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EDITORIAL

Miracles, Speaking In Tongues, And Divine Healing

When Christ, after His death and resurrection was returning back to the Father in heaven, He spoke with His apostles, whom He had personally chosen, for the last time on earth. He reminded them of a very special promise that He, earlier in His ministry, had made to them, that is, they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them. This promise was made exclusively to the apostles only as we see by reading from Acts 1:1-8. This fact is again established by reading from John 14:25 & 26 and John 16:5-13. The Holy Spirit, Christ told the apostles would help the apostles, He would teach them and would bring to their remembrance all things that Christ had taught them and would guide them into ALL truth, so that when they would speak and write the Scripture they would not make any mistake.

After He rose from the dead, however, He told them: "Behold, I send the promise of my Father *upon you*, but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until *you* are endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49).

Accordingly, we read, from Acts 2:1-4: " Now when the day of Pentecost had fully come they (*the apostles*) were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one

sat upon each of them. And they (*the apostles*) were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Pentecost was an important Jewish festival. Jews from all over the world who spoke different languages had come together in Jerusalem to celebrate their Pentecost, and the Lord chose this day to baptise the apostles with the Holy Spirit. When they received the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in the languages of the various people who had gathered there. They spoke in their tongues as the Spirit gave them the power to do so. Naturally, all people were amazed to hear them speak in their own mother tongues, and they exclaimed: "How is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?" (Acts 2:8).

The Lord had commanded the apostles to go and preach the gospel to all people everywhere. But they did not know different languages of all people. The Holy Spirit of God made that easy for them, as He gave them the power to speak in the languages of various people. Not only did the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to speak in many different languages of the people, but He also gave them power to do signs and miracles. Hence we read: "AND THROUGH THE HANDS OF THE APOSTLES many signs and wonders were done among the people . . . so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. And a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, AND THEY WERE ALL HEALED." (Acts 5:12-16). Notice, my reader, that it says, that **through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done**. Not through the hands of believers; not through the hands of Christians, and not through the hands of preachers. But, **through the hands of the apostles**, because they had received power through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And, notice too the fact that all kinds of sick people were brought from all over the places before the apostles, AND THEY WERE ALL HEALED! Now how many is ALL? All means comprising every individual, any and whatever, as many as were brought or were present there, regardless of who they were and whatever diseases they had, they were ALL healed.

The apostles were like any other human being. They were men who had been with Jesus and had seen Jesus Christ after His resurrection from the dead. But when they saw the resurrected Christ, there were some among them who did not believe Him. We read: "And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted." (Matthew

28:17). Read also Mark 16:9-14. Therefore, the Lord, when He had sent them to preach the gospel to every creature, told them, "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:17, 18). Continuing, the record says: "So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs." (Mark 16:19-20). Through those signs and miracles, that is, speaking in different tongues and divine healings, etc., the Lord was confirming or establishing the word the apostles were preaching. That was the principal purpose of miraculous signs in the beginning, in the first century, in the absence of a written and a complete Bible as we have it today.

In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul wrote them, "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gifts so that you may be established." (Romans 1:11). The apostles had the power of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord had enabled them that on whomsoever they laid their hands to impart the spiritual gifts of miraculous nature they too would receive the power through the Holy Spirit and thus would be able to speak in unlearned languages, and give divine healing and do other miraculous signs as mentioned in Mark 16:17, 18. The apostle wrote to Timothy and said, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6). Timothy was not baptized with the Holy Spirit. He was not one of the apostles. But he had received the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostle's hands. In Acts 8:5 & 6 we are told, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." Consequently in verse 12 we read, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized." Then in verse 14 of the same chapter we are told, "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them." Now, reader, ponder, Why send Peter & John, the apostles there? Philip was already there, he had performed enough miracles to cause them to believe and be baptized and be saved. What was the need then to send the apostles from Jerusalem to Samaria?

The answer is found in Acts 8:17 & 18, which says, "Then they (*apostles*) laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that THROUGH THE LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES' HANDS THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS GIVEN, he offered them money." But someone might ask, how was Philip able to do miracles in Samaria since he was not an apostle? From Acts 6:5, 6 we learn that before he went to Samaria the apostles had laid their hands on him. Again, in chapter 19 of the book of Acts of the apostles we read the story of twelve men who were taught and baptized by the apostle Paul. We read: "And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." (Acts 19:6).

The important lesson we all need to learn today is, that the apostles were the ones who were baptized in the beginning with the Holy Spirit, as the Lord had promised to them. When the Holy Spirit came upon them He empowered them to speak in tongues (languages that they had never spoken and probably had never heard), and to do signs and miracles and healing of all kinds of diseases. Through such signs and miracles the Lord was confirming the word that they preached, and that caused people to believe in their preaching and to obey the commands of the Lord whom they were preaching. (Remember, at this time they did not have a complete written Bible to preach from, as we have it today). However, the apostles could not be present everywhere. So they laid their hands on certain Christians and through laying on of their hands on them they too received the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, and thus they too were able to speak in different languages and heal the sick and do other signs and miracles. But those who had received the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the hands of the apostles on them were not capable to impart any miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit to others by laying their hands on them. This is evident by reading from Acts 8:4-18.

Thus, when the apostles died, and all those people died upon whom the apostles had laid their hands to impart miraculous gifts of healing, speaking in tongues, etc., then the Lord took away that which was temporarily given in the beginning to confirm the preached word and to establish the infant church. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were like the scaffolding around an unfinished building. When the building gets completed then the scaffolding is no longer needed and is therefore removed. This is how the apostle Paul described the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:8-11. He said, "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is

knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Supernatural and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were going to vanish away and done away, when *that* which is perfect is come. He did not say, when he who is perfect has come, but when *that* which is perfect has come. Naturally, he was not speaking about a person but was speaking about a thing that was to come. He was not talking here about Jesus' second coming, because when He will come all things will vanish away, according to 2 Peter 3:10. Rather the apostle mentioned a few specific things which were going to be done away when the perfect would come. According to Psalm 19:7 "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." By the end of the first century A.D. the last book of the Bible was completely written, and thus the law of the Lord which is perfect and which converts the soul became available for all, and when it came to exist then that which was in part, the miraculous gifts, were taken away.

Therefore, today any preacher who does not know a particular language has to have another man as his translator to interpret in another language, which the translator knows but the preacher can't speak. This should be enough to convince anyone today that there is not a person living on earth who has been baptized with the Holy Spirit or who has received the power of the Holy Spirit to do a sign or a miracle. No preacher can dare today to go to a cemetery, and raise a dead man or woman. Yet, we know that Jesus went with people to a cemetery and raised a man who was dead and was buried in the tomb for four days. Likewise, apostle Peter raised Tabitha after she had died. Also, apostle Paul raised Eutychus who was pronounced dead. The apostles and some Christians upon whom the apostles had laid their hands to impart spiritual gifts of miraculous nature were able to heal all kinds of diseases; **AND THEY DID HEAL ALL PEOPLE WHO WERE BROUGHT TO THEM.** In one case we read: Peter and John, apostles, were going and on their way they met with a certain man who was, the Bible says, born lame from his mother's womb, he was carried by some people every day and was brought and left at the gate of the temple to beg. When the lame man saw Peter & John he asked for alms. But Peter told him to "Look at us." We read, "So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them" Evidently the lame man was expecting some money. He didn't know who Peter and John were; he

didn't know what they could do for him. He simply was looking for some money. But Peter spoke to him and said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength, so he leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him" (Acts 3:1-10). Now, suppose there was today even one such man on earth who could raise a dead person; or who could provide new hands or new feet to someone who doesn't have them; or who could heal someone instantly who has been born blind or lame, with divine approval, anywhere on earth, certainly he will get a worldwide coverage of such an important and unnatural event (or events, if they were to occur frequently as they did in the time of the apostles). All newspapers will be filled with the wonderful story with pictures; it will be broadcasted through radio and will be shown on the television all over the world and all the world will come to know about it!! Moreover, as it happened in the days of the apostles, people from every places will bring crippled, disabled, diseased and sick, by planes, trains, buses and by every mode of transportation of present time so that they could all be healed miraculously. BUT TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT THERE IS NOT A SINGLE PERSON ANYWHERE ON OUR EARTH WHO CAN TODAY HEAL MIRACULOUSLY, ANY DISEASED PERSON WITH THE DIVINE APPROVAL. Of course, some may be deceiving the heart of many simple people through their trickery and by their smooth words and flattering speeches. But the Bible implores to note such people and to mark them and to avoid them for those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly. (Romans 16:17, 18).

When Will Jesus Come Again?

J. C. CHOATE

There is always some one setting a date for the second coming of Christ. Just as often as they predict the time of his coming, it is just that often they miss. Will they never learn that the Lord has not provided that information to any human being?

If Jesus had wanted to make known the specific time of his coming, he would have done that. He certainly would not have revealed the date through symbolic and figurative language to encourage his people to search the scriptures in an effort to come up with the mystery date. Since he did not do that then there must be some reason for it. And there was a reason, and that was to encourage his people to be faithful to him at all times instead of waiting to the last minute to prepare to meet the Lord.

Many say that the Lord is coming soon. They mean by this that he is definitely coming within our life time. That may be true, but it may not be true. The Apostles, along with the early Christians, expected the Lord to return in the near future, maybe in their life time. No doubt Christ has been expected to come at an early date from the time he returned to the Father in heaven. And yet, he still has not come. Does that mean that he is not coming. Not at all. Rather, it means that he is coming on his schedule, not on our schedule.

There are some who think it is wrong to say the Lord is coming soon since it has been almost two thousand years since he said that he would come again. But regardless of when he comes, whether it is today or a million years from now, time in comparison to eternity is a short period of time. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that Jesus is coming soon.

We do know several things concerning Christ's return and that should satisfy anyone who respects God's word.

1. Jesus said he would come again. Hear him, as he says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3). That is definite and emphatic.

2. We are told that no one knows the time of his return, but the Father in heaven. Jesus himself said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24:36). If only the Father knows, then how would it be possible for any human being to have that information?

3. It is said that Jesus would come as a thief in the night. Peter declared, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10). He is not a thief, but will come as a

thief, that is, at an unannounced time.

4. At the time of the Lord's return, heaven and earth shall pass away with a great noise and the elements and works shall be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10). There will be no such thing as the Lord returning to reign over his people on earth for one thousand years and for the wicked to be put down. Neither does the Bible teach any such thing as a rapture.

5. When Christ comes, all will be resurrected, both the righteous and wicked. Christ said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:28, 29).

6. The living at the Lord's return, who are righteous, will be caught up in the clouds to meet him. Paul says, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

7. The Lord will send his angels to gather out of his kingdom or church all that offend and cast them into hell. Jesus said of that day, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:41, 42).

8. The great and final judgment will take place. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10).

9. At the judgment, the righteous will go to be with the Lord forever-more but the wicked will be cast into eternal punishment. (Matthew 25:46).

Yes, Christ will come again, and real soon. Many things will take place at that time, but it will be different from what many teach. Be not deceived concerning the Lord's return, and the things that will take place at that time. Once he comes, it will be too late to prepare to meet him. The big question right now is this: Are you prepared at this very minute to meet the Lord? If not, please prepare while you still have the time and the opportunity. For a certainty, Jesus will come again. We may not

know when he will come, but he will definitely come.

Especially For Women

In Jesus' Sojourn

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance." (Luke 8:1-3)

We read also in Matthew 27:55, "And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking to him from afar."

Ah! Wouldn't it have been a wondrous and thrilling thing to have been among that group of women who traveled along with Jesus and His apostles? We look back from today's vantage point, and we think how blessed those women were! They actually kept company with Jesus—the very Son of God—day by day! They saw His miracles. They heard His lessons of truth and wisdom, from the mind of God. And they were privileged to serve Him!

What did they do? How did they serve? If we, as women, had been among that group, what would we have done to serve Him?

One service mentioned in Luke 8:3 was that some of them "provided for Him from their substance" or possessions. Jesus had told one person, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head." (Luke 9:58) This One, the Creator of all things, had laid aside the glories and grandeur of heaven to live on the earth as man. What did He own here? He claimed nothing! Yet because he traveled in the company of His twelve apostles and numerous other followers, the group had physical needs that must be met. Their bodies required food, clothing and shelter. So some of these women, who must have had some degree of material wealth, provided money for the physical needs of the Master and His disciples.

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Of course it would have been necessary for someone to prepare the daily meals for that large group—18 or 20 or more adults—a challenging task! And pots and pans and dishes had to be cleaned. Clothes needed to be washed and mended. The women who traveled with Jesus were certainly not idle!

If I had lived then, and had been free of family responsibilities so that I could have done so, would I have chosen the hard life of a wayside traveler, in order to serve Jesus?

Maybe we can answer the question with a quotation from Matthew 25:40. Jesus said concerning service done to others: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."

Do we look for ways to serve today? When we give clothing to a needy person, do we give only the worn out things we no longer have use for? Remember, Jesus said, "You did it to Me." Do we open our homes, not only to friends but also to those who come our way who have "no place to lay their heads? Remember, Jesus said, "You did it to Me."

It is true that in Matthew 26:11 Jesus explained, "You have the poor with you always . . ." so He wasn't saying that the Christian must give all he has in a futile attempt to alleviate poverty. But at various times in the life of each one of us, there will be the stranger who desperately needs our help, the person who is genuinely hungry and is dependent on our compassion in order to live, those whose circumstances leave them unable to help themselves. Compassion must move us to reach out to them with whatever help we can give, understanding that this is our opportunity to walk the dusty roads with Jesus and to prepare His food and wash His clothes. "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:40).

Standing in God's Grace

CLEM THURMAN

The need for God's grace should be evident to all of us. "*All have sinned*" (Rom. 3:23), and we cannot save ourselves. We surely do not deserve to be saved. Jesus explained our need for grace this way: "*Who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say*

unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do" (Lk. 17:7-10). Our purpose on earth is to obey God (Eccle. 12:13), and even if we did that perfectly, we still do not deserve any good blessing from God. We have only "Done that which it was our duty to do."

In writing to Christians, Paul said, "for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). We are not saved by grace only. We are not saved by faith only. We are "saved by grace through faith." We read of Jesus, "We behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Christ, by His death on the cross, makes available "every spiritual blessing" (Eph. 1:3). Everything, therefore, that God does for us is a matter of His grace. It is also true that everything we do in response to God's grace must be a matter of faith.

By the grace of God, Jesus died for us and shed His blood to save us from sin. Recognizing our sins, we put our faith in the cleansing of His blood (Rom. 3:25) and the efficacy of His death (Rom. 5:8-10). By faith we then are "baptized into his death, buried with him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:3-4). There is the meeting of grace and faith: God's grace (Heb. 2:9) and our faith (Rom. 6:3) meet in the death of Christ. We respond, by faith to what God has done for us by surrendering our will to His and doing what He said to do.

Some suppose that every person has access to the grace of God, but that isn't true. Paul wrote, "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:1-2). Faith gives us access to the grace of God, and without faith none can have access to Him or His grace (Heb. 11:6). After showing that we all have sinned and fall short, the apostle wrote, "Being justified freely by his grace . . . through faith, in his blood" (Rom. 3:24-25). God's grace, our faith. And it is by faith that we have access to His grace. But notice again the statement: "This grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:1). We

"stand" in the grace of God. His grace continues to be ours, constantly and continuously, as we live by faith, in Christ.

What does it mean for the child of God to *"stand in the grace of God?"* Paul answers, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ made me free from the law of sin and death"* (Rom. 8:1). To *"stand"* means we are right with God, that we are in fellowship with Him, *"and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 Jno. 1:7). That is only possible because we stand in His grace. And we stand in His grace only because we, by faith, are *"in Christ"* (Gal. 3:26-27). When we live faithfully in Christ, His grace is ours and we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus so that we are not under condemnation.

We stand, by faith, in the grace of God. But the warning is given, *"Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God"* (Heb. 3:12). In other words, *"Take heed lest ye fall"* (1 Cor. 10:12). When unbelief rules our hearts, and we are no longer *"walking by faith"* (Heb. 3:12; 2 Cor. 5:7), we then *"fall away from grace"* (Gal. 5:4) and are again under condemnation because of sin. God's grace is ours, by faith, while we live obediently in Christ. Let us have the faith, therefore, to gain *"access into this grace wherein we stand."*

"Are You Rich?"

JOE T. SPIVY, SR.

A story is told of two children collecting papers on a cold and damp night. They were greeted at a door by a lady who invited them to hot chocolate. As they drank, one of them asked, "Lady, are you rich?" In astonishment she answered, "Certainly not! Why do you ask?" "Your cups and saucers match" came the reply.

After they left, the lady thought, "Maybe they are right. My dishes do match. I have a warm house that keeps me dry. My husband has a good job and he provided for us, and he really loves me. Yes, maybe I am rich!"

Can one be rich without money? One person said, "Some day we're going to be rich." Their mate answered, "We are rich now, but someday we may have money." One was thinking in terms of material accumulation and the other of true riches.

Yes, one can be rich without money. Paul said that "We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God . . . as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (II Corinthians 6:1, 3, 4, 10).

If we are God's children we are indeed heirs and rich as James 2:5 says we are "rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." A person who belongs to God has all that belongs to God at his disposal and within his reach. Such riches as God bestows do not pass away with time but rather reach into eternity.

In Revelation 14:13 we read that ". . . their works do follow them" and if we well remember that Paul told Timothy to be "rich in good works" what can we expect to "follow us"? Isn't that being rich without money!

However, just as one can be rich without money, one can be poor with money. Sound strange? It isn't! The Laodiceans of Revelation 3 thought themselves to be rich, but were poor indeed. Are you RICH or POOR? It's up to you.

Voyager 2

JOHN GIPSON

I stand amazed at what man can do. Twelve years ago a powerful Titan-Centaur rocket launched Voyager 2 from Cape Canaveral and headed it into the most complex journey in the history of the space age.

Voyager 2 is now taking pictures of Neptune with its rolling clouds above its surface and seeking out still more undiscovered moons. Its instruments are probing the planet's magnetic field, measuring infrared radiation from the frigid surface and analyzing the composition of the atmosphere. Its feeble radio—with less power than a refrigerator light bulb—is transmitting steadily. Just think of it. This vessel has been speeding toward the blue-green cloud tops of the planet Neptune at a speed of more than 42,000 mph for more than twelve years! What a journey! The radio signals being sent back to Earth from Voyager 2 are traveling at 186,000 miles per second, yet they take over four hours to travel the nearly three billion miles back to Earth. Voyager 2 is the same one-ton automated craft which reached Jupiter in 1979 and

photographed the Jovian storm clouds and the Great Red Spot. I find it hard to believe what man has been able to do.

But as amazed as I am by the ability of man, I stand in even more amazement at the wisdom and might of the God who created this universe. Distances beyond comprehension He has set before my eyes. Mathematical processes which baffle the minds of the wise are set in bold array. Unlimited power in creating and sustaining such a universe are at His disposal and clearly revealed.

My only response is awe and worship! How Great Thou Art!

The Local Church

JACKIE M. STEARSMAN

The Gospel leads those who respect and follow it to place a great emphasis upon the local church. Acts of Apostles records the planting of local churches in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and throughout the world. Epistles were written to local congregations and to individuals who were laboring to build up the kingdom of Christ through the local churches.

NURTURE

It is in the local church that God intended for souls to be fed, overseen (protected and guided), to gain maturity through exercise and experience, and to be returned to spiritual health if diseased (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 5:11-14; Galatians 6:1-10; James 5:19-20).

The master of deception knows that if the local church can be destroyed the power of the Gospel may be thwarted.

There are no souls who have grown to maturity but what have been directly involved in a local congregation.

Depreciate the local congregation in the minds of people and the cause of truth suffers.

Preachers need to know that they are doing a great work when they are toiling to develop the local congregation.

Local congregations need to understand and to appreciate their role in the saving of souls by nurturing and bringing to maturity souls.

INFLUENCE

Through the local church God intended to make an impact upon the world of sin. The church in Thessalonica, with the Power of the Gospel working through it, was known to be doing this (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10).

Fellowship in the furtherance of the Gospel was the very life of the local church in Phillippi (Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16).

The stronger the local congregation the greater the impact upon the world. Weaken the local church and the influence upon the world will be minimized.

CONQUER

If the local church is to realize its fullest potential in the Gospel it must overcome every foe. Like the Church at Ephesus it must overcome any loss of its first love. (Revelation 2:7). If called upon to suffer, as was Smyrna, that suffering must be endured if it is to overcome (Revelation 2:11). With Pergamum, it must overcome religious error and false doctrine when such surfaces (Revelation 2:17). If "Jezebel" types (or doctrines) arise, like in Thyatira this too must be overcome (Revelation 2:26). Should the local church become dead, as was the case at Sardis, it is counseled to overcome (Revelation 3:5). When presented with opportunities (an open door), there must be courageous faith to overcome the foes of Satan as surely as did the church at Philadelphia (Revelation 3:12). Luke-warmness destroys the potential of the local church, and where this sin exists the Lord's message of overcoming written to Laodicea is to be recalled and applied (Revelation 3:21).

CONCLUSION

All who believe and respect the gospel as the power of God unto salvation must understand and appreciate the role of the local congregation. The Lord's admonition stands: *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."*

The Essentiality of Assembling Together

RAYMOND ELLIOTT

An indispensable ingredient of the Christian life is to congregate with those of like precious faith for the purposes of worshiping God and to edify and exhort one another. God, in his infinite wisdom, created man to be a social being, that is, in need of fellowship with other men. It is a misunderstanding and a disregard of the intent of God when men abstain from the assemblies of the Lord's people. The corporate worship of the body of believers is not the whole of Christianity; nevertheless; assembling together is necessary for the spiritual growth and welfare of the individual disciple. It has never been the design and purpose of God for his followers to isolate themselves from other children of God. One can readily read of the various assemblies under the Mosaic age and to learn the necessity of such (Exodus 5:1, 3; 12:6; Deuteronomy 16:8).

A proper investigation of the disciples of Christ will determine that various assemblies were in evidence in the first century. At the beginning of the church in Jerusalem you can read in Acts 2:44; "All that believed were together . . ." Following the first persecution, saints "gathered together" (Acts 4:31). It is recorded in Acts 11:26 that Barnabas and Saul assembled themselves with the church for a year in order to teach the brethren. After the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and "gathered the church together" to rehearse all that God had done by them (Acts 12:27). All Bible students are aware that the early Christians met upon "the first day of the week" to break bread, that is, to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). In fact, when Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth, he admonished them to give as God had prospered them "upon the first day of the week" (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). He knew that they were already meeting on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper. (Acts 2). Notice in 1 Corinthians 11:18: "For first of all, when ye come together in the church (meet as a congregation) . . ." Again in 11:20: "When therefore ye assemble yourselves together . . ." In chapter 14:23: "If therefore the whole church be assembled together . . ."

The fact was, one sure way to denote a Christian who was becoming unfaithful to Christ was in their habitual absence from the assemblies of the saints. Please study carefully the context in which you find Hebrews 10:24, 25. In our assemblies, we can exhort one another

in the matter of love, good works and, in short, faithful Christian living. Even in our songs we can teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16). Redeemed people find joy, strength and security in coming together to praise God the Father and the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Expressions of gratitude, honor, homage and devotion are natural for one whose heart is filled with love for God because of our salvation, blessed assurance and the hope of eternal life. It is God's desire that we worship him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

On Greener Grass

DALTON KEY

Not long ago, I caught a glimpse of a bumper sticker which said, "The grass next door may be greener, but it's just as hard to cut." Now think about that for a moment.

Our feelings of envy and jealousy might leave us forever if we were able to see the reality of the other person's life from their perspective. All we see is the glitter, the frills, the outer trappings of those the world would call successful. But what lies beneath?

Are the rich always happy, secure and content?

Did their riches come by accident? or was hard work involved?

Many have traded their health, their families, and their very soul for the things of this world. Would we be willing to trade places with them?

Those who appear successful, are generally a success in only a few small facets of life—sometimes, only in one. Would we really want to trade lives, money for money, problem for problem, heartache for heartache?

No, most of us would like the seeming "rewards" without having to pay the price.

Perhaps we'd be better off to live our own lives, to be content with our own blessings, and leave the baser sins of envy and jealousy to those small enough to enjoy them. Remember the words of Paul: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

Was Ananias A Mistaken Disciple?

W.A. HOLLEY

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 conscious 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 persecuted: 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 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 their out blood and water." These verses shows that Jesus shed this 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.

Unprofitable Servants

BOBBY KEY

Oh, why should mortal man be proud? Of what do we have to boast? "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). God made man upright, but he soon went astray (Ecclesiastes 7:29). In heaven's sight man is but a mere worm (Job 25:6). "How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" (Job 15:16). "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

As we look at the eternal benefits Christianity has conferred upon us, and the rich inheritance it proposes to confer in the world to come, the little that poor mortal man can do in such a short life sinks into nothingness, and deserves no credit. Anyone who will take the time to think of all God has done for an undeserving race sees his own accomplishments dwindle into complete insignificance. "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). If God permits us to enter heaven it will not be because of any works of merit we have performed—it will be through His great mercy.

Jesus reminds us that after we have done our duty—after we have done our best—we are still unprofitable. "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do (Luke 17:10). We have never done anything worthy of our boasting. To God we owe eternal gratitude, praise and thanks giving. It is a marvel that He has received us and permitted us to labor in the greatest cause on earth. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15). To the name of God goes all of our honor and praise forever.

The Image and Superscription!

DILLARD THURMAN

When questioned as to whether or not it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, Jesus called for the tribute money, and asked, "*Whose is the image and superscription? . . . Render unto caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*" (Mt. 22:17-21). With this very reasoning, we believe in God, the Creator; and also believe Man bears His image and should reflect it to the world. We entertain no doubts as to our origin, for we are assured in God's holy Word: "*And God said, Let us make man in our own image after our own likeness.*" "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*" (Gen. 1:26,27). His image and superscription I bear, and when I look in the mirror each morning I see the image of God, which reminds me of my obligation to "*Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.*" Courses in "higher learning" never dimmed this great truth! I still bear the image and superscription of God, the Father!

THE GODLY IMAGE BECAME DEFACED!

When placed in the garden of Eden, Adam could speak with God face to face, for he was made in God's image, and speak His language. But it was man's sin, and resulting depravity, that changed the picture! Sinful man was not permitted to look on the face of God, nor to live in the garden of Paradise! The statement was made again, "*In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.*" (Gen. 5:1). But the next chapter reveals man's increasing wickedness, "*And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*" (Gen. 6:6). But this was the fault of man, not of God! "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*" (Isa. 59:2). But that pristine beauty was to be restored, so that it is written: "*for a man ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God.*" (1 Cor. 11:7). Even though scarred and defaced, that image is to be recognized and respected! James speaks of the unruly, evil tongue, saying, "*Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made in the similitude [likeness] of God. . . My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*" (Jas. 3:9-10). We must respect men, for they still bear the divine image (imprint) of God!

JESUS CHRIST BORE A PERFECT IMAGE!

Over and over it is affirmed that Jesus Christ borne the image of God, the Father! For God *"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."* (Heb. 1:2-3). Thus we find the Christ had the brightness of God's glory, and also the express image of God's person! Of Him it is recorded: *"And the Word was made flesh; and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."* (Jno. 1:14). As the only begotten Son of God, He bore God's image to the world! He said, *"And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me."* (Jno. 12:45). To make this clearer yet, He said, *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."* (Jno. 14:9). Paul writes of Him: *"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature."* (Col. 1:15). Again he wrote, *"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid in them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."* (2 Cor. 4:4). yes, the glorious gospel is of Christ, who is the image of God, shining to the world!

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN HIS CHILDREN!

The image of God is seen in His Son, but it is also reflected in His children! This makes for an improved citizenship! *"Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his evil deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."* (Col. 3:9-10). The image of God the Father is reflected in His children when they seek that transformation! *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."* (2 Cor. 3:18). As Christ shows God to the world, so saints must strive to constantly look to God to develop godliness [God-likeness] in our lives, and thus be transformed into the God-image by the Spirit! To be like Christ is also to be like God! *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."* (Rom. 8:29). God has foreordained that we should bear the image of His Son, which is the image of God, our Father in heaven!

HOW GOD'S IMAGE IS SHOWN IN SAINTS

The image of our Father is reflected when we show His attributes. *"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."* (1 Jno. 3:3). Paul's instructions to Timothy was, *"Keep thyself pure."* (1 Tim. 5:22). This purity was readily apparent: *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth."* (1 Pet. 1:22). Paul's charge to young Timothy was: *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."* (1 Tim. 4:12). How often do we hear purity extolled in our times? Decent people blush to hear and see what is "spoon-fed" to our youth in TV programs!

Job was specific in saying, *"I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker."* (Job 36:3). The Psalmist exclaimed: *"The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."* (Psa. 145:17). Jesus preached, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,"* (Mt. 6:33). That is to be put first for the image of God to be seen in our lives! Therefore Paul urged, *"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."* (Eph. 4:23-24). Since God is righteous and holy, our righteousness and holiness must become apparent to the world for God's image to be seen!

Another attribute of God is emphasized by John: *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."* *"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."* *"we love him, because he first loved us."* (1 Jno. 4:7-8, 16, 19). Notice how the righteousness and love of God is joined in saints: *"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."* (1 Jno. 3:10). Our love and compassion for others portrays God within (1 Jno. 3:16-17). By this His image is seen!

CORRUPTED IMAGE OF MAN'S ORIGIN

Atheism has been a growing menace in our world for the past few decades. The idea that God created the world is held in derision by many self-styled "free thinkers," agnostics and openly avowed atheists. Of course, atheism is nothing new. Long before Jesus came, it was written, *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."* (Psa. 14:1; 53:1). Humanists would destroy the idea of Man

bearing the image of God, for he denies any power higher than man! He contends man is a mere animal, arriving by evolutionary chance, and having no higher source of morals, and no higher direction. But the most sickening factor in all this is that the church, seeking for popular acceptance and acclaim, has abandoned the call for God-like behaviour that portrays His image, and has catered to the world with musical programs, projects, challenge attendance drives, and "fast food give-aways" to appeal to man's carnality! Entertainment and social functions have displaced sound gospel proclamation; and spiritual illiteracy abounds! Morality is sorely lacking when teen-age pregnancies, unwed mothers, "live-in lovers" and TV "sexploits" are becoming the norm, and the church is cursed with "the demon of dumbness"! Worldliness is rife, and the Devil laughs in satanic glee!

A CHALLENGE FOR GOD'S SAINTS!

This present age needs to see the image of God restored to the life of Man! That is our glorious calling and aspiration. *"As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."* (1 Cor. 15:49). John had a glimpse of this in writing, *"Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."* (1 Jno. 3:2). How Paul *hurt* for saints whom he had brought to Christ! *"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."* (Gal. 4:19). He wanted to see the image of God shining resplendant in them! He wanted brethren to *"be strengthened with might in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."* (Eph. 3:16-17). It is by this means that God is seen in our lives!

Paul's earnest expectation and hope was that *"Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life, or by death."* (Phil. 1:20). But look to the transformation he gained: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Gal. 2:20). The image of Christ and God could be seen in Paul as he lived before men! Let us rededicate ourselves to the proposition that God's image will be portrayed in our individual lives, and the light of the gospel will shine forth radiantly—not from our own selves, but from Him who saved us: *"Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."* (Col. 1:27). We oft sing: "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me!" But don't just sing of it: LIVE it!