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Our Duties To The Local Church

The church of our Lord exists throughout the world. The church also exists locally in the form of a congregation. There might be any number of such congregations even in one city or area. Speaking of a group of congregations like this in New Testament times, Paul referred to them as churches of Christ. (Romans 16:16). Each one is independent of the others, is known as the church of Christ, recognizes Christ, as its head, has its own leadership, conducts worship, engages in its own work, etc.

We who are Christians are members of just such a local congregation. We are a part of that church then and as such we have certain duties and responsibilities to it. We are to be faithful in discharging those duties and responsibilities. As we do so then we can be a blessing to the Lord's cause and help it to grow and to spread, and in turn, the Lord will bless us and reward our efforts.

Sad to say, but there are some who become members as they would in joining a club. There are members who are no more than spectators in worship, as they might be at some sporting event. There are those who want the benefits that go with being

a member of the church but who do not want to invest their time, efforts, and money in it. That would be like wanting to be a part of a business, never putting anything into it, but wanting to make a living from it. Such members then are weak and need more teaching so they can understand the church and what it should mean to them to be a member.

Just now we want to note some of the duties and responsibilities that we have to the local church. As these are listed, please be honest enough with yourself and with God to compare your own situation with these things to see how you measure up.

1. We owe the local church our faithful attendance in worship. This means that we should be present every Lord's Day, and if at all possible we should try to bring others with us. The Hebrew writer said in the long ago, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25). We need to be the kind of people that the church can depend on. If we are not faithful in our attendance, then how can we set a good example to others, be used in the services, and help plan the work so it can grow and expand? We should not only put forth every effort possible to attend worship on Sunday but we should also try to attend any and all other services possible. That would include special meetings as well.

2. We owe the local church our full support which include our weekly contributions. Paul exhorted the Christians at Corinth, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). He said again, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6,7). This means then that even as the Christians at Corinth, we are likewise to give. We need to realize that the church has work to do and the only way it can do that work is to have the necessary

funds to put on it. Where are those funds to come from? Sometimes in the beginning of a work, brethren who live in other places may send some funds to help the local church to do its work until it can grow to the point where it can support itself. But even then the local brethren should not refrain from giving and allow someone else to do all of the giving. Therefore, we as members of the local church must give each first day of the week as we have been prospered so that the church can take care of its local needs, like paying rent, paying electric and water bills, advertising its meetings, postage for Bible literature, support for local preaching, and so on. Then there is the need to give to enable the church to have funds to help those who have needs. It may be necessary to help a brother who is out of work, to help some needy member with a medical bill, to send a contribution to brethren in an area where there has been a famine, flood, or a cyclone. Any number of other needs may also arise. And finally, we need to give to provide funds for the church to preach the gospel in other areas. Now if we don't give, or if we don't give as we should, then the church is going to be limited in what it can do. Naturally, the more we give then the more the local church can do. It is therefore urgent that we learn what the Bible teaches about giving and that we then apply that to our own giving habits. When we learn these lessons and practice them then the church is going to be benefitted and others likewise will be benefitted since it will enable us to do more to help others and to spread the gospel.

3. We owe the local church our involvement in the work. Besides attending the assemblies and giving of our means, as men of the church we need to make ourselves available to participate in various meetings. We can lead in prayer, wait on the Lord's Table, lead singing, teach a class, and preach. Of course we might not be able to do some of these things on becoming Christians, but with the passing of time, seeing how things work, growing in our knowledge of God's word, and through the encouragement that others may give us, then we can begin to help out in various ways. We'll maybe not be able to do the best job at first but with the passing of time, and with the gaining of experience, then we will improve and do better. The main thing is to want to be involved and then to try. We can also help with

personal work, going out to conduct meetings or to accompany others as they go out to visit and hold meetings. We can visit the sick and the weak members. We can pray for the work. The older ladies can prepare the Lord's Supper, teach classes for younger ladies and children, visit the sick, stich for the needy, extend hospitality, and so on. Even the young people can study, attend classes, invite their friends to the meetings, and perhaps in many other ways. But that is plenty to do if each one will do what he or she can. Please, let us not leave everything up to just a few. Let us not let someone else do the job that we can do. When we all get involved then we will grow spiritually and become better people. Also, this will definitely help the church to grow both spiritually and in numbers. In New Testament times even when there was persecution the record says that the disciples were scattered abroad and that they went everywhere preaching the word. (Acts 8:4). The thing we should note here is the fact that they were all involved. Again, we read concerning the early Christians, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42). We should do likewise.

4. We should support the local church in dealing with the ungodly and unfaithful members of the church. Even one of the Lord's own Apostles turned out bad and we know that was Judas. The scriptures tells us of unfaithful members of the church like Ananias and Sapphira and others. We are also told in God's word what we should do with the unfaithful, the erring. The Lord says that we should first go to them and talk to them about their situation. If they will not listen then we should take one or two others with us. If they still refuse to listen then we should take the matter before the church and then those members should be withdrawn from, that is, if they still refuse to repent of their sins and return to the church. (Matthew 18:15-18). Christ taught that the branch that will not produce fruit should be bruned. (John 15:1-8). Paul says that fornicators, the covetous, the idolaters, the railers, the drunkards, the extortioners, and so on, should be withdrawn from and then he says that we should have no social contact with such people, even to eat a meal. (1 Corinthians 5). Again, he says that we should mark those who cause divisions among us (Romans 16:17,18), that we should withdraw from every

brother that walketh disorderly among you (2 Thessalonians 3:6), that we are to reject the heretick (Titus 3:10), and that we are not to bid God's speed to a false teacher. (2 John 9-11). Rather, the church is to be kept as pure as possible (Ephesians 5:27; 2 Corinthians 11:2), since Christ one day on his return will send to gather out of the kingdom or church all that offend and to cast them into hell. (Matthew 13:41,42). Again, the Hebrew writer tells us that God chastens those whom he loves. (Hebrews 12:1-11). But what if we refuse to deal with the ungodly and unfaithful, those who have refused to repent of their sins, then we are disobeying God and the church is made weak because of it? It means that the church is not pure and this will encourage others to be unfaithful. It also will cause the word to lose respect for the people of God. Furthermore, who would want to become a member of the church when there is such ungodliness being practised among its members? Therefore, let us remain pure before God and let us support the church in keeping the church pure.

5. We owe it to the church to support sound gospel preaching and that of opposing sin and error. Paul said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:2). Christ said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15). Again, Paul said, "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine." (Titus 2:1). There are many other such statements in the scriptures that encourages the preaching of God's word, being sound in our teaching, preaching against sin, worldliness, and ungodliness, and preaching and condemning false doctrine. In other words, we must be strong in our preaching, always preaching with love, but still firm in teaching the truth. If we are soft and weak in this then the church will be weak and the members will begin to drift away or false teachers will deceive us and lead away from God. With strong preaching, and with our support for that kind of preaching, then the church can become strong.

6. We owe it to the local church to be faithful members. This includes not only in attending the assemblies, and such like, but in our homes, on our jobs, in all that we say and do, and in

our dealings with one and all, we should remember that we are Christians and members of the Church of Christ and therefore we should do everything in our power to represent them in such a way that Christ will be honored and the church will have the respect of all. We are not to be Christians and members of the church just on Sunday but every day of the week. Paul has said, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4:16). We should love the church and help the church in every way possible. On the other hand, we should never criticize the church, complain about the members, find fault, and so on, around unbelievers. If we have some complaint then we should take it to the church itself and get it corrected. Neither should we go around among the members and try to create problems, division, and such like. This is far from what the Bible teaches. Rather, we must be faithful to the church if we are to be faithful to the Lord.

As you can see, then, as members of the local church or congregation we have definite duties and responsibilities. There are many blessings and benefits that come to us as Christians and members of the church but not without returning to the Lord and his people the things that he requires of us. But as we do our part, and as the church grows and spreads, then it means that we have done our duty and along with this comes unspeakable joy and satisfaction. May God help us then to always do our part. We know that the Lord will definitely do his part.



**associate
editorial**

Baptized—When, Where, Why, How?

Have you been baptized? If so, when were you baptized? where were you baptized? how were you baptized? and why were you baptized? These are some very important questions concerning

baptism. Not only one needs to be baptized, but it is absolutely necessary for one to know the right answer to these questions.

Jesus Christ has said to the apostles to go and teach all people of all nations and then baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He also declared just before his ascension into heaven that he who believes and is baptized will be saved. (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). The apostle Peter later exhorted, "Repent and be baptized." (Acts 2:38). Saul was commanded to "arise and be baptized." But, when should one be baptized? Where should one be baptized? Why should one be baptized? And, how one should be baptized? Let us see?

WHEN?

When one is old enough to believe the gospel of Christ and old enough to repent of his sins. Mark 16:16 says : He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. Acts 2:38 commands : Repent and be baptized. Therefore one should be baptized when one has already believed in Jesus, and, of course, to believe in Jesus one must hear about him, since faith comes by hearing. (Romans 10:17). Also, one must repent of sins or turn away from sins before baptism. This, therefore, automatically exclude little children from being baptised. Because little children cannot believe and cannot repent. Little babies are not the right subject for baptism. Jesus did not direct his command to little infants but to people who can understand, believe and obey. Those who believe that they have been baptized, because they were "baptized" when they were little children, need to understand and need to realize that they have never been baptized scripturally, and that they need to be baptized now.

WHERE?

The Bible teaches that one must be baptized into Christ. Romans 6:3 states. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Galatians 3:27 declares, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." According to Romans 6:4,5, by being baptized into Christ, "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.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." The inference is that when we are baptized into Christ then we are also baptized into his death, which was for our sins, and since he shed his blood in his death, for the remission of our sins, (cf. Matthew 26:28), therefore we are saved by his death, and by his blood, by being baptized into him. Salvation is in Christ, according to Colossians 1:14. Also, at I Corinthians 12:13 we are told that all are baptized into one body. According to Ephesians 1:22,23 the body is the church, and Ephesians 4:4 says that there is only one body. This then means that when one is scripturally baptized into Christ he is not only saved from his past sins, but also at the same time he become a members of Christ's church, which is his body. All who are baptized into Christ have become members of his spiritual body, the church, of which he is the head. (Colossians 1:18). According to Acts 2:47 the Lord adds to the church daily such as should be saved.

WHY?

One must know the purpose of baptism. One must be told why he or she needs to be baptized, and one must know why he or she is going to be baptized. Baptism is not a religious bath or washing of the body. (1 Peter 3:21). It is a command of Christ. He said, one must BOTH believe and be baptized *to be saved*. (Mark 16:16). Peter, on the day of Pentecost, clearly said to those who were listening to his preaching that they need to repent and be baptized *for the remission of sins*. When Ananias came to Saul (Paul) he exhorted him to immediately arise and be baptized *to wash away his sins*. Therefore we learn that the Bible teaches that one must be baptised to be saved from sins; to receive the forgiveness of sins; to have his sins washed away. Baptism is not merely an outward sign of an already received inward salvation, as some think. But it is a specific command of Christ for a specific purpose. It is commonly taught today by many preachers that one is saved by faith only, when one mentally receives Christ as a personal saviour, and that after salvation one may be baptized just for the sake of obeying the command of Christ. But this is not the teaching of God's word. The Bible teaches that as much as faith is necessary for salvation so is baptism necessary for

salvation. Believe and be baptized to be saved, is the command of the Saviour.

HOW?

The Greek word *Baptidzo* which has been translated into English as baptism means : to dip or plunge or immerse. The Bible baptism is an immersion. The Bible baptism signifies the death and burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. By repentance, which precedes baptism, (cf. Acts 2:38), one dies to his sins, then his body is lowered, as a dead person, into the grave of water and buried therein, and then raised out of the watery grave of baptism. Thus signifying thereby the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Listen to the apostle Paul, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12; cf. Romans 6:3-5). This is how eunuch was baptized by Philip: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptised him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts 8:36-39).

There is, according to Ephesians 4:5, only one baptism. But if one was baptized before he was old enough to believe in Christ and repent of his sins then he actually did not receive the one baptism of the Bible. If he was not baptized into Christ, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, then he was wrongly baptized. If he was not baptized to be saved, that is, if he didn't know at the time of his baptism that he was being baptized for the forgiveness of sins, for salvation, then his baptism was unscriptural. Likewise, if he was not buried or immersed in water when he was baptised then he has never been baptized as the Bible teaches.

Counting The Cost

W.A. Holley

The cost of true discipleship is no little thing. Perhaps one reason why many children of God do not remain faithful to their profession is because they never sincerely take in consideration what following Christ will cost them. One cannot be a Christian without paying the price! "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple," said Jesus (Luke 14:27).

One's discipleship to Christ must not be merely apparent or illusory; rather, Christ demands that those who follow him must be ready to sacrifice all, even our lives, if need be. "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another; in diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing steadfastly in prayer; communicating to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality. Bless them that persecute you; bless and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Set your mind on high things, but condescend to things that are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits", suggests some of the costs of true discipleship, according to Paul (Romans 12:9-16).

"For which of you," said Jesus, "desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and asketh conditions of peace. So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:28-33, ASV).

If we are children of God, we must follow the marvelous example of the great apostle Paul. In his amazing sermon addressed to the Ephesian elders, he declared, "How I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:20-24, ASV).

Jesus illustrated the costliness of Christian discipleship by the tower builder and the king with an inferior number trying to overcome another king with superior forces. As disciples, we are all building towers or meeting what we may consider opposition too strong to be overcome. We should be encouraged to fight the good fight of faith with backbone and fortitude; we should never attempt to follow Jesus with frivolity of spirit and want of real determination: such guarantees total failure:

To illustrate, in a practical way, what it means to count the cost, we suggest a careful reading of the following story.

"I will tell you," said a man who was talking to a friend about temperance, "how much it cost me to open my eyes on this subject. When my wife and I were first married, we began keeping house with a beautiful supply of liquor, wine, and beer; we continued after this fashion until I, my wife, and our two sons, were all drunkards. Finally, my eyes were opened, but then it was too late."

What an awful cost! What a price to pay!

Fathers and mothers, if you set a poor example; if you refuse to believe and obey Christ; if you will not attend the Lord's assembly; if you show by your attitude that the Bible, and God, Jesus Christ, and the church mean nothing to you, do not expect your children to do better!

But, just a word of caution! Counting the cost should begin with becoming a disciple of the Lord. How does one become a disciple, a Christian? One becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ, a Christian, when one hears what Jesus teaches, believes and obeys it, and makes a concerted effort to be faithful to his teaching throughout life (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:36-38, 41-42, 47; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; I Peter 3:20-21; Revelation 2:10).

The Light Must Shine To All The World

J.R. Sullins

Our Lord said, "I am the light of the world : he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Jesus instructed Paul to go to the Gentiles and "open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified" (Acts 26:18-ASV). Paul referred to this light as the "light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (II Corinthians 4:4).

The same need that existed in the first century exists today. The light of the gospel needs to shine forth to every creature on the face of the earth. But brethren, we must be honest with ourselves and know that we are not getting the job done. Consider with me some thoughts on this matter.

In the first place, except for a few exceptional congregations most congregations have no immediate plans for *going* out into their own communities, much less the world, to proclaim the gospel of Christ. We, for some reason, have thought that when Jesus said "go into all the world and preach," he meant to build a church building in a certain community, set up worship services and have one or two gospel meetings per year to invite people to "come" hear the truth proclaimed. On the contrary, the reason the early church multiplied in members is because they went daily from house to house, ceasing not to teach and preach

Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42). Within sight of many of our church buildings, there are those who have never heard of Simple New Testament Christianity. No one, including the elders, preacher(s), teachers, or members have made the effort to go shed the light of the gospel of Christ to those individuals. The *Light* will never shine to every creature unless we begin to learn what it means to go with the gospel.

Secondly, what are you doing to see that every creature has the opportunity to see the light of Jesus through the gospel? How many neighbours have you taught in the past year—how many friends—how many relatives—how many business associates? Is it not your responsibility to teach them? Many Christians do not realize that possibly they will be the only ones who will be able to convert a certain individual because of their relationship with that individual, Jesus taught us that it is our responsibility (Matthew 5:13-17). Peter said we are to “show forth the excellencies of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9). Unless the church realizes the need of personal soul-saving, we’ll never accomplish the task of taking the light of the gospel to every creature.

In the third place, for the most part the churches of Christ have greatly declined in their interest in world evangelism. In the past ten years, according to a reputable mission survey, our missionaries in foreign fields decreased an alarming one-fourth in number. We now have five percent of our preaching brethren preaching to ninety-five percent of the world’s population. The real cause of this is not known, but really, couldn’t we say that the basis of the problem rests in the fact that the church as a whole has declined in its belief in the Lordship of Jesus Christ? If the church as a whole really had a strong abiding faith in the Master, would it be necessary for missionaries to go around begging for funds so that ninety-five percent of the population of the world might be taught the gospel of Christ? If the church were filled with faith-filled Christians, wouldn’t there be more who would be willing to make the move necessary that this world be evangelized?

Every loving, compassionate Christian sees the plight of lost mankind. Thank God for those who, at home and abroad, are

involving themselves directly and indirectly in spreading the light of the gospel of Christ. May God have mercy on those in the church who have done nothing, who are not doing anything now, and who are not planning to do anything in the future toward leading those near and far to a knowledge of the truth of the gospel of light.

Reflections Upon An Auction Sale

Douglas Sims

Several years ago I spent a day keeping records of the auction sale of a family who was selling the worldly goods of a family member to settle his estate. I learned a lot that day about human nature. What I saw in the people who came to an auction should cause us to stop and think about our own attitude toward this world's goods.

THE CURIOUS CAME to watch the proceedings and to ponder, "I wonder how much he was worth? How much did he leave?" The answer of course is obvious: he left everything (I Timothy 6:7).

THE GREEDY CAME to get a "bargain." Their own greed was their downfall. Some paid more for a "used" item than a "new" one was worth.

THE FRIENDS CAME to make a bid but left with hard feelings toward others who out-bid them for a coveted item.

THE FAMILY CAME to witness the life's possessions of a loved one picked over as if by vultures and carried away to a hundred different places.

THE AUCTIONEER CAME to make a fee, and to wonder which one of these will be the next to go so he can sell their possessions also.

THE TAXMAN AWAITS to get his share. They say nothing is certain but death and taxes, but even the dead are taxed.

Please think on the following words from the word of God :

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness : for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

"Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided ?" (Lk. 12:20).

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matt. 6:19).

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21).

It matters not how many deeds to property you hold, but how many deeds you have done for your fellow man.

It matters not how many rupees you have saved, but how many souls you have been instrumental in saving.

It matters not what people think you are worth but what God knows you are worth in the things that are important.

Finally, my fellow pilgrim upon this earth, remember the words of Jesus when he said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" (Mark 8:36-37).

One day you will leave this life, and you will leave all these "things" which seem so important now. Are you laying up treasures in heaven ?

"Speak Less Than Thou Knowest"

Dalton Key

It was Shakespeare, in *King Lear*, who wrote, "Have more than thou showest, Speak less than thou knowest." Avon's bard must have been reading the Bible, for it teaches the same truth. "He that hath knowledge spareth his words : and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise : and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding" (Proverbs 17:27,28).

The exhortation of James, calling for "every man" to "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" is especially suited to our current clime, one of near constant chattering producing scarce, if any, profit. Sparse drops of reason find themselves no match for the veritable deluge of words with which they are forced to compete.

Talking has become a national pastime; listening, a lost art. Many of us have much in common with the young man, who in asking Socrates to teach him the art of oratory, rattled on and on. When finally the sage found a fleeting opportunity to get a word in, he said he would have to charge the lad a double fee, for he would have to teach him two sciences: how to hold his tongue, and second, how to use it. Knowing what not to say, and when not to say it, is often more important than knowing the ins and outs of grammar, speech, and conversation combined.

Of course, this may be pressed to the extreme. Calvin Coolidge, is remembered as a man of few words. He was the one who, at the urging of his bed-ridden wife, attended church services alone. Upon returning home, he was asked what the preacher had spoken on. "Sin," was Coolidge's terse reply. His wife, prodding him further, inquired, "Well, what did he say about it?" "He was agin' it," he replied. We also remember Coolidge for commenting, "If you don't say anything, you won't be called on to repeat it." Yes, this may be pressing the matter.

Yet the truth remains. A too busy tongue and a pretentious laugh usually evidence a vacant mind. As Lincoln quipped, "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt". Likewise, Prior observed, "And 'tis remarkable that they, Talk most who have least to say."

And yet a much higher wisdom has issued this warning: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew 12:36,37).

May we seek wisdom to distinguish the times to speak from the times to be silent.

Jesus Is King

Jim E. Waldron

The great prophet, Isaiah, said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Again Gabriel said to Jesus' mother, "And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." (Luke 1:31-32).

The exaltation of Christ "upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah over Israel" (I Chronicles 28:5) i.e., "the throne of Jehovah" (I Chronicles 29:23), or "the throne of David over Israel" (II Samuel 3:10), has already taken place, for we read in Revelation 3:21, "I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne".

Yet, one may say, it says Christ "sat" but when did he begin to sit "upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah over Israel" i.e., "the throne of David?"

The answer is the ancient feast day Pentecost, just fifty days after the resurrection and ten days after his ascension some 1950 years ago. We know this beyond a shadow of a doubt, because the Holy Spirit on that Pentecost, by the mouth of Peter, quoted from both Psalm 132 about David's son on his throne and Psalm 110 about Christ ruling from God's right hand (Acts 2:30-36). Peter said on that day, "Let all Israel know assuredly" that God had raised up Jesus to place him on David's throne and to be David's Lord at God's right hand.

The Hebrew writer tells us "when he had made purification of sins, [Christ] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3), and that the Father, who is God, said of the son, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8).

Thus, Jesus Christ is now ruling over the kingdom of God, spiritual Israel (Philippians 3:3; Galatians 3:29; 6:16), and "he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be conquered is death" (I Corinthians 15:24-25).

The kingdom of Heaven upon this earth, the church of Christ, is under the rule of the monarch "who is King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Timothy 6:15), and rules heaven and earth from "the right hand of power" (Luke 22:69).

The Candle Under The Bed

Ancil Jenkins

"Is the lamp brought to be put under the bushel, or under the bed, and not to be put on the stand?" (Mark 4:21).

Jesus is teaching us the folly of a wasted life. In the poorly lit houses of his day, the candle or lamp was often the major source of illumination. The oil was valuable and not to be wasted.

How foolish for one to light a lamp and then put it under the bed or couch. It would not give off its intended light. It also might catch the bed on fire.

This, however, is no more foolish than the lives of some. The Lord has put within us the possibilities and potential for greatness in his service. He has given us natural talent and abilities that can be put to his service. This ability is different in different people. Some possess more talent than others. However, none are lacking in some capability to serve the Lord.

Let us examine ourselves. Let's not have the spirit of Moses, who thought he could not lead the Children of Israel. Be honest with yourself. Do not fear asking a good friend to help you evaluate your potential for the Lord's service.

Be eager to work. Be as Isaiah : "Here am I, send Me !" (Isaiah 6:8). Many do not find opportunities to work for the Lord the same way a thief does not find a policeman—he doesn't look for one.

What about your lights ? Is it shining for God ? Are people clearly seeing your good works and praising God, or is it under a bed ? Move it ! There is danger of its going out.

The Interview

K. Mathai

Most of the readers might have had an opportunity of facing interview. Usually interviews are held to select the best candidate for a certain job. For interviews, we know that hundreds appear, though the vacancies are limited. Only a few are selected and others are sent back. Each candidate, before appearing for the interview should work very hard to be successful. No candidates appear without necessary preparation, though they are fully aware of the number of seats.

There will be a greater and more important interview for all of us. In Matthew 22:17, we read "For many are called but few are chosen". Each member of the church is called. There is no distinction of cast and creed. For there is no difference between the Jew and Greek. For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (Rom. 10:12). Calling is for all but only a few will be selected. This is a very serious matter. Am I worthy to be chosen? Let us ask this question. How do we live? Most Christians stop growing at the point of entering into Christ. Actually this is the very point, where we start. If we are not preparing for the great interview, where are we going to stand?

Let us turn to Paul's Epistle to Philippians, chapter 3 and verse 12. . . . "Not as though I had already perfect but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which that also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus". Apostle Paul had every right to claim his worldly connections. But here we see, he left whatever he had in this world to gain Jesus. He had knowledge, wealth and

respect among his fellowmen. He threw all these as dust and forgetting all things which were behind and reaching for the things which were before him, it certainly means Christ and his Cross.

We can draw another similar example from the Old Testament. God told Lot to run from Sodom, not turning back. This is a wonderful example to give us strength and courage to forsake the world. We are called and separated from this world. We have no business with worldly lusts and passions. Again, let us see what the New Testament says about it, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God; I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." (II Cor. 6:16).

It is very clear that we have nothing to do with unbelievers. We are the temple of the living God, and the Spirit of the Lord dwell in us. When the Spirit of the Lord dwell in us we are of the Lord; We are his children. And if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together." (Rom. 8:17). Now we can know that to become an heir means to share the suffering of Christ. Carrying the cross daily, preparing daily for the great INTERVIEW. So that we may succeed in it. Peter encourages the Christians by saying: "But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering; when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceedingly joy." (I Pet. 4:13). Are you a partaker of Christ's sufferings to qualify you as a successful candidate to inherit the richness of eternity.

Miracles And Their Use

E.S. Smith

A miracle is a happening contrary to the laws of nature. Every believer of the New Testament believes that miracles were performed by the Christ, his apostles and others to whom this divine power was given. It is only the modernist of today who, denying the deity of Christ and the inspiration of the New Testament, likewise denies that miracles were performed.

These miracles were performed by the apostles and others upon whom the apostles laid their hands during the infancy of the church. They were enabled to do these things of supernatural character that their words might be proven to be from God. This divine power was given for the purpose of confirming the word of God and served its purpose in that way.

As the New Testament was given by the inspiration of the Spirit of God these men who spake as the Spirit gave them utterance could perform the supernatural wonders that the hearers might know that their teaching was from God. The 16th chapter of Mark, the 20th verse we read that the apostles, and we know of others upon whom the apostles laid their hands from further study of the New Testament, "went forth and preached evarywhere the Lord working with them and confirming the word, by the signs that followed. Thus in the infant age of the church as the New Testament was being given for the guidance of the people of God these miracles were performed for that purpose.

When the New Testament was complete and men could "look into the perfect law, the law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25) the need for miracles of confirmation was at an end, so this power left the earth with the death of the last apostle and has not been manifest since that time. As Paul prophesied of the time "that which is perfect has come" (I Cor 13:20) he spoke of it as the time when that which was in part should be done away, "That which was in part" in the time of Paul was the miraculous revelation and confirmation of the will of God. Therefore, when this revelation and confirmation was completed the need for miracles was at an end and they ceased as he had said they would when that which is perfect had come.

Miracles served their purpose in this age which was the age of creation in the spiritual realm, just as they served their purpose in the creation of the natural realm. The creation of the world and life upon it was a miracle, yea, it was a series of miracles as one by one the created things of this world came into existence by the power of the word of God. Likewise in the creation of the new or heavenly creation in this dispensation of the Spirit there were miraculous occurrences. However, these served their purpose in the time of creation or beginning and henceforth have been done away but all things continue today in the church, which is God's new creation, by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

However in the world today we have those who would counterfeit and imitate the miracles of Christ and apostles. These claim that the power of God still works through them and that these miracles are performed at their hand today. I say this is a counterfeit and not the genuine it is an imitation and not the real thing because, the need for these miracles is gone and with the need the deed has likewise come to an end.

Some are deceived today and think that there are those who can do the thing which apostles and their co-labourers did in the first century, while others know better and only teach things that they may gain the acclaim of men and the wealth which this world can give. They attempt to appeal to the word of God for sustenance of their claims but they can find no authority there. We will briefly examine some of the claims they make and see the absurdity of their assumptions.

First of all they will turn to the sixteenth chapter of Mark and say that the seventeenth verse promises this power to every believer in Christ. However in discussing the matter with them you will see that they will not stand by this claim and do not ever pretend to believe it in actuality. In this verse Christ said, "These signs (not part of them but, these signs, all of them) shall follow, (not may follow but, shall follow, with unfailing certainly spoken by the Christ) them that believe. (Not some of the believers but "them that believe every one in the class addressed at that time)."

Now notice carefully, "These signs shall follow them that believe." I am unable to find among those that claim this to mean the believer in Christ any who will affirm that every believer has the power to do all of these things. In all of their cults we find some of great prominence who are set forth as their healers and miracle workers. That will not fulfill the demands of the passage but if this refers to the believer in Christ then every one who believes in him must necessarily have the power to do all of these things.

Thus we see the failure of these who pretend to work miracles to find substantiation of their claim in this passage. At the time these words were spoken the Christ was speaking to the apostles who in unbelief would not listen to the testimony of those who had seen him after he was raised from the dead. He "upbraided them

for their unbelief" (verse 14) and then makes this promise to them that believed. As the apostles heard his words and believed assuredly that Christ was raised from the dead they went forth to work in his name. Upon those the Holy Spirit came and by his power they could do the things that Christ had said they should do. Not one of them failed in any particular but all of them had the power to do all of these things.

Then in the early church we find another group that were given the miraculous power by the laying on of the apostles' hands. "Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given" (Acts 8:18). In this way and in no other this power of the Holy Spirit was given and those thus receiving the power by the laying on of the apostles' hands could not pass the power on to another, as we see the inability to do this in Philip upon whom the apostles had laid their hands (Acts 6). It was necessary for Peter and John to come to Samaria to endow certain ones in that church to teach the word of God by the inspiration of the Spirit until the New Testament was completed for there was power residing in the apostles and in none other.

Therefore today since the need for miracles to confirm the word is not here, we do not have miracles. Secondly, since the power to do these things was promised only to the apostles and since none have this power but by the appointment of the apostles, we cannot have it in the earth today for the apostles are dead and buried and have no successors. We can, therefore, say with certainty that miracles are not performed today by the power of God through men who make such claims. All that they do is only a counterfeit and a pretense and whatever is accomplished must be attributed not to God but to men or devil.

The word of God is our guide today and by it we should order our lives that we may hear the great judge say, "Come ye blessed of my Father."

Thankful For Love

J. V. Copeland, Jr.

THIS IS the time of year that many people think of giving thanks. It is good that people have something that will

cause them to give thanks. But for christians, every day is thanksgiving day because they have so many things for which they are thankful.

IF YOU were asked, "What are you the *most* thankful for?" What would your answer be? Sure, we can think of many things for which we are thankful.

CHRISTIANS are a people filled with THANKSGIVING. Infact, that is a characteristic of Christ. He often thanked his Father for what he did for him. Paul was a thankful individual. He exhorted Christians to be thankful. Are we?

AFTER NAMING the many things for which you are thankful, just stop and think for a moment. If you had all these and many times more, but had no one to love, or no one who loved you, would you be happy? How could you enjoy all those things if love did not exist?

LOVE is a quality, or characteristic that comes from God. Love makes all the things more valuable and more meaningful. Someone has said that "the gift without the giver" is bare (empty, meaningless). That is why we say that *LOVE* is that for which we should be most thankful.

GOD IS LOVE, as the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle John to write (I Jno. 4:16). Thus, one who is begotten of God learns to love because he becomes partaker of his Father's attributes. One purpose God had in creating man was to have people to love and to be loved by them. I'm thankful that God made me in His image. I learned love by learning about God. Things are appreciated but they do not last. Love is something to enjoy every hour of every day.

TO THINK IS TO THANK. The two words "think" and "thank" comes from the same rootword. When a person really thinks about God and all the good things which God provides for us, we cannot help but thank God for them. If we are not *thankful*, that is evidence we do not really *think* about the source of all our blessings.

I AM THANKFUL that God loves me. I AM THANKFUL I have come to know God so I can love Him because he first loved

me. Yes, I am thankful for love. Not only for God's love, but I am thankful for the love my family has for me. I am thankful for the many wonderful Christian friends, brothers and sisters in the Lord, who love me. I am thankful for the friends I have outside of Christ and the Love they have for me. I AM THANKFUL FOR LOVE.

Judge For Yourself?

Jeff Wilder

Once upon a time, a little boy named Phil was at school playing with his friend, Bobby at recess. As they were playing, Phil became angry at Bobby for no apparent reason, deliberately he pushed him into a mud puddle. Bobby was very upset as he got up out of the mud. As the two boys stood there glaring at one another, Mrs. Jones, their teacher, came up and immediately sent Phil to the principal's office for a paddling.

It is easy to see that Phil was in the wrong, he should not have pushed Bobby in the mud puddle. Mrs. Jones made a judgment. Was it correct? It would appear that it was.

We as human make our judgments by outward appearances. God our maker judges the heart (I Samuel 16:7). Many times it is difficult for us to be fair in our judgments for the simple reasons we are human. For example we may say, "five years ago he called me a name so he is a sorry, no good, low down person." However, we do not remember the persons penitent attitude toward us. He has a change of heart, but often we retain these hostile feelings, because of something he said years ago. This is a refusal to consider the heart. John, the apostle, says "Judge not by outward appearance but to judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24) Failure to consider change of the heart for the better will cause our judgment to be incorrect of the person. Should not each of us re-evaluate the heart before we pass judgment?

Many times we hear "Don't judge a book by its cover!" Good advice! Yet there are times when this is all we have. We must be positive!! Make your judgment the same as you would have others judge you. (Matt. 7:1).

We should live in such a way it will be easy for one to judge us. Our motives should be always clear. When outward appearance is all we have, our motives will prevent any bad judgment.

Most of all remember that God is the judge of all. He will judge every act we do. (Ecc. 12:14). Does the fact bring comfort to you, or do you feel uneasy?

Do You Have Beautiful Feet ?

Gary C. Hampton

We are not going to ask everyone to take their shoes off to read this article. Instead, we are going to refer to Romans 10:15. Paul writes, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Certainly we are sent to preach the gospel of peace.

Jesus said, in Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." The word "gospel" literally means "glad tidings." The apostles were thus commanded to go proclaim the glad tidings. Matthew's account, in 28:19-20, makes it plain that the command stands for us today. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Thus, the command is self sustaining. Those baptized are to be taught to teach others who should be baptized and taught to teach others.

One of the primary jobs of the church is to undergird, or support, the truth. (I Timothy 3:15). We must ask ourselves if we have beautiful feet. To fail to do so would be to fail in doing that which God would have us to do. That the early church understood this is plain when we read Luke's writing. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." (Acts 8:4). This tremendous sense of duty in preaching the gospel paid great dividends. Paul was able to say the gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven when he wrote Colossians 1:23.

It is time to let the world see our beautiful feet. Tell your friends and neighbours that the Son of God died so that we might live. Invite those you know to study God's word with you. Pray for their souls daily and ask God to give us an opening to reveal his will. Make an opportune time to talk about it. In short, tell the glad tidings and let the beauty of your feet show.

Writing Out Loud

Bob Hurd

PSALM 112. "BLESSED IS THE MAN . . ."

There is the tendency for some to ask, "Is it really worthwhile to live for the Lord?" This is asked because of the seeming enjoyment of living in and for the world. Sin is a pleasure, Heb. 11:25. However, if we examine that text, it is but for a season. When the season is over, then cometh the day we reap the rewards for how we have lived. Is it worth to live for our God? Let's just see what the Psalmist says.

Verse 2, "HIS SEED SHALL BE MIGHTY UPON THE EARTH:" With sacrificial service comes reward. God never forgets His and what they do for Him. Abraham followed God, and God never let him down. His seed did grow, and he through the promise of God, became a mighty nation. Today, we are the children of God through Christ . . . but it all began with the promises made to a man who lived for God.

Verse 3, "WEALTH AND RICHES SHALL BE IN HIS HOUSE." The treasure we receive for service to God is not always silver and gold. The wealth of love filled homes, love filled hearts, the treasure of many friends, peace and contentment....there is more value in these than all the silver and gold in the world! This does not exclude the receiving of these things, for our God is able to provide abundantly all things.

Verses 4,6,8, "LIGHT IN DARKNESS, LIFE FOR EVER, NO FEAR." Ours is a troubled world to say the least. Many today sit and wring their hands in despair. Not so for those who live for the Lord. They have strength when the dark clouds

gather. Jesus, our Light, provides the light to keep us going even when the shadows of death hung nearby. The Christian life is a life of assurance and hope. Everlasting life is for those who follow the Lord faithfully. When one is confident of life eternal in Christ . . . where is fear? Why fear? Verse 7 of this Psalm is the key of the text, "HIS HEART IS FIXED TRUSTING IN THE LORD." As we can see, the Christian way is the best way for mankind to follow. These gifts and promises are reserved for any and all who are in Christ. Eph. 1:3. But they are for those **ONLY IN CHRIST**. Yes, from this we can see it is truly worthwhile to live for the Lord. . . imagine what life is without Him !

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An internationally known religious leader recently said, "The need of the decade is for people to rediscover the Bible." The Bible is always fresh and contemporary. Its message penetrates the problems of every generation.

We're experiencing a "knowledge explosion". The mountains of materials being thrust upon us is staggering. Enough scientific information is published each day to fill seven complete 24—volume sets of encyclopedia. That's 500 times faster than man's ability to read it.

Almost any book you buy is out of date before you get out of the store with it. The material is partially obsolete before you finish the chapter that contains it. But the Bible doesn't grow obsolete; is never outdated.

So, it makes sense to read your Bible every day. Reading the Bible through is a worthy project if you are reading to gain deeper understanding. And you never exhaust the treasures of the Bible. The more you read, the richer the rewards. Sir Walter Scott said, "The more learned, acute, and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The more deeply he works the mind, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore." "The grass withers, and the flower falls : but the word of the Lord abides forever." (I Peter 1:24).

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