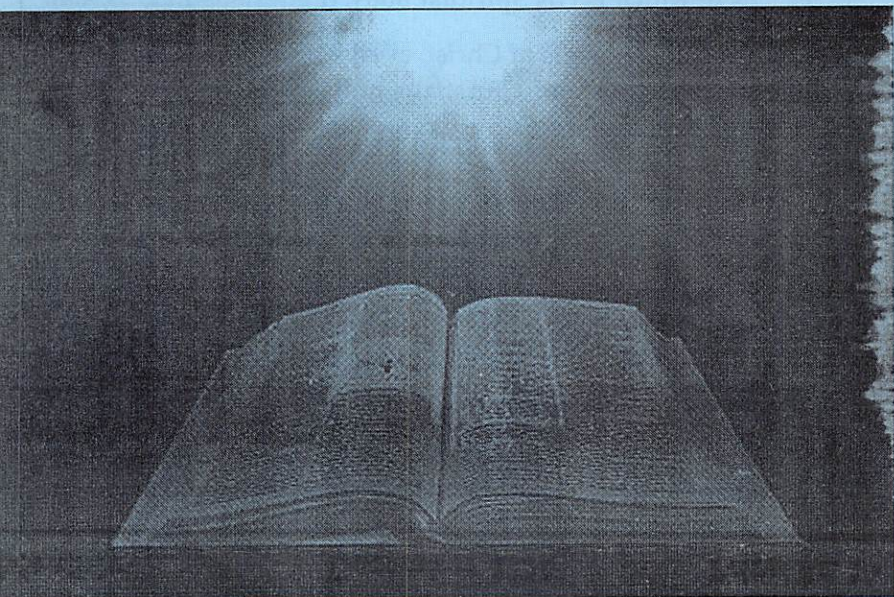


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THE BIBLE TEACHER



Our Plea

Let the Truth Prevail

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the Church. (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His Spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men which contain doctrines and commandments of men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

Baptism Is Not For Little Children

THE DOCTRINE OF INFANT BAPTISM grew out of a belief that should a child die without having been baptized he/she will suffer eternal punishment in hell with the devil and his angels. Therefore millions of people get their babies baptized or sprinkled. It is supposed that souls share in Adam's guilt and every person therefore is under condemnation and is punishable for the inherited guilt quite apart from any actual sins one may commit. Hence it is called "the doctrine of original sin" which teaches that children are born with the guilt of sin through inheritance and are depraved in nature.

But this is not what the Bible teaches. Had it been so that children are born in sin depraved, Christ would not have said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted, and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3). Again, in another instance, when little children were being brought to Him so that He might put His hands on them and pray, His disciples rebuked those who were bringing their children to Him. But Jesus said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; **for of such is the kingdom of heaven.**" (Matthew 19:14). Now, if those children were depraved sinners, as it is supposed, then why did Christ say, "of such is the kingdom of heaven"? And why did He tell the disciples to become as little children



to enter the kingdom of heaven?

The truth of the matter is that babies, little children, have no sin in them. They are as pure as Adam and Eve were in the beginning when God had created them after His own likeness and in His own image. (Genesis 1:26, 27). Adam and Eve were not created by God as little babies, but as full grown man and woman. They were intelligent, rational, were able to differentiate between wrong and right, and were able to choose to do or not to do a certain thing. However, they chose to disobey God's command, and therefore they became sinners when they did that what God had commanded them not to do. (Genesis 2:16,17; 3: 1-13). This is how sin is defined in the Bible. It says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4). Adam and Eve had disobeyed the law or the command of God and had thus become sinners. Likewise, when a baby is born, that baby is without sin. He does not have the capability to understand right from wrong or the full consequences of disobedience. True, at an early age a child can begin to understand obedience to parental commands, but the concept of God and of obedience to Him, and the laws concerning sin and its consequences are beyond the mental capability of a little child. However, when the baby grows and become of a mature age – when he/she is able to know right from wrong; is able to make personal decisions; is able to choose to obey God or to disobey Him; when he/she is accountable to God—from that point onward, God holds that person responsible for every action the individual does.

Some turn to Romans 3:23 to teach that all are born with the sin of Adam. But it does not say that. It reads, "All have sinned." Not, "All are born with sin." Others go to Psalm 51:5 to justify the erroneous belief that babies are born sinners. But, again, this is not what is being taught in that passage. Notice what King David said in that passage. He said, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity." David was brought forth. But who had brought him forth? His mother! So he was talking there about his mother who had brought him forth and who was in iniquity when she had brought him forth. Again, notice, next he says in that passage, "And in sin my mother conceived me." Who had conceived David? His mother! So who was in sin? His mother! David was not yet even born! This statement is parallel to someone saying, "In anger my mother beat me." Now who was angry? The mother, not the child! David is certainly bemoaning the fact that as an adult he was a sinner. He says one reason he committed sin was the sinful influence. Into which he

was born. He does not say he was born a sinner, but he was brought forth in iniquity. He does not say he was conceived a sinner, but was conceived during the time his mother was in sin. In other words, the people who were around him after he was born tempted and influenced him to sin. David's situation was like Adam and Eve's when they were created. They were created sinless, but it was through the persuasion of the devil they chose to sin. So it is with every individual. One is born innocent into the world, but it is a world made up of sinners. It is a world of sinners persuading others to sin. Yet, "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death." (James 1:14-15). Sin is committed personally by every individual and not inherited from another. So does the Bible teach at Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself."

To be saved from sin, the Bible teaches, all need to be baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins, after believing in Christ, and repenting of sins, and confessing Christ as the Son of God. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:35-39). But the fact of the matter is that a baby or child is not a sinner, and therefore that baby or child does not need baptism.

REPENT OR PERISH

J.C. Choate

AS A BASIS FOR our study, please consider the following statement made by Christ himself: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish". (Lk. 13:3). In order to emphasize this truth the Lord used the identical phraseology in the fifth verse. Now in connection with all of this, two cases were brought up where sinners had to pay for their ungodliness, and the conclusion was that if such was true of them, then those present were in need of repenting of their sins lest one day they should have to reap the consequences. Thus, the Lord just made it plain and simple: You either repent or perish. They were given a choice. Such was not only true of them but the same warning and choice has come down to us.



Paul later said that God now requires all men everywhere to repent. He says specifically: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30). At one time God may have over looked certain things, but Paul assures us it is different now. The inspired apostle says that God now requires all men everywhere to repent, and you know, that includes you and me and everybody else. What about it? Why, God has commanded us to repent. What if we don't?

We'll just have to answer for it. Remember one thing: God has commanded us to repent and if we fail to, he won't be responsible.

The scripture further tells us that one must repent of his sins in order to obey the gospel of Christ. You remember after Peter had preached the first gospel sermon in fact, a group of people wanted to know what they should do to be saved, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38). No doubt about it then; one must repent in order to obtain the remission of his sins. Leave off repentance and one could not be saved.

What is repentance? We know that it is more than just feeling sorry for what had happened. Repentance is more than just a confession of one's past sins, etc. True repentance involves a change of heart, a complete turning around. In other words, it means that if one is going in the direction of sin, he immediately turns and goes in the other direction. To illustrate further: It means that if one hates his neighbor he will now love him; that if he has been stealing, in the future he will give to the poor; that if he has been cursing, from now on he will praise God, etc. Yes, repentance is a complete change of life, disposition, outlook, feeling, attitude, and so on. To repent is to give up an old life in order to begin a new one, no longer to be a servant of the devil but henceforth to be a servant of God. That is true repentance.

Paul explained to the Corinthians: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (2 Cor. 7:10). Repentance is a condition of salvation but such does not mean that one is saved on the basis of repentance only. Repentance is unto salvation, going in the direction thereof. Repentance, scriptural repentance, must be preceded by genuine faith and followed by the confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and finally result in baptism for the remission of sins. (Mk. 16:16; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38; 22:16). So you can see that there are more conditions of salvation than one; that each is

equally important, and must be dealt with that thought in mind.

Peter tells us that the Lord is interested in the salvation of each soul, when he says: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9). Christ is anxious that every soul repent of his sins. Why does he desire that we take such a step? Because it is necessary to the saving of our souls. Sin, or those who have sinned, will not be able to enter the portals of heaven, so if we are allowed to go in we must repent of our sins and live holy lives before God.

Don't forget: the Lord has put it on this basis - repent or perish. Friend, repent of your sins and obey the gospel of Christ that you might be saved. Do it today.

WHAT IS TRUE LOVE?

Justin A. Hopkins

OFTEN YOU WILL HEAR someone speak about how unkind and unloving it is to judge someone else by saying that they are caught up in sin. After all, who are they to be judging? Don't they have sin in their own lives: How, then, can they judge me for what I am doing? Didn't Jesus say, "*Judge not...*" (Matthew 7:1)?

Here is an assumption about what is unkind and what its unloving. To accuse someone of being unloving is a heavy accusation, because "*He that loveth not knoweth not God*" (1 John 4:8). To say that someone is unloving, then, is to say that they are not in fellowship with God.

This makes the discussion about what is and isn't loving one of utmost importance. How, then, do we define love? John goes on to tell us that "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8). God, by His very nature is love. In the preceding verse John told us that "*Love is of God!*" To truly understand love, then, we must turn to God and His Word for a definition. Since love emanates from the very essence of His being, any definition of love that contradicts His definition cannot be correct. We must ask, then: What does the Bible say about being loving toward those around us?

"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it" (2 John 5,6) Here John

tells us that, not only is love defined by the person of God, but it is commanded by Him. So, to be unloving is to be out of fellowship with God, and to be disobedient to His commands. Surely, nobody can expect to reach Heaven if they are acting in a way toward those around them that is unloving. Jesus takes this one step further, and tells us that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). So, then to be disobedient to God's commands also demonstrates a lack of love for our savior!

John goes further, and explains to us what this command entails. After all, there are so many different definitions of love, how can we know what truly is loving if God did not tell us? Thankfully He did! He says that love is to live by His commandments. Therefore, if I am to be loving to my neighbors, I must always ensure that my actions toward them are directed by God's commands. Conversely, if my actions toward my neighbor are in direct violation of God's commands, or even fail to fulfill them, then I am not truly being loving toward them.

What, then, does the Bible say in regard to addressing sin and error in the lives of others? It must either be loving or unloving; there can be no middle ground. Galatians 6:1,2 commands us: *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."* So, if I am to be loving, I have an obligation to reach out to those who I see trapped in sin, and try to bring them back into a right relationship with Christ. To fail to do so, is to fail to fulfill the Law of Christ, and is therefore, unloving.

Paul strikes at the heart of the matter when he deals with the concept of withdrawing fellowship from a brother who is in sin. Here is an action that is seen by most in the world as being most unkind and most unloving. But, what does the Law of Christ say about it? In 1 Corinthians 5:5 Paul declares firmly that one of the purposes of withdrawing fellowship is to save the soul of the brother or sister who is caught up in sin. In the same vein, Paul tells us again in 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15, *"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and, have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother?"* The withdrawal of fellowship is, of course a last resort, but one with definite purpose. It is to help bring some immediacy to the consequences of sin and cause the erring one to count the cost, with hopes that they will return to the paths of righteousness. It is

not something that is to be done in a mean-spirited way, but with love and sorrow, offering encouragement to repent, and the promise of a warm reception upon doing so at every turn.

When you stop and think about it, how could it be loving to ignore sin? Sure, the personal relationship, and the benefits that you receive from that relationship remain intact. But what of the sinner? He or she is hurtling toward eternity, lost and without hope, and those around them fail to show enough concern to do what they can to stop them before it is everlastingly too late! If this person was sitting within their house, enjoying some entertaining diversion, but that house was on fire, would you not remove them from that house, no matter what was required? To leave them alone to burn certainly could not be loving. How could it be any different to leave them alone to face the fires of hell, while you, holding the Gospel, have done nothing to save their eternal soul?

Is it uncomfortable to confront sin? Does it sometimes cause rifts in relationships? Does it sometimes evoke anger, shame, sorrow, and other such emotions? Absolutely. But, is it not the ultimate act of love to set aside those temporal things that mean so much, and strive to save a soul? So, the next time that you are faced with a soul that is lost in sin, do what is loving, reach out to them with the Law of Christ, and help them, while there is still time!

The Foreknowledge of God Explained

Louis Rushmore

IF GOD KNOWS THAT someone will do something, does God *make* him do it even if it is against his will? How can one reconcile *the foreknowledge of God* with *the freewill of mankind*?

First, the Bible firmly establishes that humans have freewill. Every “whomsoever” passage teaches that God has given mankind the ability to make choices for himself. There are 183 occasions of “whosoever” (KJV) or “whoever” (NKJV) appearing in our Bibles! Consider this widely known example in the New Testament: “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16 NKJV; cf. Matthew 7:24; Acts 2:21; Revelation 22:17).

Other expressions also convey the Bible teaching about the freewill of man. “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28) is one such verse. People could hardly respond to the invitation of the Lord if they

lacked freewill or the ability of choice to do so. However, having the freedom of choice, we humans can accept the divine invitation or we can refuse it.

One can see “freewill” even in the Old Testament under Judaism as those worshippers could voluntarily give a “freewill offering” (Exodus 35:29; Leviticus 22:21, 23, 38; Numbers 29:39; Deuteronomy 12:6, 17; 2 Chronicles 31:14; Ezra 3:5; 7:16; 8:28). Every command in God’s Word presumes the ability of mankind to exercise his freewill to obey or disregard it. Divine Judgment corresponds to the ability of humans to make correct or incorrect responses to divine instruction, for which they will be rewarded or punished (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Because of this, the apostle Paul ‘persuaded men,’ which would have been wasted effort if it were impossible for men to make the decision to obey God and prepare for Judgment (Amos 4:12).

Second, it is equally clear from the Bible that God knows everything or has foreknowledge. We find Him “*declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done...*” (Isaiah 46:10). Only God can accurately and consistently foretell what things will come to pass (Isaiah 42:9; 48:3).

Consequently, hundreds of prophecies (some made thousands of years before their fulfillment) throughout the Bible have all come true in every detail. In addition, God foreknew that mankind would sin, and therefore need a Savior (Titus 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:18-20). Aware through His foreknowledge also that wicked men would crucify Jesus Christ, He used that circumstance to bring about the saving sacrifice of the Messiah for the sins of mankind (Acts 2:23). He also foreknew who will be saved (1 Peter 1:2).

Third, the foreknowledge of God and predestination or foreordaining by God are not the same thing. The biblical references to “predestination” pertain to God’s decision to save eternally, not *individuals*, but *the class of souls who obey Him* (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4,5,11). God’s plan of salvation “*was foreordained before the foundation of the world*” (1 Peter 1:20).

“Foreknowledge” is an accommodation for humans who are confined to time—past, present and future. However, God, Who is not subject to time but Who is eternal, views everything—past, present and future from the human viewpoint -as having already occurred. Therefore, God told Joshua that He had given to him Jericho, though the Israelites had not yet captured that city (Joshua

6:2). Earlier, God had told Abraham that He had made of him a great nation with many descendants and “*a father of many nations*”

(Genesis 17:5), though Abraham had not observed that yet; but for God Who is not bound by time, it was a reality. For God, it is not a case of what *will* happen in the future, but because God is not bound by time, everything has already occurred. He merely reports in several biblical passages what from His vantage has already happened, though for mankind who is bound by time, many things remain yet in the future.

Therefore, God did not *foreordain* or *predestinate* Judas to betray Jesus Christ, but He did *foreknow* that Judas would do that (John 17:12; Acts 1:16). God, then, had recorded in prophecy about the betrayal of His Son, and it came to pass or was fulfilled. God did not *force* Judas to betray our Lord, but He simply saw what Judas would do and prophesied about it. All future events from man's standpoint have already occurred from God's viewpoint. God does not interfere with free moral agency, but he simply sees beyond the vantage point of humans.

All past, present, and future events have already occurred from God's perspective, and so He *foreknows*, but *foreknowledge* does not require Him to *cause*, *foreordain* or *predestine* them to occur.

Imagine a hiker reaching the summit of a peak overlooking a curvy and hilly, narrow mountain road far below. He can clearly discern that two, fast-moving automobiles blindly approaching each other from opposite directions will top a hill or round a curve and collide head-on. Yet, no one would accuse the hiker of being responsible for *causing*, *foreordaining* or *predestinating* the horrific crash. Foreknowledge does not equal predestination. Likewise, God is not responsible for causing what He sees will happen.

Finally, God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:26), which includes the freedom of choice or will. God, through His foreknowledge, "*foreknew*" those who would conform to His will, and He "*predestined*" that class of souls to be "*justified*" and "*glorified*" (Romans 8:28-30). God predestined a plan of salvation for those who would opt, through the proper use of their freewill, to conform to His purposes.

Men *make decisions* every day about whom they will marry, occupational pursuits, education, where they shall live, what clothes they will wear, what foods to eat and dozens of other choices. With the same powers of freewill, mankind chooses to obey (Hebrews 5:9) or disobey (2 Thessalonians 1:8) the Gospel.

God is not a respecter of persons, arbitrarily predestinating certain individuals to be lost while predestinating certain other individuals to be saved (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11). Almighty God

votes in favor of you and me to live eternally in heaven with Him, as He does not desire anyone to be lost (2 Peter 3:9).

Satan, on the other hand, votes against us (1 Peter 5:8). Each of us, then, by our obedience or disobedience casts the deciding vote as to where we will live in eternity. God will neither force anyone to be saved nor to be lost eternally.

GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS

Johnny Ramsey

MOST EVENING NEWS PROGRAMS on our televisions contain most of the bad news of the world. A small percentage of news reports may contain relatively good reports, but they are rare, indeed. However, there is a wonderful and beautiful message of hope and joy in the precious proclamation of the life and death of our Lord. Verily, the gospel is great news of a risen Savior who has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-3). This powerful story of love and peace is truly glad tidings to warm our hearts and give us reason for life in the here and now (Mark 10:30). This, alone, should block out the dreary gloom so rampant about us.

Christians have a wonderful Savior who cared enough to leave the bliss of glory (1 John 4:14) to die at Calvary so that we could be redeemed. He shed His blood on the cross to make it possible for us to escape the penalty sin brings (Rom. 6:23; 1 Pet. 2:24). That is the best news the world could ever hear! The gospel also provides us with our dearest friend (John 15:13) to brighten our day and defeat any pessimism that would cloud the sunshine of our existence. In deepest sorrow, heartache and loneliness, our Master cares: "*Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you*" (1 Pet. 5:7). What glorious news!

*There's not a friend
Like the lowly Jesus.
No, not one!*

Children of God also rejoice in our relationship with Jesus as the Master Teacher. He knows what is in man (John 2:25), and, as a result, He can guide us into the verdant path of holiness and integrity with the wonderful words of life (John 6:68). Nicodemus declared, "*Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God*" (John 3:2). And when officers were sent to arrest Jesus, they came back empty-handed, saying, "*Never man so spake*" (John 7:46).

Jesus was truly "A man sent from God with teaching beyond compare." The gospel is the good news because it brings comfort to soothe broken hearts and to wipe away our tears. In Isa. 38:5, Jehovah told a very sad king, *"I have heard your prayers. I have seen your tears."*

"The God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3) will sustain us in grief and loss. Till the end of time, He will be with us (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). There really is a lot of good news available. Why not turn off the gloom and doom of television reports and open up the Bible and find the power of God to lead you and calm your troubled soul? There is true satisfaction when we surrender our very being to the glad tidings of truth. When we learn to serve the Lord in the beauty of godliness, new vistas of radiant sunshine flood our lives with positive thinking and joyous service. What a friend we have in Jesus! May we never overlook our tremendous blessings in Christ.

GOD, GIANTS and GRASSHOPPERS

(A Lesson on Fear and Faith)

Texts: Numbers 13 & 14; Joshua 14

Reuben Emperado

"WE SHOULD GO UP and take possession of the land, for we certainly can do it. "

While the children of Israel were camping in the desert of Paran the Lord told Moses, *"Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders."* (Numbers 13:2).

Twelve men were chosen to spy the land including *Caleb* and *Hoshea* who was also called *Joshua*. These men were sent by Moses to see the nature of the people and the cities they lived in. They were to observe their fortifications and defenses and see the condition of the land.

These spies explored the land for 40 days. At the end of that time they returned with some of the fruits of the land, and also with diverse and contradictory stories to tell. All of the men were convinced of the goodness of the land, but ten of the spies were afraid of the inhabitants for they were "giants", and they further described the fortification of their cities as "reaching the skies".

They said: *"We went into the land which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is the fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We*

even saw the descendants of Anak there" (Numbers 13: 27,28).

They also said: *"We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are. The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak from the Nephilim,). We seemed like grasshoppers in our eyes, and we looked the same to them"* (V. 32,33). The fear of the ten spies had reduced them in their own eyes to the size of grasshoppers. And their fear destroyed the morale of Israel, melting their hearts and paralyzing them.

While the report of the majority was negative, Joshua and Caleb believed otherwise. They trusted on the promises of God. *"Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said: 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we certainly can do it'"* (V. 30).

They further said: *"The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them"* (Number 14:6-9).

Because of **unbelief** the children of Israel failed to receive the promise land. Forty years later, Caleb narrated their experience:

"You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.'" (Joshua 14:6-9)

The difference is between **faith** and **fear**; between godly and worldly perspectives. Joshua and Caleb realized that God had called them to fight and possess the land. They were to fight not with their own strength but with the strength of the Almighty God. They realized that God's strength was stronger than their enemies and greater than the obstacles.

The story is about **faith and fear, courage and cowardice**. A contrast of Joshua and Caleb with the ten spies will give us a better perspective.

Joshua and Caleb

- Joshua and Caleb were obedient men. They followed God wholeheartedly. They saw God's power and trusted in His ability to give the land into their hands.
- They were men of courage and deep conviction. They saw the land and the goodness thereof. They did not ignore the presence of a strong obstacle nor deny the strength of their enemies but they trusted in the power of God.
- They were men who were not influenced by the negative thinking of the crowd, the majority, nor were they influenced by fear or favor.
- They were men of true strength, both spiritually and physically. At the age of 85, when most men are retired, Caleb asked to be allowed to conquer the giants.
- Their faith in God reduced the giants of the land into grasshoppers in their own estimate. They saw that the real giant was God and the real grasshoppers were their enemies. Joshua and Caleb were not pigmies in their own eyes, because God was residing in their hearts.
- They **believed** in the promises of God, **claimed them and received them!**

The Ten Spies

- They were convinced of the goodness the land but did not believe in the power of God.
- They saw the difficulties, the strength of their enemies, and the fortified cities, and their hearts melted in fear. Their fear reduced them to mere grasshoppers in their own eyes; it paralyzed and demoralized them, and as a consequence, they failed to receive the promises of God.
- They had omitted God from the total picture. The obstacles blinded their hearts and they lost sight of the great God behind them.
- From fear they jumped into presumptions. Then they tried to overcome their enemies by their own power and they were defeated.

Faith and Fear

- **Faith sees and dares and triumphs** in the days of **overwhelming difficulties**, while **fear runs, trembles and fails** in the days of **overflowing opportunities**.
- **Faith** acts with unwavering courage and conviction, even when others think it cannot be done.
- **Fear** paralyzes the strongest of men, while **faith** energizes the

weakest of men. Caleb at the age of 85 still felt and acted as if he were no more than 40 years old, but the young men acted as if they were without strength.

- **Fear** delayed the promises of God, while **faith** waited patiently through the delays caused by faithless men.
- **Fear** canceled the promises of God. Their faithlessness had put them outside the circle of God's benefits, but **faith** was the channel through which later generations received the promises and blessings of God.

Conclusion

The conviction and courage of Caleb and Joshua were vindicated when, 40 years later, they entered the promised land. Out of the 600,000 men above 20 years old, only two were allowed to enter and possess the land, together with the younger generation. Their faith and courage were eventually rewarded but they had to wait patiently for 40 long years, a delay caused not by their own fault but by the fault and failure of others. When the majority of God's people lose faith in Him, even the innocent and the faithful will suffer for a time.

Today we, too, have our own "promised land" to claim, strongholds to conquer and enemies to fight. Our weapons are not swords and guns but the armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18). The battlefield is not in a distant land but within our minds and hearts. The greatest enemies we have to conquer are still our own **fears and doubts**. How can we conquer these personal battles? The lessons from Joshua and Caleb can give us the key. We can win these battles and conquer our fears by faith and trust in the promises and words of God.

Responsible Citizenship

Joe C. Magee

"AND WHEN IT WAS day, the magistrates sent the officers saying, 'Let those men go.' So the keeper of the prison reported those words to Paul, saying, 'The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.' But Paul said to them, 'They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison, and now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come and get us out'" (Acts 16:35-37).

There are two opposite schools of thought concerning the Christian and his conduct as a citizen. Some believe that Christians

should be totally oblivious to their civic or political surroundings. "In the world, but not of the world" is their reason for not taking part in any function of society, not even to vote. Others are much more militant. It is not uncommon for them to stage sit-ins, march in protest, or even practice civil disobedience. If, in their judgment a law is unjust, they do not hesitate to disregard such law.

Paul's action in Philippi refutes both these attitudes. While grossly mistreated, Paul staged no civil unrest, nor did he take any sort of revenge against those at fault. Upon his release from prison, he simply encouraged the brethren and departed. But let's back up and see how Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen.

Paul, acting fully within the law, was not content to let the magistrates get by with breaking the law. They not only had mistreated a Roman citizen, they had carelessly handled their responsibility as magistrates. By making a legal and proper issue of this, Paul solidly established a precedent that may have in the future prevented unjust action against the Philippian brethren. For instance, by Paul's action, the Philippian jailer, now a brother in Christ, was completely removed from direct involvement in this incident, thus saving him from any unjust reprimand.

The lesson here is—in times of civil stress, somewhere between total lethargy and emotional loss of control, there lies the wisdom of responsible citizenship. Not all governments are the same; and yet Christians can live under any form of government, and have over the centuries. We are taught to obey the laws of the land so long as they do not come in direct conflict with the laws of God. We in America have more freedom than most, but we must not abuse that freedom with law-breaking practices. We possess the freedom of expression, and we should use that freedom with common sense, not with emotional abandon. None would deny that injustices are rampant in our nation, from the federal courts down to local governments. But if we, in our effort to offset these injustices, break the law ourselves, are we any better than other law-breakers? Two wrongs do not make a right. Let's think with our heads and not our emotions.

When The Devil Speaks, Someone Listens

Roy Beasley

ADAM AND EVE WERE in the beautiful Garden of Eden, where God caused to grow every kind of tree that was good to look upon

and good to eat. Everything was perfect. God even gave to them a law to live by. He commanded them to dress the garden and to keep it, and warned them not to partake of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, lest they should *"surely die."*

One day Satan approached Eve in the form of a serpent and said, "Yea..." "Yea" is in the King James Version. However, in the original Hebrew it is a breathing sound, such as "Umph." *"Umph, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden."* Now, this question was asked to confuse, to create doubt in the mind of Eve. "Is that really what God said? Did I understand Him correctly? Could He have meant something else?"

Well, Eve understood what God had said. She replied, *"We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."*

Then the Devil said, *"Ye shall not surely die."*

The first time the Devil spoke, it was for the purpose of creating doubt. The second time he spoke, he plainly contradicted what God had said.

The Devil spoke and Eve listened. She partook of the forbidden fruit and gave some to Adam, and he too did eat. Thus, they sinned, and the sentence of death was pronounced upon all of mankind.

The Devil spoke to Eve through the serpent. He spoke to Adam through Eve. He did not speak to each one personally. The Devil still speaks today, but not personally. He uses many agents, many spokesmen. Satan filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3). Satan can fill our hearts to commit sin. He has no trouble communicating. He is eloquent. He is convincing. *When the Devil speaks, there are always those who listen.*

There is so much misery, heartache, and death in the world today. This shows that *when the Devil speaks, someone listens.*

There are wars and rumors of war. There are terrorist attacks on innocent people. There are dysfunctional families. *When Satan speaks, someone listens.*

There are the problems of child abuse and spousal abuse. There is the drug problem. There is religious division. There are those who sow discord among brethren. *When the Devil speaks, someone listens.*

Jesus once said to Peter, *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"* (Luke 22:31). Satan desired to have Peter, and he desires to have you and me to *"sift as wheat."* What does that mean?

Take some flour in a container out of doors. Scatter it around on the ground. The wind will carry some of it away. Then try to gather it together again in the container. You will be able to find only a small fraction of what you originally had.

That is what the Devil will do to you if you will let him. He will put you through the mill. He will take away the goodness from your life—reputation ruined, innocence evaporated. He will sift you like wheat if you let him. And, when all that is worthwhile is gone, it will be impossible to get it back.

When the Devil speaks, don't listen.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

J. Robert Brooks

Who instituted it? Jesus (Matthew 26:26-30).

When? The night of His betrayal by Judas (1 Corinthians 11:23).

Why? To establish a lasting memorial until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:26).

What was used? Unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (Luke 22:18,19).

Who were there? Jesus and the 12 apostles (Matthew 26:20).

What feast had just ended? The annual Passover feast (Luke 22:13,14).

What did Jesus tell each person to do? To eat the bread in memory of His body, and to drink the cup in memory of His blood (1 Corinthians 11:24,25).

Where was this new memorial feast to be placed? In His Kingdom (Matthew 26:29).

What did the apostles do with it after Jesus sent them the Holy Spirit? They made the Lord's Supper an act of worship in the church (Acts 2:41,42).

How often did the church observe the memorial feast? It was a weekly observance on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

Where was it eaten? In the church assembly (1 Corinthians 11:18).

Who ate? Disciples of Christ/Christians.

What was each person exhorted to do? Examine himself (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Was it possible to do it unworthily? Yes. One could eat and drink without discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29).

What else is this feast called? A Communion (1 Corinthians 10:16). Is there a church where one can observe this simple memorial feast in honor of Christ? Yes. We in the churches of Christ observe it every first day of the week as nearly as possible like Jesus said to do.

So You Believe In God?

Dr. Bert Thompson

ARE YOU A PERSON WHO believes in God? Are you among the number that believes mankind is specially created in the image of God? Do you really believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Savior of the world? If so, you are in good company. Many great minds down through the ages have been firm believers in God. Oftentimes we are led to believe that anyone who is anybody has long since shed their belief in God for a more "intellectual" stance of atheism or agnosticism, with accompanying belief that organic evolution has produced all we see around us through genetic mutations and natural selection. But it's just not true.

Many famous statesmen, scholars, scientists, artists, poets, and other such celebrities have held to a belief in an Almighty God. Not "everyone" believes in evolution, with its "god" of atheism, as we are led to believe. Dr. A. Cressy Morrison, former past president of the New York Academy of Sciences, affirmed that "so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on the earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance." Dr. Edwin Conklin, Princeton biologist, stated: "The probability of life originating from accident is comparable to the probability of the unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a print shop."

The famous French General, Napoleon I (Bonaparte), observed that "All things proclaim the existence of God." British poet William Cowper commented that "In all the vast and minute, we see the unambiguous footsteps of ...God." Emerson, another famous poet, wrote that "Nature is too thin a screen; the glory of the omnipresent God bursts through everywhere." Dr. George Washington Carver, when asked one day what he was doing, replied, "God and I are working on the peanut." United States President Abraham Lincoln once remarked, "I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the Earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God."

Dr. Johannes Kepler, the famous German mathematician and astronomer who formulated the three basic laws of planetary motion,

described his research as "thinking God's thoughts after Him." Dr. E. W. Maness once said, "If the word 'God' were written upon every blowing leaf, embossed on every passing cloud, engraved on every granite rock, the inductive evidence of God in the world would be no stronger than it is." Will Durant, the famous humanist, even once admitted, "The greatest question of our time is not communism versus individualism, not Europe versus America, not even the East versus the West; it is whether man can bear to live without God."

The psalmist stated, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork*" (Psalm 19:1). The apostle Paul wrote: "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and glory, so that they are without excuse*" (Romans 1:20).

Not everyone believes in organic evolution. Many people through the ages have believed in God—for good reason.

Seed of the Kingdom

Perry Hall

IN CHRIST'S GREAT PARABLE of the Sower He explained that the various types of soils represent the various conditions found in the spiritual hearts of men. Some are too hard to penetrate. Some are too shallow to produce lasting results. Others are too crowded with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world, and are suffocated by them. Then He discussed the honest and good heart that brings forth fruit with patience.

Jesus explained that "*the seed is the word of God*" (Luke 8:11). We must accept and not deny what the Bible plainly affirms. When Jesus declares that the seed is the Word of God, that is final. This parable teaches concerning Christ's kingdom. The Word of God is the seed of the kingdom to the exclusion of absolutely everything else. If we desire a crop of corn or wheat, we must have the seed of that plant. The only way to produce corn is to plant corn. God's law of reproduction is immutable. Every seed produces only after its kind.

There has never been any way to convert people except to teach them only the pure Word of God and persuade them to receive it. "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul*" (Psalm 19:7). The New Testament is the seed, the law of God, for the Christian age. No human creed can produce conversion of an alien sinner to Christ. A human creed is not the seed of the kingdom. It is the seed

of a human denomination that had its beginning long after the establishment of the kingdom of God. The New Testament makes Christians only and the only Christians, due to the unchanging reality that every seed produces after its own kind. It tells those who are lost what they must do to be saved. It shows examples of New Testament conversion.

May we receive with meekness the implanted Word unto the saving and purifying of our souls, being born again, not by corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever (James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:25).

DANGERS OF DRIFTING FROM GOD

Dillard Thurman

TAKE HEED, BRETHREN LEST there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12-13). The inspired writer of Hebrews knew full well that it was possible to depart from God, and here he warns of its probability. The "impossibility of apostasy" idea had not then gained circulation. He not only warned against it, but cited instances where it had happened. These words were written to Hebrew Christians who then faced great trials for their faith in Jesus, and many were tempted to turn back to the law of Moses, which had been done away in Christ.

The Hebrew writer shows that Jesus Christ is our high priest, "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:6). Knowing that this was a different priesthood than that of Aaron's, under the law given through Moses, he adds: "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). He goes on to show that the old law was "disannulled" (Heb. 7:18) because of its weaknesses, and we today are living under a "better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6). Christ, by His death on the cross, became "the mediator of the new testament" (Heb. 9:15) and said, "Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God: He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:9-10). There was great danger for those who tried to go back to the old law, for: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

The Deceptiveness of Drifting

Though many people do not deliberately turn against God, there are many who “*drift away*.” And even though the process of drifting is very slow, and hard to detect, still the end result is just as complete and fatal as rebelliously turning away. Since stationary relationship with God cannot be sustained, we must either draw closer to God each day, or we slip further away. We are better or worse, higher or lower, at the close of each day. If we are not progressing in righteousness, then retrogression eats as a cancer within. “*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them ... How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?*” (Heb. 2:1-3). One does not have to openly rebel against God, or rise in denial of Him, to be lost. This end is more easily attained merely by neglecting Him and His will for our lives.

Drifting Is a Gradual Process

Notice that the Bible says, “*Lest haply we drift away*.” Deterioration is seldom noted as a sudden process. A dilapidated farm house often changes so gradually that the tenant is unaware of change until the building is beyond the point of justifiable repair. Soil erosion may be so gradual that the farmer is unconscious of any threat to his field until the worth of his land has been permanently destroyed. In like manner, spiritual erosion and deterioration within may be so gradual that we neglect a remedy until disaster confronts us.

The surface of a placid lake betrays no sign of movement or current. Yet the next morning may find a floating log on a distant shore. Drifting will not attract attention as will a sudden lurch, but the end result may be even greater. And in our spiritual affairs, no current may be detected on the surface, but an undertow can cause a drift that will take us away from God. Subtle influences and the pressure of temporal affairs may cause us to depart from the course of sound gospel preaching and practice.

Some Examples of Drifting

The antediluvian people did not suddenly renounce their allegiance to Jehovah. Rather, it was by small departures that they drifted away, until finally a breach was widened that brought on a flood to destroy them (Gen. 6-9). Israel allowed small influences and social pressures to separate them gradually from God, until He allowed them to be taken away into captivity because of their departure. When King Jeroboam turned the people of Israel from

God, he did so by the use of cunningly devised innovations which at first appeared to be small and harmless. Yet twenty-three times, Jeroboam is branded as the one *"who made Israel to sin"* (1 Kgs. 12).

If "eternal vigilance is the price of freedom" in political "affairs, then spiritual freedom is no less exacting. Thus, it is no wonder that God often warns us to *"take heed"* (Psa. 119:9; Eccle. 12:9; Acts 8:6; Heb. 2:1; etc.). Similar warnings are penned in God's word by the apostle Paul, *"Let a man examine himself... Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves"* (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5).

Love of the World Causes Drifting

Possibly one of the most potent factors that promotes drifting from God is a desire to conform to this present world. Our innate desire to be accepted by our fellows easily leads us to the brink of compromise. We would like to be accepted by our religious neighbors, and therefore are tempted to "soft pedal" when straightforward Bible teaching would offend. We desire to appear honorable in the sight of the world, and are tempted to lay aside the simple story of the cross and man's need for salvation, in order to present a social gospel that will win friends but may fall far short of the pungent words of inspired men. We want the favor of neighbors and friends, and find it better to dodge an issue than to be faced with a situation as John faced, when he told Herod, *"It is not lawful for you to have her"* (Matt. 14:4). That cost him his head! It is convenient to salve our conscience with the idea that "times have changed," and make no outcry against the lewd pictures depicted in daily papers and magazines, semi-nudity on the streets, pornography, sexual immorality and filthy language in movies and on television.

But friends, God still challenges us with, *"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins"* (Isa. 58:1). He still demands of us, *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"* (2 Cor. 6:17). God's people must forever remain *"a peculiar people, zealous of good works"* (Titus 2:14). Saints must still be taught, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"* (Rom. 12:2). It is easy to drift with the world, but many times more difficult to brave the cruel chidings to take a stand for principles of truth and right! So, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the*

world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). If you have a high regard for what the world thinks and says, then there is a grave possibility that you are even now drifting away from God.

Spiritual Irritability Is a Sign of Drifting

A symptom of drifting from God is found in spiritual irritability. When one becomes peevish and persists in bickering and strife to attain selfish whims and desires, it is likely he is drifting away from God. When plans and programs are championed to the hurt and neglect of others, or the whole work of the church is ridiculed or denounced, it is likely that the critic is growing more and more distant from God. This religious irritability becomes apparent in gossiping and in fault-finding. Such a one not only drifts away from God, but is constantly nudging others along the same road to destruction. If you find that Christians "rub you the wrong way," you are drifting in the wrong direction!

Lack of Spiritual Appetite Denotes Drifting

When one displays a lack of spiritual appetite, in that there is no longer a hungering and thirsting for righteousness, it means another person is drifting away from God. Such a diseased person may go for days without spiritual food, and will absent himself from divine appointments with little remorse. If he attends, one hour of service a week seems sufficient. The rest of the time his Bible lies unopened on the shelf. He becomes one of a number (whose name is legion), who do not allow spiritual things to interfere with "living a Christian life." Such folk have become insensible to the danger of "*departing from the living God.*"

Religious Idleness Portrays Drifting

Religious idleness is probably the most common and noticeable of all the symptoms of drifting away from God. Anything lifeless will drift with the tide, and the restless tide of life will surely not move one closer to God! It takes vitality and activity to stand against this influence. As a dead fish drifts with the current and the live fish swims against it, so the dying Christian drifts with the world in idleness, and the live saint will fight against the pressures. Those afflicted by religious idleness will never display zeal and energy, but will be lulled to sleep by impersonally criticizing any who strive to do the work of the Lord.

How Can We Prevent Drifting?

The remedy for this situation lies in awaking to the need to correct the situation. We must become aware of the disastrous plight of

drifting away from God. "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:14-16). The remedy for drifting from God is found in our being alerted to the condition and apprised of its dangers. We must then take corrective steps. If we have drifted away from God, we must realize that we can never drift back to him! It will only be by diligent action that we may be able to return to the Lord. "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

PASCAL'S WAGER

Kerry Holton

FRENCH PHILOSOPHER, BLAISE PASCAL (1623-1662), made an argument for the existence of God which has come to be known as "Pascal's Wager." It does not prove that God exists. But, it provides incentive for one to search for God and to study and restudy the arguments that seek to prove God's existence.

Pascal's Wager asks: "Where are you going to place your bet? If you place it *with* God and there is *no God*, you lose *nothing*. If you place it *against* God and *He exists*, you lose *everything*."

Consider this line of thinking. What does a person lose by believing in God? What does he lose by living for Christ? Not one thing. The Christian life is full of joy, meaning, and satisfaction. It provides a way to cope with adversity and live guilt-free. Many have lived the Christian life for many years, and they would all testify, "We are not disadvantaged in the least. The best and most rewarding life in the world must be the life of a believer!" So, a believer in God will enjoy a wonderful life, even if God does not exist.

But, what if God does exist, and one does not believe in him? What if a person rejects God and His will? What if he is ungodly, only to realize one day that God is and that He punishes for an eternity those who did not acknowledge His existence by the way they lived? This person would lose everything. Jesus said, "Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). It just doesn't make sense to bet against God.

So, where will you place your bet? Are you willing to risk your eternal happiness on the remote chance that God does not exist? Please don't. Your life is too precious to risk on such a foolish wager. Live for God!

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