

SERMONS OF LIGHT

**BY
W.A. HOLLEY**

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INTRODUCTION

I represent an older generation of Gospel preachers who presented book, chapter, and verse throughout their sermons. We believe that God has a Divine Pattern for His work among men (Titus 2:7; Hebrews 8:5).

For example, Noah was not left to his own discretion with regard to the construction of the ark (Genesis 6:14-22). Moses built the Ark of the Covenant according to God's instructions (Exodus 25:10; 30:6).

Hence, we are guided by the Holy Scriptures to call Bible things by Bible names, and to do Bible things in Bible ways. We must not add or take from what God has revealed unto us in His Holy Word (Revelation 22:18,19).

I have been a student of the Bible for more than 60 years. I have read many books designed to help one to learn more about the contents of the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15). Moreover, I have toured the Holy Land where my vision, knowledge, and understanding were considerably enlarged. Accomodatively, to walk where Jesus and His apostles walked seems to have a profound effect upon one.

The purpose of this book is to help honest hearts to escape the clutches of false religion whether in the United States or foreign nations. May God's richest blessings be upon all who read this book.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

To A. T. Holley, Sr. and Mae Evans Holley was born (1911) W. A. Holley, the eldest of six children. He was born in the Liberty Hill community about 12 miles south of Oakman, Alabama. His first schooling was in a one room school, with one teacher, six grades, and one recitation bench. He continued through public school until he graduated from Walker High School. His higher education was in Freed-Hardeman College and Lamar College. David Lipscomb University presented him with a special award commending him for more than 50 years of gospel preaching.

He has written articles for the *Gospel Advocate*, *Firm Foundation*, *Gospel Light*, *Words of Truth*, and other publications. He has conducted radio programs where he taught God's truth without compromise.

In 1933 he married Johnnie Wilma Harris. This marriage continued for 56 years. He has two sons, James Donald Holley and Mark Stephen Holley, plus several grandchildren.

His aim is to continue in the faith until his Master calls him home.

A STATEMENT FROM THE PUBLISHER

Having a deep appreciation for our older gospel preachers, I thought how beneficial it would be for the church if we could print books of sermons or sermon outlines by some of these sound and respected brethren. So I contacted W. A. Holley, G. L. Mann, Alan E. Flaxman, and Marvin Rainey about supplying manuscripts. They agreed to do so. We have printed brother Mann's **Bible Centered Sermon Outlines** and now we are bringing out brother Holley's book. Brother Flaxman has sent a manuscript of sermon outlines and Marvin Rainey is preparing his. At a future time, others will also be invited to participate in this effort to honor some of our older brethren with the opportunity of leaving in printed form, for posterity, one or more of their books.

These soldiers of the cross have done a great job over the years, faithfully proclaiming the gospel of Christ. We need their preaching and teaching in permanent form for the present and future generations. I count it a great honor to be able to publish their books.

I have known of brother Holley's work for many years. He has conducted gospel meetings and has written hundreds of articles for our gospel magazines and papers. As he says, he represents the old school of giving book, chapter, and verse, in preaching and in the writing of articles. As you read these sermons, you will notice that that is a part of him, and it is a good pattern to follow.

This book is being deliberately kept to a little over 100 pages so that it can be used by World Bible School teachers and others as they send copies to their students throughout the world. We have materials on hand for several more volumes, and if you appreciate these sermons you will no doubt be looking forward to others that will follow.

We pray God's blessings on brother Holley as he continues to proclaim the message of our Lord through the pages of this book.

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How To Live The Christian Life

One must begin with a genuine conversion to Christ Jesus and his way. Conversion to Christ involves faith, repentance, confession, and baptism as taught in your Bible (*John 3:16; Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 13:3, 5; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-38*). It is impossible for one to live a Christian life if one is not a Christian. For example, one cannot live the life of a married person if he/she is not married.

The fruits of a Christian life must be apparent to all (*Titus 2:11-12*). One's entire body must be devoted to the service of Christ (*Romans 12:1-3*). It involves service to the less fortunate (*James 1:27*). We must love, not in word, but in deed and in truth (*1 John 3:17-18*). There must be no hypocrisy involved. What does this word mean? It is defined: "A feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*). All pretentiousness is outlawed by Almighty God.

We shall suggest a few guidelines which can aid you in living the Christian life—

(1) Endeavor to develop a wholesome attitude. Anyone can make a career of finding fault with everything and everybody (*Matthew 7:1-5*). Of course, others are not perfect, but neither are you! Learn to look on the bright side of life. There is far too much darkness already. One can look up and see the stars or one can look down and see the mud. It will help to possess a warm and friendly disposition. Kind and gentle words win friends and influence people. Keep a cemetery in your back yard in which to bury the faults of your friends.

(2) One needs to understand that there are some "Thou shalt nots" (*Exodus 20:1-17*). No one is living a Christian life while committing sin (*Galatians 5:19-21*). The rich young ruler asked Jesus, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" What was Jesus' answer? We read, "Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honor thy father and thy mother: and, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (*Matthew 19:16-22*). Imagine what healing would take place in our nation if these commands were honored today (*Proverbs 14:34*).

(3) Remember that there are some "Thou Shalts." Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (*Matthew 7:21*). The apostle John wrote, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they

may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (*Revelation 22:14*).

You must obey the Lord's commands to believe, repent of your sins, confess Jesus' name before men, and to be baptized in his name for remission of sins (*John 3:16; Acts 17:30-31; 8:37; 2:36-38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4*).

Following these primary commands, there are other commands addressed to children of God which must be obeyed. What are some of these? Well, the Lord requires his people to assemble upon the first day of the week (*Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 10:25*), to engage in worship as prescribed by him (*Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19*), and to follow "in spirit and in truth," as commanded by him who died for us (*John 4:23-24*).

Although there are many distractions, all Christians must work for unity, peace, and harmony of the church which Jesus Christ so dearly loves (*Ephesians 5:22-24*).

Do not sow discord (*Proverbs 6:16-19*). Honor the elders, deacons, preachers, song leaders, Bible class teachers and one another (*Romans 13:6-10*). Make certain that you set a Christian example (*I Timothy 4:12*).

(4) Learn to be loyal and faithful to God at all cost. Some elder, preacher, or other Christian may seem unworthy of your support, but keep on serving the Lord for he never changes (*Hebrews 13:8*). You can be saved if others are and you can be saved if others are not. In apostolic times there were many false teachers and profligate church members, but Paul never allowed them to turn him aside from his duties (*I Corinthians 5:1-13; II Timothy 4:10-18*).

In many places where the church of Christ exists, there are many drifters, wanderers, floaters, who are constantly going from one congregation to another, seeking perfection. Such members refuse to serve the Lord under the elder-ship, not wanting any responsibility, they become lost (?) to their duty and responsibility as Christians. Such a practice is always sinful. This scribe has lived in cities where there were many local churches and, with his own eyes, he has seen members of the church who never had a church home, always drifting from one congregation to another. Such a practice robs the church in many ways!

Jesus Christ wants his followers to be "rooted and grounded" in his will and way. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (*Ephesians 3:17*). Christians must be "grounded and settled," not drifting from pillar to post (*Colossians 1:23*). Furthermore, we are to be "rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving," wrote Paul (*Colossians 2:7*).

Any plant must grow down before it can grow up. Isaiah knew well the principles involved when he wrote, "And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward" (*Isaiah 37:31*).

Why do we have so many crybabies, whiners, complainers, fault finders, unhappy members? Can it be because of the lack of being "rooted and grounded" in the basic principles of God's holy word? Is it not time for us to grow up and begin obeying the word God has given unto us?

I Am Not Ashamed

Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the Holy angels" (*Mark 8:38*).

Paul suffered many things for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he was not ashamed of it (*II Timothy 1:12*). Onesiphorus was not ashamed of the chain worn by Paul (*vs. 16*). No one should be ashamed to wear the name, Christian (*I Peter 4:16*).

There are some things of which we should never be ashamed. Please note the following:

1) Never, never, be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (*Romans 1:16*). Thus, the gospel of Christ is the only power God uses to save believers.

God does not use dreams, visions, or experiences of so-called grace, or prayer to save the lost. There are many false gospels being preached today (*Galatians 1:6-10*). Many would be well advised to see if what they believe to be gospel truth is really and truly taught in the Holy Bible (*Acts 17:11; Isaiah 8:20*).

2) We must never be ashamed of the word of God. Throughout the centuries the Bible has had many enemies. For example, ten thousand Bibles were burned at Graez in Steiermark on August 8, 1600 by order of Ferdinand II. Again 60,000 Bibles were burned in one year, 1637, in Bohemia. These are but samples of numerous efforts to destroy the word of God. Even today there

are those who have devoted each waking moment to its destruction; and, if they cannot destroy it, they seek to discredit it. Thousands of preachers are standing in the pulpit preaching from a Bible which they do not believe. Dr. Spong, a bishop of the Episcopal Church, has said, "Is one of the reasons that our clergy do not teach the Bible rigorously to their congregations the fact that clergy ourselves have come to dismiss much of the Holy Scripture as no longer valid?" (*Birmingham News*, February 3, 1989). This same man wants to "retire this noble book to the shelves of our libraries and museums." Dear readers, never be ashamed of God's Holy Word!

3) Do not be ashamed of the Lord's church or kingdom. The Lord's church has never been popular, but many are determined through gimmicks and gadgetry to make it so. These people will bend or wrest the scriptures to attain their goals (*II Peter 3:15-16*). Others are willing and ready to ignore or sweep under the rug certain passages which stand in their way. One Birmingham area church of Christ through its leadership has said, "Women have been scapegoated throughout history in religion. The church is an instrument of man and sometimes does wicked things that do not reflect God" (*Birmingham News*, March 24, 1989). To show just how far they are willing to go, they say, "As far as we can tell, that will mark the first time that any woman has stood up in a church of Christ and given a sermon." The passage they wish to wrest is *I Timothy 2:12*. It is false to contend that "The church is an instrument of man..." Man did not establish the church (*Matthew 16:18-19*); it was established by the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, not man, possesses all authority necessary to lead the church in his way. The church as Jesus Christ established it needs no improvement!

4) We should never be ashamed of scriptural worship. This worship has been divinely authorized, and it must not be changed (*Revelation 22:18-19; Galatians 1:6-10*). The first day of the week is the Lord's day (*I Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10*). The items of worship are: participating in Bible study, in fellowship, the Lord's supper, prayers, singing, and giving of our means (*Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19; I Corinthians 16:1-2*). Human participation may be subject to improvement, but the divine side of worship cannot be improved (*John 4:23-24*). For example, the addition of a piano or organ cannot improve the Lord's prescribed worship, for the use of such instruments would be an addition (*Revelation 22:18-19*).

5) We should never be ashamed of being a Christian. "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed;

but let him glorify God on this behalf" (*I Peter 4:15-16*). How shameful for one to live a life devoted to sex addiction, to crime in all of its ramifications, drug addiction, locked away in some institution! But how wonderful to see people, young and old, living lives devoted to truth and righteousness!

Christianity, wrongly practiced, casts long, dark shadows which blind men to the truth of God Almighty. Christians are required to be examples of believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (*I Timothy 4:12*). Elders, deacons, preachers, brothers and sisters do great harm to the cause of Christ when they set sinful examples before others. Never be ashamed to set the finest example before others. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (*Titus 2:11-12*).

Dear reader, do not be ashamed of the Lord's will. Obey it today.

Some Very Popular "Lies"

God "cannot lie" (*Titus 1:2*). In fact, it is "impossible for God to lie" (*Hebrews 6:18*). All men are warned, "Glory not and lie not against the truth" (*James 3:14; John 8:32; 17:17*). "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (*I John 1:6-10*).

We want our readers to understand that the foregoing quotation was addressed to children of God—Christians—not to alien sinners (*Ephesians 2:11-22; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38, 41-42, 47*).

Contrary to many, a lie can be believed (*II Thessalonians 2:10-12*). An old prophet's lie was responsible for the unfortunate death of "a man of God" (*I Kings 13:1-18*). Actually, the truth of God can be turned into a lie (*Romans 1:25*). It is possible for one to lie, even unto God (*Acts 5:4*). The father of lies is none other than Satan himself (*John 8:44*).

What are some of the more popular lies? We shall discuss this question under two categories—

The First Category:

(A) "Join the church of your choice." Does Jesus Christ have no church? and no choice? We suggest that the following scriptures be read: *Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4-6; 5:23-32; Acts 2:47*. According to your Bible, no one ever "joined" the Lord's church!

(B) "One is saved the moment he believes." Where does your Bible so teach? Sinners are saved by a faith that obeys God's commands (*John 3:16, 36; James 2:14-26; Acts 10:34-35*). Thus **FAITH** is classified as "a work of God" (*John 6:28-29*).

(C) "Let the Lord speak peace to your soul and take the Lord as your personal Saviour." These are very popular statements, coming from the lips of many preachers; but, where does your Bible make any such statements? If you know where the Bible so teaches, please send us the scripture references. (Please read *Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-38; Romans 6:3-4, 17-18*).

(D) "Sprinkling and pouring are acceptable 'modes' of baptism." Many honest and sincere people believe this statement; but where does your Bible so teach? Baptism is an immersion in water (*Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12*).

(E) "One should be baptized because one is already saved." According to the New Testament, baptism, as commanded by Jesus, is necessary to be saved (*Mark 16:16*). *Acts 2:38* teaches that baptism is in order to be saved, "unto" (cis) or "for the remission of sins." Bible baptism is never administered "because of remission of sins," according to Holy Writ.

(F) It is asserted, "A piano or an organ is not so bad when used in the Lord's assembly." But, where does the Lord command its use? One pianist, when asked why the piano was used in their worship, replied, saying, "Because we like it." But does the **LORD** like it? He never authorized its use in Christian worship. (Cf. *Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; I Corinthians 14:15*).

The Second Category:

(A) Many excuses are really lies; we simply do not wish to face duty's demands, and so we offer excuses (*Luke 14:15-24*). One church member who had gone fishing on Sunday morning, when reminded that he should be in worship at that very hour, said "Well, if I were at home I could not attend services, because my dear wife is ill and I couldn't leave her!" It does not require much effort to manufacture excuses—they are ever available!

(B) Another says, "I know I drink; but that's not so bad; everybody else

does it too." One can rationalize almost any situation. Many try to find Biblical support for social drinking; but if there were no social drinkers, there would be no alcoholics. Social drinking is a sin before God and one reason is because it encourages others to drink. No Christian can afford to set a poor example before others (*Revelation 21:8; Galatians 5:19-21; Proverbs 23:29-35*). It is just as sinful to entice one to drink as it is to entice one to commit adultery.

(C) "Falsehood concerning absenteeism isn't so bad; it doesn't hurt anyone!" one tells himself. Satan often deceives thousands with such thoughts. Remember, God has something to say with regard to such action (*Hebrews 10:25; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10*). One sure way to destroy your interest and enthusiasm in the Lord's Cause is to simply stay away.

(D) Many contend that they "have the right to live as they please." They "can choose their own lifestyle," they aver. This includes marrying and divorcing as many times as they please. Such an attitude destroys the moral foundations upon which our nation was founded. One famous woman was expressing her concern for the future of the American home; but, at that very moment, she had been married to four men, and the one with whom she was then living, she had never married. What a bad example to set before others! We suggest that *Genesis 2:24-26; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12*, be carefully read and applied to your life.

(E) What about those church members who try to soothe their conscience, claiming they "are unable to give to support the work of the Lord's church?" (*Acts 5:1-11*). There are three New Testament words which regulate giving: Ability, prosperity, and purpose (*Acts 11:29; I Corinthians 16:2; II Corinthians 9:6-7*). Many can purchase the most expensive house, the biggest car, wear the finest clothes, and eat at the most expensive restaurants—but make token contributions to the Lord. One woman, a compulsive spender, using credit cards, ran up a bill of \$100,000, buying things she didn't really need—but had no money for the Lord's Cause! **SHAME!**

The Word of God

God works in people. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (*Philippians 2:13*). Yes, God works in men

and women! But how does he work? We shall see: "...When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (*I Thessalonians 2:13*).

In the light of the foregoing quotations, we are forced to the conclusion that God works in people through his word (*Hebrews 4:12*). God does not work in men through dreams, imaginations, sorcery, witchcraft, enchanters, astrologists, psychics, and the like. We know that thousands today believe in such; but God speaks to men through his word—only! This is the reason why you should become a student of the Holy Bible.

Gospel preachers should make certain that the people to whom we preach know that there is a **gospel preacher** among them. How sad, how tragic, it is when a "gospel preacher" finishes his sermon and some listener says, "That was a fine Baptist" or "Methodist sermon." **Gospel preachers** must show the difference between the true and the false (*Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23*). "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing..." (*I Timothy 6:3-4*).

Ezekiel was one of God's great prophets. His hearers are seen talking with each other, but they do not take his message seriously. We quote, "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice... for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (*Ezekiel 33:30-33; Ct. 2:5*). Paul taught preachers to "preach the word...in season" and "out of season"—that is, when people want it and when they do not (*II Timothy 4:1-5*). The people desperately need to know that there is a gospel preacher among them (*Cf. Ezekiel 2:5; 30-33*).

Improper Ways To Handle God's Word

(1) One can be unskilled in the use of God's word. The Hebrew writer says, "For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe" (*Hebrews 5:12-14*). To become skilled in the proper use of the word one must learn some facts about it. Careless or haphazard reading never produces the proper results. The skilled use of any weapon is a necessity (*II Timothy 2:15*).

(2) One can "wrest" or twist the scriptures. "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (*II Peter 3:16*). For example, many preachers, when they come to *Mark 16:16*, or *Acts 2:38*, or *Acts 22:16*,

or *Romans 6:3-4*, are unwilling to accept them at face-value; they torture or twist them, seeking to make them mean something else.

(3) Some make the word of God of none effect. What does this mean? Many make fun of the teaching of the Bible. Others mock, scorn, and ridicule its message, arguing that it is out of date. Some simply ignore it. To illustrate: take a glass of tea; then add a tablespoon of salt; and you have the refreshing power of your glass of tea destroyed—made of none effect. When one adds the doctrines and commandments of men to the Bible, he makes God's word of none effect (*Mark 7:6-13*).

(4) One can blaspheme the word of God (*Titus 2:5; I Timothy 6:1*). To "blaspheme" is to speak evil of. One may blaspheme God, Christ, the doctrine of God, the Church of Christ, or faithful members of the Lord's body. Men and women, boys and girls, who refuse to comply with the demands of Almighty God often also "blaspheme" the word of God (*Titus 2:1-8*). We strongly suggest that our readers turn now to the references cited and digest the thought presented.

(5) The word of God is often corrupted (*II Corinthians 2:17*). Many corrupt the word of God in order to make dishonest gain. The apostle refers to those false teachers who make merchandise of the souls of men through dishonesty and covetousness. Such preachers as Jimmy Swaggert, Oral Roberts, Jim Bakker, et. al., fall into this class (*Titus 1:11; II Peter 2:3, 14, 15; Jude 11, 16; Ezekiel 13:19*).

(6) Paul said he had "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully..." (*II Corinthians 4:2*). What does it mean "to handle the word of God deceitfully?" Well, it means "to corrupt, especially by mingling the truth of the word of God with false doctrines or notions, and so handling it deceitfully" (Vine).

(7) Some stumble at God's word. We read: "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed" (*I Peter 2:8*). Israel stumbled in regard to Jesus Christ because his teaching, his atoning death, his resurrection, his gospel regarding his kingdom, were—and are—contrary to all their ideas as to the will of God (*Romans 9:32; I Peter 2:8; Luke 2:34*). Even today, many "stumble" over God's word because of its teaching concerning Roman Catholicism, or Denominationalism!

How To Handle The Word

(1) Realize that "the seed is the word of God" (*Luke 8:11*). Seed brings forth after its own kind (*Genesis 1:11; Galatians 6:7-8*).

(2) Receive God's word "as the word of God, not as the words of men" (*I Thessalonians 2:13; Philipians 2:13*).

(3) The word of God is God's "sword" which strikes deep into men's hearts (*Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12*).

(4) The "engrafted" (implanted) "word" brings about the new birth (*James 1:18, 21-25; I Peter 1:22-25*).

(5) You should "obey" God's word (*Romans 5:1-2; 6:3-4, 17-18*).—Do it today.

The Promise Of The Messiah

In a simple manner we shall discuss a subject which, perhaps, is the most important topic in the whole Bible. We shall allow the Holy Scriptures to speak for themselves.

We shall begin with *Genesis 3:15*, which gives the first faint promise of the coming Messiah: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In the early morning of time, to the serpent these words were spoken by Almighty God.

Later, this promise was renewed to Abraham. God said, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (*Genesis 12:3; Cf. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:8*).

All of these passages were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

We have another statement of a prophetic nature by Jacob: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee"... "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Please read the entire context: *Genesis 49:8-10*). Here the reader should read *Hebrews 7:12-14; 8:4*).

As the years pass by, we come to *Numbers 24:15-17*, which should be read. We shall quote verse 10: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there cometh a Star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel..." God allows Balaam, a disloyal prophet, to foretell the coming of "a Star," "a sceptre," which was eventually fulfilled through David in the Lord Jesus Christ (*Matthew 1:1; Psalms 132:11; Isaiah 11:1*).

In the book of Deuteronomy we have another wonderful prophecy of the great "Prophet" who was to come. Moses told Israel, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee, a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (*Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19*). This passage was interpreted by Jesus and the apostles as foreshadowing the coming of the Messiah (*Acts 3:22-23; John 5:43; 12:48-49; Matthew 17:7*), thus, the "seed of woman," "Shiloh," the "Star," the "Prophet," the "Son of David," the "Servant of the Lord," all blend into one person—the Messiah.

Again, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (*Isaiah 7:14*). What does this verse mean? Does it refer to a young woman? Or to a virgin? Well, the answer is clear! An inspired commentary is found in *Matthew 1:18-25* and in *Luke 1:30-35*, which states that the prophet had in mind Mary, a "virgin," the mother of Jesus Christ.

In another place Isaiah said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from hence forth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (*Isaiah 9:6-7*). Clearly, the "Son" of this passage is to sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it. Solomon "sat upon the throne of David his father" (*I Kings 2:12*), yet at the same time Solomon "sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father..." (*I Chronicles 29:23*). Solomon also sat upon "his" (own) throne (*I Kings 1:37, 47*). Actually, there was but one throne: the throne of the Lord (Jehovah), the throne of David, and the throne of Solomon. The only reasonable conclusion rational minds can reach is that the subject of prophecy was raised up to sit on "David's throne" (*Acts 2:29-38; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 4:12-16*).

Another interesting and (in some ways) an astonishing prophecy is found in *Jeremiah 22:29-30*. The subject is Coniah and his future. We quote: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no more shall a

man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (*Jeremiah 22:29-30*). Coniah, Jeconiah, and Jehoiachin, are three names which belong to the same man (*I Chronicles 3:17-18; Matthew 1:11-12*). The lesson is: Coniah could have no son "sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." This scripture reference forever lays to rest the false doctrine that Jesus will sit upon the literal throne of David on earth and reign in Judah for a 1,000 years—in the literal city of Jerusalem!—If he did so reign on earth, God said he "shall not prosper!"

Again, "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abuse him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is: and I will give it him" (*Ezekiel 21:25-27, KJV*).

The rule of earthly Jewish kings is to cease! Sin and iniquity had been in charge long enough! The ONE to whom the prophet looked was the great Messiah—the Priest and King who now rules over his spiritual kingdom unto the end of the world (*Zechariah 6:12-13; Genesis 49:10; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:32; John 1:49; I Timothy 6:14-16*).

We sincerely urge our readers to believe and obey the truth before it is too late (*I Peter 4:17 with II Thessalonians 1:7-9*).

Are You In God's Family Or Satan's?

We earnestly ask our readers to answer the question, "Are you in God's Family, or in Satan's Family?" as honestly as possible. Let your answer be based upon the teaching of your Bible. Our appeal must always be: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (*Isaiah 8:20; Cf. Luke 16:29-31*).

Verily, God has set up his own measuring standard which determines what is right and what is wrong (*Isaiah 34:16-17*). Jesus spoke of a special relationship when he said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad" (*Matthew 12:30*). One is "against" Jesus when one rebels against his teaching (*Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 22:14*).

According to Jesus, Satan is the "father" (*John 8:44*) of the devil's chil-

dren. Moreover, "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil..." (*Matthew 13:38-39*). Jesus, addressing some unbelieving Jews, said: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it" (*John 8:44*). Satan's children possess his nature, and his desires, and seek to do his will.

One's daily life declares whether one is a child of God, or a child of the devil: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil" (*1 John 3:10*). Hence, if the children of Satan pray to their "father," they pray to the devil! Only the children of God can rightly address God as our "Father." God has no children outside his family.

In the Bible sense, one's "house" is one's **FAMILY**. For example, Joshua said, "...As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (*Joshua 24:15*). Hence, Joshua's "house" was his "family." Again: "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his **HOUSE**..." (*Hebrews 11:7*). Thus, Noah's "house" was his "family."

As strange as it may seem to some, the Lord's "family" or "house" is his church. How do we know? We read: "...That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the **HOUSE** of God, which is the **CHURCH** of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (*1 Timothy 3:15*). Those who hear, believe, and obey the truth of God, are added to the Lord's church (*Acts 2:36-38, 41-42, 47*). The Lord never makes a mistake by adding people to the wrong church! [Verily, denominationalism did not exist in the Apostolic Age!]

Ephesians 2:12-22 needs to be read. Jews and Gentiles become one in Christ: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the **HOUSEHOLD** of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (verses 19-22). To be in the "world" is to be lost; to be in Christ—in his body—his church is to be saved (*Ephesians 1:3, 22-23; 4:4-6; 5:22-25*).

The church of Christ is a "spiritual house" (*1 Peter 2:5, 9*). Jesus is head "over his own house" (*Hebrews 3:5-6*), which is the Lord's **CHURCH** (*Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:18*). Jesus is the Saviour of the body, the church (*Ephesians 5:23*). Hence, if one is to be saved, one must be in the

Lord's church. The 'non-essential' church is nowhere to be found in the Bible! One cannot be "in Christ" and "out of the church" (*Matthew 16:18-19*). The **kingdom and church**, in the passage cited, refers to the same institution.

How does one get into the Lord's church, or "family?" It is simple, indeed. One "must be born again," "born of water and of the Spirit" (*John 3:3, 5*). These two verses read as follows: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Verse 3). To explain further to Nicodemus, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (verse 5).

From these two passages we should learn that there is but one birth, with two elements: "water" and "the spirit." Both of the elements are essential to the new birth, and to entering into "the kingdom" or church.

What is the new birth? Since things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, it follows that whatever one must do to be saved (or, to obtain remission of sins), equals "being born of water and of the Spirit." When one believes, repents of his sins, confesses Jesus' name before men, and is baptized into Christ for remission of sins, one has been "born of water and of the Spirit." Jesus stated it thus: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (*Mark 16:16*). Peter answered the question: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" with these words: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (*Acts 2:37-38*).

Many preachers have worked hard to eliminate **WATER** from the new birth; but that would eliminate being "born of water," and violate the teaching of God's word (*Galatians 1:6-10; Revelation 22:18-19*). Such efforts spring from doctrinal prejudice as found in the denominational world. Denominational preachers will try any deception by artifice or subterfuge in order to conceal or evade the truth of God. Do not listen to preachers, but turn to the word of God (*Acts 17:11*).

One becomes a "new creature" "in Christ" (*II Corinthians 5:17*). How is this wonderful act accomplished? It is when one obeys the truth of God (*I Peter 1:22-25*). What is included? Faith (*Hebrews 11:6*), repentance (*Acts 17:30*), confession of Jesus' name (*Matthew 10:32-33*), and baptism in water, for remission of sins (*Acts 2:36-38*).

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil..." To which family do you belong?

Winning Souls

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (*Proverbs 11:30*).

Paul recognized his duty toward the unsaved. He wrote, "For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more" (*I Corinthians 9:19*).

Again, Paul was a debtor to all men. He, therefore, was ready to preach the gospel to the lost (*Romans 1:14-17*). Those who know the truth are obligated to share it with others less fortunate. The only power God has to save sinners is the gospel of Christ (*Romans 1:16; Mark 16:15-16*). The gospel of Christ is not a system of philosophy, nor a code of ethics. The gospel is God's voice, addressed to the human heart, which, when obeyed brings forgiveness of sins (*I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7-9*).

There are three requirements

(1) The soul-winner must be sold on the gospel as the power of God to save believers (*Romans 1:14-17*). One must know the truth, be committed to the truth and to the teaching of the New Testament, if he is to win others to Christ. It is folly to send out unskilled and unlearned "teachers" to attempt to win sinners to Christ and the church! A salesperson must know his "product" if he is to be successful in selling it.

Do your homework before you try to win others to Christ (*Hebrews 5:11-14*).

(2) One must know his prospect; not just his/her name, but know something about his/her interests. Character, education and occupation should be considered. Oftentimes this much information will open many avenues for teaching the gospel. The New Testament furnishes such information regarding the original apostles, and of Paul.

(3) The soul-winner must know why he has called at the home of his prospect. He is **NOT** making a social call, nor just **PASSING THE TIME** of day, nor to **TALK** politics, sports, etc. As quickly as possible, come to the reason for your visit. Tell the person why you are there. Be just as warm and friendly as possible. Limit the time for your study of the Bible. Don't wear out your welcome. Leave the door open so that your return for another visit will be welcomed.

The "How" Of Soul Winning

(1) The soul-winner must be a "Christian" in all that the term implies. Half-

baked, lukewarm, nominal "church-members" are sure to fail as soulwinners. Their veneer is just too apparent; their real character shows through. For example, Judas, Alexander and Demas could not have been soul winners (*Acts 1:25; II Timothy 4:10-17*). Paul gave up everything in order to be a soul winner for the Lord (*Philippians 3:3-11*).

(2) Urge the person whom you are teaching to make a commitment to the Bible as the one and only source of authority. God's word is infallible, inspired of God, and will be the standard of judgment at the last day (*II Timothy 3:15-17; John 12:48*). To do otherwise is to have no basis of agreement (*Acts 17:11; I Peter 1:22-25*). The idea that we can "take it or leave it" means that no agreement can be reached. Hence, urge Bible authority as common ground. Let the prospect know that he has the ability to read and understand the Holy Scriptures (*Ephesians 3:3-4; 5:17*).

(3) Start with the simple teaching of the Bible, such as faith, or the church, or repentance, or baptism, etc. Do not try to settle the more profound questions of the Bible, like why human suffering, and the like. As time goes on, you will gain more knowledge and then be more able to comprehend the more difficult subjects. Take a look at the sermons preached by Jesus and the apostles, and see how plain and simple and direct they are (*Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4, 17-18*).

(4) Be courteous in your approach. Call and set up an appointment; don't just "drop in." If you fail the first time, try again; don't give up! Keep on till you succeed, if possible.

(5) Use your skills to make the best possible impression for your cause. Do your homework. Know what you are trying to accomplish. Your enthusiasm and attitude will largely determine whether you succeed or fail.

(6) At the very first visit, get right to the point. Assume that the prospect wants to hear what you have to say. Explain to him/her that sinners are lost and need to be saved from sin. Tell him/her what a blessing it is to know that one's sins can be forgiven (*Acts 2:36-38, 47*). Should the person whom you are teaching seem to be difficult, it may be necessary to take a second person with you to aid you (*Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47*).

(7) Never allow yourself to be drawn into an argument. If the person whom you wish to convert is lead to criticize, let him do so; but keep your composure and stay on the subject. If momentarily removed from the subject, you should return to it just as quickly as you can.

Do not hide the truth of God, nor compromise it (*II John 9-11*). Be just as diplomatic and tactful as possible. Know your subject so well that you can turn to various Bible verses which read as you say they do. In teaching peo-

ple to become Christians, there is nothing else so powerful as the word of God (*Hebrews 4:12*). Memorize all the scriptures you plan to use and they will make you far more effective.

May God ever bless you in your work of winning souls for Christ.

Things Everybody Needs To Know

To know the truth of God should be the objective of every honest soul (*John 8:30-32; 17:17*). Truth is available, being contained in the sacred narrative. Truth can be understood, believed and obeyed (*Ephesians 3:3-4; 5:17; I Peter 1:22-25*).

The wisdom of men must not be mistaken for the truth of God (*I Corinthians 1:18-31*). The doctrines and commandments of men must be rejected outright (*Mark 7:6-13*). No one can obey the commandments of men and become a Christian. Seed always bears fruit after its own kind (*Genesis 1:11; Luke 6:44*).

Many wish to live without God and his word; but to do so is to cutoff oneself from all divine guidance (*Psalms 14:1*). We should understand that God's word is true, if **EVERYONE** believes; and that it still remains true, if **NO ONE** believes it (*Romans 3:3-4*). The veracity of God's word does not depend upon men.

What We Need To Know

(1) We need to know that the only means by which God speaks to the sons and daughters of men is through the Bible. God does not use dreams, imaginations, astrology, or feelings to communicate with men and women (*Jude 3; I Peter 1:10-12; II Peter 1:20-21; II Timothy 3:15-18*). If one abandons the Bible, he has abandoned **GOD!**

(2) We need to know that so-called "natural" religion cannot meet the needs of lost humanity. The sun, moon, stars, and the earth may indicate a designer, a builder, etc., but natural religion can never reveal the identity of him who created the heavens and the earth (*Genesis 1:1-2; Psalms 19:1-3*). If you wish to know God, open your Bible and read it.

(3) We need to know that man separated himself from God (*Isaiah 59:1-2*). "Hereditary total depravity" (Calvinism) has never been taught in the Bible. Man is not born astray; man "goes" astray (*Psalms 58:3-6*). *Psalms*

51:5 does not teach that babies are born sinners. Read this verse and you will observe that sin was on the part of the mother. The Bible says, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created till iniquity was found in thee" (*Ezekiel 28:15*). Jesus invited little children to come unto him (*Matthew 18:3; 19:14*). Would Jesus have required others to become like little children, if little children are indeed totally depraved? No person becomes a sinner until he by sinning transgresses God's law (*I John 3:4*).

(4) Satan causes man to disobey God. Satan is very powerful, but not so powerful that he cannot be "resisted" (*James 4:7; Ephesians 4:27; I Peter 5:8-9*). Satan's work is to deceive, corrupt, and lead men astray. How does he do it? He has his own "ministers" (*II Corinthians 11:13-15*), his own "doctrines" (*I Timothy 4:1-3*), and his own "synagogues" or churches (*Revelation 2:9; 3:9*). Satan's preachers are oftentimes well educated, possess wonderful personalities, and are very persuasive; but do not be deceived—read your own Bible (*Acts 17:11; Romans 16:17-18; I John 4:1*).

(5) One needs to know that God's power to save sinners is the gospel of Jesus Christ (*Romans 1:16-17*). The gospel of Christ is God's only power to save believers. Contrary to the view of some, God does not use the Holy Spirit to save sinners separate and apart from the Word of God or the gospel of Christ. Does the Holy Spirit have a part in the conversion of sinners? Indeed, he does! What is the Holy Spirit's work in converting sinners? The Holy spirit teaches, guides, admonishes, directs through the word of God or the gospel of Christ. He thus influences sinners to obey the truth of God (*II Timothy 3:15-17; James 1:18, 21; Ephesians 6:17*). Sinners must obey the truth to be saved (*Hebrews 5:8-9; I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7-9*).

(6) We need to know if possible *Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; and Luke 24:46-47*, by memory. It is a shame for Christians to go through life not knowing from memory the Lord's Great Commission. How can we teach it, if we do not know it? Other passages I recommend Christians to memorize are: *Romans 6:3-4; John 19:33-34; Acts 2:36-38; 41-42, 47; 22:16; Galatians 3:26-27*.

(7) It is not impossible to understand the word of God (*Ephesians 3:3-4; 5:17*). Countless thousands have understood it, believed it, and obeyed it. Just read the Book of Acts and you will see.

To be understood the Bible needs to be rightly divided. There are three dispensations of time: The Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. **The first two periods are no longer binding upon men.** We live under the New Testament which will continue till the world ends. The New Testament can be divided into these classifications: The four records of the gospel, Acts, the

twenty-one epistles addressed to churches and individual saints, and the Book of Revelation. Keep this in mind as you read.

(8) We need to know that the Bible is not of human origin. It is inspired of God (*II Timothy 3:15-17*). No man or set of men could write a book like the Bible. It addresses man's deepest needs, reaching the deepest recesses of his heart (*Hebrews 4:12*). It can stir man's soul, and furnish the motives and incentives which can lead man to change his life for the better. Neither mathematics, philosophy, psychiatry, nor other branches of the arts and sciences can ever, ever, ever solve man's sin problem!

Man was created in the image of God. Man needs to be reconciled to his Maker. Until that is done, man can never find peace with himself. Sins are terrible burdens which press heavily upon the human soul. Forgiveness of sin takes place in the mind of God. God will forgive your sin when you believe (*Hebrews 11:6*), repent of your sins (*Luke 13:3, 5*), confess Jesus' name before men (*Romans 10:9-10*), and when you are baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (*Acts 2:36-38*).

Now, your record is made clean; you stand before God without spot or blemish. You are a child of God! Remain faithful to the Lord, and heaven can be your eternal home (*Revelation 2:10*).

Some Questions Regarding Giving

Giving on the part of Christians for the purpose of supporting the work of the Lord is very important. If Christians do not support the church of Christ, who will? Giving on the first day of the week is commanded by Almighty God (*I Corinthians 16:1-2*). This was a special collection which shows the method used by the early church to fund her work.

To please God, Christians must give of their time, talent, and money. It requires money to aid the poor, the needy, widows and orphans (*James 2:14-17; I Timothy 5:8-16; James 1:27; Galatians 6:10*).

There are two chapters (*II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9*) devoted to this subject. These Christians had made a "promise" which Paul urged them to keep (*II Corinthians 8:10*).

WHAT ARE SOME PURPOSES OF GIVING?

(1) We must give because God has so commanded (*Matthew 7:21-23; Acts*

20:35). Here is one of the highest motives for giving: God commands it! Now read *I Corinthians 16:2*.

(2) The Christian should give as a means of his own spiritual development and growth (*Ephesians 4:11-16; II Peter 3:18*). Giving tests our spiritual progress. Are we too stingy, too parsimonious, too penurious, too miserly, to comply with the Lord's demands?

(3) Giving serves as proof of the Christian's love for God and humanity (*II Corinthians 8:3, 9, 24; John 14:21; I John 5:3*).

(4) We give to provide money for the purpose of carrying on of the Lord's work. "Know ye not that they that minister about sacred things eat of the things of the temple, and they that wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar? Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (*I Corinthians 9:13-14, A.S.V.*).

WHAT IS THE LORD'S PLAN FOR GIVING?

(1) *I Corinthians 16:2*, in the Greek, reads: "...kata main sabbatou" which, when translated, means, "every first day of the week." (Read also *Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 1:10*).

(A) Who should give? "Every one of you."

(B) What should one give? "Lay by in store."

(C) How should one give? "As he hath been prospered."

(D) Why give? "That there be no gatherings when I come..."

(E) When give? "Every first day of the week."

Other passages which should be read are *Acts 11:29* and *II Corinthians 9:6-7*. These passages use the words "ability" and "purpose." *I Corinthians 16:2* uses the word "prospered." Hence, a Christian must give as he has been prospered, according to his ability and as he purposes in his heart.

Christians are on their honor when they make their contributions each Lord's day. Are you giving to the Lord what you would not give to your President? (*Malachi 1:6-9*). If you know God's will on this subject, no man knows better than you whether you are giving as the Lord has commanded you!

THE WRONG WAY TO GIVE

(1) One must **NOT** give "grudgingly." "The grudging regret is set in contrast to cheerfulness enjoined in giving, as is the reluctance expressed in 'of necessity,' (Vina).

(2) We must **NOT** give out of "covetousness" (*II Corinthians 9:5*). The word "covetousness" in the American Standard version is rendered "extor-

tion". Vine says of this word: "...As (a matter) of extortion, i.e., a gift which betrays the giver's unwillingness to bestow what is due..." Our gifts should be prompted by love (*I John 5:3*).

WHAT IS THE TRUE SPIRIT OF GIVING?

(1) We should give **CHEERFULLY** (*II Corinthians 9:7*). Verily, "God loves a cheerful (hilarious) giver." The Greek word HILAROS, as used in the text cited, "signifies that readiness of mind, that joyousness, which is prompted to do any thing; hence, cheerful" (Vine). To be a Christian, giving is no distasteful chore; but rather, an act of great joy. Think of the difference between the giving of Barnabas, versus that of Ananias and Sapphria (*Acts 4:36-37; 5:1-11*).

(2) Christians should give **READILY, EAGERLY, ZEALOUSLY** (*II Corinthians 8:11-12*), and with a **READY MIND**. It is through giving that treasures are laid up in heaven (*Matthew 6:19-21*). Paul talks about "fruit that may abound to your account" (*Philippians 4:17*).

(3) The true spirit of giving involves **LIBERALITY** (*II Corinthians 9:11*). Generous giving should be the goal of all Christians. David did not wish to offer to God that which cost him nothing (*II Samuel 24:24*). "He that giveth, let him do it with liberality" (*Romans 12:8. A.S.V.*).

(4) Purposeless and spasmodic giving are sinful. We should plan our giving so as to accomplish the greatest good (*II Corinthians 9:7*). The church and the gospel deserve our support. All should uphold the greatest power for truth and righteousness on earth.

The Unity Of The Spirit

The unity of God's people has always been the objective of God Almighty. This was true in the Old Testament; and it is still true in the New Testament.

It has always been sinful to sow discord among brethren (*Proverbs 6:14, 16-19*). Strife, dissension, or contention for superiority has ever been contrary to God's will and way.

There was strife between the herdsmen of Lot and Abraham (*Genesis 13:7-8*). In this, Abraham was the peacemaker. Among brethren there should be no division.

Under the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, the kingdom of God continued for 120 years (See *I and II Samuel*, and *I and II Kings*). But, there arose division, as a result of which ten tribes of God's people, under the leadership of Jeroboam, established their own kingdom. From that time forward there was hostility, war, and division which was never healed. In many instances divisions once begun can never be ended. Let us beware!

Religious division is strongly condemned in the New Testament. Jesus, just before he was to be crucified, prayed unto his father, saying: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and loveth them, even as thou lovest me" (*John 17:20-23, A.S.V.*).

Our Lord recognized the importance of unity. He said, "...Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth" (*Luke 11:17, A.S.V.*) What Jesus said here is still true! Absolutely true!

The church of Christ was established in A.D. 33 upon the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (*Acts 2:1-4, 36-38, 41-42, 47; Colossians 1:13-14*). Was the church united then? Indeed it was: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common..." (*Acts 2:44; Cf. 4:32-35*). *Acts 5:12* says, "...And they were all with one accord..."

What we have just read could never be said of denominationalism. Denominationalism is inherently sinful. Why is the foregoing statement true? Simply because denominationalism is built upon division—a church for every man's choice—as IF Jesus has no church and no choice. The truth is: Jesus added to his church centuries before denominationalism ever came into existence. In fact, Satan is back of all denominationalism, for he is the god of division. Factually, one can be a New Testament Christian and never be a member of any (or all) denominational churches, as were those who became members of the church in the first century!

It is sinful for members of the church to split up into warring groups, We quote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (*I Corinthians 1:10*).

But in the church at Corinth there was division over preachers. "For it hath

been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (*I Corinthians 1:11-13*). Hence, Christians are not to follow preachers, but we must follow Christ.

To follow preachers is to be "carnal" and to "walk as men" (*I Corinthians 3:1-6*). We honor gospel preachers, but sometimes they go astray, or get lost along the way (*I Timothy 1:19-20; II Timothy 2:16-18; 4:10, 14-17*). Follow Jesus Christ who never goes wrong! One should follow a preacher only if he follows the Lord (*I Corinthians 11:1*). Dear Christian friends, be on the lookout for those who make it their business to cause division. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (*Romans 16:17-18*).

It is the duty of Christians to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of pence" (*Ephesians 4:3-6*). This work can be accomplished by practicing lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, ever living up to the high standard of Christian deportment (*Ephesians 4:1-3*). Without these traits, the unity of the Spirit cannot be achieved.

What are the planks of the unity of the Spirit?

There is...

- One body—the church, *Ephesians 1:22-23*.
- One hope—life eternal in the world to come, *Mark 10:30*.
- One Spirit—the Holy Spirit, *I Corinthians 12:4*.
- One Lord Jesus Christ—*I Corinthians 8:6*.
- One faith—*Jude 3; Romans 10:17*.
- One baptism—*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38*.
- One God—*Galatians 3:26-29*.

Please study these facts carefully. There are seven "ones" here. One cannot have the 'church of one's choice' any more than one can have the Spirit, or Lord, or God of his choice. One cannot have the faith of one's choice any more than the God of his choice. Dear reader, believe, and obey the truth today.

What Will You Leave Behind?

From time immemorial men and women have been leaving this old world. It is not a question of whether we shall leave, but when we shall depart.

There is an appointment which we all must keep (*Hebrews 9:27*). A great Judgment Day is coming (*Acts 17:30-31; Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10-11*). We will enter eternity prepared or unprepared (*Amos 4:12; John 14:1-6*). Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

Since we are responsible people, responsible for the acts we perform, for the words we speak, and for the choices we make, we should be willing to do some serious thinking (*Deuteronomy 30:15, 19; Joshua 24:15*). In one sense it is possible for one to influence others here on earth even after one is gone into the next world (*Hebrews 11:4*). Even though Abel has been dead for centuries, he still speaks to modern man. So can you speak even after you leave this world.

Dear reader, what will you leave behind? We shall raise a few questions:

(1) Will you leave behind a life filled with sinfulness? A life which was devoted to lawlessness and disobedience to God and man? It is written of Jehoram, a king of Judah, that he "departed without being desired" (*II Chronicles 21:20*). Jehoiakim is described as dying without anyone to lament his memory. We quote: "But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shedding innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah, my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (*Jeremiah 22:17-19*). Here is a man of high rank who died in disgrace, receiving no honorable burial at all.

There is another view which can be laid before our eyes. Jereboam was so wicked that only one of his children—a young child—would receive an honorable burial (*I Kings 14:10-13*). Parents, what examples do you set before your children? (*Ephesians 6:1-4*).

(2) All should leave behind the power of a good example. This is exactly what Jesus did for us. "... Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (*I Peter 2:20-25*). Our friends, our neighbors, our brethren in the Lord need our good examples (*Matthew 5:16*). It is in this manner we let our light shine before men. In fact, others can "see" us after we are gone.

(3) Dear readers, will you leave behind you a genuine, devoted Christian family? Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (*II Peter 2:5*). This preacher was instrumental in saving his own family—saving himself and seven others (*I Peter: 3:20-21*). Was Noah a failure? Not at all! We would do well if we can manage to save our own families! Pray that you can do as well as Noah did! One should not become so interested in saving others, that he forgets to save himself! We urge all fathers and mothers to become Christians today (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 15:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:36-38; Romans 6:3-4*).

(4) Church leaders, will you leave behind some well-trained leaders of the Lord's church who will be able to carry on the work of the Lord? Listen to Paul: "And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witness, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (*II Timothy 2:2*). Elders should understand that they will need successors; they should go about seeing that there are trained men who can carry on the Lord's church after they have retired or died (*I Timothy 3:7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:14*). Leaders of God's people are always necessary. Work, therefore, to have qualified men ready to assume their duty and responsibility.

(5) Friends, neighbors, will you leave behind words of wisdom and instruction planted in the minds of your children and grandchildren which can sustain them in a crisis? This is seed-planting time! Each is building meaningful memories now. Will your children remember some word of advice, or instruction, or suggestion after your departure? How often do you recall what your father or mother said?

(6) Is the world made better as a result of your having lived here? Or, is it made worse? Is the church of the Lord in your community made better because of your efforts and your life? Or, has the church been made worse? Have you sown discord? Have you sown peace and harmony? How will you be remembered? as a sorehead? a grouch? a fault-finder? a peacemaker? (*Proverbs 6:16-19; Matthew 5:9; Philipians 1:27; I Corinthians 1:10*).

Joshua left a wonderful example. "And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of Jehovah that he had wrought for Israel" (*Joshua 24:31*). These wonderful words are incorporated in the Holy Bible for our learning (*Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11*). Hence, Joshua must have been held in high esteem at the time of his death, being 110 years of age (*Joshua 24:29*).

(7) If you have never as yet obeyed the gospel of Christ, you may be leaving behind your last opportunity to hear and obey the truth of God (*I Peter*

4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7-9). There is no second chance for those who are dead. "Purgatory" is the figment of the imagination; it has no support in your Bible. In a figure, Solomon stated it in these words: "...If a tree falls toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (*Ecclesiastes 11:3*).

"Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me"

by W.A. Holley

We sincerely suggest that *Exodus 20:1-17* be read. These verses condemn idolatry in all its forms. For some reason, man has always resisted God's will and way (*Romans 1:18-32*). These verses describe the condition of the Gentile nations without God. Read them and weep!

God commanded the Israelites, when they entered Canaan, to stamp out all traces of idolatry: "Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures" ("their figured stones"—Albright), "and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down their high places" (*Numbers 33:52*).

Although such was God's command, it was not many years until Israel was engaged in idol worship. One has but to read the Old Testament to learn these facts. Many kings were instrumental in leading Israel to worship idols.

For example, many Hebrews worshiped "other gods:" Asherd, the goddess of the high places; Baal, the goddess of fertility; and Molock, the goddess of sacrifice, where children were burned. There were many others.

The Greeks also had their gods: Bacchus, the god of wine; Apollo, the god of sunlight, music and poetry; and Venus, the goddess of natural productivity, and later the goddess of love and beauty. Many other gods could be mentioned, but these will suffice.

We raise a question: Are we as far removed from idols as we might think? I think not. We should remember that idols are very corrupting, because one tends to become like the objects which one worships.

What are some of the gods of our modern age? Well, there is the god of technology. Countless thousands seem to think that the modern computer, and modern science, can solve all our modern problems. But such can never be the case. Why? Because man has a spirit and a conscience, and thus he has a sin

problem. No computer can solve this problem. The gospel is God's power to solve this problem (*Romans 1:16; Mark 16:15-16*). If one gains the world and loses his soul, he has lost everything (*Matthew 16:26*).

The god of materialism is everywhere apparent. Thousands upon thousands worship their material possessions: Cars, houses, money, stocks and bonds, expensive clothing and jewelry, and the like. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (*Matthew 6:24*). "Mammon" is a word which refers to material riches. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of wealth he may possess (*Luke 12:13-21*). Money is valuable, but cannot purchase everything (*Ecclesiastes 8:8; I Timothy 6:6-18*). Hence, "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil."

The god of self is another idol worshiped by many. Do not fall in love with self. It is good to think well of yourself, but do not carry it to an extreme (*Romans 12:1-3*. Man needs to know that he is totally helpless without God, Jesus Christ, the Lord's church, and the Bible (*John 15:1-7*). A Greek fable tells of Narcissus, who fell in love with his image as reflected in a fountain. For shame! No man is truly free until he recognizes his dependence upon his Maker (*John 8:32; Romans 1:18 ff.*).

Not only so, but there is a sex-cult in our nation today. In fact, sex has become "big business" to millions of people. In magazines, on TV, in the newspapers, on billboards, sex is paraded and extolled at terrific price to the general public. To some there is nothing but sex! The god of sex is being worshiped each day. Special lifestyles promote sex, whether it is contrary to Biblical teaching or not (*Genesis 2:24-26; Matthew 19:3-9*). Efforts are being made to expose as much of the human body as possible. In fact, we are not very far from rank, stark nudity! (*I Timothy 2:9-15*). Both male and female bodies are being used to sell beer, wine, automobiles, houses and land. We have lost all sense of shame: Homosexual and lesbian relationships are being accepted as "normal" relationships today; but God's word strongly condemns all such (*Genesis 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-11*).

The god of sports is another idol worshiped by the millions. Some church members do not mind missing the Lord's assembly, often traveling hundreds of miles and spending hundreds of dollars, to attend sports events. Is there no priority? Does the Lord say nothing about putting his kingdom first (*Matthew 6:33*)? My brethren, these things ought not so to be! Heaven is far more important than any sports event! Do not lead others astray (*I Corinthians 10:31-33*).

Others worship the god of power. Their aim is to control men at almost any cost. Some will lie, steal, and misrepresent truth, using any deceptive method to gain power over others. This is one reason we have so much fraud in our elections. The object is to win—no matter what the cost, even if one has to crucify others in the process! In the New Testament, Diotrefes was such a man (*III John 9-11*). Read this passage and see.

The Devil is another idol whom many worship. Jesus rejected Satan's overtures, refusing to worship him. Satan showed Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Satan urged Jesus to fall down and worship him; but Jesus refused, saying "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (*Matthew 4:1-11*). Satan has his own churches (*Revelation 2:9; 3:9*), his own doctrines (*I Timothy 4:1-3*), and his own ministers (preachers) (*II Corinthians 11:13-15*). Behind devil worship is atheism in all of its blackness and darkness. An album by Venom contains these words:

"We are possessed by all that's evil;
the death of God we demand.

We spit at the virgin you worship,
and sit at Lord Satan's left hand."

How shameful! how disgraceful! Young people do not need to hear such Rock Music. It is an attack on Christ, the church, and on the Holy Bible.

Living Well

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew" (turn away from) "evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue" (pursue) "it" (*I Peter 3:8-12*).

Obviously, many in our society do not "love life;" for, each year, countless thousands end up as suicides. Surely there is a better way for one to live life.

Living life is serious business. One author said, "One life—a little gleam of time between two eternities—no second chance forever more." Theodore Roosevelt said: "The poorest way to face life is with a sneer." Mary Rhinehart said: "A little work, a little sleep, a little love, and it's over."

One should not merely exist, but live a life of usefulness, thus contributing something of value to earth's citizens. Are we making the world in which we

live better for ourselves and for others?

How can we go about making life worth living? We shall offer these suggestions—

(1) Pursue a useful and serviceable work. Adam was required to “keep and dress” the trees of the garden, even though he was in Paradise (*Genesis 2:15*). All should learn to work with their own hands; for, if they will not work, they should not eat (*I Thessalonians 4:11; II Thessalonians 3:10*). If we follow Jesus, we will not wish to be ministered unto, but to minister unto others (*Matthew 20:28*). Hence, we should not look upon work as drudgery, but as a means of serving others.

(2) To live well, we must have some one to love. The two greatest commands in the Holy Scripture is to love God, and to love our neighbor (*Matthew 22:34-40*). We suggest that *Luke 10:25-37* be read that our readers may see a demonstration of the principle involved.

We, therefore, should love God, the Bible, the church, the brethren, and our families. Anything short of this objective cannot gain the approbation of God!

(3) To live well one must learn to accept himself. Limitations are bound upon us all. Not all of us can be President of the United States. We cannot all be Generals, or Admirals; but we can be all that we can be! One old man said, “I know that I’m not very much, but I am what I am.” Daniel Webster refused to be nominated for the office of Vice-President on two occasions; but in each instance, had he been willing to take second place, he from that office would have become President of the United States!

Fanny Crosby possessed a great handicap, but she did not permit it to destroy her. She said, “I am the happiest person! If I had not been deprived of my sight, I would not have had a good education and a good memory.” We all do not have the same talents and the same opportunities (*Matthew 25:14-30*). Someone has said, “Ability plus opportunity equals responsibility.” Do not grumble about your lot in life. Take what you have—and make the best of it (*Judges 7:21*). We urge our readers to do their best with what they have, where they are, and for as long as they may live.

(4) Learn well the art of self-examination. Most of us are experts at criticizing **others**, but we should begin with **ourselves**. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (*II Corinthians 13:5*).

Sometimes we are so concerned (or, critical) about others, we forget ourselves. Listen to Jesus Christ: “And why beholdest thou the mote” (a tiny speck) “that is in thy brother’s eye, but considereth not the beam” (crossie)

"that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (*Matthew 7:3-5*).

(5) To live well one must cultivate an interest in the welfare of others. "Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (*Philippians 2:3-4, A.S.V.*). We must learn to bear our own burdens and, also, the burdens of others (*Galatians 6:1-6*). One person, after reading the story of the Good Samaritan was asked what he had learned from it? His reply was, "When I get into trouble my neighbor should help me." He, therefore, thought only of himself! "Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (*Romans 12:13-16*).

(6) Learn to stick to the job till it is done. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (*Ecclesiastes 9:10*). No preparation for future life is possible after one is dead. One can overcome failure, if one will try, try, again and again.

(7) To live well one must leave an abundance of room in one's life for spiritual activity. One who leaves God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the Lord's church, out of his life is certain to be a failure! In Christ Jesus are "all spiritual blessings" (*Ephesians 1:3*). How can one partake of these blessings? The answer is simple: By faith repent of your sins, confess the name of Jesus, and then be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (*John 3:16; Luke 13:3; Acts 8:37; Romans 6:3-4*).

Is The Church Of Christ Essential To One's Salvation?

When we speak of "the church" we speak of the church which our readers can find in their Bibles. We have no reference to modern denominationalism. Denominational churches came into existence long after God's divine revelation to man had been closed. One must turn to the encyclopedias for information about them.

We freely grant that all denominational churches are non-essential. But the New Testament "church" is not a detour off the way to heaven. Jesus Christ would not have built, loved, shed his blood for, a "non-essential" church (*Matthew 16:18-19; Ephesians 5:23-27; Acts 20:28*). If sinners can be saved apart from the apostolic church, then Jesus shed his precious blood in vain (*Acts 20:28; Colossians 1:13-14, 18, 24*).

Herewith we shall present some scriptural principles for your serious consideration:

(1) God Almighty has placed salvation "in Zion." "I will bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion..." (*Isaiah 46:13*). Where does the prophet say God will place salvation? "In Zion," we are told. But what is "Zion?" Well, according to *Hebrews 12:22-23*, "Zion" is "the church" which Jesus established. Hence, salvation is in the church of Christ (*Romans 16:16*).

(2) The word "church" comes from the Greek word *Ekklessia*, which means "the called out from the world." The whole world is lost (*1 John 5:19*). To be saved, one must be called out of the world into Christ, into his body, where salvation is located.

How does God "call" sinners? It is "by the gospel" (*II Thessalonians 2:13-14*). All who respond to this call become a part of "the one body" (*Colossians 3:15*). The "one body" is the Lord's church (*Colossians 1:18, 24*). Hence, if one is not in the church, he is not among the called, and is not saved.

(3) The "church" of Christ is the "body" of Christ (*Ephesians 1:22-23*). Jesus is the Saviour of the body, the church (*Ephesians 5:23*). Only the "church" of Christ is subject to him (*Ephesians 5:24*). Sinners are "reconciled" or saved, in one body—the church (*Ephesians 2:13-20*). Thus, if one is not in the "church" which is Christ's "body," one has no connection or union with Christ who is the "head" of the body (*Colossians 1:18*). Again: if one is not in the "body" of Christ, the "church" of Christ, one is not under the direc-

tion or rule of Jesus Christ (*Ephesians 1:22-23*). Jesus is not the "head" of a body that is not his!

(4) The church is the "house" of God (*I Timothy 3:15*). According to the Bible one's "house" is one's "family" (*Joshua 24:15; Hebrews 11:7*). The Lord's "house" is a "spiritual house" (*I Peter 2:5*). One's "house" or "family" includes all the children born into it (*John 3:3, 5; I Peter 1:22-23*). God has no children outside his family. We must conclude therefore that if a person is not in the household of God, the church, he remains not a child of God, but an alien, a foreigner, and unsaved (*Ephesians 2:19*).

(5) Christ is the foundation of the church (*I Corinthians 3:11*). The "church" was not built upon Peter, but upon the bed-rock truth that Peter confessed: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Matthew 16:16*). It is impossible to build on Christ and not be a part of the super-structure—the "church" of Christ. The church covers the entire rock. One cannot build on Christ, the foundation, on the outside of the "church." To build on some other foundation is to build on the sand (*Matthew 7:24-27*).

(6) The "church" is the "kingdom" of God on earth (*Matthew 16:18-19*). The Lord's kingdom includes all who are not under the power of darkness (*Colossians 1:13-14*). The "kingdom" of God includes all who have been cleansed by Jesus' blood, all who have been "born again...born of water and of the Spirit" (*John 3:3, 5; Acts 2:36-38*). Hence, if one is not a citizen of God's "kingdom"—the "church"—he remains still in the devil's kingdom (*John 8:44*).

(7) The "church" is the sheep-fold of God. "There shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (*John 10:16*). But the "fold" or flock is the "church" (*Acts 20:28*). "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..." (*John 10:9*). Thus, if one is not in the "fold" or the "church," one is not saved. Indeed, the church of Christ is essential.

(8) The Lord adds to his "church" such as should be saved: "...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (*Acts 2:47*). They were saved in being added, and added in being saved. (There is no joining the church of one's choice here.) Not one soul was saved out of the "church."

(9) The "church" is the "bride" of Christ (*Ephesians 5:23-27*). *Romans 7:4* teaches that Christians are "married" to Christ. We quote, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even unto him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." If one is not in the "church," one has no relationship with Christ. Only the "bride," the "church," can inherit the marvelous blessings of Jesus Christ, the Groom (*I Peter 1:4; Galatians 3:26-*

29). One day the Groom will be coming back after his "bride" (*Ephesians* 5:25-27, 32), and no others!

How does one become a member of the New Testament church? Believe the word of God, repent of all sins, confess Jesus' name before men, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (*John* 3:16; *Acts* 2:36-38; *Romans* 10:9-10; *Romans* 6:3-4). The Lord adds all the saved to his church (*Acts* 2:47).

These words are written for those who sincerely seek for truth.

What Is Baptism?

The subject of baptism is an important one. Much is said in the Bible about this controversial subject. We sincerely urge our readers to lay aside all prejudice and preconceived notions on the subject of baptism. Permit the Bible to speak for itself (*Isaiah* 8:20; *Acts* 17:11). Actually, this is the only way to settle the question posed. Human judgments and human creeds can only "muddy the waters."

WHAT IS THE ACTION OF BAPTISM?

In the New Testament, the Greek word, baptizo, occurs in its verb form 80 times. In its noun form, baptisma, it is found 22 times. These words always **mean immersion**—never, NEVER, **sprinkling** or **pouring**.

In *Leviticus* 14:15-16 we read: "And the priest shall take some of the log of oil, and **pour**" (**cheo**, to cause to flow in a continuous stream), "it into the palm of his own left hand: and the priest shall dip" (**immerse**, submerge, bury) "his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall **sprinkle**" (**raino**, to cause to scatter in drops) "of the oil with his finger seven times before the Lord." Here God demonstrated the difference between the three words: pour, dip and sprinkle.

Although many intelligent people try to promote the theory that there are three scriptural 'modes' of baptism (pouring, sprinkling, and immersion), there is no Biblical support for such a contention.

Your Bible, dear reader, expressly teaches that baptism is a burial. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are BURIED with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the father, even so

we also should walk in newness of life" (*Romans 6:3-4*). Thus, dear reader, if language means anything, baptism is a burial.

Colossians 2:12 reads as follows: "**Buried** with him in baptism, wherein also ye are **risen** with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here again, baptism is said to be a burial, an immersion,—not sprinkling nor pouring by any stretch of the imagination!

The Bible says nothing about sprinkling or pouring as being baptism. The truth is: sprinkling and pouring are sprinkling and pouring, and nothing else! John Wesley, commenting on *Romans 6:4* and *Colossians 2:12*, wrote, "Buried with him"—alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion."

The word **baptizo** was never TRANSLATED. The Greek word **baptizo** (with its related forms) was **anglicized**, which means that it was given an English ending. In the King James Bible in 1611, it was thus **anglicized**, not translated. Why was this done? Because the translators did not want to condemn the practice of the Church of England—sprinkling or pouring—by putting the correct word—immersion—into the text, where it really belongs.

How would the Bible read, if the words **baptizo**, **baptisma**, and **baptistes** were truly translated? We shall give our readers a few examples.

In those days came John the Immerser preaching..." (*Matthew 3:1*). "John did immerse in the wilderness..." (*Mark 1:4*). "And John also was immersing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were immersed" (*John 3:23*).

We shall cite a few other passages: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (*Matthew 28:19*). Another plain passage, "He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved..." (*Mark 16:16*). "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (*Acts 2:38*).

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be immersed, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (*Acts 22:16*). "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been immersed into Christ have put on Christ" (*Galatians 3:26-27*).

WHAT BAPTISM REQUIRES

Bible baptism requires "much water" (*John 3:23*), coming to the water, going down into the water, and coming up out of the water (*Acts 8:36-39*). Baptism requires a burial, a planting in water, and a resurrection (*Romans 6:4-5*; *Colossians 2:12*). None of these conditions can be met by sprinkling or pouring! Hence, neither sprinkling nor pouring can be Bible baptism!

IS BAPTISM NECESSARY?

Is baptism essential to a sinner's salvation? Indeed it is! We have but to look seriously at *Mark 16:16*; *Acts 2:36-38*; *22:16*; *Romans 6:3-4*; *Galatians 3:26-27*; or *1 Peter 3:20-21* to see that God has commanded sinners to believe, repent of their sins, to confess Jesus' name before men, and to be baptized "for the remission of sins" in the name of Jesus Christ. These are demands of the Lord; they are not the demands of the writer of this article.

Acts of the Apostles is a book of conversions. There are ten cases of conversions recorded here. In each case of conversion in this book, the preacher is always present, the gospel is always preached, and those converted to Christ were always baptized. No one was ever baptized because he 'was already saved;' but, the truth is, the sinner was baptized "for," "in order to, (unto, EIS, Greek preposition) have his sins remitted" (*Mark 16:16*; *Acts 2:38*; *22:16*; *1 Peter 3:20-21*).

How To Live Life

As long as we remain on earth, we must live somehow—whether profitable or unprofitable. We are here; and we are going to be here; so, why not try for the very best life possible?

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it" (*1 Peter 3:10-11, A.S.V.*).

All Christians are to strive earnestly that they "may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (*1 Timothy 2:1-3*).

Someone has said the whole drama of life consists in four basic "I wants:"

"I want to live.

I want to feel important.

I want a mate.

I want a variety of change."

While these "wants" may not be expressed in the finest manner, they do seem to represent some basic longings of the human heart.

Verily, all that we say here is based upon the predication that those who wish to live, properly, have heard and obeyed the Lord's gospel (*1 Peter 4:17*; *II Thessalonians 1:7-9*). One cannot really and truly "live" without having

Jesus Christ as his constant companion (*John 14:1-6, 15, 21-23; 15:14*).

What are some rules that should govern the Christian's life? We shall note

(1) Endeavor to be happy. Jesus taught his disciples the basic rules of happiness (*Matthew 5:1-12*). If you are not happy, why are you unhappy? One should never confuse "happiness" with "pleasure" (*Isaiah 5:20-24*).

To be happy, one must have a holy purpose of life, and then work diligently to achieve it (*Philippians 2:1-5*).

(2) Count life as a great blessing. Be zestful. Live, work, play, enjoy each day, because your life will end soon enough (*Hebrews 9:27; Philippians 1:18; 2:16, 17, 18, 28; I Thessalonians 5:16*). There is no sense in being mad at the world. Such an attitude often leads to suicide...God forbid!

(3) Learn (even if you must give up some of your pet peeves) to live in harmony (as far as your efforts are concerned) with others (*Romans 12:18*; Compare the New King James). Following the Golden Rule is always in order (*Matthew 7:12*). Sympathy, understanding, social adjustment, congeniality are traits of character all Christians desperately need.

(4) To live life as you should, you will need a keen sense of direction. If you don't know where you are going, you will likely end up somewhere else. To illustrate, a woman asked a boy, "How far is it to Smithville?" The boy answered, "About 24,996 miles if you continue in the same direction; but, if you will turn around and travel in the opposite direction, it is about 4 miles." How often do people travel in the wrong direction!

Dear reader, try to live a balanced life, a life of moderation, a life of self-control (*II Peter 1:5-11*). Learn how to handle criticism (*cf. Matthew 11:16-19; 9:10-13*). Jesus was often subjected to criticism; but he never allowed it to turn him aside from his mission. Those who "fly off the handle" not only hurt themselves, but others as well.

(5) Never worry about yesterday, today, or tomorrow. "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (*Philippians 4:6, A.S.V.*). Put God and his kingdom first, then all things necessary will be added (*Matthew 6:33-34*). Prepare a worry box: write all your worries on a slip of paper, and put them inside it. When checked, you will see that most of your worries never come to pass. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you," is the answer to excessive and overpowering worry (*I Peter 5:7*).

(6) To live properly one needs a correct insight into one's life. One needs to face the consequences of one's own conduct. Are we trying to live a lie? Will we acknowledge our own faults and shortcomings? (*James 5:16; I John*

1:6-7; Acts 8:22). David could never be right with God until he confessed his sins...the whole sordid affair with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:1ff; Psalms 51:1ff).

(7) Develop a confidential relationship with someone: Your wife or husband, your mother or father, your preacher or doctor, your friend or neighbor. David and Jonathan had such a wonderful relationship (I Samuel 20:3-39; 23:16). You need someone to whom you can talk!

(8) Learn to laugh at yourself; don't take yourself too seriously. Gain great satisfaction from working to help others (Ephesians 4:26-28; Acts 20:35).

(9) When personal problems arise, attack them promptly and intelligently. Do not go off 'half-cocked.' Never permit your problems to eventually drown you. Frustration, sorrow, and disappointment can exercise a withering spell upon your efforts to serve the Master.

Happiness is like a beautiful butterfly: If you chase it, it will elude you, but if you will sit down, turn your attention to other things, the butterfly may come and softly sit on your shoulder.

“I Will Not Forget...”

How often we forget what we should remember! Many have forgotten their duty toward God and toward his family. To say, “I will not forget” expresses resolve, determination, will. No one can accomplish anything unless there is determination to do so.

There are things which we SHOULD forget. The apostle Paul, wrote about “forgetting those things which are behind...” (Philippians 3:13-14). It is well for one to forget about past failures, past insults, even past accomplishments—and not permit such to hinder future progress.

(1) “I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word” (Psalm 119:16). We may well forget the doctrines and commandments of men; but we must not forget the word of God (Matthew 15:1-9; Hebrews 4:12). The word of God must be obeyed if one wishes to be saved (Hebrews 5:8-9; Revelation 22:14).

(2) “For I am become like a wine-skin in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes” (Psalm 119:83, A.S.V.). “Statutes” refers to any law which God has caused to be permanent. The Law of Moses was permanent for as long as it

was in effect; but it was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, and was taken out of the way when Jesus died upon the cruel cross (*Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:44-49; Colossians 2:14-17*).

We are saved by the word of God when we believe and obey it (*Acts 2:36-38; Matthew 4:4; James 1:18-21*). All responsible people are under the power and authority of the New Testament (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47*).

(3) "My soul is continually in thy hand: yet do I not forget thy law" (*Psalms 119:109*). The New Testament is now the law of God (*Romans 8:1-2; James 1:25; cf. 2:12*). To argue that Christians are not under any "law" is folly indeed! Law implies imposition by a sovereign authority, plus the obligation of obedience on the part of all subjects to that authority. God who made man has a right to command him (*Acts 5:29; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*).

The conditions of salvation as set forth in God's holy word are: Faith (*Hebrews 11:6*), repentance (*Luke 13:3, 5*), confession of Jesus' name (*Matthew 10:32-33*), and baptism for (or unto), the remission of sins (*Acts 2:38*).

(4) "I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts" (*Psalms 119:141*). The writer of this verse was not an ego maniac; rather, he was humble enough to remember, and to obey, the precepts of God.

It is not enough to be a "nominal" Christian; rather, one must be a genuine Christian—one who has obeyed from the heart God's holy will (*Romans 6:3-4, 17-18; Matthew 5:16; Titus 2:11-12; James 1:26-27*), and one who is determined to remain faithful unto God unto death.

(5) "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments" (*Psalms 119:176*). When a child of God goes astray, he can always return if he remembers God and his word. Is it possible for a child of God to so sin as to be eternally lost? Indeed, it is! (*Galatians 5:4; I Corinthians 9:27; 10:12; Luke 8:13; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:25-30*).

Even sheep can be lost; and if not rescued, they perish (*Matthew 10:6; Luke 15:1-7; Matthew 15:24*). The old Calvinistic doctrine of "once in grace, always in grace," is not taught in your Bible (*I Chronicles 28:9; II Chronicles 15:2*).

(6) "Bless the lord, O my soul: and forget not all his benefits" (*Psalms 103:2*). The Lord God has blessed us wonderfully. The seasons of the year (*Genesis 8:22*); our food, clothing, and shelter represent God's physical benefits extended to us. We sing:

"Count your blessings,
name them one by one,

Count your many blessings,
see what God has done.”

One dear brother, when asked to lead a prayer, would always say, “We thank thee for life.”

This brother is now gone; but I now understand better what he had in mind.

We shall permit the scripture to speak: “We” (Paul and Barnabas) “also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in time past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (*Acts 14:14-17*).

God is the creator of all things in heaven and in earth. God does not dwell in temples made with hands. He does not need anything men can provide; he is the source of life. In him we live, and move, and have our being. The goodness of God manifested in the creation of heaven and earth should help men to understand there must have been a Maker—A First Cause (*Hebrews 3:4-6*). Something never comes from nothing. All life comes from antecedent life. A watch, or an automobile, testifies that it had a designer and maker. We suggest that *Acts 17:22-29*, be carefully read. The goodness of God manifested in the creation of heaven and earth should help me to understand there must have been a Maker—A First Cause.

(7) We should not forget those promises we made to God our Father. When you made the good confession, and were baptized into Christ, you promised him your all for the remainder of your life.

When you married your spouse, your promised before God and man you would be true and faithful to your companion for as long as you both should live. Do not forget that promise.

Acceptable Preaching

Not all preachers are alike. In all ages past there have been true and false preachers. For example, the 450 prophets of Baal were false preachers; while Elijah was the one true preacher (*I Kings 18:17-40*). Miciah was one true preacher as opposed to 400 false prophets or preachers (*I Kings 22:1-36*).

Gospel preaching is extremely important. John the Baptist was a preacher

(*Matthew 3:1; Luke 3:3*). The twelve apostles were preachers (*Matthew 10:1-15; Acts 1:26; 2:1-4, 14, 37, 42, 43*). Jesus Christ was the greatest preacher who ever lived, or shall ever live! (*Matthew 4:23; 12:41*). Paul and Noah, though separated by a vast space in time, were great preachers (*I Timothy 2:7; II Peter 2:5*).

The Holy Spirit through his word is inseparably united in the work of converting sinners to the will of God (*Romans 10:17; Acts 2:1-4, 36-38, 41-42, 47*). The Holy Spirit, in conviction and in conversion, never operates independent of, nor separate and apart from, the word of God or the gospel of Christ (*Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12; II Timothy 4:1-5*). Verily, in all cases of New Testament conversions, a preacher was always present, the word or gospel was always preached, and those who believed were always baptized. Truly, the word of God is "the sword of the Spirit" (*Ephesians 6:17*).

"Preaching" is not a mere string of words. To "preach" acceptably, one must urge the acceptance or the abandonment of an idea or course of action. According to Bible standards, much that is called "preaching" today is not "preaching" in the true sense of the term. Any sermon which does not extol truth and condemn error is not Bible preaching. It is gospel preaching that changes the hearts of men and women (*Romans 1:16-17; I Peter 4:17; I Thessalonians 1:7-9*).

Preaching which accomplishes the good that God desires must be perceptive, both on the part of the preacher and the hearer. The preacher desperately needs a keen insight into the concept and meaning of the word of God; and, the hearer must be made to understand what the will of God is for him. The preacher should endeavor to meet the needs of his audience; and the audience should be made to sense its needs as well. Somehow, and in some way, both the preacher and his audience must be placed on the same wave length. Gospel preachers should never preach what the multitude wants, but, rather, what is needed! (*II Timothy 4:1-5*).

Acceptable preaching must be different, distinctive, with regard to its content (*Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23; Jeremiah 23:25-30*). A gospel sermon must be filled with the word of God, properly divided and properly applied. When one cannot tell the difference between a GOSPEL sermon and a DENOMINATIONAL sermon something is radically wrong. All denominational terms should be eliminated. The language of Ashdod has no place in a gospel sermon (*Nehemiah 13:23-24; I Peter 4:11*). If a preacher cannot bring himself to do this, he should leave the pulpit. Many years ago, a certain gospel (?) preacher told me that he did not know whether he believed the Bible, or not. This scribe said to him: "Get out of the pulpit and stay out of it until you know

that you believe every word of it without any equivocation whatsoever!"

Gospel sermons should be plain, clear, and straight forward. The preacher should never leave his audience in doubt as to what he means. In our day of higher and higher education, and since the ordinary listener does not understand the Greek and the Hebrew, preachers of the gospel would do well to hold such references to a minimum. *II Corinthians 3:12* mentions "great plainness of speech." The eternal destiny of souls is at stake; hence there should be no ambiguity of speech. If the hearer cannot UNDERSTAND the preacher, what good has he accomplished? Jesus' sermons were remarkable, because "the common people heard him gladly" (*Mark 12:37*).

Always the truth—and nothing but the truth—should be spoken or written, no matter what the pressure, where God's word is concerned (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47*). "Speak the truth and lie not," wrote Paul (*I Timothy 2:7; Ephesians 4:15*). Thus, let the truth be spoken in love. Only truth can bring freedom from the bondage of sin (*John 8:30-32; 17:17*). Truth must be believed and obeyed; but one cannot believe and obey the truth if one never hears the truth of the gospel of Christ (*Romans 10:8-17*). A preacher may shine (?) in personal work, or in missionary efforts; but if he fails in teaching the word of truth, all his efforts are a failure! The preacher's only business in the pulpit is to "preach the word" (*II Timothy 4:1-5*). He is to be "instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (*II Timothy 4:1-8*).

Boldness should always characterize the preaching of God's preachers. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (*Acts 4:13 Cf. Vss. 29-31*). Thus, the example of the apostles, in the midst of threatenings and persecution, spake and acted with great boldness, their examples should encourage preachers in our day to conduct themselves likewise. How about it, preachers?

Perseverance should characterize each gospel preacher! "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I have preached the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more" (*I Corinthians 9:16-19*). Just here we suggest that verse 22 be memorized and applied.

A preacher's heart must be fixed in the right direction. With determination,

with loyalty to God Almighty, with love for lost souls—whether paid or unpaid—he will preach the word, in season or out of season—come what may. The preacher who can be “hired” to preach, can also be “hired” NOT to preach. May God Almighty ever bless and keep all faithful gospel preachers, in Jesus’ name.

What Is Your Reason For Church Membership?

It is always proper to give a scriptural reason for any religious act or determination. “But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear” (*1 Peter 3:15*). These words, by Peter, were addressed to children of God.

To “sanctify” the Lord in one’s heart is to permit him to dominate one’s thoughts and actions. To “be ready” to give a Bible answer to a Bible question means to be prepared, both in knowledge and in conduct. The world asks: “How can I hear what you say, when what you are is forever thundering in my ears?” Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher and preacher who ever lived “began both to do and teach” (*Acts 1:2*).

The reason for one’s hope in God and in things eternal must be founded upon the “rock” of God’s everlasting truth (*Luke 6:47-48*). Houses built upon the “sand” cannot endure the test of time. Often truth is buried beneath the rubbish of Roman Catholic dogma, denominational doctrines, and commandments of other men. We must “dig deep” to uncover truth long hidden to many.

If you were asked why you are a member of a certain church, how would you answer? Would any of these suggestions represent your response?

(1) “I am a member of the Catholic church (or, the Methodist church, or, the Baptist church) because my parents were members of such a church.” Such was not true of Paul, nor of Peter, nor of many other people in New Testament times. They left Judaism, and became members of the church of Christ (*Philippians 3:4-11; Romans 16:16*).

(2) Are you a member of a certain church because its location is merely convenient? Surely, there must be a deeper, more demanding, reason! Are you

a member of a certain political party simply because it was the most convenient? To give "a reason" means that one must be well-informed (*II Timothy 2:15*).

(3) Are you a member of a certain church because it is the most popular church in town? If the Pentecostians had followed such course, they would never have become members of the Lord's church (*Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:1-47*).

(4) Are you a member of a certain church because it owns the finest church building in town? If this is your reason, you would not have become a member of the Lord's church in apostolic times—for the early church possessed no church-buildings of their own! (*Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2*). The fact is that 300 years passed before the early church owned its own building.

(5) Are you a member of a certain church because it teaches what you believe? If you already believe the truth, well and good; but if you believe contrary to the Holy Bible, you are in grave danger (*Romans 3:3-4*)! Why not "search the scriptures" to learn the truth of God (*Acts 17:11*), then go where it is taught.

(6) Are you a member of a certain church because its preacher is so sweet and kind, and because he is such a scholar—because he just sweeps one along with his beautiful flow of language? Apollos was such a preacher; but he did not know the truth! He had to be taught "more perfectly" the gospel of Christ (*Acts 18:24-28; 19:1-7*).

More: Are you a member of a certain church because its membership is composed of the rich, the elite, and the powerful from a social or a political point of view? *Revelation 3:14-22* tells of a church that had everything, but in reality had almost nothing!

We shall now discuss some Biblical reasons for membership in the New Testament church.

Obviously, one should not put church-membership on the same basis as membership in a fraternal organization, or in a social or civic club, etc.

(1) One should be a member of the Lord's church in order to be saved. Those who have been "born again"... "born of water and of the Spirit," are added, by the Lord, to his church (*John 3:3, 5; Acts 2:36-38, 41, 47*).

(2) One should be a member of the Lord's church that one might be in "the house of God" or the "family" of God (*I Timothy 3:14-15*). The house of God is his church or his family. How does one enter the family of God? Through the avenue of the new birth (*John 3:3, 5; I Corinthians 4:15; II Corinthians 5:17; I Peter 1:22-25; 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7-9*).

(3) One should be a member of the Lord's church in order to be under the rule of our High Priest—The Lord Jesus. Jesus is High Priest "over his house;" and his "house" is his church (*Hebrews 3:6; 4:14-16; 10:21; 1 Timothy 3:15*).

(4) One should be a member of the Lord's house, or church, or family, so that one may be in a position to worship God. On the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, when about 3,000 souls heard and obeyed the gospel, they were added to the church; then these church members began to worship God "in Spirit and in truth" (*John 4:23-24; Acts 2:41-42; Ephesians 5:19; Acts 2:47*). Those outside the Lord's church, or outside his house, cannot worship God acceptably (*Galatians 1:4; 1 John 5:19*).

(5) To be in Christ is to be in his church. No one can be out of the CHURCH and be in CHRIST at the same time! When one through faith, repents, confesses Christ, and is baptized into Christ, that one, at the same time, is "baptized into the one body," which is the church (*Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13*).

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (*Romans 12:4-5*). "But now are they many members, yet but one body..." "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (*1 Corinthians 12:20, 27*).

Church Problems In The Twenty-First Century

It is no sin to try to anticipate some of the problems and situations which may arise. Business men endeavor to foresee any difficult trends that might arise. All colleges and universities are very interested in what the coming years may bring. National and local government would profit wonderfully from knowing of the changes which may occur. Such anticipation may spell the difference between success or failure.

Although this scribe does not claim to be a prophet, nor the son of a prophet (*cf. Amos 7:14*), it is possible, from past history and the teaching of God's holy word, to gain some insight into what the future holds in store for the years to come. We claim no psychic powers, nor do we possess a crystal

ball which could declare a correct reading of the many problems that may arise in the years immediately ahead.

The church of Christ was established on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (*Matthew 16:18-19; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 47; 11:15; Colossians 1:13-14*). Shortly after its establishment it began to suffer from sundry persecutions, as the Book of Acts reveals. Read Acts, chapters 3 through 9, and you will see many efforts to banish the Lord's church from the face of the earth. Saul of Tarsus was one of its greatest enemies.

During the first century the church was warned of dangers to come. Paul spoke of attacks upon the divine government of the church (*Acts 20:28-31*). "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith..." (*I Timothy 4:1-3*). "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine..." (*II Timothy 4:1-8*). And false teachers would arise (*I John 4:1-5*). Thus, persecutions, apostasies, famines, and opposition from the Roman government, represent but a few of the obstacles which confronted the early Christians.

What are some of the problems which may confront the Lord's church in the years bringing us into the twenty-first century? For your consideration, we suggest the following thoughts.

(1) There will be much stiffer competition from the powers of entertainment. These powers are almost unyielding and unalterable as they attempt to sway the average person. Television, satellites, fishing trips, and vacations of all sorts to keep countless thousands away from the house of the Lord (*Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10*). There must be a renewed dedication to serve the Lord without compromise of truth (*Ecclesiastes 9:10; I Corinthians 16:13-14*).

(2) Vast propaganda machines will be unleashed in an all-out effort to popularize the church of Christ. In fact, these voices are now being heard in many circles. These voices tend to drown out the voice of truth. Even now, the Lord's church must take advantage of every legitimate means by which it can keep itself in the public eye. The "gates of hell" cannot destroy the church of God (*Matthew 16:18-19*). "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (*Romans 8:31; cf. Numbers 14:9; Psalms 118:6*). Denominationalism and Roman Catholicism may spend millions, but they cannot destroy that church built by the Lord Jesus Christ!

(3) As the years come, we shall need better educated preachers, more efficient elders, more effective teachers, and a better disciplined membership. Whether we like it or not, the general public is going to be more highly educated. Those who visit the services of the local church of Christ will not be

satisfied to hear some illiterate make a fool of himself. It may be, in the years to come, we shall be forced to truly educate our own in the things of the Lord, rather than depend upon the public schools to do it for us.

(4) As we approach the twenty-first century, greater and greater sums of money, time, and efforts, are being spent in promotional programs in support of religious projects. The church of the Lord will need to command the greatest vision possible, if it hopes to grow and prosper. That church with no vision can hardly succeed! We should, as Jesus said: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (*John 4:34-35*). We shall need better-equipped buildings, in better locations, where the people can assemble for worship, vacation Bible schools, singing schools, and the like. Winston Churchill said, "The farther back you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see." (*cf. Philippians 3:12-14*).

(5) We will need to overcome our fears, anxieties, worries, and must add to our efforts courage, boldness, and zeal for the work of the Lord (*Titus 2:14; Revelation 3:19*). It is past time for us to launch out into the deep, overcome our reticence, and march onward toward victory.

(6) Greater efforts will be made to blur that line that separates truth from error. Even now many within our ranks are ready to tolerate almost anything! In the minds of thousands there is no such thing as truth: Every thing and every body is right! (*cf. Romans 3:3-4*). Some think that others' views should not be criticized. Jesus contended that "Thy word is truth" (*John 17:17; cf. 8:30-32*). Jesus and other inspired men condemned the views of false teachers (*Matthew 15:10-14; Mark 7:1-13; Acts 13:4-12*). Can faithful followers of the Lord afford to do less? (*Philippians 1:17; Jude 3*).

(7) As we approach the twenty-first century, there will be greater efforts to obtain public funds for religious purposes. Many are deeply interested in removing any boundary between separation of church and state. Efforts in that direction are now being pushed in the United States Congress. Do you want a state-run and state-operated religion? The Constitution now prohibits such; but many want that changed (*Mark 12:13-17; cf. Luke 20:19-26*). A slight crack can result in a flood!

(8) As great numbers are brought into the church, we must make certain of their indoctrination. We must teach...teach, and teach them again—and again (*Matthew 28:18-20*). Many church problems stem from a lack of teaching (*Hebrews 5:11-14; 1 Peter 2:2*). Christian examples are always needed (*Matthew 5:16*).

The Sin Of Doing Nothing

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (*James 4:17*).

You may not have committed the sin of murder or theft or adultery, but if you have not been "born again...born of water and of the Spirit," you are a sinner nevertheless (*Romans 3:23; 6:23*). To be "born again...born of water and of the Spirit" (*John 3:3, 5*), is to believe that Jesus is the Christ, repent of all sin, confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and be baptized in the name of Christ for remission of sin (*John 3:16; Acts 2:36-38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-5*). When one is "born again...born of water and of the Spirit," one is saved; but to be saved one must "believe and be baptized," taught Jesus (*Mark 16:16*). The conclusion which we have reached is correct because "things that are equal to the same thing, are equal to each other." Hence, whatever one must do to be saved is, precisely, what one must do to be "born again...born of water and of the Spirit."

Whether one wishes to admit it or not, there are some "thou shalt" and some "thou shalt not." (cf. *Exodus 20:3-17; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 22:34-40*). No person can be saved merely on the basis of things not done. One who lives a good moral life is admirable, but one cannot be saved purely on morality alone. If such could have been the case, then the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cruel cross would not have been necessary (*Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22-28*). There are sins of omission and sins of commission. To God Almighty, sin is sin, of whatever class.

During Jesus' personal ministry, he denounced those sinners who did nothing. Consider these examples: the priest and the Levite who passed by on the other side (*Luke 10:25-37*); the rich man who allowed the beggar to lie unaided at his gate (*Luke 16:19-31*); the servant who hid his master's pound in a napkin, thus refused to use his opportunity (*Luke 19:11-27*); the unprofitable servant who buried his talent (*Matthew 25:14-30*). These (and many others could be mentioned) were not scum or refuse of society...rather, they were people who chose to do nothing.

Listen to Jesus, your Saviour and mine: "Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (*Matthew 25:41-43*).

What about you? Are you committing the sin of negligence? (*Hebrews 2:1-4*). Are you refusing to exercise the care demanded of a prudent person? Do you know to do better than you are doing? Many are fully aware of their negligence. When approached regarding their failure to respond to God's demands, some say, "Yes, I know my duty. I intend to begin doing the right thing one of these days. I am not ready as of yet. Just give me a little more time to make up my mind. I'll do the right thing before it is too late...you'll see." Here is stated the sad story of King Agrippa, who heard the great apostle Paul preach the glorious gospel of Christ, but wavered, as far as we know, to his own destruction (*Acts 26:24-29*).

The sin of neglect is extremely difficult to combat, for very few ever come to their senses and take up the axe of accountability and begin chopping away at the mountain of duty.

Do you know that you must obey the gospel of Christ? (*I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7-10*). If so, why do you yet delay? Life's slender thread might be severed at any moment; then why do you still postpone your obedience to Jesus the Christ? When it is too late, it is too late!

Most members of the Lord's church know they should assemble with the saints and worship God in His own appointed way (*Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2*), but thousands neglect to do their duty. Why? Failing to do one's duty leads to everlasting destruction (*Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27*). Yea, idleness, procrastination, and neglect are the enemies of the soul!

Verily, thousands know they should contribute of their means that the gospel may be preached to the lost and that the poor may be supplied their needs, but inaction and indolence never gets the job done. Where does the church obtain its money? From its members! (*Acts 11:29; I Corinthians 16:1-2; II Corinthians 9:6-7*). The sin of doing nothing hinders the growth of the Lord's church.

You know, according to God's word, to pray and study God's word, and to sing His praises, but the question is are you doing what you know should be done?

It is high time for us to examine ourselves to see if we are guilty of the sin of doing nothing! Let us stop sitting on the stool of do-nothing and whittling on the stick of do-less. Let us arise and be about our Father's business. Let us put on the whole armor of God, let us unsheath our sword and get on with our battle against Satan and sin. The sin of negligence is extremely dangerous and the wages of sin, whether omission or commission, is death (*Romans 6:23*).

Was Ananias A Mistaken Disciple?

The story of the conversion of Saul (later called Paul) is one of the most fantastic stories ever told. The reader will find the full account of how Saul was converted in Acts, chapters 9, 22, and 26. We sincerely urge our readers to peruse these chapters very closely.

Saul was very much against Jesus Christ and his church. He had stood by watching the stoning of Stephen (*Acts 7:58-59*). Later, "Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and desired from him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound into Jerusalem" (*Acts 9:1-2*).

Acts 26:9-11 reads as follows: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." Later, circa A.D. 65, Paul wrote of some horrible incidents, saying "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (*1 Timothy 1:13*). Paul declared: "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (*Acts 23:1*), thus indicating that one can possess a good conscience even though one is wrong.

Saul saw a light, was struck blind, and heard a voice, on the Damascus road; but he was not converted to Christ there. "And as he (Saul) journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined around about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he, trembling, and astonished said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (*Acts 9:3-6*).

Saul was three days in Damascus, "without sight, and neither did eat nor drink" (*Acts 9:9*), before he heard from the Lord again.

The Lord Jesus did not tell Saul what to do to be saved; rather, he sent Ananias, "a certain disciple," to instruct him in the Lord's will and way. Jesus commanded the apostles (earthen vessels), not angels, to preach the gospel to

sinful men (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; II Corinthians 4:7*). Hence, Jesus used Ananias to teach Saul his truth.

“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias.” (Notice the vision comes to the preacher, not to the sinner). “And he said, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision of a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hands on him, that he might receive his sight” (*Acts 9:12*). Ananias strongly objected to the Lord’s command ordering him to go to Saul (*Acts 9:13-16*).

When Ananias finally came unto Saul, what did he say? Read *Acts 22:12-16*: “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Saul was told to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins...” Did Ananias misinform Saul? Millions of denominational preachers, down through the ages, have so asserted. Denominational people argue that sinners are saved by “faith alone,” or by a miracle, or by prayer, or, that God determined it all before men were born. Ananias, a person especially chosen to instruct Saul, never said a single word concerning these denominational dogmas...Not one word!

The denominational world says that baptism cannot wash away sins. Again, we ask, Was Ananias in error? Was he misguided? Was he wrong? No, not by any stretch of the imagination!

“Preacher, don’t you know that it is Jesus’ blood that washes away sins?” asks someone. Yes, of course. Jesus’ blood was shed in his death. We shall quote John 19:33-34: “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” These verses show that Jesus shed his blood IN HIS DEATH. But to appropriate the benefits of Jesus’ shed blood, one must be baptized INTO HIS DEATH: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also

should walk in newness of life" (*Romans 6:3-4*). Verily, one is washed in the blood when one is washed in the waters of baptism (*Revelation 1:5; 7:14*). An obedient faith which includes baptism is the means by which we contact the cleansing blood of the Lamb.

What Is A Home?

The word HOME is used many times in Sacred Writ. Sometimes the home, is used, by metonymy, for the house or family. The home, in a real sense, is far more than a house. To build a home as God would have it, we must build wisely. Much careful planning and hard, diligent work is involved. No Christian home can be the product of an accident!

In the light of the foregoing words, we suggest that Matthew 7:21-27 be carefully considered. A young man whose father was in the military, said, "We have a home; we just don't have a house to put it in."

We shall now offer some guidelines for the establishment of a happy, Christian home:

(1) From the beginning of the human race, the home was monogamic in the form. Adam and Eve were to live with each other until death separated them. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (*Genesis 2:23-24*).

Although divorce was permitted (*Deuteronomy 24:1-3*), it was never the law of God. When Jesus came, he restored God's original law of marriage (*Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:11-12*). This law is equally binding upon all men and women. Marriage partners should understand that marriage is an opportunity for happiness. It is a step in which two imperfect individuals unite their hearts in the struggle for happiness.

(2) The home is procreative in design. How did the Lord God put it? We quote: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it" (*Genesis 1:27-28*). Thus, sexual relations between human beings are not merely for the gratification of the flesh. Such false notions have lead to abor-

tion, homosexuality, lesbianism, and other deviations from God's law (*Romans 1:26-28*). God has set the bounds for sexual activity for all men and women. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (*Hebrews 13:4*). Marriage should be respected and honored. All sexual impurity is a sin before God. Parents, lend your children to the Lord (*I Samuel 1:27-28*; cf. *Psalms 127:3-5*).

(3) The home is united in construction. We read: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (*Matthew 19:5-6*). Paul is the author of a wonderful statement describing this holy relationship: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (*Ephesians 5:21-23*). Another passage of great importance: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife" (*I Corinthians 7:10-11*). The only scriptural ground for divorce and remarriage is adultery (*Matthew 19:9*). A house divided cannot stand (*Matthew 12:25-30*).

(4) A Christian home demands mutual obligations. Both husband and wife are obligated to work to make their marriage succeed. The husband has his duties and the wife has hers. Learn to cooperate in all areas of your marriage. Always be ready to talk when problems arise. Never go to bed angry. Settle all differences immediately. Learn to forgive and forget. Realize that you cannot always have your way. Try to maintain a warm, friendly attitude toward each other. Do not use the children as pawns. Marriage is somewhat like a lock and key: both must work together if success is to be achieved.

(5) A Christian home is patriarchal in government. The head of the home is the husband. Such leadership does not imply dictatorship. Arbitrary action and genuine love cancel out each other. A Christian wife can submit to her Christian husband without any loss of dignity whatsoever. In the light of these statements, we suggest that *Ephesians 5:22-32* be read and digested. No institution can have two heads. Two presidents of the United States at the same time would be a disaster!

(6) A Christian home is religious in spirit. Our nation and the church suffers today because of a lack of religious training. Think of drug addiction, all

kinds of crimes, filthiness and indecency, drunkenness and the like, all indicating a lack of spiritual training. All such training should begin in the home (*Genesis 18:19; Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:7-10; Ephesians 6:1-4*). Parents, do not wait until your children are grown to begin training them—it is then too late! It is here that children and grandchildren are taught to love, respect, reverence truth and righteousness. Here, they learn to live in peace and harmony with the laws of God and with one another (*Matthew 22:34-40*).

In the home we build some of our most cherished memories. Most young people desire to leave home. But, when one becomes old, he longs to return to the old home place, there to visit again with old friends, and to see once more the hallowed scenes of childhood. But there is another land to which we are going, where the redeemed of the ages dwell.

Things Preachers Seldom Tell

Preachers speak with conflicting voices. One will be amazed by the differences expressed among preachers. For example, Methodist preachers preach one way, while Baptist preachers preach an entirely different lesson. Can both be right? Does the Bible teach both doctrines? If the Bible presents contradictory doctrines, who can believe the Bible?

How can an honest listener know the truth? The answer is: Do not listen to preachers—listen to the Holy Bible. Preachers can be right or wrong, but the Holy Bible is always right (*Acts 17:11*). In *Acts 18:24-28*, Luke tells of “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures,” who did not know the full truth of God. It became necessary for Aquila and Priscilla “to expound unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Afterward, he went on his way preaching the perfect gospel of Christ (*Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:6-10*). Much of modern denominational doctrines now preached by these preachers cannot be found in the Holy Bible. This scribe does not hesitate to make the foregoing statement because it is the truth.

Have you noticed, the Methodists preach the possibility of apostasy, but the Baptists deny it; the Methodists preach sprinkling or pouring for baptism, but the Baptists say only immersion will do. Question: Are both scripturally right? All preachers claim to preach only the truth, but do they? Go to the Bible to learn the truth (*John 8:30-32; 17:17*).

We shall now mention some things preachers seldom tell their audiences—

(1) The Bible teaches that the gospel is God's power to save the believer (*Romans 1:16*). Denominational preachers deny that the gospel is God's power to save. According to them sinners are saved by the direct operation of the Spirit, separate and apart from the word of God. Others contend that sinners are saved in answer to prayer. Some teach that the sinner must have an experience of grace, a feeling which is better felt than told. What they don't tell you is that Christ's gospel must be believed and obeyed (*Romans 10:16-21*; *II Thessalonians 1:7-10*; *I Peter 4:17*).

(2) Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (*Mark 16:16*). How many denominational preachers preach this verse? Most denominational preachers spend a life time trying to find a way around this verse. Why? Because Jesus Christ does not agree with the denominational doctrine of "salvation by faith only" (*James 2:14-26*). In any school, two plus two equals four. Two minus 2 equals zero. In *Mark 16:16*; belief plus baptism equals salvation, but belief minus baptism equals damnation. Dear Reader, is this what your Bible teaches?

(3) An inspired preacher, Peter, taught, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (*Acts 2:38*). Was Peter wrong? Some preachers have gone so far in their opposition to *Acts 2:28*, as to seek to explain away this great verse. Why? Because most denominational preachers baptized a person "because of remission of sins," but *Acts 2:38* teaches that baptism is for, in order to, unto, remission of sins. The statement, "For the remission of sins," in both *Matthew 26:28* and *Acts 2:38* are identical. Question: Did Jesus shed his blood "because of remission of sins?" Sinners must be baptized in order to "receive remission." It is better to accept the Bible as it is.

(4) *Acts 22:16*, reads, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Denominational preachers seldom, if ever, preach or teach this verse. Denominational preachers tend to ignore this verse as if it had been spoken by the devil. They try to have Saul saved on the Damascus road, but, if he were, Saul did not know about it for he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Jesus Christ did not know about it, for he said, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (*Acts 9:6*). Ananias did not know that Saul had been saved on the Damascus Road, for he said, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins..." (*Acts 22:16*).

Why did Jesus appear unto Saul? To save him? No! "...I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of the things in the which I will appear unto thee," said Jesus (*Acts 26:16*). In order for Saul to become an apostle it was necessary for him to be a witness of Jesus' resurrection (*Acts 1:22; I Corinthians 16:8*).

(5) *Romans 6:3-4* is another passage which denominational preachers seldom preach. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Denominational preachers ignore these verses, arguing that the sinner is saved by faith only, before and without water baptism. But, salvation is in Christ (*II Timothy 2:10*). One must be baptized into Christ where salvation is located (*I John 5:11-13*).

(6) *Acts 2:47* teaches, "Praising God, and having favor with all of the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The Lord Jesus built but one church (*Matthew 16:18-19*). Those who become "such as should be saved" are added (by the Lord) to his church (*Romans 16:16; I Timothy 3:14-15*).

Modern denominational preachers scream to the house top urging people to join the church of their choice. In apostolic times no person ever joined the church of his choice! Where is the scripture that so teaches? Believe the truth, repent of your sins, confess Jesus' name before men, and be baptized in Jesus' name for remission of sins, and the Lord will add you to the RIGHT church (*John 3:16; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 2:38*). These words are written for those who honestly seek God's eternal truth.

Can We Understand The Holy Bible Alike?

For centuries the Bible has been vilified by those who teach that it cannot be understood by all alike. These teachers talk of private interpretations as if each person is entitled to his own notions even though they may contradict what the Bible says.

Those who turn to I Peter 1:20-21, in their efforts to justify "private interpretations," have turned to the wrong passage! The passage says, "Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In plain language, what this reference teaches is that what the prophets spake and wrote was not their own "private interpretation." Their message was the message of the Holy spirit (*II Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16*).

Can we understand the bible alike? Yes, of course, we can! We understand every thing else alike. For example, 2 plus 2 equals four; 36 inches equals one yard, 16 ounces equals one pound, 5,280 feet equals one mile. On any mathematical examination all who come up with different answers, fail! Every school child must submit the same answers.

Can we understand the Bible alike? Yes, indeed! In *Ephesians 3:3-4*, we have an important point made: "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery: (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." Notice these four important words: Revelation, wrote, read, and understand. Later Paul wrote: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (*Ephesians 5:17*).

We may differ and all misunderstand what the Bible teaches. One person may understand while another may misunderstand; but if all understand the Bible they all understand it alike.

What causes misunderstanding? One may misunderstand by not taking all that God says on the subject (*Matthew 4:4*). Again, we may misunderstand God's word by going beyond what is written (*Deuteronomy 29:29; I Corinthians 4:6, A.S.V.*). Human opinion counts for nothing (*Jude 3*). We may also misunderstand by not knowing what God's word says (*John 8:30-32; 17:17*). Hence, we must study the Holy Bible (*II Timothy 2:15*). Then, we may misunderstand the teaching of the Bible by adding to or subtracting from God's holy word (*Revelation 22:18-19*). Again, we may misunderstand the word of God by simply choosing to ignore it (*II John 9-11*).

To understand the Bible we must agree on what it teaches. For example, we can understand that one must believe in order to be saved (*Acts 16:30-32*), but when one adds "faith only" doctrine, disagreement arises (*James 2:14-26*). We can agree that faith comes from hearing God's word (*Romans 10:17*), but if one teaches that saving faith comes through prayer, then disagreement jumps to the forefront. Bible believers can agree that one must repent or per-

ish (*Luke 13:3*), but disagreements arise when one contends that repentance is unnecessary (*Jonah 3:10; Matthew 12:41*).

We can all agree that one must confess Christ before he is baptized. "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God' (*Acts 8:36-37*). Confessing one's feelings, or telling one's experiences would make agreement on the teaching of the Bible impossible. Scripture, please!

The Bible teaches that baptism is a burial in water (*Acts 10:47-48; John 3:3, 5*). Those who insist on sprinkling or pouring as a substitute for immersion make agreement with them impossible (*Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12*). Why reject God's word for the words of men? (*Mark 7:6-13*). Yes, we can agree that baptism in the name of Christ is for, unto, or in order to obtain, remission of sins (*Acts 2:38*), but those who follow strictly the Bible can never accept "baptism because of remission of sins." Where is the verse that teaches that one should be baptized because he is already saved?

We understand the Bible when we accept the fact that the Lord adds the saved to the church (*Acts 2:47*). But when some insist on joining the church of one's choice, we can never agree to such human practices.

The addition of human creeds, articles of faith, manuals, and catechisms creates religious divisions which can never be breached until all such religious creeds are forever abandoned (*Revelation 22:18-19*). The Bible is all-sufficient (*II Timothy 3:15-17*). Creeds do not unite people; rather, they create division (*I Corinthians 1:10; John 17:20-23*). To have unity, be prepared to "preach the word" (*II Timothy 4:1-5*).

To have unity, where worship is concerned, we must follow the Lord's will and way (*John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19*). The addition of organs and pianos and brass bands creates division and disharmony. The Lord did not command playing, but singing (*Colossians 3:16*). The addition of mechanical instruments to the worship creates discord, strife, conflict, contention (*Proverbs 6:16-19*).

We must be united in the use of Bible names or division and strife will inevitably follow. Speaking as the oracles of God brings peace and harmony (*I Peter 4:11*). Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Let us do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names. Wearing human religious names always divides people (*Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16*).

A Baptist Woman Preacher

According to newspaper accounts some Baptist churches are very upset in the Memphis area: A woman is now serving as a pastor in one of the area churches. She entered the pulpit in "a brand-new, tailor-made, royal blue minister's gown..." We wonder just where the scriptures authorize "a minister's gown." Could it be that denominational ministers have borrowed the idea from the Catholic practice as set forth by their priests and the Pope?

The woman pastor—"Rev." Nancy Schested—says, "I have been praying for divine intervention." But false teachers [nearly] always claim to have divine intervention (?) no matter how unscriptural their notions and practices may be. Tennessee's Shelby Baptist Association, representing 120 Baptist churches in the Memphis area opposed selecting "Rev." Nancy Schested as pastor for the Prescott Memorial church. Do they claim "divine intervention" too? If so, would that not mean that God is supporting two contradictory positions? Who can believe it?

What the good lady needed was not "divine intervention," but a passage or passages from the Holy Bible. Just what passage authorizes women to serve as preachers or pastors? "Pastors" in the New Testament, refers to elders or overseers or bishops of the New Testament church (*Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-7*), not to the pastor of a denominational church, whether Baptist or some other.

Paul, Peter, Matthew, James, et al., were never called "pastors" of the church; neither were they ever addressed as "Reverend" Paul, "Reverend" Peter, and the like... (Should the reader know where such passages are found, please let us know)!

We have read of John "the" Baptist, but we have never read of any sort of "a" Baptist church, whether north or south or east or west. John the Baptist was not "a Baptist" preacher, as strange as it may seem to some. John was the baptist—not "a" baptist. **The** is a definite article which points out the work John did—he baptized others. It is like "Matthew the publican" (*Matthew 10:3*), "Philip the evangelist" (*Acts 21:8*), or "Elymas the sorcerer" (*Acts 13:8*) or "Jeremiah the prophet" (*Jeremiah 38:10*), and many other like examples can be cited. Which John was Matthew writing about? The answer: The John who did the baptizing. There were many Johns in those days, but just one John who baptized. Don't you see? And so it was with the other examples cited.

Since "the Baptist church" is not a New Testament organization, it can formulate its own rules for pastors, or for anything else. The Baptist church—its creed, its name, its form of government, its terms of membership, its rules and regulations—cannot be substantiated by the New Testament. There is not a word addressed to denominational churches, *per se*, in the Holy Bible. What a book the Bible would be if it endorsed and supported all the different, conflicting, contradicting teachings and doctrines of all denominational churches! One reads in vain looking for a direct reference to "a Baptist church" or "a Methodist church" or "the Roman Catholic church," and the like... in the Bible!

What the "Rev. Nancy Sehested" has shown, when she became the pastor of the Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis is that she does not believe the Bible, the New Testament, the very Scripture she claims to preach. We know, that this charge is a serious one; but it is a true one. Listen to Paul the apostle: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (*I Timothy 2:11-12*). The word **teach** in the above quoted verse means to "deliver didactic discourses" (Thayer). Women are prohibited from teaching and exercising authority "over the man." In other situations women may teach other women, or her children, her grandchildren, children in Bible schools. Priscilla and her husband taught Apollos the way of the Lord more perfectly (*Acts 18:26; Titus 2:3-5*). The word **silence** as used in *I Timothy 2:11-12* means **silence** as far as delivering a didactic discourse—a sermon—is concerned. Hence, women are not permitted to teach "over the man," not to exercise authority "over the man." According to *Titus 2:15*, evangelists are to teach and rebuke "with all authority;" hence, women cannot be evangelists (*Cf. Acts 21:8*).

As a matter of fact, there are other requirements of the Lord which the Baptist church rejects. We shall name only a few: Baptism "for the remission of sins" (*Acts 2:36-38*); the Lord's Supper each Lord's day (*Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-30; 16:1-2*); the possibility of apostasy (*I Corinthians 11:23-30; 16:1-2*); the possibility of apostasy (*I Corinthians 9:27; 10:12*); salvation by faith that obeys (*James 2:14-26; Romans 5:1-2; 6:3-4; Mark 16:16*); and the operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion through the word (*Ephesians 6:17*).

The Baptist churches and other denominational churches reject the aforementioned cardinal points, as well as many others, simply because they do not believe what the Holy Scriptures say (*Cf. Hebrews 11:6; John 8:21-24*).

The truth is: If women truly believed the Holy Bible, they would not wrest the scriptures trying to justify their desire to be pastors (*II Peter 3:16*). The word **wrest** means to twist, to pull, force, or move by violent wringing or twisting movements. Why torture the Scriptures? Why not believe and obey it? This approach is by far the safest course to follow. Why spend a lifetime trying to circumvent what God has said so plainly?

Obedience: Is It Important?

“We Must Obey God Rather Than Men” (*Acts 5:29*)

Throughout the ages of human history, God has required man to obey him, and he has always punished those who have disobeyed him. Adam and Eve, through their disobedience, brought physical and spiritual death into the world (*Genesis 2:17ff; 3:1-6, 14ff*). The antediluvians, because of their disobedience, brought the great flood “upon the world of the ungodly” (*II Peter 2:5; Genesis 6:1ff*). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because ten righteous persons could not be found within their borders (*Genesis 18:23ff; 19:1ff*). With comparatively few exceptions man’s history has been one of rank disobedience against God Almighty (*Romans 10:21; Titus 1:16; I Peter 2:7-8*).

Who Should Obey?

Jesus Christ died for all men (*Hebrews 2:9*). The gospel of Christ must be preached unto all nations (*Mark 16:15-16*). Both Jews and Gentiles need the power of the gospel in their lives (*Romans 1:16*). Both men and women heard and obeyed the gospel in apostolic times (*Acts 8:12; 16:14; 17:4, 12*). Various classes who obeyed the gospel in New Testament times are: murderers, persecutors, jailors, business women, soldiers, treasurers, sorcerers, Samaritans, Jews and Gentiles. Hence, the gospel of Christ is addressed to every human being on earth who wishes to escape the bondage of sin.

What Is The Meaning Of Obedience?

One is the servant of him whom he obeys. If we obey God, then he is our master; if we obey Satan, then he is our master (*Romans 6:16-18*). Jesus declared: “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (*John 8:34*). No one can serve the devil and please God at the same time (*Matthew 6:24*). To obey God means to do as God has commanded!

One Should Obey Whom? And What?

One must obey God and his gospel. We quote: "We must obey God rather than men" (*Acts 5:29*). How does one obey God? Not by obeying the doctrines and commandments of men (*Matthew 15:9*). It is necessary to obey the gospel of God (*I Peter 4:17*). Those who refuse to obey God are certain to remain in their sins, and be lost (*II Thessalonians 1:7-9*). Obedience involves more than "the doctrine of salvation by faith only" (*James 2:24; John 6:28-29; 12:42-43*).

The scripture says: "...And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (*Acts 6:7; Cf. Romans 1:5; 16:26*). Such obedience as the Lord requires includes: faith, repentance, confession of Jesus' name, and baptism. Where can references showing these commands of the Lord be found? (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Romans 10:9-10; 6:3-4; Acts 2:36-38*). In all examples of conversion in the book of Acts, these elements were always present. To this rule there is no exception!

After one becomes a Christian it is necessary for that one to remain faithful unto death, if one wishes to enter into life eternal (*Revelation 2:10; II Timothy 4:6-8*).

Why Should One Obey God?

"...Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (*Revelation 14:13*). This passage refers to a proper relationship with the Lord. One can "die in the Lord," according to the verse quoted. The new birth (*John 3:3, 5*) is involved. If one is "IN Christ, he is a new creature" (*II Corinthians 5:17*). How does one obtain such a wonderful relationship? Those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," are those who have been baptized into Christ, baptized into the death of Christ and its benefits (*Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27*). Jesus' blood was shed in his death (*John 19:33-34*); and in baptism we reach the cleansing power of the precious blood of Christ. No, it is not the water that saves; but in water baptism (which seems ridiculous to unbelieving men), we contact the blood of Christ which washes away sins (*Revelation 1:5; 7:14; Acts 22:16; Hebrews 9:14; I John 1:7*). No blessing is pronounced upon those who die OUT of the Lord. Those who fall asleep in Jesus shall not perish, and those who sleep in Jesus will be brought back by the Lord at his coming (*I Corinthians 15:20-24; I Thessalonians 4:13-18*).

If One Obeys Not, What Are The Consequences?

The wrath of God shall fall upon the disobedient (*Colossians 3:6*). More,

"Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (*Ephesians 5:6*).

The disobedience of Nadab and Abihu, of Ananias and Sapphira, of King Saul, of Judas, et al., led to their downfall. It should be understood that sins of omission are just as damning as the sins of commission (*Matthew 25:31-46*). "...To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (*James 4:17*).

"This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole [duty] of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, A.S.V.*)

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (*1 Peter 3:12*).

The Commandments Of The Lord

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (*1 Corinthians 14:37*).

The foregoing quotation represents a test which Paul applied to all false teachers. Those preachers or teachers who differed with Paul were false preachers. There were many false teachers in Paul's day. Hence, Paul wrote, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual" but refused to admit Paul's authority to speak by divine authority, thereby shows himself to be a false teacher. All preachers who do not acknowledge the things Paul wrote or spoke were divinely inspired messages from God, are false teachers, even today!

The apostle Paul did not write his opinions into the text of the Bible, but he did write the truth of God, which was given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (*II Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16*). Yes, the commands of the Lord are authoritative; the Lord has no non-essential commands which man can safely ignore (*Galatians 1:6-9; Hebrews 5:8-9*).

In our investigation, we should recognize that there are countless commands of men (*Matthew 15:9*). We need but to read *Mark 7:6-13*, to see that

the commandments of men make the commandments of God of non-effect. It is a fact that millions now prefer the commandments of men to the commandments of God. We suggest that *II Timothy 4:1-5* be imprinted into the minds of all preachers and teachers.

What are some of the commandments of men now being advocated? What about joining the church of one's choice? What scripture teaches salvation by faith only? Where is scriptural authority for sprinkling or pouring as Bible 'modes' of baptism? What passage authorizes the use of an organ or piano in Christian worship?

Jesus Christ issued a new commandment. We quote: "A new commandment I have given unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another" (*John 13:34-35, A.S.V.*). The key to this passage is that we are to love one another, just as Jesus loved us. Jesus loved us fully, completely, without reservation: we should love one another in exactly the same way. The proper application is stated: "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (*Galatians 5:14-15, A.S.V.*). We herewith suggest that *Psalms 15:1-5*, be read. Always use the Golden Rule (*Matthew 7:12*).

"Go... preach the gospel" to "all nations" contains another of the commandments of the Lord (*Matthew 28:18-20*). Here, clearly stated, is our foremost duty. The church is the pillar and ground of God's truth (*Acts 8:4; Ephesians 3:9-11; I Timothy 3:14-15*). The gospel is God's power to save the lost (*Romans 1:16*). If we fail in our duty to preach the gospel to every creature, the blood of those who might have been saved is certain to be upon us (*Acts 20:26-27; Ezekiel 33:11, 31-33*).

The Lord commands us to believe his word. "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (*I John 3:23*). No one can please God who does not believe (*Hebrews 11:6*). But "faith" comes by hearing God's holy word (*Romans 10:17*). One cannot be saved by "faith only" (*James 2:14-17, 19, 24-26*). One is saved by faith when that faith leads one to obey God Almighty (*Romans 5:1-2; 6:3-4*). To try to be saved by faith alone is to try to be saved by a "dead" faith (*James 2:26*).

The confession of Jesus' name is another of the Lord's commandments. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also

before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (*Matthew 10:32-33*). To "confess" Jesus is to confess his name—not our experiences, our feelings. The eunuch declared, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (*Acts 8:37*). Romans 10:9-10 shows how important confession of Jesus is. In the Bible no one ever confessed: "I feel that God for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins."

The Lord has commanded all men everywhere to repent (*Acts 17:30-31*). What is repentance? Repentance involves a change of mind which results in a reformation of life. This change of mind of which we speak involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God. A fine illustration of what repentance is can be found in *Matthew 21:28-29*. Read the story and you will see. Repentance is a condition of remission of sins, but not the only condition (*Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19*). Repentance is one of the more difficult commands to obey because it involves the human will. Many simply WILL not change their way!

The last command we wish to discuss is baptism: "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..." (*Acts 10:48*). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (*Mark 16:16*). "...Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (*Acts 2:37-38*). Baptism puts one into Christ, into his death, where one's sins are washed away by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (*Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4*).

Dear reader, do not stumble over the Lord's commands.

"We Ought To Obey God Rather Than Men"

The above caption is taken from *Acts 5:29*. These are the words of Peter who spoke as the Spirit instructed him (*Acts 2:1-4*).

The words obey and **obedience** are words frequently used throughout the Bible. Some treat these words as if they were bad words: words to be ridiculed

and scorned. The "faith only" people and the "grace only" people tend to ignore and to make fun of Bible obedience.

In more than 50 years of preaching, this writer has often met denominational people who thought obedience is something to be rejected. Such people think that God does everything for the sinner, and that the sinner can do nothing to be saved (*Acts 2:36-38, 40; I Timothy 4:12-16*).

We shall permit the Bible to speak. At the marriage feast in Cana, Mary said of Jesus, "Whatsoever he saith unto you," (*John 2:1-11*). After his disciples fished all night without catching any fish, Jesus told them to "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." Peter tried to explain to Jesus why they had failed, but then said, "...Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (*Luke 5:1-11*). Other passages which illustrate the principle which we are discussing are: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (*Matthew 7:21-23*). Hence, the only way to obey Jesus Christ is to hear and obey his commands (*Cf. Luke 6:46*).

We shall now notice a few areas in which obedience is absolutely necessary.

Acts 5:29 says, "We ought to obey God rather than men." To obey men is to abandon God. Men speak with many voices, but God speaks with only one voice. The doctrines and commandments of men make the commandments of God void (*Mark 7:6-13*).

We ought to obey Jesus Christ. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (*Hebrews 5:8-9*). How does one go about obeying Jesus? Well, one hears what Jesus has said (*John 6:44-45*), believes what Jesus teaches (*Mark 16:16*), repents of all sins (*Luke 13:3*), confesses Jesus' name (*Matthew 10:32-33*), and is baptized into Christ "for the remission of sins" (*Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-38; Romans 6:3-4*). Anything less than what Jesus has commanded is not obedience, in the Bible sense. We read, "...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the lord, he hath rejected thee from being king," said Samuel (*I Samuel 15:22-23*).

Another way of stating this matter is that one must obey the truth of God. "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness and wrath..." (*Romans 2:8*). It is a sin to refuse to obey the truth (*James 4:17*). Hear the apostle Peter: "Seeing ye have purified your souls

in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (*I Peter 1:22-23*).

Furthermore, it is necessary for one's faith to express itself in obedience. "...And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (*Acts 6:7*). "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name" (*Romans 1:5; Cf. 16:26*). The only way one can show his faith is through acts of obedience (*James 2:14-19*). A faith that will not obey is a dead faith (*James 2:24,26*).

The "gospel of Christ" (which encompasses all the demands of the gospel), must be obeyed. "...What shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (*I Peter 4:17*). The answer to the question just quoted is found in *II Thessalonians 1:7-9*. It reads, "...The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." *Acts 2:36-38, 41-42, 47* furnishes a wonderful example of what it means to obey the gospel. Read and be wise.

One must obey the word of truth. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (*John 8:30-32*). "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (*James 1:18*). "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (*James 1:21*). Where salvation of sinners is concerned, nothing is more powerful than the word of God. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (*Hebrews 4:12*)

Hence, read the word, learn what the Master's commands are, believe and obey them, and you soul will be saved.

An Old Man Sinned

Reader, please open your Bible to *II Samuel 11:1-27*, and peruse these tragic verses. David already was an old man when he became involved in his relationship with Bathsheba. He had already several wives, and did not need another wife. His foolishness brought tragedy upon David, and upon his whole family.

Today, in some quarters, such relationships are accepted and highly praised; but such was sinful then, and it is sinful still. Adultery has ever been wrong (*Matthew 19:3-9; Genesis 2:21-25*). The most beautiful terminology cannot cover such an awful sin. Adultery by any other name is still adultery.

(1) The text says, "David tarried at Jerusalem" (verse 1). Under normal circumstances, David would have been with his army. For whatever cause, he remained behind. Indolence and selfishness are great sins. Duty comes first (*Matthew 6:33*). David found himself in the right situation to get into trouble.

(2) David had too much time on his hands. He walked upon the house top. *I Thessalonians 5:22* teaches that one should avoid the appearance of evil. To say the least, one should never go looking for sin.

David saw a woman, a beautiful woman, bathing herself in full view. She may have wanted to entice a man. To "entice" means to persuade or allure. What more explicit way could she have gone about gaining her desires?

Jesus taught that it is a sin to look upon a woman "to lust after her" (*Matthew 5:27-32*). Job is a splendid example for all men today. He said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (*Job 31:1*).

(3) David sent for her. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man; but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death" (*James 1:13-15, A.S.V.*). Lust is strong; sin is alluring, powerful.

So far as we know Bathsheba came to David willingly. No evidence exists which indicates that she offered any protest. She may have been flattered by the overtures of King David. The two, David and Bathsheba, committed adultery. David had a wife; and Bathsheba had a husband! A few days afterward, she knew she was pregnant. Something had to be done! She told David. Sin has a way of revealing itself! Each reader should read *Romans 6:23* and *Galatians 5:19-21*.

(4) David went to extremes trying to cover his sin. Bathsheba's husband (Uriah) was ordered home from the battle-front; but he refused to see his wife. Verse 13 shows that Uriah was made drunk hoping that he would visit his wife, but to no avail. When all else failed, David wrote a letter ordering Joab to see that he was slain in battle (*II Samuel 11:15-17*). It seems that within a few days afterward David and Bathsheba were married to cover their sin. What a sordid story! Only the precious blood of Christ Jesus can wash away sin (*I Peter 1:18-19*). Jesus shed his blood in his death (*John 19:33-34*). To contact the cleansing power of Jesus' blood one must be baptized "into his death" (*Romans 6:3-4*). This cleansing by the precious blood of Christ involves faith (*John 3:16, 36*), repentance (*Luke 13:3, 5*), confession of Jesus' name (*Matthew 10:32-33*), and baptism in the name of Jesus for remission of sin (*Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:26-27*).

(5) What about sin's consequences? There is a law of sowing and reaping (*Galatians 6:7-8*). Read it and take warning.

Nathan the seer came to David for the purpose of showing David the error of his way. After telling him the story of a rich man and a poor man and the ewe lamb, no words were minced: "Thou art the man," said Nathan. Let it be remembered: —if you sin, you are the one! You will be held accountable unto God! Joseph said, "...How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (*Genesis 39:9*).

David repented of his sin, but still had to suffer the consequences of his foolishness.

"Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife..." (*II Samuel 12:10-12*). It is a shame that David became involved with another man's wife. Listen, "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord... save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (*I Kings 15:5*).

David's grievous sin caused the clouds of misfortune to gather about him. His daughter Tamar was ravished by her brother (*II Samuel 13:1-18*); Absalom rebelled against David the king (*II Samuel 15:1-10*); David's wives were abused (*II Samuel 16:20-23*); Amnon, David's son, was murdered; a three days' pestilence followed David's double crime—Adultery and murder. And Adonijah and his conspiracy gave David much trouble.

We close with a quotation from the New Testament: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (*Romans 6:23*).

Conditions Of Scriptural Prayer

God speaks to us through his message contained in the Bible; we (his children) speak to him through prayer. In prayer we should speak plainly—if leading the prayer—loud enough to be heard—ever remembering that we are talking to God, not to the people.

What are the conditions of scriptural prayer? We shall note—

(1) We must be children of God. The devil has his children (*John 8:44*), and God has his children (*I Peter 3:12; I John 3:10*). God is the Father of his children only. His children are those who have been born again, born of water and of the Spirit (*John 3:3, 5*). The author of these words is aware that God created the whole human race; but a special relationship is involved wherein one called out of the world into one body, the body, which is the church (*Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:36-38, 41-42, 47; Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18, 24; Ephesians 4:4-6*). Only those who have God as their spiritual Father can rightfully address him as "our Father" in heaven (*Galatians 3:26-27*).

(2) Prayer to be heard must be properly addressed. A letter improperly addressed ends up in the 'dead letter' office. A Christian must address his prayers to God, not to Mary, not to Peter, nor to any other human being (*Romans 10:1; Matthew 6:9-13*). One does not pray to Jesus, for he said, "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you" (*John 16:26*).

(3) Our prayers must be offered unto God in the name of Jesus. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (*Colossians 3:17*). To pray "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is to pray by his authority. It is sinful to pray for something Jesus has not authorized. Before Pentecost the disciples asked nothing in Jesus' name (*John 16:24*); but since Pentecost all prayers must be in his name.

(4) Scriptural prayer is always asked in faith "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (*James 1:5-7*). How does one obtain faith? In answer to prayer? Not at all! Faith comes by hearing God's word (*Romans 10:17*). And without faith one cannot please God (*Hebrews 11:6*). Hence, a sectarian prayer asking for saving faith is an absurdity!

(5) Scriptural prayer involves the possession of the spirit of humility. The

haughty, the arrogant, the proud, can never have their prayers reach the "Throne of Grace." In Luke 18:9-14 Jesus speaks a beautiful parable regarding two men: a Pharisee and a publican. The Pharisee was proud and egotistical, boasting of his excellence and superiority; while the publican earnestly prayed: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus said the publican went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (*Proverbs 16:18*).

(6) In our prayers there must be the spirit of obedience. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (*Proverbs 28:9*). Never ask God to save you contrary to his will. When one prays for God to save him at an altar of prayer, one is asking to be saved contrary to Jesus' will. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." Jesus did not say, "He that believeth and prayeth shall be saved." Peter did not say, "...Repent, and pray," but he did say, "Repent and be baptized..." (*Cf Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38*). Listen to the apostle John: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." (*I John 5:14*).

(7) Erring children of God must repent and confess their sins before they have the right to pray unto God Almighty (*James 5:16; Acts 8:21-24; Psalm 66:18*). There is no need to ask God to "forgive our sins" unless we are willing and ready to quit our practice of sin.

(8) It is necessary for us to cooperate with our prayers. What does that mean? We shall illustrate: if we pray for bread, we must work to earn it (*II Thessalonians 3:10-15*). If we pray for the lost, we must preach the gospel unto them (*Mark 16:15-16*). If we pray for the sick, we must see that they have medical services necessary (*Luke 5:31*). What Jesus is saying is, "The healthy person does not need a physician, but a sick person does."

(9) Many prayers can be—and are—rebellious prayers. Many people want to be saved in answer to prayer rather than to obey *Mark 16:16*. The Israelites were commanded to march around the city of Jericho (*Joshua 6:1-6*); but suppose they had decided to pray instead. Would the walls have fallen down? Could prayer have been substituted for dipping seven times in Jordan, in Naaman's case? (*II Kings 5:1-11*). Would it have been proper for the blind man to pray, rather than to wash in the pool as the Lord commanded? (*John 9:1-12*). Why do denominational preachers wish to substitute prayer for baptism in such passages as *Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:26-27; I Peter 3:20-21*)?

As important as prayer is to humanity, it cannot be substituted for any other command of God.

Restoring The Erring (No. 1)

From a Bible point of view, only those who have become Christians can be restored to their "first love." Unto the church at Ephesus, the Lord said, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which do evil: and hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted" (*Revelation 2:2-3*).

All that is said in the foregoing quotation is true; but there is another sad story to be told. Read on: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (*Revelation 2:4-5*). How tragic! How deplorable! How lamentable! Here are those who have been washed in the blood of the lamb—their sins all washed away—but now they have gone back into their sinful practices!

What is their relationship to God? We quote, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (*II Peter 2:20-22*). With words a more repulsive picture arousing total aversion or disgust could not have been painted. The dog and the sow represent the child of God who has gone back into sin. How dirty! How filthy!

The books of Proverbs, Jeremiah and Hosea use the words "backslider," "backsliding," and "backslidings," seventeen times. In each instance these words refer to children of God who have turned their backs to God and have determined to walk their own way regardless of what he demands of them.

These words are not used in the New Testament, but there are many New Testament passages which indicate that children of God may fall from grace, and thus may be eternally lost—unless repentance is manifested in their hearts. Sometimes we find those who have their hearts set on backslidings—they simply will not repent of their sins (*Hosea 11:7*). Oftentimes backsliding becomes a terrible spiritual disease which the Lord God would heal, if one could but repent of his/her sins (*Hosea 14:4*).

We shall note a few passages which indicate the possibility of apostasy: (1) "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (*Luke 8:13*). (2) "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (*I Corinthians 10:12*). (3) "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (*Galatians 5:4*). (4) "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (*Hebrews 6:4-6*).

God would freely forgive those who have fallen from grace provided they repent of their sins (*Luke 13:3, 5; II Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30-31*). Ah, that's the problem!

Among individuals who fell by the wayside are Judas and Demas (*Matthew 26:14-15; II Timothy 4:10*). Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of their faith (*I Timothy 1:19-20*). Peter denied the Lord, but soon was restored to his favor (*Matthew 26:69-75; John 21:15-17*).

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (*Galatians 6:1*).

Restoring The Erring (No. 2)

Backsliding members of the Lord's church are very common. In many large cities where the church is said to be strong, there are dozens who were once faithful members, but they no longer attend the services. In small towns, and in rural areas, many members of the church can be found who no longer make any effort to attend the Lord's day assembly.

Were we to keep all those who have been baptized into Christ, we would indeed be a force to be reckoned with! Absenteeism has ever been a church problem. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (*Hebrews 10:25; Cf. Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2*).

Thus, in apostolic times, the "manner," the custom, the practice, of some was to forsake the Lord's day assembly.

Just try to imagine how much good could be accomplished if all the talents, time, ability, and enthusiasm of our backsliders had been available to the Lord's cause! When members backslide they carry all their talent, time, ability, and enthusiasm with them back into the world. Backslider friend, look what you have cost the church in turning away from the right way of the Lord! (Cf. *Matthew 25:14-30*). Read what Jesus spake of an unprofitable servant who was bound for hell.

What are some of the causes of backsliding? (1) Mixed marriages contribute to the problem of backsliding. If you don't think so, read *1 Kings 11:1-8*. To please his wives, Solomon entered into the promotion of their false religions. "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no kings like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin" (*Nehemiah 13:26*).

The Lord's rule for his children is to marry only in the Lord (*1 Corinthians 7:39; 9:6*). If both husband and wife are not Christians, then the principles of *1 Peter 3:1-7* are to be applied.

(2) Sometimes the love of money is a cause of backsliding. When one falls in love with money, one falls out of love with the Lord. One cannot serve two masters (*Matthew 6:24*). Judas was a victim of the dominance of money in his life (*Matthew 26:14-25*). Ananias and Sapphria lost their lives because they lied about money (*Acts 5:1-11*).

(3) Some backslide by reverting to former sinful practices, as in instances where one returns to drinking, or to stealing, et al.

(4) Some return to false religious practices, as did the Galatians (*Galatians 1:6-9*).

(5) Bad associates lead many away from God. Those who are not strong enough to resist evil companionships are certain to fall (*1 Corinthians 15:33*).

(6) If one's love for the world is too strong, one is certain to backslide (*II Timothy 4:10; Cf. I John 2:15-17*).

(7) Self-satisfaction contributes to apostasy, as in the case of the church at Laodices (*Revelation 3:14-22*). These members were neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm. Such members may desire a 'little' religion, but not 'too much.' Of course, we can never arrive at perfection, but we can grow toward it (*II Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 6:1-3*).

Backsliding is a dark and gloomy picture. It may be caused by threats of

persecution, secret sins, negligence, Sunday work, and ignorance of Bible teaching on this subject. Can it be that our elders and preachers have failed to stress the dangers of falling from grace?

To church leaders we offer these suggestions: never leave new converts 'on the banks of the river' to 'root for themselves.' Give them supervision, or else they are in danger of returning to their old pursuits. See that they are properly fed with the word of God. Provide them with work, or activity. Those who have nothing to do get into trouble. Make certain that the elders keep in constant and close contact with them (*Hebrews 13:17*).

What are some of the signs of spiritual decline? How can a child of God recognize that he is sliding back into the world? "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself" (*Proverbs 14:14*). When one thinks that he can live without God, he is sure to become a backslider. A backslider, when in company of faithful Christians, does not like to be reminded of his faults. Such an one can miss the Lord's day assembly and feel no twinge of conscience. Children of God who have lost their allegiance to Christ may be extremely concerned about a clean environment, but a corrupt heart concerns them not at all. (Do you feel compelled to apologize for the plain preaching of the truth of God)?

How can a backslider be reclaimed? It is a simple matter: If such an one with all his heart, will repent of every sin, confess them before God, and ask in prayer to be forgiven and restored to the fellowship of the Lord's church, it shall be done. We can trust God to keep his promises. We suggest that these scriptures be read; *Acts 18:18-22; James 5:16; I John 1:6-10; Matthew 18:15-17*.

Restoring The Erring (No. 3)

How does backsliding occur? Obviously, it usually comes through a gradual process. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them" (*Hebrews 2:1-2, A.S.V.*). "Haply" means to carelessly, unconsciously, drift away from the church and the truth of God. A foot-note in the King James Version, says, "Run out, as of a leaking vessel." A small hole in a gasoline can will soon cause it to become empty. To "drift" means to be carried along by surrounding evil influences.

Some have false ideas which need to be corrected. One may think that before he/she can be restored to God and to the fellowship of the church, it is necessary to be living a sinless and perfect life. But no one can live a sinless and perfect life! Such an idea is ridiculous in the extreme. If one could live a sinless and perfect life, what sins would he have to confess of which to repent, and of which to pray for forgiveness?

Please don't stop reading! Read the following passages of scripture. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (*Galatians 6:1*). Notice, this verse stresses the words "fault" and "restore." Thus the person under consideration is not sinlessly perfect!

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" "sins should be forgiven." *Mark 4:12; Cf. Matthew 13:15*). "The effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much... Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (*James 5:16, 19-20*). In these verses, brethren had faults which they should confess, if their souls are to be saved.

Another passage germane to the proposition which we are discussing is: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (*II Peter 2:20-22*).

Learn well the lesson here taught: The people addressed had escaped a sinful world, through the knowledge of the truth; but they have now returned to their lost state, where they are in a worse condition than before they were converted to Christ. How can one be in a "worse" situation. The dog and the sow represent Christians who were once cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, who have now backslidden—fallen from grace—and are "worse" than before they were converted to Christ!

Another scripture: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (*Proverbs 28:13*). One cannot hide or conceal his sins from God Almighty. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (*Proverbs 15:3*).

In the light of the foregoing quotations, what can the individual backslider do?

(1) He can "examine" himself to see if he is in the faith (*II Corinthians 13:5*).

(2) He can attend faithfully the various services of the church (*Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7*).

(3) He can work hard at adding the Christian graces (*II Peter 1:5-11*).

(4) He can pray unto God each day (*I Peter 3:12*).

(5) He can permit God, through this word, to say something to him (*Matthew 4:4*).

(6) He can do something for God each day (*Matthew 25:31-46*).

(7) He can let God do something for him each day (*Acts 14:27; 15:4*).

(8) He can stand for truth and against wickedness. "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (*Psalms 119:127-128*).

May God Almighty through his word lead all lost sheep back to the fold (*John 10:16*).

Dr. Graham's Plan Of Salvation

Dr. Billy Graham is a man of influence and power. Countless thousands follow him. We do not wish to misrepresent him even in the slightest. We shall do our best to be fair with him and the doctrinal position which he espouses.

In *The Birmingham News*, November 12, 1987, a young woman asked Dr. Graham about the forgiveness of her sins. *Ephesians 1:7-8* was quoted: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence..."

The first words tell us that forgiveness is located "in Christ." The above-quoted verses are wonderful in deed; but they do not tell us how one enters Christ, where one does obtain "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..."

Are one's sins forgiven in answer to prayer? Alien sins (sins of those who

have never become children of God) are never forgiven in answer to prayer (*John 9:31; Ephesians 2:12-13*). Jesus did not say, "He that believeth and prayeth shall be saved." Jesus did say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (*Mark 16:16*). Peter did not say, "Repent and pray for the forgiveness of sins." Peter did say, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (*Acts 2:38*). Ananias did not say, "Keep on praying and your sins shall be washed away." Ananias did say, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (*Acts 22:16*). In this verse one calls on the name of the Lord by doing what the Lord has commanded.

How different Dr. Graham's message is when compared to the teaching of the Bible! Listen to Dr. Graham's instruction for the young woman: "Right now get on your knees, tell God you're sorry for your sins, and ask Christ to forgive you and come into your life." Dear Reader, do you know where such teaching can be found in the Holy Bible? I do not!

Other avenues are argued by Baptist preachers in efforts to circumvent the Lord's command of Baptism. They tell us (1) Salvation is by faith only (*Cf. James 2:14-26*). Yes, the sinner is saved "by faith"—but not by faith alone. When is the sinner saved "by faith?" When the sinner believes and obeys the Lord's commands (*Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-38; Romans 5:1 with 6:3-4*).

(2) Some, in an effort to get around the Lord's command on baptism, assert that the sinner is saved "by grace alone." If one will but read *Ephesians 2:8-9*, one will see that GRACE and FAITH are joined together in bringing about salvation. To divorce "grace" from "faith" would be blasphemy. We must not separate what God has joined together (*Matthew 19:3-9*).

(3) Others claim that sinners cannot be saved by any kind of "works." But Jesus (*John 6:28-29*) teaches that FAITH is a "work!" Of course, one cannot be saved by one's own works (*Jeremiah 10:23*); nor can one be saved by observing the works of the Law of Moses (*Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16; 3:10-13*). However, sinners can "work the works of God" through their obedience to the gospel of God (*I Peter 4:17; II Thessalonians 1:7-10*).

(4) And then there are those who contend that sinners are saved by the "direct" operation of the Holy Spirit, separate and apart from the word of God. Such a fantastic theory puts the responsibility upon God!—If sinners are not saved, it is God's fault! According to such a theory the sinner has no responsibility at all. Yet, Jesus demands obedience on the part of sinners (*Mark 16:16; Cf. Acts 2:36-38*). Conversion is not a miracle wrought by God Almighty (*Acts 3:19*). If it were, God would save all men (*I Timothy 2:5-6*).

Salvation is located "IN Christ" (*II Timothy 2:10*). In fact, Dr. Graham quoted *Ephesians 1:7-8*, which shows that "redemption... the forgiveness of sins" is "IN Christ." This passage is true beyond any doubt!

But, how does one, according to the scriptures, enter Christ? The answer is simple: one by faith, repents of his sins, confesses the name of Christ, and is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (*John 3:16, 36, A.S.V.; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 2:36-38*).

In support of the above-stated proposition, we shall now quote a few passages of scripture: As a matter of fact, Dr. Graham's proof-text (*Ephesians 1:7-8*) refers to those who had been baptized into Christ! We shall quote: "And when they heard this they were baptized INTO the name of the Lord Jesus" (*Acts 19:5, ASV; See the whole context—verses 1 through 7*).

Jesus instructed his disciples to teach all nations,... "Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Matthew 28:19, A.S.V.*). Could Jesus have been wrong in his teaching?

"Or are ye ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (*Romans 6:3-4, A.S.V.*). Hence, one is justified "by faith" when one is "baptized into Christ" (*Romans 5:1-2; 6:3-4*). Baptism is a burial—not sprinkling or pouring. Paul's sins were washed away when he was baptized into Christ (*Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Cf. Hebrews 10:22*)

Another passage: "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (*Galatians 3:26-27, A.S.V.*). So wrote the great apostle Paul! Dr. Graham can never set aside God's plan of salvation!

Purposes of Marriage

It will be well for our readers to consider the teaching of *Genesis 2:18-24*. Here we have the beginning of marriage. God never intended for man to have more than one wife, nor woman to have more than one husband. Strangely, God did permit concubinage and divorce in the Old Testament; but they were never in his will (*Matthew 19:3-9*).

One purpose of marriage is to find a "help meet" for man. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet

for him" (*Genesis 2:18*). All the animals were made to pass by before Adam, but... "there was not found an help meet for him" (verse 20). To supply Adam's need, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, took out a rib, fashioned it into a woman, and gave her to the man to be his wife (*Genesis 2:21-24*). Obviously, she is a "fit" companion for man. Adam understood the sacredness of this special relationship, for he said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." God then said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Since marriage exists for the perpetuation of the human race, homosexuality and lesbianism represent sins which are contrary to the purpose and will of God, and to the nature of man. God said to Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth..." (*Genesis 1:28; Cf. Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; Romans 1:26-27*).

When boys and girls reach the age of maturity, they have a God-implanted desire for a special companionship within the bounds of holy marriage (*Hebrews 13:4*). Through this wonderful arrangement God expects a man and a woman to find peace, pleasure, achievement and contentment in each other. Here God has made it possible for the holy desires of the flesh to find fulfillment, legitimately, morally, and scripturally. It is when this rule is broken that immorality begins to reign supreme. (We suggest that *Proverbs 5:19; I Corinthians 7:1-5*, be read and digested).

Verily, God's purposes for marriage involve far more than the procreation of children. Parents of children must see that they are properly guided, instructed, and nurtured. We read, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (*Ephesians 6:1-4*).

The principles of truth and righteousness must be instilled into their minds. Read to them from the Holy Bible (*Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; II Timothy 1:5; 3:15-17*). Carry them to worship services! Set the finest examples before them: no cursing, no alcohol, no tobacco, no drugs, no child abuse, et al.

One woman, after hearing a sermon on child rearing, said, "I have a son five years of age; when should I begin teaching and training him?" The reply was, "Rush home now, begin **now!** — You are already five years late!" A child's mind must be conditioned from the first day of its life — don't wait until the child is grown before you try to guide it in the right way of the Lord. Never, never, turn this great responsibility over the TV, or day-care centers, or to pub-

never, turn this great responsibility over to the TV, or day-care centers, or to public school teachers.

Jesus taught wonderful lessons regarding the responsibilities of marriage. Jesus taught that adultery is far deeper than the overt act. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (*Matthew 5:27-28*). A man whose "look" is not checked with restraint, and who forms the impure purpose of lusting after her, is only waiting for an opportunity to occur. Adultery is a disease of an unholy heart (*Matthew 5:8*).

Our day is one of easy divorce. The law of the land will grant a divorce for almost any grounds. For example, one man obtained a divorce from his wife of 30 years because she insisted on keeping in her room a canary bird which sang off-key. As a matter of fact, some have married and divorced so many times they are proud of their record. One young girl explained: "I don't have any brothers or sister, but I have three daddies by my first mamma, and four mmmas by my last daddy."

When Jesus was asked, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"—Jesus cited the purpose of God in creation (*Genesis 1:27; 2:24*). Because God's holy purpose called for man and wife to be one flesh; any disruption of the holy bonds of matrimony violates his holy will. The Pharisees asked Jesus: "Why then did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so" (*Matthew 19:7-8*). The only exception to God's marriage law is the sin of fornication or adultery (see verse 9).

But, one may ask, 'What if the marriage becomes intolerable because of religious abuse or cruelty? Must a husband/wife endure such a marriage—no matter what?' The answer is simple. "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife" (*I Corinthians 7:10-11*).

The word love can solve most marital problems. Listen to Paul. "Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself; for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also loveth the church" (*Ephesians 5:28-29*).

A Preacher's Work

The finest instruction ever given to preachers is found in the books of First Timothy, Second Timothy, and Titus. Gospel preachers should read these books often. Special attention should be given to *II Timothy 4:1-8*.

Some churches want a preacher who is "out of this world." But, like other Christians, there are no perfect preachers. The Lord's requirements of preachers are wonderful; but, let us not set standards so high that none can reach them.

Things The Preacher Should Not Try

The preacher should not try to be a professional entertainer. The preacher's business is to preach the gospel (*Mark 16:16*). Paul's instruction reads as follows: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (*II Timothy 4:2*). It is "in season" when people like it, and will obey it; but it also must be preached when it is unpopular, or is "out of season." (*II Timothy 4:2*). He is to "preach the word."

The preacher should not attempt to do all the work of the church. Should he try to do all the work that needs to be done, he destroys himself, and spoils and robs the members of the church of many blessings which come from doing their duty. A preacher needs time for Bible study, meditation, and prayer. If he becomes too busy, he will have nothing to say when he stands in the pulpit.

The preacher must not spend all his time visiting the sick. Of course, he must, as a Christian visit, but visitation is not the exclusive duty of the preacher. Other members of the church (all) are required to fulfill their obligations here (*James 1:27*).

It is not the preacher's duty to become a dictator in the Lord's church. It is contrary to God's plan for one man, one elder, one deacon, one woman to seek to "run" the church of God. Diotrephes was such a man, but he was rebuked by the Apostle John (*III John 9-11*). God has put elders—bishops—overseers—in charge of the church (*Acts 20:17, 28; Philipians 1:1-2*).

Gospel preachers must avoid being used by others to accomplish their selfish purposes. Cooperate? Yes! But have your own mind—do what you think is right—stand on your own two feet.

Preachers should never become involved in factionalism. Promoters of heresy do great harm to the people of God. Schisms are always sinful (*I Corinthians 12:25*). Usually those who are withdrawn from because of their heretical teaching end up establishing their own church or religious group.

There Are Some Things A Preacher Should Do

What are they? A gospel preacher should be a preacher of the word of the gospel of Christ (*II Timothy 4:2; Mark 16:16; Romans 1:16*). If a preacher has any business in the pulpit it is to preach the word. One cannot "preach the word" without preaching the word! Preachers should not talk about the scripture; they should preach the scripture (*I Peter 4:11*). Preachers should never carry their personal problems into the pulpit with them. Endeavor to be filled with enthusiasm—but not with apathy—as you proclaim God's wonderful message.

A preacher who is dispirited, aggravated, grieved, and emotionally upset cannot do an acceptable job preaching the gospel of Christ. Furthermore, maintain a good, wholesome relationship with your wife and children. To do otherwise is to fail.

Preachers should keep in close contact with the elders. As a rule, if a preacher is considerate of the elders, they will also be with him. Elders are the overseers of the church—remember that! Do not try to run away from the elders. It is necessary to learn that one (the preacher) cannot have his way all the time. Peter and Judas, James and John made mistakes. It is far easier to be a wrecker than it is to be a builder.

Gospel preachers should be aware that the world is watching them (*Matthew 5:16*). Practice honesty, be fair in your speech and your dealings with others, seek to be tactful and well-mannered, dress neatly, but not gaudily, ever striving to make the best impression possible upon others. Whatever you do, never permit pride and arrogance to stand in your way.

Permit this writer to address a few remarks to members of the church of Christ; Encourage your preacher. A few compliments for your preacher's efforts are always in order. Jesus never flattered any one, but he did compliment those who deserved such. (*Cf. Matthew 8:5-10; Luke 7:1-10*). In this manner you can make your preacher's work much easier.

Another suggestion: Pay your preacher a decent salary; support him with your attendance at each service; look for ways to help spread the gospel and build up the church; don't be professional fault-finders—a proof-reader looks only for mistakes—never learning what the printed matter really says. Be kind, warm, and friendly toward a fellow-brother and servant of Christ.

Kind Reader, the foregoing remarks are written against the background of more than 54 years of preaching. Verily, if I had my life to live over I would spend it preaching the gospel of Christ.

A Contented Life

But godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (*I Timothy 6:6-7, A.S.V.*).

"Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content" (*Philippians 4:11, A.S.V.*).

"Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have; for He himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (*Hebrews 13:5, A.S.V.*).

We do not suggest that one should not try to improve one's lot or state in life; but one can bring oneself to the point where he is not disquieted, or disturbed by excessive desires, even though not every wish is gratified or obtained. There is no real reason why a Christian should live a discontented life!

Even though man has a built-in desire to excel, to progress, to achieve, man can learn to be contented in whatsoever state he may find himself. Just here the reader should open the book of Philippians and peruse its sacred pages.

One can learn to make the best of one's circumstances, whether in prison, or poverty, or sickness, or whatever one's physical handicaps may be. This is exactly what the great apostle Paul practiced. Do not waste your energy through worry (*Philippians 4:4-7, 11-13, 19, A.S.V.*). A disease that cannot be cured must be endured. Life's shadows will come—we must somehow learn to live with them.

Jesus taught that we must learn to live life a day at a time (*Matthew 6:9-13*). Bread for the day is all the bread you need. A true application of the lessons taught in *Matthew 6:31-34* will keep us from borrowing trouble. That makes one miserable! A little faith, a little trust, a little common sense works wonders! Forget the past, and look to the future (*Philippians 3:13-14*). It is always, "now," "today!" Abraham Lincoln, of Civil War fame, when asked what he was going to do, said, "I am like the old preacher in a crowded coach, nearing a raging river—I never cross a river till I get to it... And, besides, many rivers are placid; and the lions along the way are chained, anyway."

Christian friend, where is your faith? The habit of worry needs to be overcome (*Matthew 6:24-30*). One person had become so accustomed to worry that he could not remember what he was worried about. For shame!

One should never be afraid to try. Success often follows failure! Peter said, "Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy

word, I will let down the net" (*Luke 5:5*). Excuses are worth nothing. Jesus said, "Launch out into the deep." They then caught more fish than the net would hold. Of course, Peter had to do something about it. Nothing ever succeeds if one never tries! You can control the way you think (*Proverbs 23:7*).

If one wants contentment, one must develop the correct view of life. We live in the REAL world, not in the IDEAL world. Life cannot be all fun and leisure. Life is pain, struggle, sorrow, toil, and hardship—as well as success and accomplishment. In fact, life is a mixed bag of things good and bad. There is no easy way through our world. Paul stated, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (*II Corinthians 4:8-9; Cf. II Corinthians 11:24-28*).

One can increase his measure of contentment by taking time to count his blessings. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (*James 1:17*). *Acts 14:17* says, "...That he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful season, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

You may think you have nothing for which to be thankful; but, just suppose you lost the little you now possess. We sing a song:

"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed;
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done."
Have you ever had to beg for bread? (*Acts 20:35*).

Perhaps the greatest contributing factor to real contentment is a deep and abiding faith and trust in Almighty God. Anxiety possesses us when we doubt our beliefs and believe our doubts. Can it be our nerves crack because our faith has already broken?

Faith in God comes by hearing his word (*Romans 10:17*). Is our faith shattered because we no longer read his word? *Philippians 4:19* says: "My God shall supply all your needs..." Do we believe this promise?? *Philippians 1:12* reads: "The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." Can we say, "Amen?"

In *Deuteronomy 33:25* God promised the Israelites: "...As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The Psalmist wrote, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (*Psalms 23:4*). Jesus declared, "...And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (*Matthew 28:20*).

Josiah, the Mistaken King

Following the entrance of Israel into the land of Canaan it was God's divine purpose to govern them through Judges. These were 15 in number—Othniel being the first; Samuel, the last one.

In the course of time the people became dissatisfied with God's way of ruling them and demanded a king to rule over them. We read, "When Samuel was old, ... he made his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his first born was Joel; and the name of his second, Abijah: They were judges in Beersheba. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice" (*I Samuel 8:1-3*).

The conduct of Samuel's two sons represented no weakness or fault of God's system of government; but it did show a marked and shameful disregard of his will. When elders, deacons, preachers, and other members 'mis-live' their calling, it does not mitigate the will and way of the Lord. The Lord's law is right, even if all the members of the church go wrong!

The people of Samuel's day demanded a king to rule over them. "We will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" (*I Samuel 8:19-20*). How foolish! Instead of God's ruling over them, they wanted a king. In our time many are dissatisfied with God's way (the New Testament way), but desire a Pope, or denominational machinery to rule over them. Such wish to be "like all the nations."

In due time a king was granted them. Saul, David, and Solomon reigned for 120 years. Then the kingdom was divided:: Two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, became the Kingdom of Judah, with Rehoboam their first king. The other ten tribes, under Jeroboam, became the Kingdom of Israel—a rebellious kingdom. In these kingdoms some rulers were good, and some were bad. Idolatry and apostasy became the order of the times.

It was during one of the darkest periods of Jewish history that Josiah King of Judah was born. He was a subject of wonderful prophecy: "And behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of Jehovah unto Bethel: and Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar by the word of Jehovah and said: O altar, altar, thus saith Jehovah: Behold a son shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he sacrifice the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee. And he gave a sign the same day, saying This is the sigh which Jehovah hath spoken: Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out" (*I Kings 13:1-3*).

Here is one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible. This prediction was about 350 years before the event took place. The child to be born was "Josiah" whose name was called 350 years before his birth! How could the "man of god" have known? The answer is found in that he spake by the inspiration of the Spirit of God (Cf. *II Timothy 3:15-17*; *II Peter 1:20-21*).

The prophecy mentioned in *I Kings 13:1-3* finds its fulfillment in *II Kings 23:15-16*. Josiah was on the throne of Judah. He came to Bethel, the right place. The Bible says: "Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, even that altar and high place he brake down; and he burned the high place and beat it to dust, and burned the Asherah. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchers that were there in the mount; and he sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchers, and burned them upon the altar, and defiled it, according to the word of the Lord, which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things."

Josiah made war against idolatry throughout the land. He destroyed everywhere high places, groves, images and all outward signs and relics of false worship. He restored the Temple, finding therein the book of the law of Moses, which he endeavored to impress afresh upon the minds of his people. Perhaps, his greatest day was the celebration of the Passover (in his 17th year) which had long been neglected. He was a great reformer!

What was Josiah's mistake? He was a meddler. He became involved in affairs which were not his own. Pharaoh-Necho was on his way to wage war against Assyria, but Josiah attempted to intercept him, and was slain in battle near Megiddo. We suggest that our readers turn to *II Chronicles 35:20-27* to learn of the sad fate of Josiah. Josiah seems to have been 'spoiling for a fight;' he should have known that it is never right to intrude into the affairs of others.

But Josiah would not listen when he was told to stop his efforts to interfere in the affairs of Pharaoh: "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; and God hath commanded me to make haste; forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not" (*II Chronicles 35:21*). Despite the foregoing warning, Josiah would not control himself: "Nevertheless, Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight against him, and hearkened unto the words of Neco from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo" (*verse 22*).

In the battle that followed, Josiah was mortally wounded (*verses 23-24*). Here is a man who should not have intruded into the affairs of another. Should we not learn from this incident?

"He that passeth by, and vexeth himself with strife belonging not to him, is

like one that taketh a dog by the ears" (*Proverbs 26:17*). In the New Testament we read: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters; but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (*1 Peter 4:15-16*).

Reproaches Removed

We sincerely request that *Nehemiah 2:9-20*, be closely scrutinized. Because of their rebellion against God, the Jewish people were in Babylon as captives. Artaxerxes the king saw Nehemiah's sorrow of heart, and desired to know its cause. Nehemiah then told him of the shameful conditions which characterized the city of Jerusalem (*Cf. Nehemiah 2:1-8*).

Why did Nehemiah wish to return unto Jerusalem, his native city? He wished to "build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach" (*Nehemiah 2:17*). What does the word reproach mean? Here the word means "shame, disgrace, a cause or an occasion of blame..." Hence, Nehemiah wished to make necessary correction.

Members of the church of Christ oftentimes make great and high claims, but they sometimes fall far short of the Lord's standards (*Galatians 5:4; 11 Peter 2:20-22*). If we have ceased to speak as the Bible speaks, if we have ceased to conduct ourselves as the Bible demands, if we have brought shame and disgrace upon the Lord's church, we must labor to have these (and all other) reproaches removed. It is through repentance, confession of sin, and prayer that restoration can be made (*Acts 8:21-22; James 5:16*). We should know that a good name and a good reputation represent two of our greatest assets (*Proverbs 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1*).

There are two kinds of reproaches. Some reproaches are deserved. Sin always brings reproaches. If one is reproached for drunkenness, adultery, strife and division, et. al., it is one's due. Others must suffer reproaches for righteousness' sake (*Cf. 1 Peter 4:14-16; Matthew 5:11-12*).

The Lord's church needs all reproaches removed from its pathway. At the very best, the church already has enough difficulties which serve as obstacles to truth and righteousness (*Titus 2:11-12*).

(1) "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (*Proverbs 14:34*). Of the church, it is written: "... Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his

marvellous light" (*I Peter 2:9*). The only way for the church to shine is for its members to shine (*Matthew 5:16*). Has your lamp gone out? (*Matthew 25:1-13*).

(2) Nothing brings greater reproach upon the church than those elders, preachers, and deacons who bring shame and disgrace upon his holy cause through their misconduct (*II Timothy 2:22-26*). All Christians are under the same obligation to live soberly and righteously. Dear Christian friends, never cause the way of truth to be blasphemed! (*I Timothy 1:20; Romans 2:24; I Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:5*).

(3) Disorderly services are very unfortunate. Too much talking, too much noise, too much coming in and going out, disrupt the Lord's services. One passage talks about decency and order (*I Corinthians 14:40*). Reverence should characterize all our services (*Hebrews 12:28*). "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (*Psalms 89:7*).

(4) All forms of internal dissension, consisting of partisan and contentious quarreling, must be laid aside. Peace and unity should be the order of the day (*I Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 1:27*). "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife" (*Proverbs 26:20-21*). A house divided cannot stand (*Matthew 12:25-26*).

(5) Christianity 'mis-lived' is a dark stain upon the body of Christ which is certain to hamper the progress of the church. We bring reproach upon Christ and the church when our lives deny our profession (*Philippians 2:12-18*). One old brother said, "How can I hear what you say, when what you are is forever ringing in my ears?" The church needs men and women of sterling character, because character is the beginning and the end of all things. The measure of one's character is what he would do if he knew he would never be found out!

(6) Stinginess with regard to our time, talent, and money is another reproach which should be removed. How many Christians spend far too little time, talent, and money in the service of the Lord? Lost time is never found again (*Ephesians 5:16*). Any talent that is buried is lost forever (*Matthew 25:14-30*). It is not money, but the "love of money" that is "the root of all kinds of evil" (*I Timothy 6:10, A.S.V.*).

What is the future of the Lord's church? It can be bright, or dismal—as we make it. It can have the best and most efficient leadership, if we want it. The

church can be united, peaceful, and workers-together with God, as we desire it.

The influence of the church for good can be an ever-widening circle till it encompasses the whole earth. Let us work to remove all reproaches, and go on to eternal victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“Kids Say Rape OK In Some Cases”

The above caption comes from **The Birmingham News** (May 3, 1988). It refers to a survey taken of 1,700 boys and girls from the 6th grade through the 9th grade. The survey was conducted by the Rhode Island Rape Center.

What does the survey reveal? “Nearly a fourth of the boys, and one out of every six girls, responding to a survey on rape said it was acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex with him if he had spent money on her” (**The Birmingham News**, 5-3-88).

We ask, Where did these boys and girls get such an idea? In Sunday School, where the Bible is taught? No! But such ideas are freely presented on daily TV programs! Are our parents permitting TV to teach and guide their children? How many children never attend a single church service? It is true that countless thousands of parents have no real interest in Bible teaching (*Ephesians 6:1-4*).

Another shocking statement is: “65 percent of the boys and 47 percent of the girls in the seventh through ninth grades said it is acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex with him if they have been dating more than six months.”

Again, we ask, where do such thoughts originate? In most schools the Bible cannot be taught. In many instances sex education has become a “how-to” proposition rather than a “don’t do it” proposition. Verily, it seems that sex has become a sort of toy, or game, with the “now” generation. Could such teaching explain the rapid spread of AIDS? In many circles, the word **abstinence** has become a dirty word; but this is exactly what the God of heaven teaches (*Genesis 2:21-25; Matthew 19:3-9*).

Another offensive quotation is: “87 percent of the boys and 79 percent of the girls said rape is OK if a couple is married.” What is rape? Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary defines rape as, “Sexual intercourse with a woman by a man without her consent and chiefly by force or deception.” This is woman-

abuse! Such sadistic mental and physical pain suffered by any woman would be extremely horrifying.

Women, like men, were created in the image of God. Men are commanded to love their wives as they love themselves (*Ephesians 5:25-31*). Where has the "Golden Rule" (*Matthew 7:12*) gone? What has become of the law of morality? No man has a right to mistreat or abuse a woman, even if she is his wife.

Again, we quote from the survey: "31 percent of the boys and 32 percent of the girls said it would not be improper for a man to rape a woman who has had previous sexual experience." How did these children come up with such outlandish notions? Can it be that these ideas reflect the educational philosophy which they have received? When children are taught HUMANISM and EVOLUTION—that human beings are no more than cats and dogs—how can they reverence the rights, whether spiritual or physical, of others? In a very true sense, one is the product of one's teaching. When God is left out of children's teaching, there is nothing left to rightly guide them.

David sinned against his son (Adonijah) when he allowed him to grow up unchecked and undisciplined (*I Kings 1:6*). Both Eli and Samuel made similar mistakes (*I Samuel 2:12, 22 ff; I Samuel 8:1-5*).

"50 percent of the students said a woman who dresses seductively and walks alone at night is asking to be raped," the survey reports. They probably are right!

Nudity is one of the great problems facing American women. The TV screen is filled with women wearing nothing but three "bandaids." The movies have gone even further in removing women's clothing. Pornography is a first-rate seller throughout the nation. Such nudity corrupts the minds and hearts of little girls. Mothers should see that their daughters are protected from such exposure.

True Christianity implies a different standard of dress from that of the world. We quote *I Timothy 2:9-11*: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

There must be something wrong with women who do not understand that nudity can excite, arouse, and stimulate strong sexual feelings in a man which can cause serious problems for them. God Almighty made clothes for Adam and Eve, and he expects modern women to clothe themselves properly.

In most instances, parents are not tough enough when they are bringing up their children. Parents are far too lenient; they need to put their feet down and

lay down the law. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (*Proverbs 13:24; Cf. 19:18 22:15; 23:13; 29:15*).

It is high time for women to take warning: "National statistics state that at least 25 percent of the girls in the United States will be sexually assaulted before they turn 18." How sad!

A Roman Catholic Ceremony

According to newspaper reports a ceremony of earthshaking importance was held in Birmingham, Alabama, March 26, 1988. But, as measured by the Holy Bible, it falls far short of scriptural demands.

Raymond J. Boland was ordained as a bishop. Did he meet the qualifications of a bishop as set forth in the Bible? Indeed, he did not! *1 Timothy 3:1-7* demands that bishops have a wife and children; but Mr. Boland has neither.

"Archbishop Oscar H. Lipscomb of Mobile conducted the three-hour ordination in the packed cathedral, resonant with the sound of three choirs and fragrant with incense" (*Birmingham Post-Herald*, March 26, 1988). Where does the Holy Bible authorize any such practice? We sincerely ask: What New Testament passage refers to choirs, and incense? In what passage does one read of a "bishop's miter"? And, where is the Bible authority that gives Pope John Paul II, divine right to appoint any bishop? We know of the qualifications of bishops (*1 Timothy 3:1-7*), but does Mr. Boland meet the scriptural requirements? We think not!

"A gold-plated volume of the gospels is symbolically held over Raymond Boland's head during his ordination" (*Ibid*). The question is: Will this man preach the gospel message without addition or subtraction? Does he have the courage to preach the truth about Mary's other sons and daughters? (*Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3*). What scripture will he read to show that Mary the virgin was immaculately born free of original sin? (Actually, the doctrine of hereditary total depravity is unknown to the Bible, *Ezekiel 28:15; Acts 17:29; Luke 3:38*). Will the bishop preach the truth as contained in *Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47*?

"While the cathedral's huge pipe organ played before the ceremony, Boland's mother quietly said a rosary in her pew" (*Ibid*). We sincerely ask, Where, in the New Testament, does one find authority to use a pipe organ? We

also ask for a Bible verse which mentions the rosary?

The vocabulary of Roman Catholicism is amazing when compared to the New Testament. We notice: Cardinal, Archbishop, Auxiliary bishop, Reverend, Father, etc. No one can use these terms, and follow *1 Peter 4:11; Matthew 23:6-12*. We respectfully challenge any one to find the New Testament passage which uses the word **pope**. "Tradition" in religion is a dangerous word (we know the word is sometimes used in a good sense, *II Thessalonians 2:15; Galatians 1:14*). But the "traditions" and "doctrines of men" are always condemned (*Matthew 15:6-9; Mark 7:6-13*). As used in the New Testament the word **tradition** usually means laws and regulations handed down orally from one generation to another without written instruction. The Roman Catholic church can always invent "tradition" to support any thing they may desire.

Verily, saving faith comes from God's written word, not from human tradition (*John 20:30-31; Romans 10:17*).

"Nearly 1,000 Roman Catholics from around the world gathered in St. Paul's Cathedral yesterday to witness the ordination of Raymond J. Boland as bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham" (Ibid). The Catholic Church is good at embellishing numbers and exaggerating geography in their efforts to claim superiority over the whole earth. There are other religious bodies in Birmingham. Are they to submit to Catholic rule? Does the reader know that the Pope claims the "the supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff; union of minds, therefore, requires, together with a perfect accord in the one faith, complete submission and obedience of will to the church and to the Roman Pontiff as to God Himself" (Great Encyclical Letters, 193). Furthermore, "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty" (Great Encyclical Letters, 304). It is no wonder, then, that Mary Callahan, one of Mr. Boland's admirers said, "He's the greatest boss in the world," for that — boss!—is exactly what he is expected to do!

The truth is: Jesus possesses all authority (*Matthew 28:18-20*). He is the head of all things to the church which he built (*Ephesians 1:22-23; Matthew 16:18-19*). Jesus has not surrendered any of his authority to the pope, nor to any other man or ecclesiasticism. It is often said that the pope is the vicar of Christ. What does **vicar** mean? The word means "one serving as a substitute." But Jesus Christ needs no substitute!

Jesus' church was established on the first Pentecost after his resurrection (*Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 36-38, 41-42, 47; Colossians 1:13*). The Roman Catholic Church is an apostasy which grew out of the New Testament church,

and was not fully organized until about 606 A.D.

The terms of membership in the New Testament church are clearly set forth. They are **faith, repentance, confession** of Jesus' name, and **baptism** (immersion) (*Cf. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:36-38*).

The manner of New Testament worship is set forth. The day of worship is the first day of the week (*Acts 20:7*). The scriptural items are these: the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread (Lord's supper), and prayer (*Acts 2:42*). Another item of worship is singing (*Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19*). Here is the way Jesus commanded his followers to worship God:

Acceptable service and worship of Almighty God must be offered to him "in spirit and in truth." We read, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (*John 4:23-24*).

A Church That Continues

In this treatise we shall be contending for the New Testament church—the church you can read of in the Holy Bible (*Matthew 16:18-19*).

What does the word **continue** mean? The definition, according to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, is: "To remain in existence... to maintain without interruption a condition, course, or action..." Many churches have ceased to exist. The seven churches of Asia, once strong, growing, vibrant congregations of the Lord's people, have ceased to exist (*Revelation 1:11*).

In Rome there was a strong church of Christ to which Paul addressed the book of Romans; but it has long since vanished from the earth. In its place, there is an apostate church, which bears no resemblance to the church of Paul's day (*Romans 1:7; 16:16*). What we here said would apply to the whole area of early New Testament Christianity.

We suggest to all Christians that they, in whatever community they may live, do all in their power, in harmony with the teaching of the Holy Bible, to keep the light of the Lord ever burning—Don't put the light out, and don't let it go out (*Cf. Leviticus 6:12-13; Matthew 5:16*). All Christians should reded-

icate themselves to the perpetuation of the Old Jerusalem Gospel (*Galatians 1:6-10*).

We shall offer a few Bible directions which will help us to achieve our noble and holy goals:

(1) Our aim must be to continue in the word of God. "Jesus said to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (*John 8:30-32*). Pep-talks, liberalism, psychology, and modernism in the pulpit cannot get the job done. It is high time for us to look into the "perfect law of liberty" (*James 1:25*). God's word is powerful indeed (*Hebrews 4:12; Romans 1:16*). From the beginning of the church the disciples "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine..." (*Acts 2:42*). We are duty bound to continue to preach *Mark 16:16, Acts 2:36-38, Romans 6:3-4*, no matter how unpopular these and other verses might be. "Preach the word," said Paul (*II Timothy 4:1-5*).

(2) According to *Acts 14:22*, we should continue in faith. We must not be moved away from the faith (*Colossians 1:21-23*). The faith that saves comes from hearing God's word (*Romans 10:17*). Many, as Hymenaeus and Alexander, have made shipwreck of their faith (*I Timothy 1:19-20*). We can become so enamored with riches, cares, and pleasures until our faith wanes and dies (*Luke 8:12-13*). An "evil heart of unbelief" cannot carry one to heaven (*Hebrews 3:12-13*).

(3) If the Lord's church is to survive we must practice goodness, self-discipline, and morality. Hence, we must return to the standard of right as set forth in Holy Scripture (*Titus 2:11-12*). Wrong is wrong, no matter how we may try to rationalize it (*Romans 3:3-4*). "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (*Romans 11:22*). It is high time that we should return to practicing "pure and undefiled religion" (*James 1:27*).

(4) Of course, we should fight the devil and all his cohorts, for he is the adversary of God and man (*I Peter 5:8*). Satan perverts the scriptures, opposes God's work, hinders the progress of the gospel, works lying wonders, and is the father of lies (*Matthew 4:6; I Thessalonians 2:18; Matthew 13:19; II Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 16:14; John 8:44*). Instead of fussing and fighting and quarreling among ourselves, we should fight the real enemy—the devil (*Romans 12:20; 14:19*). Following the Golden Rule is always in order (*Matthew 7:12*). "For he that would love life and see good days, let him

refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (*I Peter 3:10*).

(5) Remember always those great Bible lessons you have heard and learned. "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (*II Timothy 3:14*). Think of the many wonderful sermons which you heard from the lips of brother Gus Nichols, N. B. Hardeman, Foy E. Wallace, et al. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (*II Timothy 2:2*). Should we not bequeath to oncoming generations the same faithfulness to the church, the same dedication to God's will and way which we received from our benefactors?

(6) The church that continues is the church that continues to worship God according to his Holy Will. There is a special day involved—the first day of the week (*Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 1:10*). There are certain items or acts of worship which must characterize the worship service. They are: singing (*Ephesians 5:19*), Bible study (*Acts 2:42*), prayer (*James 5:16*), giving (*Acts 11:29-30*), and the Lord's supper (*I Corinthians 11:23-28*). One must worship God in the right "spirit" and according to his "truth" (*John 4:23-24*). It is possible for one to worship God, but in the wrong way. This is exactly what the people of Athens did (*Acts 17:23; Cf. Matthew 15:1-9; Colossians 2:20-22*).

Worship is not an exhibition whereby we come together to show off our new clothes, new cars, or expensive jewelry. We should remember that we are in the presence of God, and he knows why we have assembled together.

The Blood Of Christ

From early human history, God is represented as considering blood sacred. The blood of Abel, which was shed by Cain, is described as crying out to God for vengeance (*Genesis 4:10*). We are told that life is in the blood, or the blood is the life (*Leviticus 17:11, 14; Deuteronomy 12:23*). Both the Old Testament and New Testament forbid the eating of blood (*Genesis 9:3-4; Acts 15: 20, 29*).

The scriptures say, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (*Genesis 9:6*). Animal blood used in sin offerings under the Old

Testament was typical of the vicarious suffering of the Great Messiah who was to come (*Hebrews 9:19-28*). Many events of the Old Testament were a "...shadow of good thing to come" (*Hebrews 10:1-4; 8:5*).

In delivering Israel from bondage in the land of Egypt, God instituted the Passover. The Israelites were to take a lamb, slay it, prepare it for food. Its blood was to be put on the lintel over the door of each Israelite's house, and on both door posts (*Exodus 12:3-10*).

The instruction is clear and plain: The blood is to be put over the door and on each side post of each home of the Israelites. Would it have been proper to have put the blood on a barn? or some other structure? One reason why both Denominationalism and Roman Catholicism are sinful and wrong is because they (per se) have not been covered by the blood of Christ. Jesus purchased only his church with his blood (*Acts 20:28*). The Israelites were required to stay in their houses, which had blood on them, if they wished to be saved from death (*Exodus 12:13-17*). In like manner, we must remain faithful members of the church, which has the blood of Christ on it, if we would be saved eternally (*Acts 20:28*).

Just here we raise a question: Instead of putting the blood on the two door posts and on the lintel above the door, as commanded, would it have been right to have substituted prayer instead? No doubt many modernists would say, "Yes." But, not so! The Lord say, "...when I see blood, I will pass over you..." (*Exodus 12:13*). Suppose some Israelites had said, "We don't want to mess up our houses with animal blood—we will pray at a mourners' bench instead." Would such have been right? No indeed! Hear God's word: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (*Proverbs 28:9*). Never add to, substitute for, nor subtract from, God's Holy Word (*Revelation 22:18-19; Jeremiah 26:2*).

Everything in the Old Covenant was dedicated with the blood of animals when the book was sprinkled with blood (*Exodus 24:3-8* with *Hebrews 9:11-28*); the New Testament has been dedicated with the blood of Christ (*Matthew 26:28* with *Hebrews 10:26-29*). Whatever is not included in the New Testament does not have a drop of the blood of Christ on it! Instrumental music in Christian worship is sinful because it is not dedicated by the blood of Christ. Christians people should see and know the difference (*Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23; Hebrews 5:11-14*). It is just as sinful to add instrumental music to the worship of the Lord's church as it was for Nadab and Abihu to add strange fire, "which he commanded them not" (*Leviticus 10:1-2*).

Jesus' precious blood speaks of better conditions and promises than did

that of Abel. We have come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that "speaketh better things than that of Abel" (*Hebrews 12:24*). Abel's blood cried out for vengeance; but Christ's blood offers mercy and pardon to all (*Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 2:9*).

It is true that Jesus shed his precious blood for all men (*Hebrews 2:9; I John 4:14*); but the wonderful benefit of his blood is received conditionally. The atonement of Christ is not limited to a certain few, as Calvinism argues, but is a universal one. Jesus died for all (*Hebrews 2:9*). The gospel is to be preached to every creature (*Mark 16:16*). Man is a creature of choice (*Revelation 22:17*). Only those who resist God's will are damned (*I Peter 4:17*), and heaven is promised to all who hear and obey the will of the Lord (*Revelation 22:14*).

Some for whom Jesus died can be lost (*I Corinthians 8:11; Romans 14:15*). Hence, the notion that the number of the redeemed "is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished" is false!

Jesus shed his blood "for the remission of sins" (*Matthew 26:28*). Repentance and baptism are "for the remission of sins" (*Acts 2:38*). Therefore, one is cleansed by Jesus' blood when one believes and obeys the gospel (*Hebrews 5:8-9; John 3:16, 36, A.S.V.*).

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..." (*Ephesians 1:7*). When does one contact the blood of Jesus? The answer is simple. It is when one, by faith, repentance and confession of Jesus, is baptized into Christ's death. (*Romans 6:3-4*).

Jesus shed his blood in his death (*John 19:31-34*). Your Bible teaches that one is "baptized into his death" (*Romans 6:3-4*).

According to the Bible, one is washed in Christ's blood when one is washed in the water of baptism (*Revelation 7:14; Acts 22:16*).

Jesus purchased the church with his own blood (*Acts 20:28*). Jesus would not have purchased a non-essential church, nor would he have built a non-essential church (*Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:47*). The Bible teaches that one is baptized into the one body, which is the church (*I Corinthians 12:13*).

For church members also, the cleansing power of the blood is conditional. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (*I John 1:7*). If we keep on walking in the light of truth, his blood keeps on cleansing us from sin.

What Is Baptism?

Baptism has been throughout the centuries a controversial doctrine, but it should not be; the Biblical teaching is very clear.

What does Bible baptism require? We shall be extremely cautious to state exactly what the Bible clearly teaches, with no effort to muddy the waters.

Bible baptism requires **water**: "I indeed baptize you with water" (*Matthew 3:11*). Many preachers and churches do their best to remove water, arguing that the Holy Spirit is the element. Paul in *Ephesians 4:5* teaches that "there is one baptism," not two. This means that Holy Spirit baptism had ceased by A.D. 64, when the Ephesian letter was written. Was Paul in error?

Bible baptism requires **much water**: "...John was baptizing in Aenon... because there was much water there..." (*John 3:23*). Sprinkling or pouring does not require "much water." Baptism, according to the Bible, requires **going to the water**: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (*Acts 8:36*).

Furthermore, baptism requires **going into the water**. "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (*Acts 8:38*).

Baptism is a **burial**. "Buried with him in baptism..." (*Colossians 2:12*). Again, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (*Romans 6:3-4*). In sprinkling or pouring there can be no burial or resurrection.

Bible baptism necessitates a **coming up out of the water**. "And when they were come up out of the water..." (*Acts 8:39*).

Again, Bible baptism requires the administrator to handle the subject, not the element, water. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them..." (*Matthew 28:19*).

In the light of these scriptures, baptism cannot be sprinkling or pouring!

What is baptism? Beyond any doubt, baptism is a "burial," according to *Colossians 2:12* and *Romans 6:3-4*. We shall now quote Adam Clarke, a renowned commentator of great academic accomplishment, commenting on *Romans 6:4*: "It is probable that the apostle here alludes to the mode of administering baptism by immersion, the whole body being put under the water, which seems to say, the man is drowned, is dead; and, when he came up out of the water, he seemed to have a resurrection to life; the man is risen

again; he is alive." (Clarke's Commentary, Vol. VI p. 76). It must be borne in mind that Adam Clarke was a Methodist, and that he does try to support sprinkling and pouring as modes of baptism; but, when his scholarship comes to the fore he goes back to the original meaning of the word "baptism"—immersion.

Factually, the first authenticated instance of sprinkling occurred about the middle of the third century (A.D. 250). Hence, the practice of pouring or sprinkling came too late to be Bible baptism. Those who sincerely wish to follow the teaching of God's Holy Word can never submit to sprinkling or pouring as modes of Bible baptism!

Bible baptism involves a washing, which can never be true of sprinkling or pouring. Here we suggest that *Hebrews 10:22*, *Titus 3:5*; *Ephesians 5:26*, and *Acts 22:16*, be carefully read.

Who should be baptized? Should infants be baptized? Many say, "Yes." But the Bible says, "No." In the first place, infants do not need to be baptized. They are not sinners! The doctrine of hereditary total depravity is a false doctrine—the doctrine that babies are born sinners is a mis-use of scripture. The King of Tyre was "perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (*Ezekiel 28:15*). Sin is a transgression of the law (*1 John 3:4*); it is the soul that sins that dies (*Ezekiel 18:28*); babies have never sinned! Any sin mentioned in *Psalms 51:5* would be on the part of the mother, not on the part of the child. Read this passage and you will see!

It is impossible for infants to be taught the gospel (*Matthew 28:18-20*); they cannot believe (*Mark 16:16*); they have no sins of which to repent (*Acts 2:38*); they are not capable of confessing Jesus' name (*Matthew 10:32-33*); they have no sins to be remitted (*Acts 2:38*). Hence, these verses do not apply to infants!

What is the design or purpose of Bible baptism?

Bible baptism is not a 'church ordinance' (as taught by denominational preachers); rather, Jesus commanded baptism even before the establishment of the church (*Matthew 28:18-20*; *Acts 2:36-38, 47*).

One is to be baptized because it is a part of the New Birth (*John 3:3, 5*). On Pentecost those who believed in Jesus repented of their sins, and were baptized, born again, born of water and of the Spirit (*Acts 2:36-38, 41-42, 47*). *Mark 16:16* teaches that it is the baptized believer who is saved.

One is to be baptized "for the remission of sins..." Jesus shed his precious blood "for the remission of sins" (*Matthew 26:28*). Did Jesus die for those who were already saved? No person in the New Testament was ever baptized

because he was already saved (*Acts 2:38*). The phrase in these passages—"for the remission of sins"—are identical.

One is to be baptized in order to have one's sins washed away (*Acts 22:16*; Cf. *Ephesians 5:26*). *I Peter 3:21* teaches that "...baptism doth also now save us..." Who will deny it? It is baptism that puts one into Christ or his body which is the church (*I Corinthians 5:17*).

"Uncertain Sounds"

The word "sound" is an important Bible word. Any teaching contrary to "sound doctrine" is sinful (*I Timothy 1:10*). According to *II Timothy 1:7*, all Christians need "the spirit of a sound mind." Paul urges us to "hold fast the form of sound words..." (*II Timothy 1:13*). Some are unwilling to "endure sound doctrine..." (*II Timothy 4:3*). It is by "sound doctrine" that the faithful are to convict false teachers (*Titus 1:9, A.S.V.*). There is such a thing as "sound speech" (*Titus 2:8*). Only in following the complete word of God can we be "sound in the faith" (*Titus 2:2*).

The Bible also mentions "uncertain sounds" (*I Corinthians 14:7-11*). Read these words and you will see that there must be a distinction of sounds; otherwise it would be impossible to correctly understand what is piped or harped. The sound of a trumpet, in all ages, has been used to direct armies either to advance, or to retreat, as the situation might indicate. Likewise, voices or languages which teach different doctrines can never gain the approbation of God Almighty because he speaks with one voice!

Isaiah the prophet wrote, "To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them" (*Isaiah 8:20*). "Every word of God is tried" (Marginal note, "purified"): "he is a shield unto them that take refuge in him. Add not thou unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (*Proverbs 30:5-6, A.S.V.*).

We shall now listen to the apostle Paul: "If any man teach a different doctrine, and consent not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting" (marginal note: "sick") "about questions and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain" (*I Timothy 6:3-6, A.S.V.*).

Only those preachers who "preach the word," who speak as the oracles of God," and who "abideth in the teaching of Christ," are God's spokesmen here on earth (*II Timothy 4:2; I Peter 4:11; II John 9-11*). All preachers who do otherwise are to be rejected (*Galatians 1:6-10*).

What are some of the "uncertain sounds" which can be heard today? We shall note:

(1) In some quarters and in some publications there seems to be a special fascination with the idea of bringing the Independent Christian Church into full fellowship with the church of Christ. Some seem to be willing to unite with that denomination at almost any cost. Compromise seems to be the order of the day! To such brethren the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship of the New Testament church is of minor importance, if any at all. Unity is the goal of all New Testament Christians, but not with the compromise of New Testament principles (*John 17:20-23; I Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1-6*). Such is a sin before God!

(2) Another "uncertain sound" is that women should be permitted to be elders and preachers of the church of Christ. According to this psychology, the New Testament church is outdated, outmoded, and needs to be restructured, and be brought into the twenty-first century. Verily, the power of women's equal-rights movement is being felt in the various churches, including the church of Christ. Television, radio, newspapers, and magazines are full of such propaganda. Now, despite scriptural restrictions (*I Timothy 2:11-12*), many women are ready to trample the word of God under their feet, and climb into the pulpit and into the eldership, even though they have been strictly forbidden to do so. Let women joyfully accept the role God Almighty has given them and all will be well (*Genesis 2:21-25; I Corinthians 11:7-15; Titus 2:1-7*).

(3) More "uncertain sounds" include what some call "open membership." What is that? It means some are ready to receive any person into membership of the church whether that one has obeyed the gospel of Christ or not. In New Testament times only those who heard, believed, repented of their sins, confessed Jesus Christ, and were baptized in Jesus' name were added to the church (*Acts 2:36-38, 41, 47*). Some have "modernized" the church so much as to receive into its membership those who have been sprinkled or poured (not baptism in the Bible sense), or have taken others in on their denominational baptism. Denominational people are saved (?) before they are baptized. Some of our brethren teach that one does not need to understand that baptism is "for remission of sins." Yet this is exactly what Peter taught (*Acts 2:38*)!

Jesus put baptism before salvation (*Mark 16:16*). Paul was taught that baptism comes before the washing away of sins (*Acts 22:16*). Paul taught that baptism is a burial—immersion—and has a resurrection in it (*Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-4*). We ask: Are those who are saved (?) at the mourners' bench eligible for membership in the church of Christ? Are those who were saved (?) before they were baptized eligible to be received into the Lord's church? Shame, shame, shame!

(4) The uncertain sounds of denominationalism are more and more being incorporated into the speech of members of the church of Christ. For example: "Our pastor," or "our church," "our ministers"—ministers of visitation, youth ministers, singles ministers, THE minister, minister for the young marrieds, and the like. All these expressions are foreign to the teaching of the Old Jerusalem gospel. Read *I Peter 4:11*: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." The Holy Spirit says through Paul, "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (*II Timothy 1:13, A.S.V.*).

"Tell Us Plainly"

The Jews therefore came round about him, and said unto him, "How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly" (*John 10:24*).

At the time of this statement, there was division among the Jews (*John 10:19*). The Jews wanted him to "tell (them) plainly," whether or not he was the Christ. But Jesus had told them: "But Jesus answered them, I told you, an ye believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me" (*verse 25*).

The truth is: If the Jews had but believed their own scriptures, they would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah (*John 5:39-47*). Also, the marvelous works done by Jesus were proof that he came from God (*John 3:1-2; 9:16; Acts 2:22*).

We do no violence to the scriptures when we apply the expression—"Tell us plainly"—to other areas of divine truth: We shall note:

(1) "Lord, tell us plainly" about baptism. Baptism requires "much water" (*John 3:23*). Therefore baptism is not sprinkling or pouring. Scriptural baptism demands going down into water, and coming up out of it (*Acts 8:26-39*). Baptism is immersion (*Romans 6:34; Colossians 2:12*); for we are "buried

with him in baptism." Baptism is to save us, to remit our sins, and to initiate us into Christ (*Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27*).

(2) "Lord, tell us plainly" of the one true church. The Lord's church was established on the first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (*Matthew 16:18-19; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; 36-38, 41-42, 47*). The church or kingdom existed during the lifetime of the apostles and early Christians (*Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 1:6, 9*). Jesus purchased the church with his own blood (*Acts 20:28*), reigns over it as its head (*Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4-6*), and is its Saviour (*Ephesians 5:23*). The church which Jesus built is not composed of denominations, for the Lord's church existed hundreds of years before denominationalism ever disgraced the pages of history. In the Bible there is no 'joining the church' of one's choice; the Lord added the saved to his church (*Acts 2:49*).

(3) "Lord, tell us plainly" how one must live so as to inherit heaven and immortal glory. After one becomes a Christian one keeps himself unspotted from the world, living a sober, righteous, and godly life (*James 1:27; Titus 2:11-12*). The impossibility of apostasy is never taught in the Bible (*Galatians 5:4; I Corinthians 10:12; Hebrews 6:4-6; II Peter 2:20-22*). Eternal life is in the world to come, awaiting the arrival of the faithful (*Mark 10:30; Revelation 2:10*).

(4) "Lord, tell us plainly" of the assembly. (*Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25; I Corinthians 16:1-2*). Is it on the Sabbath day? No, it is the first day of the week. On this day we are to assemble to worship God. The items of worship are clearly set forth in the scriptures (*Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19*). It is in this manner we worship God "in spirit and in truth" (*John 4:23-24*). The "whole church" should assemble together (*I Corinthians 14:23*).

(5) "Lord, tell us plainly" of the kind of music required in Christian worship. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (*Colossians 3:16, A.S.V.*) Another verse, *Ephesians 5:19*, reads: "Speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (*A.S.V.*). Other verses which authorize singing are *Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13; Romans 15:9; I Corinthians 14:15*. None of these verses, nor any others, teach the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. The New Testament authorizes singing, but not playing.

(6) "Lord, tell us plainly" of the contribution. Christians are taught to give as they purpose, as they prosper, and according to their ability (*II Corinthians*

9:6-7; *I Corinthians 16:1-2*; *Acts 11:29-30*). It is God who gives us power to earn money (*Deuteronomy 8:17-18*). Actually, we give only of that which God has given us (*I Chronicles 29:14*). Faithfully make your contribution to the Lord each first day of the week. Rob not God.

(7) "Lord, tell us plainly" of the dangers of worldly pleasure. One's spiritual vitality can be "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (*Luke 8:14*). One becomes an enemy of God when he falls in love with the world (*James 4:4, A.S.V.*). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (*I John 2:15-17*). Moses refused all the honors and treasures of Egypt that he might enjoy the heavenly rewards of God Almighty (*Hebrews 11:24-26*). Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of earth; but Jesus turned him down, flat (*Matthew 4:8-9*).

(8) "Lord, tell us plainly" of that great heavenly reward. Jesus has gone to prepare a mansion for the faithful (*John 14:1-6*; *Revelation 2:10*). Those who do his commandments have a right to enter through the gates into the city (*Revelation 22:14*). Those who become children of God and "die in the Lord" rest from their labors (*Revelation 14:13*).

Now, we suggest that our readers turn it *II Timothy 4:6-8*, and reflect upon their meaning.

How To Make The Church Strong

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (*Ephesians 6:10*).

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all things be done with charity" or "love," A.S.V. (*I Corinthians 16:13-14*). Thus, the Ephesian and Corinthian brethren were exhorted to be strong, "...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

When we urge the "church" to be strong, we have no reference to denominationalism, Protestant or Catholic. One reads in vain looking for any instruction addressed to either protestantism or Catholicism.

One can read in the Bible of that church or kingdom which Jesus Christ established (*Matthew 16:18-19*; *Acts 2:1-4, 36-38, 41, 47*); but where does the Bible mention the Baptist church, or the Methodist, or the Roman Catholic church, et al.? We do not wish to be offensive; but we must not be derelict in our duty to present the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as these lines

are written (*John 8:30-32; 17:17*). "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" wrote the great apostle Paul (*Galatians 4:16*).

But, how can we make the Lord's church strong? We shall offer the following suggestions:

(1) Let all members of the church work for 100 percent attendance for all services: Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and all services of any gospel meeting. Hebrews 10:25 urges church members not to forsake the Lord's assembly. The "whole church" should assemble together (*I Corinthians 14:23*). The day of assembly for specified worship is the first day of the week (*Acts 20:7*).

The easiest way to kill any church is to stay away. When members refuse to assemble together the church dies. Atrocious sins such as murder, adultery, or fornication can help destroy the church in any given location; but these are not the only sins that can close the doors. Verily, 'good' people can be instrumental in stopping the church in its tracks by just staying at home, or going elsewhere! There can be no church of Christ in any community unless it assembles! — If you want the church to cease to exist, just stay at home!

(2) A strong church must have the proper food and the proper exercise. The food is the word of God; the exercise is putting into practice those divine duties bound upon us as God's children (*Matthew 4:4; I Peter 2:1-2; Hebrews 5:11-14*).

We should make certain that we are free from all spiritual diseases. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (*I Corinthians 11:23-30*). False teachers and false doctrines can have no place in a strong church (*I John 4:1-4; II John 9-11; I Timothy 4:1-5*). We urge each member of the church to become a student of God's word (*II Timothy 2:15; I Timothy 4:13-16*). Memorize the scripture; you will need it in an hour of trial.

(3) No church can prosper without money. Many of our members do not appreciate sermons on the duty of giving; but they should. God has commanded it. Are we going to allow a few dollars to keep us out of heaven? Do we know that the church has bills which must be paid? Where does the money come from, if not from our church members? How much should a Christian give? We shall answer according to scripture. We must give according to our ability (*Acts 11:29*). To put it another way, we must give as we have been **prospered** (*I Corinthians 16:1-2*). Again, we must give as we have **purposed** in our hearts (*II Corinthians 9:6-7*).

If each member gives as the Lord has commanded, we will have ample money to do what the Lord wants done. One hundred percent of our members

giving as the gospel of Christ teaches will get the job done.

(4) Nothing can win more friends for Christ and the church than a real demonstration of true Christian living. Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (*Matthew 5:13-16*). True Christian living dispels, through a holy example, spiteful ignorance and prejudice, and recommends life's finest course. The apostle Paul, wrote: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world..." (*Titus 2:11-12*). Those who mislive Christianity bring shame upon themselves and the Lord's church (*James 1:26-27; 4:4*).

(5) If you wish to help make the church strong, assume your responsibility for its success. There is plenty of work for all (*John 9:4; Philippians 2:12*). Lead singing, teach a class, attend each service, give your moral support to the elders, the deacons, the preacher, to each member.

(6) Let there be no division among members of the church (*I Corinthians 1:10-17*). Always follow after those things that make for peace (*Romans 16:17-18; Philippians 1:27*). With no discord, no fussing; rather, help answer Jesus' prayer for unity (*John 17:20-23*).

The Sin Of Negligence

The Hebrews writer raises an important question: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...?" (*Hebrews 2:1-4*) The entire context should be read.

To neglect salvation is to fail to show concern for it. To do nothing is to sin against God (*James 4:17*).

Perhaps, more people shall be lost because of their negligence than for any other one sin. Many sinners are heard to say, "I intend to obey the gospel some day, but not now—I will, before it's too late..." For millions, that day never comes (*Acts 26:27-29*), "Almost persuaded" is not enough!

Some churches of Christ are guilty of NEGLIGENCE. We do not make the foregoing charge lightly. Many churches of Christ fail to preach the gospel (*Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16*). The business of the Lord's church is to edify itself, to aid the poor, and to "preach the gospel to every creature" (*Ephesians 3:9-11; 4:12; James 1:27; I Timothy 5:9-16*). We humbly suggest that entertainment by choirs, quartets, and the like, are not (and have never been) a part of the work of the church. Some misled churches are incorporating humming, and handclapping, into their services in efforts to improve (?) the worship services. But the Lord's worshipservice needs no improving, since the scriptures clearly authorize all necessary items of worship (*John 4:24; Acts 2:41-42; Ephesians 5:19; Acts 20:7*).

The addition of a piano or organ to the Lord's worship cannot 'improve' the singing. What such additions do is destroy the worship which God ordained (*Leviticus 10:1-2*). Great efforts in some quarters are being made to bring the Independent Christian Church into fellowship with the churches of Christ at almost any cost, including denominational baptism, et al. We suggest that *Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; and I Corinthians 14:15* be closely scrutinized. Such a compromise as suggested would mean that the Christian Church would win (?) everything, and the true, Biblical church would lose everything (*II John 9-11*).

Another area where negligence is apparent is our failure to restore the weak, backsliding members (*Galatians 6:1-4*). In far too many instances the "lambs" have become "goats." According to reports in some areas, there are more backsliders than those who faithfully attend the Lord's services (*Hebrews 10:25; II Peter 2:20-22; Revelation 3:14-22*). Elders, deacons, preachers, and all other Christians, need to become God's missionaries at home, and should try to reclaim these "lost sheep." How long has it been since concerted efforts toward restoration of these erring members in your congregation have been made?

How long has it been since the church where you worship has given aid to the downtrodden? Often we preach a mighty good religion; but all-too-often, we do very little about helping the distressed. We urge our readers to turn to *Deuteronomy 15:7-11*, and study these verses. Now, read *Romans 15:4*, and make proper application. It seems that God has a special love for the poor (*Matthew 26:11; John 12:8*). Let us seek out those who need help and try to supply their needs.

Negligence, many times, can be observed with regard to the disorderly. Don't we know that a little leaven of the wrong kind, can, if left alone, destroy

the whole local church? Is this not the lesson taught in *I Corinthians* the 5th chapter? The object is to exercise discipline that the offender's soul might be saved (*I Corinthians* 5:4-5; *II Thessalonians* 3:6, 10-15). In many churches prominent (both men and women) members are known to be rank sinners, but nothing is ever done about the situation. In the church today we still have our modern Judas', Diotrophes', et al. (See *I Timothy* 2:19-20; *II Timothy* 2:16-18; *III John* 9-11). The ungodly must not be permitted to lead and guide the church of God (*Romans* 16:17-18; *I Timothy* 6:3-5).

INDIVIDUAL NEGLIGENCE

Often, we as Christians neglect to spend time in prayer to God (*Colossians* 4:2; *Romans* 12:12; *Ephesians* 6:18; *I Thessalonians* 5:17-18). Do you pray only when an emergency arises?

Christian friend, how long has it been since you read your Bible? A week? A month? Years? Daily Bible reading is the order of the day for faithful Christians (*I Timothy* 4:12-16; *Luke* 9:23; *II Timothy* 2:15).

Many church members neglect the Lord's assembly (*Acts* 20:7; *I Corinthians* 16:1-2; *Hebrews* 10:25; *Revelation* 1:10). Dear friend, how long has it been since you attended the Lord's Day services? Have you been at the beach, on the river, or visiting Grandma, when you should have been in the assembly? One man said that if he had not gone fishing, he still could not have gone to church, because his wife was too ill to leave her alone at home! How ridiculous can one be?

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee..." (*Hosea* 4:6; *Daniel* 9:13-15). Israel as a nation perished because it did not know God. When the church, God's nation, refuses to be led by God's Holy Word, it too shall suffer dire consequences (*Galatians* 16:16; *I Peter* 2:5, 9). Jesus is our great example; we must, therefore, walk in his steps (*I Peter* 2:17-21).

Do not permit negligence to hide your talents (*Matthew* 25:14-30). Visit the sick (*James* 1:27; *Galatians* 6:10); keep your heart pure (*Proverbs* 4:23; *Matthew* 15:18-20); and bridle your tongue (*Matthew* 12:36-37; *James* 3:1-11).

Those who have not become Christians, children of God, must not neglect to obey the gospel of Christ (*Mark* 16:15-16; *Acts* 2:36-38; *Hebrews* 5:8-9).

Religious Sinners

Christianity is a religion, but not all religions are Christianity. We have but to cite various religions as Hindu, Buddhism, Shinto, Moslem, and varying branches of Catholicism, to indicate that not all religions are the same.

It is possible for one to be religious, yet be religiously wrong. Paul is a perfect example of this principle. "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (*I Timothy 1:13*). With the foregoing passage, we shall quote *Galatians 1:13-14*: "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; and profited in the Jews' religion above many of my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

Saul of Tarsus had a good conscience while he tried to destroy the Lord's church (*Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:9-11*). The Pharisees and Sadducees were very religious, but their religion was characterized by rank hypocrisy (*Matthew 6:1-8; 23:iff*). Their religion was vain because it honored the traditions of men (*Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:6-13*).

How can one become a religious sinner? One way is worshipping the true God in the wrong way. Please read *Acts 17:16-31*. In Athens Paul found an inscription which read, "To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." The Athenians were not Christians, even though they worshiped. They needed to be taught the truth of God. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (*Acts 17:30-31*).

Cain was a religious sinner because he failed to follow God's rule of faith (*Genesis 4:1-7; Hebrews 11:4*). The Jews of Paul's day were religious sinners because they tried to establish their own righteousness, but refused to submit themselves to God's will and way (*Romans 10:1-4*). Nadab and Abihu were religious sinners because they offered unto God what he had not commanded (*Leviticus 10:1-2*).

All who have not obeyed the gospel of Christ are sinners still, no matter how often they may worship. Cornelius, though a praying man and a liberal giver of alms, was a sinner until Peter preached the gospel to him, which instructed him what to do in order to become a child of God (*Acts 10:1-3; 11:13-14; 15:7-9*).

The Ethiopian Eunuch had traveled a thousand miles to worship (*Acts 8:27*), but he did not become a Christian until he heard and obeyed God's truth (*Acts 8:32-39*). Lydia (*Acts 16:14-15*) was a business woman who had gone out by the riverside to worship, but at that time she was a religious sinner; she became a Christian after she heard the truth and obeyed it (*Hebrews 5:8-9*).

Many modern religious people are really religious sinners because they are determined to follow their own way—not the Lord's way. For example: They are determined to "get religion" rather than do religion as taught in *James 1:27*. Some wish to join the church of their choice, but the Bible says nothing about joining the church of one's choice (Cf. *Acts 2:36-38, 41, 47*).

Others wish to "get saved," and then, because they are saved (?), be baptized. But the Bible teaches that Bible baptism is "for," or "unto," or "in order to" remission of sins. The phrase, "for the remission of sins" in both *Matthew 26:28* and *Acts 2:38*, are exactly the same in both English and Greek. We raise the question: Did Jesus Christ shed his precious blood "because" sinners had already been forgiven? How ridiculous! Even so, *Acts 2:38* teaches that sinners are forgiven in baptism. Be honest, now!

Others are determined to use mechanical music in the worship, even though no New Testament passage authorizes its use in Christian worship (*Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16*). Jesus taught that true worshippers must worship God "in spirit and in truth" (*John 4:23-24*), but an organ or piano, or a brass band, in Christian worship, is not in the truth (*John 17:17*).

Countless thousands of religious sinners are found among those who insist on being saved in answer to prayer. It is not enough to say, "Lord, Lord;" one must "do the will" of the Master (*Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46*). Jesus did not say, "He that believeth and prayeth shall be saved." Rather, he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (*Mark 16:16*). Peter did not say, "Repent and pray... for remission of sins." But Peter did say, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (*Acts 2:38*). These two verses cited here do not sound like "mourners' bench" religion, do they?

Dear Readers, do not remain religious sinners any longer; rather hear, believe and obey the truth of God today (*1 Peter 1:22-25; Revelation 22:14*).



