

# 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.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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## SIMPLICITY IN CHRIST

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### EXCUSES

"And they all with one consent began to make excuse..." (Lk. 14: 18). An excuse is just another attempt to justify oneself, which man is inclined to do on occasion. Many times it would be much easier, and simpler, to just say that we don't want to do something, and we aren't going to do it. Or, conversely, just admit that we have failed to do something which should have been done. But, that would entail acknowledgement that we are wrong, and possibly repentance. Who will do it?

As a rule, we offer more than one excuse to fit each failure. Or, different people offer a variety of excuses on the same subject. We aren't convinced ourselves that one excuse will suffice, so we want to make certain that we have more than one just in case the first one or two fizzles out. And, it is difficult to listen to excuses day after day, without some kind of rejoinder. I wouldn't make a very good social worker. About the time some shiftless excuse for a man told me he was physically unable to work, couldn't find a job, the right hours, the right working conditions, the right pay, or may lose his unemployment or welfare payments, I'd probably refer him to 2 Thes. 3: 10, Eph. 4: 28, and Acts 20: 35. Then, after I had been fired for too much preaching on the job, I'd probably quote 1 Tim. 5: 8.

If a man is sick, and can't work, he doesn't need a bunch of excuses. If he is able to live without working, and without being a leech on society, more power to him. If he is too lazy, why not just admit it? All the Lord

has ever promised us is a life of thorns, thistles, and sweat, and sufficient for our daily needs if we "seek first the kingdom." Anything else is pure luxury.

While I have always had more work in the Lord's vineyard than I can do, I've had my share of meetings cancelled by congregations, and no two seldom gave the same excuses. One wanted to send me some other place where I couldn't preach to them, another said it was "building a building" and I could not come, and one didn't give any reason at all. Another said they were canceling my meeting, "After very careful consideration and due to the circumstances involved." That's all, nothing more. Another cancelled "because of things they had heard," but didn't tell me what those things were.

Only one congregation was honest enough to give me a reason. They agreed with what I preached, but had obtained a preacher to work with them since my last visit whose practice didn't agree with what I preached, and was afraid that if I came for the meeting the fat would be in the fire. They weren't overly impressed with the preacher's projects, and even favored my position over his, but for the sake of peace decided to cancel my meeting. I survived, but whether they and he will in the judgment, I can't say. One thing I know, I'm not responsible for preaching the truth someplace when I'm hindered from doing so.

Then, there are the excuses brethren make for not defending their idols. They claim they don't worship those idols, and that all is a matter of opinion, yet they will quarantine and brand those who disagree with them, cancel their meetings, lie about them and the real issue, divide the body of Christ, and in the safety of their own pulpits and papers talk like it is a matter of life and death.

These same brethren have a different set of excuses when dealing with the denominational world. In fact, they often use more fairness and courtesy when dealing with the world than they do toward their brethren in Christ. Maybe they have more in common, or feel that they do. The excuses they use depend on whether they are talking to brethren who agree with them, brethren who disagree with them, or to the world. They claim

there is no pattern for much that the Lord gave us to do, but they surely have a pattern when it comes to making excuses—say whatever is necessary to keep from doing what they generally never intended to do in the first place—make a fair, honest, open effort to give an answer of the hope which they claim to have.

Any of us who have tried to persuade souls to obey the gospel have heard our share of excuses. The time is not convenient, some preacher made them angry, their relatives wouldn't like it, or there are hypocrites in the church, they say. We can give excuses for not studying the Bible, visiting the sick, or attending the assemblies of the church.

The "lord" of Lk. 14: 22 could see through those excuses which he heard, and the Lord of judgment can see through ours.

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# Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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## "WHOSE SINS YE REMIT—WHOSE SINS YE RETAIN"

All day long the disciples had been filled with wonderment. Early that morning two of the women went to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty. Jesus made an appearance to Mary at the garden tomb and instructed her to go into the city of Jerusalem and tell "my brethren." Later that day he appeared to two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. That Sunday evening, they gathered secretly "for fear of the Jews." Suddenly, Jesus appeared in their midst. They were evidently startled, perhaps afraid, for Jesus quickly spoke and relieved their anxieties. He said "Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side." It was enough. "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."

This joyous reunion, reported only by John in 20: 19-23 is of the utmost importance to all of us. What he said to them that night has to do with whether or not sins are forgiven or retained. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (21-23).

This passage is parallel in substance to the accounts of the Great Commission recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke. The time is different, for those three reports concern the last visit with them before the ascension. John's account is set on the evening of the resurrection day. In the Great Commission, considering all the passages, they were to tarry in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father (the Holy Spirit to guide them). Then they were to start there and make disciples of all nations. They were to teach, baptize believers and then teach them to observe all things he had commanded. Those taught who believed and were baptized would be "saved" (Mark 16: 16) and would have "remission of sins" (Lk. 24: 47).

Our passage in John shows the basis on which such forgiven would rest. Jesus breathed on them and said "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." We are not to understand that he then and there imparted the Spirit to them to lead and guide them into all truth. It was after this event that he said "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high" (Lk. 24: 49). Also, just before his ascension he said "But ye shall

receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1: 8). So then, when he "breathed on them" he did not impart the Spirit to them. It was a symbolic gesture to indicate that the Spirit would be breathed into them later and that under the direction of that Spirit, they would announce to the world the terms upon which sins would be forgiven. The statement also indicates whose sins would NOT be forgiven. The Spirit would give them words by which we could know whether or not God has forgiven sins.

Do you see the utmost importance of this passage? The only thing we can know about whether our sins have been forgiven or retained (held against us) is by what Holy Spirit guided apostles taught. Any alien who does not submit to the Spirit guided instruction of those men Jesus "sent" (his apostles), has his sins "retained." Any erring child of God who does not comply with what these Spirit-filled men taught as necessary to that end, has his sins retained. Is any man prepared to dispute this?

The alien sinner was taught by these men to believe the gospel (Acts 16: 31). He was also taught to "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins" (Acts 2: 38). If a legion of angels were to teach otherwise, it would not make it so, for our Lord did not send angels forth with this message. He chose earthen vessels in the form of the apostles and shined the light of divine inspiration in their hearts (2 Cor. 4: 6-7). Paul said they spoke "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. 2: 13). All the conventions, synods, councils/or general assemblies of religious leaders in the world cannot alter what Holy Spirit guided apostles taught on this subject. All the personal testimonies of those who claim to have "accepted the Lord as their personal Saviour" short of doing what these apostles taught, cannot set aside the simple truth they pronounced. All the hypothetical cases of soldiers in fox-holes, miners trapped in caves, victims of car wrecks or those upon whom tree limbs have fallen on the way to be baptized do not give a single one of us the liberty to preach that an alien sinner will be forgiven short of doing what Spirit-guided men preached or wrote. Who is prepared to deny this?

These same Spirit-guided men said to Christians "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jno. 1: 9). Multitudes of debates, and barrels of ink used to write articles leaving the impression that just "maybe" there are exceptions will not mitigate what John, an inspired Apostle of our Lord said. My notion of what is just or fair is not the standard. Whether or not I am worried about the basis of fellowship and how broad its borders ought to be, will not change what the Holy Spirit said through John. Bring on all the hypothetical cases you can invent. Question the justice and fairness of God Almighty, if you have no better sense and so little reverence; but when you have finished with all of that, then remember that Jesus said "the words I have spoken shall judge you in the last day" (Jno. 12: 48). And part of that word is John 20: 22-23 "Whose sins ye re-

mit, they are remitted and whose sins ye retain, they are retained. " The sense of that last phrase is "they have been retained. "

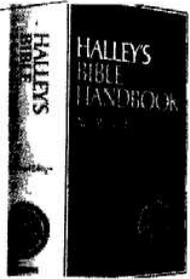
Why cannot gospel preachers, or the theologians of Sectdom content themselves with teaching people what the Lord and his apostles said on the subject of remission of sins? Yes, God will be the judge. I know that. But I also know HE SAID he would judge us by his word. I have to take that at face value. So must you. It matters not how many books a man has authored, how many years he has preached, how many he has baptized, how many churches he has helped to start, or how good he is morally: no man knows any more about the subject of forgiveness than what he can find on the pages of inspiration delivered by those men into whom God breathed the light of divine inspiration. Am I therefore become a judge for saying that those who have not complied with what the Spirit revealed through these men have their sins "retained"? Well, is that not what he said? Do any of you know anything different from that. If so, by what spirit did you receive it? Are any among us so ignorant or arrogant as to think that our own ipse dixit is equal to the word of inspiration? With Paul, let us all say "we also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4: 13). "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10: 17). Let us all be content to speak what we believe and let's be satisfied to believe the word of God.

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**PAUL'S FIRST JOURNEY  
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Raymond Harris and I had made arrangements to remain in Turkey at the close of the Steps of Paul and John Tour and visit the cities associated with Paul's first journey (except Cyprus which I had earlier visited). All of the cities are now in Turkey, but due to the location of hotel and car rental facilities it was not practical to visit the cities in the order in which Paul did.

**Perga**

From Istanbul we took a one hour flight on the Turkish Airline to Antalya (Attalia). Our Hertz rental car, a new Renault 9GLT with only 6000 kilometers, was waiting for us upon arrival. The airport was to the east of town, so this put us only a few kilometers away from Perga in Pamphylia (Turkish Perge). Perga, located about seven miles from the Mediterranean Sea, is the only one of the cities to have considerable ruins excavated. We visited the theatre from the time of Trajan which seated about 14, 000. The stadium, which seated about the same number, is one of the best preserved in Asia Minor. The walls of the city were from the Hellenistic period (3rd century B. C. ). There were gates from the Greek and Roman periods. The older one included 9 inscriptions of various founders of the city. We noted the names of emperors Augustus and Trajan on inscriptions. Like any Roman city, Perga had an agora or marketplace, a bath, and a nymphaeum (fountain). A water channel had been constructed as a divider in the middle of the main street. The earliest datable building besides the walls was a palaestra (a training area for physical exercise) dedicated to the Emperor Claudius (A. D. 41-54). The text in Acts does not mention whether Paul was able to dock at Perga. The city was located about three miles from the Cestrus (Aksu) River but was probably not a port. He may have landed at Attalia and gone immediately to Perga.

It was from here that John Mark turned back (Acts 13: 13-14; 15: 37-39). No reason is given, but Raymond and I guessed, tongue in cheek, it must have been the heat. It was definitely the hottest place we visited during our two weeks in Turkey. The heat was so debilitating that we went to the hotel in Antalya and rested during the hottest part of the afternoon. Ramsay argued that a change in plan was the reason John Mark abandoned the group. He also strongly contended that Paul had a serious illness in Pamphylia—malaria fever (St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen, pp. 90-97; Cf. Gal. 4: 13-14). This would be the reason why Paul

chose to move immediately to the higher altitude of Pisidian Antioch. These are simply educated guesses. On the return visit Paul spent an indefinite period of time preaching in Perga (Acts 14: 25).

### **Attalia**

Attalia had been founded by Attalus II of Pergamum in the second century B. C. Military veterans had been settled in the area by Emperor Augustus sometime before 6 B. C. In the third century A. D. the city became a Roman colony. We enjoyed seeing the harbor from the high cliffs above it. Attalia was the port of entry from Egypt and Syria to the interior of Asia. From here Paul sailed back to Antioch (Acts 14: 25). There is no mention of any preaching in the city. The Lycian mountains were clearly visible to the west. The most impressive ruin in the city is Hadrian's Gate, a three arch gateway which was extensively restored between 1960 and 1963. Our hotel was located near the harbor in a beautifully restored area of the city. We enjoyed lunch and dinner in two different outdoor cafes where there was a nice breeze. There were several German tourists in the city, but I observed only two other Americans.

### **Pisidian Antioch**

On the second day we had to make it to Konya by evening in order to have even a third class hotel available. We left early and drove through the Pamphylian plain and through the mountains to Yalvac. The road was good all the way but the climb was steep at about three different points. Snow-capped mountains and beautiful valleys were ever about us. North of Isparta we drove along side the large, cool, mountain lake Egridir before arriving at Yalvac. We marvelled that Luke's account mentions nothing of this long journey which took us four hours in a new car along modern paved roads. It may well have been in territory like this that Paul faced "dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers" (2 Cor. 11: 26). As we rolled into the outskirts of Yalvac we saw two cultivated fields of white poppies along the road. Under U. S. pressure, Turkey outlawed the growing of poppies in 1971. By 1974 they were allowing them to be grown under strict government control. Government factories convert the dried stems into poppy-straw concentrate (PSC) and then into morphine and codeine (See "The Poppy," **National Geographic**, Feb., 1985, pp. 143-189).

The residents of Yalvac were having what appeared to be an annual side-walk sale. The main street was filled with trucks loaded with fruits and vegetables of every sort. Shoe repairmen, clothing salesmen, and trinket hawkers were also cashing in on the large potential. Yalvac is located on a plateau at an elevation of about 3600 feet above sea level; the temperature was more bearable than at Perga. In the small museum we saw evidence of an early civilization in this region, as well as a Roman presence. We found one young boy who spoke enough English to point us in the right direction to the site of Pisidian Antioch.

Antioch had been founded about 350 B. C. by either Seleucus Nicator or his son Antiochus I on territory

which had been devoted to the Phrygian god Men (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised 1979, 1: 142). We saw a small statue of Men in the museum. The city was actually in Phrygia, near Pisidia. About two thousand Jewish families were brought to Phrygia from Babylon about 200 B. C. (Josephus Ant. Xii. 3. 4). Paul visited the Synagogue and presented a lesson which summarized the history of the Jewish nation, especially as it related to the Messianic promise (Acts 13: 14-41). The message was so well received that within a week the "whole city" assembled to hear the word of God. When the Jews rejected the word, Paul and Barnabas announced that they would turn to the Gentiles. The Jews instigated a persecution against the preachers and drove them out of the district (Acts 13: 44-52).

The tell, which lies a few kilometers north west of Yalvac, was excavated by Sir William Ramsay and D. M. Robinson from 1914 to 1924. Little is to be seen today. The well-preserved Roman aqueduct which brought water from the Sultan Dag to the city was the most impressive thing we saw. There were ruins of the temple of Augustus, baths, a triple gate, and a fourth century Byzantine church.

Pisidian Antioch was part of the Roman province of Galatia. If the South Galatian theory be correct, as Ramsay argued and as many modern scholars contend, then the epistle to the Galatians included the churches of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

### **Disaster Strikes!**

After a sufficient number of photographs had been made we decided to head for Konya (Iconium), a distance of about 180 kilometers (108 miles). About 1: 30 P. M. we stopped east of Sarkikaraagac (we never could pronounce it) to make a picture of one of the shadoofs which dotted the fields. Our lovely little Renault died right there. Neither Raymond, nor the three Turks who stopped to help, could get the engine going. After hailing a bus into town we called the Hertz office in Antalya. No one in the town spoke English. An effort was made to get the car fixed locally since we were nearly five hours away from the office. The only person in town capable of making such repairs seems to have been the Fiat tractor mechanic. After towing us to his shop he eventually gave up, indicating an electrical problem. We judged him to be correct. By 6: 30 P. M. we were in an old local TAKSI headed for Konya. Hertz would send a car there. As the taksi driver pulled out of town he stopped to send two nice loaves of bread (the bread is never wrapped) to his family. He offered the loaf, which must have been 15 to 18 inches in diameter and 2 inches thick, to us and we broke bread right there. Other than snacks we had not eaten all day. We did have a supply of water with us, and the mechanic had supplied us with the ever-present afternoon tea. I must confess that while we never sensed any personal fear, we were apprehensive at the thought of eating dinner with the mechanic and his family. We kept reminding one another of a similar experience which Jack Lewis had reported ("Following Paul with Hertz," Restoration Quarterly,

XV, 1972, 129-151).

We had enjoyed the experience, but our regret at the breakdown was two fold: we missed some great land-scape shots along the way into Konya, and we wouldn't be able to see the Museum until the next morning. That would crowd our schedule the next day. (Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in the next article. )

## Building Better Families

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### FOCUS ON THE WILL OF GOD

Children learn from seeing and hearing. Few children become Christians who have had no exposure to parents who do not read the Bible and pray. The children who have been exposed to a father and mother whom they see and hear reading God's word, talking about that word, giving thanks for their food and other blessings, and are aware that their parents pray to God regularly are made conscious that God plays a major role, yea, the dominant role, in the lives of their parents. When these same children hear their parents talk about God and doing right because they want to please God it is natural for such little ones to grow into maturity with an awareness of this supernatural Provider and Keeper's meaningfulness to their parents. Many of us cannot remember a time when our families were not blessed by such experiences as Bible reading, prayer and conversation about God and spiritual things in our family circles. Blessed is that child who cannot remember a time that the very thought of a loving heavenly Father was not in its family's thoughts!

#### Spiritual Values—Number One

If it be true that spiritual values are the most important of all values it is imperative for the entire family to keep spiritual considerations at the top of its list of values. Yea, not merely at the top of the list but even more so! The truly spiritually minded family will be so saturated with spiritual thinking that no planning, or work, or play, or visits, or money expenditures, or education, or any other social, economic, or physical activities or planning will occur without the first thought being centered in the will of God. When one enters Christ he does so by virtue of Christ entering that individual's heart and therefore his life. The Christian seeks to "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10: 5).

### The Result of Parental Commitment

The family which is truly dedicated to living God's will is one wherein God's word is constantly exalted and appealed to for guidance in every facet of its function will be a happy and trusting family.

I shall never forget visiting a family of ten children and two parents who worked hard to feed and clothe them. Nine of the ten were present that day and all set on wooden benches around a large rectangular table with father and mother side by side at one end. On the wall above the parents were these words inscribed on a plain framed placard: "Christ is the head of this house. He is the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation." Yes, I know that the father of these children was the physical head of that physical family, but I also know that the head of that man was Christ and that that man was head of his wife (I Cor. 11: 3; Eph. 5: 23). Every child at that table was under control of the father who was controlled by Christ. Spiritually Christ is "head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1: 22) but as certain as a Christian "rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" simply because Christ rules him, it would appear that Christ was the head of that house through that father of ten children, everyone of whom was a member of the spiritual family of which Christ is the head.

The father and mother who focus upon the will of God have everything good going for them in "nurturing" their children "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." Parents who leave out God in their child nurturing are destined to see a materialistically minded family which ties them to this world only. It is still true that we reap what we sow and, proportionately, much more than we sow! Focus on God's will is a definite element in successful discipline.

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### "PAUL CHOSE SILAS AND DEPARTED"

Silas became identified with Paul on the apostle's Second Missionary Journey. He first appears in Acts at the Jerusalem meeting over circumcision. This was about twenty years after Pentecost. Silas is one of those men who appear only briefly in the sacred text. But God wants us to learn about this faithful disciple and to profit from the learning.

1. **Silas Is Seen as a Leader in the Jerusalem Church.** "The whole church" was present when the apostles and elders met to discuss the circumcision matter, and Silas was chosen, along with Judas, to go to Antioch to confirm "by word of mouth" the things written in a letter to the Christians there. This letter is one of the oldest parts of the New Testament, and Silas is one of four men whose names are preserved in it (Acts 15: 22-29).

Silas and Judas, "leading men among the brethren," went with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, and when the letter was read, the brethren "rejoiced over its encouragement". Then Judas and Silas exhorted them "with many words and strengthened them". What joy it brings when people are freed from error by the truth (cf. John 8: 31-32)! Judas and Silas exhorted the disciples to build up their faith. This is the purpose of exhortation.

Judas and Silas were dismissed when their mission was finished, but Silas either remained in Antioch (King James Version) or soon returned. Christians may work with any faithful congregation they choose, and for some reason, Silas chose Antioch, after having served faithfully as a leader in Jerusalem.

Even though he was one of the "leading men" in the Jerusalem church, there is no indication that Silas was an elder. One can be a leader without being an elder. But true leadership in the church is attained by faithfulness, maturity, and earned respect. Silas had proven himself trustworthy, and was chosen for the delicate mission to Antioch for that reason. What a "hothead" or an incompetent person would have done in a situation like that at Antioch isn't hard to imagine. Much harm is done by important duties being given to persons unprepared by temperament or experience to handle them.

Silas was also a prophet and an effective exhorter. While all teachers can exhort, not all are skilled in it. But both teaching and exhorting are needed and an able exhorter is a treasure to any congregation (cf. 1 Tim. 6: 2).

2. **Silas Is Seen as a Companion of Paul.** He joined

Paul after the apostle separated from Barnabas. A disagreement arose between these men over whether to take John Mark on the Second Journey (Acts 15: 36-39). Barnabas wanted to take him but Paul insisted that the young man, who had deserted them on the First Journey, should not go. Both men apparently acted on principle. Even a matter of judgment can involve a principle of truth when anchored in sound reasoning and with the cause of Christ uppermost. Paul and Barnabas each continued the Lord's work and any enmity between them is more in the mind of commentators than in Scripture.

While Paul's prior acquaintance with Silas was limited, he knew the man's qualities. He had observed him in his mission to Antioch and he knew the high respect in which he was held by the apostles and other brethren in Jerusalem. Men should not be chosen for the Lord's work in order to learn faithfulness, the faithfulness should come first. Perhaps Paul's experience with John Mark taught him this important lesson.

Paul and Silas' journey through Syria, Cilicia, and Galatia broke little new ground. They strengthened the churches in Syria and Cilicia (v. 41). They delivered "the decrees" to those in Galatia, strengthened them in the faith, made some converts, and added Timothy to their company (Acts 16: 1-5). But the Holy Spirit led them to Troas, where they received a call to preach in Macedonia and where Luke joined them (v. 6-10). While their main work lay across the sea from Troas, their labor in the other places mentioned was not unimportant. Mission fields need the gospel, but established churches need exhortation and encouragement. What profit is there in sacrificing one field for another? It is as important to keep people in the right relationship with the Christ as it is to bring them into this relationship with.

3. **Silas is Seen as a Faithful Soldier under Fire.** His most notable work was at Philippi where he had part in the conversion of Lydia, the jailor, and their households (Acts 16: 11-40). He and Paul shared scourging and imprisonment in this important Macedonian city and used their Roman citizenship to affect their release. Paul's insistence that the magistrates take personal note of their mistreatment was more for the benefit of the disciples at Philippi than themselves. It was not his nature to make such a demand for personal glory.

Silas accompanied Paul to Thessalonica where they had another effective work (Acts 17: 1-9; cf. 1 Thes. 1: 5-10). They next worked in Berea and established a strong congregation there (Acts 17: 10-13). Many Berean Jews and "not a few of the Greeks" were converted. But when Jews from Thessalonica stirred up the crowds, Paul left, leaving Silas and Timothy behind to strengthen the work.

Brethren conducted Paul to Athens and left him there alone, returning with word for Silas and Timothy to come to him there "with all speed". However, Paul had gone to Corinth when his friends came to him (Acts 17: 14-15; 18: 1-5). Silas apparently remained through Paul's stay in Corinth. This is indicated by Paul's reference to "Silvanus and Timothy" assisting him there (2 Cor. 1: 19) and by "Silvanus" joining the salutation in

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians written from Corinth (1 Thes. 1: 1; 2 Thes. 1: 1). Silas is believed to be a contraction of Silvanus.

Coneybeare and Howson think Silas returned with Paul to Jerusalem at the close of the Second Journey. But his presence with Paul in Corinth is the last reference to him in Acts. At this point he simply disappears from the book without explanation. We would like to know more about Silas, but the New Testament was written to tell about Christ, not to satisfy our curiosity. Those who preach the word are of little importance compared to their message. Paul asked, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed" (1 Cor. 3: 5)? Years later Silas was in Babylon with Peter, who regarded him as a "faithful brother" and by whom Peter wrote his first letter (1 Pet. 5: 12).

Silas was one of those faithful soldiers of the cross who was willing to stand humbly for a while in the shadow of Paul and Peter to support their great work in the gospel. He was willing to serve where he was needed without seeking personal recognition. In God's scheme of things the cause of Christ could not succeed on earth without such men.

## BREAD OF LIFE

"I am the bread of life. . . so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Jno. 6:35, 57.

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## "LOATHING GOD'S GIFTS"

God miraculously led the Israelites in the wilderness, providing them with bread, water, deliverance from enemies, and the removal of obstacles. Yet, in spite of the many manifestations of His grace and power, the people often became impatient and murmured against God and Moses. One such occasion was as they "journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged (impatient-NASB) because of the way (journey-NASB). And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread" (Num. 21: 4-5).

Because of Israel's attitude and actions, God sent the fiery serpents among them and many died. When they admitted their sin and asked Moses to pray unto God for relief, the serpent of brass was made and placed on a pole so that the bitten could come and look and be healed (Num. 21: 6-9).

Notice that in speaking against the Lord the people of Israel said "our soul loatheth this light bread." They

had come to loathe or detest the bread (manna) that God had previously provided for them (Num. 11: 6-9; Ex. 16: 12-31). This manna was God-given, and it effectively sustained physical life. Israel could eat it, along with the quails, and live. Physical life was sustained. But, they "lusted" for more, or something else "remembering the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic" which they had come to love in Egypt (Num. 11: 4-6). So, they expressed a loathing or detestation for this God-given bread. They even referred to it as "this light bread." They were not referring to weight or low in calories when they referred to it as "light." Adam Clark, commenting on the Hebrew word used here says "a word of excessive scorn; as if they had said, this innutritive, unsubstantial, cheat-stomach stuff" (Adam Clark Com. Vol. 1, p. 683).

It is no wonder that God was so offended with Israel and severely punished them. They not only loathed what he had given, preferring other foods according to their taste, but even referred to the "bread from heaven" as innutritive and unsubstantial, or worthless.

It seems that man has always had a tendency to prefer the attractive things offered by Satan and the world to that which God gives; often giving up the divine for that which is flesh pleasing. Eve yielded to this temptation in the garden. Son, Cain, soon exchanged what God authorized in sacrificing for what seemed good to him. The Bible is replete with examples of this, and in every case, God was displeased and severely punished the guilty.

## Guilt Today

In John, Chapter six, Jesus reveals himself as the true bread that came down from heaven of which one can eat and have eternal life, in contrast to the manna which could only sustain physical life for a time (vs. 48-50). He further revealed that we eat of him as we hear his words (vs. 45, 63), believe on him (vs. 47), come unto him (vs. 35), and dwell in Him (vs. 56). Our Lord, in his word, has provided a number of things that are ingredients of the Bread of Life, or eating of Him. They include hearing his Word (Jno. 6: 63; 1 Pet. 2: 2, 2 Pet. 3: 18), assembling for worship and spiritual edification (Heb. 10: 24-25), observing the Lord's Supper properly in memory of Christ (1 Cor. 11: 26)—to keep from becoming weak, sickly, and dying (1 Cor. 11: 30), congregational singing (Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16), prayer (Rom. 12: 12; Lk. 18: 1; Jas. 5: 16). and even other things that could be cited.

Do we today loathe this bread from heaven and consider it worthless? Do we prefer and exchange this for that which is more ear-tingling, pride satisfying, and flesh pleasing?

ASSEMBLING. How do you really feel about assembling regularly with saints for worship and spiritual edification? You may not say out loud "I loathe these assemblies", but do you complain about "having to go", and being deprived of the TV watching or other activities that you had really rather be engaged in? Maybe your desire for other things causes you to "forsake the assembling" in order that you might pamper your pref-

erences! Your actions, which speak louder than words, may be saying these assemblies are "light", "unsubstantial", or "worthless". Knowing how God felt about, and dealt with Israel for "loathing" His life-sustaining gift to them, enables us to know how God feels toward us, and what he will do, when we are guilty of this kind of thing. "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10: 11).

**SINGING.** Often saints are heard murmuring about the congregational singing because it doesn't sound good to their ears, and requires special learning and participation on their part. They think God could have given something much better, like instruments of music instead, or to accompany, or specially trained choirs, specialty groups, etc. With many, the things they desire actually over-ride and supplant congregational singing. Thus, by word and actions, what the Lord gave is "loathed" and declared unsatisfying and worthless.

**LORD'S SUPPER.** Observing the Lord's Supper in memory of Christ (1k. 22: 1) on the first day of the week (Acts 20: 7), regularly (1 Cor. 11: 25-26; Acts 2: 42) and in a worthy manner (1 Cor. 11: 29) is loathsome and worthless to some. Many are not hesitant to express in words their distaste for such action; others show it by their actions—neglect or abandonment. The corruption at Corinth—making a common feast or meal of it, along with the prejudices and discriminations of common feasting, appeals more to some—is better—than what the Lord requires. Indeed, many do "loathe" this God-given memorial supper and deem it "worthless", according to their words and actions. They are guilty of the same sin that Israel was in their attitude and actions concerning the manna, and for which God severely punished them.

**PRAYER.** Prayer is a part of the "Bread of Life" which Christians must continually eat. Yet, this too, is loathed and considered worthless by a host of people. Some are outspoken concerning their doubts and feelings of the efficacy of prayer; others show their distaste by the absence of prayer in their life; by going any place and every place else than prayer to God for their desires and needs.

### **Sin Unto Death**

We need to realize that loathing and considering worthless what God has given is sin. It is a sin unto death (1 Jno. 5: 16), unless repented of. When Israel was guilty on the occasion of our text, God sent among them the fiery serpents and many died. When they cried unto Moses, asking him to pray unto the Lord for relief, and he did, a way of salvation was provided. It involved Moses making a serpent of brass, putting it on a pole, and those bitten going and looking on the brazen serpent. All who would not comply with this God-given remedy died.

When we today are guilty of this same sin, and many are, the remedy is in that which God provided for the remission of all sins—the shed blood of Christ. It is effective for the remission of the Christian's sins when

we repent and pray to God for remission (Acts 8: 22; 1 Jno. 1: 9; 2: 1-2). This is the "walking in the light" (which is the same as eating of the bread of life) that assures the Christian of continual cleansing by the blood of Christ (1 Jno. 1: 7). To be guilty of "loathing" God's effective gifts, speaking against and indicating they are powerless and worthless, is to be a sinner, doomed to eternal death. Continuing such action and refusing to seek the remedy is to "tread under foot the Son of God, count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10: 29) which will render one incapable of being led to repentance. All that remains is "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10: 26-27).

Brethren, if you detect even a faint loathing in your heart for the things of God; a yearning for self-pleasing things rather than the things of God, you had better hasten to the "Bread of Life" and feed heartily thereon. "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness (goodness)" (Isa. 55: 2). Otherwise, "ye shall die" (Rom. 6: 23).

Things Most  
Certainly  
Believed

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### **CERTAINTIES OF OUR SALVATION**

#### **"We Shall See Him"**

Again we examine a series of positive statements from the First Epistle of John. The basic theme of this epistle is expressed "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 Jn. 5: 13). The certainty of eternal life is based on the things written. The Gnostic philosophy, advocated in Asia Minor the last of the first century, projected superior knowledge as the basis of relation with God and thus outmoded faith. John in a special way addresses this fallacy by positively identifying the true basis of relationship with God. This series of positive considerations continues to be challenging to the child of God today by way of giving assurance of our salvation.

"We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 Jn. 3: 2). The closing thought of chapter two impresses that righteousness is of God and those that are of Him, his children, are righteous. The exhibition of righteousness is evidence of being sons of God and it is not a superior

knowledge apart from faith in Jesus Christ. John then dwells on the blessings of that relationship. "Behold", take notice of the measure of God's love extended us, summed up in verse 5, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" and reminiscent of John's statement of the great "golden text. " "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3: 16).

In this prelude to our key statement of study, he then addresses the proof of relationship to God as children. Is it because the world knows and recognizes us as such? No. The "world knoweth us not" and why should we expect this kind of recognition to be the basis of our relationship to God when it didn't even recognize Jesus as his Son. This failure must surely be viewed as one of the greatest of all perplexities, even though it was not unexpected. The world generally does not understand nor identify with the principles and reasons for the conduct and commitment of the Christian and has no real grasp of the basis of the joy and comfort being such affords. But in spite of this non-recognition of the world, John says, we are sons of God now. God recognizes us as such and that is enough. To revert to previous study, that recognition is based upon keeping his commandments, knowing him, keeping his word, the love of God perfected in us (cf. 2: 3-5). Just because we have not seen what we shall be there need be no doubt as to our present status with our Father.

"We know that, we shall be like him" is the most intriguing of promises to the child of God. To be like him is to be as he is in both spirit and form or body. How thrilling to contemplate the assurance of Paul, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. 8: 16-17). Glorified with him, be like him and share with him that great and eternal legacy as children. This is a summary of all the good things which the Father has in store for his own.

There is an interesting story about a group of heathen converts who when it came to the task of translating this verse (1 John 3: 2), just could not conceive of such a possibility. The very idea, they reasoned, of sinful man being like the Son of God. So they stopped and said, "No! It is too much. Let us write that we shall be permitted to kiss his feet. " Indeed, to be like him, is a great deal, but the wondrous love of God has made the promise reality.

**"We know that we have passed out of death into life,** because we love the brethren" (1 Jn. 3: 13). The antagonism between the workers of evil toward the workers of righteousness should not be viewed as especially strange, John argues. Did not Cain hate his brother Abel and kill him because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. So marvel not at the hatred of the world. We are children of God in spite of this, he assures. We can know it is true because we have passed from "death" unto "life, " from a state of sin into a state of righteousness because we have the Son of God (cf.

5: 12). The criterion of this certainty here in focus is the opposite of hatred. It is love of the brethren.

Perhaps we need to be careful not to accept an altogether too common misconception. Love for brethren is not to be viewed as a condition of salvation from past sins. It is here posted as evidence of the certainty of it. It furnishes the evidence that we have passed from death unto life and affords a test with which the individual and the world may identify. Love alone is not the standard of acceptance before God but it is the basis on which all true virtue rests.

What a tragedy that it has become so common in so many places that brethren have no love for one another. The church struggles to become a stable influence in the community for maybe twenty years and never seems to quite make the grade and those involved wring their hands and weep in wonder when the real problem often is so near it is missed. There is no real love among brethren, the world plainly sees this and every effort made to reach the world falls on deaf ears because they want no part of it. In these situations there can be no spiritual growth and progress until there is a complete change of heart and attitude toward the Lord and one another. Until this occurs there might just as well be a boarding up of the doors and a tearing down of the sign "Church of Christ" because it is not and won't be until this basic ingredient is established.

We have further identified some of the positive notes stressed by the beloved John in the hope that we may be certain of our relationship to the Lord and of our hope for heaven. The uncertainty and doubt often evident among us is faith weakening and eternally destructive. We must dispel these attitudes.

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### **"MY FATHER THE FARMER"**

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Last year my wife and I moved to within driving distance of my grandparents house. We never visit there that we do not get Mema started telling stories about the family. Isn't it funny how much mothers know about the actions of their children? We think we pull the wool over their eyes and years later it comes out they knew about it all along. One such incident recited to us in a recent visit was my father's somewhat unique farming practices. It involved the planting of corn. It seems he was given a sack of seed corn and told to plant the freshly plowed field. Due to my father's superior horticultural talents he deduced that he could finish much quicker if he planted by the handful and walked faster, thereby having time to do the things young boys would rather be doing than planting corn on a warm

spring day.

Funny thing about seed corn; it grows. And grows. I can imagine the look on Dad's face as his workmanship became evident, as well as my Granddaddy's. One will have to ask my father the punishment he received. However, I am sure it was fitting. I also must admit to more than once driving the mower in high gear to finish the grass for the same boyish reasons.

When looking back on these incidents certain passages take on new meaning and certain lessons can be learned. Many times today we go about our spiritual sowing in a hurried step, throwing in the seed, kicking the dirt over, and moving on. Even the most fertile ground will not bring forth as it could with these techniques. How many times have we been told "if its worth doing its worth doing right"? God expects no less from us. Therefore, the sowers attitude toward his work is the first step to successful spiritual farming. With the proper attitude, the farmer will take care how deep the seed is planted, seeing they are evenly spaced, and in straight rows.

In our spiritual planting we must remember to plant one seed at a time and give it proper attention.

There is a tendency, no, there is a trend to do our spiritual planting in clumps. Mark 16: 15-16 tells us to take the Good News to ALL the world-not just to preach it in the field where it's convenient. Everybody likes to sow in the shade and near the water bucket, but what about the middle of the field? Where does the tallest corn grow? Not in the comers or in the shade that's for sure.

In one sense, we all as Christians are sowing one long row throughout life. Not turning back, but planting one seed and taking one step at a time. When we reach the end of our row Christ will turn with us and examine our work, to see the result of our efforts. I am ashamed to say that there will indeed be some clumps and empty spaces in my row. How about yours?

At the time Dad was growing up money was very hard to come by and seed was expensive. He wasted much with which he was entrusted. Grand daddy had to go buy some more seed to finish the job. In our work today we must sow bountifully (2 Cor. 9: 6), but we must realize how precious it is because of its power, and because of who bought it for us.

May we all continue to "press on" and "lay hold" on that which Christ has promised to his faithful at the close of the day. Let me commend Philippians 3: 12-16 to you as the attitude to express toward our spiritual row which we are working.

After being the example in so many of Dad's sermon illustrations, it is nice to have one to "tell" on him. Thanks Mema, I will be back for another visit soon.

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## Using the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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### GO TO THE MOSQUITO

"Go to the ant thou sluggard" is a favorite text among teachers at Athens Bible School where two of my children attend. But an article by Boyce Mouton suggests we may be able to learn from the mosquito too. At least from a certain group of mosquitoes:

"Off the west coast of Florida 3. 2 kilometers is the island of 'Seahorse Key.' It is a virtual paradise for mosquitoes... heavily timbered, swampy, warm and damp. In 1968 scientists began releasing thousands of amorous male mosquitoes upon the island. The influx of new mosquitoes averages 13, 200 per day. At the end of the experiment 96% of the mosquito population had been annihilated. The secret of this amazing stratagem is a sterile mosquito. Scientists produced and released insects that were normal in every way... except that they could not reproduce. In the second generation of the experiment the ratio of sterile males was 3 to 1. In the fifth and sixth generations it was 100 to 1. Except for the arrival of new wild mosquitoes migrating to the island, these insects would have been completely destroyed. In the last two generations studied infertile egg rafts was 99. 4%-99. 8% effective." The application is made to Christianity: "Statistics indicate that 95% of those with their names on church roles never win a soul to Christ! A community of mosquitoes with this alarming sterility rate would be close to extinction. The church could be unless the "rank and file" of the disciples begin to lead others to Christ. Except for the gospel seed being sown by "wild mosquitoes" (maverick believers who do not know any better than to share their faith), the Lord's church would long since have vanished. WHAT A DIABOLICALLY CLEVER WAY OF ANNIHILATING CHRISTIANITY. Scientists at Seahorse Key were trying on an exceeding tiny scale the same plan that Satan is working on a worldwide scale.

Brethren let us soberly reflect anew upon the words of our Lord.

**"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches;**

he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned... Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15: 4-7, 8).

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## INGREDIENTS FOR GROWTH

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Before it is possible for spiritual growth to occur, one must have been begotten by the word of God, the gospel, and in obedience to the same have been born again of the water and of the Spirit. Paul affirmed to the Corinthians that he had "begotten them through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4: 15). There is no other begetting power known to man given by God. Many in the religious world are attempting to grow to spiritual maturity who have not yet been begotten by the word of truth and born of the water and the Spirit. This is why I talk to so many folks who are thoroughly confused and frustrated with their spiritual walk and do not know what the problem is. They have never complied with the will of heaven to be begotten and born (Jno. 3: 3; Acts 2: 38; Acts 3: 19; Titus 3: 3-7; Rom. 1: 16-17; Jno. 6: 44-45; Mk. 16: 15-16; Rom. 6: 3-6; Gal. 3: 26-29; 1 Pet. 1: 22-25). This spiritual begetting and birth brings one into the one body, the church, and not into some humanly formed organization or denomination (Acts 2: 41-47; Col. 1: 13-14; Jno. 3: 5).

### **Spiritual Food or Diet**

Too many who have been obedient to the gospel and thereby added by the Lord to His church do not grow spiritually as they should. This is a tragic problem all too evident as well as all too common in the churches of Christ today. We simply do not have as many Bible students as we should. As someone said once, "many in the church think as epistle is an apostle's wife." In the physical family we would be so very disturbed if growth did not properly occur and we would do well to be concerned for where there is not an obvious growth, it indicates a physical problem needing immediate attention. Why do you suppose we are less concerned at the lack of spiritual growth in new converts to Christ? Are we more concerned with the physical than the spiritual? To ask is to answer. We are commanded to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2: 1-2). How great an appetite do you have for the word of Christ? Study is essential to know the will of the Lord. One who ever expects to pass an exam for some desired degree in secular society knows how much work is involved and how often the midnight oil may have to be burned to learn sufficiently to pass the exam and get

the degree. How can we expect to meet with Christ's approval when we are unwilling to study sufficiently to know the answers for our hopes? Please read 1 Pet. 3: 15; 1 Tim. 4: 13-16; 2 Tim. 2: 15; Eph. 4: 11-16; 2 Pet. 3: 18.

### **Constant Prayer**

Prayer is uniquely the privilege reserved only for faithful children of God (Jno. 9: 31; 1 Pet. 3: 12; Isa. 59: 1-2). If a perfect man needed prayer so badly as to pray all night as did our Lord Jesus Christ (Lk. 6: 12), certainly we all need sorely to exercise the privilege more fervently and with greater frequency than we do! There's no way of judging, I suppose, what blessings and assistance to do the will of the Father in heaven we miss by simply not praying as often as we should and to reach others with a needed message of salvation (Eph. 3: 20-24). We are told that He is able to do exceedingly above all that we think or ask. The apostles realized that the preaching of the word of God and prayer took precedence over the physical needs of those under consideration on that occasion in Acts 6: 4. See also Mk. 11: 24; Jas. 1: 5-7; Mk. 11: 25-26.

### **Daily Meditation**

Study, yes, but more than that! We need to learn the art of meditation on those things eternal and divine. Think on the things we read, ponder them, make notes. Ask yourself a series of questions about the text, seek to learn all that the Lord wants us to get from the passage under consideration in the context where it is found. David spoke of the man who is blessed and says he "meditates on the word of God both day and night" (Psa. 1: 2). Paul told Timothy to meditate on those things he had been taught (1 Tim. 4: 15). See also Psa. 19: 14 where the words of our mouth as well as the meditation of our heart, petitioned David, may be acceptable in the sight of the Lord. In Phil. 4 Paul said we should think on those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, saying that if we do "the God of peace will be with us" (Phil. 4: 8-9).

### **Attendance in the Public Assemblies of the Church**

God chose through preaching to save and to edify the membership of the local congregation. No true lover of Christ will absent himself/herself from any of the assemblies of the local congregation on purpose. (1 Cor. 1: 21; Jno. 14: 23; Acts 2: 42). The early saints recognized the importance of the assemblies of the churches of Christ and would make every possible effort to be able to be where they met when traveling (Acts 20: 6-7). In Hebrews 10: 25 we are commanded, "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together..." "We need the strength worshipping and being with others of like precious faith can give. You cannot obey the Lord's command to "teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16), unless you are in the assemblies where such is taking place. Nor can you "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" in partaking of the Lord's Supper unless you are with others and partaking on a weekly basis (1 Cor. 11: 23-31). It is a sin to willfully forsake the assemblies of the saints.

### **Giving Sacrificially**

Some Christians will never grow to spiritual maturity for they will never learn and get to know the joy of sacrificial giving to the Lord. Also they will never understand how others who make less than they do can possibly "get by" and give so much to the Lord. Why it takes every penny they can scrape up just to make ends meet! They need to learn what the Lord said and believe it then they will understand and not until. Over and over in the New Testament the inspired writers referred to God's provision for his faithful people when they would do as He said as proof that He still will do the same for us if only we will trust Him sufficiently to put Him and the kingdom first (Mt. 6: 33; 2 Cor. 12: 13; Acts 20: 35; 2 Cor. 8: 1-9; 1 Cor. 9: 6-10).

### **Application**

We must put into practice that which we know is the Lord's will and that which is our responsibility for growth to take place. James 1: 21-25 tells us to be doers of the word and not hearers only. James 2: 14-26 shows that faith without works is as dead as the body without the spirit and that the way we have faith is by our performance of those things we profess to believe. Romans 12: 1-2 shows that we are not to conform to this world but "be transformed by the renewing of the mind."

### **Importation**

You will never grow to spiritual maturity until and unless you begin to relate that which you learn to be the will of Christ. That's just a fact. Ask anyone who has ever taught a class and see who they think it was who learned the most, his students or himself/herself. You will learn that the latter will be his/her answer (Heb. 5: 12-14; 2 Tim. 2: 2; Acts 8: 4; 1 Thes. 1: 5-8).

As you attempt to teach your friends and neighbors about the will of Christ you will be faced with questions and quibbles learned from denominational preachers, the answers to which you will probably not always know immediately. If, however, you are interested in your soul and those to whom you speak, you will seek out the answer and return to your friend with God's answer to said question. In 1 Peter 3: 15 we learn that we are to "... be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." You see, as you search the scriptures for the answer to a legitimate question or even a quibble, you will be spiritually benefited by said exercise and hopefully so will your friend you are trying to convert to Christ.

Do not study simply to be able to tell that friend just how wrong he is and how right you are; after all it is a precious soul you are trying to save, not a contest to see who knows the most! I've heard gospel preachers brag about how they "skinned" someone in debate. I would rather convert him, wouldn't you?

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**READ YOUR BIBLE TODAY**

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## **SAVING THE WORLD BUT LOSING OUR FAMILIES**

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It takes dedication and personal sacrifice to be a Christian, no doubt about it. It takes a special kind of person, a person with conviction and perseverance, someone with "beautiful feet" (Rom. 10: 15), and we are blessed with many such people in the kingdom. I am, however, concerned and would like to raise a cautious voice regarding our priorities. As a preacher I am fully cognizant of the need for a redoubling of our efforts to reach a lost and dying world, yet at the same time I am concerned that there are many, many of whom are preachers and elders, who in their zealous determination to effectively evangelize their community have lost sight of another priority in their life: their family. As I have read of some of the pioneer preachers of the 1800's and early 1900's I was impressed with the great sacrifices that their families were forced to make and how often the family was almost totally neglected in an effort to preach the Gospel. I fully understand that not only must a minister make sacrifices, but that his family as well must be willing to make certain sacrifices, but my concern is that in an effort to reach the lost with the message of hope that we may very well be losing our own families. Some years ago I had the privilege of sitting at the feet of Brother Bob Frank and I well remember him, at that time, voicing concern over this very issue. How many men have neglected their families to preach the gospel or to serve as elders and as a result have seen their families begin to fall apart?

When Paul wrote Timothy "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5: 8. NASB), I do not think that I do any injustice to the text or the context in applying this principle to providing for the emotional and spiritual necessities of our families as well. We must always be on guard lest we allow ourselves to be so caught up on our mission to evangelize that we forget an equally important mission, bringing our children up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord". If we are not cautious we will find ourselves in the unenviable position of not "practicing what we preach". Traditionally, preachers' and elders' children have been notorious for being rowdy and oft times troublesome. Now whether such a conclusion is warranted I am not qualified to say. I certainly hope that it will not be so with my children.

In my 36 years on this earth I have seen many changes in the Lord's church, some good and some not so good. I have seen preachers' sons indicted for murder and elders' daughters sent to prison as accomplices to murder. I have seen preachers' marriages, in greater

numbers than I care to think about, end in divorce. I have known of preachers' wives, neglected by their too busy, dedicated husbands, who find physical fulfillment with another man and in some instances another preacher, I have known of preachers, who because of their busy schedules are not home often enough to reap the physical benefits of the marriage relationship and have found fulfillment with other women. No one likes to talk about such things, but we cannot ignore them, they are real, they are happening to some of our closest friends. We need to reconsider our priorities and reevaluate our relationships with our wives and children. What good is it to be loved by the brotherhood for your works' sake and yet lose your family in the process. That's a high price to pay. No one is suggesting that we be less interested in the souls of men, what we are suggesting is that we reconsider how we may continue to serve the Lord without sacrificing our families on the altar of dedication and conviction. Paul said it best "but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9: 27 NASB). Some years ago there was a popular country-western song that stated "You can't be a beacon if your light don't shine". And so it is with those of us who labor in the Word. We must live and exemplify the life that we seek to teach others to live.

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## SILVER THREAD AMONG THE GOLD

**Gary L. Fiscus**  
**Silver St. at Locust**  
**New Albany, Indiana 47150**

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I once read that the book of Romans had a "silver thread" running through it. That silver thread is the resurrection. The Bible does not say what color the resurrection is; but if the word of God is "more precious than gold," then certainly, the resurrection may well be "the silver thread!"

I have found many references to the resurrection in the 16 chapters of Romans. It is possible that I have overlooked some or many; but for your consideration, study the following with me.

1) **"Resurrection from the dead"** (1: 4)—Paul begins his message with reference to AUTHORITY. This "gospel of God" (1: 1) was not of men, but from the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3: 1-3). Notice the POWER of the resurrection in Jesus. Notice the AUTHORITY, i. e., "according to" mentioned in verse four. At the outset of the epistle we begin our threading of the silver with power and authority.

Jesus gives eternal life. He was raised from the dead for this purpose. Thus, those who believe Jesus was resurrected, have hope of that life fulfilled.

2) **"Believe in Him who raised Jesus"** (4: 24)—Righteousness is "credited to the account" of those who have faith in God and the Son of the resurrection. BELIEF necessitates action. Never is righteousness said to be "reckoned" to a believer only; rather, only to a believer who acts upon his faith.

3) **"From Transgression to Justification"** (4: 25)—This chapter ends with a point and purpose of the resurrection of the Lord. He suffered, died, and was buried because WE all sin. He was resurrected, however, that WE might find JUSTIFICATION. In the next chapter, i. e., 5: 18, Paul considers again the emphasis of this "one act of righteousness." The result was "justification of life to all men." Had Jesus not been resurrected WE would not be "excused" or "vindicated" from our transgressions. Paul writes of this silver thread of purpose in the golden words of Jehovah. A purpose of the resurrection is to justify man.

4) **"Newness of Life"** (6: 4-11)—Perhaps many in the Lord's church have been so preoccupied with the action of baptism, that they have forgotten the result of that action! The result as indicated here is a "NEWNESS of life." The apostle continues his proposition of the resurrection by stating the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is re-enacted in baptism. One may enjoy the "new life" as opposed to the "old man" (6: 6).

This entire context explains immersion's purpose. The "old self" ends in burial. The "new life" begins in resurrection. Even the future is made certain in this action, i. e., there will be a resurrection (John 5: 25), that will result in a "likeness to Jesus" (Rom. 6: 5; 1 Jn. 3: 2). Basically we are seeing here a pattern of:

A) Jesus' resurrection and triumph over Satan.

B) Our re-enactment of Jesus' resurrection in baptism.

C) A general resurrection in judgment where we "shall be like Him (Jesus)."

By understanding and following these "three resurrections" we, (Rom. 6: 11), become "dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

5) **"Fruit Bearers"** (7: 4)—Another purpose of this "silver threaded" resurrection is that once we follow the action of baptism we BEAR FRUIT for Christ. Under the Law people served the lusts and sinful passions (Rom. 7: 5) of nature. I believe our author is here addressing three laws of concern:

A. Mosaical

B. Christian

C. Natural

There was no release from the iniquity committed under Moses' law. Man could only appease God by the sacrifices of blood and flesh of animals. Until Jesus died, was buried and resurrected, people on the Mosaical side of the cross had no acceptable atonement for their sins. Because of the resurrection, however, Paul says the fleshly law (natural), which gets us into trouble, finds a way of escape in the blood and sacrifice of Christ. We as Christians, are able then to "bear fruit for God" (Rom. 7: 4) instead of "fruit for death" (vs. 6). How? By the resurrection the child of God is able to, in modern slang, "get his act together." He can now, with

hope of salvation in his heart, share this good news with others, and subsequently produce a product acceptable unto Jehovah! It is more than an appeasement. We are fruit bearers because of the resurrection!

6) "**The Indwelling Spirit**" (8: 11)—Jesus' ascension from the grave gives the Christian an INDWELLING of the Holy Spirit. This text (Rom. 8: 1ff) explains how sin mortifies the body; but Jesus, by the resurrection, is able to "give life through your mortal bodies" (Vs. 11).

In verse 10 we have "righteousness" again mentioned. It is coupled now with this indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Just what makes you holy? What separates you from the world, and joins you to Christ? What makes you, a Christian, that "peculiar" person Peter portrays? It is the resurrection which has produced an indwelling Spirit in the child of God.

As the resurrection produced action in baptism and a new life in Jesus, it also gives power by the Spirit to the Christian. Look at Romans 8: 16: "(He) bears witness.. ." i. e., He testifies, "WITH our spirit, " i. e., our "lives that we are children of God. " Note especially the preposition "with. " Kenneth Taylor in his popular paraphrased "Living Bible" uses "to. " The resurrection did not provide more revelation to be given apart from God's written word. It provided the power of the Holy Ghost to work with us in our lives to "keep that which has (already) been committed. " Hence, He does not testify "to" us; but works "with" us. He does so through God's written inspiration (Eph. 3: 1-5). All of this is possible because Jesus was resurrected from the grave.

7) "**Intercession**" (8: 34)—Our text here includes verse 27, even though some versions break the continuity of thought at verse 30. Because of the resurrection we as God's children have a "go between" from ourselves to Jehovah. I do not believe we can think of Jesus and the Holy Spirit here as two separate entities, either working when the other does not. E. g., verse 26 says the "Spirit intercedes" and verse 34 labels the Lord as the intercessor. The word "also" helps to define the co-

worker relationship.

If we think of Christ and the Holy Ghost as accomplishers of the same task, i. e., INTERCESSORS, we should have no trouble understanding that they accomplish that task because Jesus, "took on the form of man" (physically), died, and was resurrected to make this possible. As the spiritual part of all three members of the Godhead is mentioned in verses 9-11 we can see that physical aspect of resurrection made possible the intercession of the Spirit in God's child.

In this verse also (8: 34) it is significant to note the Kingship of Christ, as He is now (present tense) "at the right hand of God. " Thus, His resurrection provided us a King. A monarch, if you please, to rule His kingdom while we are alive and citizens of it on earth.

8) "**Salvation**" (10: 9)—Finally, SALVATION is made possible to us because of the resurrection. At this verse, we have confession of the Lord and development of faith that He was raised. How many times have I used this passage to prove confession of faith? I am fearful I have missed an equally important point, and, really, the basis for salvation. It is essential that folks confess Jesus as the Christ; but do we emphasize the resurrection just here as much as we should? Possibly not! In simple terms, while we preach the plan of salvation as being faith, repentance, and baptism, we neglect the foundation for the plan: **The Resurrection!**

I conclude with one more, this time rather obscure passage of the resurrection: Romans 14: 9. The word resurrection is not used here, but note its inference.

"For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. "

We, like Jesus, must die (Heb. 9: 27); but, because of the resurrection we can and will escape the second death. Thank the Lord for this "silver thread" among the "gold. "

## THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

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

Send all News Items to: Connie W. Adams, P. O. Box 69, Brooks, KY 40109

### CHARLES FLETCHER HOUSE

F. YATER TANT, Gardendale, AL—Charles Fletcher House of Douglas, Arizona, known throughout the nation for his total commitment to the evangelization of Mexico, died of a massive heart attack on July 1. He was seventy-two years of age. His funeral service, conducted in both English (by Mack Kercheville) and in Spanish (by Pedro Rameriz Banda) was an occasion of great sadness for all. This sorrow was particularly evident among the Mexican brethren, whom he loved so deeply, and who had reciprocated that love to the fullest. He had lived among these people, sharing in their humble life, and had won their hearts completely. Brother House is survived by his wife Nattalee, his aged mother, Ira Maude House, a daughter, a grand daughter and a great-grandson. Also grieving at his death will be an uncounted number of his "children in the faith" who had been led to

Christ by his tireless efforts.

Through the years brother House had written hundreds of letters to churches and individuals, pleading with them to recognize the great opportunity open to us in reaching the people of Mexico. Scores had responded, and there are now a number of small Mexican churches along the Mexico-U. S. border between El Paso and San Diego—churches which for years to come will be a living testimony to the unflagging zeal and dedication of this one man. May his tribe increase!

Brethren and churches who had been interested in the Mexican work, and who had from time to time sent contributions through brother House to be used in furthering that cause may, if they desire, continue their contacts with that field through brother Mack Kercheville, (P. O. Box 3487, El Paso, Texas 79923) or brother Melvin Rose (179 B. St., Brawley, California 79923).

**DEBATE**

September 30th through October 4th, 1985, brethren Charles A. Holt and J. T. Smith will meet in Lake Jackson, Texas to discuss the following propositions:

1. The Scriptures teach that the local ecclesia of Christ has reference to nothing more than disciples or saints in a given area or context, who may act individually and/or together with others in carrying out the Lord's will; and there is no requirement (pattern) from God that they form or constitute themselves into an organic, institutional body corporate (functional unit) for doing any work ordained by God.

Affirms: /s/ Charles A. Holt

Denies: /s/ J. T. Smith

2. The Scriptures teach (1) that every local church of Christ is an organized, functional, institutional entity (body corporate); (2) that as such it has been given certain specific, clear-cut, authorized works to perform that only this unit can perform with God's approval; and (3) that every disciple of Christ is required to join (become a part of) such a formal organization and therein serve under the control of the organization in certain works that the disciples cannot do otherwise and please God.

Affirms: /s/ J. T. Smith Denies: /s/

Charles A. Holt

3. The Scriptures teach that as a result of meeting Bible qualifications men may be appointed as elders by a local church; and that as duly constituted officials (bishops, pastors) they have the divine authority to oversee that local church in all of its functions, with the right to make the final decisions.

Affirms: /s/ J. T. Smith Denies: /s/

Charles A. Holt

4. The Scriptures teach that (1) elders are the older, relatively more mature; (2) that age, knowledge, experience and maturity in the Lord's service constitute them as such (compared to the younger); (3) that these elders, because of who and what they are, are thus authorized (appointed) by the Holy Spirit to teach, tend, shepherd (pastor), oversee, guide and lead (bishop) the disciples among them; and in the discharge of such responsibility or function there is no inherent authority.

Affirms: /s/ Charles A. Holt

Denies: /s/ J. T. Smith

This discussion will be held at the Lake Jackson Intermediate School cafeteria on Oyster Creek Drive in Lake Jackson, which will seat about 500 people. (Coming south toward Freeport from Houston on Highway 288, turn right on College Drive which becomes Oyster Creek Drive). The sessions will begin each evening promptly at 7: 30 P. M. Both of these brethren solicit your prayers that truth may prevail, regardless of who has it. They encourage all who will to attend this discussion. For more information, call (409) 265-2191 or write J. T. Smith, P. O. Box 698, Lake Jackson, TX 77566.

**NEW CONGREGATIONS**

**TOM ROBERTS**, P. O. Box 330998, Ft. Worth, TX 76163—In addition to other faithful churches in the Fort Worth, Texas, area, there is also a congregation meeting on the south side of the city, filling a long standing need. The WOODMONT church of Christ had its beginning in the fall of 1981 with a peaceful "swarm" of a few members who lived in the south part of Fort Worth and who wanted to start a faithful church closer to their homes. Brethren where they were worshipping, the West Side congregation, were kept apprised of the plans, bid them "Godspeed" when they left and complete harmony existed and still exists between two groups.

For about three years, the Woodmont church met in rented quarters (the Jewish Community Center) but pressed forward with plans for a permanent meeting house. On December 23, 1984, these plans were fulfilled when the church occupied a new building at the corner of Alta Mesa Blvd. and Landview, in the heart of a new residential/business section. The architect and builder was Joe Feagin, a member of the College Park church in Richardson, Texas. With nine classrooms, nursery, study, library and an auditorium seating approximately 250, the building features an auditorium with a "wrap-around" effect in the seating. I am serving as the local preacher.

Visitors may locate the building by taking the Crowley Road exit off I-20 (South Loop 820), going one mile to Alta Mesa and turning right. We are located at Alta Mesa and Landview. Phone: (817) 292-4908. We meet Sundays at 9: 30 and 10: 30 and 6 P. M. with Wednesday Bible study at 7: 30 P. M. Please inform relatives or friends in the area about us.

**BILL FLING**, P. O. Box 2072, Roseville, California 95678—The elders at Miller Avenue in San Jose have offered to continue our support in a new work for the Lord. After investigations and many prayers, we have decided to start a congregation in Roseville, California. There is one institutional-type church there. The nearest church respecting the Lord's pattern is in Carmicheal. Roseville is half-way between Sacramento and Auburn, on I-80. It has a population of 28, 000 and is growing with many High Tech businesses moving into the area. A nucleus of 14-16 members will be starting with us.

We met the first time on Sunday, July 21st. We are presently meeting in the Eagles Hall at Vernon and Lincoln Streets in Roseville. On Sundays we meet at 9: 30 and 11: 00 A. M. and at 6: 00 P. M. My home phone is (916) 652-7526 (in Loomis). Or you may call Steve Dickey (916) 725-3390 (Roseville exchange). If you know of unfaithful Christians in the area, or anyone you would like us to contact, please write or call. The Eagles Hall is about 2 or 3 minutes off I-80, taking the Douglas off-ramp west to Folsom Road, right to Vernon, left to Lincoln. With God's help, a church to His glory will grow in Roseville.

**THAYER STREET LECTURES**

The church meeting at 640 Thayer Street in Akron, Ohio announces a lecture series for September 16-19, 1985. Speakers will be: Jeff Smelser, Bob Buchanon, Frank Perkins, Bobby Graham, Roy Diestelkamp, Ray Farris. Wayne Walker will lead congregational singing. Subjects include: The Nature of the Church, Suffering, Self-Deceit, Marriage, Church Buildings (authority for, financing and Use of), Behavior in the Assembly, Church Fads, When are N. T. Examples Binding, Patterns for Benevolence, Patterns for Evangelism. For more information call (216) 376-2818.

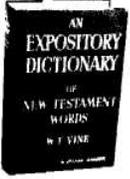
**ZION, ILLINOIS LECTURES**

The church meeting at 2310 Lewis Avenue, Zion, Illinois 60099, will have a Bible lectureship October 20-25, 1985 on the theme, AUTHORITY IN RELIGION. Speakers will be: Keith Barclay (Janesville, WI), Maurice Barnett (Phoenix, AZ), Gary Coles (Round Lake Beach, IL), Karl Diestelkamp (Kenosha, WI), David Girardot (West Allis, WI), Craig Meyer (Berea, OH), and Gene Taylor (Tallahassee, FL).

**PREACHING IN COLUMBIA—VENEZUELA**

**ROYCE CHANDLER**, Mason, Ohio—Wayne Chappell (Mill Rd, Cincinnati) and I traveled to Columbia and Venezuela during July 6-19 to visit among the brethren in Bogota and Manizales, Columbia. The best news of all to come out of this work in the past four years is that CARLOS RESTREPO (the young man who originated the work in Columbia in 1977 and who baptized around 200 people in the first three years of work, and who then fell away from the Lord four years ago) HAS COME BACK TO THE LORD! About four weeks ago he

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returned to the assembly of the church that meets in Chapinero and confessed his unfaithfulness and has been assembling with them since. His wife has also returned. Only time will tell just what part he will play in the continuing work there. Santiago Castro, preacher in Chapinero, is doing well though discouraged over a "lull" in the attitude of some brethren there. Those who know Santi could help by writing him a good letter of encouragement.

The church in San Carlos (south Bogota) where NESTOR BERMUDEZ is working, is busting at the seams with zeal, enthusiasm and success. They now have about 30 attending and their little meeting place is packed and the work is going well.

**REID BRASWELL** and **JAIME RESTREPO** are working in Manizales. There have been 12 baptisms in recent months. They are a zealous, close group and the future looks very exciting for the work there.

**C. S. Gatlin, Jr.**, P. O. Box 1397, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864—THE GOSPEL MINUTES, published weekly by Dillard and Clem Thurman of Fort Worth, Texas, has been around for many years. The present circulation is now over 125, 000. Many people have desired to obtain back issues of this paper which are no longer available from 1959-1982. The Thurman's have given me permission to reprint and make available bound volumes of this paper beginning with the year 1959. If you are interested in obtaining any of these back issues, please send a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope to the above address. I will send you a price list and information concerning printing and delivery dates.

**LUTHER W. MARTIN**, 707 Salem Avenue, Rolla, MO 65401—On this date, July 6, 1985, my very good friend and brother in the Lord, Oliver Murray, of Houston, Texas, "came home" to his devoted wife and family after hospitalization for a five-bypass-surgical procedure. There were some anxious moments, when a blood clot formed, but many prayers were offered in his behalf, and the wisdom and skill of his physicians allowed him to return home today. We are so thankful that brother Oliver Murray was able to come home.

Yesterday, after a three-week trip to Europe, my beloved wife, Jeanne "came home." With planes being bombed out of the sky, and terrorists holding hostages; with Athens, Rome and Madrid being bombed by terrorists; with Jeanne Martin's group of tourists arriving in Madrid one day after the bombing there, many prayers ascended

heavenward in her behalf and for the safe arrival of those travelling with her. I have written the above simply to remind us of the precious blessings we all enjoy and possibly take for granted: blessings of good health, home, freedom and liberty. Let's all take time to give thanks for our many blessings in this life, and the greater blessings awaiting the faithful, who are prepared for the great homecoming at the end of time.

#### PREACHERS NEEDED

**WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT**—The church here is looking for a man interested in moving to the New England states to help us. We are able to supply partial support and could supply some possible leads for additional support. Those interested should contact: Church of Christ, 23 Trumbull Dr., Wallingford, CT, or call (203) 269-0406.

**MISSION VIEJO, CALIFORNIA**—The small congregation here is looking for a mature person to work with us. Some support is available but additional support would be required. This is a good opportunity to work with devoted Christians in a young work. A retiree or someone willing to do secular work would probably work out best. Contact Walt Halagarda (714) 768-8518 or write: Saddleback Valley Church of Christ, 22951 Los Alisos Blvd., Mission Viejo, CA 92691.

#### PREACHERS AVAILABLE

**CAROL BATES**, 3114 N. 18th, Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814—I am interested in working full-time with a congregation in need of a preacher. Full information and references gladly supplied. Write or call (208) 667-7922.

**KENNETH E. MORRISON**, 516 S. Sequoia, Roswell, New Mexico 88201—I am interested in relocating with another faithful congregation. I am 34 years old, married with three children. I have been preaching here for six years and our separation is completely peaceful. I can fully recommend the church in Roswell without reservation to any who might desire to locate here. Write me at the above address or call (505) 622-9152.

#### IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS	253
RESTORATIONS	86
(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)	