

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"—John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

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SOME THINGS YOU WILL NEVER REGRET



Don Martin
417 East Groesbeck
Lufkin, Texas 75901

We all have done things in life that we afterward regret. The things we regret doing cause unhappiness, failure, and waste. By doing that which we will not regret, however, we can enjoy happiness, success, and productivity. Let us observe a few things which we will never regret having done:

BECOMING A CHRISTIAN. Beloved, when you have arrived at old age and look back upon your life, you will not regret having obeyed the primary commands of the gospel. Out of all that you will regret in life, you will not experience remorse for having believed (John 8:24), repented (Acts 17:30), confessed (Acts 8:37), and being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). The day you obeyed the plan of salvation will be a day you will remember as a happy day, the day you became a child of God (Rom. 6:17, 18; Gal. 3:27).

BEING A MEMBER OF THE LORD'S CHURCH. Being a member of the Lord's church, his spiritual body, is indeed a precious, exalted privilege (Eph. 1:22, 23; Matt. 11:11). To be a part or member of the church for which the Lord gave his blood is an honor (Acts 20:28). By being in the Lord's church you can enjoy salvation, reconciliation, freedom from condemnation, and all spiritual blessings because all of these things are enjoyed in Christ or the church (2 Tim. 2:10; Eph. 2:16; Rom. 8:1; Eph. 1:3). You will never regret assembling with the saints and helping build up the church.

STUDYING GOD'S WORD. Time spent in studying God's word is time well spent. But, alas,

some look upon studying God's revelation to man as a necessary evil. The word of truth is that by which we are begotten, saved, edified, sanctified, and purified (Jas. 1:18; I Cor. 15:1-2; Acts 20:32; John 17:17; I Pet. 1:22,23). It is through a study of the word of God that we derive faith and learn the will of God (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 5:17; cf. 3:1-4).

TEACHING OTHERS THE GOSPEL. One of the greatest experiences in life is to be instrumental in successfully teaching the gospel to the lost. This is an experience, however, that many are depriving themselves of because of neglect and indifference. As you consider the activities and accomplishments of your life, you will never regret having taught the gospel to aliens and encouraging weak brethren in Christ (cf. Acts 8:4; Phi. 2:16; Gal. 6:1; Rom. 15:14).

AVOIDING GOSSIP. James, in dealing with the abuse of the tongue, wrote concerning the tongue, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature: and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:5,6). Even though James is dealing with the misuse of the tongue in teaching error (Jas. 3:1), certainly these enunciations condemn all abuses of the tongue including gossip. Under the law, the Jew was prohibited from receiving or repeating gossip (Ex. 23:1). (Gossip as used here is a generic word including idle talk of all kinds.) Compare I Tim. 5:13.

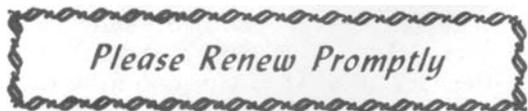
ESTEEMING OTHERS BETTER THAN SELF. Paul wrote, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3). The person who goes around trying to show that he is superior to everyone is usually an unhappy, bored person. Paul wrote to those in Rome as follows: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

BEING KIND AND GENTLE. The circumstances matter not - belligerence and rudeness

are never justified! "And be ye kind one to another," the writer enjoins, "tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). The apostle Peter wrote, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (I Pet. 3:8). One can contend for the truth without being repulsive in his mannerism (Jude 3; cf. 2 Tim. 2:24).

BEING STEADFAST AND UNMOVEABLE.
 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

Friends and brethren, you will regret having done many things in life, but you will never regret having performed the foregoing. Conversely, you will regret having not performed them!



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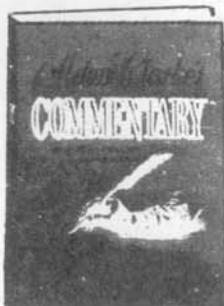
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Editorial

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THE NEED FOR A BALANCE WHEEL

My friend and brother, E. C. Koltentbah of Muncie, Indiana, than whom there is no better Biblical exegete, commented once that a certain individual "lacked a balance wheel." What he meant was that this person was never on an even keel but always either way up or way down. It is our considered judgment that there has never been a time when an appeal for a "balance wheel" was more needed than now. Society at large is pestered with radicals in one area or another. Some become so fired up with some social or political issue that they are consumed in the flame of their own zeal. Their all-absorbing issue becomes the pivotal point of the universe. In no realm is this practice more dangerous than in religion. We therefore address our admonitions here to Christians.

The Bible makes it plain that the people of God are to be well rounded in the knowledge and application of truth. Every passage requiring soundness of faith and judgment has a bearing on this. The book of Titus is concerned with "sound doctrine." The word "sound" means that which is wholesome, contributing to the spiritual health of those who receive the teaching. Elders were to employ "sound doctrine" in convicting gainsayers (Titus 1:9). Those who had gone astray were to be rebuked sharply that they might be "sound in the faith" (verse 13). Titus was to use "sound speech" in teaching all ages (2:1-8).

Paul urged stability when he commanded the Ephesians to "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). In the next verse he said "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." The development of the character of the child of God involves many things. In our faith we are to supply virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (2 Peter 1:5-8). We are to resist sin in ALL forms and apply virtue in ALL forms. Peter said "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober . . ." (1 Pet. 1:13). This is an appeal for the people of God to gain control of themselves and act sensibly. In fact, every passage calling for sobriety speaks to this point. Several practical applications are in order.

(1) **ALL CHRISTIANS** need a balance wheel. The cause of Christ is hindered by those who run

first hot and then cold. They are either on fire with zeal for the truth, or they are in the valley of despair and total indifference. They are supremely uplifted one day but sadly downcast the next. They become intensely interested in one area of Bible study and application to the total ignoring of other equally urgent subjects. Without meaning to start a war just here on the covering question, we know of certain places where some of the sisters are very careful to cover their heads with a veil while their skirts are scandalously short and revealing. The logical question arises as to balance in obeying the Lord. How many men have been appointed elders because they had a plurality of children who had been baptized without regard for whether they were "apt to teach" or were "self-willed?" Then we have Christians who get excited over some political issue or activist organization designed to save our nation, usually to the diminishing of their interest in the kingdom of God. They tend to view those not so wrought up on their favorite subject as less than patriotic. Surely, there is a need for all to be "grounded and settled" in the truth. Stay balanced.

(2) **CONGREGATIONS** need a balance wheel. Many congregations have been started in times of crisis and it became necessary to give much attention to the issue at hand. But some have failed to realize that continued attention to only one area of study invariably produces weakness in others. A church may be well instructed and known for its stand against liberal practices involving worship and work of the church, while the spirit of the world takes over the lives and minds of its members. The word of God is designed to meet the needs of all Christians. The edifying of the church requires a balanced diet of truth. Elders have a grave responsibility to regularly review the areas of Bible study being covered. Are babes in Christ being given what they need, or do we place them right away in the middle of a study of Romans or Revelation? Are the young being given the help they need to bolster their faith in a world which seeks to destroy it? Are they being taught what the Bible says about marriage and the home before they make a big mistake? Are they being shown how to apply the principles of the word of God to "flee youthful lusts"? Titus 2 makes it evident that truth is relevant to the needs of aged men, aged women, young women and young men. In Ephesians 4:1-16 Paul argues that God's wisdom made every necessary provision in the church for every Christian to come to the full measure of his potential and concluded by saying that this "maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

(3) **PREACHERS** need a balance wheel. Much damage has been done the cause of Christ by those who regard themselves as its greatest benefactors. Preaching the gospel is an honorable work. God chose this means of spreading the truth to all the world. But it is all too easy for a preacher to run to extremes. One can become so obsessed with a

certain subject that he cannot preach without bringing it in somewhere. That truly becomes his hobby. Perhaps he sees a problem which needs correction where he labors and addresses himself to it. But the needed change does not appear all at once and he is so determined that IT WILL BE DONE that he begins to "nag" on the subject until even those who agree with him grow weary of repeated thrusts week after week. Why not give the problem thorough treatment, then let the teaching soak in for awhile? While it is soaking, go on to something else. Paul told Timothy to preach with "all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Don't forget the "longsuffering" part of it. Later on, approach the problem from a different direction. A sore needs healing, but you can pick at it until it becomes infected. Balanced teaching lends greater respect to whatever must be said on the troublesome problem.

It is encouraging to know that there are some brethren who are especially trained in certain fields of study, but it is easy for a "specialist" to become so wrapped up in his favorite topic that he turns every conversation in that direction and every sermon touches it. One can get so carried away as a personal work expert that he neglects to give attendance to reading and study and often arises to say something while really having nothing to say. He has beat the bushes to get them out to hear him say nothing! On the other hand, some become so bookish that they lose touch with the mind of the common man and forget that we are not only to teach publicly, but from house to house as well. All of us need to strive to be practical students of the word. Balance is the key.

Paul said "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you" and "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 20, 27). The most profitable thing any of us can do is to teach people exactly what the text of the word of God says. In local work over recent years, we have observed that the greatest interest of all was shown in sermons which carried us through some book of the scripture, speaking morning and evening until the book was covered. Sunday evening attendance always increased during these studies. By teaching in context with present applications where such can be made, many needed areas can be covered without anyone thinking we have gone out of our way to grind an axe.

Paper editors need a balance wheel. Nearly all periodicals were started to meet some special need not being met otherwise. Journals begun out of spite, a competitive spirit or to grind personal axes will do great harm. At various points in our history there have been grave errors to arise which had to be checked. Periodicals have rendered valuable service at such times. There will always be times, even for those well established, when some questions require more space than others. At such times, responsible brethren ought to use whatever means they have open to them to teach truth and expose error. But

what we must never forget is that our adversary, the Devil, is not a one issue enemy. While we are pounding him on one front he already has plans to attack another section of the wall. Again, balance is needed.

We are trying hard to keep the balance wheel in good working order in the operation of this paper. While we are willing to let responsible brethren air a different view from what we may set forth, we make no attempt to satisfy the whims of some readers and would-be advisers. We feel no obligation to give space for nit-picking. We have asked capable men whose soundness in the faith is not in doubt, to write under assigned heads in order to insure balance. From other articles sent by willing writers, we are able to complete each issue. We believe our regular writers, some of whom have been with us since the paper began in 1960, have created a reputation for material that is true to the word of God and presented in sensible fashion. We have often asked these men and others whose judgment we respect, "What area of scripture are we not properly searching with our readers?" We shall continue to do this. The waters of religious journalism are often stormy and it is not easy to steer a safe course. But we want our readers to know that we are striving to do exactly that. To our readers and writers we say "Let's keep the balance wheel working."

PRICE INCREASE IN JANUARY

We have put it off as long as we can. The time has come when it is no longer economically feasible to delay. Since we began the operation of this paper two and a half years ago we have had one increase in printing costs, two postal rate increases with another to come in January, and have added four pages to the paper each month. Other costs related to the publication of the paper have increased. **SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES** has not raised the subscription rate in the last five years, though other journals have done so, some of them twice within that time. In January, 1976 the single subscription rate will be \$6 a year, while clubs of 4 or more will receive it for \$5 a year. The group rate then will be 15 subscriptions for \$5 a month, or \$60 a year. Bundles to one address will cost \$5 for 15. We will continue to honor the terms of our automatic renewal agreement.

If we can get our mailing list up to 7500 (500 more than at present), we will add 4 more pages, making this a 24 page monthly, instead of the present 20 pages. If you appreciate the paper, then tell others about it and urge them to subscribe before the increase. It is not hard to get together a club. Many Christians receive no religious paper in their homes, and might well be convinced to do so upon your suggestion. Why not send the paper to a list of friends?

This is a good time to say a sincere "thank you" to those friends who have stayed with us, some from the very beginning. A number of these friends are paying for lists and have done so for several years.

This kind of help has made it possible for us to continue. By letter and personal conversations across the country, many have told us how much they appreciate the paper and the good it is doing. This is encouraging to us and makes us even more determined to keep **SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES** in the mail.



SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN IN THE HOME

Perhaps the most frequent question asked today in reference to rearing children and teaching them to accept their responsibilities is: "How do you get them to listen and to respond to teaching?" It must be recognized that each individual has his own capacity for learning and has his own individual personality with which he must deal in applying the instructions and developing the learning process. Children, as adults, are mutually facing many problem situations in life, but unlike their more mature parents, they have not had the benefit of the experience of years and often lack the instruction of competent parents to know how to deal with these situations.

There are at least four essential qualities every person must develop in preparing himself for his responsibilities as a mature person. First, he must realize the value of the time he has and the need to use it in the best possible way. Secondly, he must consider his attitude and state of mind toward life in general and his own responsibilities in particular. Thirdly, he must recognize the true function of his conscience and make sure he keeps a conscience pure from offense; and fourthly, he must recognize that every person has an influence which he wields in life, for good or bad. Some person is affected in life by the influence of another.

Who Are "Children"?

Something must be said about how the Bible uses the word "children". It sometimes refers to infants, small, "little ones" (Matt. 18:2,3; 1 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:14). Sometimes the word refers to "youth, new, younger" children from the age of understanding and accountability to adulthood (Eph. 6:1,2; Col. 3:20; Titus 2:3,4). The word is also used in the New Testament to refer to descendants, regardless of age. In this sense, one may be a child and at the same time be a father or mother (Matt. 23:31; 1 Tim. 3:4). It also refers to a disciple in his relation to his teacher.

Ephesians 6:1-3 instructs children to obey their parents in the Lord. It is a command. Since these instructions are addressed to "children", it must follow that these children must be of the age and accountability to be able to respond to this command of the Lord.

A distinction must be recognized between men and children (1 Cor. 13:11). Paul said, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." A child is not expected to think or to act as an adult. Neither should we expect adults to think or act like children. We must recognize the need for directing the child's thoughts and actions in the direction that upon maturity in years he will have implanted in his mind the word of God, which will make him what he ought to be.

Rules for Success

1. Time is the measurement of one's life and the very short portions are measured off in seconds, minutes and hours, but longer periods of one's life are counted in months and years, but these flee by and are spoken of in the Bible as a vapor and a shadow that passes away—all of which indicate the brevity of life and the shortness of time. "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). "What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). Time may be wisely used, or it may be wasted. A frequent phrase, "I am just killing time", is far too real and serious to be taken lightly. Time, once passed, is never relived. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15).

A child should learn to use his time wisely in the early years of life in discerning right and wrong and in preparing himself to meet the problems which he faces today and which will be more serious tomorrow. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccl. 12:1).

2. A young man or woman must understand what attitude is and how it ought to be used. Like other normal and natural attributes of any human being, everybody has an attitude of some kind toward any given thing or person. An attitude is the state of mind in relation to that thing or person. It may be very strongly in favor of or against, or it may be a neutral attitude, but this mental disposition which one has is extremely vital in attaining his goals in life.

3. Conscience is that God-given quality of every individual to know himself and to know whether or not he is responding as he believes he should to life. Paul said, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus ..." (Acts 26:9). Again, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). Romans 2:15 teaches that the

function of conscience is to approve or disapprove of one's conduct or behavior in accord with the standard which he believes to be right. Every young man and woman must respect his conscience—not as a guide, but as a means of approving that which he believes to be right.

4. Influence is a very vital part of a person's life. It may be difficult to define in all of its qualities, but perhaps the most concise definition is "that personal power which impresses the personality of one individual upon the life of another so that the end result is that he takes on the qualities of your personality." When Jesus said that the Father which sent him would draw all men to him, it was a drawing force which is said to be when he hung upon the cross, men would be drawn by the revelation of what this signified.

Man is a creature to imitate. The earliest years of his life begin the copying of the patterns that are before him in the lives of others, and when the final sum of his life has been drawn, it will consist of the combination of all the influences of the people who have impressed his life through all the years. For this reason, young men and women should recognize the power of influence upon their own lives and seek companions who will exert a good influence over their own lives (1 Cor. 15:33). They ought also to try to impress for good every life they touch.

The Pattern of the Believer

Children from the age of accountability to adulthood must recognize that the only real and true standard for success is the Word of God. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5). An honest self-appraisal is the best guarantee for holding self-respect. One must recognize and accept the responsibility for determining his own destiny in life and his labor of life toward the goal which he has chosen will ultimately determine his destination in eternity (Joshua 24:15; Acts 2:40; 2 Cor. 5:10).

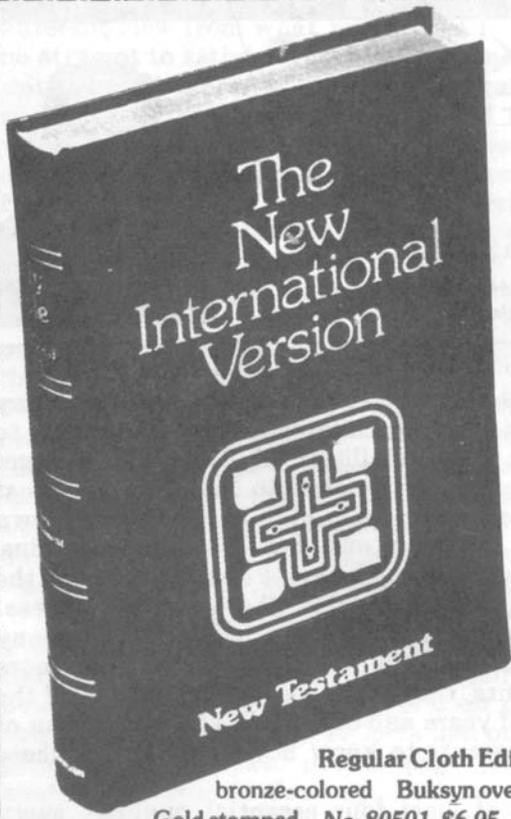
A young person should also know that there are some things in life that are more important than others. It is not necessarily the big things that make life important, but it is the right things, which in some cases may be the little things of life. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God ..." (Matt. 6:33). This makes the goal the things from heaven, not "things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). The young man and woman must recognize and respect the value of their time as youths and not waste it in riotous living, but labor with patience toward the mature years when they may be productive in the Kingdom of Heaven. The law of sowing and reaping is applicable to every phase of life (Gal. 6:7-8). What a man sows, he must reap, and that which is sown in the youthful years will be reaped in the later years of life.

Three principles of Divine truth that should always be remembered and practiced are:

1. To have respect for and obedience to the law of

God and man (James 1:22-25; Romans 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

2. As you go through life, treat every person as you would want them to treat you in every area of relationships with them (Matt. 7:12).
3. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccl. 12:1).



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EXPOSITION: TEXT and CONTEXT

Weldon E. Warnock

1021 Welford Drive
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THE LETTER TO SMYRNA (Rev. 2:8-11) It was not easy to be a Christian at Smyrna. The church was experiencing persecution and more was imminent. In addition to their tribulation (v. 9), some were to be imprisoned and undergo further trials (v. 10). The words of Paul, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12), had become a reality.

As with the church at Philadelphia, only good is spoken of this church. No condemnation is given. What a contrast with the Laodicean church where Jesus finds nothing to commend—only a series of complaints. The Christians at Smyrna loved the Lord and proved it by their willingness to suffer for the Cause of Christ.

Trials

Persecution came to the disciples at Smyrna in different forms. There are five of them to which we will direct your attention.

(1) Tribulation. This word is translated from the Greek word, "thlipsis." It literally means "pressure." R.C. Trench states, "When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were so pressed and crushed to death, this was literally thlipsis."¹ The oppression, affliction and distress at Smyrna were pressure forces to try to crush Christianity out of them.

(2) Poverty. There are two Greek words for poverty. One is "ptocheia" and the other is "penia." Jesus uses the former. He says, "I know your ptocheia." The word "ptocheia" means deep, extreme poverty; destitution; beggary (cf. Thayer, p. 557). Whereas the word "penia" suggests a lack of wealth—having nothing superfluous. This type of person may satisfy his needs with his own hands, but the other type of poor person has nothing at all. The brethren at Smyrna had nothing at all.

Reasons for the extreme poverty could be as follows. One, many Christians of the first century were from the lower class of society. Many of them were slaves. This could have been the case at Smyrna. Two, it was difficult for Christians to maintain employment. Many lost their jobs because of conversion, or they could not operate their business because of boycott (cf. Rev. 13:17). Consequently, they became destitute.

(3) Slander. "I know the blasphemy of them

which say they are Jews" (v. 9). The word "blasphemy" indicates injurious, evil and defamatory speech. The Jews' tongues were wagging at Smyrna. False rumors were being circulated and minds were being poisoned.

Barclay writes that there were six ever-recurring slanders levelled against the early Christians, (a) On the basis of the Lord's Supper—this is my body and this is my blood—the Christians were accused of being cannibals, (b) Because of the Christians eating common meals together, called love-feasts, they were charged with practicing orgies of lust and immorality, (c) Because Christianity did split families, they were accused of tampering with family relationships, (d) The heathen accused the Christians of being atheists because they did not accept the pagan gods, (e) The Christians were accused of being disloyal citizens because they would not confess "Caesar is Lord." (f) The Christians were accused of being incendiaries because they foretold the end of the world in flames and disintegration.²

Which ones of these, if any, the Jews might have used, we do not know. The point Barclay makes on love-feasts was apparently a post-apostolic charge as there is no concrete evidence of such feasts among the first century Christians. Love-feasts in Jude 12 may have been the Lord's Supper. Read Albert Barnes' comments on Jude 12 in his commentary. We can be confident that whatever charges favored the Jews with the Roman tribunals and caused the Christians much duress and suffering, they employed everyone of them.

(4) Prison. The Devil would cast some of them into prison that they may be tried (v. 10). Im prisonment may not sound so terribly bad from the standpoint of our penal system, but in ancient days, imprisonment, in many cases, was a prelude to death. The officials would not take the trouble to look after the welfare of the prisoners.

This tribulation of imprisonment would last "ten days." This is not a literal ten days, but indicative of a short period. Hendriksen states that this number is "a definite, full, but brief period."³ The persecution would be full and intense, but it would last only a short while. The brevity of suffering is used in the Scriptures as an incentive to endure (2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Pet. 1:6).

Satan cast them into prison by his agents—the Jews and the Roman officials. While the Devil was tempting those imprisoned, God was using the affliction to test, try and prove—"that ye may be tried."

(5) Death. "Be thou faithful unto death." Jesus is saying to be ready to suffer, even unto death, even if it costs your life. Martyrdom appeared to be a real threat. The fifth seal (Rev. 6:9) concerns itself with those who were slain for the word of God.

In about 155 A.D., Polycarp, a pupil of John, was slain at Smyrna. Refusing to say "Caesar is Lord," he was brought to the stadium before the proconsul, as the story goes. This tribunal said, "Swear, and

we will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ." Polycarp responded, "Eighty and six years have I served him and he never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?" Later threatened with wild beasts and finally, fire, Polycarp replied, "Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt." Polycarp was tied to a stake and killed.⁴

How easy many of us have it today. We have good jobs, fine homes, abundance of food, a compatible government to our religious practices, commodious meeting-houses, modern conveniences, etc., but how many of us have the love and dedication that characterized the Christians at Smyrna? We complain if we have to make a little sacrifice. Brethren gripe about attending a gospel meeting, special studies, training programs, giving, visiting, and any other thing that requires a little effort. Some of us are spoiled rotten. We would not have fit in at Smyrna too well.

Persecutors

Specifically stated in the letter as persecutors of the church were the Jews. Jesus calls them the synagogue of Satan. They might have considered themselves "the synagogue of God," but in reality they were of the Devil. Here is the Lord's estimate of those who oppose his church.

In the journeys of Paul we read of the Jews constantly causing trouble for Paul and his companions. At Antioch of Pisidia the Jews "stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas" (Acts 13:50). Wherever the Jews could exert any influence on local officials against disciples of Christ, they failed not to do so. At Iconium the "unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles" (Acts 14:2). Also notice Acts 14:5; 17:5. All over the Roman world, Jews were filled with antagonism against Christians.

Another force at work against the church was the devotees of emperor-worship. Once every year the Roman subjects were required to come to the temple dedicated to the Emperor and burn a pinch of incense in his honor. He had to confess during the burning of the incense that "Caesar is Lord." This was a loyalty test for afterwards he could go and worship the god or goddess of his choice.

Emperor-worship reached its zenith during the reign of Domitian. The Roman Empire was a polyglot of peoples—different races, nationalities and languages. To unify the Empire, a spirit of nationality was needed. This was found in the Emperor. He became the symbol of all that Rome was and for which she stood. It was a gradual development, the first Caesars deprecating it, but little by little it became acceptable and popular.

Criswell writes, "Finally, the Emperor of the Empire was officially created a god. Then, eventually, the final step was taken, Heretofore, the worship of the Roman Emperor had been voluntary—But as the centuries passed, in the days of Domitian, in the latter days of the first Christian century, in the days when the Revelation was written, the last step was taken and Emperor-worship, Caesar-worship, became compulsory."⁶ The Christian could not comply, so he was persecuted.

Exhortations

To help the oppressed Christians in such trying and difficult times, Jesus exhorts them and offers words of encouragement.

(1) Fear not. They are exhorted to "fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Though they were being afflicted by poverty, slander, imprisonment, and the threat of death hanging over their heads, Jesus says, "Do not fear."

The anxiety for our well being fades when we consider him who says, "Fear not." In verse 8 Jesus claims that he is eternal, "the first and the last." Stott writes, "The seas of life may ebb and flow; He stands as immovable as a rock. We are born and grow and decay and die, but His years do not fail—When fears grip the heart of men, and name and goods and life are threatened, nothing can bring tranquillity like faith in Him who is both the first and the last and eternal."⁶

In addition, the fact that Jesus had been through all that they are suffering should bring them comfort. He "was dead, and is alive." The Christian has the assurance of Jesus' resurrection that he will also be raised, and therefore, this will give him the courage to even suffer martyrdom for Christ.

(2) Be faithful. Jesus encourages these brethren to be faithful, even if it costs their lives. "Lord, is faithfulness worth such a supreme sacrifice?" Jesus response is, "I will give you the crown of life," and you "shall not be hurt of the second death." He is in position to evaluate. He knows what true riches are. Although the Smyrnians were impoverished, Jesus said "thou are rich." Hence, Jesus is saying that you have to suffer and then suffer some more, but be faithful, for it is only temporary, and then you will have the crown of life.

People of the world live to die, but Christians die to live. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Matt. 16:26)?

Footnotes

1. R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), p. 203.
2. William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
3. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
5. W. A. Criswell, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
6. John R. W. Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), p. 46.

SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

J. G. O'Neal

1729 5th Avenue
Bessemer, Alabama 35020



SAVED BY GRACE, FAITH AND WORKS

By inspiration Paul said, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). This passage suggests man is saved by (1) grace, (2) faith, (3) and not by a certain kind of works. However, this passage does not teach that man is saved without works of any kind. Thus, there is the need to ask the age old question of how faith, works, and grace are related to salvation.

I. Saved By Grace

"For by grace are ye saved" is the statement of Inspiration.

What is grace? (1) It may be defined as "God's favor." (2) Thayer says, "the New Testament writers use grace preeminently of that kindness by which God bestows favors even upon the ill-deserving, and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses, and bids them accept of eternal salvation through Christ" (page 666). (3) Grace is God's power. "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12:9). (4) Grace is God's provision, (a) In Christ we have a perfect example (1 Pet 2:21-24) and a perfect sacrifice for sin (Rev. 1:5-6; John 1:29; Heb. 2:9; Rom. 5:8; John 1:14-17). (b) In the gospel we have the revelation of the word of grace (Rom. 1:16-17; Acts 14:3; 18:27; 20:24, 32; Titus 2:11-12). (c) The church is the spiritual relationship provided for by his grace (Acts 20:25; 2:41,47). (d) Grace provided for his resurrection (Acts 2:30; Heb. 4:15-16). (e) Grace provides our salvation (Eph 2:8-9).

God expresses his grace through his law. The grace of God's sun and rain is expressed through his law that governs these. We may use God's grace by planting crops in the spring time expecting a fall harvest. We may reject God's grace and deny ourselves the benefits of it by planting in the fall and expecting a winter harvest. Just so, in the spiritual realm, God's grace without respect of persons (Acts 10:34-35) is offered to those that will claim the benefits of his grace through his law. The grace that saves teaches man how to be saved (Titus 2: 11-12).

God's grace must be appropriated by man. (1) Grace is through Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 17) but one is baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:1-4). (2) The death of Christ was "by the grace of God" (Heb. 2:9) however, "we are buried with him by baptism into death" (Rom 6:4). (3) Grace will be made known to

Christians at the second coming of Christ (1 Pet. 1:13) on the condition "if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14). (4) The gospel is "of the grace of God" to those who obey the gospel (Rom. 10:16). (5) The gospel is called "the word of his grace" (Acts 14:3; 20:32), however, one must speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). (6) The grace of God teaches (Titus 2:11-12) but one must live soberly, godly in this present world. (7) Grace reigns through righteousness (Rom 5:21) but it reigns only when we obey as servants of the Lord (Rom. 6:17-18). (8) Men are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9) but salvation is through man's faith. (9) Men are "Justified by his grace" (Titus 3:7) when they have faith (Rom 3:25). (10) Men are called by God's grace (Gal. 1:15) but the call comes through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). (11) Men are elected to salvation by grace (Rom. 11:5) but they are to make their election sure (2 Pet. 1:5-11). (12) By prayer we may come to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:15) but we are not to cease praying (1 Thess. 5:17). God's grace is available to mankind, but man must appropriate the grace of God.

God makes known the conditions of his grace through the gospel. Grace is revealed by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Grace that saves teaches (Titus 2:11-12). The word of God was preached, the Lord Jesus was preached, men "believed, and turned unto the Lord" resulting in the grace of God being seen (Acts 11:9-22). When the gospel was preached men were exhorted to "continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:42-43). The gospel was described as the "gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24,32). All that one can know about the grace of God, believe about the grace of God or promise to another about the grace of God is what can be read in the gospel of his grace. If the gospel does not reveal a matter, then one cannot scripturally claim the grace of God for it.

False concepts are often entertained about grace. (1) Some have the mistaken notion that grace eliminates works. It is true that the grace of God eliminates men being saved by (a) the works of the law of Moses (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16), (b) the works of men (Eph. 2:9; Titus 3:5; Isa. 64:6), (c) the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), and (d) dead works (Heb. 9:14). However, while some kind of works are excluded by grace, it does not follow that **all** works are thus excluded. The grace of God includes the (1) works of God (John 6:28-29; Rom. 10:10), (2) works of God's righteousness (Acts. 10:35; 1 John 2:29; 3:7,10), (3) Good works (Titus 3:8-14); Eph. 2:10), and (4) works of faith (1 Thess. 1:3; Rom. 10:17).

(2) Others have the mistaken idea that God will not impute sin to one because of grace. The word "impute" means "to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over" (Thayer, page 379). The idea of God not imputing sin to one guilty because of the perfect life of Christ does not inhere in the word "impute". From Psalms 32 and Romans 4, it is learned that the man to whom God will not impute sin is the one who has his sins covered because they

have been forgiven.

(3) Because of their error, others think the grace of God makes a distinction between the gospel of Christ and the doctrine of Christ. The apostles were charged with filling "Jerusalem with your doctrine" when they preached "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38) and "repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Those who seek to make this distinction would have that preached as being only "gospel", but Luke records it was called "doctrine".

When one considers the chart, it is learned the gospel was to be believed (Mk. 1:15; 16:15-16) as well as doctrine (Acts 13:12). Men were called upon to obey the gospel (Rom. 10:16) as well as doctrine (Rom. 6:17). The gospel saves (1 Cor 15:2) the same as doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16). Men were to teach the gospel (Gal. 1:8-9) and doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3).

II. Saved By Faith

While grace is God's part in the salvation of man, this grace must be accepted. While salvation is a free gift, it is a conditional gift. It must be accepted, and man accepts salvation by faith. Faith saves men (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:1; Heb. 11:6). While faith saves, men are not saved by "faith alone" (Jas. 2:24). "Faith only" would exclude God's grace.

In Hebrews 11, one reads of some examples of faith that justified one in the sight of God. (1) Abraham (Heb. 11:8-10) "obeyed" God, "went out" of his home and "sojourned" in a strange land. His was not "faith only". (2) **Noah** (Heb. 11:7) "moved" and "prepared an ark" and this was "by faith" but not "faith only". (3) Israel (Heb. 11:29) had "faith" but that faith expressed itself when they "passed through the Red Sea". (4) **Joshua** (Heb. 11:30) had "faith" and "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down", after "they were compassed about seven days". These and the other examples of faith in Hebrews 11 all have one thing in common. The faith expressed itself in obedience to God.

By faith men have access into God's grace (Rom. 5:1-2). Men have access when they believe in Christ (John 8:24) into the provisions of God's grace. Belief of the gospel (Mk. 16:15-16) is necessary in order for man to obtain the benefits of God's grace. Obedience to the gospel (Acts 2:36-47) is necessary in order for men to have access into the church which has been provided by the grace of God.

Faith in the heart of man comes from "the faith" of the gospel. Paul preached "the faith" (Gal. 1:23). From faith of the gospel to faith in the heart is the purpose of the faith or gospel (Rom 1:16-17). The "faith of Jesus Christ" was what caused them to believe (Rom. 3:21-22). Faith came from hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). Faith is to be in "his blood", that is, in the power to remit sins (Rom. 3:25). Paul said the "spirit of faith" was "according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak". (2

Cor. 4:13). One cannot believe that which is not a part of the doctrine of Christ, for to partake of that which is not the doctrine of Christ is to be guilty of "evil deeds" (2 John 9-11).

"By faith", as used in Hebrews 11, implies (1) God has spoken (cf. Rom. 10:17), (2) Man has acted, (3) His action is as God spoke, (4) He has acted like God said, (5) His action is with God's purpose in view, and (6) His action is only because God spoke.

Is there a relation between faith and works? Because Paul said some were justified who "worketh not" in Romans 4:4-5, some have in error concluded that works of any kind do not have a relation to our salvation. In the context in which Paul is writing, the "works" which he says do not justify are the works or "the deeds of the law" of Moses (Rom. 3:28; cf. Gal. 2:16). Works of the law of Moses do not save, and yet, James says "by works a man is justified" (Jas. 2:24). There is not a contradiction between Paul and James. James is discussing, not the works of the law of Moses, but the works of faith (Jas. 2:14-25). James shows that Abraham was justified without the works of the law of Moses because he lived before the law of Moses; however, Abraham was not justified apart from obedience, for James shows how he "offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar" (Jas. 2:21-22). Faith without the work or obedience of faith is a dead faith (Jas. 2:17). James shows our faith is shown by our works or obedience (Jas. 2:18).

Some, in an effort to avoid gospel obedience, do not realize that, when they deny man is saved by any kind of works, they are saying that man is not saved by faith because Jesus said faith was "the work of God" (John 6:28-29).

III. Saved By Works

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul said "not of works, lest any man should boast". This passage has led some to conclude that no works are involved in man's salvation. They say that if salvation is "by grace", then it cannot be "of works". This is based upon a misunderstanding of Romans 11:6.

Some of what is involved in their error is that they do not understand what is involved in a gift and that a gift can be either conditional or unconditional. In order to have a true gift, there must be (1) the giver, (2) the gift and (3) the receiver of the gift. Then, gifts may be given without any conditions or there may be some conditions to receiving a gift. If conditions are connected, they do not destroy the gift.

Just so, when God, the giver, gives to man, the receiver, his gift of salvation conditioned upon man's obedience to his will, this does not destroy the fact that salvation is a gift.

The New Testament shows that man cannot be saved by (1) the works of the law of Moses (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16), (2) by man's righteousness (Titus 3:5; Eph 2:9), and by (3) dead works (Heb. 6:1; 9:14). However, this is far from saying man is not saved by any kind of works.

The New Testament reveals men are saved by (1) the works of God (John 6:28-29), (2) works of God's righteousness (Acts 10:35), (3) good works (Titus 3:8-14; Eph. 2:10), and (4) the works of faith (1 Thess. 1:3).

While men cannot be saved by the works of the law of Moses (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16), the works of faith do justify one before God (Jas. 2:21-23).

Some read, "and if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6). From this they, in error, conclude that if man performs any work in order to be saved, he is not saved by grace.

Paul showed "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20). The law or "letter killeth", it was "the ministration of death" and the "ministration of condemnation" (2 Cor. 3:3-12). Under this, the law of Moses, Paul said, "He that despised Moses" law died without mercy" (Heb. 10:28).

However, under the "gospel of the grace of God" (Acts. 20:24) there is forgiveness of sin (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38) and this because of the blood of Christ (Mt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25). Under grace, there is the "gospel of the grace of God" which is the same as being "Under the law to Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21). The "law to Christ" is the same as "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). James expressed it as the "perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25) and "the law of liberty" (Jas. 2:12). Under "grace", man is under "the perfect law of liberty", the "law to Christ" which liberated mankind from or "made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). The "law of liberty" does not mean one is under no law, but that one has been liberated from the law of Moses. Grace and law do not conflict with each other, rather they complement each other. The grace of our government permits us to drive our cars whenever and wherever we please. However, we are bound by the law as we drive. These laws do not conflict with grace, just so, "law to Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21) does not conflict with God's grace.

Work To Obey God

Christ will save those that obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). One must do the will of God to be saved (Mt 7:21-23). One must do righteousness (1 John 3:7). God accepts those who work righteousness (Acts. 10:34-35).

IV. Ephesians Saved

The Ephesians were saved (Eph. 2:8-9). Their salvation was by God's grace, when they "by faith" obeyed God. The Ephesians were baptized (Acts. 19:5) so their being baptized did not negate the grace of God. They were not saved until they were baptized, since Christ commanded it (Mk. 16:15-16).

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Ken Green
2920 New Hartford Rd.
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THOSE "FACTIONS"

Conversations with preaching brethren have convinced me that my personal experiences along a certain line are quite common. It is becoming more and more difficult to hold gospel meetings without being branded as a compromiser or a factionist.

In city after city and community after community we find two or more "sound on the issues" congregations that have branded each other as factions. As a result, any evangelist who consents to preach for one of these will, often as not, be black-balled by the other.

It's easy enough for someone to say (as someone recently did) that preachers should refuse to preach for factions until necessary corrections are made. It's not quite as easy, however, for a preacher to determine where the faction is.

The fact of the matter is that a large number of these agitations have been effected solely over matters of judgment. Either brethren within a church fall out over opinions (personality clashes and old grudges erupting in the process) and divide, or, one congregation receives disgruntled, perhaps disfellowshipped, members from another congregation. Immediately, the lines are drawn and that church is not a church, it's a faction.

Such has become a major problem. I have some suggestions:

1. Let's realize that brethren do not always use the best judgment. If some start a new congregation and I do not agree with the manner in which they went about it, or their reason for doing so, I still need to be big enough to swallow my pride and do what's best for the cause of Christ.

Paul and Barnabas separated over a matter of judgment (Acts 15:39). I'm quite sure that at least one of them showed poor judgment—but, strange to say, the Bible doesn't give any inspired information on which one it was.

Frankly brethren, I'm not interested in receiving the mimeographed letters that are often sent all over the brotherhood to "explain the problems" in a given place. Since those problems are none of my business (If they were, I would not know whom to believe.), I just throw such letters in the waste-basket.

2. Let's practice (not just talk) local church autonomy. I can recall a time or two when I was

highly disappointed that a neighboring church received into its fellowship some who had been withdrawn from, or had left under the imminent reality of such action. I was disappointed, but I felt then, and still do, that such was their business. Other than provide what information I felt compelled to provide, I kept my nose out of their business.

I certainly have no right, under circumstances like these, to brand the other church a faction, and refuse to announce or attend its meetings, etc.

3. **Let's treat visiting preachers fairly.** Since it is impossible for me to unravel every disagreement and solve every problem and determine who is right and wrong in every situation where brethren have these problems, **I don't even try.** I go and preach wherever I am given the opportunity. I preach the whole counsel of God so far as I know it. If there is some phase of truth that the "faction" where I am holding a meeting will not receive, tell me what it is and I'll be sure to preach it.

Brethren, let's grow up.

WONT IT BE WONDERFUL THERE

The impossibility of apostasy is surely one of the most absurd and inconsistent doctrines that men have devised. The crazy quotes from Baptist preachers who try to come to grips with its consequences are almost endless.

Another, if someone is keeping count, appeared in **The Biblical Evangelist**, June, 1975. Editor Robert Sumner, commenting upon vacationers who don't darken a church door while away, said: **"While we do not suggest those who act thusly are not really saved, without fear of contradiction and without apology, we dogmatically state such are so devoid of spirituality that if real religion were gunpowder, they wouldn't have enough to blow a hat off a chair!"**

If what Mr. Sumner says is true, then without fear of contradiction and without apology, we dogmatically (and consistently) state that heaven will be full of people devoid of spirituality and real religion.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

WATER WALKER DROWNS

Tom Oglesby reproduced in his bulletin (**The Bedford Torch**) a few months back a UPI release from Jacksonville, N. C. which told of a young man who tried to walk on water.

The short article says: "The body of a man who claimed he could walk on water was fished out of a creek here yesterday, according to authorities.

"Officers said Furney Harrison, 28, of Richland allegedly told friends in a bar Saturday night, 'The Lord told me I could walk on water.' Officials said Harrison apparently tried to and drowned."

Tom well commented: "In spite of this man's apparently inebriated condition, he was at least more consistent than the religious shysters who

pawn themselves off as faith healers."

I haven't heard of Oral Roberts or Kathryn Kuhlman trying to walk on the water, have you? As a matter of fact, I haven't heard of these trying to raise the dead, turn water to wine, still violent storms, multiply food . . . yet they quote the words: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever . . ." as though they applied to the performance of miracles.

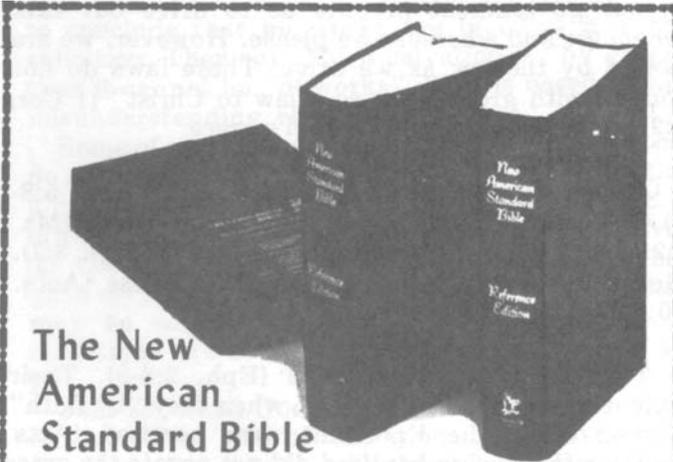
By the way, many of you may have read in a recent issue of **People** magazine that Miss Kuhlman is being sued for \$430,500 by her former personal administrator, Paul J. Bartholomew, and her ex-pianist, Dino Kartsonakis. Miss Kuhlman has maintained a low profile in public so far as her wealth is concerned, but these two former associates say she has a fine arts collection valued at \$184,000, antiques and museum pieces worth \$1,250,000, and \$1,000,000 worth of personal jewelry.

They also claim that she likes her booze. When asked about that, Miss Kuhlman replied: "I wouldn't even dignify that question with an answer . . . What do you do when you're in India? Drink the water?"

I've learned that you can expect those kinds of answers when you try to find validation for her miraculous claims too!

Then too, Oral Roberts University has announced its future plans for a medical center. Mr. Roberts appeared Labor Day on the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy telethon. He presented a check for \$10,000. A noble gift from Roberts and his university faculty—but I feel that some of the M.D. victims would much rather hear him say: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).

Indeed, the legs of the lame are unequal.



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**THE WHEAT AND THE TARES
(MATTHEW 13(36-43))**

J. J. Smith

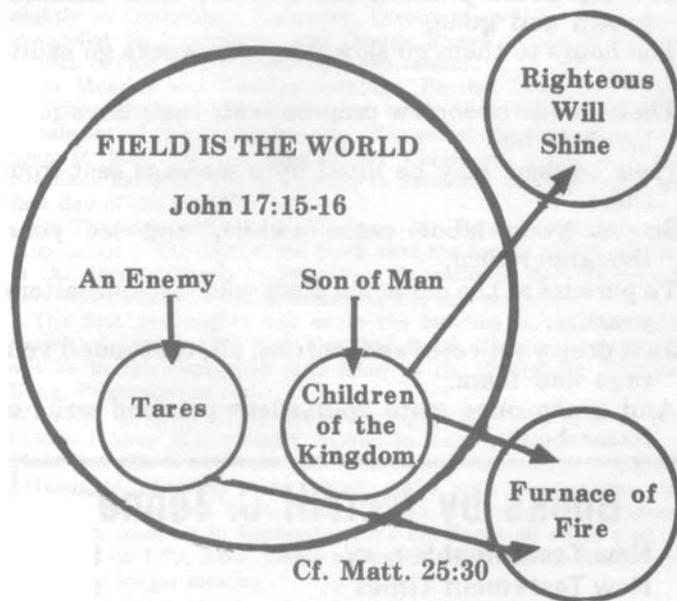
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There are a number of positions taken on these passages both by commentators and also by brethren. I believe that the position set forth in this article is true to the scriptures and if so cannot be successfully answered. Chart #2 was made to be used in a discussion with a Baptist preacher on the subject of apostasy. I understand the passage to teach that some children of God will be lost.

<p>Field = World Good Seed = Children of the Kingdom Tares = Children of the Wicked One Sower of the Good Seed = Christ Sower of the Tares = Devil Reapers = Angels Harvest is at the end of the world.</p>

You will notice that the above chart is nothing more than a word-for-word description of the parable of the tares as Jesus gave it. However, as we study this subject we will find that we need to take special notice of exactly what is said by Jesus in the explanation of this parable. To be aware of what Jesus said in his explanation will go a long way toward clearing up the matter.



First of all Jesus said the "field" is the "world." Now if we lose sight of this one fact, we will miss the point of the lesson. Many brethren talk about the devil sowing tares in the church. But that is not what the Lord said. He said, the tares were sown in the field = world. Some do not think we can practice church discipline if we take the position that the "kingdom" in these passages refers to the church. However, it has nothing to do with "church discipline" for Christ said the tares were sown in the world—not the church.

Angels to Gather from World and Church
 Now, according to verse 40, "just as" the Lord will send his angels to gather the tares, (that were sown in the world—not the church) "so shall it be at the end of the age." So shall what be? "The Son of man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:41-43). So, "just as" the angels are going to gather the tares that were sown in the field (world—not the church) so shall it be with those who commit iniquity in the kingdom.

Christ's Use of the Word "Kingdom"
 However, to further strengthen my argument that the "kingdom" in verse 41 is the church, I call attention to the fact that the word "kingdom" is used three times in verses 38, 41, 43. I have never found anyone who thinks that the good seed = children of the kingdom in verse 38 refers to anyone except those who are Christians. And, I do not expect to find anyone who would deny that those of the kingdom in verse 43 would be anyone other than Christians. Why, then, would there be three uses of the word "kingdom" in the same contest and two of them refer to the Kingdom of God and the one in the middle (verse 41) refer to the world? I contend that there is nothing in the context that would lend any support to such a view. For Christ plainly says that the "field" is the "world."

Conclusion

Thus Christ says that he will send forth his angels and gather out of the church all that apostatize and will cast them into a furnace of fire—Baptist doctrine notwithstanding.

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THE RICH MAN ALSO DIED

Clarence R. Johnson

Read carefully Luke 16:19-26. There are a number of lessons we may learn from this passage. For instance, in Lazarus we learn that (1) one doesn't have to have money, power, fame or good looks to please God (vs. 20, 21); (2) the discomforts of this life are but momentary compared to eternity (see also 2 Cor. 4:16-18); (3) death does not have to be a curse—it can be a blessing (vs. 25); and (4) physical ailments are not necessarily a sign that a person has displeased God.

The case of the rich man teaches us that (1) no amount of money, popularity, or worldly power can assure one a home in heaven (vs. 19, 22); (2) the "pleasures of sin" are but "for a season" (see Heb. 11:25); (3) who we know, or are related to, will be of no consequence to the God with Whom we have to deal; (4) financial success and good health are not signs that one is pleasing God (vs. 25; Luke 12:20); (5) not all will be saved (see Luke 13:23, 24); (6) a person's eternal destiny is sealed at death (vs. 26).

We may note from this passage that there are two general kinds of physical death, the death of the righteous (Psa. 116:15; Num. 23:10) and the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). It is obvious that in order to die the death of the righteous, one must live the life of the righteous (Heb. 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Our own experience tells us that death can come at any time. Sickness, disease or accident may befall us far ahead of the general life expectancy. The soul is the most important possession of man (Matt. 16:26). Sin has placed the souls of men in jeopardy of eternal death (Rom. 3:10, 23; 6:23) but God gave His Son that we, through Him might have life (John 3:16-18). The blood of Christ is sufficient to cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7), but we must apply His blood to our sin-sick souls through obedience to His gospel. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26, 27). "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3).

Yes, there is something more important in life than money, fame, power or popularity. Have you seen after the welfare of your soul?

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A Letter Home

W. Curtis Porter

Well, boys, you've wandered many years, much older have you grown,
But back at home your parents live in sadness and alone;

Perhaps you've traveled many miles,
you've journeyed here and there,

But you have never gone beyond the reach
of Mother's prayer;

Your parents pray in silent mood—with tears
their cheeks are wet,

As anxiously they hope from you a letter they
will get.

Will you not cease a moment, then, your
wandering steps that roam,

And take your silent pen in hand and write a
letter home?

'Twill cheer a mother's aching heart, 'twill cheer a
lonely dad;

'Twill cost you but a little time, but make two
hearts so glad;

They call you man where now you live, but
still you're mother's boy—

The very mention of your name yet fills your
dad with joy.

Your childish prattle they recall as tears now
dim each eye—

The gentle touch of childish hands when you
were standing by;

Just take your pen within those hands made
rough by passing years,

And send a letter back today to dry those
silent tears.

The old home place is lonely now, with children
grown and gone,

The hours to them go slowly by, the weeks go
sadly on;

Their clouds of sorrow may be rent, their days
may brighter be,

Their burdens may be lifted by a message sent
from thee;

So let your labor cease awhile, and let
your thoughts return,

To parents at the old home place who for your
letters yearn;

Just drop your cares and worries, all, that round
you rage and foam,

And grasp once more your silent pen and write
a letter home.

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

"... They rehearsed all that God had done with them ..."—Acts 14:27

J. T. SMITH, 3433 Studebaker Rd., Long Beach, CA 90808—The work at Studebaker Road in Long Beach is going well. We have four fine elders and an average Sunday morning attendance of 226. The congregation is either fully or partially supporting eight men in preaching the gospel. In addition to this, we have a question and answer column in the TV section of the Long Beach Newspaper with a circulation of 192,000. Everything is running smoothly under the direction of our elders. When you are in this area, come and worship with us. The Lord willing, I will be with the Southside congregation in Owensboro, KY for a meeting October 13-19 and look forward to being with these brethren again.

JAMES C. JONES, Rt. 1, Chicopee Rd., Gorham, Maine 04038—August 15, 1975 concluded five years work with the church on Chicopee Rd., Gorham, Maine. Attendance averages 20 per week for worship. Several have been baptized this year though not all remain faithful. I plan to continue with the church here, Lord willing. I am losing \$125 per month in support as of January 1, 1976. If you can help with this, please contact me. This is a difficult field.

JIM GABBARD, 520 Mary Ester Cutoff, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. 32548—I have moved to Fort Walton Beach to work with the Northside church at the above address. We are happy that one has been baptized since our arrival. The church membership is relatively young but seems to be well grounded in the word. They have done the preaching here for quite some time and indications are they've done a splendid job. We'll be printing a weekly bulletin shortly, Lord willing, and that, with other activities promises to return good results. I should like to receive as many bulletins as possible and request that readers who print and mail one add my name to their mailing list. I find most bulletins very stimulating with fine material in them. When in Florida, stop and visit with us if possible.

ROBERT WAYNE LACOSTE, W. West and Dunbar, Refugio, Texas 78377—I am happy to report that 8 have been baptized and 2 restored in meetings in which I preached last summer in Bonham and Ector, Texas. Also, one was baptized and one restored recently in the work here in Refugio. When passing through Refugio, please stop and see us.

RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION—OWENSBORO, KENTUCKY

There will be a four night discussion, Dec. 1, 2, 4, 5 at 7:30 nightly in Owensboro, Kentucky. Disputants will be Ken Green, evangelist in Owensboro, and George Russel of the Worldwide Church of God (The Armstrong organization).

On Monday and Tuesday evenings, Brother Green will affirm the proposition: "The Scriptures teach that the fourth commandment of the decalogue—viz., 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy'—is not binding on Christians under the new covenant and that Christians are to assemble together upon the first day of the week."

On Thursday and Friday evenings, Mr. Russell will affirm the proposition: "The Scriptures teach that the fourth commandment of the decalogue—viz., 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy'—is binding on Christians under the new covenant."

The first two nights will be in the building of the Southside church of Christ, 2920 New Hartford Road. The final two nights will be in the Penthouse (5th floor) of the Owensboro National Bank, Frederica and 3rd.

WAYNE S. WALKER, 506 Steinhagen Rd., Warrenton, MO 63383—I have just recently moved to work with the church of Christ at E. Flora and McKinley in Warrenton, Missouri. Attendance generally runs about 40-50 with an average contribution of around \$225. Harry Lewis of Mooresville, Indiana held us a meeting in September. We are about 60 miles west of St. Louis on 1-70. Also, please note that the church in Sandusky, Ohio is no longer meeting.

RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION—BRANDON, MISSISSIPPI

There will be a debate in Brandon, Miss. (12 miles from

Jackson) between Paul Brock and Richard W. Forsythe of the United Pentecostal Church, on November 3-4, 6-7 at 7:30 nightly in the national Guard Armory. Propositions are: Nov. 3 and 4

The Scriptures teach that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is for all New Testament Christian believers, and will continue until the end of the New Testament church age.

Affirm: R.W. Forsythe; Deny: Paul Brock
Nov. 6 and 7

The Scriptures teach that special miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to confirm the oral word of God, and were to cease when the word of God was completely revealed. Affirm: Paul Brock; Deny: R. W. Forsythe

PREACHER NEEDED

SHELBYVILLE, ILLINOIS—A minister of the gospel is needed to work with a congregation of approximately 100 members. Please send pertinent information and comments to: The Elders, Church of Christ, South Second and Charles Sts., Shelbyville, Illinois 62565.

EDITOR'S NOTE ABOUT ADS FOR PREACHERS

We have had many requests to run notices about congregations needing preachers. As we have space, we are glad to render this service as a news item and free of charge. The carrying of such notices does not mean that the editor knows all about the congregations making such requests and can unreservedly recommend the work there. In fact, we are not in the preacher placement business. Recommending preachers to churches and churches to preachers is a sticky business at best. Some good and capable men who do good work at one place, might not necessarily serve well in another. Frankly, it is our opinion that such ads, either from churches or preachers, are not the best way to meet such needs. Some churches have been contacted by men, who were totally unsuited to the work at hand because of such ads. We offer this word of advice to both churches and preachers considering each other—INVESTIGATE EACH OTHER.

Winter Classes in Louisville

The editor will teach the following classes during the months of December, January and February:

Monday nights - 7:30 - Sermon Preparation and Delivery - Expressway

Thursday nights - 7:30 - New Testament Introduction - Valley Station

Friday mornings - 10:00 - The Preacher and His Work - Expressway

These classes will last two hours. In addition to these, Steve Wolfgang will teach a Monday night class these same months for Bible class teachers. The aim of these classes is to better prepare men to preach the gospel and to equip both men and women as teachers of the word.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

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