

# 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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## ACCEPTED OF HIM

(2 Cor. 5:9)

*Donnie V. Rader*

4724 E. Manslick Rd.  
Louisville, KY 40219



### THE WAY TO PRAY (Part 1)

When the disciples pleaded, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1) they were wanting to be shown the way to do it. Thus Jesus said, "After this manner therefore pray ye" (Matt. 6:9). In other words, Jesus said "This is the way to pray."

It is not prayer per se that is acceptable to God, but prayer that is offered as the Lord teaches. Hopefully, with a little study our prayer service will become more meaningful.

#### Characteristics (How)

1. **With a prepared mind.** Prayer is something we must prepare our minds to do. We must be in the proper frame of mind. Our minds need to be free from all distraction. Worldly cares and concerns need to be pushed aside for the moment. Tune everything else out. It is hard, if not impossible, to pray with a lot of noise—e.g. the television blaring or with a lot of activity around the house. If we are not careful, we will find ourselves in the middle of a prayer suddenly thinking about that letter we forgot to mail or the phone call we need to make. If possible, we need to picture ourselves as being enclosed in a circle where nothing can get through to disturb us while we talk to God Almighty.

2. **According to God's will.** If God is to be pleased we must pray in harmony with God's revelation. John speaks of the confidence that the Christian has saying, "if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1 Jno. 4:14). Jesus set an example of requesting "thy will be done" (Matt. 26:39, 42).

It is possible to teach error, sing error and yes, even pray error. That is why "Lord, teach us to pray" is so important to us.

3. **Ask in faith.** James said that one needs to ask for wisdom especially in the midst of trials and temptations. However, when he asks let him do so in faith (Jas. 1:5-6). He further shows that the man who is unstable and has a wavering faith need not expect anything that he asks of the Lord (vs 6-8). Jesus said, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22; cf. 1 Tim. 2:8; Mark 11:23-24).

4. **With humility.** The Pharisees had a problem with praying on the street corners to be seen of men (Matt. 6:5). Jesus told of a Pharisee who boasted in prayer of being much better than the publican (Luke 18:10-14). Obviously, the only way to approach the creator of the universe is in humility.

5. **In the name of Christ.** The Lord taught His disciples to ask "in my name" (John 14:13-14; 15:15). Paul urged that we do all things "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). While this does involve Christ being our mediator, it also involves praying by his authority (cf. Acts 4:7).

6. **In spirit.** All of our worship is to be in spirit as well as in truth (John 4:24; cf. 1 Cor. 14:15). To pray in spirit simply means to do so sincerely and from the heart. Paul defines "in spirit" in Rom. 2:28-29 as meaning "of the heart". It is possible to say words that would be acceptable unto God but our heart be far from him (Matt. 15:8). Our prayers must be fervent, striving, agonizing with strenuous zeal (Jas. 5:16).

7. **Not: (a) Fixed expressions.** Compare Matt. 6:9-15 and Luke 11:2-4 and you will see that Jesus did not use the exact same expressions. Certainly there is nothing wrong with using familiar phrases again and again. However, merely "saying your prayers" is not praying! The point is that there are no standard words or phrases that we **have** to use. I sometimes wonder what a new convert thinks as he listens to our prayers when it seems like phrases are used over and over to the point of becoming meaningless.

(b) **Much words.** Prayers do not have to be long or filled with a lot of words. It seems that the Pharisees thought that their prayers would be heard for their

much speaking (Matt. 6:7). Consider the prayers of Jesus in Gethsemane which contain only 20-22 words each (Matt. 26:39, 42). Augustine said, "We pray most when we say least, and we pray least when we say most." Martin Luther said, "Few words and much meaning is Christian; many words and little meaning is heathenish." Longer prayers have their place (Luke 6:12), but all prayers do not have to have a lot of words.

**Elements (What)**

We have a lot for which to pray and that demands that we spend some time in prayer. We sometimes pray in very general terms whether making a request or giving thanks or praying for others. One thing I learn from looking at the prayers given in the Bible is that we need to pray for definite things (Cf. Luke 11:11-12; Jas. 5:17-18).

The apostle Paul instructs that "first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). There are four elements of prayer mentioned in this text.

1. **Supplication.** This refers to asking for a need, an entreaty. Clarke says this refers to a request for the averting of evil. Thus our prayers should consist of asking for some things (1 Jno. 5:15). We should ask not to be led into temptation (Matt. 6:13; Mark 14:38). There are times we need to ask for strength to overcome weaknesses (Heb. 4:16). We must ask for God's help to make it through trials and temptations (Jas. 1:5-8). We often face physical problems for which we need God's help (Jas. 5:13; Acts 12:5). We are constantly in need of God's protection and care (Matt. 24:20). In fact, we can ask for anything that is right within itself (Phil. 4:6).

2. **Prayers.** This refers to any discourse with God (petitions, praise, thanksgiving, et. al.) Clarke says this refers to a request for the obtaining of good. Our prayers should be filled with **praise**. Notice that in the model prayer Jesus gave it began and ended with praise (Matt. 6:9-13). God should be recognized as the Almighty, the creator of all things and the giver of every good and perfect gift.

Our prayers do and should contain request. We ought to ask for wisdom (Jas. 1:5), the furtherance of the gospel (2 Thess. 3:1; Col. 4:3), forgiveness of sins (Acts 8:22), temporal needs (Matt. 6:9-13), church growth and that God's will be done (Matt. 6:10).

We will give consideration to intercessions and thanksgiving in part 2.

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# Editorial

*Connie W. Adams*

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## EDITORIAL STEW COLUMN BY COLLY CALDWELL

With this issue of SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES, we begin a regular column by C. G. "Colly" Caldwell of Temple Terrace, Florida. In addition to his administrative work at Florida College, Colly is one of the best preachers to be found. His writing is interesting, instructive and highly readable. He always does his homework. We believe his contributions to the paper will add a much needed dimension which our readers will appreciate.

\* \* \* \* \*

## VOLUME 27 CLOSES

With the issue you hold in your hand, Volume 27 closes. When this paper began in 1960 under the editorship of H. E. Phillips and with the considerable help of James P. Miller, none could foresee how long the paper would be in business nor the influence for good it would wield. In that length of time, many papers have started and folded. From the beginning, we have enjoyed a large readership, many of whom have introduced the paper to friends and family. We have been blessed with the writing of a number of good men who have worked voluntarily and only for the good their writing would do. No writer has ever been paid, except in the personal satisfaction he has derived. This editor has been on the job since June, 1973, almost as long as H. E. Phillips edited the paper.

It is not always easy to meet deadlines and keep a paper operating smoothly, especially with the press of other work. Since 1975, I have been engaged in gospel meeting work nine months each year. I have had to write articles, compose news columns, carry on correspondence and other things essential to the paper, while on the road. (I am writing this column from a kitchen table in the home of my friend, Jerry Hale, in Parkersburg, West Virginia.) I do not take golf clubs or tennis rackets with me to meetings, and am not criticizing those who can do that. I do take a typewriter, and a brief case full of work. Sometimes a writer will tell me he cannot get an article done because he is in a meeting. I am always a little amused by that, for most of my work has to be done that way.

During the past year, we made one change in operation which has proved to be a great help to my wife and

me. In July, Jane Ashbrook went to work full time for the paper. That has made it much easier for my wife, Bobby, to travel with me in the meetings without being swamped with work on the paper before and after each meeting. Jane is efficient and has quickly grasped the day-to-day work which must be done to keep the business part of the work flowing smoothly. She is the wife of Lee Ashbrook, one of the elders at Manslick Rd. church in Louisville, and also the daughter of our good friend and brother, A. C. Grider. We owe a debt of thanks to Joan and Donnie Rader for helping us so ably during the critical months in 1985.

\* \* \* \* \*

## PREACHERS, MEETINGS AND TEMPERANCE

It comes as a surprise to some that the greatest difficulty I face in meetings is the meal list. Quickly, let all understand that my wife and I appreciate every act of hospitality shown to us. It not only involves extra work, but extra expense to entertain company. But there is a problem here. Gospel preachers (and their wives) are as obligated to practice self-control as all other Christians. Let's face it, folks, intemperance is a sin! It is wrong for a preacher to yield to it and it is equally wrong for sisters to insist that we over-indulge.

Think a little, now. This year we were in 23 gospel meetings. The average length was six days. If you have one meal a day in the homes of brethren, that equals having Thanksgiving dinner 138 times in a year. Add to that the fact that in a few instances, against my strong protest, some brethren scheduled two such meals a day, and the problem is compounded. Then some want you to come home with them after services every night and EAT. Do you have any idea what it is like to get up from a seven course meal at about 2 P.M. when you are scheduled to sit down at another table equally loaded at 5 P.M. the same day? In many places you will find three kinds of meats, three breads, twelve vegetables and three desserts, sometimes with pointed reminders that "I like to see a man eat"; or "you don't eat enough to keep a bird alive"; or "it won't hurt you just this once." With all due respect to the culinary talents of my good sisters, I insist on making one thing clear — I reserve the right to decide my own capacity!

Those who travel much soon learn that routine is absolutely essential to good health. Upon Doctors advice, I try to maintain the same eating habits away from home which I observe at home. I always eat a good breakfast, light lunch and a pretty good supper. For that reason, I have tried to limit meal appointments in meetings to the evening meal. Not only does that enable one to use some restraint about the amount of food, but it also means there are not as many deadlines in the day. As indicated before, this preacher has to take work along to do. There are always letters to write, reading to

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do for sermons, and to make preparations for classes and other teaching commitments. All of us should be ready and willing to put the needs of the meeting first in terms of personal teaching and visiting of those who need us.

A brother, just recently, met me for the first time. After exchanging a few pleasantries he surprised me by saying "you don't have a big belly like most preachers." Thanks, brother, I think. I suppose that is better than the comment of one sister in Kentucky, who told one preacher he had "Dunlap's disease." He said, "What do you mean, Dunlap's disease?" She said "Your stomach dun' lapped over your belt buckle." Preachers, beware of "Dunlap's disease."

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### PATTON-PHILLIPS EXCHANGE

The written exchange between Marshall E. Patton and H. E. Phillips on the remarriage of a "put away" person will be delayed until the February, 1987 issue. Brother Phillips had a severe reaction to a flu shot and this has hindered some of his work. At this writing, I have in hand the first article from each of them and anticipate receiving the second articles soon. We believe our readers will benefit from the study of these two men.

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### WINTER CLASSES

As you read this, the editor should be well under way with winter classes at Manslick Road in Louisville. In addition to a Sunday morning class on "Dangers We Face" and a Wed. night class on 1 Peter, there is also a Monday night class on "Developing Congregational Leadership" and a Friday morning class on "Between the Testaments." We hope to find a few evenings to

watch the fire crackle in the fireplace while the snow blankets the ground.



## DIVINE COMMUNIQUES

*C. G. "Cotty" Caldwell*

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Temple Terrace, FL 33617



### "UNTO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY"

*GOD'S MESSAGE:* "WE WERE MADE A HERITAGE, HAVING BEEN FOREORDAINED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS WILL; TO THE END THAT WE SHOULD BE UNTO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY" (EPH. 1:11-12).

A "communiqué" is a message or piece of information given out officially. The New Testament is the government approved record of the "communiqués" issued by the Divine King of heaven and earth to citizens in His kingdom and to foreigners through His authorized ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20; Eph. 6:20). A "communiqué" may be informative or directive. When the President of the United States issues a "communiqué," he intends either to provide important information or to issue a command. In either case, no "communiqué" from a head of state may be disregarded or taken lightly with impunity.

### God's Purposes In Us

One such "communiqué" is the message delivered through Ambassador Paul to the citizens of Christ's kingdom in the first major paragraph of the document we identify as Ephesians. In it the Lord gave public notice concerning the ultimate, higher purposes behind our being adopted as sons unto Himself (Eph. 1:5) and our being made His heritage (Eph. 1:11). All such spiritual blessings are certainly given with beneficent intent but they are not provided just to benefit us. They are bestowed "according to the good pleasure of His will" (not ours) and they are intended to produce praise from us which will make known God's glory (see also Eph. 1:9, 14).

I am afraid that most of us at times allow ourselves the misguided privilege of supposing that since God is love and has done so many loving things in our behalf, that we are created for God to bless. Do we imagine that we were made so that the Almighty would have something to pamper, humor, and spoil? Do we suppose that it is all here for us? Certainly not! God created us in His image to glorify Him and He redeemed us to be His part out of the creation because we worship and serve Him rather than ourselves.

### A Reasonable Perspective

That is not unreasonable. It does not diminish from the exalted image of a good God who truly loves mankind. It simply calls us back to who we are. When I make something I do it "according to the good pleasure of my will." If I plant a garden, I place the plot, design the rows, and choose the vegetables according to my own decision. If I build a house, I make it like I want it to serve the purposes I have for it. God made the world according to his own will to please Himself. He did not make it to please IT... and we are part of it. He did not make us to please us!

We have had tropical fish at our house. Lynda and I decided to set up a tank, so I went down to Fin City (good name, don't you think) to purchase what we needed. When I walked in, I learned that you do not just buy a fish tank. You must choose the size and shape you like. You then must select a system to pump oxygen into the water, a decor or motif, a stand, and on and on. I was all decisioned out when I carried it home, and I still did not have any fish. When we had set up the tank and let it run a couple of days, I went back to Fin City. The tank was pretty, but I wanted something moving around with life in it. I chose several beautiful fish.. all different kinds and colors. Whatever pleased me, I put in the tank. I did that according to the good pleasure of my will. I also bought food, chemical treatments, and other items the fish needed to do well. I was kind and loving to those fish, but I did not set up the tank for the fish. I set it up for me and my family.

After a while, some of our fish died, so I went back to Fin City. I looked around this time for some colorful fish which would complement two angel fish and two "silver dollars" which had grown to pretty good size. As I walked along, I was struck by a tank of pink "kissing gouramies." They were beautiful. They looked as if they were puckered up to kiss one another all day long. Now, I am basically a pretty romantic fellow, so I decided I just had to have a pair of them (notice I said, "a pair"). I took them home, put them into the tank, and gloried in how beautiful it all looked. But the next day, I went into the den and one of my "silver dollars" was floating belly-up on the top of the water. Upon examination, I saw that the other one was missing skin on its side and the angel fish were missing some of their fins. Those "kissing gouramies" were kissing my other fish to death. Well, I studied and labored and sweated over what to do and finally came to only one conclusion. You guessed it! I flushed those "kissing gouramies." Please do not send the S.P.C.A. after me. I am certain that those fish went out into the Hillsborough River and into the Gulf of Mexico and are today better off than before. I was not, however, going to let those fish mess up my tank!

You know, we read the Old Testament and sometimes think that God was just terrible to open the ground and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Listen, folks. Those people were messing up God's tank! If God created the world for them, it would be a different matter. But God made them for Him. They were not serving

and glorifying the Lord. They were destroying others and abusing the very purpose of their existence. Actually, it is a mark of the wonderful grace and mercy of God that He flushed only a few.

### Some Spiritual Applications

Not only did God create us for His glory, but He also "chose us in Christ," "foreordained us," "freely bestowed grace upon us," "redeemed us," "forgave us," "made known his mystery to us," and "made us a heritage" unto himself TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY. By what egotistical presumption do we assume that we may worship by our own will to our own satisfaction? Why do we assume that we may choose "spiritual work" which satisfies ourselves but which has no authorization from the King? How on earth do we reason that we may establish our own lifestyles which conform to the god of this world and at the same time please the God who created us to glorify Him? And on what basis can we believe that we can be saved by some means other than total compliance with the terms of salvation set down in the gospel of Jesus Christ? Surely we are not so naive nor stupid that having thoughtfully considered this Divine Communiqué, we should exalt ourselves above that which God intended.



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## WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

(Rom. 4:3)

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### THE ELECT LADY

**QUESTION:** *The second epistle of John was written to the elect lady and her children. Who was the elect lady? Was she the church or some sister in the Lord?*

**ANSWER:** It is not possible to say with certainty who the lady was—whether the church or an actual woman. It is my persuasion that John is addressing a church under the figure of a woman.

The Bible depicts the church in several places as a woman. John wrote, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1). This woman is repeatedly mentioned in Rev. 12. The beloved apostle John further writes in apocalyptic imagery, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:9-10).

Paul wrote that the Corinthian church had been espoused to Christ as a bride to her husband (2 Cor. 11:2), and Peter said, "She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you" (1 Pet. 5:13, ASV). The King James Version has, "The Church that is at Babylon, elected together with you." If the church at Babylon could have been likened to a lady, "elect" like the churches to whom Peter was writing (1 Pet. 1:1-2), the "elect lady" of 2 John could well be a local church to whom John wrote.

In the Old Testament Israel was personified as a woman. She was spoken of as "the daughter of Zion" (Isa. 52:2), married (Isa. 54:4, 5; Jer. 2:2), a mother (Isa. 54:lff) and a widow (Isa. 54:4; Lam. 1:1). This same figure is carried over into the New Testament in reference to the church.

But if the "lady" was a local church, who were "her children?" Do not the children compose the church? Yes, but the "lady" would be the church collectively and the "children" would be the church distributely or separately. Matthew 13:38 refers to "children of the kingdom." The kingdom, collectively, as a whole, comprises all of the redeemed, but separately or individually, children of the kingdom.

In Hebrews 12:23 we read of "the general assembly and church of the firstborn." "Firstborn" is plural in the Greek, meaning "firstborn ones." The general assembly (the church) is collective, but the firstborn ones are the

children of it. John stated, "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). The "woman" is the church and "her seed" are her children.

Jeremiah 31:5 states that "Rachel (nation of Israel) wept for her children." Rachel is the nation, collectively, while the children are Israel, separately. Daniel 12:1 refers to Israel as a people and children of thy people. Hosea 4:6 addresses Israel as a people with children.

We conclude, therefore, that the "lady" of 2 John could very well be the church and "her children" the individual members. In other words, the "lady" would be the church collectively and "her children" the church, distributively. Her elect sister (v. 13) would be a neighboring congregation and her sister's children (v. 13) would be its members.

Having established that the "lady" could scripturally and logically be used as a figure for the church, I suggest further some plausible reasons why the church is addressed rather than an individual.

(1) The general character of the epistle is such that affects a church more so than an individual.

(2) The language in vv. 1-3 suits a congregation better than an individual.

(3) Verse 5, with its clear reference to the Lord's "new commandment" given to His disciples, suggests a church, perhaps, rather than an individual.

(4) The substance of vv. 6, 8, 10, 12 is clearly not addressed to physical children, but to those who have reached the age of spiritual maturity.

(5) The message of vv. 7-11 about treatment of itinerant false teachers is more likely to have been addressed to a congregation than to a single home, though it is certainly applicable to a family or an individual.

(6) The more decisive objection that the letter was written to an individual is that the "elect lady" is addressed sometimes in the singular and sometimes in the plural. The singular occurs in vv. 4, 5 and 13; and the plural occurs in vv. 6, 8, 10, 12. It seems to me that an individual would not be so addressed.

\* \* \* \* \*


### JESUS BREATHED ON THEM

**QUESTION:** *What is meant in John 20:22 where it says that Jesus "breathed on them," and then said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost?"*

**ANSWER:** Thayer states "where Jesus, after the manner of the Hebrew prophets, expresses by the symbolic act of breathing upon the apostles the communication of the Holy Spirit to them" (*Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 209). The breathing transferred nothing from Jesus to the apostles, but only symbolically foreshadowed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles at Pentecost. There is no indication that any gift of the Spirit was imparted to the apostles when Jesus appeared to them between His resurrection and ascension. They were told to tarry in Jerusalem until they be endued with power from on high (Lk. 24:49; cf. Acts 1:4, 5, 8; 2:1-4).



Receiving the Spirit in John 20:22 was to be in conjunction with the remitting and retaining of sins in John 20:23. The Spirit would teach them all things (Jn. 14:26), guide them into all truth (Jn. 16:13) and convict the world of sin (Jn. 16:8). The apostles would bind and loose (Matt. 16:19; 18:20) heaven's will through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The conditions of forgiveness are set forth after the Holy Spirit, i.e., His power, is received by the apostles in Acts 2. Cf. Acts 2:36-38. Here, and subsequent thereto, sins were remitted and retained by whether the gospel was obeyed or not.



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## BREAD OF LIFE

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



*Herschel E. Patton*

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## PROBLEMS OF BREAKERS OF THE BREAD OF LIFE—(2)

(We are studying the problems (perils) of preachers of the Word, suggested by Paul in 2 Cor. 11:23-29. A former article dealt with the problem of persecution and the problem of "In Journeys Often".)

### The Problem Of False Brethren

It is a sad fact that many perils of preachers do not come from the heathen, or world, but from "brethren". Paul had serious problems from Judaizers (Acts 21:20-21, 27-30; 2 Cor. 10:3-11, 15; Phil. 1:15-18). John and others had a problem with Diotrophes (3 Jno. 9-10), and there are still many Diotropheses among brethren today. Other brethren, though not a Diotrophes, often are jealous of, or become peaved at the preacher and begin to gossip, make cutting remarks, slander, "prating against" that one. Everyone "who would live godly in Christ Jesus" will have problems of this nature. It is to be dealt with by rebuke, forgiveness (Lk. 17:3), doing good to, praying for, and manifesting love for them (Matt. 5:44).

Brethren sometimes invent or espouse false doctrine, causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine divinely revealed (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:1-4). Paul warned the Ephesian elders "even of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). Some may want to "set apart their brother" because of different private opinions (Rom. 14). Scripture is very clear in pointing out what should be done with those causing such problems. It takes knowledge, courage, patience, kindness, coupled with prayer, to properly deal with such problems.

### The Problem Of Finances

The apostle Paul knew what it was to be "in hunger and thirst"; to be in want and to abound. Sometimes he suffered because brethren wouldn't, couldn't or lacked opportunity to send to his necessities. Dedicated preachers have generally suffered much, practicing great self-denial, because of a lack of support, especially in days past. Thanks be unto God that most brethren today have a better understanding of supporting preachers, what the Bible teaches (1 Cor. 9:4, 7-14) and what the needs are, so that most are adequately supported.

However, many still have a problem because of various reasons. Maybe the brethren are stingy with their support, conditions or circumstances arise that demand more, or some great loss has placed them in debt. Think of that evangelist who has support promised for a work in some foreign country (Africa, China, Germany, etc.) and after leaving the sources of support and establishing himself in his chosen field, he begins to get letters from his supporters saying, "we can no longer send" because we have decided to build, take on some other project, or maybe no reason at all is given!

Some preachers may bring on themselves financial problems by mismanagement. Regardless of the reason, or reasons, every breaker of the bread of life is likely to face this problem at times. It may be resolved by increased support, the preacher "makes some tents" on the side, his wife gets a job, or maybe better planning and management. Whatever is done to solve the problem, should be done so as not to jeopardize the main work of sounding out the Word—saving souls. Brethren could contribute much to solving this problem by understanding the needs of an affluent society (cost of housing, automobiles, food, clothing, educating children, books, etc.) and support accordingly. If they are unwilling to pay "that much" they should be sympathetic and non-critical of the preacher's efforts to meet the problem with other legitimate means.

#### **The Problem Of Concern**

Besides all the other perils Paul faced, he mentioned is "care of all the churches that cometh upon me daily" and asked "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" Every dedicated, faithful preacher is greatly concerned about the brethren where he preaches or where he has gone preaching the Word. Their problems, sorrows, tragedies, spiritual conditions, etc. concern him and often become his own. These have become so numerous and burdensome to some preachers that their health, physically and mentally, is threatened, and sometimes destroyed.

Some preachers, in an effort to help brethren, (turn them from a course that they know is destructive, or lead them in a good way that they are reluctant to go) being unsuccessful, become so upset, disappointed, and sometimes angry, that they do and say things that hurt more than help, as well as injure themselves emotionally and physically. This "concern", good and right within itself, can become a destructive problem. It must be tempered with patience, moderation, understanding, and much prayer.

The problems connected with preaching the Word or breaking the bread of life should not cause one to refrain from this work. There is great reward in facing and enduring these problems. Paul said, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

**READ YOUR BIBLE TODAY**

## **SIMPLICITY IN CHRIST**

*P. J. Casbolt*

P.O. Box 1487  
Chiefland, FL 32626



### **JEREMIAH 50:7**

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Pr. 25:11). Surely the words of the prophet Jeremiah in the passage cited fall into that category praised by Solomon. "All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, even the Lord, the hope of their fathers" (Jer. 50:7).

This verse is typical of inspiration, showing how much higher the ways and thoughts of God are above those of men; how much deeper is divine wisdom compared to the shallow verbosity of men. Since the underlying theme of this column is simplicity, we will use Jeremiah 50:7 to illustrate that theme. I pray that preachers and all others will be more encouraged to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11).

This statement from Jeremiah illustrates the dependability of divine prophecy (Josh. 23:13; Jer. 25:11,12); it shows that God is capable of "declaring the end from the beginning," in this case the punishment of Israel by Babylon (Isa. 46:9-11). Still, the false prophets of Premillennialism want us to doubt God's ability to foresee a political problem and His ability to execute His will. And, having attempted to cast doubt upon God's prophetic ability through His prophets, the false prophet expects us to have confidence in the prophetic failures of men!

Jeremiah 50:7 also adds credence to the Bible principle of God ruling in the kingdom of men (Dan. 5:21), for God not only charted the course of Babylon, a heathen nation, but also the courses of Israel and Judah. And, with the ultimate punishment of Babylon and the return of God's people to Jerusalem after seventy years, we see that God does not reckon time as does man, nor is God influenced by man's impatience in His divine timetable (2 Pet. 3:8).

Another lesson from our text is that God's people sometimes cause the enemy to blaspheme (Rom. 2:24). Babylon and other heathen nations knew that Israel was sinning "against the Lord." And, the fact that God punished Babylon illustrates that the Gentiles were accountable to God, and could not escape His wrath just because they were not signatory to the law of Moses (Rom. 2:14, 15). Some today think that they can escape the wrath of God by not submitting themselves



to the law of Christ, claiming that it has no jurisdiction over them (1 Cor. 9:21; Acts 17:30, 31).

Another false notion destroyed by Jer. 50:7 is the persistent, perennial "hypocrite" argument—that one is justified in his or her sin because someone else is a hypocrite. Babylon tried to use this dodge, but it didn't work with God. And, in addition, we see in this passage the "let us do evil that good may come" philosophy. Babylon claimed she was doing a good deed by meeting out punishment to a disobedient Israel. The principle of hardened hearts and the possibility of apostasy are seen in this verse, as well as returning to God's favor through repentance.

I do not claim to have exhausted the storehouse of truth and wisdom contained in Jer. 50:7. On the contrary, I know that I have not. I also know that there are literally hundreds of such passages in the Bible just waiting to be tapped for the unlimited source of spiritual energy which they hold.

Some preachers will waste hours, months, and years looking for new sermon material—in the wrong places. I have known them to start and promote chain letters in order to get a few sermon outlines. Some may be captivated by the mysterious, the profound, the sensational. The sooner we get into the word of God, stay in it, and stay out of worldly wisdom, the better off we will be.

## PRECEPTS AND PERCEPTIONS

*James R. Cope*  
301 Green Castle  
Temple Terrace, FL 33617



### THIS BLESSING CAN BE YOURS!

He has baptized many more people at 11 PM than at 11 AM—and 6 PM on Sundays.

The physical setting for his teaching is usually a breakfast table with an open Bible or Bibles easily available to both teacher and prospect. On the table are a few sheets of writing paper, a pencil or pen and at hand is a stack of denominational books—creeds, catechisms, manual, discipline, prayer book, and perhaps a few other uninspired works.

If you are disposed to see and hear a demonstration of truly interesting and effective teaching in this man's particular field of expertise—the simple New Testament story of "the first principles" of the gospel, you should see and hear his methods of converting people in their own homes "the same hour of the night" he instructs them.

If you desire to see and hear a teacher who preaches and a preacher who teaches so effectively that a ten-year old child can follow every point and if you want to

catch afire with a zeal to reach honest truth-seeking souls, give yourself a treat by hearing this man.

The teacher is not a Demosthenes. He is no popular orator. He speaks rapidly, clearly and convincingly. He sometimes splits infinitives, dangles participles and, occasionally uses a singular noun with a plural verb—(Don't we all?)—even though he holds a Ph.D. in mathematics. As a teacher of honest hearts he never ridicules yet never compromises. God's will is both his seed and his sword, religious error his foe, kindness his manner. He wears a subdued smile all the while he speaks, often chuckling as he talks. He is well versed in his material, speaks rapidly and unhesitatingly. He hates sin in every form but loves the sinner. He moves his listeners by his sincere confidence that the Bible is God's word, that the spiritual body of Christ is composed of sinners saved by God's grace only as they believe and obey the gospel expression of that grace. Yes, you will be blessed to let this man tell you how, when and where you can convert people "the same hour of the night".

Having sat with rapt attention through his lessons on how he does this work I said to this brother, "If I had the money and you had the time I would support you in your travel to visit every church in the world that would open its meeting house doors to your five lesson series." He can often do it all between Friday and Sunday evenings.

This brother, now a couple of years short of fifty, is optimistic and confident when he leaves his own house for a one-on-one study appointment in another's house. It is not uncommon for him to go by the meeting house, turn on lights and see that the baptistry is ready. He expects to use it before returning to his own house the same night!

If you want to be "turned on" to the "know how" of reaching lost souls in a "one-on-one" study situation and you want those with whom you regularly worship to share such a heart-warming and spiritually stimulating experience the brethren with whom you regularly worship will not make a mistake by contacting Charles Goodall, 8701 North 34th Street, Tampa, Florida 33604. His evening and week-end phone number is (813) 988-2861. You are "in for" a spiritual uplift relatively few Christians have experienced. "Try it. You'll like it!"

Note: Our brother does not know what I have written about him.

### SCOPES II THE GREAT DEBATE

by

Louisiana State Senator **BILL KEITH**

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## THE INGREDIENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL GOSPEL MEETING

**Bobby L. Graham**  
**1820 Epworth Dr., N.E.**  
**Huntsville, AL 35811**

In the tenth chapter of Acts, as a result of God's purpose to "gather together in one all things in Christ" and to "reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross," there occurred one of the most important gatherings of all time. It was a meeting planned in the precincts of heaven at the highest level of the divine kingdom. Its importance is seen in the introduction of the gospel of Christ to Gentiles, but its significance extends to other considerations that will become clear in this study.

The convergence of the principle characters in the sea-coast town of Caesarea resulted from the providential working of God in bringing about a series of events—the angel's appearance to Cornelius in a vision, God's clarification of His will to Peter in another vision, and Peter's summons to Caesarea by the delegation from Cornelius (Acts 10:1-23).

"And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends" (Acts 10:24).

After Cornelius explained some of the events leading to Peter's arrival, he then introduced the apostle to a tailor-made audience, "Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all things commanded you by God" (Acts 10:33).

### Recognition Of God's Providence

Peter said "Therefore we are all present. . . ." In this very word of summary, he alluded to the series of events wrought of God to make possible the reception of the gospel by these first Gentiles. We do not here discount the importance of Cornelius' godwardness, Peter's willingness to go to teach, or the human instrumentality involved in this case. Nor do we stress the role of the miraculous as a model for future conversions. In this case both miracle and free will combined to achieve the purpose of God, with God's providence making use of both elements. The miraculous element was useful only under the arrangement of miraculous measures, which God planned to have a definite duration to serve as definite purpose (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Heb. 1:3, 4). Although similar conversions occur today as a result of divine providence, we must understand that the miraculous element is missing. Honest hearts will gain opportunities to hear the gospel, as happened in the cases of Cornelius and the Ethiopian treasurer. Whenever the saving gospel of Christ is proclaimed to sinful people, we should understand that such is the consequence of

God's providence.

### Accountable People

In Peter's statement the "we" refers to individuals capable of understanding and responding to the gospel. Such is necessarily implied in this context: (1) They heard; (2) they were charged to fear God and work righteousness; (3) they were called upon to believe in Christ to receive remission of their sins; (4) they were commanded to be baptized. Surely this picture does not portray innocent children, incapable of the mental and intellectual activities of these people.

Personal accountability is underscored throughout the preaching of Peter and the response of the Gentiles. The accountability of each person is such that "each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). Parents will not give account of their children, nor children for their parents. Neither the faithfulness nor the wretchedness of one person shall be considered in respect to the judgment of another. When children of God are mightily impressed with their own accountability and that of others, they will work diligently to persuade men to consider the gospel of Christ. There is no thought so sobering as that of my certain appearance before the judge of all the earth.

### Present Before God

All people live in the presence of God at all times. "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13). In another sense Christians come into God's presence in worship as they draw near to Him. It was the evident purpose of Jehovah to make Moses aware of his being in the divine presence in a special sense when He instructed the man to remove his shoes, as he was "on holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). All who live in the presence of God during life and appear in His presence in worship will make yet another appearance before God in the final judgment: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ \_\_\_\_" (2 Cor. 5:10).

When people understand that they live in the presence of God, with no thought or act or motive being hidden, and that they shall render their own account in His presence on the last day, they will be motivated to live before Him in an acceptable manner. It is the dismissing of this thought from their minds in an effort to eliminate a troubling conscience that produces practical atheists. When accountable individuals hear the gospel, they do so in God's presence. How they hear will determine what they will hear on that last day in His presence.

### All

Peter said that all of the people were present before God. When the gospel is being presented, how concerned are we that all be invited and urged to hear it? How diligent are we to contact those who never heard it, those who have failed to obey it, and those who have departed from it? What urgency do we Christians feel and demonstrate in the interest of lost souls? Oh, for the zeal of Christ who wept over lost ones! May God hasten

the day when we watch for the slightest indication of interest from the lost, as did the prodigal's father, so that we might encourage that interest. Shepherds are needed who will go find the lost and straying sheep. Let us never be content to "have a meeting, "invite some prominent teacher, tell neighboring churches about it, and then wonder why the lost are not being saved! Such limited vision, well paid preachers, and dependence upon other Christians to "fill the building" will not impress God with our interest in seeking the lost.

### Present To Hear

Those present with Cornelius knew why they were there. They had not come to see and be seen, to socialize, to placate insistent neighbors, or to pass time on a night of boring television programs. No, they were present to hear all that God had commanded Peter to teach.

Observe that these people were not selective in their hearing. Their purpose was to hear "all things commanded you by God." They were not trying to eliminate the unappealing, the controversial, or the condemning parts of Peter's preaching. They wanted it all. It is imperative that each accountable person be willing to consider all of God's will.

Notice also that these people were purposeful in their hearing. They heard to obey, as we can learn from their response to the command of baptism (v. 48). Only when people hear to obey the Lord do they hear properly (Jas. 1:21-25). Only when they believe it to be divine in origin do they welcome it, allowing it to effectively work in them through faith (1 Thes. 2:13).

The only appeal that Christians can properly make to others whom they hope to interest in the gospel is one spiritual in nature. The only motive that can properly lead people to be present for gospel preaching is a spiritual one.

Successful gospel meetings, like that one in Acts 10, always are the result of a recognition of God's providence, the presence of all accountable people possible, and an eagerness to hear "wonderful words of life." Those of us responsible for planning such efforts, encouraging other to attend them, or participating in them in one way or another would do well to take these matters into account.

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**JESUS TO BE BORN IN JERUSALEM**—"And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem...." (Alma 7:10).

(NOTE: "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king...." (Matt. 2:1).

**CHRISTIANS 73 YEARS BEFORE CHRIST**—"And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come." (Alma 46:15).

(NOTE: Luke wrote in the New Testament: "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

**THREE DAYS OF DARKNESS AT CHRIST'S DEATH**—".. and there shall be no light upon the face of this land even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead" (Helaman 14:20).

(NOTE: Matthew wrote in the New Testament: "Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land" (Matthew 27:45).

**ABOMINABLE CHURCH FIRST MENTIONED**—"Behold the foundation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God . . ." (1 Nephi 13:5—Dated between 600 B.C. and 592 B.C.)

**CHURCH ESTABLISHED ABOUT 147 B.C.**—"And they were called the church of God, or the church of Christ, from that time forward. And it came to pass that whatsoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to the church" (Mosiah 18:17). (NOTE: The Book of Mormon has the church established before Christ was born, and baptism being practiced before John the Baptizer was born.)

**THE WORD "BIBLE" USED 559 B.C.**—"Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?" (2 Nephi 29:6).

(NOTE: The writer of the Book of Mormon expected to have the Bible called to his attention, as he touted the B. of M. The term "Bible" did not come into general use until the 5th century. A.D.)

**BOOK OF MORMON, AN IMPERFECT RECORD**—

"... and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record." (Mormon 9:33).

**BOOK OF MORMON WRITTEN IN CHARACTERS OF "REFORMED EGYPTIAN"**—"And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian. . ." (Mormon 9:22).

(NOTE: One of the "three witnesses" to the Book of Mormon, made a trip to New York City, and there contacted a Professor Charles Anthon, who reportedly stated that the sample of hieroglyphics that had been sketched from the 'golden plates' was 'reformed Egyptian'. Only, no linguist before or since is aware of 'reformed Egyptian'.)

**JESUS AS REDEEMER IN 545 B.C.**—" . . . I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell" (2 Nephi 33:6).

(NOTE: Jesus became our Redeemer at his death and resurrection in 33 A.D. Yet in 545 B.C., the Book of Mormon uses "hath redeemed" (past tense) as if it had already happened at that early date!)

**JESUS IS BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON**—"Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son" (Ether 3:14).

(NOTE: Christ was on earth, but God spoke from heaven. "This is My beloved Son" (See Matt. 3:17; 17:5; and 2 Pet. 1:17).

**BIBLE DOES NOT CONTAIN "ALL MY WORDS"** — "Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written" (2 Nephi 29:10).

(NOTE: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed: For he that biddeth him Godspeed is a partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11).

**WRITING UPON A RENT' IN A GARMENT**—"And when Moroni had said these words, he went forth among the people, waving the rent of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had wrote upon the rent;.. ." (Alma 46:19).

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**IS CONSCIENCE A SAFE GUIDE  
IN RELIGION?**

**IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE SINCERE  
AND YET BE WRONG?**

**David Pratte  
7021 Omaha Ct.  
Ft. Wayne, IN 46804**

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Frequently religious people say, "Just let your conscience be your guide." or "It doesn't matter what you believe or what church you attend as long as you worship God sincerely." Are these ideas really true?

Conscience can be defined as that part of the mind which distinguishes whether or not a person's actions harmonize with his beliefs. It is that inner voice that approves when you do what you believe to be right, or that makes you feel guilty when you do what you believe to be wrong.

Without question, Christians must live sincerely with a clear conscience. It is always wrong to violate your conscience (Rom. 14:23; Acts 24:16). But is having a clear conscience the only thing necessary to be pleasing to God? Can we be sure we will receive eternal life just because we are sincere, or is more required? Please consider the following evidence.

**I. IF CONSCIENCE IS A SAFE GUIDE, THEN RE-LIGION MUST BE THE ONLY AREA OF LIFE WHERE IT IS!**

In all areas of life that we know of, it is possible to be sincere and act in good conscience and yet be wrong and suffer tragic consequences.

In traveling, a person in all good conscience and sincerity can make a wrong turn and go in a wrong direction. And he still ends up in the wrong place in spite of his sincerity. What if he insists, "I didn't mean to make a wrong turn and I really thought I was right, would that make him right? No, he becomes right only when he learns his mistake and corrects his direction.

In medicine, people have taken wrong treatments in all good conscience sincerely thinking they were right. Maybe the doctor or the pharmacist made a mistake, or maybe the patient took pills from the wrong bottle. But the wrong medication taken accidentally will have the same effect on the body as if it had been taken deliberately.

A relative once visited us and when she went to brush her teeth, she squeezed the paste on her brush and started brushing—until she realized she had gotten our daughter's tube of diaper rash medication instead of toothpaste! Another friend thought he was spraying on underarm deodorant, till he realized it was spray starch instead! They acted in all good conscience and sincerity, but they were still wrong and they suffered the consequences.

The story is told of two trains that collided head-on

because they were traveling in opposite directions on the same track. With his dying words, one engineer handed a piece of paper to a bystander and said, "This will show I was on the track I was told to take." He had acted in all good conscience and sincerity, thinking he was right. Be he and many passengers on his train died in spite of his sincerity.

In all areas of life, a person can be wrong even when he sincerely thinks he is right. Why should we expect religion to be any different?

**II. IF CONSCIENCE IS A SAFE GUIDE, THEN THE BIBLE WOULD BE WORTHLESS.**

The Bible instructs men how to live for God and know right from wrong. But if conscience is a safe guide, then why not just ignore the Bible and follow our conscience? If it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere, then it would not matter whether or not you believe the Bible. You could believe anything else, as long as you were sincere!

But the problem is that the Bible contradicts all this, for it plainly says that we must know and obey the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17—The scriptures instruct us and provide us to all good works.

Psalms 119:105—God's word is a light to our path.

Romans 1:16—The gospel is God's power to save men.

John 12:48—Jesus' words will judge us.

Now read Matthew 7:21-23. These people were completely sincere—they believed in Jesus as Lord, they thought they were right, and they were surprised when Jesus was not pleased with them. But their sincerity was not enough. They were rejected. What was lacking? They had to do the will of the Father—which is revealed in the Bible.

If conscience is a safe guide, then the Bible would be unnecessary. But following the Bible is essential; therefore, simply being sincere and having a good conscience must not be enough.

**III. IF CONSCIENCE IS A SAFE GUIDE, THEN HUMAN AUTHORITY WOULD BE AS GOOD AS DIVINE AUTHORITY.**

If it does not matter what we believe as long as we are sincere, then it would not matter whether we believe what God revealed or what man invented. If a person sincerely accepted man-made doctrines, he would be as well off as the person who believe what God revealed. But the Bible clearly contradicts this idea. It says we must follow God's will, not man's ideas.

Isaiah 55:8, 9—God's ways are not man's ways, but His thoughts are higher than ours. That is why we need revelation from God in order to know how to please Him.

Jeremiah 10:23—It is not in man to direct his steps.

Matthew 15:9—Following human doctrine makes our worship empty or worthless.

Galatians 1:8, 9—Those who teach other gospels are cursed.

2 John 9—Whoever fails to abide in Jesus' teaching, does not have God.

Proverbs 14:12—A way may really seem right to people (we may be sincere), yet it leads to death!

2 Corinthians 10:18—Not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends. We may think we are right, yet God may still not approve our lives.

When you think about it, the whole concept of just following your conscience, simply amounts to following a human standard—your own human conscience becomes your standard. Many oriental religions (such as forms of Hinduism) teach that truth is inherent in the heart of man, so to learn God's will you simply search the inner recesses of your mind. Some professing Christians have adopted a similar idea by saying God will accept your service as long as you follow the dictates of your inner man (conscience or sincerely-held beliefs). The Bible, however, denies this, for it clearly shows that man cannot know truth by searching within himself; rather, he needs a revelation from outside himself—from the God who made him.

**IV. IF CONSCIENCE IS A SAFE GUIDE, THEN FALSE AND DECEITFUL DOCTRINE WOULD BE AS GOOD AS TRUTH.**

If it does not matter what you believe as long as you are sincere, then a lie, sincerely believed, would be just as good as accepting truth. There are many people who sincerely believe in false religions, or in no religion—are they all acceptable? There are sincere atheists, Moslems, Hindus, Jews, Catholics, Mormons, Protestants, etc. If sincerity and good conscience are all it takes, then these people are all right.

But the Bible warns that, to be saved, we must follow the truth in religion.

Proverbs 23:23—Buy the truth and sell it not

John 8:31, 32—To be free from sin, know the truth.

John 4:23, 24—For God to accept our worship, we need not only a right spirit, but also the truth, (cf. Jude 3).

1 Peter 1:22—We purify our souls by obeying truth.

Clearly, we must follow truth, not error, to be saved.

In fact, the Bible often warns us to make sure we are not deceived into following false teaching.

Matthew 7:15—Beware of false prophets who are wolves in sheep's clothing.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15—There are false apostles, deceitful workers, who, like Satan, pretend to be angels of light and ministers of righteousness.

1 Timothy 4:1-3—The Spirit expressly warns that some will fall away from truth and follow lies instead.

1 John 4:1—Believe not every spirit because many false prophets are in the world. (See also 2 Pet. chapter 2; Rom. 16:17, 18; 2 Tim. 4:2-4; 1 Tim. 2:14).

Please notice that, while the false teacher himself may or may not be sincere, the people he deceives may definitely be sincere. A deceived person is a person who really believes something is true even though it is not true. Such a person would be sincere and have a good conscience. If this is all that matters, why all the warnings against error and deceit?

In fact, the Bible expressly tells about a man who was

deceived by false teaching. He was sincere and had a good conscience. But he was still lost. This man was Saul of Tarsus. Saul was a devoted Jew who rejected Jesus as the Savior and he persecuted Christians. Note:

Acts 23:1—He did this in "all good conscience."

Acts 26:9—He really believed he ought to oppose Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:13-15—Yet in doing this, he was still condemned as "the chief of sinners." Clearly, people can be lost even though they are sincere and have a clear conscience. Saul was saved only when he learned the truth and obeyed it (Acts 22:1-16).

Only truth saves. Error condemns. But people can and often do follow error sincerely and in good conscience believing it to be true. Therefore, good conscience and sincerity alone are not enough. One must also search the scriptures to know the truth (Acts 17:11).

#### **V. IF CONSCIENCE IS A SAFE GUIDE, THEN IGNORANCE WOULD BE AS GOOD AS KNOWLEDGE.**

If it does not matter what one believes as long as he is sincere, then no one needs to bother to learn the truth or to teach the truth to others. In fact, if sincere ignorance is a valid excuse, then we are better off being ignorant! It would be dangerous to learn or teach the truth, for someone who learns it might refuse to obey it and be lost (since they would be violating their conscience).

Yet the Bible clearly demands that we all learn God's will and teach it to others.

1 Timothy 2:4—God wants all men to know the truth.

Mark 16:15—Preach the gospel to every creature.

John 8:32—Jesus' followers should know the truth.

Acts 17:11—Bereans were noble for searching the Scriptures. (See also Psa. 1:2; 119:47, 48, 97-99).

1 Peter 2:2—We should long for God's word like a baby longs for milk. (See also 2 Tim. 2:15; Josh. 1:8; Deut. 6:6-9; Heb. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:2).

If all we have to do is follow our conscience, then why is it so important to learn God's word and teach others? In fact, the Bible plainly teaches that ignorance is not an excuse for disobeying God.

Leviticus 5:17—A person who violated God's law was still guilty, even if he did not know it.

Hosea 4:6—God's people were destroyed (not excused) for lack of knowledge.

Luke 12:47, 48—One who disobeys his master's will, even if he did not know it, is still beaten—yes, with only a few stripes, but still he is beaten.

Romans 10:1-3—Jews were zealous religious people. But they were ignorant of God's way and established their own instead. As a result, they needed salvation. Ignorance was not an excuse.

Acts 17:23, 30—Athenian idolaters were ignorant of the true God. They could, therefore, have been sincere and had a good conscience. But God does not overlook this ignorance. He demands repentance. (See also Matt. 22:29; Acts 3:14-17; 13:27; 1 Cor. 4:3, 4; Eph. 4:18)

One of the main reasons people argue that we will be saved simply by sincerely following our conscience, is so

they can justify their loved ones who disobey God's will out of ignorance. God's word, however, teaches that, whenever we disobey God's will, we sin whether we are aware of it or not. Instead of trying to excuse such people, we should try to teach them so they will no longer be ignorant!

#### **VI. IF CONSCIENCE IS A SAFE GUIDE, THEN DIVISION WOULD BE AS GOOD AS UNITY.**

Another reason people argue that sincere people of all beliefs will be saved, is so they can justify people of different beliefs who clearly contradict one another. But the Bible condemns division and demands unity.

John 17:20, 21—Jesus prayed for all who believe in Him to be one as He and His Father are one.

1 Cor. 1:10-13—There should be no division among us. Christ is not divided, so neither should His followers be.

Galatians 5:19-21—Those who are guilty of causing strife and faction will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 4:3-6—We should strive for unity based on one body (the church—1:22, 23) and one faith, just as there is only one God. (cf. 1 Cor. 12:20).

If conscience were a safe guide, then sincere people would be safe in spite of their divisions. Yet the Bible clearly shows that division is not safe at all. Therefore, conscience is not a safe guide.

#### **Conclusion**

Your conscience is like a clock. It is not enough just for it to be working right. It must also be set right or it will not tell you the right time. So your conscience only tells you whether or not you are doing what you believe to be right. If you follow your beliefs, your conscience will not bother you. But if your beliefs are contrary to God's will, you will still be wrong (just like following a clock that is set wrong). A person, for example, may sincerely believe the doctrines of Hinduism, Judaism, or any other false religion, and he can follow those doctrines in all good conscience. But he will still be disobeying God.

The solution to the problem is to diligently study the Bible and obey only what it teaches, without any human doctrines. Then your conscience will be "set" right, and when you follow it your life will be right, (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-7; 3:9).

What does God's word say you should sincerely do to receive eternal life?

Hear the gospel—Romans 10:17; Acts 17:11

Believe it—Romans 1:16; Mark 16:16.

Repent of sin—Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9.

Confess Christ—Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37.

Be baptized for the forgiveness of sins—Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3, 4.

Live a faithful life—1 Corinthians 15:58; Matthew 6:33; Rom. 12-1, 2; 2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1.

**WHEN YOU MOVE—Please allow two months for change of address notices. We have a cut-off date for changes each month. *Thanks for your help.***



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## THERE'S STILL TREES

**Stanley W. Adams  
P.O. Box 698  
Lake Jackson, TX 77566**

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I am certain that everyone has heard, from the mouths of children, some innocent statements which are full of sage wisdom. We have three sons and they are a joy to be around and are always coming up with things which make us think.

I was talking with my middle child, who just turned 4, about being thankful for the blessings we have. I was afraid that he was growing to expect all of the toys and gadgets he has, as the normal manner of life. I was talking with him about this subject, and he was telling me he loved me because of all the clothes he has and his toys and his bunk beds, etc. I asked him if he would still love me if he were unable to have all those things and he said yes. I then asked him why he would still love me if I could not buy him things, and his reply was: "Well, Daddy, there's still trees!" I immediately hugged him and told him how proud I was of him and he ran off to play, little knowing that he had taught his Daddy a valuable lesson.

I at times am much like my son. I gauge happiness by the material things of life and not so much by the natural things which God has given us. I do not believe that I am alone in this. We tend to judge our happiness on the amount of things we have and not on the real substances of life.

I cannot think when was the last time I really gave any thought to a tree. The beauties of God's creation go unnoticed so often by those of us who claim to love Him so much. We become so enamoured with the trappings of the materialism of this world that we fail to realize that God has provided us a vast storehouse of pleasures to be enjoyed. When was the last time you really took time to appreciate the simple pleasures of this life, with your family? While I realize that we must not become as those who worship the creation, instead of the Creator, I do think that we have lost sight of the many simple pleasures which make life so rich and meaningful.

We too often equate love and happiness, with what we have and are able to amass. Anyone can provide things for his own, but it takes time and love to provide yourself and to teach appreciation for the many natural things God has provided. Let us look for a time at some things we have a material concept of:

**SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATIONS**—What thoughts does this bring to mind? To many it means a congregation which has a nice building, with padded pews, a paved parking lot, and air conditioning, with plenty of room. To others it means having members who

are prestigious, while to others it means a congregation which keeps peace at any price. These are content to go along any old way as long as the "boat is not rocked". They become dull and lifeless, while considering themselves to be "on the move". I get the impression from many brethren, that a congregation is not pleasing to God unless it has a building. We have made the arguments for years, that it would be all right to meet in a rented place, or under the trees, and that the place we meet is not as important as what is done there. If the congregation, where you attend, met in a rented hall, or under the trees, would you still attend there? Have you ever shunned worshipping with a congregation, on a regular basis, simply because they did not have the facilities that a more prosperous group had? If so, may we ask, "What is your concept of serving God?"

**SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS**—To those who are in the dating ages, "What gauge do you use to determine a successful relationship?" Do you look for the wealthiest, most popular person, to date: Do you judge people on the basis of appearance alone? Often times the people we admire so much are the most inwardly unhappy of all. They do not know the simple joys of life. They are unable to find what true happiness and stability consists of. They are given everything and appreciate nothing, because they have never been taught to labor for the things they possess. They take their parents for granted, their teachers, and they will take you for granted, also, if you are unfortunate enough to choose them as partners. Look for substance in your relationships.

Husbands and wives also need to understand that often the most precious thing that can be given is time. Talking and being together is often time longed for by one or both partners in marriage. Some give one another everything but time. It is past time for marriage partners to realize that the TV. can stay off, the dishes can wait, and the world won't end if we take time for one another.

**SUCCESSFUL SERVICE TO GOD**—In Colossians 3:23, we are told "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men." We should be trying to please God and not impress men. I am afraid that many are not so much concerned with whether truth is victorious, as they are whether they will be mentioned in the historical accounts of the church. A very wise man, when asked what he thought made great men, replied: "They never entertain, aspire to, nor realize their own greatness." Those who are trying to make a name for themselves, at the expense of Truth are headed for disappointment. Humble service and dedicated desire to serve no matter what the cost, is what God desires of all of us. One humble servant, when approached about his prejudiced attitude toward black brethren, and shown by the scriptures where he was wrong, replied, "Well, it will take some getting used to, but if that is what God wants, then that is what I am gonna do."

How reliant are we upon the Lord? Do you trust in uncertain riches, and place undo importance upon the material? Can you remember when people really loved to attend services and would support gospel meetings

and had little regard for how much time was taken, or how comfortable the pews were? If we are not careful, we are going to be quickly on the way to taking the heart out of serving God and consequently assassinate our zeal for service. Some of the most memorable times and most successful times that congregations have enjoyed, was when they did not have so much, materially, and they realized that in spite of all the problems and discomfort, "there's still trees", and a loving God who made them as well as us.

### POET'S CORNER

Brown leaves tumbling  
in the air! Brown  
leaves flying  
everywhere!

Leaves held captive  
throughout the summer's green,  
Now are free to wander  
on the autumn scene.

Tumbling & twirling  
up, up out of sight— Now  
the unchained prisoners  
have taken flight!

So it is with mortals  
throughout this earthly life:  
Our souls are kept imprisoned  
in tents of pain and strife

Until death's icy fingers  
release our captive souls And  
we are free to fly away  
towards our Heavenly goal!

—Betty Tope

**DON'T FORGET TO PRAY!**

## 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*

**L. E. SLOAN**, Brandon MS—On September 15, 1986, I lost my good wife of 44 years. Mary Sloan died on that day in a Houston, Texas hospital following by-pass heart surgery. After all efforts and procedures known to modern medical science were employed, she yielded her spirit to the grim reaper and departed to be with the Lord.

The funeral was held on September 17 in Goodlettsville, TN. Many friends and faithful brethren came from many places. Music took the form of congregational singing directed by Frank Fox of Millersville, TN. Ed Byers, a long-time friend and dear brother, read from Psalm 23 and directed our thoughts in a beautiful prayer. James Hahn, a dear friend of the family for many years, gave the funeral address. He began by reminiscing of old times and associations with the Sloan family, giving quotations from Mary Sloan which he remembered from the late 1950's. Then he devoted the remainder of the address to the living, giving timely admonition to all.

The Sloan family would like to thank everyone for their expressions of sympathy, kindness and concern in whatever form it came. Our burden is great and our heart is heavy, but "we sorrow not as others who have no hope."

**BERT G. ENOSTACION**, #2 Estrada Apt., Ortega St., San Fernando, La Union 0501, Philippines—I am now publishing an 8 page, monthly paper called **SPEAKING THE TRUTH**. It contains teaching articles to edify brethren here and will carry a small news column to encourage brethren with what is going on elsewhere. At present we are only able to publish 500 of these a month.

### PRISONER BAPTIZED AFTER LONG DELAY

**PATRICK L. GAMPP**, 54400 Memorial Drive, Apt. 23-N, Stone Mountain, GA 30083—Victor Amashta was baptized on August 29, 1986. He is a prisoner in the Cobb County jail in Marietta, GA and will likely be deported to Columbia when his sentence is completed. I had

met him before he was arrested and convicted and he remembered me and made contact. On May 19, Barney Keith, who was with us at Eastside in a meeting, and I went to see Victor in jail and studied with him for almost two hours after which he decided he wanted to be baptized. It was to take 15 weeks before we could baptize him. We were hindered by various officials of the Douglas County jail. Eventually we were to contact various officials in the United States Marshall's office, Victor's attorney, Judge Robert L. Vining and Senator Mack Mattingly, among others, before the matter could be resolved. He has continued to study and shows much growth. He still has two and a half years remaining to be served with the state of Georgia before he will be deported to Columbia. He needs the prayers and encouragement of faithful Christians. Could you write him? Victor Amashta, c/o Cobb County Jail, P.O. Box 649, Marietta, GA 30090-9650. (The preceding was condensed from a most interesting letter from brother Gampp. We have known of many instances now in which jail or prison officials, aided and abetted by denominational chaplains who oppose God's plan of salvation, have interfered with prisoners obeying the gospel. Brother Gampp even offered to buy and set up a portable baptistery and was refused. He spent countless hours and money of his own to secure this man's right to be baptized into Christ.—Editor).

**EFRAIN F. PEREZ**, Casilla 1317, Valparaiso, Chile—A report from this brother contains a picture of brother Perez along with 14 other men who are studying with him in a preacher training course at Puente Alto congregation. He is also conducting two other courses in other places. One was baptized Sept. 28 at Quilpue congregation.

### DEBATE

The Shenandoah church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas has invited Jack Holt of Stanley, LA to debate Mac Deaver of Clarksville, TX on

the limited benevolence issue. The Shenandoah church will be holding a lecture series on "Liberalism" concurrently with the debate, and will be endorsing Mac. Jack will be endorsed by the West Avenue church. The discussion will take place on Monday, February 16, 1987 between 7 and 9 P.M. and on Tuesday, Feb. 17, between 1:30 and 3:30 P.M.

#### NEW WORK IN FAYETTEVILLE, NC

**JOHN GRAHAM**, 7002 Lamure Dr., Fayetteville, NC 29301—We are starting a work in Fayetteville, a city of over 50,000 which has no sound church within 30 miles. Our present meeting place is 5322 Yadkin Road. We meet Sunday mornings at 9:30 and 10:30, Sunday evenings at 6:30 and Tuesdays for Bible study at 7:30 P.M. We are known as the North Fayetteville Church of Christ. Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base are nearby. The area offers excellent potential for the Lord's work. If you know someone in the area who should be contacted, please contact me at the above address or phone (919) 488-5296; or contact Tom Dickerson, 2437 Torcross, Fayetteville, NC 28304—phone (919) 483-5723.

#### OAK PEWS AVAILABLE

The Mooresville church of Christ in Mooresville, IN has 13 solid oak pews they no longer need. They have been used in class rooms that now have individual desks for the students. The pews are curved in style and range in length from seven feet, eight inches to ten feet, five inches. Each one is about two to three inches longer than the one in front of it. They were designed for a semicircular auditorium. Any church that can use them and pick them up may have them at no cost. Contact the church at 720 North Indianapolis Rd., Mooresville, IN 46158. Phone (317) 831-2663 or 342-0112.

#### JAMAICA WORK

**JERRY ANGELO**, P.O. Box 7171, Klamath Falls, OR 97602—During 1986 visits to Jamaica by the writer, Willie Muse, Robert Bunting, Rodney Pitts, David Arnold and wife, Janice, daughter Mary Lee and Mildred Dark have opened many doors of opportunity. Robert Hartian and George Medley have been laboring in Catadupa without any regular source of income, until Broodmore church of Nashville, TN agreed to support Robert and Kemper Heights of Madison, TN has agreed to support George. Pray for this work right under our noses. It has been neglected far too long.

#### PREACHERS NEEDED

**METAIRIE, LOUISIANA**—A 35 member congregation in Metairie (New Orleans suburb) seeks a full-time preacher. The church is self-supporting, without elders and needs a mature preacher for full time work immediately. Contact Church of Christ, 3000 Lake Villa Dr., Metairie, LA 70002.

**DAYTON, OHIO**—The Northern Heights church in Dayton seeks a full time or part-time preacher. This is a young congregation established two years ago. Partial support is available. We are the only conservative congregation in a community of about 10,000 families. Contact Abe Martin, 5911 Bramblewood Ct., Dayton, OH 45424. Phone (513) 236-6894. Or Duane Jenkins, 926 Firwood Dr., New Carlisle, OH 45344.

#### IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

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