

The Way of Truth

Vol. 82

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

No. 5

Motherhood

See page 3

May 2024

"BEHOLD THY MOTHER"

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

—John 19:25-27

JESUS had a special place in His heart for His mother. From our text above, we gather that the Lord felt a responsibility to provide for her care even after He finished His course on Earth. He transferred the burden for her care to John the Beloved. Jesus let Mary know that He was concerned about her well being after His mission was completed.

Mary the woman was very special in God's plan. Of all women on Earth, she was chosen to bear the Messiah. She was willing to bear the shame associated with the miracle birth. She was blessed *among* women. Nowhere in the Bible does it hint that Mary is to be worshiped or prayed to! But Mary was a consecrated vessel who faithfully allowed God to have His way with her, no matter the consequences. When she was called her answer was, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

Oh, that people today would thus answer the Lord's call! Mary was not to be worshiped, but she knew God and deserves to be respected. As Luke records in chapter 1, verses 46-55, "And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." Such depth of spirit flowed from her soul!

As His life was ebbing from His body, Jesus was concerned for others. He cried to John, "Behold thy mother!" As we approach Mother's Day on May 12, I would like for our readers to do that—behold your mother. Look closely at her, take notice of her, examine her. Realize what a treasure you have in Mother. Comprehend her greatness.

Behold thy mother's heart of love—Mothers are often taken for granted. It's often said, "A mother's work is never done." How little is her faithful labor of love appreciated. Not until a woman becomes a mother herself can she understand how much her own mother sacrificed for her children. Not until she becomes a mother does she realize how much a mother can love.

"We all intuitively know that a mother's love is crucial to the creation of a well-adjusted human and that we are all born with an instinctive expectation of receiving unconditionally selfless love from our mother."

—Jeremy Griffith

Behold thy mother's sacrifice—Proverbs 31:15, "She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens." Proverbs 31:27, "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."

Behold thy mother's wisdom—Proverbs 31:26, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

Behold thy mother's prayers—This world needs more praying mothers. Bro. Harley McClung often tells how he heard his mama praying for him as a youth and the impact those prayers had on his conversion.

Behold thy mother's importance—She is more important than the President of United States. She yields more impact on your life than any other person you come in contact with.

Fathers, behold the mother of thy children!—Treat her with respect and regard. Honor her for her faithful example which she daily displays.

Now, turning to the spiritual application, let us consider the following:

Saints of God, behold thy mother!—Galatians 4:26, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." The Church of God is the mother of all Christians. Few people realize this marvelous truth! The church is referred to as "the bride of Christ" and "the bride, the Lamb's wife." It is the church that bears children through the new birth. "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isaiah 66:7, 8). Behold thy mother in these scriptures: Psalm 87:5, 6, "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there."

Behold thy mother and thy brethren!—Jesus considered Christians as His spiritual family. Matthew 12:47-49, "Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!"

Before I close, I want to make an appeal to anyone unsaved who is reading this editorial. If you have a saved mother, she has shed many a tear for you.

Sinner, behold thy mother—She never gives

ABOUT THE COVER

In America, the second Sunday of May is our annual holiday recognizing those who give their devotion to the rearing of children. The vast influence of mothers on society is often overlooked. She deserves our appreciation and affection. Flowers are traditional expressions of such. But we owe her far more: our loving care.

THE WAY OF TRUTH

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

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—Gregory E. Tyler, Editor

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“Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children.”

—William Makepeace Thackeray

“My mother was my role model before I even knew what that word was.”

—Lisa Leslie

“A mother understands what a child does not say.”—Jewish proverb

“A mother’s love is more beautiful than any fresh flower.”—Debasish Mridha

“Mothers hold their children’s hands for a short while, but their hearts forever.”

—Unknown

“Motherhood: All love begins and ends there.”—Robert Browning †

up on you. She continually prays for your salvation. She dreams of the day you will give your heart to the Lord.

Why not yield to the Spirit’s wooing and be an answer to Mother’s earnest prayers and give your heart to God?

Make this year’s Mother’s Day truly special—**“Behold thy mother!”** †

QUOTES PERTAINING TO MOTHER’S DAY

May 12

“Mother is the heartbeat in the home; and without her, there seems to be no heartthrob.”—Leroy Brownlow

“Mothers are like glue. Even when you can’t see them, they’re still holding the family together.”—Susan Gale

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**POEMS
FOR
MOTHER**

*"Youth fades; love droops; the leaves of friendship
fall: a mother's secret hope outlives them all."*
—Oliver Wendell Holmes

OUR MOTHERS TODAY
Pearl Scanlan

Our mothers today are strolling
Down the avenues of sin.
They are dancing, smoking, drinking
Side by side with vilest men.
Every sinful place she visits
With a brazen painted face,
Anywhere there's degradation
She is found within the place.

Oh, the shame it brings upon us,
Oh, the horror of it all.
She is damning souls by millions,
Nations fall when mothers fall.
Her influence reaches farther
Than another's ever could.
Great the danger, when all virtues
Disappear from motherhood.

We are headed for disaster
When our mothers go astray,
For the footsteps of her children
Will most likely go her way.
Many, many feet will travel
In the path that mother goes,
Many, many souls will perish,
Be partakers of her woes.

It is sad when fathers travel
In a path that leads him wrong.
But oh, the awful tragedy
When our mothers go along.
We'll meet shame, remorse and anguish,
Yea, the price will be most dear
If our mothers still continue
In their present wild career.

THE BOOK MY MOTHER READ
Dwight Williams

I have it yet, the dear old book
That lay upon the stand,
In which she often used to look
And always at her hand;
The corners rounded are with age,
The leaves are worn and thin,
And dim the lines on many a page
She so delighted in.

A half-hour's rest in household toil
For needed strength she caught,
And in the light of fragrant oil
She found the place she sought:
And heavy labor turned to love,
And duty led away
To visions of the land above,
A sabbath-hour each day.

The book remains more sacred still
Because of her dear eyes,
That saw therein God's wondrous will
And saw not otherwise;
For thus she found a way to Him
Who down to evening late,
And through the valley, lone and dim,
Brought her to His dear gate.

MY KINGDOM
Author Unknown

I am Queen of a Beautiful Kingdom;
God gave it to me for my own.
My Castle is a rambling old farmhouse,
And a low rocking chair my throne.

My Subjects are dear little children
Who willingly come at my call;
The King is the husband and father,
Who furnishes bread for us all.

Sometimes when I mend little stockings,
Or hear a short prayer at my knee,
I marvel that God in His wisdom,
Presented this Kingdom to me.

I often feel weak and unworthy
To guide little footsteps that roam,
To keep them all safe and contented,
In our Beautiful Kingdom of home. †

MOTHERHOOD

Message by Bro. Doug Shenberger



SINCE TODAY is Mother's Day, I'd like to talk a little about "Motherhood." It's a wonderful thing that we have Mother's Day once a year. It shouldn't be the only day of the year that mothers are appreciated, praised, and thanked, but each day they should feel our approval and blessing on their lives.

I'd like to draw our attention to the book of Luke, chapter 1, verses 28-31: "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus."

To begin this message, I'd like for us to think about Mary and her viewpoints, and maybe some of what she might have felt concerning having the Son of God as her son. We have here the statement "thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

As you know, Mary was willing. She said in verse 38: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." She was willing for whatever God wanted her to do.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DID MARY FEEL?

As I was thinking about this I thought, *what responsibility did Mary feel?* I wonder what it was like through Mary's eyes to know that she was going to be the mother of the Son of God, and have the most intimate and knowledgeable relationship that anyone could have with the Son of God in human form.

As we look over in Luke, chapter 2, we find there the birth of Jesus. I want to read a couple verses from farther down in the chapter where Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem. Verses 25-33: "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him."

In Luke 2, it also says that Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. She felt all these things that she experienced and that were prom-

ised. We don't know a lot about what Jesus' childhood was like. We don't know very much at all really about His childhood, other than what happened when He was 12 years old and went to Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph lost track of Him. He was found in the temple, and He said to them, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" But I think of Mary and the responsibility that she felt for this Son, and how she must have felt the responsibility from day to day, and the care of Him, and the love she had for Him in teaching Him. She spoke, I believe, words of correction to Him at times. His mother said to Him in verse 48: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us in this way? We've been worried about you. We've been seeking for you." So she was capable of expressing some correction or disapproval. I think Jesus was a normal child in some ways and probably very different in some ways. But Mary loved her son and endeavored to work with Him and teach Him.

JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE

Mary was there for Jesus' first known miracle when He turned the water into wine. He did that because she told Him to. She said, "There's a need here." I often wondered why it is that she would have said that, and what caused her to have that understanding and that faith in Him to believe that because He was there, there was a need. I wondered if she had seen Him do something before. She knew who He was. He said it wasn't His time yet, but she told the servants to do whatever He said. We see there a desire to please His mother and to do what she wanted done. I'm not saying that it was anything wrong. I'm just saying that it's interesting. Of course, Mary was there at His death on the cross and experienced what it was like for a mother to see a child suffer, be abused, and die. I believe that she rejoiced in His resurrection.

I said those things about Mary as an introduction to cause us to think just a little bit about motherhood, and how she must have felt a special responsibility and need. I know Jesus was the Son of God, but yet I believe she had a place to play in raising Him, in teaching Him, and training Him.

Motherhood is a high calling. It's a special place. There's a reason why we honor mothers. I just want us to think about that for a few minutes. As we think about the responsibility of motherhood, unfortunately, we know not everyone in the world understands or has a vision of that responsibility. Not everyone feels the responsibility perhaps as we think they should. But to be responsible for bringing a new life into this world, it's a Godlike responsibility. It's a fulfilling of God's plan for the continuation of humanity. It's a natural thing, but yet it's a special relationship that we see in the

family of man with their mothers and their children. Think about that helpless baby born into the world. It's fully dependent on Mother and family. Think about what's the vision that's there for the responsibility for that child.

The Bible tells us that we are to honor our father and mother. Children are to obey their parents. How would they know that? How will they learn that? Do they wait until they're old enough to read the Word of God and understand those truths? No, they need to be taught that by their parents. The responsibility that we have as parents, and especially mothers for the care and for the training of small children, is an incredible responsibility to have a vision of what they may become one day.

MOTHER'S VISION FOR HER CHILDREN

Mary had an understanding of who Jesus was, and somewhat of what His work might be in the earth, I suppose. I'm sure it was not nearly complete. But how many mothers have that vision for their children of what they might be, or might become, and what their responsibility is in training them, guiding and shaping them, protecting and helping them to the best of their ability? The shaping and molding of their behavior and character? The Bible tells us that if we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it.

There are a lot of people who believe that the early training of children is the most important and foundational part of their lives. Children learn vast amounts in the first couple years of their lives. Much about who they will become, and what they will do, is determined in the mother's arms and care. So it's an incredible and beautiful responsibility in relationships. As I said, it's a high calling. The future of our world depends so much on the mothers of our country. Sometimes that's a frightening and sobering thought, because it seems like there is such a lack of vision of what motherhood can be, and should be, and the responsibility and beauty of it, the power and respect and authority that comes along with that position. It's a beautiful and marvelous thing. It's too often belittled in the world today, or entered into frivolously and thoughtlessly with no vision or understanding of the responsibility that goes with it.

When you think about motherhood, a lot of times it starts with so much giving, so much doing, and so much sacrifice—time, sleep, emotional draining things. If you know something about what a young wife or mother goes through in the early years of a child, a lot of times it's a significant burden. I know there are blessings that go along with that. There is fulfillment in that, but still there is so much sacrifice, and often relatively little thanks or appreciation. A lot of times we as human beings don't do real well with that. We like to be appreciated, and sometimes it's hard for us to look far out into the future and do things that are going to pay off a long time from now.

As we think about the days and nights sitting up with a child with a fever and sickness, endeavoring to bundle up the injuries of body and heart, and all the emotions and feelings of the child, and how it's placed in the care of a mother and a father, that's an incred-

ible and precious responsibility to shape and to have that young child to work with. Not only to feed them, to clothe them, and to provide the physical necessities, but to do so much more. To meet the emotional needs, and to be able to look into the future and see what can be, what could be, and what needs to be done today to make that vision of the future a reality. The need to train for usefulness and purpose.

TIME PASSES SO QUICKLY

There's so much that could be said in caring for the needs of the entire child. I just want to share a little vision of the desirability of beautifying and valuing motherhood, because it's being lost. Its position is being belittled or being looked at as something being outsourced or left to others to take care of. Unfortunately, so often it's done without the true love and the true care and nurturing of a mother's heart. It's beautiful when you think about the authority that a mother has and the responsibility that she has for the future of the child. What can we put in the scale to compare with that privilege and that responsibility? What is more valuable than that? Where else are our children going to learn the vital important things of life but from the loving heart of their parents? We just can't think it will happen later. Time goes by so quickly, and things pass away. The lessons that aren't learned when they need to be learned at one month, or three months, or six months, or a year, are very difficult to catch up on some time down the road in the future.

I think as Mary worked with her little Baby [Jesus], she thought about what He was going to become and the responsibilities He would have. I just wonder what went through her mind as she took care of Him. "I need to teach Him and help Him. I want Him to be all that I can help Him to be." And she saw that vision of what that could be, and it was a beautiful, beautiful thing.

The Bible tells us that where there is no vision, the people perish. We live that in our lives today on a vast scale. We see that around us in our world today. There are so many people perishing for want of a vision of a home, of family, and of motherhood. One of the wonderful things about Christianity, I believe, is that it is a religion that truly lifts up women and puts them in a special place of honor, of responsibility, of usefulness, of purpose, of being appreciated and protected, and being recognized as having an important role. True Christianity does not belittle women. It does not take women for granted in the relationships of life. They are truly so vital and critical. When we think about the thought *where there is no vision the people perish*, I believe where there is lack of vision of motherhood, we have a generation of children who are perishing for want of that vision, for want of the understanding of what the mother can and should do, and for a vision from God for what the needs of her children are.

We have a couple verses in Proverbs that I would like to refer to this morning. Proverbs, chapter 31, which is about a virtuous woman. I want to read the last part of that chapter, starting with verse 26: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." I think that's so beautiful in thinking about this virtuous woman presented here. The value and importance of her. Opening her mouth with wisdom

speaks to an understanding, a knowledge, and a vision of what's right and what's good. Kindness is one of the beautiful attributes of a mother. She loves her children and is kind to them. "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates." The thought *her children will rise and bless her* is a beautiful promise.

THERE IS JOY IN MOTHERHOOD

I said earlier that sometimes in the early days of motherhood, it can seem like a heavy burden and a lot of work and responsibility, but I believe that God's plan is that there be joy in motherhood, that the children will arise up and bless their mother, and that their mother would be honored and appreciated and revered for her service and love. There should be a two-way relationship that provides reward and blessing to the mother. You know, you can't do excellently and not be rewarded for it. "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." If there is excellence achieved, then there's a reward. That's the way God's plan is for humanity. That's the way He works with people. There is a reward for excellence.

Another verse I'd like to mention is in III John. Verse 4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." In talking a little bit this morning about vision, and having a vision for the future, I believe that this verse captures a critical need that we have. I know John is talking about his children spiritually walking in truth, no doubt, but the thought goes along so well with the thought of a mother. To know that your children walk in truth. What greater joy can you have than that, than to see their lives and know that they're being blessed by righteousness that you've instilled in them? Now that they're walking in truth, what greater joy can there be for parents to know that they're making the right decisions in their lives? I believe that to want, to desire, and to really have those blessings in our lives, we have to be able to have a vision for it. We have to plan for it. We can't leave it to chance and happenstance. There are some sacrifices that are required to achieve it. That's a lot of what motherhood is about. But we need to plan and to prepare, and we need to have the Lord's help and guidance that we might be able to experience that joy of seeing our children walk in truth.

Many of the thoughts of motherhood also apply in some ways to the church. "The church is the mother of us all" the Bible tells us. Revelation 22:17 says, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." That's referring to the church as the bride of Christ. God's Spirit and His bride work together to say "Come." The Bible tells us that when Zion travails, she brings forth her children. The church is represented as the bride of Christ and the Mother. When we think about motherhood, I believe that some of those same characteristics should apply to the church, and the way we see people, work with people, and love people. We are to love and care for one

another. We are to be faithful to one another. We are to be consistent in our kindness and training and working with diligence in planning for the future. You know, motherhood is not intended to be an experience that's vindictive or bitter or angry at people. It's intended to be an experience of love and kindness and care, of seeing the best in others, allowing and expecting growth and planning and training for improvement.

Think about those words that I just read from John: "I have no greater joy." There are a lot of joys in life, and a lot of things you can experience, but what greater joy is there than to see your children walk in truth, and to see them spared from a lot of the things that we see going on in the world today? There is truly so much heartache and loss. So many young people are dying young or suffering emotional damage and despair to a degree that it's almost unimaginable. I know that we as mothers or fathers can't make every decision for our children and make them do the right thing. But may the Lord help us to have a vision for the responsibility and the beauty and the power that comes along with motherhood.

CONCLUSION

As we show our appreciation to our mothers today, they deserve our recognition. They hold a special office and place. As they fill that office well, they are worthy of special honor. God's plan is a beautiful plan. I would encourage us all to maintain that vision of what God's plans are for the family of man. As the world around us goes another way so rapidly, the beautiful and the right way is still to follow God's plan. His plan for motherhood, the love of a mother, and the influence it has on our children and our children's children down to many generations, is a beautiful and wonderful thing full of power, and worthy of worship and praise. †

OUT OF BOX 88

Dear Saints,

I enclose my donation to help in whatever way possible to get the message out to the world. We are in trying times, and the world's only salvation is our almighty God.

I pray continually for a Church of God to start up in my area. I was raised in our church and want nothing more than to be in God's church once again, and have fellowship with the saints. I watch the three services each week, conventions and the like, and thank my dear Lord for the Hagerstown congregation, and the internet.

Bless you all for your continuing outreach.

—S. M., Indiana

As many of our readers know, we can be found on the internet at www.wayoftruth.org where in addition to reading past issues and other information, you can watch our general services every Sunday LIVE at 10:40 A.M and 6:00 P.M. E.D.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. Also, we now have a site streaming Church of God music and messages 24/7 recorded during our services. It can be found by going to wayoftruth.org and clicking on:

[Way of Truth Internet Radio](#)

BEING EASILY ENTREATED

From his book, *Heart Talks*

By the late C. W. Naylor

NOT LONG since I saw in the report of a meeting a statement something like this: "The brethren were easily entreated, and so all personal difficulties were easily settled." One of the greatest problems that ministers meet, and one that requires the most patience and wisdom, is the problem of settling personal difficulties. These difficulties are often found existing between those professing to be Christians. And sometimes they are very hard to get settled. There is just one reason for this: those involved are not "easy to be entreated." James tells us that this is a quality of that "wisdom that is from above." The quality of being easily entreated is a mark of true piety and of a Christlike spirit. Where it is wanting, spirituality is always below normal. It is not hard to settle troubles if people want to have them settled; for if they really want them settled, they are willing to settle them the right way. Peace and harmony mean more to them than any other consideration, except truth. Division and discord cannot exist unless people are willing to have it so; that is, unless one or both parties place a higher value upon something else than they do upon peace and harmony.



Abraham is an example of a man who was easily entreated. When strife arose between his herdmen and those of Lot, it grieved him, and he said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). He therefore proposed to give Lot his choice of all the land and to take what was left.

What does it mean to be easily entreated? It means to be kind and just and reasonable and self-sacrificing in one's attitude toward others. The man who possesses this quality habitually manifests this temper in his life. There are those who are very tenacious of their rights. They feel that people do not respect those rights as they should, so when any question involving them arises, they feel as though they must "stand up for their rights." They often lose sight of everything else; kindness, mercy, forbearance, patience, Christlikeness—in fact, nothing counts but their rights. Their rights they will defend, and very often their rights prove to be wrongs, or in insisting on their rights they do that which wrongs others. Really spiritual people are not so particular and insistent concerning their rights. They would far rather sacrifice their rights than to contend for them, unless something vital is involved, which is rarely the case. When a spiritual man is compelled to defend his rights, he will do it in a meek and quiet way, a way that has in it nothing offensive or self-assertive. When they were

about to scourge Paul unlawfully, his only assertion of his rights was to quietly ask, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts 22:25). But there are those who will not yield in the least; they know their rights and they will not yield to anyone! Very often their rights would look quite different if such persons possessed more of the spirit of Christ.

Things sometimes look very different to different people and no amount of talking and arguing will make them see alike, and the more of such there is, the further apart people drift. That is the reason so many church troubles are always *being* settled but are never *really* settled. The trouble is in the hearts. The members are not willing to be entreated. Let them get their hearts warm toward each other, and be filled with the spirit of brotherly kindness. Until such is the condition, one might as well try to weld two pieces of cold iron. As before stated, when people desire unity and harmony, they can have it. But they must desire it enough to be willing to sacrifice for it all those things that prevent it.

Another thing that hinders is self-will. So many people like to have their own way. If others will do their way, such persons can be very gracious and kind; but if they do not have their way, they manifest a very different disposition. They are ready to "balk"; their kindness is gone; they become stubborn; if there is trouble, they are very slow to yield. It is very hard for them to submit even when they are convinced that they should do so. When they do seem to yield, it is often only an outward yielding, the heart remaining the same. How much trouble this self-will makes, and how different it is in spirit from Him who said, "Not my will, but thine be done"! We are commanded to submit ourselves one to another. When we demand that all the submission be on the part of the other person, it shows that we are self-willed, that we care more about having things go our way than we do about having them go right, or than we care to manifest a Christlike disposition.

Still another thing that prevents our being easily entreated is pride. A lady was recently talking with me about a conversation she had just had with some other ladies. She had been advocating a certain doctrine which they did not receive. In speaking of it she said: "I grew a little warm in the discussion of it. I did not mean to let them best me." So many people have this disposition. They will not be "bested." They will hold to their position even when they are in the wrong, and know it. If they did not take such a position, they might acknowledge the other to be right; but when they have taken the stand, they will not yield. What is the trouble? Pride in the heart is the secret. This disposition always has its root in pride; humility never acts in this way. Pride keeps people from acknowledging truth; it keeps them from changing their attitude. Pride of opinion keeps them from being willing to listen patiently to others who differ with them. Pride is at the root of many church and personal troubles; pride is what they feed on, and the only way to cure them is to get rid of the pride.

The minister who would settle such troubles has need to look for one or more of these three things. He may expect a search to disclose either selfishness, self-

will, or pride; for if the trouble is not easily settled, he may be assured that some or all of them are in the way. His task, then, is not so much to get at what seems to be the trouble, as to give attention to these underlying things which are the life of the trouble. No trouble is truly settled till these elements are purged out of the heart.

O brethren! what we need in all the churches and in every heart is that “wisdom that is from above” (James 3:17). We are told that it is “first pure.” By wisdom, James does not here mean what we usually mean by that term, but in it he includes the whole of the gift of God that comes to us in our salvation. It is “first pure,” then as a natural consequence of that purity it is “peaceable.” It loves peace; it seeks to be at peace with all. It is “gentle.” That gentleness, which was manifested in the life of Jesus, reveals itself anew in the hearts of those who are “first pure.” Love has no harsh words, no harsh feelings. It is full of mercy and easy to be entreated. Where this heavenly wisdom abides, there will not be a disposition to assert one’s own rights, to be self-willed, or to hold fast to one’s own ways. On the contrary, if its blessed presence fills our souls, we shall be merciful, kind, forgiving, long-suffering, pitiful, and we shall have the same tender feeling for our brother who has done us wrong as the father had for the prodigal. We shall be ready to run to meet him. We shall be ready to forget all the past. Our hearts will be filled with joyfulness at the expected reconciliation. O brethren, there is nothing needed quite so much today and every day as the heart-quality that makes people “easy to be entreated.” †

—Reprinted from March 1991 issue

BIBLE LESSON OF THE MONTH

THE STEPS OF THE RIGHTEOUS THE ORDINANCE OF FEET WASHING

Scriptures: John 13:3-15, 17.

John 13:3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Memory Verse: For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.—John 13:15.

Aim: To establish in our minds the true understanding of the doctrine of feet washing.

INTRODUCTION

IT IS A SIMPLE matter for those who so desire, to rearrange the Scriptures in any way that suit their beliefs or is convenient to their doctrines. Thus we have many different conceptions of the Bible. When it comes to the subject of today’s lesson, it is often brushed aside as being only an eastern custom. (On entering a house, we are told, a visitor’s feet were washed by the lowest servant.) The thought is also advanced that feet washing is not a doctrine but rather meant to be only a symbol of humility: if a brother were ill, another would care for him, even to bathe his feet if necessary. But would not a true Christian be more than willing to do this anyway—without a special symbolical reminder—not only for another Christian but also for a sinner? Even many good-hearted non-Christians would do as much. What of the widows in Paul’s ministry (I Timothy 5:10) who were not to receive of the church’s charity unless they had, among other things, “washed the saints’ feet”? This indicates something deeper than an act of mercy, a custom or a symbol.

MEDITATIONS

DIVINE PERSUASION—John 13:3—Jesus knowing—Jesus knew well His calling, and He carried it out fully. His setting forth the doctrine of feet washing was at the instruction of His heavenly Father, and we will do well to obey it.

LEADING THE WAY—John 13:4—Girded himself—The supper Jesus and His disciples were eating here was the Feast of the Passover. The towel must have been of sufficient length to reach nearly to the floor after Jesus had tied it around Himself, His outer garments having been laid aside. **Verse 5—Began to wash—**Considering the dignity and personality of Jesus, we can see readily what a notable act of true (not symbolic) humility this was. Jesus did not hesitate to do whatever was necessary to accomplish the Father’s will. May we also be of the same mind!

PETER’S REMONSTRANCE—John 13:6—Dost thou wash?—It was hard for Peter to imagine what Jesus was doing here, for he had never seen Him so markedly humble. His impulsiveness and feelings of unworthiness forced him to remonstrate. We see no other disciple taking this attitude.

JESUS’ ANSWER—John 13:7—What I do—Here again it is made evident that Jesus was setting forth

a divine ordinance and not following an eastern custom, for He would not have needed to say that the disciples did not understand what He was doing; they would have been well-informed if the washing were to remove dust from their feet. He assured them they would know the reason for His act.

A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP—John 13:8—Hast no part—Peter, becoming very positive in his assertion that Jesus would never wash his feet, was told plainly by the Master that unless he submitted to the will of God he could have no part with Him.

PETER'S SUBMISSION—John 13:9—My hands and my head—When the Master made the situation plain to Peter, he very quickly submitted, being not only ready to have his feet washed but also his hands and face.

JESUS TEACHES—John 13:10—He that is washed—In preparation for the Feast of the Passover, everyone had cleansed himself and was, as Jesus said, “washed” already, and doubtless had done the extra cleansing of washing the dust from his feet as he first entered the room. Thus the disciples were “clean every whit.” **Clean, but not all**—Here a spiritual application is made; though all were clean physically, this was not so spiritually. Jesus was of course referring to Judas who would betray Him. It would seem that such humbleness and love demonstrated by Jesus would have so melted Judas’ covetous heart that he would have repented on the spot.

AN IMPORTANT COMMAND—John 13:14—Ye ought—If it was right and expedient for Jesus to wash His disciples’ feet, it certainly followed that they were to wash one another’s feet. “Ought” doesn’t mean to do or not to do as one may desire; it means “duty bound.” Therefore, we are obligated to carry out this command of our Lord.

A PROPER EXAMPLE—John 13:15—Given you an example—*Example* is defined as “conduct inducing imitation.” It is the will of God that this ordinance be practiced by all the disciples of Jesus Christ, for He, on this Passover evening, had set a precedent, according to His own words.

A SOURCE OF HAPPINESS—John 13:17—Happy are ye—The entire value of this observance is on the spiritual side. Happiness is the direct result of obedience to the will of God found in His Word.

CONCLUSION

Feet washing is not for the purpose of cleanliness; it was not instituted to strengthen a custom of the East. Since it is so easy for the flesh to assert itself and so human to bestow honor upon those who are great, the principle of washing one another’s feet is much needed in the Christian society. When anyone compares himself with the Master, he will see immediately that he himself is nothing. Feet washing encourages a spirit of humility and tends to remind us of our proper places, at our brother’s feet and not above him.

This command, like the Lord’s Supper, should be observed at frequent intervals, the brethren being gathered in one room waiting upon one another, the

sisters in another location doing the same. It seems proper to hold such a service in connection with the Lord’s Supper, since both these ordinances (the supper and the feet washing) were instituted by Jesus at the same event.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Explain the difference between the customary Jewish feet washing and the feet washing Jesus instituted for His church.

2. What is the meaning of “example” as used by Jesus in our lesson, and why did Jesus personally give us this example?

3. Why did Peter object to the Master washing his feet? What changed his attitude?

4. Is feet washing a test of fellowship? In what way?

5. What is the true purpose of this ordinance?

6. Mention one strong point Jesus advanced to prove the disciples should wash one another’s feet.

7. Explain why biblical feet washing is something more than an act of mercy or a symbol of humility. †

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER



YOUR MIDDLE NAME

Bible Lesson by Rebecca Bland

“You’ll never guess what my piano teacher’s husband’s middle name is!” my younger sister, Annie, exclaimed as she got into my car. She had just come from her piano teacher’s house, and she was smiling broadly.

Annie was a teenager, but she didn’t have her driver’s license yet, and so someone always dropped her off and picked her up from her piano lesson. Today, I was the one picking her up.

“What is his middle name?” I asked.

“It’s ‘Cake!’” said Annie. “Isn’t that funny? I’ve never heard of anyone with the middle name of ‘Cake!’”

I laughed. “Well,” I told her, “your piano teacher told me not long ago that her husband’s middle name was ‘Bread!’” I thought for a moment, and then I added. “And one time she told Twila that his middle name was ‘Pie!’”

“How can he have so many middle names?” Annie asked.

“Well,” I told her, “he doesn’t—not really. It’s just a figure of speech.”

“What do you mean—‘figure of speech’?” Annie asked.

“A ‘figure of speech’ is an expression that you can’t take literally,” I explained. “But it puts a vivid picture in your listener’s mind.”

“So those aren’t really his middle names?” Annie asked.

“No,” I said. “Today you took your piano teacher a piece of cake, right?”

Annie nodded. “It was left over from Sunday dinner yesterday, and I knew she would like it. When I gave it to her, she smiled and said, ‘I’ll put this in the kitchen to share later with Charles. He’ll enjoy it. His middle name is ‘Cake!’”

I laughed again. “What your piano teacher was saying was that her husband really likes cake. He likes it so much that it’s almost a part of who he is.” I paused, and then went on. “I took her a loaf of bread once, and she told me that Charles would enjoy sharing it with her. ‘His middle name is ‘Bread!’” she told me.

“So that’s why she told Twila his middle name was ‘Pie!’” said Annie. “Twila gave her a piece of pie, and Charles likes that a lot, too.”

“Yes,” I said. “It’s just her way of saying how much her husband enjoys sharing those things.”

Often since that day, I have thought of Mrs. R, my sister’s piano teacher, and her husband’s many middle names. I always smile, because I know that, in reality, Mrs. R’s husband’s middle name was Edward.

Not everyone in the world has a middle name. In our culture, middle names are very common. They are generally given for the purpose of keeping one person separate from another who might have the same first and last name.

Many years ago in our country, your middle name might have been the maiden name of your mother or grandmother. Or it might have been the name of another of your ancestors. Today, a middle name is often given because the parents like it for some other reason.

My mother gave me the middle name of “Ruth”—the same middle name my grandmother had. I was seldom called by my middle name except when I was in trouble. When my mother said, “Rebecca Ruth Castang, come here!” I knew I was in for a scolding. But to me, Ruth was a good name because it connected me with my grandmother.

Our wise saying this month comes from Proverbs 22:1 which says, *A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.*

What is a “good name”? What if you don’t like your name? Does that mean you don’t have a “good name”? No, it doesn’t. The term “good name” is a figure of speech. It means that only good words and actions are associated with your name. In this context, your “name” is who you are down inside.

Whenever you do something, your name is linked with it. When you do a task for your parents, it is as though you put your signature on it. If the task is well done, you can be proud to “sign” it. You should never do or say anything that you would not want attached to your name. That is the way to develop a “good name.”

Once long ago I heard a minister tell a story about something that happened to him when he was a young man in the Army. A soldier’s wallet was missing, and all the men in the barracks were lined up to be searched.

The other soldiers pointed to the minister and said, “You don’t need to search him. We all know he would never take something that didn’t belong to him.”

You see, the minister had developed a “good name.”

Our scripture tells us that a “good name” is more valuable than great riches. A good name will help you make beautiful and lasting friendships. A good name will cause you to be trusted by others. And a good name will help you live a life that is pleasing in God’s sight.

Activity

In Bible times, a person was often given a name because it had special meaning. See if you can identify some names that had special meaning in Bible times.

- _____ meant “drawn from the water.”
a. Paul b. Moses c. Abraham d. Peter
- _____ meant “father of many.”
a. Abraham b. Moses c. John d. Aaron
- _____ meant “princess.”
a. Rachel b. Ruth c. Sarah d. Anna
- _____ meant “peace.”
a. David b. Saul c. Joshua d. Solomon
- _____ meant “man.”
a. James b. Esau c. Adam d. Samson

Answers to Last Month’s Activity

JACOB (Genesis 27)

By deceit, Jacob took the birthright and blessing that belonged to his brother, Esau. He fooled his father, Isaac, by pretending to be Esau. This so angered Esau that he threatened to kill Jacob. Jacob had to flee for his life, and it was many years before the brothers were reunited.

GEHAZI (II Kings 5)

Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, lied to Namaan, a Syrian captain who had just been healed by Elisha. After Elisha refused the gifts Namaan wanted to give him, Gehazi told a false story in order to get the gifts for himself. As a punishment, Gehazi was stricken with the leprosy from which Namaan had been healed.

ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA (Acts 5:1-10)

This husband and wife tried to deceive the apostle, Peter, into thinking they were donating to the Church all of the money they had received from the sale of some property. They were struck dead by the hand of God for their dishonesty. †

SUNDAY SCHOOL LITERATURE

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

WHAT IS YOUR VISION OF GOD'S KINGDOM?

Message by Bro. Doug Koerner



I AM GLAD once again to be in Hagerstown. I trust the Lord will bless the message as it goes forth. I feel very strongly about needing a vision. We need a purpose, a direction. There can be different visions. As our lives go on, God can give us visions to encourage us, to ground us, and to root us in the battles we have to face.

Let us open up our Bibles to II Corinthians, chapter 12. In verses 1-6, Paul says: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."

We know that Paul went through a lot of battles and persecutions and trials. In my Bible the topic of this particular part that I read says, "Paul's vision of paradise." Many of us know the story of the apostle Paul. He went through some great troubling times. Paul received a vision here. As we read this, it is almost too difficult to comprehend. We have to, by faith, comprehend it, and take it, even as Paul said, "There are some things I'm not really sure what happened." But God knew that Paul was going to need something extra to go through life. He was going to need some encouragement, some blessings.

THE STORY OF PAUL

We know the story of Paul's salvation when he got saved on the road to Damascus. We know that when he was there, his name was Saul. He was persecuting the people of God. On the road to Damascus, he had letters from the authorities to find anybody who was preaching in the name of Christ to bring them back to Jerusalem. As he was on the road, a light shone around about him. He fell to the ground. The Lord spoke to him. Saul lost his vision, but he received a vision almost at the same time. Now, we have to understand this: we're not talking about a vision with our eyes. We're not talking about something we can see. When the Lord spoke to Saul, He said to him, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." He got a vision, and he said to the Lord, "Who art thou, Lord?" At least he recognized it was Jesus. Saul was without sight for three days. The men who were there with him led him by the hand to Damascus. The Lord told him to wait there.

Another individual stepped into the picture, who was Ananias. The Lord said to Ananias, "I need you go to Saul and pray for him." Ananias said, "I know who Saul is. I know he comes to persecute the church." Saul saw in a vision a man named Ananias coming in. Ananias put his hand on him that he might receive his sight. The Lord said to Ananias, "Saul is a chosen vessel unto me." Later, his name was changed to Paul. With this vision that Paul received, it helped him face great battles.

As young people and older saints, we're going to go through battles. Because we're going to need some additional strength, we can ask God to give us visions of the kingdom of God. Our mom and dad and others might have had an influence on us to be saved and sanctified, but I believe it's very important that we have an additional vision to continue to stay saved in this time world. We need a vision of Christ.

After Paul was saved, he gave his testimony many different times. He gave his testimony to King Agrippa. King Agrippa listened to Paul. One time he told Paul that he was mad because of some things he was telling him.

A VISION IS AN UNDERSTANDING

We need to think of a vision for a moment. As I said, it is not something that we see with our physical eyes. Too many people want to be able to touch things, to be tangible about things. Many things we can see with our eyes. I thank God for a physical vision, but there's a difference with a spiritual vision. There needs to be a deeper walk with a spiritual vision. A deeper insight with the things of God. As I think of a vision of the kingdom of God, it is an understanding of a deeper walk with the Lord.

I was 17 years old when I got saved. I was raised in Sunday school. I was getting ready to graduate from high school, and I had all kinds of dreams. I was looking at going into the navy at the time. I was looking at doing some sports in the navy. I had all kinds of hopes and anticipations after graduating. The world was out there for me. In October of '81, I was given an invitation to come to a revival service. My thought in my own mind was, *I want nothing to do with that*. That wasn't an interest to me right then. I had the world I was looking at, but I told the individual, "I'll think about it." Within the next few weeks, the Lord started talking to my heart. There was only one place that I really wanted to be that first night and that was in revival. I don't really know why, outside of God was dealing with me. As I sat back there, and the message went forth, it was the first vision that God ever gave to me. He started to talk to my heart. God never condemned me for what I thought about doing after graduating.

He never said that I didn't need to do anything I thought about doing. He said, "Of all the dreams that you're thinking of, of all the anticipations of when you graduate and go out there, if you achieve or accomplish all the hopes you want to do, if you miss salvation, it is vain." God started to deal with me that way.

When we think of a vision, it is something that we don't have a recognition of right now. God opens up our minds. He shows us some things. I didn't get saved during that revival, but God kept working with me. He brought me to the place to be saved. A vision—a deeper understanding—a walk.

We know many times that the visions that God gave people in Bible times, they were dealing with hardships. The Bible teaches us that John was exiled on the isle of Patmos, and that's where God had given him the Revelation that we have. As young people, I encourage you to ask God to give you some insight, some vision, a deeper walk in the things of God. I really can't tell you what to ask for, but you need to seek God. You need to say, "I'm saved and sanctified, but Lord, help me to have a deeper walk with you, and give me some insight of the things of God."

Paul had received a revelation of heavenly vision. He was caught up to the third heaven. We see that God came and dealt with Ananias and told him to tell Saul "what great things he will have to suffer." I believe most of us remember the story. I believe that's why God may have given Paul this vision here, because He knew it would need help him.

WE ARE LIVING IN A WICKED WORLD

Saints of God, we are in a wicked world today. We're in a world that is so far away from the Word of God. They have abandoned the Word of God. Let me tell you, we're going to need some extra help by saying, "Lord, help me to go deeper in the things of God," because many times people have been saved and sanctified, but they went back. They didn't have a deep enough vision in the things of God.

I ask you this evening: "Do you have a vision of the kingdom of God?" I wrote that term down because I've asked that question to people at times. Sometimes people may ask, "Do you have a vision of the Church of God?" and some people may criticize you for that. "Well, you think your church is the only one." They may try to argue with certain things. I've often asked people, "Do you have a vision of the church that Jesus Christ built and what He paid for with His own blood?" Do we have that vision this evening? Many times people receive a deeper walk, a deeper vision living for the Lord.

I want to tell you a couple stories. This first one is very well known, but it has always been an encouragement to me. One time Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, and He said to His disciples, "It is needful that I go through Samaria." The disciples went on ahead to the city to buy meat, but Jesus went on to Samaria where He met a woman at the well. Jesus started to talk to her. He told her some things. He said to her, "Give me some water." He was referring to the water at the well. Jesus let her know. He said, "The water you have here in this well, you will be thirsty for again." He went on to say, "But the water that I'm going to give

to you, you'll never thirst again." Something struck a chord in her, because she said, "Give me this water that you have." Here is where Jesus started to deal with her. He said, "Go call your husband." She had never met Jesus. She didn't know who He was. She said to Him, "I don't have a husband." Jesus said to her, "You've spoken truly, but you've had five husbands, and the one you're with is not your husband." Do you know what she said? "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." What was the first thing that started to click?

Do you know God can deal with us in different ways to help us to get a deeper understanding of what He desires in our lives? As Jesus spoke with the woman at the well, she got such a vision of this man, Jesus Christ. She was understanding that there was something different about Him than just a prophet. He was the Messiah. She got such an impression of Jesus that she left her waterpot at the well and went into city to tell the people what had happened. She said to the men, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" The townspeople came out to meet Him. As they came out to meet Him, they asked Him to spend some time with them. The most precious thing about this particular story, I believe, is the latter part of it. This is found in John 4:42. This is what the people said to the woman: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." I believe that Jesus will do for you as He did with this woman at the well. He will introduce Himself to you, but it will be your responsibility to receive Him.

ELISHA OPENED THE EYES OF A MAN

Do you remember the story of the young man who was with Elisha? As they were starting to leave the city, he cried out to Elisha, "What are we going to do? They're all about us. They're going to destroy us." Elisha prayed to God to open the young man's eyes that he might see. What am I talking about this evening? I'm talking about you asking God to go deeper in the things of God. Not because of this person, or that person, but "Lord, show me some things." Even as older saints, I trust that from time to time you've asked the Lord, "Show me some things." In your prayer, "Lord, today, show me something. Reveal something to me." I'm not talking about some great revelation, but "Lord, help me to draw closer to you that I may have a greater vision." Why? To establish you, to help you to grow stronger.

Of course, we all know the story of Peter. When Jesus was talking to His disciples, Peter said to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Do you have a vision this evening?

Again, when I was saved at 17 years old, I began to read and study the Word of God. I began to think about *a vision of the kingdom of God*. One evening at home, I was reading a tract, and God gave me a vision of the Church of God. I want to read to you a couple of things that impressed me. It says, "The Church of God is indestructible in its very nature." God's church. It is not this building, not this church, in general, as we as

people, in a sense, but God's church. It is indestructible. "It is built upon an indestructible foundation, which is Christ. It isn't built upon Peter, but upon Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. He is the Rock upon which the church is built." That was the first part of it.

This is what might be a little unusual. I ask you to bear with me. These couple things are from the second part of the tract: "Immediately after the inauguration of the church on the day of Pentecost, she entered into a conflict with the enemy. The conflict shall last until the consumption of ages, and she will be accepted in the Father's presence for eternity. History tells us that thousands of Christians were martyred by pagan Rome. As the Christians were martyred, their faithfulness to Christ caused others to accept Him, which weakened Paganism and strengthened Christianity."

SOMETHING WORTH DYING FOR

The thought that God gave to me when I read those lines was, *this was something that people felt was worth dying for*: Living for Jesus Christ, living in the kingdom of God, is worth a life. There were people who were martyred in Bible days, as mentioned in the latter part of Hebrews, chapter 11. People were martyred for this purpose: the kingdom of God. I always had a vision of some of those mentioned here in Hebrews. I'm not saying they were bold or brazen. Maybe they were weeping and fearful, but they did not denounce Jesus Christ. They lost their lives for the gospel.

We have people giving up Jesus Christ for almost nothing. "I don't want to live for Christ because somebody talked about me. I don't want to live for Christ because somebody offended me. I don't want live for Christ because someone else was a hypocrite." We must be willing to give our lives for this. God says to give our lives for the saints.

In the story of Peter, James was beheaded for preaching the gospel. Herod said that it pleased the Jews that he did that, so what did he do? Peter was taken to prison. They were going to behead him. Do you remember where Peter was that night? He was sound asleep in prison between two guards. I don't know how he could sleep knowing that he was going to die the next day, unless there was such a great comfort in his vision that he said, "Tomorrow I'm going to be with Jesus again." When an angel came to Peter, a light shone around him. He still didn't wake up. The angel had to awaken him.

King Nebuchadnezzar said to the three Hebrew children, "You will bow to my image or you will be thrown into the fiery furnace." They were bound up and thrown into the fiery furnace. They told the king, "We're not going to bow before your image. God will deliver us from your hands today." The king was so mad that he had the furnace turned up seven times hotter than it had ever been. As those men were throwing the three Hebrew children into the furnace, those men were killed by the flames. Now, we're talking about a vision of what can be done in having such a grounding in the things of God. As that king looked into that fiery furnace, he said unto his counselors, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have

no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." If we have a strong vision to stay true to God, He might put us in some places to allow Christ to shine in our lives. It may be difficult times. He might run us through the furnace, spiritually speaking.

Job went through some battles. He said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him." Are you on a strong foundation this evening?

COUNT IT ALL JOY

Let's go to James, chapter 1, verse 1: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting." I want you to look at verse 2: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." We may ask, "How do we count it all joy? That's a difficult thing." Again, in my living for the Lord, He allowed that verse of scripture to come alive to me. Back before I became pastor, and God was dealing with me with some things, He was preparing me. He was trying to get me ready to go through some hardships to help me to be confident. I can remember very vividly that there were some things that God was allowing me to go through. It wasn't just one battle. This went on for weeks, if not months. I realized as I went through one particular battle, the Lord was there. The Lord helped me. I went through another and another and another, but He helped me. There were multiple battles that I went through. God gave me the scripture here: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." There is no joy in the battles and temptations that we have to go through. Where the joy is, is when you're going through those battles and you're trusting in God, He shows up at those times. Just like the three Hebrew children. Before they were thrown into the fiery furnace, they told the king that if we die, we're going to go to heaven, but God will deliver us. God gave the king an understanding that the fourth man who was loose, looked like the Son of God.

One of the things about our vision is that if we live for the Lord, and we're going through our battles, He will see us through. We know what Job went through. He said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." God allowed difficult things for Job to go through. I don't think he could have gone through if he hadn't had a strong vision of God. We can be saved and sanctified, but we have to have some good foundations in our souls. Otherwise, we're not going to make it. Judas walked with Jesus Christ for three years, but he failed. We're not going to make it unless we get a strong vision of the things of God. James says, "Count it all joy." Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into jail for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they were delivered.

I know, as young people, you haven't been through a lot of things, but if you stay faithful and true, you will face some battles. God wants you to shine. He said that you're a light on the top of a hill. That doesn't mean that you're just up there, but God's going to allow you to go through some things to shine in the world. He's going to put you in some situations in life to allow you to shine for Him. But you have to have a firm foundation. You have to have a vision.

Paul gave a long list of things that he went through. He faced shipwreck, he was stoned and left for dead. He could have said, "You know what? I'm done. I don't understand why I have to go through all this." That's the human part. Sometimes we don't understand why we go through battles, and we get weary. Let's not be weary in well doing. Let's get a vision of paradise, a vision of the kingdom of God, a vision of heaven. From time to time, we need to ask the Lord, "Lord, I need an extra vision. I need an extra desire for the things of God." When we go through those battles, and they're hard, we can look back and say, "This is worthwhile fighting for."

The enemy is ruthless. He does his very best to discourage us. He tries to get us depressed, but God has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. He'll carry us through every step of the way, but we have to trust in Him. We have to have faith in Him.

One of the things we don't need in having a vision of God is to have any intentions of hearing people discredit the Word. "Well, the Word of God says this, but I don't believe it." We need to be careful debating the Word of God with some people. Just leave them alone. Some things are okay to discuss, but some people just want to discredit the things of God. They want to reject what Jesus Christ did or reject the Word of God. I have no desire to get into those situations. It amazes me that there are people out there who are atheists. They will try their very best to try to prove that Christ is not real. Leave them alone. Why do they want to debate those things? That hurts our vision. I'm not saying we should not talk to them, but we can tell if some people just want a debate or really want to know about the things of God. That's different. But when they want to tear us down, or hurt our vision, we need to ask God to give us wisdom in times like these. Sometimes we just need to leave people alone.

VISION HELPS US ESTABLISH DIRECTION

Let's go to Matthew, chapter 4, beginning with verse 18: "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him." I thought as I read those scriptures, all Jesus said to them was, "Follow me." Do you know what they did? They left everything to follow Christ.

One thing a vision will do, it will help our direction. It will help to establish us. This is a path I'm traveling. By the grace and help of the Lord, I'm not changing that path. As Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they immediately left their ship and followed Jesus. Do you know it's hard to leave family for the gospel? But when they got a vision, an understanding, a direction, they left. "And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him" (verse 22). Someone came to Jesus saying, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home

at my house." Jesus answered, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." When we have a deep understanding and a direction of the things of God, it will help to establish us in life.

Young People, as you're getting ready to face things in life, you will have a lot of things that are going to come to you. You will have to make some dramatic decisions in life, but if you're founded on the things of Jesus Christ, and you have a good vision and direction, Jesus will help you to make proper decisions. He'll help you to get the direction that you need and assure you of those things.

There are many organizations out there that desire our time. A lot of organizations are good. Nothing really wrong with them. There are organizations that clean up the environment. I've had several different organizations that called me to be on their board. They feed the homeless. A man called me about churches getting together one day and having lunch with pastors in the local area, but the Lord did interject, "You need to leave that alone." There is nothing wrong with getting involved with some things, but the problem is, when we get a vision of the kingdom of God, that is what we want to work for and put our best into. All those other things we realize that we don't have time for, because we want to put our best into the things of God. There are all kinds of things that you can do to help. Just ask your pastor, "What can I do?" He may give you something that seems very minor to you, but be faithful in that. Be faithful in that, and God can use you in other places. Don't lose your vision.

John was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. He started to preach the kingdom of God. When Jesus came on the scene, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus came to John and said, "I need you to baptize me." John said, "I don't need to baptize you, I need to be baptized by you." Jesus said, "Do this as an example." The Bible says, "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him." John saw this. He witnessed this. He had a strong vision. Later on, as Jesus Christ was walking, and John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," John's disciples got up and followed Jesus. John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Do you know what happened to John later on? He was in prison. Something got ahold of him, and he called some of his people to the prison. He said, "Go ask Jesus the question, Are you the one, or should we look for another?"

CONCLUSION

I'm telling you, the enemy doesn't care who he gets. I believe John made it to heaven. I believe he finished his course with faith, but there was a time of discouragement. People can get discouraged. No matter how long you've been saved and sanctified, if you don't keep close to Jesus Christ, and keep your vision clear, the enemy will try to trip you up.

One last thought for the young people: Pray for your pastor. We're talking about a vision. The Bible says that

they watch for your soul. It also says in Ezekiel 33 that there's a watchman on the wall that sounds the trumpet. You need to pray for him. "Lord, I want him to sound the trumpet loud and clear. I want to be able to understand it to protect my soul." There is a responsibility of the watchman, and there's a responsibility for the people to hear the Word, to obey, and to follow. Tell your pastor you're praying for him.

Ask the Lord to help you to have a deeper vision, a deeper walk with Him that you may be able to stand strong against all the enemy's attacks.

May the Lord bless you. †



Dear Young People,

This month's article is written by my wife, Sis. Julie Shenberger. She shared these thoughts in an early morning devotional with the young ladies in our congregation. We trust you may receive a blessing!

—Bro. Doug

Near to the Heart of God

*There is a place of quiet rest,
Near to the heart of God,
A place where sin cannot molest,
Near to the heart of God.*

*There is a place of comfort sweet,
Near to the heart of God,
A place where we our Savior meet,
Near to the heart of God.*

*There is a place of full release,
Near to the heart of God,
A place where all is joy and peace,
Near to the heart of God.*

Refrain:

*O Jesus, blest Redeemer,
Sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, who wait before Thee,
Near to the heart of God.*

THIS HYMN, written by Cleland B. McAfee, has been an encouragement to me throughout the years. It shares a precious place that's not known by most of the world. It's a special place reserved for those who have a close and personal relationship with God. In the physical world, even though we love our families deeply, we can only hold them in our arms so close. However, we can't get too close to God. He's never far away, yet we have the blessed opportunity to just keep getting closer, and closer, and closer to His heart.

So, how do we get close to God's heart? It takes a conscious effort. In order to get close, we need to study and learn of Him. We need to know the things that please and displease Him. We can take comfort in know-

ing that God's heart never changes. He is perfect in every way, and our hearts can always safely trust in Him. The lyrics of this hymn show us that as Christians we have a place we can go to for all our needs. We just need to make sure we are near to Him and know His heart.

We can learn of God's heart by studying His Word, by spending time with Him in prayer, and by being in His presence. I encourage you, as young people, to make it your personal desire to learn all you can about His heart. Learn what pleases Him, displeases Him, and what His heart is like.

I have taken the acronym **H E A R T** to share with you just a few beautiful truths we can know about God's heart. I trust this will stir your mind and you will think of many more attributes. His heart is:

H—Holy

I Peter 1:15-17: "*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*"

We know God's heart is holy. So, if we desire to please Him, we can examine ourselves and see if we are living a holy life. Are the things we are doing, and the words we're saying, coming out of a holy heart? Are we close enough to His heart that the decisions we're making reflect His holiness?

E—Everlasting

Psalm 90:1, 2: "*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*"

We don't have to worry that He is going to change. His promises are true, and we can trust He is going to be the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is our dwelling place in all generations.

A—All Knowing

I John 3:20: "*For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*"

God knows all things. We are limited in our knowledge; but He knows our path and goes before us. We can trust Him to direct our path. He isn't trying to hide truth from us. If we search His heart in a matter, He will reveal truth.

R—Reliable

Jeremiah 29:11-13: "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*"

We don't need to question if God has the very best in mind for us. His heart is familiar with each of us as individuals. He knew us in our mother's womb and knows the very number of hairs on our head. Our life is in His hand, and He has thoughts of us. He doesn't overlook our needs and is faithful. We can depend on

Him and know that if He has allowed something to come into our lives, it has first gone through His hand.

T—Tender

Psalm 69:16: *“Hear me, O Lord; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.”*

God isn't far from us, if we choose to draw close to Him. He is touched by our feelings and His heart is tender toward us. He has a multitude of tender mercies. God is just, and sometimes we will feel His correction, but even in those times, we will feel Him dealing tenderly with us. His heart is full of compassion.

In conclusion: If we learn how to know God's heart better, we will be able to carry this through into every relationship we have. If we see the value in being a student of the heart, it will teach us how to see the needs of others. We'll find ourselves desiring to learn the heart of our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, family, and friends. It will then carry on with us into our married life. We will desire to learn the heart of our companion and children. We will view the world around us differently. We'll be able to look past the physical person and see their heart. We'll love deeper and learn better how to have a servant's heart. We will be closer to God's heart, and we'll be more like our great example, Jesus. He came to earth to show us His Father's heart. John 3:16: *“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.”* †

STEPS HEAVENWARD

By the late R. L. Berry

Chapter XII

The Source of Power

(A Chapter on Prayer)

DO NOT MAKE the mistake, young convert, of trying to live the Christian life in your own strength. Thousands have tried it and have failed. There is a source of power, and from it you must draw the strength you need for daily living. That source is the throne of God, where grace abounds and is free to all who ask for it. “Ask,” said Jesus, “and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” And the supply of grace that you need you will obtain by prayer.

Jesus told us the very best way to pray that there is: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:6). To enter into thy closet means to be alone with God somewhere; to shut thy door means to shut out everything else but yourself and God, you must be where you can say, Here are God and I only; I am going to talk with God, and he with me.

Do you ask how to begin? It does not matter how you begin, so long as you pray from your heart. Down

in your heart you feel certain needs, or wish you had certain things; or you may feel as though God were a good way off and you desire to ask Him why He seems so far away. It matters not what you want, just tell your Father in heaven as you would or did your father on earth when you wanted something from him. The Lord does not care for fine, well-worded prayers, nor long prayers, nor loud prayers; He likes to hear sincere prayers, honest prayers, prayers that come out of the heart.

Do you want to know what you shall ask for? Ask for anything you need. Jesus said: “What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11: 24); “If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14). “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). There is no limit to the things Christians may ask for. They may ask for grace, for health, for healing from sickness, for patience, love, and faith, for boldness and humility, for wisdom, for a job if out of employment, for help in business or at one's trade or vocation, for aid in the home, at school, in company, for the salvation of sinners, and for help in every time of need. “Call upon me in the day of trouble,” saith the Lord, “I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psalm 50:15). Many people call upon the Lord in time of need, but never think of Him at any other time. You are not to do so, young convert, but you are to learn how good it is to go to God in prayer every day.

Cultivate a feeling of dependence upon God; think and feel that you need God so much, and that you cannot get along without His help and comfort. If you will begin from the very first day of your new birth to take everything to God in prayer, it will be one of the very best habits you can form. The more you rely upon God the more peace you will have, and the more things you take to Him in prayer the less trouble you will have. To find comfort and peace through prayer you must learn to commit things to the Lord; and once committed, they are to be left in His care without worry. Sometimes Christians carry their burden to the Lord, they lay it out before Him in all its completeness, they describe it to the Lord in great detail, recounting how it was or is, how it feels to carry it, how distressing it is, how very great it is, and they show the Lord all about it, and then after going to all the trouble of showing it to the Lord in prayer, they solemnly shoulder up their burden again and carry it off with them. Maybe in a few days they go again in prayer and show the Lord all about it, and perhaps they carry it away again. Why not leave your burden with the Lord? “Cast thy burden upon the Lord; and he will sustain thee,” says the Word. Take your burden to the Lord, but leave it there.

Do not be surprised if the Lord does not answer at once. Elijah was mighty in prayer; he prayed for a drought and it came, he asked God to show by fire who was the true God and God sent the fire, and at once. But when he went to pray for rain he had to pray seven times before there was any answer. He prayed and then sent his servant to see if there were any signs of rain. The servant returned, saying there was neither rain nor any signs of rain. But Elijah did not cease praying.

Again he prayed, and again, and seven times, and then the servant said there was a cloud about the size of a man's hand. That was enough; Elijah quit praying, and soon there was rain. But suppose Elijah had quit the first, the second, third, or any time before the small cloud appeared?

Jesus told a parable one time to the end that Christians should pray and not faint. The parable was about a widow and a judge. The judge was unjust, a bribe-taker, perhaps, who had no conscience and cared nothing for justice. The widow had trouble and came to the judge to obtain relief, but the old judge did nothing. The woman came again, she presented her case anew; she seemed not to know that the judge was against her. He again refused. But this woman was persistent, she would not cease, she did not recognize defeat when she saw it. She came to the judge with her grievance again and again so that out of sheer desperation the judge granted her request. The moral or truth of this parable is that if God does not answer when we pray the first time, we should pray until He does.

The Lord knows best, and we must trust Him with everything. The Lord will answer prayer sooner or later, or He will give some sort of an answer. It may be an answer such as He gave to Paul once. Paul had prayed most earnestly three times that the thorn in his flesh might depart from him. The Lord did not see fit to take it away nor to relieve him in any way, he simply said to Paul, "Paul, I want thee to bear this infirmity, this thorn, and I will make the grace of God sufficient for thee that thou shalt be able to bear it." So when Paul wrote of it, he added that since the Lord told him that, he gloried in the very same thorn that he had previously prayed earnestly to have removed. So if the Lord will not remove your burdens, He will bear them up to the extent that they will not be so hard for you to carry.

Like all young converts, you are without experience in divine things and will make mistakes, maybe a good many of them. Make all of these the subject of prayer. Be perfectly open and frank about them. I know a fine, strong Christian worker who was accustomed to using profanity before he was converted, that is, he habitually uttered curses. About the following morning after he was converted, he was down in the cellar repairing something and it went all wrong and he swore. He did not mean to, "it just popped out." But he knew it was wrong just the same, and down he dropped on his knees and prayed. He told the Lord he had quit swearing, quit sinning, quit the world and the devil, and that he was sorry the oath had come out. He took a firm stand against cursing, and never has been bothered in the least with it since. Prayer was the means of his rescue and his source of power over a very bad habit.

If you make a mistake, admit it to the Lord, and in all sincerity pray for more grace. Here is a testing time, and if you are able, which all are, to carry a mistake to God in prayer, and through grace be not discouraged with yourself, then you will gain an important victory.

Prayer should be definite. Prayers for things in general have their place; but, young convert, you must learn to pray definitely for what you need. A woman prayed for ten minutes sleep one time and obtained it.

Jonah had a poor place to pray, but he knew what he wanted, and his prayer reached God, and about the next thing Jonah knew was that dry land was under him. There were two newly converted people who made it a practice to pray to God for certain of their friends, mentioning their names, and asking God to save and bless them.

Pray in faith. All through the Bible we are told to ask in faith, believing, nothing wavering. Abraham, we are told, was strong in faith, giving glory to God. "All things are possible to him that believeth," said Jesus. "When ye pray," said He again, "believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Since there is nothing too hard for God, all we need to do to have our prayers answered is to believe, if other conditions are properly met. There is no use praying if no answer is expected; and if an answer is expected, then we might as well do as Jesus said, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

There are thousands of recorded answers to prayers. The Bible is full of them, and many books are given entirely to telling of answers to prayers. Every Christian will be able to tell of some answer to his prayers, so, young convert, expect an answer to your prayers. Your supply of grace will depend largely on how you pray, that is whether you pray sincerely and earnestly and in faith. The new life that God planted in your soul in regeneration needs a great many things. In your life will come a great many problems. Along the way to God's city there will be many byways, deceivers will be close at hand ready to lead you astray, false shepherds would pen you in some other sheepfold than the Lord's—these and many other things will call for more grace and wisdom than human hearts know of themselves. Hence you must pray.

Last, pray every day. Let no day's work be commenced without prayer. Before you go out to meet life's problems and conflicts, joys or sorrows, kneel down and pray. Pray till there is the knowledge of divine love in your heart, if possible, if not, pray in faith, and trust. Make a habit of praying every day. If it is convenient, it is well and wise to have a place of secret prayer, where you may go to converse with your heavenly Father. If you are tempted to neglect prayer, resist the temptation and pray anyway. To overcome lifelessness in prayer, remember the goodness of God and thank Him for it fervently, and have some need that you feel should be supplied. As long as one has any needs he is not liable to have listlessness while at prayer.

Prayer is the most wonderful and yet the most simple thing a Christian can engage in. Prayer moves God, provokes Him to work. Oh, young convert, begin now to live an earnest life of prayer! †

We are sure that our readers know that the cost of publishing this magazine continues to rise. Postage rates have been increasing at an alarming rate. We do not charge for the magazine. We depend on the generosity of our readers to help us in our endeavor to send this gospel messenger to all the world. Please remember this ministry in your giving. May our Lord bless you abundantly as you do so.



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

QUESTION: Was the Ethiopian saved before Philip baptized him?

ANSWER: Yes. It is clear Philip would not have baptized him otherwise. Note what the Scriptures say: The eunuch was reading from Isaiah; he was reading a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ. After Philip was invited into the chariot, he took the same scripture and “preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35).

As they journeyed along the eunuch said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” If baptism saved, Philip, doubtless, would have replied, “Nothing!” But that is not what he said; rather, his reply was, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest,” which is as much as to say, if you do not, I will not baptize you. Now note the eunuch’s answer: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (verse 37). John tells us, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (I John 5:10). Of course, John speaks of a true heart belief and not just a head belief, thus we see that the eunuch was “born again” BEFORE Philip baptized him.

QUESTION: Can a justified person be equally called a saint or should he wait till he is sanctified?

ANSWER: There are verses of scripture where the word *saint* is used that means “sanctified” or “holy ones.” The word *saint* expresses more than some “set apart” vessel, or thing; it expresses an experience of holiness in the heart of a person.

However, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* says, “In the plural, as used of believers, it designates all such and is not applied merely to persons of exceptional holiness. ...”

QUESTION: Can a Christian have the Holy Spirit and an evil spirit too?

ANSWER: A person who is possessed with an evil spirit could not have the Holy Spirit abiding in him. A person must be saved from sin, be born again, and then present himself to God to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You must live a holy life to retain the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION: What if a person is born again (spiritual birth) and remains not being baptized, will that affect his eternal life?

ANSWER: You cannot knowingly disobey any law of the New Covenant and continue to have God’s approval on your life.

If a person got saved and died before he had opportunity to be baptized, it would not bar him from eternal

life, for baptism does not save you; Jesus is the Savior, but baptism is required. And, a Christian is one who is willing to obey the Word of God.

QUESTION: What is the trinity?

ANSWER: The word *trinity* means, in part, “a set of three persons or things that form a unit.” In Christian teaching, “the union of the three divine persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost) in one God-head.”—*Webster’s New World Dictionary*.

You do not find the word *trinity* in the Bible, but you do find many references to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three are spoken of when Jesus was baptized. “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16, 17).

In Hebrews 9:14 the Holy Spirit is called “the eternal Spirit.” “How much more shall the blood of Christ, [1] who through the eternal Spirit [2] offered himself without spot to God, [3] purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

QUESTION: Will you please explain Revelation 2:5? What are the “first works”? Does this mean one must be baptized again after having been saved and having gone back into sin, and then having come back to the Lord again?

ANSWER: The verse says “first works,” so there is more than one thing to do. Water baptism is one of them. Some object to the teaching that a person who has been reclaimed must be baptized again, but baptism, in part, is a testimony to the world that you have died to sin and been made alive in Christ. If a person returns to a life of sin, he dies, for “the wages of sin is death.” The world sees him living in sin; if he returns to the Lord he must “die to sin” and be made alive to Christ. He needs to show this by being baptized just as he did, and for the same reason he did the first time.

QUESTION: I Corinthians, chapter 7, verse 28 says, “But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.” Would you please explain this verse?

ANSWER: Paul was living in a distressing time (verse 20), and in his judgment, under the distress, it was best for young people not to get married; however, if they did, they did not sin, but Paul plainly told them that if they did get married they would have trouble in the flesh. And I suppose it is safe to say that all couples do have some trouble, some more than others, of course. They are made “one” in marriage, but they are still two as far as mind and will and desire are concerned. Millions who are void of a real experience of salvation have found their “trouble in the flesh” to be so great they have tried to get rid of it by divorce, only to add trouble upon trouble. Paul said, “But I spare you” by suggesting that they remain single under “the present distress.” This statement should not be taken to mean that Paul

was against marriage; that would have been contrary to other scriptures.

QUESTION: Where did Peter and Paul respectively end their days?

ANSWER: We understand that Paul was beheaded at Rome. It seems that after two years at Rome as a prisoner, he was released for sometime, rearrested, and brought back to Rome and this time slain.

Tradition says that Peter was crucified and at his request, he was crucified with his head down. Paul did not feel he was worthy to be crucified head up as his Lord was. Again, tradition says this was at Rome, but there is nothing in the Scriptures that tell us this. †

ISAIAH, A FAITHFUL PROPHET

Radio Message by the late Bro. Alvin Craig

(aired 7/31/11)

OUR SUBJECT for today's broadcast is "Isaiah, a Faithful Prophet." Our text of scripture is Isaiah, chapter 1, verse 1: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."

Isaiah was a prophet in Judah for 40 years—740 to 700 B.C. His name meant *salvation is Jehovah*, meaning much the same as Joshua, which meant *Jehovah is salvation*. Isaiah was a married man, and he had two children. His conversion is described in chapter 6, verses 5-7, and I will read them: "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." After this, Isaiah heard a voice which said, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (verse 8).

The book of Isaiah is the third longest in the Bible with 66 chapters. Isaiah is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet. The book of Isaiah, in its entirety, was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls back in 1948, and it's on display now in what is called *The Shrine of the Book* in Jerusalem.

Isaiah was called to warn his people of their evil ways. They had a form of godliness, but they denied

the power thereof, as many are doing today. I'd like to read from Isaiah, chapter 1, beginning with verse 11 through 17: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

Now, those were some of the things that Isaiah called the people of Judah's attention to, but how many of them paid any attention to what he said? How many of them listened to what he had to say? It was then just like it is today. Many, many people can hear the Word of God, yet they reject it, turn away from it, and go on in their own sinful and evil ways. Beloved, we need to take warning from the Word of God. These things are written for our admonition and for our learning. Isaiah was indeed a faithful prophet.

One of the outstanding things in the life of Isaiah was his part in the defeat of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. His army had destroyed 46 walled cities and had taken away 200,000 captives, and he came to capture Jerusalem. Hezekiah was king at that time, and he was endeavoring to please the Lord. Sennacherib sent a message to Hezekiah, trying to scare him into surrendering the city without a fight: "Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? But if thou say to me, We trust in the Lord our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars [you] hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?"

Now, Sennacherib had heard how Hezekiah had had various altars and idols destroyed because he wanted the people to worship the true and living God. Sennacherib, not knowing the truth, thought that Hezekiah had done offense to the gods, but Hezekiah had indeed pleased the Lord. Sennacherib sent a number of messages to Hezekiah, trying to intimidate him, and he finally made fun, as it were, and ridiculed the true and living God. Hezekiah mentioned that in his message when he appealed to Isaiah to pray for them. He mentioned about Sennacherib and how he, as it were, was making fun of the true God. Of course, Hezekiah had not offended the true God by destroying the idols. He had pleased almighty God. So, Sennacherib sent another message. He spoke about different kingdoms that he had already destroyed and how their gods were not able to help them. "Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" (Isaiah 36:20). In other words, Sennach-



erib was making the Lord God of heaven like some little god of an idol-worshipping people. He was comparing the true God to those. Sennacherib made a big mistake when he compared the true God to the gods of the other countries that he had already conquered. When Hezekiah received the last message, he rent his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord, according to Isaiah 37:1.

Hezekiah also sent a message to Isaiah of how the king of Assyria was reproaching the living God, and suggested that God might be willing to reprove him, and he also asked Isaiah to pray for them. Isaiah did indeed pray. He was a man who had contact with God. He was a prophet who was faithful to God and to His message. So Isaiah sent back this message to Hezekiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of his god, that his two sons smote him with the sword" (Isaiah 37:6, 7, 35-37).

Sennacherib, with all of his boasting, proved to be one who was very foolish indeed, for God showed who was the true God. He had moved his army (hundreds of thousands of them) up there around Jerusalem, and he was determined that he was going to destroy Jerusalem like he had other cities and nations. But God showed who was God. Isaiah was a faithful prophet, and God heard Isaiah's prayer, and He took care of the Assyrian army. Not only did He take care of the Assyrian army, but He also took care of the boastful king Sennacherib.

The second major thing in the life of Isaiah that I would like to refer to were the many prophecies that he gave concerning the coming of the Messiah. He spake of the coming of the Messiah in different ways: a Branch, a Rod, a Stone, a Light, a Child, and a King. I say, in the book of Isaiah, there are many various prophecies concerning Christ. I'd like to read some of them on the broadcast today. Isaiah, chapter 9, verses 2, 6, and 7: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

In chapter 11 of Isaiah, verses 1 and 2, we read: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of

wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

In the beautiful chapter, chapter 35, which is one of my favorites, as far as the book of Isaiah is concerned, we read an extended prophesy. I know some people take it literally, but it must be understood in a symbolical way: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Beloved, in that chapter, Isaiah was not talking about a literal desert. He was not talking about a literal highway. We are to understand these scriptures here as being fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in His salvation. When the eyes of the blind were opened, and the ears of the deaf were unstopped, was whenever Jesus Christ came and ministered to the people. "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart." The desert here is described as that sinful state—the barrenness of a sinful state. It being made to "blossom as the rose" is whenever the salvation of the Lord comes to that heart, and it begins to bear the fruit of the Spirit. I know the millennialists want to put this out in what they call the kingdom age, but those things that Isaiah spoke of in chapter 35 were not literal. They're not to be taken literally, as far as the desert, and so forth. They're understood as the salvation of the Lord—what God will do for barren, sinful souls. He will save them, clean them up, and enable them to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Remember what Isaiah said: "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean [the unsaved] shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those [the redeemed]: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." I thank God for the reality of this.

Then, we have in Isaiah 61, a prophecy about how the Lord would anoint Him. Jesus Himself in the synagogue in Nazareth took the scroll of Isaiah and read Isaiah's prophesy, as found in Luke, chapter 4. He told people there in that synagogue, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Yes, the salvation of the Lord will make that barren soul as fruitful soul. It won't be a desert any longer.

I thank God today for the prophet Isaiah. He was so faithful, not only to his people, but he made many prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. We have these beautiful truths revealed to us today through the inspired Word of God. †

"THEY THAT BE WISE"

By the late H. R. Matthews

WHAT IS wisdom, and why is it mentioned so frequently in the Scriptures?

"Being wise, or having wisdom implies the ability to judge and deal with persons, situations, etc., rightly based on a broad range of knowledge, experience, and understanding."—*New World Dictionary of the American Language*.

In approaching wisdom from the spiritual, scriptural standpoint, we will find that wisdom is one of our leading considerations in assisting us in reaching the eternal destiny of dwelling in the mansions that Christ has gone to prepare for us. Not only so, but wisdom is a daily requirement in successful Christian living, and especially in our relationship with others, whether they be saints or sinners.

The highest level of wisdom can only be achieved by those who are obedient to the admonition of the wise man Solomon, who said, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

Let us make inquiry now of an apostle who sat at the feet of Jesus and was taught by Him. His name was James, and his mother was the same Mary to whom the angel announced, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke 1:31). This relationship lends high quality credibility to the counsel James gave in his epistle to the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad. His counsel is no less credible to saints of God in our day: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and up braideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:5, 6).

James makes it clear in this foregoing verse, that the God of heaven is the source of wisdom, and when there is a lack of wisdom we are to ask of God and He will supply all the wisdom that is needed for a given situation. Give careful consideration to the fact that James did not suggest multiple sources from which to

seek wisdom. We are to go to God, for only He can supply this need. But we are to ask in unwavering faith. Notice carefully that wisdom and faith function only as one supplements the other.

We must be aware that the enemy always has an alternative to all the rich graces of God. The apostle James, in describing the wisdom from above, declared, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). In describing the devil's alternative to the wisdom from above, James declared, "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15). The apostle Paul had this to say about the wisdom that descendeth not from above: "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (I Corinthians 3:19).

Let us study now for a bit on the life of King Solomon who was declared to be earth's wisest man. How do we know that he was earth's wisest man? How did he become earth's wisest man? How did he become one of earth's greatest fools?

Solomon was King David's son by Bathsheba. David's earthly reign and his kingly reign were about to end in death. Shortly before his decease, David had made Solomon king over Israel. In humility of heart, Solomon realized his own inability to undertake such a momentous calling. Israel was no ordinary nation, and the kingship was no ordinary reign, for Israel was God's Old Testament chosen nation, and Solomon's leadership was one that must lead Israel in the paths of righteousness.

In imploring God to prepare him for this calling, Solomon did not ask for riches, long life, nor the heads of his enemies. But let us look at the biblical account of Solomon's request: "And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgement; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there is none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days" (I Kings 3:8-14).

Inscribed in the book of Proverbs are instructions from the God of heaven to his son, Solomon, concerning knowledge and understanding which are born of wisdom: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine

ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and lifteth up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler [shield] to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. When wisdom enetereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh forward things" (Proverbs 2:1-12). Through pen and ink, Solomon preserved and passed down to this generation these commandments. If observed, they will make us wise unto knowledge and understanding.

How could it be; I repeat, how could it be, that one so wise as Solomon, became a fool? "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded" (I Kings 11:1-6, 9, 10).

If it were so that Solomon had repented and came back into favor with God, the Scriptures would have informed us of such, but they do not. This must be a warning to all of God's children, for we are not in heaven until we see Jesus face to face. Let us then be true and faithful.

In stating that "he that winneth souls is wise," King Solomon placed wisdom at its highest potential, since soul winning determines the eternal destiny of all who favorably respond to soul winning efforts. In all our soul winning efforts, at the top of our list we must place the words of Jesus: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). We are workers together with God, but it is He who must do the drawing, and it is He who must give the wisdom as we do our part in soul winning.

The building blocks of soul winning begin with our own Christian testimony. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,

and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Next, Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

There are no tests on who your neighbor may be. The good Samaritan stopped and gave aid to the injured Jew who was an historical enemy. And what was the apostle Paul's instruction regarding our enemy? "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." Why should we do this? "For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Romans 12:20). Heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head was not an act of violence; rather, among the Jews of Paul's time, heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head was emblematic of an act of kindness intended to develop a friendship.

Why is so much attention given to soul winning? The key word in this question is *soul*. The real person is the soul. The body is only the house of clay in which the soul dwells. When body and soul go their separate ways, the house of clay returns to the dust from whence it came, but the soul will continue its eternal existence, with its eternal destiny being either heaven or hell. Jesus set forth the question: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). This question, in reality, is making a statement: "One soul is worth more than all the world, even multiple worlds." As you gaze into the face of an unsaved loved one, does your soul burden cry out to the one name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved? Does not the fact that Jesus tasted death for every man give us a better understanding of the worth of a soul?

O for the soul burden of Moses who pled for God to blot his name out of the book of life, rather than those under his leadership that had sinned such a great sin in making gods of gold! Or the soul burden of the apostle Paul as he unburdened his heart, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsman according to the flesh" (Romans 9:1-3).

In speaking to His disciples, Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37, 38).

A chorus we sing at church, written by the late Sis. Stutzie Craig, says:

*We have a job to do,
For the world is lost and dying;
Christ will see us through;
On His Spirit we're relying;
Christ is the world's great need;
We'll lift him up in word and deed.
From the paths of sin we'll bring them in—
We'll work and win! †*

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Revival Services

Craigsville, West Virginia
May 16-19, 2024
Bro. Doug Shenberger, Evangelist
Bro. Harley McClung, Pastor

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Alvin A. Craig, Radio Minister

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