

# The Way of Truth

Vol. 78

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

No. 9

*Are You Burdened Down  
by the Cares of Life?*

See, "ONE THING  
IS NEEDFUL"

Message begins on page 15.

September 2020

**F**OR the editorial this month, I want to use a radio message I preached in 1992 entitled:

## THE UNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

I will speaking on the thought, "The Unity of God's People." Very little is heard about this thought in the nominal religious circles, mainly because they are afraid to preach the entire Word of God. The Church of God is different from any other organization on the face of the earth. There is something that makes it different. The thing that makes it different is: the Church of God stands for the complete Bible. We do not neglect any scriptures, but we try, by the help of God, to stand for the gospel in its entirety, undimmed by man's interpretations, untwisted by man's ideas, but fresh from the throne of God.

We have scriptures to back up where we stand. When we speak of the unity (or oneness) of God's people, we are speaking of an area that most people know very little about.

I'd like to use for a text to begin our thoughts today, the seventeenth chapter of St. John. These words were spoken by Jesus Christ, Himself, as He was praying to the Father. St. John 17:11: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." Verses 20-23: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

Beloved, I wonder if my radio audience senses the burden of the Master, Jesus Christ, as He prayed to the Father. Jesus could see into the future, and He knew the dangers of Satan's snares. He knew how Satan delighted in dividing and scattering Christ's flock. So He prayed to the Father that those who believed on Him would remain one. I believe that we can safely say that it is the will of God that every born-again child of God be one in Christ.

I'm going to speak on this broadcast of two kinds of unity. There is *the unity of the Spirit* and *the unity of the faith* which comes out of the fourth chapter of the book of Ephesians. I'd like to read several scriptures from that chapter. Again, the Church of God stands on what the Bible teaches. The apostle Paul, speaking to the Church of God at Ephesus, said, in chapter 4, verses 3-6: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Skipping down to verses 11-13: "And he gave some,

apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." We see here two unities spoken of in the Word of God: "the unity of the Spirit" and "the unity of the faith." I believe it is the will of God that every believer be one in Christ with every other child of God.

I know there are a lot of people in the religious world who claim to be one; but Beloved, when you refuse to fellowship saints of God, when you teach for doctrines the commandments of men, when some want the pre-eminence over others, that is not unity, that is not oneness, that is not being one in Christ.

Let's go back to the words of Jesus as He was praying to the Father that His followers would be one as He is one with God the Father. Let's think about the unity between Jesus and God, because that is the standard for the followers and believers in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Son of God. If we understand correctly, He existed before this world began. He was equal with the Father. He and the Father are one. When Jesus speaks, it's as if the Father is speaking. There is no disharmony between them. When one speaks, the other speaks; when one does something, the other does something. There is perfect oneness in thought, oneness in Spirit, oneness in action between Christ the Son and God the Father. Jesus prayed that His followers—His disciples—would be one as He and the Father are one that the world may believe.

One reason why there is so much false religion in the world (and I'm speaking now of false religion in the anti-Christian sense), why there is so much Muslim religion, why there are so many religions coming out of India and other places with Gurus, etc., is because Christianity has failed to present to the world a oneness in Christ—a unity, a firm stand for that which is right. Religious teachers and preachers have become satisfied in letting almost anything go under the banner of Christianity, teaching almost anything as long as they (quote): "believe in Christ" (unquote), then it's all right. Beloved, I'm here to say today, on the authority of God's Word, it is not all right. It is not all right if people profess Christ and live in wickedness and sin. It is not all right if they believe in Christ and teach things that are contrary to what the Word of God teaches.

You have heard on this broadcast before that the Church of God believes that the Scriptures are given to us by divine inspiration. We believe when the Holy Spirit reveals the Word of God to you, and the Holy Spirit reveals it to me, it is going to be one and the same. Now I know there are some in our radio audience who would ask, "Well, who do those

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On our cover is a picture of Yosemite Falls in northern California. The flowing water falls 2,425 feet from the top of the upper fall to the base of the lower fall. Located in Yosemite National Park, it is a marvel. In 2019, the park saw nearly 4.5 million visitors. This is another example of our great Creator's power and majesty.

# 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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bigoted people think they are that they have the truth and others are in error?" Beloved, we are not bigoted or self-centered in saying this. We believe the Word of God teaches it—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

The idea of being one, the idea of teaching one and the same thing, is not something that originated with me. On the contrary, I have learned it through the wonderful Word of God. You might ask, "What right does anyone have to say that there is only one interpretation that is correct?" Well, let us turn to the Word of God again. I Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Now Beloved, where does anyone get a multiplicity of religions out of that scripture? Nominal religions, speaking now of so-called Christian religions, have closed their eyes to that verse of scripture. As far as God is concerned, there is only one true church, and that church is the one that Jesus is building.

When there is division, when there is separation, when there is a parting of ways, God is not having His way. Let me read that scripture again: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." That scripture is a powerful scripture. Beloved, it is a scripture that we need to live by; and if I disagree with you, or you disagree with me, we need to get on our knees and pray through and get the answer from God,

because God does not have His way when there is friction and division among believers.

Before closing, I want to emphasize the difference between the unity of the Spirit and the unity of the faith. When an individual gets genuinely saved, he automatically has the unity of the Spirit. In other words, he is a new creature in Christ Jesus and the Spirit of God is with him. Now that doesn't come to pass when a person joins church. That comes to pass when an individual gets genuinely saved. He repents of his sins, he turns his back on his old life, he accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior, and he walks in newness of life. This is true with every other child of God that has experienced the same thing: he has the unity of the Spirit. It doesn't matter what he believes, it doesn't matter what he's been taught. If he's genuinely saved, he has the unity of the Spirit with every other believer. But Ephesians 4 tells us that God has given some apostles and prophets and teachers, etc., for the perfecting of the saints, and to bring us to the *unity of the faith*.

The unity of the faith comes about when those born-again children of God have unity—not only in the Spirit of God that they have, but also in what they believe and in what they teach. This is what God is working for. God is working for the church today to be one in the Spirit and one in the faith. One in what we believe, one in what we teach, so that when people of foreign lands come in contact with the holy Scriptures, come in contact with Christianity, they won't have to wonder what kind of religion they have come in contact with. They won't have to wonder why there are so many

## IN THIS ISSUE:

<b>The Question Box</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<i>Our monthly feature</i>	
<b>Winning a Crown</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<i>Part XXV of the book by the late C. W. Naylor</i>	
<b>Cleave Unto the Lord</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<i>Full-length sermon by Tim Crooks</i>	
<b>The Poetry Page</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<i>For lovers of poetry</i>	
<b>The Real Issue in Temptation</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<i>Radio message by the late A. A. Craig</i>	
<b>The Children's Corner</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<i>"O Be Careful Little Hands!"</i>	
<b>Bible Lesson of the Month</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<i>"The Story of Stephen"</i>	
<b>One Thing Is Needful</b>	<b>Page 15</b>
<i>Full-length sermon by Matt Deville</i>	
<b>Young People's Page</b>	<b>Page 19</b>
<i>"Character Qualities"</i>	
<b>Critical That We Understand Scripture</b>	<b>Page 20</b>
<i>Article by Richard Lehman</i>	

contradictions among people who profess to believe in Jesus Christ. They will realize and know that there is only one message harmonized by the holy Word of God.

Let us not beat around the bush, Beloved. The Bible is not to be interpreted in any way you or I feel like interpreting it. The Bible, when properly interpreted, is interpreted by the Holy Spirit to humble men of God who are willing to line up with what God intended. Again, that is going to be one clear-cut, pure message. There are not going to be any contradictions, and there is not going to be any twisting. It's going to be just like God gave it. The problem is, too many men try to interpret the Scriptures under their own power and reasoning, and they come up with many false ideas.

In order for men to arrive at the unity of the faith (doctrine), they must first endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You can't put the cart before the horse. In other words, men cannot demand to see things eye to eye unless they first accept true born-again Christians as brethren and labor together building confidence in one another. The more confidence we have in one another, the more likely we are going to consider what our brethren believe, and that allows the Holy Spirit to bring out truth.

Thank God for the truth of the gospel! That truth is, as Jesus prayed, that His believers, His followers, His disciples be one as God the Father, as Jesus Christ the Son, and as the Holy Ghost are one. They are three, but they are one in Spirit. They are one in purpose and one in aim. We, as saints of God, should be one in Spirit, and we should teach the same things. †



**Editor's Note:** These questions and answers in this issue are taken from *The Way of Truth Question and Answer Book*, 1946-2001.



**QUESTION:** What does the Bible say about the Antichrist?

**ANSWER:** The Bible says there are many antichrists, not just one (I John 2:18). The Bible says whosoever denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist (I John 2:22). The Bible says that antichrist is a spirit (I John 4:3). The Bible says those who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is a deceiver and an antichrist (II John 7).

Those four verses are the only ones that speak of an Antichrist. To try to make the "Beast" of Revelation 13, "the antichrist" is to misrepresent the Word of God.

The Bible says nothing about THE Antichrist being a great military, political leader that deceives the whole

world. In fact, the Bible does not speak of just one person being THE Antichrist. John said in his day there were many. Doubtless, there are even more today.

**QUESTION:** What is the meaning of predestination?

**ANSWER:** The word *predestination* is used to teach that God foreordained everything that would happen, especially that certain souls would be saved, while others would not, in fact, could not be saved.

The Bible, of course, does not teach any such doctrine, as the Scriptures teach that Jesus died for all. And if He died for all, then all could be saved. It is not God's will that any should perish, but that **ALL** should come to repentance. All who die in sin do so outside the will of God.

**QUESTION:** What is a yoke? Is a yoke the same as oppression?

**ANSWER:** Jesus had no reference to oppression when He invited us to take His yoke upon ourselves! (Matthew 11:29). A literal yoke was a type of harness which connected a pair of animals together to work. One could not do it by itself, so two were yoked together.

Jesus is inviting us to cast our burdens upon Him, for His "yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (verse 30). "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22).

**QUESTION:** Will you please give me a little more enlightenment on these two verses of Scripture: Matthew 7:24; Jeremiah 15:19?

**ANSWER:** In Matthew 7:24 Jesus says the person who hears His sayings and DOES them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock. Of course, the house that was built on a rock stood the storms of life (see verse 25). So the person who builds upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, will be able to stand the storms of life, be able to resist and overcome the temptations of the devil, and in the end hear Christ say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

As you read from the first part of Jeremiah 15, it is made clear that the people had forsaken God and He was determined to punish them for their evil ways. However, in verse 19 He gives them the promise that if they would return unto Him (after being driven out and punished), then He would bring them again to their land, and they would be able to stand before Him, having His favor and blessings. They were to separate the "precious from the vile," truth from error, right from wrong, holy from the unholy, and not return to evil. Then He goes on in verse 20 and tells how He would care for them and what else He would do for them if they would do as He said.

**QUESTION:** Is it safe to say that the mistakes we have made and repented of as Christians are buried in the sea, never to be remembered by God?

**ANSWER:** The thought that God casts our sins in the sea is based on Micah 7:19, "He will turn again, he

The Way of Truth

will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Isaiah said God has “cast all my sins behind [His] back” (Isaiah 38:17).

Jeremiah 31:34 tells us: “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Hebrews 8:12, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Since God does this with our sins, iniquities and unrighteousness, I think it would be “safe” to say He does the same with our mistakes that He forgives. That is not to say we will never have to suffer for our mistakes; but when God forgives, He forgives!

**QUESTION:** The word *fruit* in both the Old and New Testaments is always used in its singular form rather than plural. What explanation can one give this?

**ANSWER:** There are many verses where you will find the word *fruits*! However, it is true that Paul speaks of the *fruit* of the Spirit, and not fruits of the Spirit. If you look at what Paul says is the fruit of the Spirit, *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness temperance*, can you really have one part without the other? There is ONE Holy Spirit; this is HIS fruit. You can have more than one apple on a tree, but all the apples on that tree are the *fruit* of that tree. You do not find apples, oranges, peaches, etc., on the same tree.

Jesus taught us that a good tree brings forth good fruit and a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. Paul is teaching the same—the works of the flesh are the fruit of a corrupt tree; the fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of a good tree. †

## OUT OF BOX 88

I really enjoy *The Way of Truth* magazine. It is a real blessing to read in these trying times we are going through. But we know God is with us through it all.

I am sending a small donation to help in your work. ... Keep up the good work you are doing, and may God bless you all.

—L. D., Kentucky

Dear Sir,

Since 1995, I have continued to receive your monthly copy of *The Way of Truth* magazine. What a blessing! I have always looked forward to your edifying messages from the men and women of God. What of their dedication, wonderful writings targeting the youth, children, and elderly! Let's not drop the ball. Glory be to God!

—E. S., Kenya

## WRITE US THIS MONTH!

## WINNING A CROWN

By the late C. W. Naylor



### Part XXV

### Our Natural Propensities

**W**E ARE twofold beings. The real man, the man who will live forever, the man who is made in the image of God, is not the man that our eyes gaze upon. For a little while we are dwellers in a body of clay. In regard to our physical body we have no pre-eminence over the beasts: it is made of clay, and it will return to the dust from which it came. Our bodies correspond very closely to those of the animal creation: theirs and ours have practically the same functions; they are subject to the same physical laws. So far as his physical being is concerned, man differs from the animal only in being more highly organized.

We must not suppose, however, that because we have an animal body the body is necessarily impure. Such is not the case. Nothing of God's creation is impure. The body becomes impure only when it becomes defiled in some way through the sin of the soul, but the body considered by itself is pure, perfectly pure from a moral standpoint. Every part and every organ of the body was created for a pure and holy purpose. They all fulfil God's purpose. They are, therefore, as pure as God.

*All the natural functions of our bodies are good.* We ought to distinguish carefully between privacy and impurity. Some functions of the body, we naturally feel, belong to us alone; others include also those nearest us; and still others are public in their nature and have to do with our fellow men in general; but all these functions are God-created and pure. Do not allow yourself to believe that they are otherwise. It is proper and necessary that there should be a standard of modesty relating to these functions. It is proper that we should regard the standard of modesty and not deviate from it, but we wrong ourselves whenever we attach to any of these functions the idea of impurity. Our bodies are pure. Let us use them as such and keep them as such.

*The desires that naturally arise from these functions are all pure.* Get this thought firmly fixed in your mind: it may sometime save you serious trouble. When I was first saved, I did not understand myself, and I supposed that certain of these functional desires would cease when I was converted. As they did not, I became troubled and thought I was not right. I supposed that if I were really right in the sight of God, those functional desires would have ceased, and the fact that they had not ceased was evidence to me that I was not right with God. This misapprehension caused me great distress of mind and doubts and fears and perplexities. I prayed much, but found no way out of my difficulty. It was not until I learned that salvation does not destroy the natural functions of our bodies that I arrived at a point where I could have a settled experience.

Such desires have no spiritual significance. They are neither moral nor immoral; they are unmoral. To

be thirsty is not to be sinful. This is only nature's way of calling for what she needs. It is only her way of making known the things that are needed for the proper functioning of the body. So all other natural desires and appetites arising from the body have to do only with its proper functioning and are pure and holy. Do not allow yourself to think that they are not. You will do yourself an injustice if you do and make for yourself much trouble. These desires are every one necessary. You could not spare a single one of them and be normal.

*The gratification of these functional desires in a lawful way is pure and beneficial.* These functions and the desires arising from them were made for man and pertain only to man. They have no spiritual significance whatever. They have no more relation to God than have such desires in an animal. Spiritually we are none the worse if we have them, and none the better if we do not have them.

But God has seen that it was fitting and wise to impose upon us certain restrictions in the gratification of natural desires. These restrictions are for man's good. The restriction is upon *willing* and *choosing*, and not upon desire. We have no choice as to whether we shall have these desires or not, but we do have a choice as to how they shall be permitted to manifest themselves. The will regulates their gratification, and if they are given improper gratification, it is the will that becomes responsible, and it is the will that is defiled. The improper use of our physical functions, improper gratification of desires, may make those functions and desires abnormal. It may require the exercise of considerable will-power to restrain them within proper bounds, but even in such a case the desire itself is not evil. It is only unlawful gratification that is evil. Sometimes we have desires that we wish we did not have. Sometimes desire is hard to control. It asserts itself with force and clamors for gratification. We may wish that it did not do this, but, as already stated, such desire is not impure. It only requires that we keep it within the bounds that God has set for its gratification. Sometimes desire becomes abnormal, as desire for liquor or tobacco or narcotics. Such desires cannot be defiling so long as the will says no to them. Sometimes the procreative function originates strong desire. This is sometimes especially true where the body is in an abnormal condition. The principles already stated apply in such a condition also. There is no impurity unless the will fails to properly control desire when it might and should control it.

Do not lose sight of the fact that God created all the functions of your body and that you may gratify all these functions in a lawful and pure way with His approval upon you. To associate the idea of impurity with these functions or the desires arising from them or the lawful gratification of these desires is to charge God with being the author of impurity.

*All these physical desires will persist* so long as our bodies function properly. I have known men to teach publicly that after we are sanctified certain of these desires never manifest themselves again. There is no warrant for such teaching. It implies that such desires are impure. God will never take out of us anything that He put in us. He will never condemn us for doing that

which He sees necessary for our well-being. Sanctification purifies us and renders us holy in body and spirit, but it does not make us anything but men. It does not make of us something different from what God intended us to be, and in the beginning He made us what He intended us to be.

*All these functional desires must be guided by intelligence and restrained by the will.* God has given us judgment, and He expects us to use it in the right way. He expects us to keep under our bodies and bring them into subjection so that we may be holy and without blame before Him in love. He has given us the power to judge and discriminate between the right use of and the abuse of all our faculties and proclivities. We should use this intelligence. We do not need superhuman intelligence for this; we need only common sense. If we go to extremes in any way, nature will exact the penalty. The presence of the Spirit of God in our hearts will oftentimes have a modifying effect upon our physical desires; especially is this true where these have become abnormal.

During life there is a constant warfare between the flesh and the spirit. The man who is ruled by the flesh and has desire for his master, works that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, but the man who has "power over his own will" (that is, the will to use his power of self-control) and brings himself into subjection to the Spirit of God, will live righteously and godly in Christ Jesus. Appetite knows nothing of property rights nor of the laws of God or man. It knows no distinction of right and wrong, of purity and impurity. If I am hungry, any appetizing food will attract me, and desire will reach out after it. Who owns that food does not matter; desire wants it. Desire knows nothing of ownership nor does it care about the owner. Intelligence knows and recognizes property rights; therefore, intelligence and will must control appetite. If they do not and appetite gains the mastery, then the man becomes a sinner. As long as the spiritual man is in the ascendancy, as long as he rules, he keeps under the physical; but when the physical gains the ascendancy, the spiritual man ceases to be innocent and pure, and becomes sensual. That is, either the spirit must give up its way or the flesh must surrender to the spirit where their desires are contrary. This warfare is not a warfare of sin against righteousness; it is a warfare of the spirit against the flesh, of the spiritual against the natural. This warfare is not a thing of a day nor a month, but it is a thing of a lifetime. Natural desire runs out to any object that can gratify it. The spirit's task is to limit it, and gratify it only in a right manner. When this is done, purity is maintained. If we fail to do this, we become defile and sinful.

### **The Mental Constitution**

Mentally man is a trinity, composed of reason, will, and the sensibilities. We might compare him to a steamship. His body is the hull and the powerplant. Reason or intellect is, or should be, the navigator. The will is the engineer and pilot. The sensibilities are the heating and refrigerating plants. It is in reason and will that man rises farthest Godward. These are the really important things in his constitution; everything else is secondary. It is through these that he knows God and obeys Him. It is through these that we are made moral

creatures and are subject to moral law and can know and understand moral problems and principles. It is through these that we draw nigh to God. We do not have to depend upon instinct as do the animals. When God illuminates the intellect and controls the will, He has a man for His service. These are the citadels of man's soul, and it is to them that God's appeal is made and through them that man becomes Godlike.

The place of reason is in the chart-house of our vessel. God has given us a chart—His precious Word. Reason must study this chart and from it lay life's course. It must choose the port to which we shall sail and the course over which we shall sail. It must watch for the dangers that lie in the way. It must know the hidden rocks; it must know the shoals, the currents, and the various other dangers of navigation. It must read the weather-signs, so that we may know when the storms are coming and how to prepare for them and how best to weather them when they come. It must take the observations and locate our position on the voyage of life. It must decide all the problems of navigation. It must find the way out of all difficulties and dangers. Reason, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, is our only safe navigator. If we trust to anything else, we shall run upon the rocks and be lost.

*The will must steer our vessel upon its course.* Our lives must not be left to chance, but must be guided by a steady hand. Many dangerous rocks lie hidden in the sea of life. Unless a strong hand holds the wheel and obeys the voice of the navigator, we may make shipwreck. We dare not let every current carry us whither it will. We dare not let ourselves drift wherever the wind would blow us. We must keep straight upon our course. Knowing this, God has given us our wills to be the helmsmen of our vessels and to steer them in the straight and safe course that leads to the port of everlasting glory. The will must have the directing control of all the energies of our vessel. It must keep its hand upon the throttle of our lives. It must direct all our energies in the proper way. If any of our energies are not subject to our will, there is certain to be disorder in our lives. The will must be absolute master of our powers.

We need never expect to come to the place where our powers will always work good automatically. There is no such thing as an automatic Christian. Doing right is a matter of willing to do right and bringing the forces of our being into subjection to our will so that they work what the will has decreed that they shall work. We must often use our wills to compel ourselves to do that which is right, against our natural inclination. The Bible takes no account of our feelings. It points out duty. It says, "Do this" or "Do not do this." It says, "Be this" and "Do not be that." It does not say, "Feel patient"; it says, "Be patient." It does not say that we shall not feel tempted; it says that we shall not yield to temptation. When it points out any duty, it does not say, "Feel inclined to do this duty"; it says, "Do this." It lays upon the will the whole responsibility for the conduct. We are never judged by our feelings, but are judged by our wills. If reason and will are on the side of right, then the individual is judged as being right, and his conduct is approved.

*The will must be subject to the orders of reason* and resolutely carry them out. The reason that so many people are evildoers is not because they have not enough intelligence to know the right, but because their wills do not act in harmony with their intelligence. They know what is right, but they do not will to act according to their knowledge. In many things they go contrary to their judgment; they do things that they know are unwise. They deliberately set aside their reason and do that which they know will bring the condemnation of God upon them and will be ruinous to their lives here and hereafter. When the will chooses its own course regardless of the reason, it always makes shipwreck of the life. It is imperative, therefore, that you make your will subject to the dictates of your reason. If you do not, only disaster awaits you. †

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# CLEAVE UNTO THE LORD

Message by Bro. Tim Crooks, delivered in Hagerstown, MD, 07/05/20



I WOULD like for us to turn in our Bibles to Acts, chapter 11. Then we will go to the book of Ruth. Acts 11:19-23: “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” Ruth 1:14, “And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.”

I'd like to go back to Acts, chapter 11, for the time being. The title of the message tonight is, “Cleave Unto the Lord.”

The word *cleave*, in part, means, “to remain faithful; to adhere closely; stick; or to cling.” I want us to think about “cleaving unto the Lord.” Whenever we're here together, we have each other, and we greatly encourage each other, but I don't want you to cleave to me. During this Christian journey, I might fail. I can talk to the Lord and get things straightened out, but if you've been cleaving to me, then it could destroy you. Don't cleave to me. Don't cleave to Bro. Greg. He doesn't want you to cleave to him. These brethren in here would tell you, “Don't cleave to me.” In other words, “Don't look at me and stick close to me. Follow Christ.” Paul even said, “Follow me, as I follow Christ, but if I stray away, leave me, and follow Christ.”

In Acts, chapter 11, we read where Barnabas came to Antioch and admonished them “that with purpose of heart they must cleave unto the Lord.” What does it mean by “purpose of heart”? Well, if you're going to cleave to something, you have to have a reason to cleave. You have to have a reason to stick tight and hold on. We have a reason. Our purpose of heart is what drives us. I think about the saints that I've met this week, and they have cleaved to the Lord. Their purpose was that they knew there was something better. All these things that the Lord has shown us this week, and what we have accomplished—when we leave here, we have to have that purpose of heart so that we can cleave to Him. Our purpose of heart is: we have loved ones and neighbors that need to be saved. We have loved ones in false religion that need to come out.

What is our purpose of heart? I don't know what your purpose of heart is. My purpose of heart is not good for you. You have to have your own purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. If you don't have a purpose

to cleave, you will not cleave to Him. Some people's purpose is to make it to heaven. That could be the only purpose they have, but that's a good purpose. Do you know you could lose sight of that along the way, and start to think, “Well, I'm good enough, I've done everything I can do, and I don't have to keep growing”? You have to have something more than just wanting to make it to heaven. We have to empty ourselves of “us.” That's where we can start to get a purpose of heart.

When we look deeper than ourselves, when we see what really needs to be accomplished, what we're really here for, what the task is that lies ahead of us, then we can have a purpose, a meaning, and a reason—something that draws us to the Lord. I'm talking about cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart. You have to have a purpose to cleave to the Lord. You have to find that purpose, and be passionate about it. Dig into His Word. Read, meditate, pray, study. Cleave to the Lord with a purpose of heart.

In our text (Acts 11), their purpose of heart was to see the world saved. Even though they had just seen Stephen persecuted and killed, their purpose of heart was to keep going and to keep preaching, regardless of the persecution. When we leave here, some of us are going to face persecution. When you get back home, you're going to face persecution. Is your purpose of heart going to be that you will cleave to the Lord even in that persecution? Some of us will be ridiculed. Is our purpose of heart going to be to cleave to the Lord while being ridiculed and still share the Word of God? I'm talking about cleaving to the Lord. The word “cleave” here is like holding on to the side of a cliff; holding on for dear life. That's what I see when I say, “I'll cleave to the Lord.” Hold on to Him as if it means your life. You're holding to the Lord to affect other people's lives.

A time of not really cleaving could destroy your witness and testimony. It's sort of like taking one hand off the cliff and just resting for awhile, because you've been holding on so tight. At that one moment, the person you're trying to witness to won't see all the witnessing you have done. They won't see your testimony. Do you know what they'll see? Something different. But with purpose of heart, you can cleave to the Lord.

I think about David. Let's look at Psalm 17. I'll be turning to a few different scriptures. I trust you'll follow along. Psalm 17:3-8: “Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing [Isn't it a beautiful sight to be able to open your heart to the Lord and tell Him, ‘you've tried me’?]; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O

God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings."

The Lord is there for you. Open your heart to Him. See what you're cleaving to, and purpose in your heart to cleave only to Him. Let Him search your heart so He'll find nothing there. It's important that you don't let your footsteps slip. Sometimes the road is rough and the going gets tough. The mountains are hard to climb. Sometimes they're slippery and hard to climb, but the Lord is there to hold us up and to see us through. If we'll cleave to Him and follow Him, He'll see us through. If we'll cleave to the Lord, we're showing our testimony to one another. Think about that! It will be a true testimony. Cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. This cleaving to the Lord is not a group effort. This is a personal effort. David said, "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me." He didn't say he visited the congregation. He said that the Lord visited him. It's personal. We sing the chorus, "Though none go with me, still I will follow." We need to cleave to the Lord.

We have many things that need to be accomplished in this life. There are many who need to be saved and many who need encouragement. The world is getting worse and worse. A person that cleaves to the Lord and lets his light shine is a ray of hope to this world. Look at the world. People don't know which way to go. We've heard so many things we don't know what to believe. "You need to be cautious. You can be too cautious, or not cautious enough. What's good enough there is not good enough here. It's too good over here." We don't know what to believe. Do you know what's beautiful about cleaving to the Lord? It's steady. It's showing the same light all the time. Cleave to the Lord.

I want us to look at Ruth, chapter 1. We all know that this is a beautiful story of cleaving. This is referred to during a lot of weddings. This story talks about a husband and a wife cleaving to one another. Ruth's love was so strong there. The only way she could really state it was in her actions. Her love for her mother-in-law was so strong that she could only state it through her actions. I'll start with verse 10: "And they [talking about her two daughters-in-law] said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will

lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

I would like for us to look at this and compare it to us cleaving to the Lord. What a beautiful story! It is so heart-touching that Ruth would cleave to her mother-in-law, but it's so much deeper than that. When we cleave to the Lord, it's much deeper than just cleaving to a person. She said, "Where thou goest, I will go." When we cleave to the Lord, it is safe to follow Him. A part of a song says, "Tho' he may call across the sea, With Jesus I will go; And tell the lost of love so free, Till all His pow'r may know." We don't know where the Lord would have us to go, but whenever we cleave to the Lord, we'll say, "Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you say that I'm going to go, and you're going to be with me, I'm going to go." What a beautiful thought! We're talking about cleaving to the Lord; not only cleaving, but cleaving with purpose of heart. The purpose here is to follow Him wherever He leads us, even if we think it's not convenient. In our own minds, we think sometimes, "I could get into trouble for doing that." But we have to decide if we're going to cleave to the Lord, or follow our own way.

"Where thou lodgest, I will lodge." In other words, where the Lord tells you to "stop," that's where you need to stop. Some people are not ready for that commitment, even though they might say so. A lot of people don't cleave to the Lord to the point that they'll say, "If you send me and tell me to stay, then I will stay." That takes a deep commitment; a deep cleaving to the Lord. Cleave to the Lord. Be determined that if He says, "Stop here, and stay here," that you will answer, "Yes, Lord, I'll stop here, and stay here." Why? To tell the lost, to share your testimonies, to preach the Word. Whatever He tells us and wherever He sends us, isn't that our mission? We didn't come here this week to be rejuvenated and to get on higher ground so that we could bottle it up. We shouldn't take it back with us and keep it bottled up. It won't do any good in a bottle. Water won't do me any good in a bottle. As long as it is in the bottle, and the cap's on it, I could put it up to my mouth all day long and it won't come out. It won't do me any good if it stays bottled up.

What if you're following the Lord and He says, "You need to testify at work of what I've done for you"? You might be timid or afraid, but look for an opportunity to share the Word of God. I'm not telling you that He's going to tell you to move to Louisiana; but the thought here is: we'll follow wherever He tells us to go, and we'll lodge and tell His Word wherever He wants us to be. Is that right? Cleave to Him with a purpose. It's not just a free-floating ride. No, we have a job. We have to have a purpose. We have to have a mission to save the lost.

"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." This, to me, is a little deeper. Each time there was a little more consecration that Ruth was putting on herself to her mother-in-law. She said, "Naomi, your people shall be my people." When we cleave to the Lord, He has a lot of people. Do you know what you're saying? "Lord, they may worship you a little different than we do. They might not know everything I know, but Lord, I feel they're your people. So your people, Lord, are my people." We can't accomplish that without cleaving to

the Lord. Do you know why? Because we have certain things that we have been taught from our youth up, and they're instilled in us. We've seen it, been around it, and we know it's true.

Sometimes we tend to forget that it's by the Spirit that we're born into the family of God. Unless you're cleaving to the Lord, you might want to buck against Him telling you, "This is my people." "Well, Lord, that's not exactly how I've seen the women look in our church. You know they do things a little differently, and I've not experienced that. I'm just not sure about that." He said, "They're my people"; and you should say, "Lord, your people shall be my people." That's a deep consecration. We know that if we're God's people, we have the same God, but Ruth went so deep in saying, "Your God shall be my God." In other words, "All the idols that I have worshiped, I'm going to leave them in this land. When I leave this land and follow you, I'm going to follow you all the way. Your God will be my God. I will get to know Him personally."

Do you know what else Ruth said in Ruth 1:17? "Where thou diest, will I die ..." To us, it means, "in that land," but the thought there is that she would be willing to die if she never married. She was bound not to never have a husband. The thought there is that they would be in the same house together so that she would lie in the same bed that her mother-in-law lay in to die. Think about following and cleaving. That's love and consecration. There, Ruth would die; but it's even deeper than that: "... and there will I be buried."

In Bible times when people were in a foreign land, and they were ready to die, they gave commandments to take their bones to their native land. The thought here is that Ruth would be buried in the very same tomb that her mother-in-law was buried in; not just in the same land, not just dying in the same bed, but having the same God. I'm talking about her having a deep love and respect for her mother-in-law. That's the kind of love and respect we need to have for God. Whenever He calls us, or wherever He sends us, all hinges on "where thou lodgest, I will lodge." That's cleaving. That's deep. Ruth had a purpose in her heart that she would do her very best to serve her mother-in-law's needs the entirety of her life.

Of course, we know the story and how it changed, but what a beautiful story! Is it our desire to serve the Lord with that strong intent? Are we willing to cleave to Him? It is beautiful to cleave to the Lord. If you don't remember anything else I said tonight, remember to cleave to the Lord. There's something profound and deep in cleaving to the Lord.

Let's look at Deuteronomy, chapter 4. We'll start with verse 1: "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your

God are alive every one of you this day. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons."

Did you notice what Moses said in that passage of scripture? He talked about the Word of God. He said that we shall not add to it, or take away from it, but keep it as it was given to us. He said that "all of you who did, all of us who are here and have cleaved to the Lord, we are alive right now." I'm talking about spiritual life. We're not alive because of ourselves. You are not spiritually alive now because you're resting in your own understanding; you're not spiritually alive now because you followed me, or Bro. Alvin, or Bro. Greg, or any other minister; you're not alive now because you followed Mommy or Daddy, or Grandma or Grandpa, or aunt or uncle, or brother or sister. You don't have spiritual life because of them. What set those (in Moses' time) apart from the ones who were destroyed is that they cleaved to the Lord, and to His precepts, and to His law. That is why you're alive today, spiritually, because throughout the years you've cleaved to the Lord, to His laws, and to His commandments to do them. Not only to do them, but to teach them. Isn't that beautiful? When we cleave to the Lord, He preserves us. It is important that with purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord.

We don't know what we're going to face tomorrow. Things have changed so rapidly, even in our United States. From one day to the next, we don't know what to expect. You don't know what battles you're going to face tomorrow. You don't know what opposition is going to come your way. You don't know what trials you're going to face, but I can promise you this: if you cleave to the Lord, at the end of the day you'll still be spiritually alive. Cleave to the Lord. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5, 6). There are great things to accomplish by cleaving to the Lord. Hearing the testimonies this week has encouraged me to go out and tell the world what God has done. We have to cleave to Him if we're going to be able to do these things. We can't do it in ourselves.

In closing, I want to read again Acts, chapter 11, verse 23: "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Saints, cleave to the Lord.

God bless you. †

# THE POETRY PAGE

## DO NOT COMPLAIN

James B. Branam

Wherever be thy spot,  
Whatever be thy lot,  
The furnace may be hot;  
Do not complain.  
The winter winds may roar  
Around thy cottage door;  
Remember then the poor;  
Do not complain.

Temptations thick my fall,  
Thy faith seem very small;  
Just trust in God through all;  
Do not complain.  
Thy friends may all forsake,  
All hell may try to shake  
Thy soul; keep wide awake;  
Do not complain.

Dark clouds thine eyes may trace,  
The storm comes on apace;  
Then keep a happy face,  
Do not complain.  
Thy trials may seem so sore,  
While Satan loud may roar;  
Then pray a little more;  
Do not complain.

Thou hast the meanest fare—  
Not much to eat or wear,  
And naught at all to spare—  
Do not complain.  
Remember God sees all,  
And marks the sparrow's fall:  
Whatever may befall,  
Do not complain.

The cares of life are great,  
Unpleasant is thy state,  
Still trust a while and wait;  
Do not complain.  
Remember brother Paul  
Suffered the loss of all,  
And yet had learned withal  
To not complain.

## "THE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND"

Frances Ridley Havergal

Leave behind earth's empty pleasure,  
Fleeting hope and changeful love;  
Leave its soon-corroding treasure:  
There are better things above.

Leave, oh, leave thy fond aspirings;  
Bid thy restless heart be still:  
Cease, oh, cease thy vain desirings;  
Only seek thy Father's will.

Leave behind thy faithless sorrow  
And thine every anxious care;  
He who only knows the morrow  
Can for thee its burden bear.

Leave behind the doubting spirit  
And thy crushing load of sin;  
By thy mighty Savior's merit,  
Life eternal thou shalt win.

Leave the darkness gathering o'er thee,  
Leave the shadow-land behind;  
Realms of glory lie before thee;  
Enter in, and welcome find.

## SOME BLESSED DAY

W. W. Titley

Some day we'll cease our toiling here;  
Our hopes are now on things above;  
Some day without a doubt or fear  
We'll gather home to those we love.

Some day the cord of life will break,  
That holds us to this house of clay,  
In which we groan till we shall wake  
In that fair home of endless day.

Oh, glorious hope, that sweet some day!  
That hope the anchor of our soul,  
To keep us saved in Christ the way,  
And trusting Him though billows roll.

Some day—the time seems strangely near,  
When life's frail thread shall severed be  
And we shall see that home so dear,  
From earthly cares forever free.

Some blessed day—oh, joyful day  
When we shall speed from earth away.  
Our feet shall press that golden shore,  
To be with Christ forevermore. †

# THE REAL ISSUE IN TEMPTATION

Radio Message  
by the late Bro. Alvin Craig



OUR SUBJECT for today's broadcast is, "The Real Issue in Temptation." The text is taken from James 1:13, 14: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

The word *tempted* is used in connection with Abraham and his offering his son, Isaac; but you'll notice here that the apostle James says, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." So the word *tempt* or *temptation* has different meanings. It means, in part, "to try or to test; to provoke in a good sense."

Temptation, as we usually think of it, is a temptation to do something that is evil or wrong, but we must understand that the word *tempt* or *temptation* is also used in the sense of, "to try, to test, or to prove." This is in a good sense. This "trying," such as suffering in the case of Job, does not mean that there is a drawing away towards sin, but it means God is trying us or allowing Satan to try us that the end results may be beneficial or helpful to our own soul. By facing the trial—facing that which tempts (or tries) us—and being victorious—maintaining the right attitude, maintaining our love for God—shows that we love God. It shows that we love the truth and righteousness. This trying, such as suffering, which is intended to build us up and strengthen us, does not mean that there is a drawing away towards sin. I suppose that Satan would like to try to take advantage of suffering. In those times of trying and testing, he would like to try to get us to accuse God. Satan certainly must have tried Job, but the Bible says, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

The other thought, which is the thought of temptation towards evil, comes from Satan, not from God. God never tempts or tries someone with the purpose (or intent) of his doing evil, or endeavoring to lead him into evil. Any time that there is a temptation that leads toward evil, that temptation is from Satan. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil." God does not tempt any man.

Now turning this around a little bit here, it is possible for us to tempt God, as the Scriptures use the word *tempt*. In this regard, as to the use of the word *tempt*, we need to understand that it means "to provoke." We read in the book of Numbers, chapter 21, beginning with verse 4, "And they [the children of Israel] journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea,

to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." Why? Because they provoked the Lord.

We are told in I Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 9, where the apostle Paul refers to this incident: "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." So we can provoke God by rebelling against Him—by murmuring against Him. In the case of the children of Israel, they not only murmured and complained as to God's dealings with them, but they also murmured and complained against Moses whom God had chosen to lead them. It is possible for people to provoke God today by murmuring, and complaining, and criticizing, and finding fault with those that God has chosen to lead His people. Yes, God does have those who are chosen to oversee and to lead congregations. Satan would like nothing better than to disrupt a congregation by causing people to murmur and to complain against their God-ordained leader. Now I'm not setting man up as God. I'm simply saying that when you murmur and complain against the one God has chosen to lead you, you are in reality murmuring and complaining against God.

As we read the history of the children of Israel, especially the 40 years that Moses led them, they often directed their criticism at Moses; but in reality, they were criticizing and finding fault with God. God was the One who had spoken to Moses and caused him to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. So we need to be careful that we do not provoke the Lord. Paul said, "Ye shall not provoke the Lord," or "Ye shall not tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." Adam Clarke, in his *Clarke's Commentary*, said, "Ye shall not provoke Him by entertaining doubts of His mercy, goodness, providence, and truth."

We read in the book of Matthew, chapter 4, verse 7, where Satan was tempting the Lord and where the Lord responded to Satan's temptations: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." So we're not to provoke the Lord our God. We're not to murmur against Him. We're not to question His mercy, His goodness, His providence, nor His truth. Again, quoting from Clarke: "To expose myself to any danger naturally destructive, with the vain presumption that God will protect and defend me from the ruinous consequences of my imprudent conduct, is to tempt God." Of course, Satan had endeavored to get Christ to do that very thing when he tried to get Him to jump off the pinnacle of the temple. But Jesus Christ said that we should not tempt the Lord our God. In other words, we should not provoke Him. So the real issue in temptation is to decide whether to sin against God or not to sin against God.

When we talk about temptation, in the sense of "leading to do wrong," the real issue in temptation is to sin or not to sin. To look at that in its true light, what we're saying is: to decide either to live for God, live in

obedience to His Word, live a life separated from sin, live a life unto Christ, or else to rebel against God, to rebel against His Word, to rebel against His Christ, and go our own way. When Satan comes with his temptations, it is always with the purpose of leading us away from God and away from life in Christ. Remember, “the wages of sin is death.”

Satan doesn't come to you and tell you, “Now I'm coming with the purpose and the intent of leading you into death”; and he doesn't really come and say, “I've come with the purpose of leading you away from God.” He endeavors to make his temptation look as enticing and desirable as he possibly can. He dresses it up in the very finest manner that he possibly can; otherwise, it would not be so tempting. Remember, James said, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” The word *lust* means, “strong desires.” *Enticed* means that there is an interest there. You are being led astray because there's an interest there. Satan is able to make his temptations look so enticing, so desirable, so good that they tend to draw you away. The child of God must be watchful, prayerful, and alert that he not fall into the trap or snare of Satan. If he does yield himself to the temptation that Satan brings, there are dire consequences.

James goes on to say in chapter 1, verse 15, “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Some people seem to have the idea that just because an evil thought comes to their mind that they have sinned. No! A temptation is not sin. Jesus Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, yet the Scriptures clearly tell us that “He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” So *yielding* to temptation is sin, and sin produces spiritual death—separation from God. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (I John 5:12). So sin separates from God. It separates us from the Source of life. It robs us of life, and we are abiding in death.

Sin also robs us of Christ's leadership for our life. The Bible tell us, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” So whenever we yield to temptation, sin brings death. Satan then takes over our life, because we are now robbed of the power that we need to overcome sin and Satan. As long as we live in obedience to God's Word and Christ is reigning in our heart and the Holy Spirit is abiding in us, we have power through the grace of God to say “no” to sin. But if we yield to sin, we lose Christ's leadership, we lose His power out of our life, we lose the Spirit of God out of our life, and Satan takes over. Then we become his servants and do his bidding.

In dealing with others, we are told in Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Yes, there are instructions in the Word of God as to how a Christian should deal with others. One who may have

lost the grace of God out of his heart and has returned to a life of sin—that individual does not need the Christian to jump on him and push him down further. That person needs the prayers of the Christian. He needs the concern of the Christian, and the Christian should endeavor, if at all possible, to lead that erring one back to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know you can have faults without committing known sin, but Paul said, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” About this verse of scripture, Clarke says, “We are not to act as judge but as being one who could also be tempted to do the same or some other wrong.” So we are to be considerate of one another, and we are to endeavor to deal with one another with brotherly kindness, love, and concern.

To yield to temptation—to sin—is to give ourselves over to the service of Satan. I know there are many in the religious world today who would have you to believe that we are all sinners, and that we have to sin more or less every day in word, deed, and thought, but the Bible does not teach any such thing.

Let us look again at the three outstanding temptations of Jesus as recorded in Matthew, chapter 4. I'd like to read verses 8-10: “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” So to yield to temptation—to commit sin—is to become a servant of sin. You are no longer a servant of God. Satan held out the kingdoms of the world as a temptation. How presumptuous he was to think that he could give them to the One who had made this world to begin with! He said, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Satan has promised many people many things, but there's always a price tag.

The real issue in temptation (as far as tempting to sin) is that Satan is endeavoring to get you to go away from God, to stop serving Him, to give up spiritual life, to give up Christ, and to serve him (Satan) instead. But remember, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). So when Satan comes against you with his temptations, remember he's endeavoring to get you to give up life, to give up God, to give up Christ and serve him, and in the end to be lost eternally. Consider these things.

May God give you grace to resist and to overcome Satan, and to be faithful and true to God who offers life eternal. †

*James 1:13, 14: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”*

# THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



## O BE CAREFUL LITTLE HANDS!

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

"Do you know where Dad is?" I asked my mother. "I need him to help me with something." I had just gotten home from school, and I was anxious to get started on a biology project my tenth-grade teacher had assigned our class.

"I think he's fixing something in the chicken house," my mother answered.

"What do you need?" my father asked when I had found him.

"Could you please come reach something for me?" I asked. "I'm not tall enough."

"What are you trying to reach?" my father asked, straitening up from the feed bin he had been repairing.

"There's a tulip poplar tree at the top of the hill on the way up from the bus stop," I explained to my father, "and I need a leaf from it for the leaf collection I'm supposed to make for biology class."

"Well," said my father, "as soon as I get done here I'll walk down with you, and you can show me which leaf you want."

It wasn't long before my father and I were standing on the road under the branches of the tulip poplar tree I had noticed earlier.

"How did you figure out what kind of tree this was?" Dad wanted to know. He reached up and easily pulled a leaf from the tall tree.

"I looked it up in the field guide I got from the library today. I don't know why I've never noticed this tree before, but I saw it when I was walking up the hill after the bus dropped us off. It was really easy to identify, because its leaves don't look like any others I've ever seen."

"Doesn't look much like the Lombardy poplar trees we have in our yard," my father said.

"The field guide says that it's not really a poplar tree," I told my father. "It's in the magnolia family."

"I see," said my father. "Well, I'm glad I could help you out."

I held the leaf carefully as we walked home. My mind was already racing ahead to all the types of trees we had on our own property. I was sure I would be able to turn in an outstanding leaf collection by the deadline my teacher had set.

When we arrived at the house, I thanked my father again and ran downstairs to the basement table where I did my schoolwork. I put my leaf between the pages of a thick catalog my mother had said I could use. My little sister, Esther, followed me. She watched attentively as I closed the catalog, making sure none of the edges of the leaf were bent.

"Why did you put the leaf in the back of the catalog instead of the front?" Esther wanted to know.

"The pages in the front are glossy, and they won't absorb as much moisture from the leaf as it dries," I told her.

"What does 'glossy' mean?" she asked.

"It means 'shiny,'" I said.

I set some heavy books on top of the catalog. The leaf would dry flat in a few days, and then I would be able to attach it to a page in my collection.

"Where did you get that leaf?" Esther asked.

"It's from a tree at the top of the steep hill," I said.

"Remember how I saw it on the way home from the school bus and jumped up to grab one of the leaves?" I reminded her. "It was too tall for me, and so Dad went with me just now to get a leaf."

Esther nodded. Since there was nothing more to see, she slipped away to find something else to do.

I looked thoughtfully at the makeshift drying "press" sitting on top of my tulip poplar leaf. Something had begun to bother me.

Where did you get that leaf? my little sister had asked. It was an innocent question, but it brought a string of unbidden thoughts to my mind. The leaf had come from a branch that hung over the road, but the trunk of the tree was in the yard that belonged to Mrs. Gavin,\* the lady that lived on the corner property where the road curved at the top of the hill.

*Was it wrong for me to ask Dad to pull the leaf from that tree? I wondered. Had I taken something that belonged to someone else?* A memory from my young childhood came to my mind. I remembered a Sunday evening when I ran into the yard next to the church building and picked a beautiful flower. When my father learned what I had done, he took me to a Sunday school room in the church basement and disciplined me. With tears in his eyes, he explained how wrong it was to take something that belonged to someone else.

"Do you know the little song we sing in Sunday school?" he asked me. "*O be careful, little hands, what you do.*" Your little hands should never reach out and take something that doesn't belong to you. The Bible tells us, 'Thou shalt not steal.'"

Now, although I was a high school student, I felt just like the little girl who had picked the forbidden flower. What should I do?

I could hear my parents talking together upstairs in the kitchen. Slowly, I mounted the steps and opened the door. I sat down at the kitchen table and waited for a chance to speak. When my parents paused in their conversation, I addressed my dad.

"Dad," I said, "something is bothering me."

"What is it?" he asked.

"That leaf you picked for me ... did it belong to Mrs. Gavin, since the trunk of the tree is on her property?"

My father was silent for a few moments, and then he said slowly, "Well ... I guess it depends on what the law says about tree branches that overhang the road." He paused to think again, and then continued. "It didn't seem to me like it was wrong to pick the leaf—since we didn't go into Mrs. Gavin's yard."

"It's been bothering me," I told him.

"If it's bothering you, then we'll go take care of it," Dad said, standing up. He looked at my mother. "Rebecca and I are going for a little walk," he said.

"Don't stay too long," she responded. "Supper's almost ready."

"It won't take but a minute," said my dad.

Side by side, my father and I walked down the road to Mrs. Gavin's house. Without the slightest hesitation, my father strode to her front door and knocked. In a few moments, Mrs. Gavin was opening the door to us.

"Can I help you?" she asked.

"Well," said Dad, "my daughter here is doing a science project and needed a leaf from one of your trees down by the road."

"Help yourself!" said Mrs. Gavin before my father could explain further.

"Well," my father continued. "I already picked a leaf from a branch that is growing out over the roadway. Afterwards, my daughter felt it would have been better if we had asked you first."

"Bless her heart!" exclaimed Mrs. Gavin. "It's good to see a young'un care about doing what is right!"

"We're going to run off now," my father said. "My wife has supper ready."

"Thank you for coming by, Mr. Castang," said Mrs. Gavin as we walked away. "I'm glad to have you for my neighbor."

"Do you feel better now?" my father asked when we reached the road.

I sighed with relief. "Yes!" I told him. "I feel so much better!"

"Whatever you do, keep an honest heart," he said. "You'll never regret doing the right thing."

To this day, I remember my father's words. And I remember how quick he was to support me in following my conscience.

Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 12:17, which says, "He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit." God is righteous, and if we want others to see Him in our lives, we must speak the truth and be honest in our actions.

You may be tempted to tell a lie in order to get something you want, or to avoid punishment for something you've done, but dishonesty will never make your life better. One dishonest act or word usually leads to another, and the final result is always disastrous. Ask the Lord to keep you truthful and make you a shining example that others can safely follow.

\*not her real name

### Activity

Unscramble these letters to find another verse in the Bible that tells us to be honest:

**Drivope nsigth theson ni eth histg fo lal emn.**

### Answer to Last Month's Activity

Synonyms for the word **certain**:

1. sure
2. definite
3. undeniable †

September 2020

## BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

# SANCTIFICATION

## THE STORY OF STEPHEN

**Scriptures:** Acts 6:5, 6, 8-15; 7:54-60.

Acts 6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Acts 7:54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

**Memory Verse:** And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.—Ephesians 5:18.

**Aim:** To show how the Holy Spirit worked through Stephen.

## INTRODUCTION

The history of the life of Stephen surely reveals the marvelous way in which the Holy Spirit can work through one who is completely sold out to God. There

is hardly any limit to what can be accomplished when God is permitted to work unhindered in any meek and humble child of God. From the first, Stephen's great faith in God manifested itself by the many miracles which he wrought among the people. The Spirit gave him the boldness to declare the pure truth of the gospel to those who hated the believers and declared that Jesus was an imposter. As he spake under the anointing of the Spirit, refuting their arguments that Jesus was not the Christ, they became exceedingly angry and sought to put him to death. The Holy Spirit is our greatest need, for it is He who endues us with power, power to live a pure and holy life, power to witness for Christ boldly under all circumstances, power to keep self under control at all times, and power to resist Satan at every turn. In our own strength we are far too weak to cope with such a powerful enemy as the devil. It is the lack of the Spirit that has brought about all the divisions in modern Christendom. It is the devil's plan to divide and scatter God's people and thus bring about strife and confusion where unity should prevail. The Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts will cause us to love one another with a pure heart fervently and to go about settling, the Bible way, any difference that might arise. There are no differences so great that cannot be settled in this way, for it is just natural for the Spirit of God to bind us together with the cords of love. Also, we are commanded to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Without the Spirit, self rises up, and the desire to have our own way and preeminence asserts itself so that no adjustment can be made. Thus, we have another group of people off to themselves and the starting of another sect, which is just another victory for Satan.

### MEDITATIONS

#### STEPHEN CHOSEN FOR SPECIAL SERVICE

**—Acts 6:5—Stephen, a man full of ... the Holy Ghost**—I know of no greater recommendation any man could possibly have than to be filled with the Spirit of God. It is certain that a man of this character will manifest the fruits of the Spirit and will prove a blessing to those with whom he comes in contact. **Verse 6—And when they had prayed**—I want you to take particular notice that the disciples did not hurriedly choose Stephen and the other six, but they took the matter to God in prayer and got His will in the matter. How necessary it is that we let God direct our every activity in matters like this! We have His promise that if we will acknowledge Him in all our ways He will direct our paths.

**GOD MANIFESTS HIS POWER THROUGH STEPHEN—Acts 6:8—Did great wonders and miracles**—The Word tells us that signs and wonders shall follow the preaching of the truth; so this was merely the natural results that should attend the preaching of real God-called, Holy Ghost ministers. **Verse 9—Disputing with Stephen**—Holy Ghost preaching will accomplish one of two things: if you receive it, it tenders your heart; but if you rebel against it, you play right into the hands of the devil and are likely to become very bitter against the truth, as happened in this case. **Verse 10—They were not able to resist**—There is nothing more powerful than the Spirit

of God; and though these men knew that Stephen was a man of God and was speaking the truth, their rebellious hearts would not permit them to acknowledge it. It is indeed dangerous to rebel against the truth, for when we do, we become agents of the devil and are very likely to receive a delusion from God, from which there is no escape.

#### THE FRUIT OF A REBELLIOUS HEART—Acts

**6:11-14**—As Stephen, empowered by the Holy Ghost, spake to these wicked sectarians, he put to naught every argument they could bring forth that Jesus was not the Christ. Satan, working through them, caused them to resort to lies and treachery to make an end of this godly man. There does not seem to be anything too mean or low-down that the devil will not tempt men to do to accomplish his ungodly ends. In this case we see how these religious professors themselves violated one of the Ten Commandments in bringing false witnesses against Stephen. Let us desire truth above everything else in this world, for it is only the pure, unadulterated truth of God's holy Word that will see us safely through the portals of heaven.

#### THE GLORY OF GOD RADIATED FROM STEPHEN—Acts 6:15—Saw his face as ... the face of an angel

—Although Stephen was being falsely accused and being tried for his very life, he was not afraid, but spake boldly the truth about Christ. As he spoke, the glory of heaven shone from his face; but even this seemed to have no effect upon the stony hearts of those in the council room. Then followed one of the most beautiful discourses of the Bible as Stephen reiterated the story of the Israelites from the time of Abraham down to the coming of Christ. As he told them of the sins of their fathers, they became very angry and wanted to kill him; but the Holy Spirit comforted him, and he was not afraid, neither did he bear them any malice.

#### THE SPIRIT CONDEMNS THEM—Acts 7:54—

**They were cut to the heart**—As Stephen related to them how their fathers had persecuted the prophets and had killed them who had foretold the coming of Jesus, of whom they were now the betrayers and murderers, they were cut to the heart and became exceedingly angry.

#### THE SPIRIT COMFORTS STEPHEN—Acts 7:55, 56—And saw the glory of God

—God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, but to be with us to the very end. Here we see a fulfillment of this promise. The heavens were opened, and Stephen was permitted to see the glory of heaven and His loving Savior at the right hand of the Father. How trivial death must have seemed to him then as he viewed with expectancy his future abode! Let us remember that regardless of the seeming severity of the ordeal before us, God will furnish the necessary grace to go through victoriously.

#### STEPHEN STONED—Acts 7:57-59—And ran upon him

—When Stephen exclaimed, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," the hearts of his accusers became enraged, and they dragged him from the council room and outside the city, where they stoned him to death.

Even through this ordeal, his courage and faith in God did not fail, for he was able to call on God and say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

**THE VICTORY—Acts 7:60—And he kneeled down**—Here we see Stephen manifesting the true Christian spirit to the very end. Though they were killing him, he had a love and compassion for them that constrained him to ask God not to lay this sin to their charge. He surely followed the example of his loving Savior to the very end. Stephen was the first person who lost his life for the cause of Christ. His courage and steadfastness to the end, with such a glorious victory over the forces of evil, certainly should prove a great encouragement to all of us to press the battle on with renewed courage and energy.

### CONCLUSION

As we follow the life of Stephen and see how marvelously the Spirit led him successfully through every situation, and how God used him in performing many miracles among the people, we ought to be convinced of the futility of attempting to run the Christian race without the infilling of the Holy Spirit. We may never face stoning as did Stephen, but we are confronted with the same devil that he was. Satan is a much more formidable foe than most people realize. It is through the Spirit that God enables us to have victory over all the attacks of the devil, and without Him, it is impossible to stay on the winning side. We are commanded by the Scriptures to put on the WHOLE armor of God, which is comprehended in the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Ephesians 6:13, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

### FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What is the main cause of division in religious groups?
2. What exceptional qualification did Stephen have for the new work assigned to him?
3. How was he chosen for his work?
4. In what ways did the Spirit manifest Himself through Stephen?
5. Why were the rulers and scribes unable to resist the spirit by which he spake?
6. What caused them to be so rebellious against the truth?
7. How did the Lord comfort Stephen in his last hour? †

### VIEW OUR WORSHIP SERVICES LIVE!

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

## One Thing is Needful

Message by Bro. Matt Deville,  
delivered in Hagerstown, MD, 06/28/20

**I**F YOU have your Bibles, I'd like for you to turn to Luke, the tenth chapter. We'll start with verse 38: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."



Martha was a good woman. Do you agree? She took very seriously the responsibility of preparing for the Master to come. A lot of times when we're expecting a guest to come in (maybe someone we really look up to), we want to do our best to make that guest feel welcome. We want that guest to have the very best. I'm sure Martha prepared the best meal that she knew how to prepare. She tried to make everything just perfect for the Lord. That is commendable.

We all have responsibilities. We have things we must do; but in this, Martha lost sight of what was of the utmost importance. I don't believe the Lord spoke to her harshly, but I believe the Lord was saying, "Martha, you've taken your eyes off what is most needful." Dear Ones, there are times in our lives where our eyes may get off a little bit. It may be a good cause that we're doing, and we may even be working on things for the Lord and the church, but we get our eyes off a little bit from where they need to be. But I'm glad we serve a Master who says, "Dear Ones, let's get our focus back on what's most important and needful." You see, although all these things have some importance, they are so little in comparison to the one thing that is needful.

We need God. We need to spend time kneeling and talking to God. Saints, we can't get our eyes on the things that are going on around us to the point that we lose focus of the one thing that is needful. We need God in our lives. The Bible tells us to keep (these things) in remembrance. As humans, we forget some things, don't we? We forget some things more than others. It seems to me that when we have a lot going on, we lose track of what we're supposed to be doing. I lose focus on the task that's at hand, and then I need something to bring me back in focus. Other things need to be done, but if they hinder me from doing the most important thing that is before me, I need to lay them aside and focus on the task at hand. "One thing is needful, Martha," Jesus said, "and I'm not going to take it away from

Mary.” Saints of God, we need to keep that one thing before us.

One of the things that is taught to a project manager is to prioritize the duties that are to be carried out to complete a project. By prioritizing, they take the things that need to be done and list them down in order of importance. “We have to get this done. This is more important than any of the other things that we may complete. This is of the utmost importance. This particular thing takes precedence over all the other things on our list to be done.” The project itself can still be successful if some of these lower items are not completed; but if we fail to complete the items that are of the most important, the whole project is a failure.

Listen to me, in our lives we have responsibilities. There may be a lot of items in my life that I fail in, that I fall short of what I would like to accomplish, but if I can stand before God at the end and hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant,” then I’ve accomplished the most important thing.

Genesis 5:24, “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” What else did Enoch do? I don’t know, but what mattered most was the one thing that was needful in his life, and Enoch accomplished it. He walked with God. Saints of God, we might not have the greatest wealth in this world, we might not have fame and honor, but if our names are written down in the Lamb’s Book of Life, we’ve accomplished the one thing that is needful.

The Bible tells us, “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” How many people’s lives today are being built upon what they feel is best? We all have our own way of looking at things. A man’s way is right in his own eyes, but you see, God sees much deeper. He understands much deeper than we do. If we get off the plan that God has for our lives, who’s doing the building? “Lord, thou art the Potter; I am the clay. I may feel this is best for me, this may seem what’s best for me, but you know what’s best for me. You know the way that I take.”

Bro. Greg mentioned this morning that in Bible times it seemed that people were forsaken of God, but Saints, we have to keep on holding on to God. One thing is needful! One thing is of the utmost importance.

As we look over our land today, there is so much turmoil, bickering, and fighting. I do believe there are some things in our country that need to be adjusted, but the things that need to be adjusted get lost in all the bickering and fighting and arguing. People lose sight of the goal that is before them. I say that to say this: we as the people of God have to make sure that it is God in heaven that is influencing the way we live our lives. So many people today are influenced by this and by that, and by the other; but if we want to make heaven our home, we must let God lead and guide. We must let God build our house. One thing is needful, but Saints of God, it’s available. God has given us that one thing that we need.

If you would like, you can turn with me to Mark, chapter 12. It’s beautiful when we look into the Word of God and find where the educated and the religious people had questions to ask Jesus. “Let’s ask Him this. How can we trip Him up? How can we get Him?” I think

at times they thought, “We have a good question. We’ll get Him with this one.” But they would go to our Lord, and with such wisdom, He would answer their questions perfectly. He knows the answers to the problems, to the things in our lives that we face which seem to have no answer. We can depend on Him. Mark 12, verses 28-31: “And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?” In other words, what’s most important above everything else? “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” What a privilege it is to have a relationship with God! But you see, there are so many things trying to steal that love. Saints, we have to keep our love for God strong. We have to hold fast to it. We have to keep our love tender towards the Lord.

We read in Revelation 2:1-3, “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” They were doing some really good things. Commendable actions they were taking, but there was something they were falling a little short on, something they were lacking. Maybe they became so focused on certain items that they started slipping in this area: verse 4, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

Dear Ones, I say again, we have to keep our love for God strong. There are going to be trials and troubles that come our way to try to steal that love, and to sway us away from the Lord. But love will keep us bound to Him. We don’t want our love for the Lord to be just out of habit. Listen, that can happen at times. Let me say this: sometimes we may not feel like doing what the Lord would have us to do. Does that ever happen? We have an enemy that comes our way to try to make the ways of the Lord look hard. We want to keep pressing forward, even when we don’t necessarily feel like doing so. We want to make sure that we’re doing the things that we do from a heart of love as unto the Lord. Look at it this way: “Lord, I’m doing this for you. I’m suffering long for you. Lord, I want to do whatever you would have me to do for your honor and for your glory.”

If your job is to sweep the floor at church, do it as unto the Lord. If we’re not careful, the devil can have us feeling like Martha, “Here I am working hard. This isn’t fair.” Does that ever come to you? Dear Ones, what they did to our Lord and Savior was in no way fair. If I can bring glory to God doing my little part, whether it’s fair or not, let me do it as unto the Lord. Let me do it for His sake, His glory, and honor.

The Bible tells us, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." In other words, what Paul is saying here is: "Above everything else that we do as Christians, the most important thing, the one thing that is needful, is that our love for God be where it needs to be. That needs to be the focus of our lives. When that happens, it's amazing how all these other things will fall into place. It's beautiful how they fall into place. But we have to keep our love for God strong. We have to fight for it.

In I Timothy 1:5, we read, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart." When God saves us, He takes out that old stony heart and gives us a heart of flesh. Many in the world today will give money, but they're doing it to be looked up to. They do this and that, but their motives are not in the right place. We do it because we love God and people. We do it because we love God out of a pure heart; not begrudgingly, but out of a pure heart. I'm glad that God has put a pure heart in His people.

Our attitude should be, "Lord, what can I do? What would you have me to do to be a blessing for the furtherance of your gospel?" You see, we might not all be able to sing beautifully. We might not all be able to play the piano beautifully, but God has a work for each of us to do. The woman in the Bible only had two mites, but she gave all that she had, because she was focused on what was most important. Give God what we have, although we may think it is little. It's amazing what God can do. The young lad only had five loaves and two fishes, but Jesus used it and multiplied it to feed a multitude. Just let the Lord have His way, and we'll be amazed at what He can do.

Psalms 37:23, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." Dear Saints, do we love the ways of the Lord? Do we truly love Him? Do we delight to do that which is pleasing in the sight of God? It's not always easy. Sometimes we run into people who don't view things correctly. Let me say this: when you go on social media, or turn on the news today, sometimes it's hard to take the right attitude toward these things. We see the injustice of the things that are happening and it can be difficult to take the right attitude. We don't take the right attitude because it's the easy thing. We take the right attitude because we love the Lord. We delight to do what is right in the sight of God. It's a beautiful way; a wonderful way.

We need to surrender our ways to the Lord. This is of the utmost importance. In I Timothy 6:6-8, we read, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." Now are those scriptures telling us that we should have no ambition? Are they telling us that we should make no plans? I don't believe that's what they're telling us. I believe what they're

saying is that we must keep everything surrendered to God. "Lord, have your way. Whether I'm to be a beggar or poor, or whether I'm to have great wealth, Lord, my contentment is found in You. My happiness and purpose in life is in You." True contentment is not found in the things of this world. The things of this world are not going to bring you happiness, but living for God is where true happiness and contentment are found.

Listen carefully to verse 9 of I Timothy 6: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." I want to point out here—"But they that will be rich." They have determined in their own mind that they are going to be rich. There's a difference between God blessing you in abundance than you being determined that, "I'm going to obtain this." It says, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." I'd like to say here: any time we determine that we're going to do something and it's outside of the will of God, there are dangers and snares there. A lot of people have to do things that are not lawful. We've heard of people who created Ponzi schemes in trying to deceive others to obtain riches.

If God sees fit to bless us with riches, let's thank God, and use them for Him. Our way and our will must be surrendered to Him. "Lord, lead me in the path that you would have me to take." When we're where God wants us to be, He gives us grace. He gives us help and strength for whatever may come our way. When we become determined that we're going to do this or that, and do it our way, God cannot be the help that He wants to be to us. We have to surrender our ways to the Lord.

II Timothy 2:4, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." The important word here is "entangleth." We all have responsibilities. We have to provide for our family. We have to go out into the workforce. We have responsibilities outside of our own congregation. We have work to do; but the scripture says, "No man that warreth entangleth himself." You see, many people become entangled with the cares of this life. They become entangled with the desire, "I have to move up in my company. I have to have this much money in my account." They become so entangled that they lose sight of what's the most important thing. It's OK to have ambition; it's OK to work hard, but don't lose sight of what's most important.

When God is in His proper place, it brings such joy in life. I've spent a good day's hard work talking to the Lord. I've had times talking to the Lord while bush hogging. You know, the Lord can talk to you in any place. I remember years ago being at work here in Hagerstown. I was listening to some gospel music and tears came to my eyes because I felt God's presence so close. Saints, we have to bring God into every situation in life. I don't want to go through this life without God being there with me. It's OK to seek after different things, but we have to make sure that we include God in our seeking. We don't want to go to any place if God is not there with us. Let me promise you this: Young People, let God have His way in your life. He'll bless your life beyond measure. Keep your ways surrendered unto the Lord.

In I Peter 2:11, we read, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims [We have a destination that we’re aiming for. ‘This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through.’ Dear Saints, this world is not our home, but we have to keep our eyes on the prize.], abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” Fleshly lusts war against the soul. That’s what they do. Many people lose sight of what’s most important. They start losing their vision. They start losing their desire and love for God. We can’t lose our love for God. We have to keep our eyes upon the Lord. The enemy is sly and will endeavor to use even lawful things to draw us away from God. Dear Ones, we need to pray as Jesus did—“Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”

What did the Lord tell us in Proverbs? “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” “Bro. Matt, do you mean I should wake up in the morning and say, ‘Lord, what would you have me to do’”? Absolutely! That doesn’t mean you don’t have things planned out, but, “Lord, be with me in each decision that I make. In my attitude towards others, and in all that I do, Lord, direct my path that I might walk pleasing in your sight.” God will be faithful and be there with you.

I read this scripture earlier, but I want to include the second part: “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.” We all, at times, can lose sight—a little bit—of what’s most important. As Peter was walking on the water, he took his eyes off the Lord. He saw the waves. He looked away and began to sink.

Dear Ones, there are a lot of waves and storms in our world today. There’s a lot of uncertainty. In our minds, we look and wonder what’s going to become of our country, what’s going to be there for our children, and what they are going to face. But we can’t lose sight of God, because there’s hope in Him. There’s rest in God. The same grace that has been here all down through the ages is there for us, and also for our children. As parents, we want a good life for our children. We labor hard to try to teach them right from wrong, and we do wonder what they’re going to face. But God’s grace is available for them. I don’t know what they might face, but there’s nothing they’ll face that God’s grace won’t be sufficient for them.

With all the trouble and turmoil going on in this world today, don’t lose sight of God. “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” He’s the One we can depend on. He’s the One we can trust in. If we see that we’ve gotten off a little bit, God is there to hold us up. He’s not there to beat us down. He wants us, just like Martha, to get our eyes back on what’s important. We serve a loving and a patient God.

The Scriptures tell us, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). We want our affection to be on heavenly things, because the things of this earth fade away. So easily they’re taken from us. A few months ago, our economy was booming. Things were going so well. We were looking

forward to coming to camp meeting. As Bro. Greg said, “That’s the highlight of our year.” But things change that we can’t help. Dear Ones, we can’t lose sight of God. Even in times of trouble, I believe God is still able to work.

In the Philippian jail, Paul and Silas might have asked themselves, “How is this a good thing? Here we are, endeavoring to serve the Lord and to work for Him, and we’re in jail. We might as well quit trying. What’s the use?” That “what’s the use” attitude could come our way, too. “What’s the use of trying? There’s evil on every hand. We as the people of God can’t even gather together like we would like to.” But Saints of God, we have to keep our eyes upon the Lord. “Lord, even in this time of difficulty, you have a work for me to do. Help me to do my part. Help me to keep my eyes on the prize that is set before me.”

Proverbs 23:5, “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” So many people are seeking after this and that. They’re putting their life’s effort into so many causes that in the end have no value. We look at Martha. Though it was commendable that she wanted to provide the Master with a good meal, it failed in comparison to what Mary was seeking. In all the things that seem so important in our world today, when we stand before God, they will have no value. But we can hear Jesus say, “You did a good job. You did what you could. It may have seemed that so little was accomplished, but you gave me your best.”

I Corinthians 15:58, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding [giving it all you can] in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” This world needs the true Christian life lived before them. At times it seems we’re so small in number. It seems so many out there are having their heyday, but when we’re being led and directed by God, our labor for the Lord is not in vain. Our life has a purpose. God is using us in ways we can’t even imagine. God has a plan for your life and mine, but we must keep our eyes upon Him. We must keep our hearts and minds focused on God. If we do, we will be so glad when we stand before Him.

Paul said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Paul didn’t leave this world a wealthy, wealthy man. He may not have been thought of very highly by many people, but God was pleased with the life that he lived. Dear Ones, if we’re going to make it, we have to keep our eyes upon the Lord.

May God bless you. †

**“THEREFORE, MY BELOVED BRETHREN, BE YE STEDFAST, UNMOVEABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD, FORASMUCH AS YE KNOW THAT YOUR LABOUR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD.”**

**—I CORINTHIANS 15:58.**



Greetings,

This month I would like to share an excellent list of godly character qualities to consider and be reminded of. As Christians, our goal is not merely moralism or behaviorism, but to have a true experience. However, these character qualities should be a reflection of

a saved and sanctified heart. May I encourage you to study these and challenge yourselves to bear more fruit for Him.—Bro. Doug

## Character Qualities

Taken from: [GraceOnlineLibrary](http://GraceOnlineLibrary.com)

### Alertness vs. Unawareness

Being aware of that which is taking place around me so I can have the right response to it (Mark 14:38)

### Attentiveness vs. Unconcern

Showing the worth of a person by giving undivided attention to his words and emotions (Hebrews 2:1)

### Availability vs. Self-centeredness

Making my own schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those I am serving (Roman 12:1)

### Boldness vs. Fearfulness

Confidence that what I have to say or do is true and right and just in the sight of God (Acts 4:29)

### Cautiousness vs. Rashness

Knowing how important right timing is in accomplishing right actions (Proverbs 19:2)

### Compassion vs. Indifference

Investing whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others (I John 3:17)

### Contentment vs. Covetousness

Realizing that God has provided everything I need for my present happiness (I Timothy 6:8)

### Creativity vs. Underachievement

Approaching a need, a task, an idea from a new perspective (Romans 12:2)

### Decisiveness vs. Double-mindedness

The ability to finalize difficult decisions based on the will and ways of God (James 1:5)

### Deference vs. Rudeness

Limiting my freedom in order not offend the tastes of those whom God has called me to serve (Romans 14:21)

### Dependability vs. Inconsistency

Fulfilling what I consented to do even if it means unexpected sacrifice (Luke 22:42)

### Determination vs. Faintheartedness

Purposing to accomplish God's goals in God's time regardless of the opposition (II Timothy 4:7, 8)

### Diligence vs. Slothfulness

Visualizing each task as a special assignment from the Lord and using all my energies to accomplish it (Colossians 3:23)

### Discernment vs. Judgment

The God-given ability to understand why things happen (I Samuel 16:7)

### Discretion vs. Simplemindedness

The ability to avoid words, actions, and attitudes which could result in undesirable consequences (Proverbs 22:3)

### Endurance vs. Giving up

The inward strength to withstand stress to accomplish God's best (Galatians 6:9)

### Enthusiasm vs. Apathy

Expressing with my soul the joy of my spirit (I Thessalonians 5:16, 19)

### Faith vs. Presumption

Visualizing what God intends to do in a given situation and acting in harmony with it (Hebrews 11:1)

### Flexibility vs. Resistance

Not setting my affections on ideas or plans which could be changed by God or others (Colossians 3:2)

### Forgiveness vs. Rejection

Clearing the record of those who have wronged me and allowing God to love them through me (Ephesians 4:32)

### Generosity vs. Stinginess

Realizing that all I have belongs to God and using it for His purposes (II Corinthians 9:6)

### Gentleness vs. Harshness

Showing personal care and concern in meeting the need of others (I Thessalonians 2:7)

### Gratefulness vs. Unthankfulness

Making known to God and others in what ways they have benefited my life (I Corinthians 4:7)

### Hospitality vs. Loneliness

Cheerfully sharing food, shelter, and spiritual refreshment with those whom God brings into my life (Hebrews 13:2)

### Humility vs. Pride

Recognizing that it is actually God and others who are responsible for the achievements in my life (James 4:6)

### Initiative vs. Unresponsiveness

Recognizing and doing what needs to be done before I am asked to do it (Romans 12:21)

### Joyfulness vs. Self-pity

The spontaneous enthusiasm of my spirit when my soul is in fellowship with the Lord (Psalm 16:11)

### Justice vs. Fairness

Personal responsibility to God's unchanging laws (Micah 6:8)

**Love vs. Selfishness**

Giving to others' basic needs without having as my motive personal reward (I Corinthians 13:3)

**Loyalty vs. Unfaithfulness**

Using difficult times to demonstrate my commitment to God and to those whom He has called me to serve (John 15:13)

**Meekness vs. Anger**

Yielding my personal rights and expectations to God (Psalm 62:5)

**Obedience vs. Willfulness**

Freedom to be creative under the protection of divinely appointed authority (II Corinthians 10:5)

**Orderliness vs. Disorganization**

Preparing myself and my surroundings so I will achieve the greatest efficiency (I Corinthians 14:40)

**Patience vs. Restlessness**

Accepting a difficult situation from God without giving Him a deadline to remove it (Romans 5:3, 4)

**Persuasiveness vs. Contentiousness**

Guiding vital truths around another's mental road-blocks (II Timothy 2:24)

**Punctuality vs. Tardiness**

Showing high esteem for other people and their time (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

**Resourcefulness vs. Wastefulness**

Wise use of that which others would normally overlook or discard (Luke 16:10)

**Responsibility vs. Unreliability**

Knowing and doing what both God and others are expecting from me (Romans 14:12)

**Reverence vs. Disrespect**

Awareness of how God is working through the people and events in my life to produce the character of Christ in me (Proverbs 23:17, 18)

**Security vs. Anxiety**

Structuring my life around that which is eternal and cannot be destroyed or taken away (John 6:27)

**Self-Control vs. Self-indulgence**

Instant obedience to the initial promptings of God's Spirit (Galatians 5:24, 25)

**Sensitivity vs. Callousness**

Exercising my senses so I can perceive the true spirit and emotions of those around me (Romans 12:15)

**Sincerity vs. Hypocrisy**

Eagerness to do what is right with transparent motives (I Peter 1:22)

**Thoroughness vs. Incompleteness**

Knowing what factors will diminish the effectiveness of my work or words if neglected (Proverbs 18:15)

**Thriftiness vs. Extravagance**

Not letting myself or others spend that which is not necessary (Luke 16:11)

**Tolerance vs. Prejudice**

Acceptance of others as unique expressions of specific character qualities in varying degrees of maturity (Philippians 2:2)

**Truthfulness vs. Deception**

Earning future trust by accurately reporting past facts (Ephesians 4:25)

**Virtue vs. Impurity**

The moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiate from my life as I obey God's Word (II Peter 1:3)

**Wisdom vs. Natural Inclinations**

Seeing and responding to life's situations from God's frame of reference (Proverbs 9:10) †

## CRITICAL THAT WE UNDERSTAND SCRIPTURE

By Bro. Richard Lehman

**W**ITHOUT the true light on the scriptures, you will fall into error and fall prey to false teachers and their false doctrines. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29).

We need to understand the scriptures: their importance, purpose, and how they are to be fulfilled in our own lives. Else: we will fall into error. And you need the power of God's holiness working in your heart and life.

Jesus Himself is the fulfilment of the purpose of all scripture, therefore in the gospel of John He is introduced as the "Word of God":

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-5, 14).

But there have been false teachers who have taken scripture and have twisted its meaning to introduce error. Some effectively teach by their actions that the Bible is a "God" because they lift up the Book almost as an object of worship, while deviating from actually living by the scriptural purpose found in the Bible. This always results in a particular interpretation of the scriptures that does not produce the life of Jesus Christ in the people. And so today, we have many churches claiming to be "Christian" but the members do not live the holy life, display true sacrificial love, nor show the unity of the faith that Jesus taught us.

Then there are other false teachers who belittle the importance of carefully respecting and obeying the

The Way of Truth

written words found in the Bible. They assert that because Jesus is the Word of God, we need to just seek Him and be led by the Holy Spirit (without a carefulness to obey the scriptures). Sometimes they tear down confidence in the scriptures by questioning the integrity of scripture. But neglecting close attention to the scriptures is dangerous and problematic because we are warned that there would be a false Jesus that men would teach and other Christs that people would follow that would lead them into error. "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4, 5).

So how do we avoid making the Bible just an object of worship, and discern whether we are following the right Jesus Christ? It is by both obeying the scriptures, and by letting the Holy Spirit lead us that keeps us from error. The true Holy Spirit will never lead you in a way of living that is contrary to what the scriptures teach us. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-10).

How will you know that you are receiving a different gospel than the original one that was given? You will not know, unless you highly respect the importance of learning and understanding the correct interpretation of the written Word of God (the scriptures) found in the Bible. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

It is no strange thing that a preacher or teacher should come across as very anointed and capable in righteous teaching, but yet introduce error by a lack of carefulness to the original scriptures and the Holy Ghost's leading.

God, by His Holy Spirit's influence, has insured the integrity of the writing of all scripture. He has done this so that the scriptures might accurately instruct us in the purpose of His Son on Earth: to save the lost and to keep us from being deceived. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

So we also see that it is important who we allow to teach us. Have their lives been proven to be obedient to the Word of God? Do we know their lives? Do they show their knowledge of scripture by the way they live the scripture? Anyone can say anything, but only those who have been saved and transformed in their living can become qualified to teach the scriptures. Contrary to common thinking of today: a degree or certificate in doctrinal knowledge does not qualify someone. There are people who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Timothy 3:7), because what they know is only in their head, and not in their heart.

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you" (I Thessalonians 5:12).

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:15-20).

Finally, a true gospel teacher will not teach what people want to hear. They will teach nothing but the truth, even when it is not the popular to teach the truth. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (II Timothy 4:1-3).

Peter recognized how people have a dangerous "itch" for something new, and when you combine that curiosity with human purposes and desires you can be easily led astray. Consequently, he agreed with Paul about the need for a clear understanding of the scriptures to keep one from being led away with the error of the wicked. "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (II Peter 3:15-18).

Peter exhorted that we need to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Grace is having the divine favour of God upon us. "To grow" means we must increase in grace by daily humbling ourselves to seek His will and obediently walk with Jesus. To grow in knowledge requires us to regularly study to understand more about how the scriptures teach us of Christ. †

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