

The Way of Truth

Vol. 79

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

No. 3

The Blood Is Sufficient

SEE PAGE 3



APRIL 2021

WHAT MORE CAN HE DO?

 AS WE CELEBRATE the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am made to wonder what people are waiting for. The resurrection confirmed the deity of the Son of God and sanctioned His message. Even the miracle of Easter seems to have little or no effect upon the people of the world. Don't they know that this life is temporal and each of us is just passing through? Don't they realize that they have only one eternity-bound soul for which they are responsible? Don't they know that each of us must give an account to our Maker for the life we live? So many do know these basic truths, yet they continue in their sins. Why is it so hard to see souls saved in 2021? In spite of warning after warning, the masses refuse to accept God's proffered grace and instead shut Him out of their lives. It is as if they were waiting for the Lord to do something more to convince them of the validity of the gospel message. The fact is that God has done all He can do and what He has done is sufficient to save the whole wide world.

Though He has all power in heaven and earth, God has put into place certain principles, which His integrity will not allow Him to break or contradict. God can do anything He wants to do. He is God. But in His wisdom, He has chosen to respect His revealed will and to honor Himself by being consistent in all His doings. He has made it known that He cannot save a soul who doesn't want to be saved. God can work only according to just principles, which He Himself has established.

The idea that a soul is predetermined to be saved or lost and there is nothing he can do about it is not just or right. A loving God who is declared as not willing that any perish (II Peter 3:9) could never doom a soul to the regions of the lost without an opportunity to be saved! Showing respect of persons is not just (Acts 10:34, 35). Choosing individuals for heaven irrespective of their attitude toward the gospel is against God's nature. Such nature will not allow Him to use force, only persuasion when dealing with souls. In the example of Agrippa, we see the apostle Paul trying to convince the king to repent and join the ranks of the redeemed and, in fact, almost persuading him to do so. But God would not—could not—force Agrippa or any person to become a Christian. It is an individual choice. Influences come to bear on one's decision, nevertheless, the responsibility of the choice belongs to every man.

God Has Done All He Can Do to Save Men

He gave His Son to die for them—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Sin is so dark and offensive to God that it took the sacrifice of His Son to atone for the sins of the world. The blood of bulls and goats could not make the comer thereunto perfect. The wages of sin is death and Jesus died for all men.

He confirmed the divinity of His Son and the truth of His message by conquering death—If Jesus simply died and that was the final chapter, then men may have

a reason to doubt and reject Him. But that wasn't the end of it! He is risen! Christ ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

He has sent His Holy Spirit to strive with them—God has been faithful in convicting all men and calling them unto repentance. In Acts 2:37, when the Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to those gathered and conviction took hold, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" O that men would respond that way today! Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

He has sent ministers to preach to them—God so deeply desires men to respond to Him that He has sent preachers to proclaim the gospel to each generation. Even in 2021, He is doing the same. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21).

He has given the Bible to them—God has preserved His Word in written form that mankind could discern His will. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). It is still alive and full of power today!

He has given examples of His saving grace—In this inspired volume, we have examples of men and women through the ages who were recipients of God's grace. Among these is the woman caught in the act of adultery who heard Jesus say, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

There was that short tax collector, Zacchaeus, who climbed a tree because he wanted to see the Lord. He was rewarded with salvation.

There was Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the church, a wicked man who tortured and punished the followers of Jesus. Then he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and received the amazing grace of God after he cried out, "Lord, what would you have me to do?"

He reveals in contemporary form the change that is wrought—Through the new birth God provides living examples of the grace of God today. II Corinthians 5:17 is lived out in 2021, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Surely, we all have seen with our own eyes someone who has experienced that change.

He offers heaven to entice them—The promise of eternal life is God's tool to cause men to consider serving Him. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told

ABOUT THE COVER

Jesus Christ suffered a horrible death for my sins and your sins. We, doubtless, don't pause and consider His sacrifice enough. The glory of the Easter season is in the fact that His dying on the cross didn't end it all. He rose from the dead!

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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though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

He warns them time and again—Revelation 20:15, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

He reproves them—which means, “to correct; to disapprove of strongly.”

He entreats them—which means, “to ask earnestly, beseech, implore, beg.”

His goodness is extended to them—Romans 2:4, “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” He sends His rain upon the just and the unjust!

What More Can He Do?

God is not willing that any perish, but the sinner’s stubborn will does not allow God to do His great work. God has all power, but the sinner’s rejection of God’s proffered grace renders God powerless. He will never override the sinner’s will and force him to be saved.

If you are lost, who will be responsible? You have no excuse. God has done so much—what have you done for your eternal soul? Accept Him today as your personal Savior. There will never be a better time than now. The price has been paid. Christ rose from the dead for justification. †

you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

He bears long with them—God is so longsuffering! Psalm 103:8-11 says, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.”

He has given many promises of mercy—Mercy is mentioned more than 250 times in the Bible.

He emphasizes His willingness to forgive—If God was not willing to forgive, man might have an excuse. In I John 1:9 we read, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

He requires only that which is necessary—The Lord doesn’t load man with oppressive demands. He simply requires godly sorrow, repentance, faith, and the forsaking of sin. And He has promised to help man in his quest for this marvelous salvation.

God Has Done All He Can Do to Restrain Men from Sinning

He gives them a conscience—He gives a general witness of right and wrong unless it is seared by wrong decisions and continual neglect.

He gives them reasoning ability—Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

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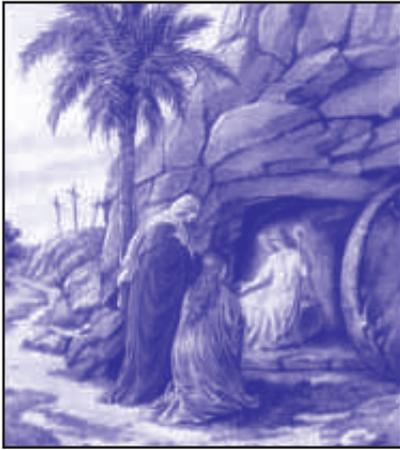
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THE POETRY PAGE



THE EMPTY TOMB

F. W. Davis

He is risen; He is not here;
Behold the empty tomb,
Where Christ our blessed Master lay,
Enshrouded by death's gloom.
No grave could hold such power divine,
Nor could hell's force enslave
The loving, risen Son of God,
Who left this empty grave.

How glad I am that Jesus came
To conquer death for me;
And brought new hope to everyone,
Plus glorious victory.
More grateful still am I today
He comes to live within,
And give us peace and hope and love
And freedom from all sin.

THE BLOOD THAT STAINED THE OLD RUGGED CROSS

Gracie B. Allen

Upon the cross of Calvary
The blessed Savior died.
In agony He suffered there;
Two thieves were by His side.

A crown of thorns upon His head,
A sword did pierce His side—
The blood that stained the rugged cross,
A fountain opened wide.

How could He give His life for one
So steeped in sin and bound?
But thru His love He rescued me,
I've moved to higher ground.

His eyes of love fell on the thief
Upon the cross that day;
He was the balm in Gilead
That washed his sins away.

The guiltless died that we might live,
He bore our sin and shame.
The blood that stained the rugged cross
Will glorify His name.

RESURRECTION MORNING

Edgar Daniel Kramer

The stone is lifted from the tomb,
And Christ is risen from the gloom
In bursting bud, in leafing tree,
In singing bird and winging bee,
In grass with gleaming dew-gems set,
In pansy and in violet,
In each fair fragrant lilac spray
That gives its sweetness to the day—
Christ is now risen and new birth
With singing fills the joyful earth!

JESUS, THE LILY OF THE VALLEY

Ena A. Gregory

Our Savior, Christ is risen
Just as 'twas meant to be,
The grave could not contain Him,
He lives and we are free.

He told us e'er He left us
He would die on Calvary,
And on the third day rise again
To walk with you and me.

As Mary came to worship
In reverence that day,
She saw the grave was empty,
She heard the angel say—

"He is not here, He's risen,"
And now the scene unfurled
Of Jesus' resurrection
To save a sinful world.

"Hosanna in the Highest,"
Let all your voices ring
In praise to God the Father
Who gave us Christ the King.

And let us all remember
As we kneel down to pray,
God gave to us a Savior
And thus came Resurrection Day! †

THE BLOOD IS SUFFICIENT

Revival message by Bro. Harley McClung, delivered 04/20/02



and life. We need to think about this tonight.

Jesus was the very Son of God. He left the realms of heaven to come down and take on the form of mortal man. He took on the robe and the veil of flesh. As He took on the veil of flesh, it meant that whatever happened to His physical body, there was pain and suffering. Just because He was God manifested in the flesh, it did not mean He didn't have to suffer. He had to suffer just as you and I would have had to suffer. Let's think about the suffering He went through. Listen, had Jesus not suffered and died, we would have had to; and yet, there still would have been no redemption. There would have been no salvation. We would have had to go through the suffering of eternal hell. I said eternal—no end; but because Jesus was willing, He made an escape (an opportunity) to each and to everyone.

Now, before Jesus went to the cross, it would have been a terrible thing just to have to suffer that death. But, Dear Ones, He did more. First of all, He knew whenever He came into this life, what would be His doom and purpose. He knew what would be His plight. So all through those years of His ministry, He had the weight of His suffering heavily upon His mind. It was not a quick thing. It was something that was ever with Him. He knew that right from the beginning. Jesus came to the place where He told His disciples what was before Him.

THE PASSOVER SUPPER

During the Passover supper with His disciples, one of them, a close friend, betrayed Him. Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane. While He was praying there, He suffered, as it were, great drops of blood. This tells me that there was some great agony. There was great suffering right there. While He was suffering, He said to His disciples, "Pray with me," but He went and found them sleeping. Now, I know they loved Jesus, but listen, He was agonizing in the garden. We sometimes sing the verse of the song, "I'll go with Him through the garden," but I wonder if we really comprehend or understand the impact of going through the garden. Jesus went through some suffering there. He was not assisted in His suffering at that moment by His disciples. They were fast asleep. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, a disciple, a follower. Jesus was betrayed by what Judas called "a friend."

Jesus was taken as a common criminal. Listen to me: Jesus was a man without spot or blemish. Jesus did no harm to anyone. Everything Jesus did while He sojourned here was good. Everything He could do to help man, He went about doing it, and yet a band of men and officers came and took Him as though He was

I WOULD LIKE for you to turn with me in your Bibles to two passages of scriptures. First, Leviticus 17:11—"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Second, Hebrews 9:11-14—"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Revival means that we are to bring people to the place where they are alive spiritually. God created man in His own image, which was a spiritual being, and yet man sinned. Whenever man sinned, he took on the form of sin and became the image of sinful man. He died spiritually. So when we're in a revival effort, our attempt, by the help of almighty God, is that we might bring someone to the place where he wants to become a part of God and take on His image again. But, Dear Ones, that can only happen because of one thing: the spilt blood of Jesus.

I want you to think with me tonight. We read in Leviticus of Moses giving to the children of Israel an opportunity for the atonement of their sins. They had to bring an animal to sacrifice on the altar. Dear Ones, that animal had no choice in the matter. That animal was just brought there beyond its choice, beyond its decision. It had no choice. It laid down its life. I might add, as that animal laid down its life there for those Israelites that they might have their sins atoned, that death for that animal was quick. A knife was put to its throat and it died quickly. It suffered very little.

JESUS, OUR SACRIFICIAL LAMB

Jesus, Dear Ones, is our sacrificial Lamb. Listen, before He shed His life's blood, there was a lot He encountered in the way of suffering. He did that suffering willingly. You know, He didn't have to die. The Bible tells us that He could have called 10,000 angels and they would have come to His rescue. He could have made the decision, "I'm not going to do it." But there in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, "Not my will, Heavenly Father, but your will be done." So Jesus is our sacrificial Lamb. He looked down on this little gathering here tonight and He saw that there was a need of someone having His blood applied to his heart

a common criminal. How they looked down upon Him! How they scorned Him! They took Him before Caiaphas and put Him through a mock trial. They didn't really give Him an opportunity. He was asked to say a few words, and whenever He went to say a few words, one of the officers started to hit Him and beat upon Him for His answers. Listen again, this was a man that did no harm to anyone. Jesus never told a lie. What He was saying there in answering, He was just telling them the truth, and yet they beat upon Him. They smote Him.

JESUS PAID IT ALL

The band of men and officers led Jesus to the judgment hall. It was a place where they wouldn't go, because they felt it was a place that would defile them. Jesus was a Jew, just like they were Jews, but they didn't care if Jesus would be defiled. They put Him into the judgment hall. He went before Pontius Pilate and He endured Pontius Pilate's questioning. When Pontius Pilate brought Jesus out, they so hated Him that they wanted Pontius Pilate to release unto them Barabbas and crucify Jesus. Barabbas was a robber and a murderer, and here Jesus was being looked upon as a common criminal. He wasn't a criminal. He was the Savior. He was the good man. He was the very God of heaven. They were looking upon Jesus with scorn and releasing Barabbas, a terrible criminal. What did Jesus think about this? Does this bother you tonight? I tell you, if someone does just a little thing to us, there is some hurt that would come to our heart and mind, but here they're doing something hideous to Jesus. They should have been doing something good.

Pontius Pilate thought by just taking Jesus out of the judgment hall that he could have Him beaten and released and that would satisfy the Jews. Pontius Pilate had Jesus whipped across His naked back. It was a whipping that was different from what the Jews would have given Him, because Pontius Pilate was allowed to give Him a whipping by the Roman soldiers. They had no limit to how much and how hard they could whip Him. They had whips that had small pieces of bone and metal attached to a number of leather strands that lacerated His back. As they bent Him over and tied Him to a stake, He was beaten again and again and again. He suffered each and every stripe. With every stripe that came across His back, there was a cut, there was blood, suffering, and misery to a righteous man. Why? Because Jesus loved you. He loved the whole world and looked upon the whole world. If there were just one lost sheep that went astray, Jesus would have done all of this for that one. He has done it for the whole world, Dear Ones, because He loves and cares for us. He wants to bring us back to a place where we can be reconciled with almighty God. What love!

The soldiers were mocking Jesus, for you see, He declared that He was King of the Jews. He was, and is, Lord of lords and King of kings. Because He made that declaration, the soldiers platted together some thorns and put it in a circle. They wove it together and had those thorns sticking out of those branches. They placed it down on Jesus' head as a mock crown. They put a purple robe upon Him that denoted something that a king would wear. Again, this was not in recogniz-

ing Him as a king. It was mockery. They were mocking Him; but again, Jesus never told a lie. He told them the truth. He is the King of kings. He is the Lord of lords.

Dear Ones, if you are in Jesus' kingdom, He is your King. He is your Lord. He cannot be your Savior unless you make Him Lord; but if you'll make Him your Savior, you'll want Him to be your Lord, because you'll see in reading and studying the Scriptures what great and mighty love was manifested through His deeds and acts that you might be redeemed.

As Jesus came forth from the judgment hall, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe, Pontius Pilate said unto the crowd, "Behold, the man!" Tonight, I say to you, visualize, *Behold, the man! that is going through this misery and agony for you. Behold, Jesus Christ standing there, being mocked, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe.* The Jews cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! We have no king except Caesar." They chose a Roman king to be their king over the Lord of lords and the King of kings. They refused the One who could give them the very best life has to offer, and yet they chose a wicked king over Jesus. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" The people threatened Pilate and said to him, "If you don't crucify Him, we're going to state that you're against the Roman Kingdom." Pontius Pilate consented to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Crucifixion is the most cruel death that has ever been known to man. There have been studies going on about the pain and the agony that is involved with a man hanging on a cross. Let me remind you, Jesus did not have to do this. So Pontius Pilate consented for Jesus to be crucified. Because they had whipped Jesus, because they had kept Him up most of the night in a mock trial, because they had spit upon Him and plucked out His beard, He was weakened; and yet, they brought Him out, laid upon Him His own cross to carry up Golgotha's Heights.

THE CRUCIFIXION

As Jesus was carrying His cross, He went as far as He could go. He bent and broke over the load. He did all that He physically could do for you and for me. They had a man to take His cross the rest of the way for Him, but whenever those soldiers got to Calvary, they nailed His hands and His feet to the cross. Then they stood the cross up and put it into the ground. Jesus hung there with His weight hanging on those nails in His hands and in His feet. What misery! What agony He suffered! Keep in mind, Jesus didn't have to do this. We're told that as He hung there in that position with those nails in His hands and in His feet, it caused pressure on His chest and it cut off the air to His lungs. He then had to push against the nails in His feet and raise up to get a breath of air so that He could live.

Dear Ones, Jesus was crucified around noontime. He hung on the cross for three hours, suffering that pain and misery. He came to the place where He heard all their mockery and ridicule. As they passed by, they said, "If you're the Son of God, if you're the King of kings, come down off that cross and we'll believe you." Listen tonight, He had no intentions of coming down off that cross, for if He had, you would have no hope. But you have hope! Jesus stayed on that cross and He

finished it all. After all was done, He said, "It is finished." He gave up the ghost; meaning, the spirit left the body.

There were two others that were crucified with Jesus. At that time of day, they weren't allowed to have those that were crucified to stay on those crosses, because preparation had to be made for entering into the Sabbath. So what would the Roman soldiers do? They would come by, and if those that were crucified were still alive, they would take something and break their legs so that they could not push up with their legs to get the breath of air. Therefore, they died. But Jesus was already dead. There wasn't to be one broken in Jesus' body. Whenever the soldiers came, one of the soldiers took his spear and thrust it into the side of Jesus. As I was studying *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, he said, "The most likely thing that happened is, the spear went up through Him and pierced His heart." Out of that wound came the blood of the precious Lamb of God. His blood that was freely spilt at that moment is the blood that is so valuable to you tonight. That blood is the blood that will redeem you from a life of sin. That blood, Dear Ones, is the thing that is so very, very valuable to mankind. It took the blood of Jesus Christ to reconcile us with God.

Sin is the greatest enemy we have because it takes us down, down, down into the dungeons of despair. It brings us to the place that God can't have anything to do with us. God is righteous, holy, and pure; and whenever mankind sins, it is a repulsive thing to God. We needed something to reconcile us. It took the very blood of Jesus Christ.

Listen to me tonight: the blood was spilt, yet there are countless millions of people out in the world that are unsaved. The reason being that countless millions are unsaved, simply is, because the blood that was spilt is not enough. Something else has to happen. We must take that blood and apply to our heart. We must look and see what Jesus did there and apply that blood to our heart, and in return, love Him. We must love Him! Whenever through the blood we see what Jesus did for us, when we understand how He went through the agony and suffering, oh, we should love Him!

The devil, our enemy, brings great pictures before people. These great pictures unfold as great pleasures. They are so appealing to so many that they run rampant after sin. They even roll sin under their tongue as a sweet morsel, while Jesus suffered it all and spilt His life's precious blood, and very few, relatively speaking, are applying it.

This blood is the only thing that will pardon you, Dear Ones, from sin. It is the only thing that you can be forgiven through. Had Jesus not willing to shed His life's blood, you could never be free from the sins you've committed, but He shed His life's blood. He has become your sacrifice; therefore, He is your Savior tonight. But He is only your Savior when you apply that blood and when you accept the offer of grace that He freely offers. To accept this grace means that you have to have a broken and a contrite heart for the things you have done. You have to come to the place where you're willing to ask almighty God, through the blood of Jesus Christ, to forgive you of your sins. Whenever you have

a sincere heart and you're really sorry for the sins you've committed, then God is willing, through the blood of Jesus Christ, to forgive you of your sins. What a glorious state God has offered man to come to! To be forgiven of your sins means that in God's sight it is as though you've never committed a sin. You're restored back to the original place where God created man in His own image. Without Jesus' blood that couldn't happen.

We read in Hebrews 9:22, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." We read in verse 27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Judgment! We'll find out, Dear Ones, what each and everyone of us in all the world have done with the blood of Jesus Christ being shed. Are we willing to apply that blood to our heart? If not, then someday we will have to stand before this righteous Judge and answer the question, "Why weren't you willing?" We're going to have to conclude that we loved something else more. We loved the world. "It doesn't make any difference, Jesus, what you did for me. I loved the world," is what we're going to have to conclude. Oh, Dear Ones, can't you see how much God loved you? Can't you see how much Jesus loved you that He went to the cross and shed His life's blood? There is an appointment that you have with death.

The blood of Jesus Christ purchased the souls of men that we might be a part of His church. We read in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The blood of Jesus Christ doesn't purchase all sects (denominations). It is the Church of God. Now, the Church of God consists of all the redeemed. Everyone that has taken the blood of Jesus Christ and applied it to their heart and have come to the place where they accepted Him as Lord and Savior, they are a part of the Church of God. Dear Ones, we extend our hand in fellowship to every blood-washed one, because the Church of God is what He purchased with His own blood.

What does the blood of Christ do for us? It changes our heart; it changes our mind; it changes our spirit; it changes our body, and purges our conscience. That's why we have a peace that passes all understanding. We can look into our own heart and know that we have come through this day without committing one sin. Because God has forgiven us of our past sins, we can lay our head down on our pillow each night, knowing that we are righteous before our God. We have a conscience that has been purged. I tell you, if you're in sin tonight, your conscience is troubling you if it is not seared. There is such a thing as a seared conscience, but if you have an active conscience, it's going to trouble you when you're in sin. The only thing that can have an affect on our conscience is the blood of Jesus Christ.

The blood of Jesus Christ affects our heart. That's the center of our affection. God wants the heart, "for out of it are the issues of life." Dear Ones, if you love God with all of your heart, then all that proceeds out of your life is going to be righteous, because you'll want to do what your heavenly Father wants you to do. You'll

be what your heavenly Father wants you to be. That's why we're found in the house of worship. We're trying to evangelize lost souls, for you see, we have the love of God in our heart. That is what Jesus did while He sojourned on this earth. He went about seeking those that were lost. He was trying to bring them to the place where they could know the goodness of God.

WHAT THE BLOOD DOES

The blood of Jesus Christ changes our spirit. So many people need their spirit changed. They have a spirit of hatred and malice. They have a spirit of revenge. Look in the newspaper and you'll see all over the world where wars are breaking out. Why? It is because the spirit that possesses those people is hatred one for the other.

The blood of Jesus Christ redeems us from all sin. It doesn't make any difference what sin we've committed. It redeems us. It cleans us up and it allows the almighty God to forgive us. It justifies us and gives us a place of peace.

The blood of Jesus Christ gives us power; not to roll on the floor, not to be speaking "mumbo jumbo" in an unknown tongue, but the power the blood gives us is the power to live right, to do right, to be right in the eyes of God and people. It gives us power to be all that God wants us to be.

We read in Revelation 12:11, "And they [the early morning church] overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." They were able to come to the place when they drew their final breath that they were going to heaven. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." They didn't love their life because they first loved Jesus. The reason they loved Jesus was what the blood did for them.

The blood of Jesus Christ allows us to come near to God. When Adam and Eve were first created and given an opportunity to be in the garden, God came down in the cool of the evening and walked with them. He talked with them. He made their life a pleasant place. Listen, the moment they sinned, that stopped. Dear Ones, the blood of Jesus Christ gives us an opportunity to regain what we lost. We can come back to the place where we can walk and talk with God. He can solve every problem, every situation that we encounter. He is a present help to all that are in need. That's what the blood of Jesus Christ does.

The blood of Jesus Christ sanctifies us. It makes us perfect. I know we live in a world where many people don't understand this. I know that doesn't mean that this physical body is going to be perfect, but we can have a perfect heart. We can have a perfect love for God. That perfect heart and perfect love for God enable us to do what God wants us to do. That is what makes us perfect. We need to be perfect in the eyes of God. God told Abraham, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Abraham did. We, too, can be perfect through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Dear Ones, I want you to think about all that Jesus did and what His blood will enable you to do. I want

you think, *what does the devil do?* What does the devil give to mankind? First of all, he lies to you. The devil will never tell you the truth unless it's to his advantage. He is always telling people lies, lies, lies. He will tell you that this way that I'm preaching to you tonight is wrong. He'll tell you that it's too hard and foolish. He'll tell you anything, but remember, he is a liar. He is the father of lies. He has never told the truth. He's fierce and cruel. Whenever the devil gets his subjects to the place where he can have full control, there's no limit to what depths he will take them.

THE DEVIL IS A THIEF

Jesus came across the Sea of Galilee. When He came out of the ship, a man came to Him. This man was possessed with devils. These devils were many. Jesus asked him, "What is thy name?" He said, "My name is Legion: for we are many." This man was unable to control himself. The Bible says that he was dwelling among the tombs and he wasn't clothed. The people tried to tame him. They put him in fetters and chains. The devils had given him so much strength that he broke those chains and fetters. Listen to me, you don't fully understand the power of the devil. None of us do, but I can tell you, he is more powerful than most people perceive. Jesus healed the man. He sat a Jesus' feet, calm, and at peace. He was a different individual.

The devil is a thief. Did you hear what I said? The devil is a thief. Do you like a liar? Do you like a thief? I don't; but the devil is a thief. He comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." He comes to steal your peace, your reputation, and your soul. He comes to steal your eternal existence in heaven. Yet, countless millions are choosing him. Countless millions are going his way instead of the way that Jesus Christ came and paid the ultimate sacrifice for. Think with me.

Tonight, you're going to make a decision. You're going to make a choice as to which one of these you'll choose. I exhort you, choose Christ. Choose the One that truly loves you. Choose the One that has laid down His life and shed His blood that you might be redeemed. The devil is so subtle. He's not going to come to you as his real self. He's going to sit right there on your shoulder and talk into your mind. He's going to tell you all sorts of things. He's mysterious; he's crafty; he's tricky; he's clever. Don't let him deceive you. He is deceiving countless millions. We read in II Corinthians 11:3, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

CONCLUSION

I'm concluding by saying to you to get a little vision of what the devil is like. Look again at what Jesus is like. Consider all the suffering that I endeavored to describe to you. Jesus didn't go through a fast suffering. He bore hours and hours of physical agony and misery by laying down His life's blood to redeem you. He did so to take you out of the miry clay of sin and to set your feet upon a solid Rock and to establish your goings that will lead you home to heaven. Consider this tonight. He's precious.

All of you are going to die. Again, I repeat, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." You have no promise of tomorrow. Today is the only thing that you're sure of. Jesus' blood was shed to bear the sins of many. That's why we have this preaching service, that's why we try to tell you the truth, that's why we point out what Jesus can do for you, so that you will make the decision to go with Him and His way. Will you ask Him tonight to bear your sins, to forgive you of your sins? He will do so, but there is one thing you must do; and that is, you must apply His blood that was shed on Calvary and have your heart changed. You must come to the place where you're willing to go with Him. Allow Him to be your Lord as well as your Savior. Jesus Christ and His blood can indeed save you. He's willing to do so if you'll let Him. Won't you come? †

WINNING A CROWN

By the late C. W. Naylor



Part XXXI

Providences and Circumstances

Life is often an enigma. It brings to us many things that we cannot understand. How blessed it is at such times to realize that there is One wiser than we who has our lives in His care and who sees all and understands all! God is our Father, and we are the children of His love. He has our welfare at heart. He is interested in all that concerns us. He watches over all our lives, and nothing that comes can come without His knowledge. Whatever comes, He knows full well its effect upon us, and His loving hand is ever ready to protect and help His children. He could, if He chose, lead us in a pleasant and easy path through life, but He knows that a pleasant and easy path would not develop in us that strong and hardy Christian character so essential for us. Neither would it give Him an opportunity to reveal the riches of His grace or His tender care. He knows that we must taste the bitter before we can appreciate the sweet. He knows that we must feel life's sorrows before we can value its joys. Suffering more than anything else develops us in the things of God. He will presently take us to be forever with Him in His heaven of peace and glory, and He wants us to be able to enjoy it to the fullest; so He would in this life develop as fully as He may our possibilities. It is for this purpose that He sometimes leads us by ways that we know not and lets His providences be dark and mysterious; but throughout our lives, if we are His, "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28). Many times, if we knew what was coming, the joy that it would bring would be lessened. He delights to surprise us, many times because by a surprise He increases our joy and appreciation. When difficulties arise through which we can see no way and He makes a way of which we had never thought—it is then that our hearts are made to wonder at His wisdom and are melted with gratitude.

His ways are not our ways. They are higher and better than our ways. If we were wise enough, we should always choose for ourselves that which He chooses for us. Alas! how often when we choose for ourselves, we choose that which is least wise! We must often deny ourselves. Sometimes it is hard to give up what we have chosen, as it seems desirable and exactly what we need. But God often denies us the seeming good that a greater good may come. If we submit and trust, that greater good will surely come; but if we rebel and clamor for what we have chosen, God may be compelled to hold back that greater good, and if we have our way, it may in the end prove to be a bitter way. What God gives is ever the best that we are willing to receive. We should often have better if we would trust God's wisdom and take gladly what He gives. Whenever we choose for ourselves and limit God to that which we have chosen, we deny ourselves of the better choice of His wisdom. The trouble so often is that we fail to trust Him. We know that if He chooses He will choose well for us, but perhaps He may forget us. May not the thing that comes escape His notice, or may He not grow careless? Sometimes we cannot feel that what is coming is His choice for us. We fear and tremble and wonder. We try to escape it, but still it comes, and in the future days we often look back upon this very thing as one of God's greater blessings to us because of what it wrought for us and in us.

God sometimes places a wall before us that we may stop and consider. We may come face to face with this obstacle across our path. We see no way by which we can surmount it; we see no way to go around it. Sometimes it fills us with foreboding. We question, "What will be the result? What shall we do?" Sometimes we grow very much troubled over it, but it is through this very thing that God can get us to do the serious thinking that He desires us to do and that it is necessary for us to do. He does not put a wall before us just to hinder our progress. He has some other purpose in it always, and when He has worked out that purpose, He will either take the wall out of the way, show us a way to surmount it, or lift us completely over it and set our feet again triumphant in the way.

He sometimes places a mountain of difficulty before us that we may climb to higher altitudes and that in the climbing we may develop spiritual strength. A rugged mountain before us may be hard to climb. Its difficulties may discourage us; but if we will gather up our courage and surmount it, no matter what effort may be necessary, we shall find that we have realized true benefits. We now stand on a higher altitude with a broader outlook, and instead of our being weakened by these difficulties, they have been the very source of our strength. Every difficulty that we conquer by placing it under our feet raises us higher in the Christian life. This is the purpose of these difficulties. God is not desirous that we have the difficulty, but He must let us have the difficulty if He is to raise us to the higher altitude, and He desires us to have the higher position. He never lets the way be too steep before us. He never lets the difficulties be too great. He knows that we can surmount them if we will. If He did not know this, He would not let them be placed in our way.

He sometimes sends sorrow to soften us and make us hungry for His comfort. We may become too satisfied with earthly things. We may draw too much of our joy from them. He delights to have us draw our joy and our comfort from Him; therefore, He must take away from us the toys which have been occupying our time, that our souls may yearn for the comfort and blessedness that only He can give. He knows that nothing softens us like sorrow. So He gives to us the cup of sorrow to drink to the dregs, and oh, what tenderness and blessedness come into our lives when we drink submissively of that cup, no matter how bitter it may be to our taste! He sometimes takes away the staff upon which we lean, that we may learn to lean upon Him. He sometimes takes away that in which we trust, that we may learn the better to trust in Him. He may sometimes take away our strength, that He may be our strength and that His strength may be made perfect in our weakness. He sometimes takes away our company that we may desire His company the more. All these happenings may seem dark and mysterious to us; they may seem the very things that are the worst for us, but they are not. They are but the manifestations of His kindly wisdom and His fatherly tenderness. Sometimes behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face. We often see only the frown of the providence, and that frown looks very threatening; but if we will look away from that frowning providence to the smiling face of God, we shall see that which will uplift us and strengthen us and enable us to bear whatever stroke of providence may come.

O soul, trust Him. He knows the way that you take. He knows the things that are in your soul and He knows just what is needful for you. So bear with patience and endure with meekness and do not question His wisdom or love. It will all come out for the very best in the end. Here is a little verse that speaks out a great truth:

“With patient mind thy course of duty run;
God nothing does or suffers to be done
But thou wouldst do thyself if thou couldst see
The end of all events as well as He.”

You will do well to memorize these lines and when things happen that you cannot understand, repeat them over to yourself until their truth enters your heart and becomes real to you. It will help you to trust; it will help you to bear; it will help you to be strong. Learn to look at things just that way, for such they are in reality. If you will count them so, it will often help you. It will make the hard places easy; it will make the tiresome places less tiresome.

But many things that come in life are not of God's sending. They are the result of natural happenings, and God would have to work a miracle to prevent their coming. Christians are under natural law the same as sinners. The natural forces, therefore, will work upon us the same as upon others. Many things that come upon us are the portion of all men and are incident to our life in the body of flesh. As long as we are in the flesh, natural forces will work upon us according to natural law. God often chooses to help us bear these things rather than to change them. He can and sometimes does overrule these natural forces in their action, but not ordinarily.

When you are tried, you should think, “Should I not have these same things to bear if I were not a Christian? and should I not have to bear them without the grace of God to help me?” Sinners have to endure trials through their own resolution. You and I have that same natural power, with the grace of God added; therefore, we ought to bear trials easier than sinners. Too many people are looking for an easy way, and when they find a little hardship somewhere, something that requires a little endurance, they are ready to look for some other way. Some people think that Christians ought not to have these things to bear, but God sees otherwise. These things will come and must come. Giving up our hold on God will make it harder instead of easier for us to bear them. We shall not get rid of them. We shall have to pass through them, no matter what we do; so we might as well bravely face them and trust God to take us through.

In wars and other calamities, the innocent suffer with the guilty. Some people blame God for all calamities. If lightning strikes a church or the wind destroys the home of a poor Christian, they blame God. If there is an earthquake or a flood, the blame is placed the same. These things are very rarely providential in their nature. They come through natural forces. God has not promised to make us immune from the action of these natural forces nor from the action of evil men. He warns us not to trust in riches nor to rely on the things of earth, but upon those higher things that cannot be stolen nor burned nor destroyed.

Sometimes it is said that God takes away our loved ones. It may be thus sometimes, but, as a rule, death comes as a result of natural causes. God has no certain time for people to die. The day of death is not decreed. We die when the natural forces of life are overcome by disease or accident or some other cause so that the body can no longer function. Moses makes it plain in the ninetieth Psalm when he says: “The days of our years are three score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four score, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (verse 10). Here he attributes the extra years, not to something decreed by God, but to the result of natural strength. We die only when our vitality is destroyed or our natural forces used up. Christians have no preeminence over others in this respect, except that God is often pleased to restore their natural forces through His healing power and so prolongs their lives beyond what they would have been prolonged otherwise. If our loved ones die, we should never charge God with injustice; instead we should turn to Him for help and comfort. Some grow bitter instead of being softened and ennobled by their sorrow. If God ever does by His own act take a loved one, it is because it is better so.

If we look upon everything as God's providence, we shall often blame Him for things with which He has nothing to do. We ought to discriminate between natural happenings and those things which are really the work of God. Sometimes we cannot distinguish; we cannot always be sure; but if we trust God, He will cause all things to work together for our good, whether by His own direct acts through His providence, or by keeping us in those natural things that we meet. The

thing to do is to meet courageously whatever comes. It is safe to rely upon His wisdom, and His love will never fail us. †

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



NO NEED TO PANIC

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

“Well, well!” said my grandmother as she bustled around her small kitchen. “I’m glad you’ns made it! Did you’ns have a good trip up?”

My sisters and I smiled at each other. Our Pennsylvania grandma always said “you’ns” instead of “you all” like we said at home in Maryland. We were as glad to see Grandma as she was to see us. We only got to visit with her a few times each year.

“Come on in and sit down awhile,” Grandma said to my mother. They went into the living room and we followed along behind. Grandma sat down in her rocker, and my mother sat on the sofa facing her. In no time at all, they were deep in conversation about all the latest happenings in Grandma’s community—the community where my mother used to live. The names of the people Grandma mentioned were unfamiliar to my sisters and me, but we listened anyway. What we really wanted to do was go and play, but we were too shy to ask Grandma if that was all right with her. We looked around the living room. Even though everything was the same as it always was, all the details seemed new each time we visited.

During a pause in their conversation, Grandma looked around at us. “Why don’t you girls go play for a while,” she said. “You can go down in the cellar if you want to. It’s a little chilly to play outside today.”

“Just don’t make a mess down there,” my mother cautioned us as we slipped out of the living room and headed for the kitchen where the entrance to the basement was. Quietly, we opened the door and tiptoed down the basement stairs. I took a deep breath. Even if I had been blindfolded, I would have recognized the smell of my grandmother’s basement. The faint smoky scent of long-ago fires in the old cookstove mingled with the fragrance of apples stored in the canning room. Hanging over it all was the pervasive, musty smell of the concrete floor and old wooden furniture. I loved Grandma’s basement.

“What shall we do first?” Twila asked me. “Do you want to play the piano?” I nodded and we seated ourselves in front of the old instrument. I ran my fingers over the keys, some of which had long ago lost their thin covering of ivory. The piano had been out of tune for years, but we enjoyed playing the few little songs we knew. While we played, our younger sister, Wilma, flew backward and forward in Grandma’s old rocker that sat nearby.

At last, Wilma tired of her rocking and came over to the piano. “Let’s go get the toy box,” she said.

“Yes! The toy box!” Twila cried. We ran across the basement and pulled the toy box out from behind the steps. We opened the lid. The old, familiar playthings were there. Our aunts’ old pocketbooks and high-heeled shoes lay in a tangled pile with a metal push-down spinning top, an old coin bank, and some coloring books.

Twila and Wilma each grabbed a pocketbook and a pair of shoes. They paraded around the basement, giggling as they wobbled and teetered on the high heels. I sat still in front of the toy box. There was a small toy down underneath all the larger ones. I looked for it every time we played in Grandma’s basement. It was an ugly toy, but I was fascinated by it. I dug down to the bottom of the box until I felt the small, rubbery body of Panic Pete. Slowly I drew the fat little body out of the toy box. I squeezed that body—hard. Little blue eyes on rubbery stalks popped out of his head. When I released my hold, the eyes flew back into their places. I squeezed again, even harder. This time, his eyes, ears, and tongue burst out of his head. I stared thoughtfully at the terrified face of the toy and then slowly let go of its smooth, round middle.

“His name is ‘Panic Pete,’” Grandma had told me one time when I had taken the toy upstairs to show her.

“Why is he called that?” I had asked.

“Well, ‘panic’ means ‘scared so bad you can’t think what to do,’” said Grandma. “Look at that little face. He looks scared to death, doesn’t he?”

I nodded silently. Although Panic Pete was only a toy, the fear on his face made me feel almost sorry for him.

Fear is a terrible thing. It can make us feel weak and unable to think. God does not want us to go through life being fearful. He has promised to be with us and give us courage, no matter what terrifying situations we may face. All we need to do is trust Him, obey Him, and stay close to Him each day.

Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 3:25 which says, “Be not afraid of sudden fear ...” The next verse tells us why. Proverbs 3:26 says, “For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.” When we trust in the Lord, there is no need to panic.

Activity

We read in the Bible about people who called on God and did not panic when they found themselves in frightening situations. Can you name the character who ...

1. trusted God and faced a den of hungry lions without fear?
2. relied upon God to help her face a great king and plead for the lives of her people?
3. faced an army of 135,000 Midianites with only 300 soldiers on his side?
4. looked up into heaven and prayed for God to forgive those who were about to stone him to death?

Answer to Last Month's Activity

1. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).
2. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding" (Proverbs 3:13).
3. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7).
4. "O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart" (Proverbs 8:5).
5. "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6). †

BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING LIVING FOR CHRIST AT OUR WORK

Scriptures: Genesis 2:15; 3:19; Galatians 6:5-8; Romans 12:11; II Thessalonians 3:10; I Thessalonians 4:11; Ephesians 4:28.

Genesis 2:15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

Genesis 3:19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Galatians 6:5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.

II Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

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

Ephesians 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Memory Verse: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.—Colossians 3:23.

Aim: To teach the Bible standard of rendering service to man.

INTRODUCTION

WE WILL find instruction in God's Word for the conduct of man in every situation of life. This is necessary, for man within himself is not a moral power; he makes moral decisions only as pressure is brought upon him by outside forces. Though men know what the Bible teaches on any given moral issue, how often they are unable to do what it teaches! Any man

who approaches God in the right manner is certain to receive assistance to perform every moral requirement. A great part of life is spent at work; consequently, many decisions are made of a moral nature. How necessary that we have Christ with His power in our lives that we may do our work well and conduct ourselves in the proper manner toward our employer and our fellow workers! Labor unrest would always be avoided if Christ were permitted to lead labor and capital.

MEDITATIONS

WORK BEFORE THE FALL—Genesis 2:15—To dress it and to keep it—It is nature's law to destroy him who is inactive and to prosper him who is industrious. Even in the Garden of Eden, before the curse was pronounced upon the earth and man, it was required that Adam "dress" the garden. We would assume that the "dressing" included the pruning of trees, and like chores. This was work and proved beneficial to the physical man.

THE FALL INCREASED LABOR—Genesis 3:19—Sweat of thy face—It did not consume all of Adam's time to dress a garden that was free of weeds and so blessed of God. But after the fall, his labor was increased. Soil that is filthy with weeds will certainly bring sweat out on the man who faithfully tries to exterminate the weeds. To sweat is good for the body, but man, as a rule, tries hard to avoid this experience. Caesar, in training and using his army, made sure that his men sweat every day, summer and winter, for health's sake.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY—Galatians 6:5—Own burden—Every man has his own world in which he lives, and he has work to do that no other man can do. God's command is that every man bear his burden. Man is so created that he is able to do this and more. One man by his own labor is able to produce enough to care for himself and a family besides, often laying up a reserve. Some who disobey God's Word do not even produce enough for themselves. Such will come into condemnation at the judgment.

THE SUPPORT OF GOD'S MINISTRY—Galatians 6:6—Communicate—The man whom God calls to the ministry will usually need all his time in caring for the spiritual matters of those he serves; he will have little or no time to labor for his own living. *Communicate* means "to give." The giving is to be of "every good thing," not the refuse or least desirable. "Him that is taught" is the average Christian, and "him that teacheth" is the minister. God has ordained part of every man's work to the support of the ministry whom He has called.

RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD—Galatians 6:7—Be not deceived—Let no man think that he can hide any part of his life from God! Every man shall reap what he has sown! Be sure of this: if he sows sparingly, he shall reap sparingly. If he sows bountifully, he shall reap bountifully. (God loves a cheerful giver.)

USING THE FRUIT OF LABOR RIGHTLY—Galatians 6:8—Reap corruption—He who is so selfish that he spends all he makes ("sows to the flesh") is certain to reap despair and woe, and in the end,

eternal death. He who gives properly to God's cause ("sows to the Spirit") shall reap joy and peace, and in the end, life everlasting.

DILIGENCE REQUIRED—Romans 12:11—Not slothful in business—God requires that "whatsoever we do," we do it with our might. This suggests activity and accomplishment. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings." The carnal and unregenerated man too often rebels against labor. Christ in the heart delivers a man from laziness. There is no place in the kingdom of God for a lazy man.

WORK ENJOINED ON ALL—II Thessalonians 3:10—Should he eat—Again, it could only be the carnal or unregenerated nature that would cause a man to refuse to work for his support. If a man refuses to work, according to this scripture, he should not be given anything to eat.

TOIL—HONEST AND HONORABLE—I Thessalonians 4:11—Your own hands—In the days of Paul, it was customary to teach a student not only the popular educational subjects of the day, but also some handicraft. Paul had learned the trade of tent making, and it fit in well as a means of support in his ministry. Laboring with the hands is honest, and if it is done in the right spirit, it builds character.

RESPONSIBILITY TO OTHERS—Ephesians 4:28—Have to give—He who uses all he makes on himself is selfish, indeed, and is depriving himself of true happiness. Jesus declared that we would have the poor with us always. If we are so fortunate as to have a good, dependable job with a good income, we should show our gratitude by reaching a helping hand to the unfortunate. It is a drastic change to transfer from the life of a shiftless thief to the life of a charitable giver, but such is the power of the true gospel.

CONCLUSION

Much of our lives are spent in labor of one kind or another. Therefore, we should try to make every effort count for good. If we sell our time to an employer for a certain sum a week, we should make sure that we return value received in service. Any man who shirks on his job is certainly stealing from his employer. There is much strife between capital and labor, which is the result of men trying to manage the affairs of life outside of God! This will always produce failure. There can be no peace between capital and labor until Christ is invited to the conference table.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Is man by himself able to make right moral decisions?
2. Did Adam have to work before the fall in the Garden of Eden?
3. What effect did the fall in the Garden have upon the labor of man?
4. What is the command of God to the man who will not work?
5. What is the working man's responsibility to the ministry?
6. What is God's promise to the man who is diligent in business? †

WHAT DOES THE RESURRECTION MEAN TO YOU?

Radio Message by Bro. Greg Tyler
(aired 4/03/94)

WHAT DOES the resurrection mean to you? Unfortunately, many people have in their mind that Easter is one day that they will dress up and go to church somewhere. It doesn't really matter where, as long as they go to the church of their choice on Easter Sunday, for they feel as though that will make everything right between them and God. That is incorrect, Beloved. The resurrection of Jesus Christ means so much more than one day where, people who never attend services, finally come all dressed up to show off their fine clothes. It means so much more than this. The resurrection is so important to the eternity-bound soul of everyone of us. I believe this is underemphasized in the religious world today.

What does the resurrection mean? It means that Jesus came forth from the grave triumphantly. He proved once and for all that He was the Son of God, that the angels did rejoice when He was born in Bethlehem some thirty-three and a half years before, that the shepherds did have a message from God when they went and found Him wrapped in swaddling clothes, and that He did give His life for the sins of the whole world. The resurrection meant that His death was not in vain and that He sealed once and forever the reality that He was, and is, the Son of God. We know that He ascended into heaven and right now is seated on the right hand of the Father.

Christ's resurrection also proved that every word that He spoke was true. Every prophecy He gave will, if it hasn't already, come to past. Every teaching and commandment that He made was eternally set as true because of His resurrection. Oh, Beloved, when that stone was rolled away and that limped body became alive again and He walked out triumphantly, it meant that every word that He had ever spoken was the Word of God! It proved that indeed He was the Word made flesh and dwelt among us.

What else did the resurrection prove? The resurrection proved that there is life after death. Some people are in a great quandary about life after death. They investigate the occult and the experiences of some who say they have passed on and have come back. They investigate the possibility of reincarnation, this and that, and the other thing, wondering if there is indeed life after death. Well, Beloved, I want to tell you that the resurrection of Jesus Christ forever confirmed that there is life after death. He was the first fruits of them that slept. That means He was the first one who conquered death. But only the first one!

Every single man, woman, and child who has ever lived on this earth will also know life after death; but the resurrection that shall come to past does not mean that everyone is going to go to be with Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus proved to us conclusively that there shall be a resurrection at the last day. When the trump

shall sound, everyone that is in the grave shall come forth, and we who are alive and remain will be caught up with them to be judged for the life that we have lived. The Bible tells us that some shall be resurrected unto eternal life and some shall be resurrected unto eternal damnation. What we are doing right now, how we are living right now will determine whether we will be resurrected unto eternal life or unto eternal damnation. Either way, Beloved, death does not end it all. There is life after death. We shall give an account of the life that we are living. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proved it. There will be a great judgment day.

When we lay down this mortal body and it returns to the dust from whence it came, that is just temporary, for we shall receive a glorious resurrected body. Those who go on to be with the Lord shall receive a body like the Lord Jesus. Those who are condemned forever to eternal despair and damnation shall also have an eternal body, one that shall not fade away, but that body shall suffer evil torment throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Life is serious. The decisions we make are serious and every single one of us shall give an account for the life that we are living.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a time of rejoicing. It is proof beyond doubt that Jesus was the Son of God. Every word that He ever spoke was true. There is life after death. We, too, shall be resurrected in like manner—some unto eternal life—some unto eternal damnation, depending on the life that we are living, depending on the state of our eternity-bound soul. Even though this is a time of rejoicing and singing “Hallelujah”! it also ought to be a sobering time.

Any of you in our listening audience who know not the Lord, that last great day of resurrection shall be a resurrection unto damnation unless you make peace with God, here and now. We would invite any of you who know not the Lord to bow wherever you are at this moment and cry out for mercy, for the Lord has promised to wash your sins away. Because of His death on the cross, because of His resurrection from the grave, you have hope of eternal life. Though you’ve lived a life of sin, yet in a moment God will wipe it all away and make you a new creature in Christ Jesus if you’ll meet His conditions. Just come to Him now, ask Him to forgive you, and walk in newness of life. ☩



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



QUESTION: Would you please explain Acts 1:8?

ANSWER: Jesus told the disciples that He must return to the Father, but that He would send another Comforter. Here in this verse, He is telling them not to start out on the task of carrying the gospel to the ends of the world until this promise be fulfilled. They needed the Holy Spirit IN their heart and life to give them power to do the work the Master had given them to do. The same still holds true today, the Spirit comes into our heart through the experience of sanctification.

QUESTION: Where do the Scriptures say that Judah or the Jews are Israel? Or where do they say Israel are Jews? I thought Judah were Jews.

ANSWER: God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28).

The twelve tribes came through Jacob. The entire group was called Israel. Genesis 46 tells of their going into the land of Egypt. Exodus 3:9 shows that God called these people “Israel.” All the tribes combined continued to be known as Israel until Solomon died. However, the individual tribes were known by the name of Dan, Judah, Benjamin, etc. After Solomon died God took the kingdom away from his son just as He said He would—I Kings 11:11. For David’s sake God said He would give one tribe to Solomon’s son. As you read on in I Kings 12 you see where the larger part of the kingdom of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam and made Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, their king. They continued with the name of Israel. Judah and Benjamin stayed with Rehoboam and became known as the kingdom of Judah—the Jews. Nevertheless, they too were Israelites. See chapter 17:12.

So the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were Israelites just as the others. They simply dropped the name after the division came. Paul, who was of the tribe of Benjamin, called himself an Israelite, and truly he was. Other New Testament scriptures include Judah when the word *Israel* is used.

QUESTION: In Matthew 27:24 it says that Pilate washed his hands before they took Jesus to be crucified. Why did he wash his hands?

ANSWER: Pilate was telling the Jews that he was innocent of any responsibility of having Jesus crucified.

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Adam Clarke says, "It was a custom among the Hebrews, Greeks and Latins, to wash the hands in token of innocence, and to show that they were pure from any imputed guilt."

We might say it was more than just a custom among the Hebrews, for we read in Deuteronomy 21:1-10 that it was required by the law. If a man was found dead in a field with no one knowing who killed him, in an effort to find out who may have slain the person, they were to make a sacrifice, come and wash their hands over the animal; while doing so they were to say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it."

Thus Pilate declared, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

QUESTION: Would you please explain why some Jews, even today, deny that Jesus did not rise from the grave.

ANSWER: It is not only "some Jews" that do not believe Jesus rose from the grave. There are others as well, and the answer is, they do not believe the Bible. Of course, most Jews do not believe He was the Messiah; He was just a man that lived over 2,000 years ago and died as other men did. A child of God believes He was the Messiah, that He was crucified, that He rose again on the third day, that He returned to the Father, and that He is coming again.

QUESTION: Who do you think was really responsible for Jesus' death?

ANSWER: The religious leaders of His day were the ones who plotted and carried out their plans to see that Jesus was crucified. But when you look at the overall picture, all humanity was responsible for His death. He came into this world to seek and to save the lost, and that includes everyone, for all have sinned, and it took His death and resurrection to accomplish salvation's plan.

QUESTION: Why is it that after Christ has been crucified on the cross that the cross of Jesus became so popular? Even on that day two criminals were also crucified, but the cross of the criminals did not become so popular.

ANSWER: Many people were slain on crosses before the Savior was crucified, and as you say, two criminals were also hanged on crosses at the time Jesus was on His. So it was not just the cross, but the One who was hanged on the cross. Because of this the cross rapidly became interwoven into theological construction or religious thinking and teaching, especially in Paul's ministry and writings.

The cross was the most shameful way for a person to be put to death in that day, so Paul appealed to the Christians to bear the shame, take whatever came their way, and still be loyal to the One who died on the cross to make possible for them, and for us all, to be delivered from sin and its bondage.

In its article on the cross, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* says, "Thus the cross symbolizes the glory of the Christian gospel (I Corinthians 1:17); the fact

that through this offensive means of death (I Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 5:11), the debt of sin against us was 'nailed to the cross' (Colossians 2:14), and we, having 'been crucified with Christ' (Galatians 2:20), have been freed from sin and death and made alive to God (Romans 6:6-11)."

QUESTION: If Jesus knew what was in the hearts of men, why did He choose Judas Iscariot as one of His disciples?

ANSWER: Jesus knows what was in the heart of man! There is no question about that. Judas became a true follower of Christ. Later he fell by his own choice. Many have been saved and lived for the Lord for many years and then lost out. Are we to say the Lord should have never saved them? That is not the way He works. Man, not God, is responsible for the decisions he makes.

QUESTION: What are the differences between the following words: law, testimonies, precepts, statutes and commandments?

ANSWER: As you doubtless know, many words have more than one meaning. In regard to the words you have asked about, there is some overlapping in meaning. The word *law* covers not only rules of conduct established by a nation, state or town (or the divine law of God), but the word also covers statutes and precepts. The word *testimony* means "witness." *Precept* means "a commandment." *Statutes* are "decrees, precepts, established acts." *Commandment* means "a command; order; mandate; law."

QUESTION: Who has been the greatest hindrance to the church unity and spiritual power?

ANSWER: Of course Satan is the greatest hindrance! But when we speak in reference to the family of man, the ministry is. Why? They have sought disciples to follow them, and their sect religion, rather than following Christ. Paul said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30).

Paul teaches us in Ephesians four that Christ gave various gifts to members of the body of Christ; among these were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Notice why these gifts were given: "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" (Ephesians 4:12, 13).

Instead of bringing the saints into unity, they have divided them and they have done this by coming up with what they call "new light," which is not light at all. Others have caused division by refusing to walk in the light that truly was light. Some are married to their religion and not to Christ.

More could be said on this subject, but possibly this will give you an answer to your question. †

REPENTANCE AND THE REMISSION OF SINS

Message by Bro. Brian Richards, delivered 01/11/15

UR THOUGHTS are taken out of St. Luke, chapter 24, verses 46 and 47: “And [Jesus] said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” There are two words that stuck out to me when I read that passage of scripture: *repentance* and *remission* of sins. I’d like for us to consider those two words this evening.

I saw a headline recently that scientists are now trying to understand the religious or the spiritual experience in the brain. They’ve come a long way in understanding to some degree, to some level, as to how the brain operates. Now they want to focus some study on understanding just what is triggered, what occurs, what “circuitry” as they call it, is touched in spiritual experiences in religion. Well, I read in the Bible where Christ said, “O Father, thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

I’m so thankful that the gospel is not a complicated gospel. I’m sure there are things we don’t fully understand, but we don’t have to be scientists. We don’t have to be highly educated, or be a certain special person, but we have to be humble and willing to be taught and learn of the Lord. I’m so thankful the Scriptures teach the gospel of Christ in a simple manner. It’s not difficult for us to understand what God’s plan of salvation is.

Why is there a need of repentance and remission of sins? God created us for His pleasure. I think that’s clear and easy for us to understand. In the Garden of Eden, God came down and communed with Adam and Eve. He created us for His pleasure and His desire is to commune with us. *Commune* means, “to spend intimate time in close contact with an individual.” God created us for His honor and glory. We’re not created for our own pleasure. We’re not created to just make money and to get toys and other things in the world, and then die and pass on. We’ve been created and formed from the dust of the earth to bring honor and glory to almighty God. But something happened there in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve sinned, didn’t they? Because of Adam and Eve’s sin, the carnal nature has been passed down to the family of man. The Scriptures teach, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” So there is a need.

I’d like for us to turn to Isaiah, chapter 59, verses 1 and 2: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities [sins] have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” Dear Ones, when sin comes into our heart, it separates us from God, for God is pure, He is holy, and He is a just God. He cannot have communion with sin. So there was a need for a plan of

redemption to restore us to a place of purity that we may once again be called the children of God, and have that one on one relationship with God Almighty. I’d like for us to consider that as saints this evening. God wants to commune with us.



We often think of how we need God. We often think of how we need God’s support, His help and guidance in life. There are so many things we need in having a relationship with God. Again, I say, God created us for His honor and glory. He wants to have that fellowship, that relationship through prayer and meditation and following His commands. He wants us to have that relationship that only a pure and justified person can have.

I don’t usually like to read to the congregation, but this time I decided that I would read something for a couple of reasons. One is, I couldn’t say it any better than the writer. There is so much here that is so good that I didn’t want to paraphrase it. Also, it was written over 100 years ago. It is taken from *What the Bible Teaches* by F. G. Smith. It is just as true today. The principles taught in the Scriptures apply to all generations, don’t they? What I’m going to read here is just as true for us today as it was written over 100 years ago. It could have been written yesterday and applied just as well. So I’d like for you to consider some of the things as I read this. It is entitled, “A Spiritual Awakening—

Sin produces spiritual death to the soul. “Your sins have separated between you and your God” (Isaiah 59:2), and this separation is represented as death (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13; I Timothy 5:6, etc.). Men become “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13). “Even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1:15). They sink into the darkness of a sinful night, until, in many cases, there seems to be “no fear of God before their eyes,” or until they appear to lose all consciousness of “the exceeding sinfulness of sin.” How sad! Yet it is true, nevertheless, that many reach the state where sin does not appear to them so very bad, and righteousness does not appear very good. Their standard of conduct is not determined by God’s revealed law, but is regulated wholly by the terms of human expediency. If they can succeed in keeping at least a fair reputation among men, or in conforming to the general standard of conduct observed in the particular circle of society in which they move, they seem entirely satisfied; as though there were no God in heaven who takes account of their sinful actions, thoughts, and desires. Such people must become awakened now from their sleep of sin, or else ere long the thunders of judgment will arouse the soul when too late. “AWAKE to righteousness, and sin not” (I Corinthians 15:34).

I read that reading because we see those things all around us. We see the moral decay of our society, and people seem to just live at a standard that is generally accepted, generally held as OK among society, rather than looking to what the Word of God teaches, and looking to what God's law requires and revealed as God's standard.

There is a need for repentance. Sin brings a separation between us and God. We read in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." I know it's very common to us, but there are those in our world today that don't understand how to be saved. They don't really understand what is really required of us. We have an altar here that people can come and repent of their sins and seek the Lord for salvation.

Think of the jailer at Philippi. He had a beautiful attitude after that earthquake when the angel set Paul and Silas free. The jailer came and said to them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

I'd like to break it down a little bit this evening. Again, I say, this is a very basic message. It shouldn't be anything new to us. What must I do to be saved? Of course, the answer to that is to repent, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We see that the Lord's plan of redemption for mankind is to bring him back to a state of purity, a state where he can have communion with Him once again, and have that one on one relationship that involves repentance. Repentance is the plan that God Himself laid out. I'm so thankful that we don't have to confess our sins to a priest. We don't have to go to a priest to confess to him. I'm so thankful that our faith is between us and almighty God.

Repentance isn't about self-denial. It's not about sacrifices or rituals. There are a lot of religions in the world that would teach that you have to deny self, meaning, to limit some certain foods you intake for a while, or put your body through some ritual or some practice of self-denial to try to cleanse yourself, or to put yourself in a place to be redeemed by the gods. That's not what repentance is.

Repentance is not church-joining. It's not coming to a congregation of people in a church and signing a decision card. Your salvation isn't determined by a committee, a priest, nor a judge. There's no class meeting. Have you ever heard of people who want to be saved being asked, and then taken into a class to be trained and prepared? That's not what repentance is about. There's no class required, no education, no training required in that regard, but it takes a contrite and a broken heart. II Corinthians 7:10 tells us, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Have you ever met someone who was sorry that he got saved or sorry that he repented? That's what it means by "not to be repented of." Salvation is not to be repented of. Once you receive the goods (the gift of salvation), it brings a peace and a lifting of that heavy load, the breaking of the chains of sin that held you down and would have destroyed you. But this only comes through repentance and through godly sorrow.

What is godly sorrow? What does it mean to have godly sorrow? Well, in thinking of John the Baptist, when he was baptizing, who came to him? The Sad-

ducees and the Pharisees came to him and he was pretty straightforward with them. He said, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" He told them to "bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." There are certain conditions that must be met to partake of the Lord's salvation.

We read in Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." We can't come to the God of heaven in our own way, can we? We can't come with our own requirements. We can't come before Him with a lighthearted nature. We truly have to have godly sorrow. We have to be serious about it. We have to be awakened to the fact that we have sinned and have offended the mind of God. We must first acknowledge that we have sinned and then we must be genuinely sorry. We must be broken in spirit. "... a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." We can't come to God in our own way and time. There are certain conditions that must be met to be able to come to God.

John the Baptist let the Sadducees and the Pharisees know that there are conditions in coming to God. He said, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." In other words, "You're not coming to get real salvation. You're not coming with a sorrowful heart. You're not coming to truly repent of the sins you have committed."

We have talked about what repentance is not. There are some other things we could use to describe what repentance is: repentance requires us to confess to almighty God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." You might say, "Well, if God is an all-knowing God, if He knows my past and what I've done, then why must I confess to Him?" The Scriptures don't teach that we have to remember or confess every single thing that we have ever done that was wrong; but in general, we have to confess our sins. We have to acknowledge we're coming to God on His terms. We have to acknowledge that sin is sin and we're guilty of it. If we put something aside and say, "Well, that's not really sin," we're not going to get the goods, are we? We're not going to get through to God. We're not going to really receive pardon for our sins. We have to acknowledge that we have committed sin and confess to the God of heaven to be able to receive His pardon. Again, I say, we come to God on His terms.

Another thing we must do: we must confess to man. Many times there is something that we have done that we have to go to a person and ask for forgiveness. We have to make the situation right. If we hold pride in our heart, or any ill-will, we're not going to receive salvation. We're not going to receive forgiveness of sin. We have to be willing to humbly make things right with our fellow man. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24). We have to be willing to make things right with our fellow man. That might sound like it's rather simple, and it is, but it can be rather difficult for some people. Sometimes people harbor grudges and ill-will towards some-

one else for decades. We can't do that. We have to be willing to let go of things. If we truly have done wrong and are harboring ill-will, that is wrong, and we need to be willing to forgive. We need to be willing to make things right.

This also brings into mind the principle of restitution. The scripture says that we need to be reconciled to our brother. If we've stolen something, we need to go back and endeavor to make it right. We need to be reconciled to our brother. "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezekiel 33:15). There's a principle laid out there in that scripture. We're to make things not only right between us and our God, but between us and our fellow man. We should not be held accountable by anyone. We should be free and clear in the sight of God and man. Only then when we come to that place where we're willing to make things right will we truly receive forgiveness from God Almighty.

Another thing that we can use to formulate or describe repentance is: prayer. Again, it's not signing a decision card that brings salvation to the heart, but it's praying to God Almighty. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). We have to call on God. The Scriptures tell us, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." So it's through the Lord Jesus Christ that we can receive pardon for our sins. Of course, along with prayer, there needs to be mingled faith. When the jailer of Philippi came to Paul and Silas and asked, "What must I do to be saved?" he was told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to believe. It can be difficult at times to believe that the God of heaven is concerned about us as an individual. Sometimes it's difficult for people to forgive themselves. It's hard for them to forgive themselves for some things. We have to believe that God is willing to forgive us. He is interested in us.

We must be willing to forsake sin. So many in our world today are teaching that the blood of Jesus just covers our sins. The blood of Christ is just something that overshadows our sins so that Jesus can't see them. That's not what the Scriptures teach. The Scriptures teach that we're to forsake a life of sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). What a blessing! What a promise that is! If we come to Jesus with godly sorrow, if we're willing to forsake whatever we have to, if we're willing to make things right with our fellow man, if we're ready and willing to turn away from a life of sin, then we're in a place to receive that abundant mercy and pardon that sets the soul free. We often hear preached that salvation is free and we also hear that there's a cost. It does cost something. The things I just laid out are the price that must be paid. It does cost something to receive forgiveness of sins.

The Scriptures teach us that the Spirit draws us. He tenderly draws us to Him. We need to keep in mind that we don't come to the Lord whenever we feel like. We come to Him when the Spirit draws and works with

us. We read in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Of course, the Holy Spirit is the arm that moves and works for God. The Holy Spirit talks to our heart in a service, to our mind and to our conscience when we lay on our bed at night. He talks to our conscience as we go about doing the things of life. He lets us know when something is not right between us and our Creator. That is the Holy Spirit drawing and convicting us. We need to consider that a precious thing. We need to realize when God is sending His Spirit to talk to us, He's giving us the opportunity to receive the greatest gift given to mankind.

We also need to realize that when God's Holy Spirit comes and deals with our heart, a decision is being set before us. We're either going to open up the door or not respond. When we push the Holy Spirit away and we tell Him we're not interested, or we'll respond to Him a little later on in life, our heart gets a little bit more resistant to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit. Our heart can become, over time, very difficult for the Holy Spirit to work with. The knocking on the door can get lighter and lighter and lighter, until sometimes later in life people get so wrapped up in the cares of life that they don't even feel the Holy Spirit any more. They don't even feel the Holy Spirit working with them as they once did.

Children, we want you to keep this in mind: when you feel the presence of almighty God talking to you through your conscience and drawing you, give heed to His voice. Don't turn it away. Seek the Lord. You may have a parent, or maybe a minister, or your Sunday school teacher that could pray with you for guidance. Don't turn away the Holy Spirit's drawing. It's a precious thing.

In describing repentance, what it is, and when we can get it, we also have to describe who it is for, don't we? Salvation is for those that repent. It's not for the elite, not for 144,000, and it's not for a predestined few. It is for all. We read in II Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." I believe this verse here helps us to understand why the Lord hasn't come yet, because He's not willing that any should perish. He wants the gospel to go out to reach souls. He wants people to respond to the preaching of His Word. He wants people to read the Word of God so He'll have an opportunity to deal with them and to send His Holy Spirit to tenderly draw them to Him.

We have an example in the Bible where Jesus said that the table has been spread. There's a great feast offered unto all that are willing to come and pay the price and meet the conditions, but we have to do something. We have to be willing to partake of the Lord's salvation that He's offered unto us. He doesn't force it upon anyone. I don't serve a God that tries to force His salvation upon anyone. The God of heaven offers the plan of salvation. He lays out His offered grace, His mercy, His love to the whosoever will. He doesn't beat down the door, but He tenderly knocks on the door.

I'd like for us to also consider remission. The scripture in Luke 24 says that we are to preach the gospel

of repentance and remission of sins. What is remission? *Remission* is “pardon.” When we meet the conditions, we receive something from God Almighty. We don’t just go away empty. We don’t go away the same person that we were when we came to Him, but we go away a new creature in Christ. We go away pardoned, forgiven, and our load of sin lifted. Again, it’s not a covering for sin as many are teaching in the world today. I know the word *cover* is used in the Scriptures at one point, but it’s not referring in any way that our sins are still there; rather, they are washed away. We are cleansed of our sins and made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.” We are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. We are justified, forgiven, and our sins are washed away. We’re regenerated and made new creatures.

I’m so thankful that we don’t have to keep a book here to keep a record of who is a part of God’s church. There’s no need for us to keep a church book, because God in heaven keeps that book. He writes our names in the Lamb’s book of life when we’re born again. God gives us the power to live above sin. Often this isn’t taught in our world today. There are so many teaching that we can just believe on the Lord and receive forgiveness of sins, and then the blood covers our sins, and we sin more or less every day. We often refer to it as “once saved, always saved.” That’s not what the Scriptures teach. The Scriptures teach that we are to live without sin. We are to turn from a life of sin. God gives us the power to do so.

Many times when people are considering salvation, they say, “Well, I can’t do that. I can’t live it. I can’t give this up. I can’t stop doing this or that,” but they’re looking to their own power and strength. No one can do it in, and of, himself. It takes the power of almighty God. It takes regeneration, the new birth to be able to resist and overcome the temptations of Satan.

Consider, we have a choice. A choice must be made. When the Holy Spirit comes to us and deals with us, He’s setting a choice before us. Again, I’m so thankful it’s not something that’s predetermined. I’m so thankful it’s not available to just a few, but to all of us. We have to make that choice, don’t we? We have to make that choice to follow Christ. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37). We have to have a thirsty soul. That’s why we pray many times for our loves ones. You’ve heard people pray, “Lord, bring whatever you can in their life to bring them to their knees.” We are praying that they’ll come to the place where they’re thirsty and broken for the Lord and are willing to lay aside a life of sin and seek the Lord’s way.

Revelations 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” That’s a promise that’s been made. If the Spirit of God is drawing and talking with you, it’s because He’s knocking on your heart’s door and wants to come in. He’s promised that if you will open the door and allow Him to come in, He will come in. He will take His abode in your heart. “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). The choice is set before us this evening. If we choose to do the right,

God will give us the power to do right. He will give us the power to do what He’s asked us to do.

When we partake of salvation, we need to make up our mind fully that we’re going the Lord’s way. It’s not something we dabble in. It’s not something we just try. We need to be committed that we’re going the Lord’s way. To the end of life, “I am making my decision to stand with the Lord. Come what may, by God’s grace, I’m going to stand with Him and serve Him.” When you do this, you will receive the blessed gift of salvation. He will plant your feet on the solid Rock and put a new song in your mouth. Many times people have testified that the Lord changed them and made them new creatures in Christ. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

The Scriptures tell us that when one soul is saved, there is joy in heaven. “Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Luke 15:7). That’s why, as a congregation, we labor in services and in prayer to reach a soul. A soul is precious.

If we choose to reject Him, the Scriptures ask, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” The Lord’s mercy has been offered. He’s laid out the plan of salvation that we can freely receive if we’re willing to come and pay the price. Again, we can’t come with our own requirements and ideas, but we must come with a broken and a contrite spirit. We must feel sorry for the sins we have committed and be willing to turn away from a life of sin. When we do that, we will receive abundant pardon.

God bless you. †

E-MAIL

Dear Bro. Greg,

Your editorial in the July 2020 issue, “One Day at a Time” was a tonic for me. All three magazines you sent to me were inspiring. ... When I show people the topics through the joy I receive when reading the magazines, I often wonder if they equally derive much joy from the magazines as I do.

—O. O., Nigeria

OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Sir,

I receive your paper and enjoy it. Keep up the good work. May God bless.

—D. C., Indiana

Way of Truth Friends,

Here is a letter to let you know your material and Bible knowledge are greatly appreciated by me, a freed prisoner for six months now. ... God bless you.

—C. V. P., Florida



Greetings!

This month's articles are written by Sis. Joley and Sis. Ellie Williams from the Craigsville, West Virginia, congregation. We appreciate their godly examples and trust you will receive a blessing from Sis. Joley's exhortation and Sis. Ellie's testimony.

—Bro. Doug

OUR CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

By Sis. Joley Williams

THERE ARE many identities that can be distinguished in our world today. Some people identify with the way they look, some identify with the way they think. As Christians, we identify with our salvation and our heavenly Father. I think that each one of us has a unique identity in Christ. We are all of one body as the church, but I think the relationship we have with God can be one on a more personal level.

During high school, I struggled a lot with my identity in Christ. I accepted what I had been taught my whole life and never really gave much thought otherwise. I started to feel downtrodden, sad, and lonely. At one point, Satan had chipped away at me so much that I felt like God didn't even want me any more; I didn't feel worthy. I don't know what happened; thank the Lord it did, but something clicked in my mind. I wasn't claiming my faith. I wasn't searching scriptures for comfort. I had been turning to the world, which only brought more tears. As I've grown in the Lord, I've realized that when I tried to serve God in the past, I never fully claimed salvation as my own. When I made the choice to fully commit my life to Him, I was able to develop my own personal and deep walk with God.

Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ..." So before we can start to build the foundation of our Christian identity, we have to be bold in the truth and claim it for ourselves! As Christians, we should be happy to live out the gospel of Christ every day, every hour, and every minute of our lives. If we are ashamed, or not fully committed to God, we won't be able to receive the full blessing that is promised to us.

Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Paul is basically saying here that his sins died with Christ on the cross, and his sins were replaced with the Spirit of God. Now that he had Christ in him, he walked by faith in God. What a wonderful example! Our old life died alongside Paul's when Jesus was crucified. We then have a duty to live by faith of the Son of God, because He loved us so much to give Himself for us. Realizing that we are new creatures in Christ

will allow our relationship with God to grow that much more, forming a stronger identity in Him.

Once we have proven the Lord and found His words to be true for ourselves, we can begin to live out His will for us. Every single person in the world has a purpose: to serve God. Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Whether the Lord calls you to sing, preach, or minister to nations, we are called to prophesy His name and to be a light to the world. Life catches up with us sometimes and we stray from that calling. We become busy and it may fall a little lower on the *to do* list. Christ prioritized dying for our sins, so why can't we give Him our uninterrupted service?

Psalms 28:7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song I will praise him." Another way to grow in our Christian identity is to rely on God for our strength. Before I learned better, I used to believe that I had to struggle through my problems and leave God alone. God has explicitly told us to bring our cares before Him and He will care for us. It may seem hard to let go and hand everything over to God, but once you've done it, you'll feel unexplainably peaceful. The second part of that verse states another purpose we have in this life: rejoice and praise God. After all that God has given to us, we should be praising Him every chance we can. We should praise Him in the years of plenty and also praise Him in the storm.

The last verse that inspired me was Matthew 4:19, 20: "And he [Jesus] saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him." In this verse, you'll notice that Jesus said to Peter and Andrew to come unto Him and He would "make" them. The Lord doesn't require us to come to Him already perfect and whole. In Him, day by day, we grow in Him and become more than we were the day before. The requirement is that we must come unto Him. We aren't powerful enough to stir the souls of men, but God is, and in His power we can see miracles done. In verse 20, the men didn't hesitate when Jesus called them, they immediately left what they were doing and became available to serve Christ. Their example is set for us to follow. When we see a need or feel prompted by God, we should act on those promptings with prayer and fasting.

As we journey through our lives, it is important to remember that everyone will have a unique experience and not to sell ourselves short if we don't "measure up" to what we think we should be. As long as we follow God and obey His will and Word, we are living up to the high calling; and truly, there is no higher calling.

—Sis. Joley

MY TESTIMONY

I have been blessed to grow up in a Christian home where we have put God above all else. I have been raised learning to love God and His Word. From an

early age, I noticed how wonderful it was to pray and spend time with God. However, as a small child, I never understood salvation.

The first time I was convicted, I was around the age of nine. Bro. Duane Jeffries came to our congregation and spoke in a revival. One of his messages was on "Running the Race." This message was about living our life for God. The conviction I felt in that service was an uncomfortable feeling, to say the least. Unfortunately, I did not get saved in that service.

I finally gave my heart and life to God two years later. I felt a great burden lifted off my heart. I was so excited that I was not being half-hearted with God any more. Learning more about God these few years have been great. The best part is that I am now a part of the greatest family, God's family. It is a true blessing to have my heart right with God.

—Sis. Ellie †

THE THOUSAND YEARS' REIGN WITH CHRIST

From the book, *Christ's Kingdom and Reign*
by the late H. M. Riggle

IN REVELATION 12, the church is set forth under the double symbol of a woman and her son, in order to show two phases of her existence during the apostasy. It will be seen that the woman brought forth a man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; let us consider this woman as presented in the symbol.

She represents the Church of God, the bride of Christ, in her primitive unity and purity. The blessed union which exists between Christ and His people is expressed by the term "marriage." This is true both of our present spiritual union with Christ and of our future, eternal union with Him. The whole church is in Scripture termed "the Lamb's wife," "the bride of Christ," etc. She was "clothed with the sun"—a striking emblem of Jesus Christ [or the New Covenant, of which Christ was the mediator], the "Sun of righteousness," the light and glory of the church. The church was clothed with His righteousness, which is represented in the same apocalypse lay "pure linen, clean and white" (Revelation 19:8). She was clothed with His holiness, with the beautiful garments of salvation. The result was that she was a pure church.

"And upon her head a crown." Ah! she sat a queen. Her husband, the glorious Lord, is the king of heaven—"King of kings, and Lord of lords." He ascended on high, "crowned with glory and honor," and now reigns a monarch over earth and sky. His wife—the church—shares this royal honor. With the same glory that the Father crowned Him, He crowned her. "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." She shares His reign in the kingdom of peace. He testifies, "I have overcome the world"; and we read that "whatsoever is born of God, overcome the world."

The twelve stars in her crown represent the twelve apostles of the Lamb. These adorn her fair brow. Her travail in birth and pain to be delivered represent the earnest labor of the early church for the salvation of the world. Like a true wife, the church joined heart and soul with Christ in the great cause which drew Him to earth. The whole church is a unit, made up of "workers together with God" in the salvation of lost souls. Both "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children."

It is said "she brought forth a man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." The question before us is, What does this man-child represent? Some have supposed that it refers to Christ; but for the following reasons it cannot: The woman here referred to is the New Testament church. The church labors and pains to be delivered and suddenly brings forth this child. Christ is not a child of the Church of God. She is not His mother. Really, He is her founder, her husband. The prophet calls Him "the everlasting Father." Since this child cannot refer to Christ, we shall clearly prove that it refers to the great and mighty host of children brought forth by the pristine church.

This man-child is clearly defined in the prophecy of Isaiah as follows: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all we that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66:7-13).

The man-child portrayed in Isaiah's prophecy is the same man-child seen in Revelation 12. Isaiah and Revelation both declare this to be "a nation born at once," "in one day." "She [Zion] was delivered of a man-child." In surprise the prophet exclaims: "Who hath heard of such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." This is clear. A nation of children, born suddenly, constitutes the man-child. He was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. This child "sucks the breast of her consolations, and milks out, and is delighted with the abundance of her glory"; "is borne upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees." To what does this refer but to new-born babes, who desire the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby (I Peter 2:2)? Paul said to some of these "babes in Christ," "I have fed you with milk" (I Corinthians 3:1-3). Was not this fulfilled in the early church? While Zion was

in travail in an upper room in Jerusalem, she suddenly brought forth, and a nation of three thousand children was born into the family in one day. In a few days the number of children increased to about ten thousand. It was but a little while till the number increased to hundreds of thousands.

It will be observed in Ephesians 2:15 that the host of Jews and Gentiles born into the Church of God, made one in His blood, and reconciled unto God in one body, constitute "*one new man*." It may be objected that this child was to rule the nations. This is the same as Daniel prophesied, namely: "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:27). And in Revelation 2:26, 27, it is said, "He that overcometh ... to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4). This represents the glorious triumph of the early church. The breaking of the nations into shivers and the ruling of them with a rod of iron, is the same as the stone of Daniel 2 breaking in pieces and consuming the brass, iron, silver, and gold, until no place is found for them. It was the iron rod of the gospel that broke them in pieces. In Revelation 12:17 reference is made to the "remnant of the woman's seed," which proves that the man-child was not a single personage.

Next is seen a "great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads," standing before the woman to "devour her child as soon as it was born." How true was the fulfillment! This dragon represented pagan Rome, and just as fast as men accepted the Christian faith, the pagans were ready to devour them. Such were the bloody days of the church under the heathen Roman Empire. But Christianity spread so rapidly and the gospel had such a crushing effect that paganism finally tottered and fell.

But what became of that holy nation, the triumphant throng, and great host of saints who were marching onward victorious over every foe? They suddenly disappeared from the earth. "The child was caught up unto God, and to his throne"—ascended to paradise—while darkness, superstition, and iniquity flooded the earth. The brilliant light of Christianity was eclipsed by the darkness of apostasy. "The woman fled into the wilderness." Here the reader will see the wisdom and necessity of a double symbol, a woman and her son, which was chosen to set forth two phases of the church.

In Revelation 17, a double symbol; namely, a vile woman and her daughters, is chosen to symbolize two distinct phases of the apostasy. So with the church. If but a single symbol were used, how could the church thereby be represented as continuing on earth and fleeing into the wilderness, and at the same time be represented as overcome, persecuted to death, and caught up unto God, and to His throne?

The phase represented by the man-child, who was caught up unto God, is that phase of the church which was cut off from the earth through martyrdom and persecution. The phase represented by the woman who fled into the wilderness is that phase of the church which continued on earth. This part in the wilderness

was crushed under human authority. The beasts' power ruled, and this was the period when the reign of God's people on earth largely ceased.

Now, for a few moments, we shall drop that phase of the church which went into the wilderness, and follow the man-child, or mighty host of martyrs who were caught up unto paradise. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4, 5).

Notice, that it was the "*souls*" of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus that reigned with Christ. These were disembodied spirits that had had part in the first resurrection. This first resurrection is not a literal one, but is a resurrection, by the power of God, from a dead state in sin to life in Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of this in his Ephesian letter: "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins ... and hath raised us up together"; also, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." To this John adds his beautiful testimony—"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). These souls had taken part in the spiritual resurrection while they were on earth and were blessed and holy—had been raised up to the high plane of holiness—and because of their trueness to God they "were beheaded for the witness of Jesus," after which they ascended into paradise, where we see them reigning with Christ. Not a word is said about people's being literally resurrected and reigning on the earth. This reign was before the resurrection of the literal dead, for the resurrection of these does not take place until after the one thousand years, and it includes both good and bad; for some are found written in the book of life and some are not (see verses 11-15).

It is clearly evident that there is no reign on earth mentioned here at all; the reign was with Christ. This beautifully harmonizes with Paul's statement, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:23, 24).

These same souls are brought to view in Revelation 6:9-11, and here it will be clearly seen that they were not literally resurrected and were not reigning on the earth at all. "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them: and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." In these texts, we again see the same persons

symbolized by the man-child of chapter 12. They were souls in a disembodied state. They were not on the earth, but they were in a state of “rest” with Christ. These Scriptures considered together blend harmoniously. First, the church reigns publicly on the earth, but this phase is cut off, by the apostasy on the one hand and by the persecutions of the beast on the other; and being thus interrupted on the earth, the scene suddenly changes to the realm of paradise, and we behold the souls of martyrs reigning there. They “rest” while they “reign with Christ,” and they “wait” for the end of that earthly reign of tyranny and usurpation in which their “fellow servants, also and their brethren” shall be killed as they were.

The special time which this reign in paradise brings to our view is that period during which God’s people on earth were martyred for the testimony of Jesus. At the end of this period, as we have already noticed, the scene is again laid upon earth, and the triumph of the church and the spiritual reign of the kingdom is again manifested. But as the public reign of the apostolic church ceased gradually, and as its restoration in the last days also takes place gradually, no exact dates for this phase of the subject can be given; therefore, the indefinite period of time that elapsed between the two is simply stated by the term, “a thousand years.” This is not literally a thousand years, for that would be less than the reign of the papacy, which was twelve hundred and sixty years; moreover, the period under consideration not only covers that period, but also extends into the Protestant era; for Protestantism also martyred some of God’s witnesses during its earlier days. In fact, all the time periods mentioned in the Revelation are symbolic, not literal. If a literal period of a thousand years had been meant, the prediction would probably have said a thousand days; just as the twelve hundred and sixty years was symbolic by “a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”

First, we see a glorious reign on earth in the beginning of the Christian era. Next, the long reign of apostasy, when the public reign of God’s people on earth ceases. But during that long period, symbolically termed a thousand years, the reign goes on in paradise, by the souls of those who had taken part in the great spiritual resurrection, and had reigned on earth, millions of whom were martyred for the witness of Jesus and the testimony which they held. Thus the scene of reigning was for this long period of time transferred from earth to heaven; but at the end of this time the saints again possess the kingdom: and in the closing days of the Christian dispensation, God’s people enjoy a reign of righteousness on earth again. The idea is not that those souls in paradise reign merely a thousand years, for they shall reign forever and ever; but the truth intended is that during the great apostasy, the time when the beast and image would reign on earth and have the dominion, the endless reign of Christ in His saints would go on uninterrupted. How fittingly the language of Dr. Clark, already quoted, applies on this particular point: “The kingdom of grace here, and the kingdom of glory above, form the endless government of Christ.” †

—Reprinted from the September 1989 issue

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Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

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Bro. Mick Akers, Pastor



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