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EDITORIAL

The Greatness Of Life

The greatness of life does not lie in earthly possessions or in the wisdom of man or in the power of man. Because whatsoever is on earth, even the existence of our physical life is of a temporary nature, is for a short time. Man, however mighty and powerful he might think of himself, must acknowledge these facts about life written by the inspiration of the Spirit of God: "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue" (Job 14:1, 2). "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (James 4:13, 14). Christ taught, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses." (Luke 12:15).

From earthly or physical standpoint the above is most true about all humans. But from heaven's spiritual perspective the greatness of man's life is seen in the fact that he was created by God in the beginning in His own image and after His own likeness. (Genesis 1:26, 27). Thus man is a spiritual being. Like God he is eternal. His existence cannot be wiped out by any explosive force, or even death. The greatness of man's life, therefore, lies in the very fact that like his Creator he too is eternal, shall ever exist, being the offspring of God.

(Acts 17:29).

But, where does man exist? In the beginning when man was created by God in His own image and after His own likeness; man was pure and holy without sin like God. He was in fellowship with God. But because of his disobedience to God, man, by his own choice and against the will of God, separated himself from his Creator. One of the saddest passages of the Bible is found at Romans 3:23, wherein we read, "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Falling short of the glory of God means, have failed of that which is the chief end of man. Man was created to glorify God, but because he sinned man made himself unworthy of God's glory. Now being separated from God because of sin man live under spiritual sentence. He will always exist, but with his sin. Even after he depart from this world, he will continue to live, but without God and eternally separated from Him—The Bible describes that state as "hell."

Since God knows the greatness of man's life, his eternal value, He did not spare even Himself for saving man from facing hell. In Christ Jesus He Himself came down on earth to save mankind. And, look, what God did to save man from sin and consequentially from hell. "In the beginning," says the Bible, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1,14). "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Phillipians 2: 6, 7, 8). "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8). "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Through Jesus Christ man becomes worthy of God's glory and living with Him in heaven for ever. When we believe in Christ, we accept Him our Saviour, one who died instead of us; when we repent of sins, we decide that we will no longer live against the will of God; when we confess Christ as the Son of God, we own Him as our Master; and when we are baptized, we emulate His death of the cross and burial in the tomb and resurrection from the dead. Then as we follow His steps,

making Him our example in life daily and by doing those things that He has commanded us to observe, in His New Testament of the Bible, we surely know that when our temporary existence of earth is over we will inherit that which is incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for us, the eternal life of love, joy, and peace in heaven with our Creator God. (1 Peter 1:3, 4). Isn't life great, looking at life from heaven's standpoint? Heaven should be life's greatest objective. We should do everything that God requires of us so that we may inherit the eternal life of heaven; just as God has done everything for us to make us worthy of heaven.

When Teaching Others

J.C. CHOATE

One of the great blessings that the Christian enjoys in this life is the opportunity to teach others. Of course we are taught to go and teach. (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15), but instead of counting it as a duty, we should consider it to be a privilege to impart to our family members, friends, and people in general, those truths that can lead to their salvation and the hope of eternal life. It is a responsibility, a tremendous responsibility, because we are dealing with precious souls, and what we teach them can determine where they spend eternity, but again, what an honor the Lord has bestowed upon us to count us worthy of such an important work.

When we teach people there are several things that we need to keep in mind. First, we are Christians and we represent the Lord. We should therefore be faithful to the Lord ourselves and go about our work in all seriousness and sincerity. Second, we are dealing with living souls and the Lord loves them and we should love them too. How we approach them, and what we say, can encourage them to want to know God's will or it can turn them away.

Third, we must teach them God's word, the truth only. Our opinions and the teachings of men will not lead them to salvation, but can bring about their damnation. Fourth, we must know the truth and present that truth in a way that they can understand it and obey it.

Our goal should not be just to teach them enough to bring them to the point of baptism. Rather, we want to teach them enough that they will understand why they should believe, why they need to obey the

Lord, and what it will do for them.

We will want to begin with God, the one God of heaven, show that he is the creator, and continue to emphasize him until that person comes to believe in him. The Hebrew writer says that without faith it is impossible to please him. (Hebrews 11:6). Then teach that person that he must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (John 14:3). Show him who Christ was, that he was born of the virgin Mary, that he lived a perfect life, that he then died on the cross for the sins of the world, and was resurrected to return to the Father in Heaven. Go on to show that the Lord requires one to repent of sins, or to turn away from his sins. (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:3). Next, stress the importance and necessity of one confessing Christ as the Son of God before men. (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32,33). Finally, stress what the Lord says about baptism, that it is a command (Mark 16:16), that it is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), that it puts one into Christ (Romans 6:3,4), and into the church. (1 Corinthians 12:13). Go over and over these basic truths to be sure the one you are teaching understands these things and is convinced of the need to act on them. Sometimes some of these things are taken for granted, and one goes through these acts without even understanding what he is doing. This should never happen.

Before proceeding to baptize your student, talk to him about the church. If you will go through the book of Acts, you will find that the Apostles and others taught the people about the kingdom or the church. They recognized that if the Lord was going to add the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), then they needed to know something about it, such as who built it (Matthew 16:18), where it was built (Acts 2), who the head of it was (Colossians 1:18), who purchased it with his blood (Acts 20:28), who the saviour was (Ephesians 5:23), the name it was to wear (Romans 16:16) and how many there was. (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Go on to teach them about worship (John 4:24), the Lord's will for his people to meet each first day of the week (Acts 20:7) to study God's word (2 Timothy 2:15), to pray (Philippians 4:6), to sing (Ephesians 5:19), to partake of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29), and to give of their means. (1 Corinthians 16:2). You can spend a lot of time on each one of these, but the acts of worship need to be understood if one is going to be a faithful Christian.

Then teach him about the Christian life as stressed throughout the New Testament, of death, the judgment, and eternity, which involves heaven and hell. (Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 25:46).

It is true that one cannot know everything before obeying the Lord,

and neither must he know everything, but he must know enough to be saved and to enter the Lord's church. This is not done by accident or by Experimentation. Rather, it is a serious matter, and as a teacher one must dwell upon the first principles or the gospel to the point that one will understand what he needs to do, and will understand what he is doing as he does it. With that knowledge, and acting upon it, he will also understand that on obeying the Lord to be saved that that will put him into Christ, the church, and as a child of God, and a Christian, as he worships God and lives the Christian life, he is preparing his soul to live with the Lord forevermore. This is the goal of the teacher for his student, and this is the end result of what happens when the student responds to those teachings presented to him.

Especially For Women

"Tell Me About Hell"

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:49,50)

". . . when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8)

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41)

"And the devil, who deceive them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone . . . And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Revelation 20:10)

"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8)

"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the

second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:14)

It was time for the family devotional. Anthony, Aseema, and James brought their Bibles and waited for Daddy to begin. “You asked about hell last night,” Peter said “That isn’t a happy thing to think about. Many people really can’t believe that there is such a place and that a loving God would send anyone there. But if we are going to believe *anything* God says, we have to believe *everything* He says.”

“First, let’s begin by reading the scriptures and letting God tell us about this terrible place. Anthony, you read Matthew 13:49,50; Aseema, read 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8. James, can you find Matthew 25:41? Mother, if you will read Revelation 20:10, I will read 21:8 and 20:14. There are many other passages that teach that God has prepared a place of punishment, but these will be enough to help us realize that hell really exists and that we don’t want to go there.”

“But, Daddy, if God loves everyone so much that He sent Jesus to die for us so we can live in heaven with Him, why would He make hell? Why doesn’t He just take everybody to heaven?” asked Anthony.

“To understand that we have to remember that God gave humans the freedom of choice. He wanted our love for Him to be because we *choose* to love Him, because we *choose* to obey Him, because we *choose* to be His children. If God was going to take everybody to live with Him—whether they choose Him or not—then there was no reason for Jesus to die. We wouldn’t have to obey God. Do you remember that 2 Thessalonians 1:7,8 says that the angels will come to take vengeance on those who do not *know* God and those who do not *obey* His gospel? So not all of the responsibility for our salvation rests with God. He has made the way for us to be saved through Jesus. But we have to *choose* to live in that way.”

“Do you think you would like living in a prison, Anthony?” Mary asked.

“No—I wouldn’t want to live with murderers and criminals!”

“That’s the same reason God made hell as well as heaven. In this world some people actually hate God, and they do everything they can against Him. There are other people who think they are being good, but they are not paying attention to what God teaches in His word. When people obey Satan all of their life, in this world, they are not prepared to live in heaven when they die. So there’s only one other place for them to go.”

“But does God really want people to go to hell?” Aseema asked.

"No," Peter answered. "In 2 Peter 3:9, Peter wrote that God is long-suffering—patient—not willing that *any* should perish. God is giving people time to learn about Him and to obey him. He is giving Christians time to teach everyone about Him. He wants everyone to choose to go to heaven.

"But Satan is also at work, and people are listening to him. They think it is fun to do the bad things in the world—to take drugs, to drink, to live immorally, to lie and cheat, to do what *they* want to do instead of what *God* wants them to do.

"Is hell really a place burning with fire?" asked Anthony.

"When God described heaven and hell, He had to use human words that would suggest a picture to our minds. He said the streets of heaven are of pure, clear gold. By that we know that it is beautiful and perfect beyond anything we could imagine. When God describes hell as a place of the terrible pain of burning without any relief for all eternity, He was painting a picture of the worst kind of suffering. He said that this is a place of total darkness, because none of His light will be there. Just think how terrible it would be to be separated forever from *everything* that is good, from every loving and selfless thought, from kindness and hope!

"Whatever the punishment is, God said over and over again that it is as eternal as heaven. It will *never* end."

"Well, I know two things," said James "I know I want to go to heaven because I want to be with God. And I know I don't want to go to hell and be with the devil his angels!

The Bible Speaks A Safe Return

BILL BROWN

The principle theme of the gospel of Christ is that of salvation from sin. (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Everyone who has obeyed the gospel has received God's salvation through Jesus Christ and has enjoyed a safe return from the unhappy state of sin to the joyous state of righteousness. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins". (Col. 1:14). "... but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. *Being then* made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness". (Rom. 6:17-18).

Sinners are described as "sheep gone astray". (Isa. 53:6). "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God". (Rom. 3:23). Those who have obeyed from the heart are saved from sin, are said to be, "returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls". (1 Pet. 2:25). The story of the Prodigal son so beautifully depicts the meaning of a safe return. When the Prodigal son leaves the environment of the pig pen, (which represents sin) and goes to his father's house, he has enjoyed a safe return. (Lk. 15:11-24). And so it is with sinners, who will truly believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, repent of their wayward life, and be buried with Christ in baptism, will enjoy a safe return.

Christ is concerned for every soul. "For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost". ((Luke 19:10). This is a faithful saying and worth of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners. . . ." (1 Tim. 1:15). Christ being so concerned about souls of mankind, prepared a channel of safe return. Man's greatest need is salvation from sin. He is lost. The condemned need pardon; the defiled need cleaning the enslaved need deliverance; the dead in sin need regeneration.

Being saved from sin is more important than being saved from sickness, poverty, saving our business, or even physical life. "For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:25). "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul"? (Matt. 16:26). Of course, men will never be saved until they first realize they are lost. On the day of Pentecost, (Acts 2), the people were told that they were guilty of murder and God had made this same Jesus, both Lord and Christ. They were cut to the heart, and asked "what shall we do"? The answer followed, "Repent, and be baptized *every one of you*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". (Acts 2:36-38). There were no exceptions then, and there are no exceptions today.

It is by the grace of God that the channel of a safe return has been prepared. "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). Therefore, by the grace of God man can receive "redemption in Christ through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins". (Col. 1:14). However, this salvation does not come without conditions. "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins". (John 8:24). "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". (Rom. 10:17). "Thus it behoved Christ that he should suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be

preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47). "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". (Luke 13:3). For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation". (Rom. 10:10). "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". (John 3:5). "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ". (Gal. 3:26-27). Study carefully Rom. 6:3-6, 16-18.

Let the sinner travelling the way to eternal destruction, who would enjoy deliverance from the misery and burden of sin and a safe return to the heavenly Father, come to God and Christ through a sincere heart and humble submission in obedience to the gospel terms of pardon. The great invitation has been given to you. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light". (Matt. 11:28-30).

The Entanglements Of Satan!

DILLARD THURMAN

Paul gave this charge to Timothy: "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." (2 Tim. 2:3-4). One who serves Christ must not be ensnared by the Devil! "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1). The Devil always has a snare ready to entrap the child of God! But we have been forewarned: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith." (1 Pet. 5:8). Tragically, many yet fall into that adversary's web of entanglement!

RESIST THE DEVIL; AVOID HIS WEB!

Often we hear the expression, "Whipping the devil around the stump," yet too often we are "whipping around the stump," but not

fighting Satan at all! Yet this is a place for righteous anger and indignation! We are told, "*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath: neither give place to the devil.*" (Eph. 4:27). A Christian is not to be intimidated by that wily, devious old demon; but rather we are told to stand up and fight! "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you! Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*" (Jas. 4:7-8). And remember this is a "non-holds-barred" and an "all-out-fight." To be sure, we must be wary and cautious; but we must still do battle against the Devil! God's warnings are for our protection: "*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*" (2 Cor. 2:11). We must be sober and vigilant so as not to allow Satan any advantage! Sobriety will keep us from being caught in his entangling web!

OFTEN ENTANGLED DUE TO IGNORANCE!

Paul assures us, "*we are not ignorant of his devices,*" and we should not be! Yet because of ignorance many are ensnared in the Devil's web due to their lack of spiritual knowledge! I am sure we have hundreds, if not thousands, of readers who can inform you of the sports world; yet are abysmally ignorant of God's great love letter from heaven—the Bible! They stumble into the Devil's snare because they do not withstand him as did our Lord: "*It is written.*" Jesus said, "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (Jno. 8:32). But they are ensnared and wall, "I just didn't know!" Of some Jesus said, "*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*" (Mt. 22:29).

How many times could that indictment be made against us? Peter said of our Lord's crucifixion: "*And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.*" (Acts 3:17). Later Paul also stated: "*For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*" (1 Cor. 2:11). Yet even to this day we have those who "*crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame;*" and all because they don't know any better! "*For my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee; that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*" (Hos. 4:6). Friend, that same indictment may be against us if we do not know the law of our God! Remember, Christ "*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.*" (2 Thes. 1:7-8). To escape the entanglements of Satan, you must "*Study to shew thyself*

approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15). Do you Study?

ENTANGLED IN BAD ATTITUDES!

Having a bad attitude often lands people in Satan's web! The member who declares the church is filled with hypocrites, all preachers are grafters, and all who do personal work are "nosy busy-bodies" is working for the Devil; and not for the Lord! One who constantly looks for the worst will usually find it and point it out to all! The artist views and paints the serenity of the valley, seeing all its beauty; but the turkey buzzard looks from above, and swoops down for a decaying, stinking carcass in the midst of it all! Each one found what it sought. Paul advised: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things." (Phil. 4:8). Do you have the soul of the artist, or "turkey buzzard"?

The saying is: "You may not be what folk think you are and you may not be what you think you are: but what you think you are!" The Wise Man admonished: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4:23). This is reinforced with the words: "For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7). None rises above the purity of his own thinking, and Satan has ensnared every impure and impenitent heart in his web of malice for eternal destruction!

ENTANGLED BY AN UNBRIDLED TONGUE!

An old adage: "Watch your tongue! It is in a slippery place!" Think of the vast number Satan has entangled because the tongue has not been bridled! James gave many pointed warnings in Jas. 3:5-10 (Study in all). Notice these pertinent things said: "The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. . . The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. . . It defileth the whole body. . . The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of poison. . . Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Do you begin to get the picture? There is only one way to control the tongue, and that is by purifying the heart! Jesus said: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. . . For by thy words thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Mt. 12:34, 37).

Have you ever asked why David was a man after God's own

heart? Could the answer be in this statement? *"I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress."* (Psa. 17:3). Many become entangled in Satan's sinful web because they have not so purposed? One who gives way to violent, abusive, filthy language during stress, did not have a pure heart beforehand. The mouth only speaks what the heart has stored. When we speak only that which is pure, we do not allow Satan to snare us in his web!

ENTANGLEMENT OF UNGOVERNED TEMPER

One of the ancient bards penned: "Whom the gods destroy, they first make mad!" Nothing places man in greater jeopardy than a *temper tantrum!* We control our temper, or our temper controls us! Temper under control is fine; it is when our temper is out of control that the Devil catches us in his snare! Paul wrote; *"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down on your wrath."* (Eph. 4:26). There is nothing wrong in becoming angry! God's anger is shown in His punishment of sin! Jesus Christ looked on calloused hearers with anger (Mk. 3:5). Our anger against cruelty and injustice should not be stored in our heart, for there it would become a lingering malice to poison the soul. Let wrath quickly subside; harbor no malice; manifest forgiveness and compassion. Never allow righteous indignation to become ingrained ill-will. The Wise Man wrote: *"Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."* (Eccl. 7:9). Temperance, or self-control, is listed as one of the "Christian graces" (2 Pet. 1:6). Even Paul faced this problem: *"I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* (1 Cor. 9:27). The Devil snares many due to uncontrolled temper!

ENTANGLEMENT BY WEB OF WORLDLINESS

The Devil's most effective and popular snare is worldliness! We are constantly surrounded by worldly influences, pleasures, and treasures. We fall into Satan's web of intrigue when we fasten our eyes on the lures about us. We are safe only when *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."* (Heb. 12:2). We have been warned, *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* (Jas. 4:4). Jesus warned while here: *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the*

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (Jno. 15:19). In coming into Jesus Christ, Christians are separated from the world, and must remain free from the web of worldly lusts! "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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 Jno. 2:15-16). When we embrace the love of the world, we are snared in the Devil's web!

ENTANGLED BY OUR OWN NEGLIGENCE

Far more often than we may think, we are snared by our own neglect of our spiritual welfare and religious obligations! Over the wrecked and ruined lives that litter the shores of eternity may be the one-word epitaph—**NEGLECT!** Often we put off that which we should do, and allow indifference to blight good intentions! Face this grave question: "How shall we escape if we **NEGLECT** so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:2). Great multitudes will be eternally lost, not because they spat on Jesus or crucified Him, but because of neglect of the salvation He offers! Every sane, rational person plans to make things right with God, and make heaven his home; but **NEGLECT** steals away opportunities, and Satan's web snares another! It is indifference and neglect that makes even the Lord vomit! "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." (Rev. 3:15-16). It makes Christ sick to see lukewarm Christians neglect salvation, and become entangled in Satan's web!

May I earnestly entreat you to greater love and devotion to God, with greater zeal and ardor for His Cause; "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Cor. 2:11).

The Courage To Stand

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Both Moses and David wrote vivid words on the subject of courage and fortitude. Steadfast loyalty is a major Bible subject. A typical statement in the Old Testament, on this vital matter, states:

"Be strong and of good courage,

Fear not, nor be afraid of them.

For the Lord, thy God, will be with you.

Paul wrote similar words to the Ephesians, urging them to do all they could to stand firm as soldiers of Christ against the wiles of the Devil. Warfare against *spiritual wickedness in high places* is a fierce battle that demands proper use of the shield of faith, helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit!

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus Ye soldiers of the Cross, Lift high His royal banner It must not suffer loss."

Since the Savior has promised to be with us and never forsake us (Hebrews 13:5-6), we shall not fear what men can do to harm us. Casting all our cares upon Christ grants us freedom to seek and pursue peace (1 Peter 3:11). A secular song challenges our attention:

"Give me some men who are stout-hearted men,

Who will fight for the right they adore

Start me with ten who are stout-hearted men,

And I will soon give you ten thousand more!"

Then we review the Bible record of courageous folk who stood for Truth against all odds it gives us hope.

Noah is mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14 as an example of absolute trust in God.

Joseph had the determination to do God's will in a heathen land under difficult circumstances.

Joshua was a valiant leader who would not make easy decisions but rather stood firm for the right.

Micaiah was a genuine prophet who would not be swayed by 400 "yes men" or even earthly kings.

Daniel, a young but dedicated statesman for Jehovah, would not take the easy route of popularity when God's people needed a voice that would never bend to earthly pomp.

Stephen was a courageous gospel preacher who died at the hands of evil men but left behind a legacy that helped to convert Saul of Tarsus.

Barnabas manifested conviction and purpose that caused him to cleave to the Lord whatever the situation.

Jesus, at age 12, made it clear to all about Him, that the Father's business took priority!

We, too, must have the courage to stand against Satan with steadfast faith (1 Peter 5:9) as we resist the fiery darts of the enemy of our soul (James 4:7). When we obey God, rather than men (Acts 5:29) we gain inner strength so desperately needed.

"Each step I take, I know that He will guide me.

To higher ground He ever leads me on . . ."

There are several areas in which members of the church need to truly manifest the courage to stand. Let us always stand up for:

The Bible—Psalms 119:46

The Church—Ephesians 3:21

The Lord—Psalm 116:1

Purity of Life—Titus 2:12

The Plan of Salvation—Acts 22:16

The Home—Psalm 127:1

Judgment Day—Hebrews 9:27

Can God, our Maker, depend upon us to stand? Wilkin Bacon wrote these challenging words for Christians:

Can He Depend On You

His Blessed Will to Do

Will You Be Crowned

With The Faithful and True

Can He Depend on You?

Let us never give Satan a comfortable place to launch his evil plans in our lives (Ephesians 4:27). Stand up for Jesus today!

"Practical Atheism"

M. FLOYD BAILEY, JR.

"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God; they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good," Psalm 14:1.

It is no doubt the height of foolishness to doubt the existence of God. Atheistic attitudes could be called the "seat of all sin." Many who would never declare that God does not exist show their atheism by their lifestyles. It is atheism to doubt that God either does not have the power to or will not punish their sins. To doubt God's word in any way is a practical atheism. The "practical atheists" profess that they . . . know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient,

and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:6).

Notice that in both verses cited above we find that men commit sins of commission ("... done abominable works" and "... being abominable and disobedient") and sins of omission ("... none that doeth good," and "... unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:6).

Notice that in both verses cited above we find that men commit sins of commission ("... done abominable works" and "... being abominable and disobedient") and sins of omission ("... none that doeth good," and "... unto every good work reprobate). Both sins of commission and omission stem from a doubt of God. There are many in the Lord's church who guard themselves from sins of commission. Although they may fall from time to time (Romans 3:23), they are upright in their deeds; but, oh so many will find themselves lost simply because they fail to do good (Matthew 25:31-46). "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Many times congregations strive for good works, but sadly, when it comes time to work, there are few who put forth the effort needed to accomplish the good. For example, visitation programs, nursing home visitation, prison ministry, mid-week Bible study, Sunday evening worship, ladies' Bible class and gospel meetings, etc. are all good works with too few laborers (Matthew 9:37-38). Is it because we don't know of the need for these things? When we fail to do good, we place ourselves in the foolish category of being "practical atheists." Are we reasoning that God would not punish us for not obeying the commands to do good (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 4:19)?

Let us never deny God that which is His: our hearts, our souls, our strength (Matthew 22:37); yea, our lives and bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). Let us work to glorify God.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16).

The Fallacy Of Faith Alone

NEAL POLLARD

In his *MAXIMS OF PIETY AND OF CHRISTIANITY* Thomas Wilson commented, "Faith is the root of works. A root that produceth nothing is dead." While Mr. Wilson was not a member of the Lord's

church, he had an excellent grasp on the activity involved in the belief of God. Too many religious leaders in the denominational world have advocated with a loud, sustained voice that one need only believe in order to be saved. Some contend that one reflects a poor image of God who teaches that our merciful, giving Father expects anything more than belief in His Son.

If one contends that faith alone saves, he forgets some crucial elements revealed in the scriptures.

FAITH ALONE FORGETS REPENTANCE. Jesus tells us that failure to comply with His command for repentance means damnation of the soul (Luke 13:3,5). Several Bible characters, in fact, were told that they stood condemned if they would not repent. Nineveh was lost without a change of heart. The Pentecostans were lost without repentance (Acts 2:36-38). Truly, genuine belief in God will cause a transformation of one's life and mind (Romans 12:1,2). When one comes face to face with the meaning of Calvary and has his heart melted, he will desire to conform to the image of God's Son!

FAITH ALONE FORGETS CONFESSION. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father 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). Jesus taught that confession was a prerequisite for salvation. The Eunuch had the presence of mind to see the importance of confession (Acts 8:37). In fact, is not faith without confession a denial? Paul said confession with the mouth is made unto salvation (Romans 10:10).

FAITH ALONE FORGETS BAPTISM. Peter told Cornelius, shortly before their trip to the waters of baptism, that those who are accepted with God are those who fear Him and work righteousness (Acts 10:35). David emphasized that God's commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172). Baptism is the righteous command unto which we must yield ourselves in *faithful* obedience in order to be saved. In the same way that Noah went where salvation was promised (the ark), one must be in the church in order to be saved. The only way to be added to the church is through baptism (I Peter 3:20, 21). Christ is the only way to the Father (John 14:6), and only baptism puts one in Christ (Galatians 3:26, 27). Faith without baptism is ineffective. As Guy N. Woods once explained, "The 'he' of Mark 16:16 is restrictive." The only ones promised salvation are those that believe and are baptized. So, he that believeth not and is baptized not shall meet what end? Since the blood

of Christ saves (Revelation 1:5) and baptism is where we contact the blood (Romans 6:1-6; I Peter 1:19), is not baptism clearly a condition of salvation?

FAITH ALONE FORGETS PERSEVERANCE. One can never erase from inspiration the statement, "Be thou *faithful* unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). A child of God must remain true to God all the days of his life. He must be true to God in his attendance (Hebrews 10:25), his priorities (Matthew 6:33), his response to the Great Commission (Mark 16:15, 16), and his manner of life (I Timothy 4:12). Frank Chesser once told the story of a denominational preacher who boasted, "I could not, after believing, be lost if I swung through the gates of hell on a rotten potato vine spitting tobacco juice in the devil's eyes!" The absurdity of that statement is seen in light of the scriptures (Hebrews 6:1-5; Galatians 5:4; II Peter 2:20-22).

In the words of Joseph Beaumont, "Faith and works are like the light and heat of a candle; they cannot be separated. Faith without works is like a bird without wings; though she may hop about on earth, she will never fly to heaven.—But when both are joined together, then doth the soul mount up to her eternal rest."

James said, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

Gideon—"Who Looked To God"

GENE MORRIS

In Judges 6 we read of the story of Gideon, the son of Joash the Abiezrite, who was chosen as the sixth judge of Israel. Gideon was selected for this position because he was a "mighty man of valor" (verse 12). Even though Gideon was a strong person, he wondered how he could be the person who would rescue Israel from the Midianites since his family was poor and he was the least in his father's house (verse 15).

We are all familiar with how Gideon began asking God to show him signs to confirm his consciousness, his confidence, and his capability concerning the parts of his task. Sometimes Gideon's asking for signs from God is given a negative connotation, suggesting that Gideon did not have enough faith in what God said; yet, Gideon is

included in the "Faith Hall of Fame" (Hebrews 11:32). Instead of viewing his actions in a negative way, we need to see that Gideon was merely seeking from God the answers to his questions. Let us notice that Gideon looked to God (something we must and need to do today) for signs of three things.

First, Gideon looked for a sign of God's *presence* (verse 17). Gideon wanted assurance that he was talking to the one true God. Today, we as Christians need to look to God for evidences of His presence which He has given to us. One evidence we have that God is with us is the Bible. The Word dwelt with God and was God, and it was made flesh and dwelt with man (John 1:1-2, 14). Another evidence is God's word given unto us through Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:20). Still another evidence of God's presence and being is His creation (John 1:3,10). These three evidences are only a few of what God has given us to prove His presence.

After Gideon looked for a sign of God's *presence*, he looked for a sign of God's *deliverance* of Israel (verses 36:38). Gideon wanted to know if God would save Israel from the Midianites with the number of soldiers he had. Presently, we can look for the evidence God has given us of our deliverance from sin and Satan. We know that God loves us immensely; so much, in fact, that He sacrificed His only Son for us (I Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 5:1). when we are faced with temptation, God has promised us a way to escape the snares of the devil (I Corinthians 10:13). God is definitely planning on delivering us from Satan if we do what He has commanded (Acts 2:38; Colossians. 1:14, 21-22).

Finally, Gideon looked for a sign of *surety* from God (verses 39-40). Gideon wanted to secure his absolute trust in God. Again, he has given us His word that He will do as He tells us; God will not break His promises (II Peter 3:9; Habakkuk 2:9; Hebrews 10:23). God is not going to forsake us or leave us (Hebrews 13:5). We can put our complete trust in Him.

Gideon looked to God for signs to see what He was doing. Today, however, we look to God through His word, the Bible, as we live our lives for Him. Although we cannot receive signs as Gideon did (I Corinthians 13:8-11). God can direct us through his Providence (Genesis 22:8, 14) as well as through His Word. Let us be like Gideon and look to God for the answers to any questions we have.

Taking Away The Anxiety

VANCE HUTTON

The world in which we live is one of instability, insecurity, and uncertainty in so many ways. Certainly, part of such could be avoided. Some of it is geared to the nature of man and things. It is said that the average man will change jobs about five times during his working career. There are many such areas of life where uncertainty abounds. The Bible speaks of such. Proverbs 27:1 says man should not boast about tomorrow because he knows not what a day may bring. James 4:13-15 instructs us not to take confidence in the future because man as a vapor knows not what will be on the morrow. Paul in Acts 20:22 spoke of being bound in spirit, not knowing what would befall him when he got to Jerusalem. We are taught to be ready for judgment because we know not when the Lord shall come (Matthew 25:13). There are some things available that bring comfort and solace in the time of storm and difficulty of life. Notice some things to which we can tie ourselves and take away so much of the anxiety connected to uncertainty of life.

(1) *The Bible*: Forever the Lord's word is settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). Heaven and earth will pass away but the Lord's word will endure forever (Matthew 24:35; I Peter 1:25).

(2) *God In Heaven*: Hebrews 13:5-6 speaks of the Lord promising to not leave us or forsake us. Hebrews 13:8 speaks of Jesus the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is not slack in His promises (II Peter 3:9). Jesus spoke of being with His people until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20).

(3) *The Church*: Daniel 2:44 spoke of the church never being destroyed. Jesus said the gates of Hades would not prevent the establishment of the church (Matthew 16:18). I Corinthians 15:24 speaks of the church when the Lord returns.

(4) *Prayer*: I John 5:14 speaks of knowing that the Lord hears and answers prayer. Hebrews 4:16 teaches us to come to God in prayer with confidence and find help in a time of trouble. Matthew 7:7-11 teaches us about the concern God has for His children.

(5) *The Lord's Work*: The least of good done for the Lord will verily be rewarded (Matthew 10:42). Hebrews 6:10 teaches us that God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love. Our labor in the Lord is not in vain but will be rewarded (Galatians 6:9; I Corinthians 15:58).

(6) *God's Providence*: We know all things work together for good for God's people (Romans 8:28). He promises to provide for us if we do His will (Matthew 6:33). The Lord provides strength to do what is demanded of us. His ears and eyes are over the righteous (1 Peter 3:12).

(7) *The Peace Of God*: There is a peace of God provided that passes understanding that will keep our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7). There is the assurance of our salvation and our relationship with God (1 John 5:13).

(8) *Heaven Itself*: There is a place of a better and enduring substance (Hebrews 11:10). It is incorruptible. Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

MAY THESE THINGS BECOME THE FOUNDATION OF OUR LIVES IN A UNSTABLE WORLD.

"Most Of A Minute"

GLENN COLLEY

Do you ever wonder if true, old fashioned conviction is becoming more rare than ever before? Is it difficult to find people who will determine what is right and then stand their ground?

If this kind of conviction is impressive to you, then you would enjoy reading the Old Testament of the Bible. It's pages are saturated with the accounts of meek people who had a cause bigger than themselves.

Take Daniel for instance. Daniel prayed three times in an open window every single day . . . without wondering or caring about who might object to faith in Jehovah. One day King Darius signed a new law which forbade any prayer or petition to any god but himself. The penalty of breaking the law was death . . . and Daniel knew it. When his time to pray came however, he was right there in that open window. For his crime he was thrown to hungry lions. God's protective arm was there however, and Daniel was safe.

Couldn't we all use this conviction? A good many people believe that the reason the lions did not eat Daniel in that lion's den was because he was all backbone.

"The Church," "The Kingdom" Are They Related?

WINFRED CLARK

In the past we have not been surprised to hear denominational preachers make a great distinction between the church and the kingdom, especially those of the premillennial persuasion. But you do not have to move into those ranks today to find such. Recently in a Nashville meeting it was said, "the two do not have an identity relationship; it is theologically incorrect to say church equals kingdom." It was said, "the church is a body of redeemed people in pursuit of an ideal which the New Testament calls the kingdom of God." We are also told that the kingdom will not exist until the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven. The idea is that we cannot have the kingdom as long as people are not perfected. It was further stated that "the church will not be the full realization of the kingdom until He comes." Therefore the conclusion is that all we have is the "pilgrim church" on it's way to becoming the kingdom of God.

It seems to me that this idea overlooks some very obvious things. We have in our New Testaments some descriptions of some churches. There was the church at Corinth, Colosse, and the seven churches of Asia. I don't think any of us would say those churches were perfect. In fact, we would all agree that they possessed imperfections of major proportions. These sins were not endorsed or condoned by the apostles. They were to rid themselves of those things that were sinful (II Corinthians 7:1-2). But, we can have no doubt of the fact that they were accepted as being churches (I Corinthians 1:1-3, Colossians 1:1-3). Must we say that in spite of their sins they were only *on their way* to becoming the kingdom of God? Was it that they were only pursuing the ideal called the kingdom of God? That would be the case if we were to accept the thesis stated above.

I am not ready to say the kingdom of God did not exist at Corinth. I wouldn't anymore say the kingdom did not exist than I would say the church did not exist. Oh yes, if I adopted the thesis stated above I might do that, but I do not accept such as being valid true. The Bible does not teach this doctrine.

Take a moment to think: Was the Lord's supper being observed in the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 10:16, 11:23-31)? Yes, I know they

were abusing such, but that does not take anything from the fact that such was being observed in the church at Corinth. In fact, Paul taught them to observe the Lord's supper. So we have a church that is not perfect, taking the Lord's supper. But wait a moment. Didn't Jesus place the Lord's supper in the kingdom? Go back, as did Paul, to the night when he instituted the supper. You will find the Lord said, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30). Would you conclude from this statement that the Lord's Supper was to be in the kingdom? Did the Lord know where it was supposed to be found? I would think so.

We need to stop and see that Paul endorsed the Lord's supper being practiced in the church at Corinth. This is seen by the fact that he tried to get them to go back to the very place where it was instituted for a pattern as to how it was to be observed at Corinth. But if he goes back to that place and time, he will *also* find that the Lord spoke of it being in the kingdom. Would you think Paul made a mistake of encouraging something to be in the church that belonged to the kingdom, if indeed, the church and kingdom are not the same? Paul would have known if there was such a difference, but Paul made no such difference and neither should we.

Paul did not see the Lord's supper as being something the church would pursue as an ideal. He saw it as a reality for the present time in Corinth, and that was true in spite of the fact that they were not perfect.

But take another look at the church at Corinth. You will also find those who were born again at Corinth. They are described in a number of ways such as, "them that are sanctified" (1 Corinthians 1:2). They are said to have been "begotten by the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15). They are said to be "washed . . . justified" (1 Cor. 6:11). "They are said to be saved" (1 Corinthians 15:2). One could have no doubt about the fact that these folks were saved justified, washed, and sanctified. Now, would you tell any of those folks that they ought to be born again? You would not dare tell a person who is said to be saved that he ought to be born again! There could be no doubt about their being born again. But if they have been born again would they not be in the kingdom of God? Isn't that where Jesus indicated that they would be? It most surely is. Listen to what He had to say about the matter: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Now what does the Lord place between a man and his entrance into the kingdom of God? The only thing I see in this passage is his being born of water and of the

Spirit. Now were any at Corinth born of water and the Spirit? Were any of those folks born again? You would have no doubt about this would you? You know they were begotten by Paul's gospel. You know they are sanctified. Would it not follow that they had been born again? But if they had been born again, they were not on their way to the ideal which is the kingdom of God. They were in it by the process of the new birth.

One would either have to deny that those in the church at Corinth had been born again or admit that they were in the kingdom of God. But if one admits that they are in the kingdom of God, then he admits that the church and the kingdom are the same. Thus you have the kingdom of God at Corinth in spite of the fact that there were obvious sins that they needed to deal with. (The fact that the human side of the kingdom is flawed does not mean God's side does not exist).

Again, we conclude that those in the church at Corinth were converted. We agree that they did what converted people are supposed to do. Do we not read "many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8)? didn't Paul later speak of such people being baptized into one body (I Corinthians 12:13)? Look at what Paul had to say about some of these folks. He talks of thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. He said "and such were some of you" (I Corinthians 6:11). We would have to conclude that a conversion had taken place. He goes on to say, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:11). We can have no doubt about the fact that these folks were converted. But if we admit that in the church at Corinth we have converted people, we must also admit that these people are in the kingdom of God. Listen what Christ had to say, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). But what will happen to those people who are converted? You say, they will enter the kingdom of God. But we would all have to admit that people in the church at Corinth had been converted. If they were converted they were in the kingdom of God. That is what Jesus said and that ought to be good enough for any of us.

Yes, the church and the kingdom of God existed at Corinth, in spite of the human flaws that also existed. With God's grace and help there should ever be the human resolve to have fewer and fewer of these flaws. We are people who are in the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13).