

The Way of Truth

Vol. 79

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

No. 5

“Turning the Heart of the Father”

See page 2.

JUNE 2021



**“Children’s children are the crown of old men;
and the glory of children are their fathers.”**

—Proverbs 17:6.

FATHER, are you the glory of your children? The word *glory* means (in part), “the source of great joy and pride.” Every child has a right to be raised by a man who is a source of joy and pride, living an exemplary life to pattern after.

There is a certain beauty of God’s plan for the family unit. First, God created Adam, then Eve, then children. One man, one woman and children resulting from a proper marriage, each of whom is loved and cherished. The family unit is the core of ordered society.

Every child is born with a God-given right to glory in his father. Sad to say, few men fill the bill in today’s world. George Herbert once said, “One father is worth more than a hundred schoolmasters.”

In this editorial for Father’s Day, I would like to use the six letters of the word FATHER to emphasize some old-fashioned characteristics that would cause children to glory in their fathers.

The letter F—FAITHFUL—We are all familiar with the phrase, “The best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.” Father should be faithful to mother. Marriage is still honorable! Leon R. Yankwich once said, “There are no illegitimate children—only illegitimate parents.” A faithful father will make an effort to make his marriage work.

A father must be faithful to his children, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”—Ephesians 6:4.

He will endeavor to train his children in the way they should go. Abraham Lincoln said that for a man to train up a child in the way he/she should go, he must walk that way himself.

Colossians 3:21 reads, “Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.” Though children need to be corrected from time to time, it should be administered with love and not wrath.

Rearing children is like holding a wet bar of soap—too firm a grasp and it shoots from your hand, too loose a grasp and it slides away. A gentle but firm grasp keeps it in your control.

Father ought to be faithful to God. No man can be the father he ought to be without Christ. Every child deserves a praying father.

The letter A—AVAILABLE—Father should make sure he has daily contact with each child.

I love the story Gordon MacDonald tells:

“Among the legends is the tale of a medieval sidewalk superintendent who asked three stone masons on a construction project what they were doing. The first replied that he was laying bricks. The second described his work as that of building a wall. But it was the third laborer who demonstrated genuine esteem for his work when he said, ‘I am raising a great cathedral.’

Pose that same question to any two fathers concerning their role in the family, and you are liable to get

the same kind of contrast. The first may say, ‘I am supporting a family.’ But the second may see things differently and say, ‘I am raising children.’ The former looks at his job as putting bread on the table. But the latter sees things in God’s perspective: he is participating in the shaping of lives.”

Time is one of the most important things we can give our children. They grow up so fast. Never be too busy for your son or daughter.

The letter T—TRUSTWORTHY—worthy of trust and confidence, dependable. He will be a conscientious bread winner, not lazy. He will not be a liar. His children can count on dad as an anchor.

One Father’s Wish

Perry Tanksley

On this bright Father’s Day I hope my boys and girls
Will have, or think they have, the best dad in the world.

I know no child I have will long remain a child,
They’ll soon be grown and gone in just a little while.
That’s why I’d like to be deserving of their praise,
So children that I love can cherish me always.

William Buel Franklin penned the following:

“If he’s wealthy and prominent, and you stand in awe of him, call him ‘Father.’ If he sits in his shirt sleeves and suspenders at a picnic, call him ‘Pop.’ If he wheels the baby carriage and carries bundles meekly, call him ‘Papa’ (with the accent on the first syllable). If he belongs to a literary circle and writes cultured papers, call him ‘Papa’ (with the accent on the last syllable). If, however, he makes a friend of you when you’re good and is too wise to let you pull the wool over his loving eyes when you’re not; if, moreover, you’re quite sure no other fellow you know has quite so fine a father, you may call him ‘Dad.’”

The letter H—HEARER—It’s easier for a father to be a teller, harder to take time to listen.

Take a Moment to Listen

Take a moment to listen today
To what your children are trying to say;
Listen today, whatever you do
Or they won’t be there to listen to you.

Listen to their problems, listen for their needs,
Praise their smallest triumphs, praise their smallest deeds;

Tolerate their chatter, amplify their laughter,
Find out what’s the matter, find out what they’re after.

But tell them that you love them, every single night
And though you scold them, be sure you hold them;
Tell them “Everything’s all right;
Tomorrow’s looking bright!”

Take a moment to listen today
To what your children are trying to say;

Listen today, whatever you do
And they will come back to listen to you.—Selected

ABOUT THE COVER

A father meditates in the reflection of Moraine Lake in Canada. Every man should ponder his great responsibility if he has children who look to him for an example of moral conduct. A father’s influence is powerful!

THE WAY OF TRUTH

(Registered Trademark)

Vol. 79

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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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*The letter E—EXAMPLE—*A man and his young son were climbing a mountain. They came to a place where the climbing was difficult and even dangerous. The father stopped to consider which way he should go. He heard the boy behind him say, "Choose the good path, Dad; I'm coming right behind you!" Father, where do your footsteps lead?

A young minister, when about to be ordained, stated, that, at one period of his life, he was nearly an infidel. "But," said he, "there was one argument in favor of Christianity which I could never refute—the consistent conduct of my father."

*The letter R—RECONCILER—*Among the family unit, Father should be a peacemaker in the home.

Eight Things for Which You as a Father Will Never Be Sorry

1. For doing your level best even when discouraged.
2. For hearing before judging in family quarrels.
3. For thinking before speaking when emotionally upset.
4. For not harboring unkind thoughts of a talebearer.
5. For being generous to an enemy, perhaps the next door neighbor.
6. For stopping your ears to gossip over the fence.
7. For standing by your principles in dealing with your teenagers.
8. For asking pardon, when in error, even of your child.

"Father should also be a reconciler between his children and God. Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man, but father stands in the gap. The school system doesn't care about the soul. Famous musicians don't care. Hollywood doesn't care. The world we are living in could not care less. But father—he not only

loves me, provides for his children, listens to them, not only does he want his children to be happy in this world, but he cares for the souls of his children."—Selected

Father, are you a glory to your children? †

RADIO LETTER

(email)

Good Morning,

I listened to the radio broadcast in Jamaica this morning on my way to work and was truly guided. I know the Holy Spirit used you to help me to make an important decision. I have always prayed for God's will to be done in my life, but this time around, persons advised me to do my research and make my decision. While nothing is wrong in doing research, only God knows the future (as mentioned on your broadcast). I had gotten confused and stressed by the findings of my research. My husband kindly reminded me that I had taken a different approach to this problem and I should revert to allowing God to work things out, then do further research.

I feel much better now. I will NOT lean unto my own understanding. I acknowledge God as the ultimate Guide (as advised on your broadcast), and so I know He will make that choice for me. And it will be the best one! Thank you!

—K. R., Jamaica

IN THIS ISSUE:

Turning the Heart of the Father	Page 2
<i>Full-length sermon by Doug Shenberger</i>	
The Question Box	Page 5
<i>Our monthly feature</i>	
The Poetry Page	Page 6
<i>Recognizing Father's influence</i>	
Tributes in Memory of a Saint	Page 7
<i>The life of Sis. Amanda Evans remembered</i>	
Winning a Crown	Page 8
<i>Part XXXIII of the book by the late C. W. Naylor</i>	
Bible Lesson of the Month	Page 10
<i>"Living for Christ in Our Speech"</i>	
Three Trees	Page 11
<i>A tale from the Bible Illustrator</i>	
A Spirit Stirred—the Genesis of Revival	Page 12
<i>Full-length sermon by Darrell Sanford</i>	
The Children's Corner	Page 16
<i>"Trapped," by Rebecca Bland</i>	
Marriage Is a Calling in the Lord	Page 17
<i>Article by Richard Lehman</i>	
Young People's Page	Page 20
<i>"Eternity," by Lauren Swain</i>	
Untempered Mortar	Page 21
<i>Article by the late H. R. Matthews</i>	

TURNING THE HEART OF THE FATHER

Message by Bro. Doug Shenberger delivered 06/19/16



I AM A little bit nervous about the topic I have this evening. That's something you don't often hear me say, but it's a topic that I felt the inspiration to speak on. I've never attempted to speak, that I can recall, a Father's Day message. Today is Father's Day, so I trust the Lord will give me the words that will be appropriate and a blessing to you.

I know not everyone here is a father, especially a father with children that are still "under his roof" as has been said; but I believe that it's hard to look at the Bible and not have some truth, something of importance that we all can get a blessing from.

If you'd like to turn with me in your Bibles to Malachi, chapter 4, I will be reading the last verse. Verse 6: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

I would imagine we have heard that verse read before, but in thinking about Father's Day, it's hard not to consider children. A man becomes a father because he has children. Children make a home something more than a man and a woman in that home. They make that man and woman a father and a mother. They make that home a much more complete family than it would have been. No matter how wonderful that married life is, children expand the scope of a home tremendously.

In our text (Malachi 4:6), there are two main points I'd like to consider. Of course, the first one is this: "he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children." Maybe one of the reasons I have an inspiration about this verse is this: I think about it. A lot of times while we're working at whatever we're doing, we sometimes have time to think. As I consider my children and my family, I think about this verse different times. In introducing this subject tonight, I'd like to bring out the truth that I believe we need to be reminded of that we may have already heard and know. Even though at one point we have a vision of something that we think is good, beautiful, or right, vision can leak away from us. It can become something that we gradually, over time, forget. I believe this is too important of a subject to allow our attention to stray or to leak away from us.

Let us consider what it means for a father to turn his heart to the children. When we talk about *heart*, in a sense, it is a complicated subject. It's not that physical, beating heart as we've heard of before, but it is the center of our emotions. It's what motivates us; it's what interests us. The heart is where our time and attention is directed from. You know, you could be sitting somewhere and two different people could come up to you and make a couple different suggestions to you. When one person makes a suggestion to you, you'd say, "Oh, it's been a long day! I really don't feel up to doing that;" and then five minutes later, someone else could come

up and make a suggestion to you about something to do, and you'd say, "Oh yes, I would be happy to do that!" What's the difference? It was something you were interested in. It was something that touched your heart, your thoughts. It was something you would like to do. It was where your focus and attention was in life, so it didn't seem like it was something that was tiring or something that was a burden to do. It seemed like something you wanted to do, and suddenly you had the energy that you didn't have five minutes ago to do something that wasn't nearly as interesting. That's just a little illustration about our heart, what's in our heart. The Bible tells us, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

There is a lot that could be said in considering that one part of Malachi 4:6, "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children," and to think about a human being's heart. What drives or inspires a human being's heart? What would cause a human being to go farther than is comfortable, or to do more for another human being than anyone else? There are people who will work 12, 14, or 16 hours a day for certain purposes, but for other things, you can hardly get them out of bed. It's because of what's in their heart that makes a difference. Whenever our heart is focused on something, it's much easier to find the time to achieve it. So if we find ourselves not accomplishing the things that we believe should be really important to us in life, then maybe we should think about whether our heart is really set on it. It's amazing what we can do when our heart is set on something specific.

Again, the first part of the verse says, "And he shall turn the heart." Let's think about *turning*. Why would you need to turn your heart? What does that word indicate? It indicates a change of direction. It didn't say that you should add interest in your heart. It says that you should turn your heart. That implies, to me at least, that you turn away from something else. Sometimes human beings have the ability to multitask. We don't always do it well though. Sometimes when we're trying to do a lot of things, something gets dropped. The reality is, the things that are really important that we want to make sure they're done well, we're going to need to focus on them. It's going to have to be something that we set our heart on. When we think about turning our heart, it indicates to me there's going to be some change. There's going to be something that requires a real focus to make something new our priority. When we're driving along and we turn, we have changed directions. We're not going the same way. Most things of real importance in life that require change are difficult. We would like to go along the way we've been going. It's not easy as human beings, many times, to make important changes in our lives.

Whenever we think about turning the heart of fathers to the children, it may require turning some of that focus away from our business, our job, our finances, and our pleasure. Many different things this can involve, but there's definitely an implication of change involved in this statement: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children."

When we think about children and start to focus on them, one of the reasons for that is to see what their needs are, to get to know them, and to understand them. When we see the needs of children, especially young children, some of the most obvious needs are the material needs. They have a need for food, for shelter, clothing, education, and protection. The interesting thing about all those things that I mentioned is this: they can be purchased with money. The most obvious needs that a father's children have can be purchased with money. That can inspire fathers, I believe, to focus on a job, a career, and providing a living for the family. Taking care of those obvious needs well can provide a sense of success as a care giver. We have a responsibility to provide for the material needs of our family. The Bible tells us that. But those are not things that necessarily would cause or require a father's heart to turn to his children. I know in a sense that providing for the family is overcoming selfishness by providing for those that are in need, rather than just taking care of yourself. But it is a pretty natural human design that God made for a father and a mother to provide for the physical needs of their children. We see that even in the animal kingdom. There's something natural there.

I don't believe that the material needs of children is what Malachi 4:6 is talking about, because I don't think that your heart really has to turn away from the material life to take care of those needs. There are other needs. There are emotional needs and spiritual needs that children have. Those needs can be more difficult to see and they can be more long term in nature. Things that are long term are easier to put off. Things that are hard to see are easy to overlook.

As a father, I feel the need to turn my heart and attention to my children. It takes time and attention to really get to know a person; and the interesting thing about children is, they're changing a lot faster than adults do. So what you've learned about your children two years ago isn't necessarily a very complete picture today. Their needs might be considerably different than what they were, and how we interact with them might have to be different. Those things take time to study and it takes time to pay attention to another person.

You know, it's hard to take time enough in our busy lives to have close friends as adults. To be close to someone, you have to spend time interacting with that person. You have to find out what that person likes and enjoys doing. You have to do things together. You have to communicate clearly. There's a lot involved in being a friend. If we're going to know our children, there will be a lot of time involved in that as well.

Whenever we think about turning our heart and focusing on our children with our whole heart, identifying their needs, developing a plan of how we're going to interact with them in a meaningful way to meet their needs as they change and develop, what an unbeliev-

able task! When we really think about it, it's a huge responsibility. I feel that responsibility keenly. Of course, we all do as parents, but I'd like to endeavor to inspire us by looking at our text (Malachi 4:6) and bringing some thoughts from it—to not let that vision leak away from us—to make sure that we're turning our hearts to our children.

Children have some basic needs. I'm talking now about the needs beyond their material needs. One of the needs that our children has is *approval*. That's not just for children. Everybody needs approval. I like to have approval. We all do. The approval of our parents is particularly powerful. One thing about approval that's really critical is this: approval is most powerful when you've earned it. Just giving someone approval by saying that he's good when he hasn't done anything particular to earn that statement, can become just empty words. To be able to give someone approval, it sometimes requires putting things in advance to help him to succeed, to achieve, and to do something so that you can give him approval that's really powerful. That will make a difference and bring him the joy that it should bring.

Let me illustrate what I just said. Let's say that you're playing a game or running a race. If you were running a race and giving it your best, and someone else was running beside you, and you won, you have a certain sense of accomplishment because you won. But if you find out that the other person didn't actually run his best and just let you win, that doesn't mean anything. That person robbed you of your joy. So empty words of praise and approval can be a similar thing. I don't believe we should give approval frivolously, but yet we desperately need to see that our children crave our approval. I believe that a father needs to turn his heart and have enough focus on his children to be able to properly meet those needs. That might mean that a father needs to create an opportunity for them to have a responsibility so that they will have an opportunity to succeed and do what's right. I'm not able to give a magical solution, for it's not my plan to tell fathers a magical solution for turning their hearts to their children and making a difference in their lives. But I want us to understand that it's not something we can put just a little effort into, and it makes this big difference.

Turning your heart, Fathers, is a lot different than carving out half an hour out of your day to take time with your children. It's a whole different outlook. I believe our text captures this truth in just a few words in a really powerful way: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers." It got right to the crux of the matter. It had to deal with the heart to really make the difference.

Another of the basic needs of children is this: to have an understanding of God. I believe that one of the earliest understandings of God that children at a young age will ever have is their interaction with their parents. That's what parents are to their children when they're really young. They're like God to them. They're all-powerful. They have the authority. They provide all the protection. So if they don't see true consistency from us as parents, then how will they really believe that God is consistent? If they're not required to obey us,

how will they know that they're required to obey God? If they don't have a loving relationship with us, how will they know that they should have a loving relationship with God? Why would children who do not obey and enjoy time with their parents believe that they should obey any other authority? There are many different things that are involved in being a father.

I've been convicted recently about the need to keep my vision clear and focused on my children. I don't want to let my heart stray away from them. I believe to some extent that a father who truly succeeds in turning his heart to his children is a somewhat unusual thing, especially in the day and age in which we live. There are so many distractions, so many responsibilities, and so many easier and more attractive things in life that are more immediately rewarding and seen than a father putting his heart and focus on his children. Many of those rewards are something that may not be seen for many years to come, but we need to realize that a father needs to turn his heart to his children.

Fathers, turning over a new leaf and going on a few weeks' course to try to make things better won't really help anything, because we're going to turn right back on our normal path. So we haven't really turned our heart. May the Lord help us to put some other things aside and be willing to turn, to change. Develop a plan for our children's lives. Something we can really invest in. It has to be more than just being in attendance with them during some games. It has to be more than taking them on a vacation occasionally. It has to be something that we do all the time. It has to be something that's from within us—from our heart.

I'm only scratching the surface of what could potentially be done in making a difference in our children's lives in their young and formative years. I know it's disruptive to a person's life. You know, we don't have young children forever. That is something that comes and goes. It's just mind-boggling the amount of speed in which they grow. They grow up so quickly. Sis. Rebecca mentioned about children growing like weeds, and I thought in relation to my thoughts for this evening, we don't want them to grow like weeds. We want them to be the plants in our garden. We want them to be plants that we are tending. We want to establish rules and guidelines. We don't want them to be like weeds, which are left to grow on their own.

The second part of verse 6 in Malachi 4 that I want to talk about for a few minutes is this: "and the heart of the children to their fathers." One of the wonderful things about God's plan and His creation is, there are natural laws. There's cause and there's effect. When we say the word *law* that is something that's fixed, unchanging. Natural laws are that way. The beautiful part of doing the first part of this verse ["And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children"] is, you'll reap the second part. I really believe that. It's not just a father and a child relationship.

If you want your husband or wife to love you more, what's the best way to achieve that? To go and say, "Listen, I don't think you love me enough. You need to do better"? The best way to get your wife to love you more is to love her more. When you invest more in her, love her more, care for her more, and do more for her,

in all likelihood she's going to love you more. That's a beautiful thing. It's impossible in life to do the right things consistently and not reap some good rewards from them. It doesn't mean that accidents don't happen and bad things don't come along in life, but it's impossible to do the right things and not reap some good rewards from them. If we, as fathers, will turn our hearts to our children, this second part of the verse illustrates the truth—"and [shall turn] the heart of the children to their fathers."

What father doesn't thrill with joy when he calls his child and he comes running to him? That father wants to see that response. He wants to see that joyful desire to obey and please. What a blessing! It's a joy to our hearts, as parents, to see our children love us and desire to be with us. It's a wonderful reward that comes when we turn our hearts toward them, when we focus on them, when we think about what's best for them, when we make a plan for their lives, and when we create opportunities for them to succeed. We don't just let them grow like weeds. We'll benefit. We'll be blessed. We'll enjoy the fruits of our labors.

In conclusion, to a large extent, these thoughts I brought to you this evening are personal to me, to my wife and our family. It's a burden of my heart. It's something that I need to work on and need to be and do. I know it's not relevant to everyone here; and whenever we see our own failures and limitations and weaknesses, it's easy to want to be quiet, but maybe I just needed to be inspired more by thinking about it and endeavoring to express these few thoughts. If it's just for me, may the Lord help me to grasp those truths and to continue to do my best to work on them.

It is so easy in the rush of life to lose the focus. It's not like this is some new thing. It's not a mysterious thing. It's not something that you can never find out about or learn any other way, but it's easy to let the vision of the best in life to slip away from us a little bit at a time over the course of years. There isn't any exact pattern for every father to live his life exactly this way in relation to his children. Some people have a different culture, a different personality, and a different lifestyle, but I believe it's a basic truth that if we want our children's hearts, we have to give them ours first. We have to turn our hearts to be able to really give them to our children and our families.

May the Lord help us as fathers, as parents. We have a desire in our hearts, but may the Lord inspire us to make whatever choices we need to make to really accomplish His plan for our lives. †

SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE

We have a six-year series of lessons. Each quarter we print quarterlies for Adults and Young People, Intermediates and Juniors. We also print leaflets for Primary and Nursery-Beginner children.

The third quarter of 2021 begins July 4 and is entitled, "The Fruit of the Spirit."

Order your sample today: The Way of Truth, P. O. Box 88, Hagerstown, MD 21741.



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



QUESTION: Did the devil ever try to take God's place?

ANSWER: Isaiah 14:12 has no reference to the devil. The fourth verse plainly states that it is a proverb against the king of Babylon. We understand it to be King Nebuchadnezzar, and referring to how he exalted himself, and God removed him from the throne for seven years, during which he lived like an animal. Verse 16 says, "Is this the MAN that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?" The devil was never a man!

Ezekiel 28 speaks of "the prince of Tyrus" (verse 2), not the devil. Verse 17 is still speaking of the prince, not the devil.

Revelation 12, the "great red dragon" is speaking of Pagan Rome, the fourth world ruling kingdom of Daniel 2 and 7. It was the kingdom that was ruling the world when Jesus was born. During this time is when the "stone was cut out without hands" (Daniel 2:34), this being Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God (Daniel 2:44; Mark 1:15).

The woman of Revelation 12 is the early morning church. The dragon, which was "called the Devil and Satan" (verse 9) opposed the church. The "war" was not in heaven where God's throne is, but here on Earth; "heaven" here meaning an exalted state. There is no "child bearing" in heaven. The "seed" of this woman are Christians which "keep the commandments of God" (verse 17).

The word "Satan" means adversary and "Devil" means destroyer. The dragon was empowered by the devil to oppose the true church. Wherever you find the dragon spoken of in Revelation, it is speaking of one and the same thing; never the personal devil.

There never was, and never will be, a "war" in heaven where God's throne is. The devil, doubtless, would find greater torment in heaven in the presence of God than he would in hell! Remember, demons were tormented in the presence of Jesus.

QUESTION: Will you please give me some explanation concerning the "one and two works of grace"?

ANSWER: In the Bible we do not find the term "one and two works of grace." These are terms that men have used to describe the operations of the Spirit of God. Usually, as accepted, the one or first work of grace is the coming of the sinner to God for the forgiveness of sins. As a sinner, he is in no condition to be a servant of the most high God. He is condemned in his soul, and he feels a heavy burden or weight upon him, and his

heart's cry is that he might be delivered and made free. So he comes to Christ and asks forgiveness for sins. This he readily receives and thus he is in a position to become a servant of the most high God. Whereas, in his first trip to the altar or wherever he sought the Lord, he sought forgiveness; in his second trip to the altar, he now offers himself according to Romans 12:1 as a "living sacrifice." This, God readily accepts and cleanses from his life a natural tendency toward sin. This is sanctification, or the second work of grace. At the same time that he presents himself, God cleanses.

There are two parts of sanctification: that which the human performs, being the offering of himself; and the second part is that which is done by God, or the cleansing of the natural tendency toward sin. These are both works of grace. However, I would want to add that anything that God does for the human family is a "work of grace." Grace is the unmerited favor of God, and everything we receive is unmerited and comes from the Lord, a gift from Him. Divine healing comes in as, of course, a work of grace; but by usage, the first and second works of grace have become to be known as 1. justification; 2. sanctification.

QUESTION: Would you please explain the scripture that says, "There is none good, no not one"?

ANSWER: You seem to have a small part of two different verses mixed together. In Luke 18:19, Jesus responded to a certain ruler who said to Him, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is God." This statement is 100% true, and any goodness to be found in anyone is not his goodness but God's goodness in him. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Let me point out however, that through God's full salvation a person takes on the nature of God, and this scripture is not to be understood to mean that a child of God continues to live a life of sin, for such is not true.

The other verse is Romans 3:10, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." This verse is used by many religious people to prove that no one can live above sin; but you will notice Paul says, "As it is written." Turning back to Psalm 14:1, we find where "it is written." Note, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."

Of course, you will find no righteous person among the "fools who say there is no God." Reading on in Romans three, you find Paul quoting further from the Old Testament where it speaks of those that have turned out of the way; there is none that seeketh after God; their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; the way of peace have they not known and there is no fear of God before their eyes. How anyone could use those verses of scripture to prove that Christians have to sin more or less every day is beyond me! Anyone should be able to see that Paul was not speaking of true Christians. †

THE POETRY PAGE

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—Ephesians 6:4.

FATHER'S DAY Raymond Orner

Father should have recognition
On this day, his day of days;
Though he asks no fuss or favors,
He deserves our words of praise.

We should pause and pay him tribute,
As his day once more draws near,
For so often we neglect him
In the days throughout the year.

He's content to see his loved ones
Have the things they want and need,
But for his own wants and fancies,
You will seldom hear him plead.

He's the one who seldom whimpers
When things do not go his way.
But today he should be honored,
For today is Father's Day.

HOMEWORK Alice Leedy Mason

The homeplace is changing,
Improving each day.
Dad's rules and instructions
Are starting to pay.

The front door stopped squeaking—
New rails guard the stair.
Dad's teaching the children
To mend and repair.

The lawn chair's so red that
It shines in the sun.
Dad's showing the children
That painting is fun.

The driveway's uncluttered—
The backyard's for play.
Dad's teaching the children
To put things away.

Three strikes means you're out.
It's **always** the same!
Dad's teaching the children
The rules of the game.

Mom calls it homework—
Of that there's no doubt.
Dad's teaching the children
What life's all about.

A FATHER'S PRAYER Mouzon W. Brabham

Father, today I bring to Thee
This boy of mine whom Thou hast made,
In everything he looks to me,
In turn I look to Thee for aid.

He knows not all that is before,
He little dreams of hidden snares,
He holds my hand, and o'er and o'er
I find myself beset with fears.

Father, as this boy looks up to me
For guidance, and my help implores,
I bring him now in prayer to Thee,
He trusts my strength and I trust yours.

Hold thou my hand as I hold his,
And so guide that I may guide,
Teach me, Lord, that I may teach,
And keep me free from foolish pride.

Help me to help this boy of mine,
To be to him a father true,
Hold me, Lord, for everything,
As fast I hold my boy for you.

THE FAMILY Anonymous

The family is like a book,
The children are the leaves.
The parents are the cover,
That protective beauty gives.

At first the pages of the book
Are blank and pure and fair;
But time soon writes memories
And paints many pictures there.

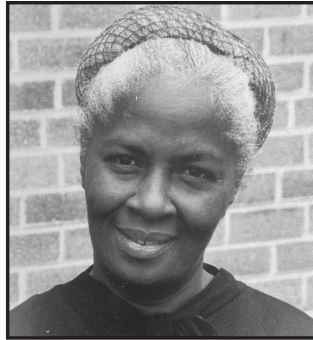
Love is the little golden clasp
That bindeth up the trust.
Oh, break it not, lest all the leaves
Shall scatter and be lost. †

Tributes in memory of SIS. AMANDA EVANS

Catadupa, St. James, Jamaica

February 13, 1935-April 2, 2021

On behalf of the Church of God in Hagerstown, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the Evans' family and the Jamaican church in general for the loss of our dear Sis. Amanda Evans. Her loving spirit and total defense of the gospel of Christ will be sorely missed. All through the 47 years that I have known her, Sis. Amanda's splendid Christian example has been a righteous influence on my life and the lives she came in contact with. Her sweet smile and endearing voice will ever be etched in our memory.



Sis. Amanda was a force behind the scene of various conventions. She was a powerful prayer warrior. She was always the same—never running down the reputation of another—always building up the kingdom of God. She made many trips to Hagerstown for our July convention, and she was always a blessing and added to each meeting by encouraging one and all to press on. Words fall short during this time of grief, but be it known that the legacy of Amanda Evans will be rehearsed among us as long as time shall last.

Bro. Greg Tyler, Pastor,

Church of God, Hagerstown, Maryland

With the passing of Sis. Amanda Evans, a true and faithful soldier of the cross has gone on to her eternal reward.

Sis. Amanda first came to Grand Cayman in November 1972 to attend our annual convention, and she faithfully attended all the conventions here until she could no longer travel. She was greatly admired and highly respected and loved for the exemplary Christian life she lived, and made her contribution to the many services she attended. She truly was a saintly woman of God, who gave her life wholly to the work of the Lord and has left a lasting legacy for us to follow.

Our entire congregations extend our heartfelt sympathy to all of her family and friends, and she will be sadly missed.

May the following lines be a source of comfort to all those who mourn Sis. Amanda's passing:

*Death is a Gateway we all must pass through,
To reach that Fair Land were the soul's born anew,
For man's born to die and his sojourn on Earth
Is a short span of years beginning with birth,
As life pilgrims we wander until death takes our hand
And we start on our journey to God's Promised Land,
A place where we'll find no suffering or tears,
Where Time is not counted by days, months, or years*

*And in this Fair City that God has prepared
Are unending joys to be happily shared
With all our loved ones who patiently wait
On Death's Other Side to open the Gate. (Selected)*

—From the Church of God (Universal)

George Town and East End,
Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

What a beautiful Christian lady was Sis. Amanda! Whether we saw her in Jamaica, Cayman, or the US, she was always the same. She wore a smile, even while she worked. And how she worked!

Sis. Amanda always put God first, attending every service—even when her body was weary from her labors. She took such an interest in the children of our family, whom she came to know during times of fellowship after services. Our sister, Twila, called her "Grand Lady" ever after Sis. Amanda paid her the compliment of thinking Twila looked too young to be the mother of two children.

We will dearly miss Sis. Amanda, but we are confident that her legacy lives on, and we look forward to seeing her again one day in heaven.

—the Castang sisters

I first met this dear saint, Sis. Amanda Evans, over 60 years ago at Bro. Felix Evan's home in Richmond Hill, Catadupa. This was in the early years of our church conventions in Jamaica. We became good friends as church brethren in the work of the Lord. We would always look forward to seeing each other at conventions at Catadupa or Cornwall Mountain.

When I moved to Grand Cayman and she started to visit our conventions, it was always a blessing to see her. The Lord has blessed her work in His service over the years. I greatly miss her. Sis. Amanda's life has touched many people in Jamaica, Cayman, and the United States. The church has lost a very stalwart soldier on Earth, but heaven has gained. May the Lord continue to bless us as a church and Sis. Amanda's families. May her soul rest in peace and her memory be a blessing to us.

Bro. Sydney Shaw

George Town, Grand Cayman

It is with fondness that I remember Sis. Amanda Evans. Over forty years ago when I first met her it was like a breath of fresh air. Her warm smile and twinkle in her eyes, along with a true Christian spirit, was what impressed me most. My family and I looked forward to seeing her each November at our convention and when she wasn't there she was missed. We were especially blessed when she visited our home.

Sis. Amanda has left a lasting legacy of love and genuine Christianity to help brighten the world, even in her absence. She will be missed, but we will keep her memories close to our hearts. May God comfort her family and her Christian brothers and sisters.

We look forward to seeing her again in heaven.

With fond memories,

Sis. Rhonda, Bro. Isaac Edie, and family
Grand Cayman †

WINNING A CROWN

By the late C. W. Naylor



Part XXXIII

Faith

IN PRECEDING chapters we have considered the subject of faith so far as it relates to the receiving of God's cleansing work in the soul; it remains now to consider the general subject as it relates to the Christian life. The word is often applied to a system of belief or teaching, as "the faith of the gospel." This use of the word calls for no notice here. Faith in this work means the faculty of the human soul by which we lay hold upon God and are brought into intimate contact with Him, and through which we receive things from Him. All have the power to believe. Evangelical faith is believing 'that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him' (Hebrews 11:6). It is believing that God is what the Bible says He is and that He will do what the Bible says He will do. It is a confident and implicit relying upon Him. It is counting Him true and His Word true, and putting that confidence into action in our lives.

In Galatians 5:22 faith is said to be one of the fruits of the Spirit. We have a natural faculty of faith, or the power to believe, and the Spirit of God, working upon this natural power, quickens our faith and turns it into channels that lead God-ward, and thus God becomes the object of our faith. Faith being a fruit of the Spirit, it naturally follows that the more spiritual we become the stronger will be our faith and the more effective it will be in its action. Like other natural qualities, it is more highly developed in some persons than in others, but there are none but can have faith in God sufficient for their own salvation and sufficient to enable them to live a godly and true life. Faith is also capable of great development. As we advance from one experience to another in the Christian life and see how God has blessed us and led us on and helped us, that increases our faith, adding to it from day to day. It is God's will that everyone of His children have sufficient faith to make them overcomers in this world, so that they may live a life to please God in all things.

Qualities of Faith

Faith is not as blind Credulity. Faith has keen eyes, and she looks forth with unfaltering gaze. She knows full well that she need not close her eyes to any fact. She knows that the whole realm of truth is hers. She gazes at all the facts in the quiver of Reason and fears none of them. She sees in and beyond these truths a mighty God, the object of her confidence. Credulity fears truth, but Faith rejoices in it, for in every truth she sees the revelation of her Beloved. Her eyes are quickened by love, so that she sees where other eyes cannot see. She sees the unseen and beholds the invisible. Her vision pierces the dark and threatening clouds of earthly circumstances and beholds God still upon His throne and still her helper.

Faith is courageous. She does not triumph because her enemies are weak, but because she is strong, and difficulties only make her stronger. She faces her foes with confidence, for she knows Him in whom she trusts. She is bold with the boldness that comes from strength, for she knows that she has access to all the strength of God. Why should she be timid or shrinking? is not her God greater than all? is He not with her? She is hopeful even in the darkest hour. She can always see something in which to rejoice. Dark skies do not appall her. The keen winds of persecution and the beating waves of trouble cannot silence her song of rejoicing. She knows in whom she trusts. She knows that the end will be victory, and so she goes upon her way confident, courageous, and hopeful.

The Foundation of Faith

Paul told the Corinthians that his preaching to them was not with 'enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God' (I Corinthians 2:4). Faith has a more sure foundation than the wisdom of man. It is based upon the character and promises of God. When we come to know the character of God, through the revelation of Himself in the Bible and through what we learn of Him by our own experience, it affords us a certain foundation for faith. We learn His truthfulness; therefore, we know His promises are true. We learn of His faithfulness; therefore, we know that His promises will be fulfilled. We learn of His kindness, and we know that He will be kind to us. We learn of His love, and we know that He will manifest that love to us in helping us. God has spoken many gracious promises to us. He cannot lie. These promises were made to be fulfilled and not to be broken. They are "yea and amen" to everyone that believes. God never tries to find a way to excuse Himself in not fulfilling His promises. He never desires not to fulfil them. He does not have to be forced to fulfil them. He has never made to us a single promise that it is not His delight to carry out for us. He stands behind them all to make them good, not simply because His faithfulness and truthfulness are at stake, but because what He has promised is the natural fruitage of His love toward us.

In these things faith has a foundation that can never fail her. Upon it she can confidently stand. This is the only sure foundation that she can have. Any other will give way beneath her feet. God's character will never change, and so His promises will never fail. If you would have faith, look at the promises of God and then look behind the promises at God Himself. Look at His character. Contemplate its beauty and strength until your heart becomes enraptured. Behold His perfection until your heart is warmed with adoration. Many are weak indeed because they do not really know God. They have never really studied His character. They are unaware of His perfection. They are unaware of His interest in them. They do not know the strength and richness of His love. They might know these things if they would read of Him in the Bible as they ought and if they would spend the proper time in meditating over what they read. Reader, if you have never given sufficient time to the study of the character of God, you ought to take

The Way of Truth

that time now. You can spend profitably many days and months therein. Do not be afraid that you will exhaust the subject, for God is infinite. Too many Christians never become acquainted with God further than to be on just common speaking terms with Him. They never attain to that intimate knowledge of Him, that intimate relation with Him, that it is their privilege to enjoy. The more perfectly we know Him and the closer we come to Him, the more certain we shall feel that our faith stands upon a solid foundation, one that will never yield under any circumstances.

Based on anything else than the character and promises of God, faith must ever be weak and wavering. Some base their faith on their experience. As long as they have full confidence in their experience, they think that they can ask God for things and obtain them because of what they are. It is very good to have confidence in our experience, but to base our confidence and our faith on our experience is a very unwise thing. If we do this, anything that makes us doubt our experience in any degree will hinder our faith just when an active, vigorous faith is needful. Many times people base their faith upon their emotions. If our feelings are the foundation for our faith, we shall apparently be very strong in faith when we are joyful; but when emotions subside, our faith is gone. Faith must have a substantial grounding, or it will fail just when most needed. To stand, it must be based upon things that are immutable. If we anchor our boat to a floating log, we shall drift with its motions. Our emotions rise and fall as the tide. If we make them the basis for faith, we shall never be able to stand.

Emotion is often a false witness, while faith's witness is always true. Emotion says that we are strong when we are joyful, and weak when we are in heaviness. Its witness is not true. Our real strength is practically the same in both instances, only we are more encouraged and inclined to use our strength when emotions run high. Joyful emotions stimulate faith, hope, and courage, and render them active; while opposite emotions depress and hinder them. The operation of faith is normal and undisturbed only when emotion is neutral or when it is fully separated in action from faith, and our faith in nowise depends upon it. Just as long as we base our faith upon our feelings, it will rise and fall as our feelings do. We shall be now strong, now weak; now certain, now uncertain; now confident, now fearful. Get your faith and your feelings separated. It is only by so doing that your faith will hold fast in the times when you need it.

When your emotions run high, you have need of little faith, for the strength of your emotions will carry you through; but when emotion subsides and you are left without the stimulus that it gives, it is then that you need faith, and it is then that you must have it in order to keep from being tossed about. Right here is the difficulty with a multitude of Christians. Their faith is based upon their emotions, not upon the Word of God; therefore so long as they feel all right, their faith is steady, but as soon as their feelings subside or as soon as bad feelings begin to come, their faith wavers and shrinks, and they are ready to give up in despair. This is child's play, and you will never be more than a child

in faith so long as you base your faith upon your emotions. God wants you to be man-sized and man-strong. He does not want you to be the creature of your emotions. He wants you to stand by faith, by a faith anchored to His immutable promises. When faith is so anchored, waves of feeling may rise and fall, the wind may blow this way or that, but the man stands firm. He is saved whether he feels good or feels bad, whether he is joyful or sorrowful, whether his heart is overflowing with thankfulness or his emotions are perfectly neutral. Faith must be based on something outside ourselves if it shall ever have a healthy growth and strong development.

Some people base their faith largely upon what other people think of them. They can feel that they are saved so long as certain ones seem to have confidence in them and are manifesting that confidence at every opportunity. It is all right to appreciate the confidence of our brethren and the manifestation of that confidence, but we should not base our hopes of heaven and our confidence in ourselves on such manifestations of approval. We must stand for ourselves. We must know ourselves and our own relations with God; we must not depend upon others to know for us. Get close enough to God so that nobody else can know your state as well as you yourself. Let no one be intermediate between you and God. He has promised that you should know Him for yourself and that you should know yourself and your standing before Him. Seek this close relation with God. The door is wide open; you may enter into it if you will. God will see that you find the way if you really try. When once your faith is anchored on the solid foundation that He furnishes for you, the accusation of men and devils will not affright you nor make you give up your confidence in God. †

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where in addition to reading past issues and other information, you can watch our general services every Sunday LIVE at 10:40 A.M and 6:00 P.M. E.S.T. Enjoy Spirit-filled singing and preaching. Also, our mid-week service at 7:00 P.M. Wednesdays is aired live. There is a chatroom where you can interact with us and share your prayer requests. Tune in and worship with us!

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PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

LIVING FOR CHRIST IN OUR SPEECH

Scriptures: Matthew 12:34; James 3:5, 6, 10; Colossians 3:8; Exodus 20:7, 16; Ephesians 5:4; Matthew 5:34, 37; Psalm 39:1.

Matthew 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

James 3:5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Colossians 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

Exodus 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Ephesians 5:4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Matthew 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Psalm 39:1 I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

Memory Verse: But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.—Matthew 5:37.

Aim: To teach more carefulness in our speech.

INTRODUCTION

THE PEOPLE of the world are surely very careless in their speech, and the professed Christian world is no better. Many earnest Christians have not learned the truth in regard to the words they say. It is necessary to have this lesson so that Christians may learn God's will on this subject, which will give them greater power with God and more effectiveness in testimony. To know how to say the proper words at the right time is worth more than silver and gold. It could be of great value to many to make a practice of saying fewer words. Let our words be few: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin!"

MEDITATIONS

EVIL HEART PRODUCES EVIL SPEECH—

Matthew 12:34—Speak good things—It is certainly most foolish to think that a child of the devil could be fluent in the things of God. Rather, he will give vent to the things that are in his heart. His speech will be loaded with sin. In this case Jesus accused the religious sect of the Pharisees of being evil; and, of course, His

accusation was founded on fact. What would He say of the many religious people today who are so light and evil in their speech?

SMALL BUT DANGEROUS—James 3:5, 6—A little member—The tongue is small, indeed, compared to the hands or feet, but how often the words uttered by it cause great trouble! God gives power to control the tongue to any who ask for it; likewise, the devil compels the unregenerated to say things that will do great harm. He also suggests that Christians say things that are unkind and very unbecoming to them as children of God. Therefore, we should use great care in speaking. "Let your words be few." If a man utters boastful, cutting words, they excite words that are more boastful and more cutting in another, until at times the situation ends in blows and even murder. Evil words arouse hatred, which is in God's sight, murder.

RANK HYPOCRISY—James 3:10—Blessing and cursing—The man who with one breath defames the name of God and then with the next pronounces blessing is depraved, indeed. God does not have any fence-straddlers, neither does He have any half-hearted children.

LEAVING OFF EVIL—Colossians 3:8—Filthy communication—Paul exhorts us to "put off," in other words, to free ourselves from, to cease from, fits of anger, wrath, the desire to hurt someone by cutting words, malice, blasphemy, cursing, and filthy communication. Filthy stories, light, meaningless conversation, angry words—these all are destructive to the cause of Christ. They must be laid aside.

PROFANITY FORBIDDEN—Exodus 20:7—Not hold him guiltless—Men profane the name of God with such frequency that they are hardly aware of it. Such is the awful state of conversation today! Man is so little and helpless in comparison with God, it is impossible to make a comparison! How absurd for him to take such a great name so lightly! Our words pertaining to God should be words of praise and adoration only.

PRAISE COMMENDABLE—Ephesians 5:4—Giving of thanks—We have nothing except that which we receive from God. Therefore, we are constantly in a place where thanksgiving is necessary. It is a very ungrateful soul who will not remember God upon the receipt of daily blessings. Jestings of any kind is improper and injurious to Christianity. Foolish talking does not contribute to the edifying of the body of Christ. Whatsoever we do, we must "do all to the glory of God."

JESUS FORBIDS SWEARING—Matthew 5:34—Swear not at all—As Christians, we should not swear (make oaths) by the Bible, heaven, etc., but should so live that our lives speak for themselves. When we must take an oath before a legal officer, "I affirm," rather than "I swear," can be used.

GUARDING THE TONGUE—Matthew 5:37—Yea, yea; Nay, nay—Let our words be only those that are necessary. Some may rebel against this, but it is only a rebellious spirit that would do so, for a sincere child of God, who has more than a mere profession, delights to improve his conversation.

DAVID'S TESTIMONY—Psalm 39:1—Keep my mouth—Men seem to get some delight from giving unbridled expression to their feelings by way of the tongue. David saw the evil of this and made his decision to avoid it. Satan will bring great pressure upon all in trying to get transgression here, but let us be informed by the reading of the Word and order our conduct accordingly. While the wicked—The wicked before David would provide greater temptation.

CONCLUSION

God has given man the power of speech, which He has denied to the rest of the animal kingdom, unless we mention the very limited words of the parrot. What a blessing speech is! But the fact that it is a blessing opens the way for the devil to use it as a curse. A close walk with God will give us control of our words. James declared that a man who was able to control his tongue was also able to control the whole body. Thus, it is very necessary that we carefully guard the words that we speak. There is no ban on singing, except that we must sing psalms and hymns. There is no ban on offering praise to God, for "praise is comely for the upright." This is one of the most important lessons; therefore, we should diligently apply ourselves to its teachings.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What will he who is given to many words be charged with, according to Solomon?
2. What kind of speech proceeds from an evil heart?
3. What are some of the evils that result from an unbridled tongue?
4. What is the state of a man who is given to both blessing and cursing?
5. What is filthy conversation?
6. Why is it foolish for men to take God's name in vain?
7. Name some things that the tongue may be used for without harm.
8. What was David's testimony in regard to his tongue? †

REMINDER TO OUR READERS

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

- The Holy Bible (Old and New Testaments)
- Bible concordances, dictionaries, atlases, commentaries, pictures, calendars etc., nor offer correspondence courses
- Hymnals nor other religious songs
- Names of persons for pen pal correspondence
- Cassettes or CD's unless paid for in advance in US currency
- Videos, cassette tape and video recorders
- Scholarships for the training of students in the United States or any other country
- Financial support for individuals
- Tracts to foreign countries due to high postage rates

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

THREE TREES

Gladys Talbot tells the story of three little trees who wanted to be something in life. The first tree wanted to be a pretty cradle when it grew up. One day some people came to the forest and cut the tree down. The tree was hewn into rough pieces and carelessly put together to form a manger in a stable in Bethlehem. The little tree was disappointed because it was shoved into a dark cave with no one to see it but some cattle. One day however, God laid there His own Babe—the Son of God. The manger quivered with delight. "Oh, this is wonderful! In all my dreams I never thought to hold a Baby like this. This is better than all my planning. Why, I am part of a miracle!"

Years passed by, and men came to the forest to cut down the second tree. This tree aspired to be a great ship when it grew up. But the little tree did not do great things. It was not made into a great vessel, but instead it became a tiny fishing boat, owned by a simple Galilean fisherman named Peter. The little boat was most unhappy. One day it stood by the shores of the Sea of Galilee dejected and disappointed. A crowd had gathered by the shore and because of the multitude, a Man, called Jesus, stepped into the little boat and taught the people from it. "This is wonderful!" it whispered. "In all my dreams and planning I never thought I would be used as part of a miracle."

After some months, men came to the forest to cut down the third tree. This tree just wanted to remain on the hillside and point to God. But men did not leave the tree alone. They tore away its branches; they cut into its bark, and deeper, into its very heart. They hewed it apart and put it together again, in the form of a crude cross. The little tree quivered through all its being.

"This is terrible!" it whispered. "They are going to hang someone. Oh, I never wanted this to happen to me—I only wanted to point to God! This is awful!"

One day, outside of Jerusalem, a great crowd gathered. In the midst of the crowd was Jesus and beside Him was the cross. After nailing Him to the cross, the little tree heard words of forgiveness and peace that were offered to the whole world. Then Jesus completed His work of redemption and "gave up the ghost."

And the cross began to understand! "This is wonderful!" it whispered. "In all my dreams I never thought to point to God in this way. I am part of a miracle. This is better than all my planning." †

—Bible Illustrator

A Spirit Stirred—the Genesis of Revival

Message by Bro. Darrell Sanford, delivered 04/18/21



LET'S SEE what a "spirit stirred" can do. Acts 17:16-18, "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers [Paul was working with the Jews. Why? Because he was stirred.] of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection."

There are still people around who think it strange to preach Jesus and the resurrection. There are more and more people who think it a strange thing. They do not accept Christianity as this country has for centuries. Acts 17:19-22, "And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." If my understanding is correct, *superstitious* here means "very religious." Verse 23, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship [worshiping, and not even knowing who He is], him declare I unto you."

Paul perceived that they were very religious people. One point we can draw from this is that there are some very religious people in the world. Some are sincere and some are not. But some are really sincere. I'm not saying they're doing right or doing wrong. I'm saying they're very sincere. They're seeking to do what they can do. Maybe they're doing all they know to do. What did Paul want to do? He wanted to seize upon that. He said, "I want to tell you who the true God is. I want to tell you who this unknown God is." Acts 17:24, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Paul just opened right up with them, didn't he? "I want to tell you about this God." May God help us to tell people about this true God, Saints, that we're serving. He has touched our lives. People can tell us all day long, "Well, God can't do this or deliver you from that." Well, I know better. The God that I serve is a deliverer. The God that I serve is a healer. The God that I serve can get the job done. He came to do it.

Acts 17:25-27, "Neither is [God] worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth [How about that?], and hath deter-

mined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord [Paul was determined that all should have an opportunity at this gospel.], if haply they might feel after him [God is determined that people should seek Him. He will stir their hearts to seek Him.], and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."

As I studied this before, the thought of seeking and feeling after God is really, I guess I should say, moving on in a progressive type way. To seek after God is one thing, but to feel after Him is another. I'm trying to find Him. I'm trying to learn God. I'm trying to see who He is and what He'll do for me. Saints of God, one day I was feeling after God. You would not have known it if you had seen me. I had long hair. I probably had alcohol on my breath, and I was probably smoking a cigarette and doing other things. You wouldn't have known that I was feeling after God, but I was. God was dealing with my heart. I was trying to feel after Him. As God was dealing with my heart, it got stronger and stronger. Eventually, it got to the point where I just knew I had to do something. I knew I couldn't go on in the lifestyle I was in. Even then, I was feeling after God. God was talking to me. He can talk to us, can't He? He talks to sinners. He talks to those that are lost as they can be.

Paul was in the midst of a den of idolatry. The people of the city were idolaters of idolaters. All they did was to talk about philosophies, etc., but Paul brought to them the everlasting gospel. He says in verses 28-30 of Acts 17, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God [I like how Paul was addressing these people. God help us to have that kind of insight and wisdom and boldness to reach the hearts of people.] winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Paul said that certain also of your own poets have said this, and they were right about it. Paul was ministering to them in a way that they could understand. Again, in verse 30, Paul says, "But *now* commandeth all men every where to repent." Now is the time! This is a present reality. Paul was letting those people know that God, at one time, might have winked at their ignorance, but He's not giving people a pass on these things anymore, because He is now calling all to repent.

Why has God called? Why has this come to pass? Because right along with that accepted time, and the gospel day that we have entered into, "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof

he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). It was a wonderful thing when God brought in the gospel day and the opportunity for the day of grace where we can really have our hearts changed. We can really live for Him, but along with that, He has put a responsibility on us. With the day of grace and that day of opportunity, He has appointed another day. He has appointed a day of judgment. He has appointed a day when we'll all give an account of the deeds done in the body. We're laboring to try to see as many as we can to be ready for that day. That's what we're here for. We're here to spread this message. We can't force people to be ready for that day. Nobody forced you; nobody forced me. God ministered to us. He compelled us. Our friends might have talked to us and tried to urge us, but we had to open our hearts to Him. God does want us to reach out to souls because they won't get a pass on it.

How do you value God calling your name? How valuable is it that God would speak to us and call us to salvation? What a valuable thing! Acts 17:32, 33, "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them." We can probably expect no better. We can probably expect some to mock. Look at what happened in verse 34—"Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." Those were the minority. I'm sure most of them rejected it.

God has us here for some reason, doesn't He? I don't think we're just here to let the world roll on. He's long-suffering. He's not willing that any should perish. He desires to see people saved. I said recently, I'm glad that Jesus didn't come back on February 9, 1980, because I would have been lost. There are souls out there right now that need this salvation. God loves them. Even when we were lost in our sins, He loved us. Every person that Jesus died for was a sinner that He wanted to redeem.

What can a spirit that is stirred do? I'm preaching to myself tonight, too. I'm preaching to my congregation and everyone, that God would stir our spirit. I'm not here to condemn or put a guilt trip on anyone, but I saw this. Paul's spirit was stirred within him. God, stir my spirit more. May my spirit be stirred when I look around at lost humanity. You know, there is so much wickedness going on, right? We are against many things that frustrate us and are morally wrong, but they are in the realm of society. All of that being as it is, and as much as we might like to change a lot of things that are going on, we have a higher calling. We have a calling to call men to repentance, not just to take care of social or political problems. The Bible says, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." This world is probably going to rock on, in a large part like it is, until Jesus returns. With all the wickedness, etc., and fighting over this and over that, who knows what it will all lead to? But our calling doesn't change. Our purpose doesn't change, regardless of social conditions, for we are here to call men to repentance. We're here to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In thinking of stirring things up, I thought of this: *every successful ministry created a stir*. John the Baptist was one. You might say, "Well, he got his head chopped off." John the Baptist did what he was sent to do. He accomplished what he was sent to do. Stephen was stoned to death, but I guarantee you, his ministry was successful. He did what God called him to do. He could have done no less. In what happened to him, the consequences of it are somewhat irrelevant.

Jesus was crucified. Well, we know that was to be done. We wouldn't be here today if that wasn't done. Some people who don't believe will say, "He was a good man. He had a good message. What if He could have shared that more?" It wasn't just about a message. It was about deliverance. It was about something greater than just words. It wasn't just a philosophy. Peter, Paul, John the Baptist, the other apostles, and Jesus stirred things up, didn't they? Even those who came later—Huss, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Wesley, Moody, Finney, Spurgeon—some you might think higher or lower of—stirred things up. There was a stir around them. D. S. Warner stirred things up. What kind of effect can one soul have on things that get stirred up? What kind of effect can just one person have that gets stirred in his own soul at the things that are going on?

I'm not stirred up as I need to be, Saints. I want to be more stirred. We value our own souls greatly. It's the most important thing to us. Mark 8:37, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It's important. I'm going to do everything to make sure my soul is OK, right? How do I value other people's souls? Do I put the same value on those dirty people like I once was, or even those high religious people? What's the value of their souls? It's really the same value as mine. But do I value it that way? I want to be stirred in the way that I value other people's souls in a greater degree. A *value* is something that transfers to a monetary level. "How valuable is this?" "Well, that costs two hundred dollars. You have to have two hundred dollars for that."

What do we have to spend to gain a soul? What do we have to pour out, to give, to gain a soul? Our time, our labors, our efforts, our words, living our lives close to God. Spend time in prayer and fasting. That's the value of a soul. How do you buy a soul? What do you use to buy a soul? Jesus paid the price, but what are we doing now? All we can do is to follow His great commission—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). May the Lord help us, Saints. As I said, I just want to stir us up in a good way.

This world is filled with rage. This world is spuing hatred. They should be weeping with godly humility, but they're not. Mankind is distracted with a tidal wave of maliciousness. This maliciousness we see in our society today, on the surface is one thing. I'm not saying it doesn't have legitimacy on the surface. On the surface it's one thing, but down deep it's conjured up by the devil. It's the devil that's doing all of this. He's powering all of this hatred, all of this envy, and all of this ungodliness in all kinds of different ways. I'm not just talking about the societal things that we see, but just think about whatever ungodly device man is using today. Where is it coming from? What's inspiring that?

The devil. He's behind every bit of it. What's inspiring the persecution of the saints in Pakistan, or wherever other saints are? Some might say, "Well, this certain religion is, or this government is." It's the devil that's doing it. What's causing these people to hate one another so much? What's causing all the moral decline and decay? The devil is the one that's doing it.

Let us look at II Timothy, chapter 3, beginning with verse 1—"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection [hardheartedness], trucebreakers [won't be appeased], false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." We are in perilous times. There is no doubt that the human race is being fueled by the most fierce and hateful demonic spirits. That's what we're seeing as people's fruit. Do you know what they all need? They need Christ.

Let us look at Act 20 very quickly. I've come somewhat to believe that, in some sense, the outcome concerning our witnessing, our seeking to win souls is not irrelevant in the sense that it doesn't matter if they get saved, but the outcome is irrelevant in the sense it's affecting us to do it or not. We have to go and do, whether we see success or not. Paul said he had to. He was compelled to do it. Acts 20:18-23, "And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." Paul said, "Bonds and afflictions are continuing there for me." But he continues to say that that's completely irrelevant. That's not going to stop me from doing, because I have something here to do and that's what I'm going to do.

In verses 24-27 of Acts 20, Paul says, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Lord, help us.

It is a great paradox that a people whose message is love, peace, joy, and hope would be so despised and hated by the world that they're seeking to reach. Our message is all positive. It really is. It's the most beautiful message in all the world. Look at what it produces:

a holy people, a people that won't hurt you for anything, a people that love you. You might say, "Oh, I remember So-and-so." Well, you know, there are always hangers-on. There are people who don't really have it, or don't really want it, but they want to play the game. We know what their story is, but what does the gospel produce? It produces beauty, peace, and a people that would do you no harm. They have no maliciousness; no maliciousness in their hearts for anyone. Love our enemies. Our whole theme is love, but yet we're despised and hated by the world that we're trying to reach. Why is that? Because the love, the peace, and the hope we're bringing come about by people humbling themselves to Christ, admitting their ungodliness, forsaking their sinful lives, and calling upon God for deliverance. People don't often want to do those things.

It is written in John's Gospel, chapter 1, verses 4 and 5, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." The darkness didn't comprehend it. It didn't take hold of it. John 3:16-20, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

We have this beautiful message of peace and love, but there is one catch. You have to humble your heart, repent, and forsake your sins. Embrace Christ and make Him everything in your life. Esteem Him higher than your own self. Many people under the control of darkness are not willing to do that. I'm not saying they can't. That's not to say that their minds can't be changed. Think about Saul, later called Paul. He was a religious man, but what was he doing? He was putting some damage on the Church of God. He thought what he was doing was right. He was wanting the saints to be put in prison and was consenting to their death. I'm convinced though that God was calling him before the episode on the road to Damascus. Jesus said it, didn't He? He said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Saul even stood and held the coats of those who were stoning Stephen. This had an effect on Saul. God's people didn't even fight back. It pricked Saul. So those that are in darkness can be saved. We still have to plant and water. We have to do what we can do to reach souls. John 3:21, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

Let's look at Haggai, chapter 1. We know the story here. The people were sent back. Darius released them to go and build the temple again in Jerusalem and they got bogged down because of situations and difficulties. They left off building the temple. Maybe it was 16 years

or something like that. I don't remember exactly, but verses 3 and 4 says, "Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" Again Saints, this is not a message of condemnation. I'm not accusing. This is just a situation. The point I want to make is that God desired them to be stirred up to complete the work. We're not finished our work. It's real easy to fall into a lull. This past year has been a lull, but not our fault as far as that goes. But the circumstances of life will cause us to fall into a lull and cause us to not be as active as we need to be. It's something we all need to recognize and fight against. We are in a lukewarm age.

The devil is doing everything he can to affect our minds, just like he's doing things to affect the world. He may not affect us like he does the world. We're not going out there and start burning down things and so forth, but he will affect us in some way. The devil can make the work of the Lord so daunting that we won't see how in the world we can do it. Some people are not interested in the gospel. It's just the spirit of the age. People are spiritually asleep and self-satisfied. There are all kinds of motivations going on in the world. We often say, "How do we get people in? How do we reach souls?" There was a time earlier on in life that we, as a congregation in Hattiesburg, probably knocked on every door giving people a personal invitation to church. I can hardly name any that came from our outreach. It just seems overwhelming. What can we do? We just have to keep living for God and being vocal. Lift up Christ and what we have. We're here to put the light in their eyes. We're here to make them thirsty. May God help us to do so.

Haggai 1:7, 8, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." Let's get up on top of the mountain, Saints of God. That's where the good building materials are. Get close to God. Get in the high place with God. Get the things that we need in our own minds and hearts that God will help to guide and lead us in what we need to do. Haggai 1:14, "And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God." The Lord stirred them up. A spirit stirred—what can we do if our spirits are stirred up for the work of the Lord?

Zechariah 4:1, "And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep." Lord, help us. I Corinthians 15:34 tells us, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not." Romans 13:11-14 says, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent [We're down at the end of it, I believe.], the day is at hand [I see that as the eternal day.]: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye

on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Lord, help us to realize the day is far spent.

We'll close with Zechariah 4:2-6—"And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." In my mind, the Lord is saying, "This appearance that you're looking at is God telling you something." We know the candlestick represents the Church of God, and He's saying, "Not by might, nor by power [not by your might and your power], but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." How are we going to get the work done? Not by our might, not by our wonderful thinking or ability, but by the Spirit of God.

Zerubbabel was there to build back the temple. The Bible says in one place, "Despise not the day of small things." The temple that they built was lesser than Solomon's temple. It wasn't as great in appearance as Solomon's temple, but what made it so great was that Jesus walked there. He came there and brought in the truth.

What do we need? We need the Spirit of God. We need to have our spirit stirred up. What's going to stir our spirit? Paul's spirit was stirred by what he saw. The Holy Spirit is what stirs our spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to stir our spirit up so that we might do that which God has called us to do. Saints, I'm not saying we're not doing anything, but may God help our spirit to be stirred by the things that we see, and devote ourselves to do what we're here to do. Share this beautiful gospel. Let's not be ashamed of it. The devil will try to put fear on us and cause us to be ashamed of it. Where does he try to make us ashamed? When we have to stand out there in the world.

May God help us to be devoted to the work of Christ our Savior. He has done so much for us. We want to build His kingdom as He would have us to do.

I love you all. I appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight. Greetings from Hattiesburg to everyone here. †

OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Sirs,

Just a note to say "thank you" so much for *The Way of Truth* magazine and radio broadcast. We enjoy both so much. Please use our offering as you see fit for Christ's service. Just wanted you to know you all and your ministry are greatly appreciated and loved. ... Thank you again for your service.

—M. & L. S., Virginia

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



TRAPPED

A Bible Lesson by Sis. Rebecca Bland

"Everything looks nice!" my dad said as he looked around the observation room with its wide windows that overlooked the new milking parlor. "I'm glad you girls did a good job cleaning because we have some visitors coming this evening to watch the milking process."

"If we could just keep the flies out of here!" said my sister, Wilma. "Every time I swat one fly, it seems like two more take its place."

"Well, all farms have flies," said Dad. "Not much you can do about that."

"But couldn't we do something to keep them out of the observation room?" Wilma persisted. "People don't want to have flies buzzing around their heads while they're trying to watch the milking."

"Maybe we could give each visitor a flyswatter," Esther suggested.

Dad laughed. "I don't think that would be such a good idea, Essie," he said. "It would only make them notice the flies all the more."

"What about fly spray?" Rosemary asked.

"No," said Wilma. "It would make the room stink, and there would be dead flies all over our nice clean floor."

"I think there are some fly tapes around here somewhere," said Dad. "Why don't you put up a couple of them? They should do the trick." He hurried away to get the machinery set up for the evening milking.

Before long, Wilma had located the fly tapes and brought them into the observation room. All of my sisters gathered around as she opened the first spool and carefully unwound the long, sticky ribbon.

"It's pretty!" Annie exclaimed. "I love how it shines! Is that what makes the flies come to it?"

"No," said Wilma. "It has an odor that attracts flies."

"I don't smell anything," said Annie, leaning forward to examine the fly ribbon more closely.

"You'd better not get too close!" Wilma warned her. "You don't ever want to get stuck to a fly tape, that's for sure!" Wilma was almost 18 years old, and she felt responsible for her younger siblings.

"How will we keep our visitors from getting stuck in the fly tapes?" Esther wanted to know.

"We'll hang them up in the corners of the room," Wilma said. "No one will be going anywhere near there."

"I still don't smell anything," Annie said.

"But flies can smell it," said Wilma, "and they like how it smells. They land on the paper and get trapped in the sticky glue." As she spoke, she carried the fly tape to the corner of the room and placed a thumbtack in the little red loop at the top of the tape. Then she fastened the thumbtack firmly to the ceiling.

Meanwhile, Esther had pulled the second fly ribbon from its spool and carefully hung it in the opposite corner of the room.

"Now the fly problem is fixed!" said Wilma with satisfaction as she stood back to admire the gleaming ribbon traps.

"Time to go get the cows," she said as she hurried out the door. Esther and Rosemary were right behind her. No one noticed that Annie had lingered behind. She stood in the middle of the floor, still gazing in fascination at the fly ribbon traps.

As she looked, a fly buzzed near one of the traps. Annie moved closer. She wanted to see how the trap worked. The fly, lured by a food scent undetectable to humans, soon landed on the shiny yellow ribbon.

Annie pulled a chair over to the fly tape and climbed up to get a closer look at the unfortunate insect. Its feet caught by the sticky glue, the fly struggled in vain to escape. Soon its wings were trapped as well. The fly would never be free again.

Annie wondered if the fly tape across the room had attracted any victims. She turned her head to look. As she did so, her hair flew out behind her and was caught by the fly ribbon. Her hair was trapped just as tightly as any insect wing.

Annie screamed. Instinctively, she reached for the fly ribbon, to pull it away from her hair, but her fingers became stuck in it. With a quick jerk she pulled the tape from the ceiling and ran from the observation room.

She nearly ran into Mom, who had just come from the house to help Dad with the milking. "What is all this screaming about?" asked my mother.

"I'm caught! I'm caught!" Annie cried.

"You sure are!" said my mother, taking in the sight of Annie with her hair tangled in the fly ribbon. "What in the world is a big girl like you doing with fly paper in her hair? You're almost twelve years old. You should know better!"

"I just wanted to see how it was working," Annie sobbed.

"Well, I guess you found out how it works," my mother said grimly. "I don't know how we're going to get that stuff out of your hair. What a mess!"

Dad had to start the milking without Mom's help. It took her a long time and lots of baby oil to get the sticky fly tape out of Annie's hair.

"Let this be a lesson to you," said my mother when the last bit of fly ribbon had been removed. "Stay away from things that don't concern you. Didn't anyone ever tell you what could happen if you got too close to this thing?"

"Yes," Annie murmured sadly.

"Well, the next time—listen!" said Mom.

Annie listened. To this day, she will not go near a fly trap ribbon.

When I think of what happened to poor Annie, it reminds me of other, far worse traps that can catch people. Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 12:13, which says, "The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble."

The “transgression of his lips” includes telling lies. Did you know that a person can be trapped by a lie? The truth makes us free. Lies, on the other hand, can trap us. One lie leads to another. A person who tells a lie has to keep telling more lies to cover up the first ones. Before long, he is like the fly that struggles in vain to get free from a sticky fly ribbon.

Always tell the truth, even when it does not seem convenient. Never try to lie your way out of trouble. Telling a lie always makes things worse.

God wants us to live our lives in happiness and freedom. That is why He has commanded us in His Word to always speak the truth.

Activity

Here are three scriptures about speaking the truth. See if you can match the beginning of each scripture with its ending.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Speak ye every man | a. will not lie |
| 2. He that speaketh truth | b. truth to his neighbor |
| 3. A faithful witness | c. showeth forth righteousness |

Answer to Last Month's Activity

1. Psalm 34:2, “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the **humble** shall hear thereof, and be glad.”

2. I Peter 5:5c, “God resisteth the **proud**, and giveth grace to the **humble**.”

3. Isaiah 57:15a, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and **humble** spirit.”

4. Proverbs 15:25, “The Lord will destroy the house of the **proud**: but he will establish the border of the widow.”

5. Proverbs 16:5, “Every one that is **proud** in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.” †

Word, and to bring forth new faithful spiritual children. And Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice for that relationship to exist. So why would we think of a Christian marriage as being different?

According to the Bible, true love is a long-term commitment to God's calling. But according to human fleshly thinking, marriage is a mutual-benefit agreement and evaluation-decision process. And when most of society follows the human fleshly method, it is actually a clear sign of an impending judgment coming from the Lord. This is what the Lord said prior to His announcement to Noah of the final destruction of the world by a flood. God was grieved and very disappointed in being left out of relationship decisions. “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”—Genesis 6:1-3. It is clear that God was deeply offended by being left out of the marriage decision. Consequently, His Spirit would withdraw from mankind because He was not wanted in their relationships. The spiritual integrity of relationships means everything to God! And it starts with the integrity of the relationship with God Himself.

True Christianity is all about true relationships that start with a true relationship with almighty God. Then God wants us to seek and inquire with Him for our life's direction and purpose, including our marriage. We know that the first marriage that ever was, was completely ordered by almighty God according to His calling. The relationship between Adam and Eve was modeled according to, and as an extension to, the original spiritual relationship between God and mankind. (Remember, God is a Spirit, and He created mankind in His own spiritual image. So the spiritual life of Adam came when God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” God is true life, and He created that life in mankind from a part of Himself.)

We read in Genesis 2:15-24, “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” (Note: *help meet* means in the original—“a helper comparable to Him.” Notice that God's plan was completely according to His calling and purpose for this relationship. First, mankind was an extension of God by the Spirit. Next, He had a calling for Adam in the earth—to take care of the Garden of Eden—the place where God would commune with man, and Eve was being called to that same purpose, as Adam's helper.) “And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to

Marriage Is a Calling in the Lord

By Bro. Richard Lehman

THE HEALTHINESS of good functional marriage relationships has a huge impact upon the spiritual health of both the family, and ultimately the church. If we are married, or thinking of getting married, marriage is intended to be part of our calling in the Lord. Since most people (deep in their hearts) don't know what a calling is anymore, they think marriage is like modern-day church organizations. You pick and choose which one best suits you, and for what you want in life. God's purpose and calling, in actual practice, is secondary to them.

Serving God is supposed to be according to His calling, His time, and His purpose. But since most people don't have a sense of answering a call (a call that might cross their personal perception of a good purpose), they also don't have a sense of devotion in marriage, when it may cross their personal preferences. The marriage between Jesus Christ and His church is according to those who answer His calling: to fulfill obedience to His

every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” (Notice that the Lord makes the distinction that the animals came from the ground, but Eve came from the side of Adam. Also, notice that Eve was created from out of the side of Adam, just as the church was created out of the side of Jesus Christ: when the soldier pierced His side and His blood spilled upon the earth, which is the same blood that would cleanse and purchase the church for Jesus Christ.) “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” So God made mankind originally in His own image, by breathing the breath of life from His very self into mankind. This is showing that they started out with the same spirit, consequently they were of the same spiritual body. So notice that Eve was not only of the same spirit, but also of the same flesh and blood. That is why the description of cleaving to one another is used. Because it is to reflect also what needs to happen in the spiritual life of mankind with God and amongst one another in the family of God.

If you feel that this language, and the thought I’m using seems strange to you, it actually comes from the New Testament also. Let me read it to you in Ephesians the 5th chapter, verses 25-33, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Remember how God presented Eve to Adam, so Christ is presenting the church to Himself.) “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Note: the description of the bride of Christ and the body of Christ are not two different spiritual analogies. They are actually the same one! Because the bride of Christ, in the Spirit, is of the same body, flesh, and bones. And that is why the apostle Paul uses both descriptions of this relationship through Christ in this one scripture in Ephesians. This is why it states that the husband should love the wife as his own body, because they are supposed to be one.) “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” (Note: that many family problems are a result of not following this teaching of leaving one family to be joined to their companion. It is a mistake to try to make your marriage companion and children become like the family that you came from. Additionally, there needs to be healthy boundaries of responsibility and purpose between the family they came from, and the new family they are forming together. The new family is a completely new family, formulated from the husband and the wife

and the children that they bring forth. And the old family needs to respect those differences.) “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Just because you can intellectually conceptualize this thought doesn’t mean that you spiritually understand it. Therefore, the apostle Paul gives the following instruction: to truly spiritually understand something, you do that by putting it to practice in your life, by faith.) “Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

The problem is that Satan gets people to get their eyes off their calling, and to start focusing on a mutual-benefits vision for their life. And the problem is that too many, right around the church, tend to also have this mutual-benefits vision for their relationships: both with their companion, and with the rest of the church. And so with this mutual benefits vision, they make decisions about where they will live, where they work, where they go to church, and who they want to marry and stay married to. If we are truly the church, we are supposed to be married to the calling of Jesus Christ. What was Jesus’ calling? It was to labor for, and be a sacrifice for the lost to be saved. Are we answering our husband’s call? Are we the help mate of Jesus Christ? Or has our vision for the church become a mutual-benefits program?

Because of what mankind did in their bad relationship decisions before the great flood, Abraham was careful about the companion that his son Isaac would have. He wanted his son’s marriage relationship to be according to the call of almighty God, and for them to cleave together as one according to that call. Genesis 24:3, 6, “And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: ... And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.”

Abraham gave directions to his servant, both times, according to the calling of God:

1. *Select a woman with a godly vision for her life.*
2. *Keep my son where God has called him.*

And Abraham’s servant did exactly what he was instructed to do. Genesis 24:12-14, “And he said O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.” So we see that everything about this relationship and marriage was determined to be ordered by God’s calling.

But as time would go on, we would see often that mankind would go back to making decisions for their relationships based on a mutual-benefit vision instead of a calling.

Thank God, Jesus took full ownership of the responsibility for our salvation's need. In fact, as it says in Ephesians, He gave His life for His marriage to us! Do we have the same kind of complete commitment to Jesus Christ and to His church in the earth, the body of Christ and the bride of Christ? Do we treat every true congregation in the Lord as "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"? Do we treat every member of the local congregation as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"? If that truly is our calling and our commitment, it will have a huge impact on the unity of the church, and the common love and care for everyone in the body of Christ. But I'm afraid that for too many, fellowship across congregations has become a mutual-benefit evaluation, causing certain ones to have favorite congregations and favorite fellowships. And then this also gets reflected by the cliques of people who prefer to fellowship one another even within a local congregation. May God help us to get our vision clear and treat the whole body of Christ as: "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh!" And when the wolf comes to try to tear us apart, may we have the bold courage to stand up for our brother and our sister!

So a calling is based on a long-term ownership in the relationship.

1. *I belong to the Lord's church.*
2. *I belong to my companion.*
3. *These children are mine forever.*
4. *This calling is mine from almighty God above.*
5. *I have left my previous family to form a new family, according to God's call.*

Based on the calling, we will go about our relationships with a very different vision and purpose at their very foundational start, and we stay with them until the end.

Even though we may have come out of a family that seems to be held together in a functional way, most families have come together, and attempt to continue to operate, based on the mutual-benefits vision. And consequently they have built into them more "calling dysfunctionality" than they recognize in themselves. And because the family is not focused on their calling, the Lord is not closely involved with the family. So we have to re-orient our vision to the calling of the Lord; otherwise, we continue to operate with too much dysfunctional fruit in our relationships and our lives, because we lack the vision of sacrificial love in our mutual-benefits vision.

The apostle Paul recognized that most relationships do not come together by calling. And even if they do, they have trouble staying focused on their calling. Therefore, he said: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."—Ephesians 5:32, 33.

When Adam and Eve were created, their eyes of their desire were on God and towards each other. They had no one else to compare each other to. And they had no other "family ways" to try to bring into their new marriage. But then Satan came along to try to get them to change the focus their desire, to comparing to something else. And the rest of what happened is now history.

The reality is that most couples start out only having eyes for one another. But then if their vision is a mutual-benefits vision, they start comparing each other to someone else or some other family. And one thing is for certain when they do this, that their desire is also not looking towards God at that time.

Characteristics of a "mutual-benefits vision" creating a dysfunctional family (and a dysfunctional church):

1. Problem resolution passes through the process of the "blame game"—which in reality does not ever really resolve.

2. Authority and control in the home often is established through fear and bullying tactics (which can be masked in a variety of techniques), instead of respect being earned through sacrificial love and sincere consideration.

3. The family is often trying to "fit in" with other perceived "functional families" so that the pain of their own dysfunctionality is hidden from everyone else.

4. Without respected boundaries of responsibility, a co-dependence formulates within the dysfunctional family, blurring boundaries of responsibility. And people on the outside often mistake this for a close family, when in reality, it is a family that will suddenly fall apart when a real tragedy affects them. The imbalance of co-dependence actually creates a weak family, because they have lost their ability and faith to depend upon God and to take on personal responsibility!

In I Corinthians chapter 7, the apostle Paul recognized that many families coming to the Lord had a lot of dysfunctional practices and ways of relating to one another. And some of this was even worse when one part of the family was not saved, further complicating the relationship. I Corinthians 7:10-17, "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches." Notice here what Paul said: "as the Lord has called everyone." So it does not matter how we may have come into a marriage: when we have been saved, we are to work to reflect the heavenly vision that God has for His family. It can be difficult. And often one member of the relationship may not be saved. Nevertheless, we take responsibility before God, and His calling, how we personally behave in that relationship. †



ren Swain's thoughts on what eternity means to the Christian.

Blessings,
Bro. Doug

ETERNITY

Lauren Swain

ETERNITY is described as "infinite time" and also the "state after death." When we talk about eternity, most often we are referring to the state of souls after death. It is this idea of eternity that I want to discuss tonight. I want to examine first the reasons for believing that eternity exists, and then I want to focus on what eternity means to the Christian.

Firstly, life without God and eternity is absurd. Let's pretend that God and life after death are imaginary. Let's pretend that once a person dies, he returns to dust and nothing more. Let us entirely remove God and eternity and examine the results. Once discarding these two things, life becomes meaningless. Men and women like George Mueller and Clara Barton wasted their sympathy, their service, and their lives. Their selfless actions may have saved many soldiers and orphans and restored hope to many people, but they had no rationale for their actions. No person has any reason to sacrifice his own life or pleasure for another. There is no motive for altruism. Seeking your own enjoyment is just as noble and good as serving others at your own expense. Even if you did spend your time and energy helping others, it would make no difference. In the eventual decay and heat death of the universe, no actions will matter. The meaning of life is what each person decides for himself. Even more stark and terrifying than a meaningless life, however, is the fact that without God and eternity, there will be no retribution for sin. Towards the middle and end of the 19th century, many philosophers rejected the ideas of absolute morality, heaven, and hell. This thinking led to the total rejection of biblical morality and resulted in concentration, forced labor, and death camps. Under this morality, no Stalin, Hitler, or Mao Tse Tung will receive any punishment for their wicked regimes. Even though these men ordered the annihilation of millions of their own citizens, the only punishment they ever had was the guilt of their own consciences—if even that. Carl Sagan, a 20th century cosmologist said, "I would love to believe that when I die I will live again, that some thinking, feeling, remembering part of me will continue. But as much as I want to believe that, and despite the ancient and worldwide cultural tradi-

tions that assert an afterlife, I know of nothing to suggest that it is more than wishful thinking." This rejection of God and eternity caused an utter disregard for human life in the 20th century and resulted in the death of millions of people across the world. To me, the only reasonable alternative is to believe in a God who rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked in eternity.

So what does God say about eternity? I want to look at the reward of the righteous. God tells us in the Bible that heaven is a place filled with peace, joy, and love. He tells us that heaven is filled with the purity and beauty of His presence, and He promises that all those who are "pure in heart" shall enjoy this bliss for eternity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Heaven has no place for tears or sorrow: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4). This might be the most beautiful promise in the entire New Testament. Even though we may suffer trials and pain (and the Bible says we will), we will never even think of those things in heaven. We will be surrounded by God's presence and filled with delight in Him. Revelation 21:23 says, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

I want to end with a passage from First Corinthians, and I want these words to be the testimony of my last hour: "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." †

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UNTEMPERED MORTAR

By the late Bro. Hoyt Matthews

MORTAR is a mixture of cement, sand, water, and perhaps, some lime. It is used to hold brick foundations and walls in place. Untempered mortar is mortar where improper proportions of sand and cement have been mixed together. The use of untempered mortar results in the crumbling of the mortar with the structure succumbing to the elements and becoming a pile of rubble.

Let us take a look at the mortar that holds other structures together. Basic among these would be the home. A house does not make a home. A home is made up of every facet of family life. A dysfunctional home or family is one that is not held together with the right proportions of mixture which make up the mortar.

A partial list of ingredients that make up untempered mortar includes: selfishness, anger, disrespect, untruthfulness, impurity, dishonesty, filthy communication, and arrogance.

It is not possible for a dysfunctional home to be a Christian home, for the acquisition of untempered mortar is not from the storehouse of heaven. A non-Christian home is not necessarily a dysfunctional home.

While a dysfunctional home affects all family members, the responsibility for family conduct rests on the parents. A father or mother may be a good parent, but if they are non-Christian they are not able to impart to their offspring that which is necessary for them to inherit eternal life.

Selfishness disrupts harmony between family members. Parenting requires much of the parents' time. When the parents are selfish with their time and spend more time with things that are more pleasurable than parenting, the offspring will feel the neglect and may turn to alternatives from an undesirable source. Many younger children seem to have a tendency toward selfishness. If this is not corrected in their formative years, it will lead to unpleasant associations between siblings and others. The undesirable traits mentioned above are by-products of selfishness, which build a structure constructed of untempered mortar.

The ideal home is the home where Christ is the head. This is the home where love and happiness reign. A life of happiness is a life where there is an absence of selfishness.

In this list, a number of counterparts to love can be found: godliness, gentleness, forgiveness, helpfulness, truthfulness, sharing, kindness, longsuffering, and courtesy.

As we have considered the thought of untempered mortar typifying a home that is not well-ordered, so now let us consider the untempered mortar which typifies an unsound religious profession.

Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). Along with this, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1). To paraphrase this thought, Jesus is saying, "If

any one professes to have entered into the kingdom of God in a way not prescribed in the Word of God, he is no better than a thief or a robber."

Jesus, in speaking to Nicodemus, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Many profess to have entered the kingdom of God merely by joining church, signing a decision card, or by the rite of baptism.

Being born again is saying "goodbye to sin and the world." The apostle John declared, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (I John 3:9). John also said, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (I John 2:15, 16).

Ezekiel wrote of those that have daubed the wall with untempered mortar. Those who declare that the Christian must sin more or less every day are daubing the wall with untempered mortar. Those hearts where the world has found a lodging place are daubing the wall with untempered mortar, for the love of the Father is not in them. That wall will crumble and fall. This is much like the foolish man that Jesus spoke of who built his house on an unsound foundation. When the rains came and the winds blew, that house fell.

Many of our church buildings today are beautiful, well-built edifices, but it is the church within that is daubed with untempered mortar and is crumbling. God have mercy on the pastors who support the woman's freedom of choice in the terminating the life of an innocent unborn child. Woe unto the pastors who support same sex marriage and unmarried parenting, whose messages never speak of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, nor His resurrection from the dead. Woe to the pastors who treat the use of tobacco products passively and support social drinking of alcoholic beverages. Woe to the TV evangelists who have been indicted for fraud and are guilty of adultery.

We have heard it said that "a nation is not stronger than its homes." Let us add to this, "and its pulpits."

Is it any wonder then that our once glorious nation has fallen from its pedestal of righteous principles? Who would have thought that over fifty years ago that one woman would be able to influence our legislatures to enact laws that would encroach upon our first amendment right of freedom of religion by banning prayer and Bible reading in our public school system? Who would have suspected that many of our state legislatures would set aside the righteous principle and vote in favor of same sex marriage?

We must reverse our course quickly while there is still hope. Our present course will hasten the second coming of Jesus Christ, which will bring cessation of time with only eternity ahead. Psalm 9:17 says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." †

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