are things people become so focused on that they lose sight of what is most important. The Word of God tells us that our life is but a vapor. Do we really grasp that? How short our life really is! It appears just for a moment, then it is gone. Man possesses a soul that is eternal. In the way that we live our lives here on earth will determine where we'll spend eternity. How sad some will hear, "Depart from me, I never knew you"; not for a year, not for 10 or 100 years, but for all eternity. How sad! but it doesn't have to be our fate. God offers a precious way, a wonderful way, but people become so wrapped up in the things of this life that only lasts just for a moment, and they don't focus on the weightier matters.

We all have to live in this world. We have responsibilities, but don't let those responsibilities cause us

to lose sight of what is most important. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life" (II Timothy 2:4). It doesn't mean we don't have to work and provide, but don't get so caught up with those things that they choke out the things of God and we lose sight of God in our lives. This has happened.

Please listen to these scriptures. Luke 13. We'll start with verse 1: "There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. [We see here that they were looking at some who were very, very evil. It's easy to see that. We see some people who do heinous crimes.] And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." What we need to take from this is: people do things for their neighbors. They try to help others. They treat others well. They give to charities, but all those things within themselves will not allow them to make heaven their home. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

CONCLUSION

My desire is to see you make heaven your home. I want to see you there, but I have to be honest with you. I could just pat you on your back and say, "Oh, you're doing good," but I'd rather see you in heaven. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Now we have the opportunity to choose whether to serve God or not. Whether to do His will or not is our decision. If we're going to hear, "Well done," we have to be obedient. We have to make peace with God.

Ephesians 5:15-17 says, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools [I don't want this to sound mean, but it's foolish not to listen and obey God.], but as wise, ... Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." God's will is for you to make heaven your home. He came and gave His all. All that He could give He gave. He paid the price, but if we want to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," we must fulfill the will of the Father.

May God bless you. †

SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE

For many years, The Way of Truth publishing work has provided Church of God Sunday school literature for many congregations. If you would like a sample of Bible-based literature and a price list, please request it. We have a six-year series of lessons. Each quarter we print quarterlies for Adults and Young People, Intermediates and Juniors. We also print leaflets for younger children. Write or call and order your sample today.



Editor's Note: These questions and answers in this issue are reprinted from issues of *The Way of Truth*, 2003-2006. Questions were answered by our late Editor, Bro. Alvin A. Craig.

QUESTION: The Bible tells us that the body goes back to earth and the spirit goes back to God who gave it. Does the soul of a sinner go back to God?

ANSWER: I will quote Matthew Henry on this verse: "The soul does not die with the body; ... it can exist without it and will in a state of separation from it, ... It removes to the world of spirits, to which it is allied. It goes to God as a Judge, to give account of itself, and to be lodged to either with the spirits in prison (I Peter 3:19) or with the spirits in paradise (Luke 22:43) according to what was done in the body. This makes death terrible to the wicked, whose souls go to God as an avenger, and comfortable to the godly, whose souls go to God as a Father, into whose hands they cheerfully commit them, through a Mediator, out of whom sinners may justly dread to think of going to God."

QUESTION: The Bible tells us that Ishmael had twelve sons. My question is, Which of the twelve tribes propagated Islam and which ones propagated Christianity? Which of these brought about Black Africa?

ANSWER: As far as I am able to learn, Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was descended from Kedar, one of the twelve sons of Ishmael. Of course, this was many generations down the line as Mohammed was not born until around 570 A.D.

None of Ishmael's sons propagated Christianity. It was through the seed of Abraham and Sarah's son, Isaac, that the promise of a Savior was fulfilled.

It was neither of these that brought about Black Africa. Biblical historians teach that the Black race came from Ham's son, Canaan. If there be any connection at all, it would be through Ishmael's mother who was Egyptian.

QUESTION: In Genesis 48:16, Jacob referred to an angel that redeemed him. So I want to ask if this angel was referring to Christ. If yes, how is Jacob redeemed by Christ when he died before the coming of Christ?

ANSWER: There is only one Redeemer and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. God gave Adam and Eve the promise of a Redeemer when He said, "The seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent." In the mind of God, Christ was a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." From the beginning of the family

of man, to the end of time, there will be only one Redeemer.

QUESTION: Can a premeditated murderer get forgiveness and enter the strait gate and narrow way to heaven?

ANSWER: Premeditated murder is a very sinful act, but it is not an unpardonable sin. Jesus said He came to call sinners to repentance; He came to seek and to save the lost. So one who is guilty of premeditated murder can be forgiven, if they come to God with true godly sorrow and repent, believing that God forgives them. The great apostle Paul was, as I understand it, guilty of murder in heart, if not in actual deed, before he was converted.

QUESTION: It is said that Lot was not righteous or saved; that it was the prayer of Abraham that saved him from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Is this true?

ANSWER: It doesn't appear that he was a very spiritual person! Nevertheless, the apostle Peter refers to him as "just." See II Peter 2:7. I cannot say that it was Abraham's prayer that saved him. Abraham prayed for God to spare the city if enough righteous people could be found in it, which, even when he came down to the number ten, could not be found, but it does not say that he prayed directly for Lot.

QUESTION: When God cursed Cain from the earth and Cain said, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," does that depict a prayer of repentance?

ANSWER: As I read Genesis 4:13, I do not get the understanding that it is a prayer of repentance. It might be of interest to you to read what Adam Clarke says based on his understanding of the Hebrew words. They could be translated, "Is my crime too great to be forgiven?" But that does not say he was repenting of his evil deed.

QUESTION: What time did God send Lucifer and his angels on the earth—before creation of man or after?

ANSWER: First, the scripture in Isaiah 14:12 where you find the word *Lucifer* is not talking about the devil but about the king of Babylon. Verse 4 of this chapter tells us it was a "proverb against the king of Babylon." Also, verse 16 calls him a "man," not the devil.

As far as I understand the Scriptures, the devil existed before God created the earth, and thus, before He formed Adam and Eve.

QUESTION: Please explain Matthew 10:28, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

ANSWER: First, let me point out that this verse proves the body and soul are not the same; it also proves that the soul is not material. We are not to fear man who can take our physical life, but we are to fear God and keep His commandments.

In regard to “destroy both soul and body in hell,” we see from this that, as Jesus taught, ALL that are in the graves shall come forth (ALL, not just the bodies of the righteous) and be judged. The righteous shall be given a spiritual body like Christ’s—see I John 3:2—and the wicked shall also be changed and given a “body” that will not be physical. †

BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

SANCTIFICATION

THE FALLEN NATURE

Scriptures: Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 20:20-24; Luke 9:51-55.

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psalm 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Matthew 20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

Luke 9:51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

Memory Verse: The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

—Jeremiah 17:9.

Aim: To produce an understanding of the fallen nature of man.

INTRODUCTION

NO ONE can doubt the existence of something in the inner man that causes him to do things that are injurious to himself and society. Men have sought vainly to overcome this infection by the process

of punishment and education but have utterly failed. In recent years, they have advanced the idea that if a child is given freedom of expression in all things it will help in this serious situation; but the result has been very disappointing, for we have on our hands the greatest disregard for discipline in the lives of youth that recent history has revealed. Man is not a mere animal. He is a never-dying soul in which has been sown seeds of wickedness; and unless this evil condition is eradicated, the fruits of the soul shall continue to be evil. It is a marvelous thing that in the gospel of the Lord Jesus provision has been made that the depraved nature can be eradicated. It is our desire not only to point out the depraved nature in the heart of the natural man, but also to encourage all who are without the blessing of freedom from the depraved nature to seek and obtain it.

MEDITATIONS

DAVID’S TESTIMONY—Psalm 51:5—Shapen in iniquity—The only sin for which a man is accountable is the sin he committed by breaking the law of God, for the righteousness of God requires that He condemn no man for anything for which he is not responsible. But in this verse, we see a state of iniquity being built right into the very fiber and being of the unborn child. After he makes his way into the world and begins to function as a separate and self-willed individual, his natural bent is to give expression to the nature that is shapen in iniquity. This tendency can be suppressed, and by correction a child can be greatly helped, but this does not remove the depraved nature that was inherited from the foreparents. There is only one remedy for that, and that is the blood of Christ, which not only removes the guilt and the penalty of committed sin in justification, but also through the experience of sanctification removes the nature that causes man to give expression to sinful acts.

EFFECTS OF FALLEN NATURE EXTENSIVE

—Psalm 58:3—As soon as they were born—The thought here expressed is that as soon as a new life begins to express itself, it is in an evil way. If a child is not curbed, it will be found very soon throwing itself on the floor, screaming and kicking. Even in the crib it will be found demonstrating anger. As years go on, this condition will become more violent, causing the individual to use his intellect with everything at his command to gain his purpose and pamper the self-life. There is only one cure for this—the gospel of Jesus.

JEREMIAH DESCRIBES THE FALLEN NATURE—Jeremiah 17:9—Desperately wicked—

“Desperately” carries with it the thought of the extreme, appallingly bad, or intensely degraded. An example of this was seen in Adolf Hitler’s life, who without pity or mercy destroyed the lives of thousands. But the seed of this awful wickedness is planted in every heart. It is the imprint of the character of Satan on the souls of men. Satan is all bad, whereas God is all good.

DEPRAVITY AMONG THE DISCIPLES—Matthew 20:20—And desiring—

We all know that human beings have only such things as God has bestowed upon them. It is within the power of God to give, and He does supply the needs of man freely. It is also within the

power of man to get. He can get by prayer. He can take the way of Satan and get by stealth or force. He can use guile. These last two methods of obtaining human desires are the expressions of the Satanic character stamped upon the soul. The redeemed soul, bearing the image of Christ, seeks the good of others ahead of himself. The disciples of Jesus, though they had their personal sins forgiven, were influenced by the inner urges that compelled them to seek personal advantage.

SEEKING ADVANTAGE—Matthew 20:21—My two sons—Not only was this the ambition of the mother, but it appears as though the two disciples had the same self-seeking desire. (See verse 24.) They had not been filled with the Spirit of God, which would have miraculously changed their attitude.

COST OF VICTORY—Matthew 20:22—Drink of the cup—As yet, the disciples understood little of what a consecrated life to the cause of God would cost. Their lack of power was demonstrated when they forsook Christ at the trial. They thought they could suffer with Christ, and truly they desired to; but when the test came, they found that they did not have the power to do so. A compromised gospel does not carry with it persecution of any great degree, but the true disciple of Christ is certain to face the fury of the evil forces that rule the world. **Verse 23—Shall drink indeed**—Their display of power did not come until after the day of Pentecost, when the coming of the Holy Spirit delivered the disciples from their depraved nature and imparted to them the power to face the persecutions. **Verse 24—The ten heard it**—Selfishness was displayed here in the ten. They were thinking more of themselves than the welfare of the kingdom of God. The sanctified soldier of the cross is ready to give his life in the defense of the gospel.

A DISPLAY OF CARNALITY—Luke 9:51—Steadfastly set—The devotion of Christ to the purpose of His Father could not be shaken even with the prospects of death. He is our example of a consecrated life, which everyone should try to follow. **Verse 53—Did not receive him**—There was great rivalry between the Jews and the Samaritans; and since Jesus made it known that He was going on to Jerusalem to be among the Jews, the Samaritans would not entertain Him at all. This is a demonstration of the childish, carnal and fallen nature of man. **Verse 54—Command fire**—The disciples were saved men, but this expression shows that they still had retaliation in their hearts and lacked love for their enemies. Jesus showed a mastery over their human impulse. **Verse 55—Rebuked them**—It is also a rebuke to anyone who is of the same spirit today. The spirit of war is retaliation on a large scale and cannot be the course of action by a Christian nation.

CONCLUSION

We see from the Scriptures' account in this lesson that even the disciples of Christ had something in their souls that caused them, at times, to act in a way that was displeasing to Christ. Many church organizations teach that the cleansing of the fallen nature is accomplished in justification; and since this is impossible they

never do receive the experience, and their work shows it. Paul declared that Christ gave His blood to sanctify the church (Ephesians 5:25-27). So if Christ gave His blood to sanctify the church, of necessity a man must be in the church before he can be sanctified. Entrance is gained into the church by the new birth, so it follows that justification has to precede sanctification.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Where did man get his fallen nature?
2. How does a man who is ruled by a fallen nature act?
3. What caused the Samaritans to refuse Christ His request?
4. Why did James and John assume the attitude they did?
5. Why did Christ conduct Himself toward the Samaritans as He did?
6. What was the state of heart that caused certain disciples to seek the favorite places in Christ's kingdom?
7. Explain the actions of the other ten.
8. What is the conduct of the average church member today? †



Dear Young People,

I trust this finds you well in body and spirit. Never forget all the Lord has done for you. He is worthy of our very lives.

This month we will talk about "the call to forgive and its price." Forgiveness is truly one of the greatest manifesta-

tions of love! To understand more fully what forgiveness really means, let us look at Christ's sacrifice for all of mankind.

Christ suffered. He suffered wrongly (meaning He did not deserve what was done to Him). But, He accepted and endured that suffering, because He knew it was the price of salvation and that the souls of men were worth it. He loved us. He forgave us. Is God offended by sin? Was He offended by our sins? Of course; and yet, because of love, He forgives. Therefore, we are inexcusable in any refusal to forgive. Refusal to forgive, in essence, is refusal to love.

Easier said than done? Yes. Just like it is easy to say that we love Jesus. It's easy to say that we believe Jesus is the Son of God. For some, it is easy to wear a gold cross around their neck and to think this somehow shows God their love. But, to actually live out these beliefs in our lives requires effort and, at times, suffering. It is "easy" to read, hear, and talk of Christ's suffering and dying on the cross, but when we really delve into it, when the Lord reveals some of what He endured, we can see more clearly what He really went through and the price of forgiveness.

Sometimes we feel as though forgiveness should come easily, almost automatic. But this isn't so. Forgive-



ness is living out Christ's commandment to bear our cross. To the world, it doesn't seem fair that the one who was injured or offended should be the one who needs to pay the price (or suffer) for forgiveness. But that is true godliness ... to suffer for someone else's actions to pay for the price of forgiveness. True forgiveness requires some suffering. But, through Christ, the One who has overcome the world, we are able to bear our cross.

Have we been offended more than Christ? Is our suffering more than His? Let us lay down our rights and freedoms for the cause of love. Love for others and love for God. In this we fulfill God's commandments.

If you are struggling, turn to Him and ask for His help. He will help you.

I am leaving you with the verses which inspired these thoughts: II Corinthians 2:7, 8, 10, 11—"So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

God bless,
Sis. Crystal Gossard †

REPENTANCE

By Bro. Richard Lehman

WHEN Jesus began His ministry, the first thing He preached was the doctrine of repentance. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—Matthew 4:17.

When a sinner begins to feel the Spirit of God convicting his heart of sin, repentance is the first step that that sinner takes towards God.

A heart looking towards repentance is required for the sinner to even start an approach towards the Savior. So it only makes sense that John the Baptist would require full repentance of those who came to him to be baptized. "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."—Luke 3:3.

People have a strong tendency to trust in their upbringing, or that they were baptized as a child or as an adult, or that they were raised in a good church family, etc. But none of those things will replace the fact that the individual must completely repent of all sin before he can be saved.

Therefore, John the Baptist strongly instructed people to not trust in anything else. But that they must completely repent of their sins, and show this by the fruits of their sin-free life that they are now endeavoring to live. "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."—Luke 3:8.

What is the definition of *repent*? "To feel self-reproach, compunction, or contrition for past conduct; to feel regret or change one's mind with regard to past action in consequence of dissatisfaction with it or its result."

So often, even before salvation, there can be many ways that one may start working on correcting his way of living. He may stop many sins that he used to do; and that is good. But that does not mean that he is saved yet. Salvation is the complete forgiveness of all sin, because the individual is sorry for all his sins. So the individual must desire to turn completely away from everything he knows to be sin.

And then, even after one is saved, he may discover other things he did not know are sin. When he does, he turns away from that also.

Concerning the sinner, the prophet Isaiah defined repentance this way: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—Isaiah 55:7.

Repentance was plainly taught by Jesus and the apostles. There is no exception to this for anyone who comes to the age (knowledge) of accountability before God.

Jesus taught: "And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."—Mark 1:15.

The apostles commanded sinners to repent. "Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."—Acts 2:38. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."—Acts 3:19. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."—Acts 17:30.

Again, repentance is required of everyone, no matter how good or self-righteous he might be.

"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—Luke 13:1-5.

Repentance also implies that there is real godly sorrow—from the depths of the heart—Luke 18:10-14.

A sinner needs a true godly sorrow. Do not mistake this for a worldly sorrow. True godly sorrow is not a sorrow just because you got caught in your sin, or that you are suffering because you are reaping for your sin. That is worldly sorrow.

The apostle Paul clearly explained the difference between the two types of sorrow.

“For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, for ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourself to be clear in this matter.”—II Corinthians 7:8-11.

A godly sorrow will cause you to change completely, and to be careful to not go back to sin.

When the prodigal son returned home, he exemplified godly sorrow. “And he said, a certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”—Luke 15:11-21.

The Spirit of God must first convict man of his sins, before man can repent. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”—John 6:44.

The Holy Spirit talking to the heart is how God draws people and convinces them of their sin, and their need to repent of it. “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”—John 16:8.

Our sins do not need to be confessed before men. But they must be confessed to God who alone has power to forgive sins. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—I John 1:9.

But, there are times we must ask those whom we have sinned against, to forgive us. This is part of clearing ourselves before those whom we have harmed. “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way;

first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”—Matthew 5:23, 24.

This produces a good conscience toward men as well as toward God. “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man.”—Acts 24:16.

Confessing certain sins to a person may hurt that person more. In that case, it is better to not confess it to that person. God would not want you to hurt, or break someone’s heart, by confessing a past sin. Some sins are best forgotten and never mentioned. God’s way heals the broken heart, so He does not want us to cause a broken heart! “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.”—Psalm 147:3.

Repentance requires that restitution be eventually made where it is due: “If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.”—Ezekiel 33:15.

Restitution was one of the first things that Zacchaeus thought of after he met Jesus Christ. “And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”—Luke 19:2-8.

Repentance includes being willing to forgive others. All hatred, malice, grudges, and ill-feelings toward others must be forgiven. “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”—Matthew 6:14, 15.

Consider that Jesus even forgave those who crucified Him, even as they were crucifying Him. “... Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”—Luke 23:34.

The act of repentance is twofold. It means not only the turning away from sin, but also the turning to God for forgiveness. And when we fully repent before God, we will come to know the refreshing and relief that comes from God when He assures us: we are forgiven!

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”—Acts 3:19. “Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”—Romans 4:7, 8. †

REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL

A Desire for the Faith of the Gospel

2019 Hagerstown Convention Message by Bro. Raymond Martin

IT IS certainly good to be in the house of the Lord. I enjoyed the beautiful singing and the fellowship already. God is good. I don't take serving the Lord lightly. It's a privilege to be a child of God. It's a privilege to serve the Lord.

We are an example unto the world. From all over the world, people are watching our lives, so we need to be sincere and careful in the way that we live, don't we? We are leading someone, either on the strait and narrow way, or on the broad way.

Our message this morning is along the line of our theme. I trust that the Lord will help us. I'd like to use a couple verses of scriptures. I'll be reading the scripture from Philippians that the theme is based on. I will then read one from Psalm 37. Philippians 1:27, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs [how you're living, what you're doing], that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." Psalm 37:4, "Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

The word *delight* means, "to take pleasure in; to be satisfied." Do you take pleasure in serving the Lord? Do you take pleasure in being with the saints of God? What is your delight? I believe the gospel to be the Word of God. I believe it to be all truth. I believe that it is infallible—from Genesis to Revelation. I believe it will always remain the same, regardless of how many try to change it or make it different. People change in our world. Churches and preachers change. The Word of God will never change. The Bible says, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

Our theme for the camp meeting is entitled, "Striving Together for the Faith of the Gospel," but for that to happen, there must be a desire in the heart to please God. We have to delight in the Lord for Him to give us the desire of our hearts. So, I've entitled my thoughts, "A Desire for the Faith of the Gospel." We must have a desire for the gospel.

To stand together, there has to be a desire. We're not going to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind" without having a desire to do so. There must be a desire. We cannot be joined together in one mind without it being that way. As was mentioned in one of the services: we need to esteem others above ourselves.

We won't have a happy home unless we esteem others above ourselves, let alone in the church. To live together in peace and happiness, we have to work together. We have to work at it. If one gets the feeling of being a dictator in the home, there won't be a happy marriage; but thank God, it doesn't have to be that way. We can have peace and happiness. There are some ups and downs in marriage and in the churches. My wife and I have been together for over 56 years. We've had some ups and downs; but I tell you, along the way there

have been some blessings. There have been some good times. It's the same way serving the Lord. Yes, there will be some ups and downs, but we have to have a desire to hold it together.

The word *desire* means, "to long for; to hope for; a strong wish; a craving for; a longing for." What things are you longing for? What are you craving in this service?

It's God's will for His church to be one. It's His will for us to stand together and fight against the wiles of the devil. God desires an army of soldiers who are walking upright, having on the whole armor of God, and striving for the faith of the gospel. We can't have partiality; we can't have strife. I had strife when I was in sin, but God changed me. He changes you when you get saved. When you're born again, you see things differently. You'll love one another. I love my wife more than I did back then. Why? Because I learned how to. You'll learn some things while serving the Lord.

You have to strive for the faith of the gospel and maintain it. If you don't, you can be deceived along the way and have nothing to stand on. There are people like that. When it comes right down to it, there are people who don't know where they stand. "I hope I'm a Christian, I hope I'll make it, I hope I'm doing what's right. I belong to this church, I belong to this organization." But, I want to tell you, you can know where you stand with almighty God. Yes, many are living on a false hope, but thank God for the gospel.

THE GOSPEL BRINGS DELIVERANCE

Thank the Lord for the faith of the gospel that brings deliverance from sin and gives freedom to the soul. The faith of the gospel will bring peace to everyone who is willing to seek for it. The Bible says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." There's more to receive after you're saved. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Some teach you can't live a righteous life. Well, you can't without the Lord, but if you'll seek first the kingdom of God, you can be a part of it. He does have a kingdom. I'm a part of it. If you're saved, you're a part of it. Thank God for the kingdom and for righteousness. You have to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" if you want to go to heaven.

Jesus said that if we seek first the kingdom of God, all other things will be added unto us. God knows what our needs are, regardless of the conditions or the circumstances that are around us. Whether it is material or spiritual, God still knows what we have need of. Many are not having their needs met because they do not delight in the Lord.

I enjoy serving God and hearing the gospel. I enjoy being with the saints of God wherever I go. With some



of them, I might not understand what they're saying because of different dialects, but if you're around them very long, you can feel the Spirit. There's one Spirit. Thank God for the Spirit of God. We can be fooled to some extent, but that's where the other brethren come in. Sometimes they can detect other spirits that I might not detect. Am I right? We're here to help one another. We're here to warn one another. If I think I'm seeing you being deceived, I'm probably going to warn you in some way. We all need to be warned so we won't be deceived.

Don't get offended at your pastor. Don't get offended at your brother and sister in the Lord. I appreciate the many fathers and mothers that I've had down through the years. They helped me along the way. I've had older people who came to me and talked to me just like my father and mother did. It has been a help. I'm still not too old to learn.

Jesus knows what the church is facing in our world today. He hasn't asked us to do anything that we cannot do. There are victories for those who are willing to put forth an effort to stand fast in one spirit and fight against worldliness. God knows the heart and the thought, and He knows what we need. The bigger the congregation or the church is, the greater victories we can have. Let me say this: you might not be a preacher, or one of the singers, a pastor, or one taking part in these services, but if you're keeping people in your home and helping with the providing of the food, the cleaning

of the building, or whatever you're doing, that's pleasing in the sight of the Lord. You're desiring to get the faith of the gospel out to reach the hearts of people. That's part of it, so don't let the devil tell you that you're not important. That's what he will do. Yes, people think, "Well, I'm not very important to the church." You are important. There's not one in this building that's not important. God is interested in every person's soul—saved or unsaved. He needs us and we need Him. The faith of the gospel is oneness, but we have to contend for it.

THE GOSPEL IS SOUND DOCTRINE

When I talk about the gospel, I'm not talking about just any doctrine. When I speak about the gospel, I'm talking about sound doctrine. That makes a difference. Paul talked about sound doctrine in the Word of God. There is a lot of teaching in our world today that is not sound doctrine. A lot of people say, "Well, we have the gospel." Is it sound doctrine? The word *sound* makes a difference. When you talk about something being sound, you're talking about something that is free from error.

There are no errors in the Word of God. It's infallible. It's something without any defects. It doesn't have any defects in it. I said earlier, people try to change it, but there are no defects in the Word of God. We need to know what is sound doctrine when we're striving for the faith of the gospel. We're talking about the true gospel. Many of the world don't have it. If I'm going out looking for something sound, like building materials, I try to find something without a lot of defects in it. If I'm building something, I don't want a board with a lot of holes in it. That's what a lot of people have. Yes, they have a gospel that has holes in it. It lets them down. It causes them to fall through. I like something that is sound so I can stand on. It's not going to crumble underneath me.

James talked about pure religion. James 1:27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." I tell you, we need to pay attention to the last part of that verse, for the devil is out to trip us up. Just because you go to a place where the *Church of God* name is, that doesn't make you a member, no! What makes you a part of the Church of God is being born again and being led by the Spirit of God. Thank God for sanctification. The Spirit of God will lead you into all truth. The Word says so. We need that one spirit and that one mind working in our hearts.

Paul said, "The time will come [not may come] when they will not endure sound doctrine [Some people don't want the true gospel. When there's preaching on some of the material things, they don't want to hear about it.]; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." That's why we have so many religions and divisions. It takes a desire in our hearts for the faith of the gospel.

What are you doing to see the work go forth in true harmony? What am I doing? Do you have a burden to see the church stand fast and hold to the standards that God has set forth? I'm not talking about things men have come up with. They have all kinds of things.

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I'm talking about the standards that the Word of God teaches. Do you have a burden to see the church grow?

I've seen a big change in the church world in my time. I've seen a lot of changes. As I said earlier, the Word of God has not changed and neither does God change. If we make a change, it should be to draw closer to the Lord. The Scriptures tell us, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

By striving to stand fast in one spirit and in one mind together, it's the only way the Church of God can grow and produce fruit. We have to strive to hold together. We have to strive to grow together. As the church grows, we produce fruit. That's the only way it will. When people come into a church and see people against one another, and see this and that going on, do you think they'll want what we have? But you have that in some of our churches today. You have people in the same building against one another. God is not pleased with that. I realize some things can be difficult to get over, but you can get over them. I cannot hold something in my heart against you or anyone and make it to heaven. We preachers can't do it. We have to work and strive together.

We have to love one another. People have different personalities and different ideas about things. Let me tell you, in the Church of God, we have to have peace and love one another. When it comes to the Word of God, we have to hold it fast and hold to the Spirit of God. We all do some things a little differently from others from time to time. We have different ways of doing things.

NEHEMIAH'S BURDEN

We read about Nehemiah having a burden for his people and his brethren who were left in Jerusalem after the captivity of Babylon. He was told of the condition of Jerusalem, the place God had chosen to put His name at one time. The walls were broken down and the city was in ruins. The gates burned with fire. The people there were in great affliction and reproach. The people had disobeyed God. That's what caused it to begin with. That's what is causing a lot of the affliction people are going through today. Yes, people are in great affliction today. Many are scattered abroad. The reason for that is they have not sought to obey the Lord. They have not sought to follow after God. Sin is a destroyer. It will destroy your life and will bring great affliction upon you. It even scatters families. The devil has scattered a lot of families. Some families don't have anything to do with one another, but the church is not to be that way.

Let me tell you, Nehemiah's heart was touched when he was told of the condition by the brethren. When he found out about the condition, he began to mourn. He wept. I believe if we love one another, there will be times we're going to be touched in our hearts by the afflictions or by things that have happened. It might not necessarily be because of sin or something of that nature, but we'll still love one another. We'll have a burden one for another. Of course, there were some people there in Nehemiah's time that loved the right way. Thank God for the remnant. Nehemiah wept and fasted. He prayed to God, but that wasn't all. He had a desire to do something about it.

Nehemiah lived in the king's palace. He lived at ease. He wasn't the one who was in want, but he was touched and had a desire to help the people. He was the king's cupbearer. His heart longed to see the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt, and he purposed in his heart to do something about it. You know the story. The king saw Nehemiah's countenance and he revealed to him what was on his heart. The king granted him the supplies he needed.

Nehemiah went back and looked over the village and he began to encourage the people to come together. Yes, he strengthened them. We can strengthen one another. We can encourage one another. He began to encourage the people. They began to build up strength. They met with some opposition. We always do. God was with them. They continued to work together in one spirit and in one mind to get the job done. They finished the walls because the people had a mind to work. They had a desire to get the job done. It's not always easy to see victories won, but when we stand together, God will be there. When we stand together, God is faithful. That's what makes the difference. It doesn't take a crowd. It only takes a few. In this place, it only took one man with a desire and a burden to do something about what had happened.

OUR BURDEN FOR SOULS

As far as ministers are concerned, we've talked about things that have separated the church, but do we have a desire to do something about it? I appreciate Bro. Greg having a desire to stand for what he has stood for. No, we're not compromising. We're not giving into the world. We're only doing what God wants us to do. We want all in the church that we can possibly have. Why? Because we're interested in souls; not just to make a name for ourselves—to look how big we are—how many people we have. That's not what it's all about. We're not after your money. We're not after fame. We're after souls. We want to please God. It's not how people see us. It's how God sees us. People want to be popular in this world, but I want to be popular in the sight of God.

I want to be faithful to God. He's the One who has helped me through the years. I believe if I had not turned to the Lord when I did, I wouldn't be here today. I really don't believe I'd be in this world. Probably some of you feel the same way, but it is because of the goodness and kindness of God in His love that we're here. Yes, the devil is trying to destroy all that he can, but we have a desire for the faith of the gospel to go forth, for it's the only hope. It's salvation to the soul. Paul tells us, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." I am not ashamed of the gospel. I love where I am. I love the church. Salvation is real. There's no other way to heaven. There is one faith and one Lord. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The pope can't give that to you. The preacher can't give that to you. Only the Lord can do that for you.

It's our desire to hold fast. We want to see the truth stay alive; not only here in Maryland, but we want to see it stay alive everywhere. We want to see our children and other loved ones saved. We want to see people healed and we want to see the salvation of souls. We want to see people walking with the Lord.

To see the salvation of souls, there will be some suffering and afflictions. Peter said, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian [I like that statement. There's suffering involved, but it's well worth it. People watch how you dress if you're dressed godly.], let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Peter 4:12-16).

CONCLUSION

If you don't know the Lord as your Savior, you're missing out on the greatest thing in the world. If you're unsaved, we're here to encourage you to turn to the Lord and to help you to see you need Jesus. The brethren have come together to encourage one another, but we're here also to encourage you to come to the Lord. Find this treasure, this joy that we have in our hearts. This is something that will help us when it comes our time to leave this time world.

Some of the saints have come a long way because they love one another, but not only do they love one another, they love you. They want to see you saved. They want to see you delivered from the power of Satan. They don't want to see the devil destroying you. He's your adversary. He wants to destroy you and keep you out of heaven; but not only that, he wants to keep you from having a good life in this world.

If you're here and haven't been doing what you need to do to help the church to go forth in harmony, or you haven't been what you ought to be, I challenge you to lay it at the feet of Jesus. †

God's Purpose

By the late Bro. Ollen O. Craig

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—Revelation 4:11.

THE WISE man said in Ecclesiastes 3:1 that there is a purpose for everything under the heaven.

When we consider the universe which God has made and try to understand the vastness of His creation, we are made to wonder why God would make so many stars and planets that it is impossible to count them. Man stands in awe and wonderment of such vastness. As man ponders this earth we live on and gazes up into the starry heavens, there must be a question, Why?



How did it get there? What is it for? Why are we here?

I'm sure that there are far more questions than anyone can answer. And many of the answers men have come up with are just mere theories which keep changing with each new generation. Some things I'm sure we will never know, and some things we don't need to know. But there is a scripture in Revelation 4:11, which will give us the best answer that I know. I quote, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." You may wonder why God would need to create so much for His pleasure; this we may never know, but God is so great, why should He stop with just a little?

The Bible does not go into specifics on His reasons for making such a vast universe, but it does give us in beautiful detail God's purpose for making the family of man. And if it is seen in the light of Bible truth, it is something beautiful to behold.

I'm basing what I have to say on what the Bible teaches; if you do not accept the Bible as truth, then you could say I'm merely advancing another theory which would be no better than any other theory that is presented.

A careful study of the Word of God will inform us that the earth was not the first thing God created. Planets, stars, heavenly beings and the earth were made long before God made man, but how long before that time we do not know. From these beings came one who refused to obey God and he became the evil being we call the devil. There are mysteries here which we cannot fully explain, but we could never accept the thought that God created a being and predestinated him to eternal torment with never a chance of redemption in any way. To say that would be to say that Satan is doing God's will in all the evil which he does, for that is why he was created and he is just doing what he was created to do.

Nevertheless, when man entered into the world he soon found Satan was there to tempt him to disobey God. Now it seems that God wanted so much to create a being that would of his own free will obey His voice. So He made a creature called man which was perfectly capable of doing just that. Man was not created as a dumb animal, or as an insect which moves only by instinct, but as an intelligent being capable of thinking and planning and choosing the way he should take.

God's plan for the family of man was that they should live in peace and harmony on this earth, thus exhibiting the love and truth of a faithful Creator and God.

The Bible tells us that God is love; it also teaches us that we should love one another, even our enemies, and do good unto all men.

The life of man was meant by his Creator to be as a beautiful picture which we love to behold. And as others look at it they receive inspiration and pleasure just gazing at the beautiful sight. I feel that it would be so if the enemy Satan were not allowed to influence the way of man and lead him in a way so contrary to the good plan of God.

Because of this, instead of love and beauty, as we behold the doings of many today, we see hatred and all kinds of wickedness that has ruined and wrecked the peace and beauty among us which God intended for His family on earth to enjoy.

Instead of beholding a beautiful picture, we see that someone has come in and taken that picture and torn it to pieces and has scattered it to the four winds. It has been ruined and mutilated to the point that it cannot be recognized for what it was meant to be.

So it is with man: someone has ruined and wrecked his life and he has gotten far away from what he was meant to be. That someone is Satan, the enemy of all mankind who delights in influencing man to live so contrary to the way God would have him live.

We hear so many saying, "Why does God allow people to do the things they do? Why would God let a little innocent child suffer, when he had done no wrong?" The thing men are forgetting when they ask such questions is the fact that God made us all free moral agents. He does not make us do anything. No man has to do wrong; he chooses to do wrong. If this were not so, we would have no decisions to make and could never be held accountable for our actions. God could stop some things from taking place, but that was not the purpose of God in creating man in the first place. He made man with the ability to choose between right and wrong. He made a world for us to live in and told us to choose whom we will serve. So the things we see in this world are the natural happenings of man's choices. When a drunkard driving his car hits another and someone is killed, it was not because God made the man drunk, but because the man himself chose to get drunk and drive his car. So we see what happens! Of course, if that man were doing what God created him for, the accident would not have taken place. God never intended for anyone to get drunk.

That can be said for all kinds of sins. God gave us His Word to live by, and to knowingly disobey it is sin in the eyes of God, and man must suffer the penalty for his sin. If we were not accountable for our actions and could only move as a puppet when the string is pulled, then there would be no choice to make and whatever we did would be neither good nor bad.

Man in his sinful state is as the picture which has been multiplied and scattered to the winds, and in that condition he has no hope of becoming as the beautiful picture again. That is, there is no hope of his being able of himself to find all the pieces and making himself beautiful and whole again. There is no more hope of that than to think that all those pieces of the picture would somehow get back together again and become something beautiful to behold.

But thanks be unto God, who in His holy plan and purpose for man, made a plan whereby every life that has been wrecked and scattered to the wind, can have that life put back together again, and made to be something refreshing and beautiful to behold.

Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, came from the courts of heaven, was born a little babe, grew to manhood. He told us about and showed unto us God the Father. He lived a pure and spotless life, went to the cross willingly, suffered and died there, and rose again

from the tomb that He might find those broken pieces and put them back together again, thus producing a beautiful life for the world to see. Our Lord lived a holy and sinless life and we are instructed to live as He lived in this world. That is the purpose for which we are on earth. God created all things for His pleasure, as we read in Revelation 4:11. God is a holy God; He said for us to be holy as He is holy. Only in being holy can any man bring pleasure to the heart of God. The Bible says God hates sin, and is angry with the sinner every day.

We say to our children, do this, or do that, and we expect them to do it, and if they don't there is some sort of punishment given for disobedience. God has given His Word to be obeyed as we understand it. The Bible tells us that the punishment for disobeying God is finally eternal hell. But what a wonderful thing that man can seek God for His forgiveness and be made a new creature in Christ Jesus our Lord right here in this present evil world.

The purpose of God for the human family was to prove to the devil that He could make a being that would of his own free will resist the powers of evil and from his heart obey the commands He had given.

In the eyes of God this is a beautiful sight. History tells us and the Bible tells us of those who have not regarded the favor of an ungodly world above the favor of God, but have chosen to suffer, yea even die rather than deny the Lord God who had bought them with His own blood. They have been ridiculed, thought religious idiots, they have been run out of town or even their own native land, yet they served their God.

God gets no glory from the worldly-minded, go-along-with-anything, church-joining, sin-you-must-professor of our day. It's so easy to call oneself a Christian nowadays. "Just believe; that's all there is to it," is what they say. But true Christianity has never gained favor with the world and it never will. I'm not suggesting that we go out and try to stir up trouble, but I am suggesting that the spirit of Satan that has opposed the saints of God down through the ages has not changed and will oppose the Church of God when she stands up for the pure truth of the gospel.

What we need today is not men who are afraid they may offend someone when they declare the truth of God; but men who will stay in their prayer closet until they get a vision of the pure truth of the Bible, and seek God for the backbone to go forth and declare it like it is. Then and only then will we see the power of God manifested as it was in the past.

It does not take the power of God to join a church or call oneself a Christian, but it does take the power of God to resist evil and live a holy life. And that, Dear Reader, is what will bring pleasure to the heart of God. God did not make a plan of salvation so weak that those who possess it have to continue on in sin, but real salvation saves from, and keeps from, sin.

So we see from the holy Scriptures that the reason God made man was for the purpose of showing to God's enemy, and ours—Satan—that in spite of all the devil can do, there are those who will follow God fully, thus bringing pleasure to His great heart. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen. †

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June 30-July 5, Lord willing

Bro. Gregory E. Tyler, Host Pastor