

STUDIES IN ACTS

by Willard Willis

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:14-21).

Some, after observing this great event -- the arrival of God the Spirit to the Lord's church --

were amazed. Others, because of a doubtful heart, said, "What meaneth this?" Others turned the entire matter off by mocking. They, in fact, believed the apostles had been drinking new wine. They, according to them, had drunk so much that they had lost control of their own senses.

Peter, however, in verses fourteen and fifteen sets the matter straight. He argued that drunkenness was not involved since it was only 9 a.m. These cynics, being Jews themselves, knew Peter was right. Peter proceeds to point out to the doubters and the mockers that they were observing that which the prophet Joel had



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prophesied. They, being Jews, were, no doubt, all aware of what Joel had said. Every knowledgeable Jew had been looking forward to the day when Joel's prophecy would be fulfilled. Here, then, was the fulfillment of that prophecy as it related to believers in the Lord's church. Doubters and mockers, however,

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"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"—Isaiah 8:20.

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CHURCH THE LAPSE OF LOVE

CHAPTER 1

John R. Gilpin, Sr.
(Now in Glory)

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And has borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore

from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove



JOHN R. GILPIN, SR.
(NOW IN HEAVEN)

thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hateth the deeds of the

Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:1-7).

This series of messages are on the general theme, "What's Wrong With The Church?" Human judgment would give a varied answer to this question.

One man would say that sectarianism is sin. Therefore, do away with all denominationalism and let everybody unite in one great religious denomination.

Another would say, "We have had too much preaching. Let's have a moratorium on preaching. Let's have no more preaching for several years, and see if spiritual

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT ELECTION

by Robert McNeill

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

Our subject, "The Bible and Election" could also be stated, "Examination time for Bible Readers and Theologians." Francis Pieper, in his book on Christian dogmatics, says, "It has been well said that in the doctrine of election a theologian takes his final examination." Another

writer has said that everyone takes his final examination in the ninth chapter of Romans in theology, and we all know what a great chapter that is for the truths of God's sovereignty and eternal election.

Examination is a good Scriptural procedure. Paul tells us in the 11th chapter of I Corinthians that a man should examine himself before partaking of the bread and the cup at the Lord's table. In the second letter to the church at Corinth he goes far beyond one aspect in the matter of examination when he exhorts the

Corinthian believers to: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves..." Examination is not just a New Testament admonition, for the Psalmist cries out in the 26th Psalm, "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth." Today, millions are not walking in the truth, and God's eternal choice of

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SIN IV THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN

by Marion Lawson

Let us read Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And Romans 3:12, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Let us next go to Webster's Dictionary for a definition of "depraved", and we find it means: morally bad; corrupt; perverted. Depravity is a word that describes the state or disposition of man considered as a moral being. A moral being is one who is accountable to God for his thoughts, speech, and conduct. Depravity means the moral corruption of human nature. Depravity is the opposite to what is required by the law of God. The Lord Jesus was asked, "What is the great commandment?" His answer in Matthew 22:37-39 is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Man's nature goes first to self-love, and a lack of any love for God. God's law says you must honour Him. Man's depraved nature puts his own gratification, honour, and interest first, last, and foremost. God does not enter into his action ex-

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SAMSON: A GROWN CHILD

Judges 13:24-25

by H.C. McSwain

"And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol."

I am sure I will not make any new and revealing statements about this well known personality. However, we can re-learn, reinforce, and refresh our memories about some important things.

I like to bring character studies. They usually are great examples of both what to do and what to avoid. In Samson's life, we see mostly what not to do. If we were asked to sum up our impression of Samson's life, we would say he was a man who grew up physically but not mentally, emotionally or spiritually. He was a child in a man's body. I imagine all of us can identify with this concept now or perhaps sometime in the past. I would hope we act like a little boy just occasionally. However, some of us persist in acting that way most of the time.

Why is it that he is one of the best known characters of the Bible? Such people as Daniel, Joseph, John Mark and others were probably better people and accomplished a more lasting work. Yet, they don't have the same notoriety. I think it is because we are attracted to the more exciting characters. As to what

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The Baptist Examiner Pulpit

A Sermon by Pastor Joseph M. Wilson

WHEN GOD SAYS NO, PART II

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (I John 5:14-15).

We are discussing the matter of unanswered prayer. We are not discussing the question of whether "no" or "wait awhile" constitute an answer to prayer. We are not discussing the matter of things in our prayers or in our lives being a hindrance to an-

swered prayer. We are discussing the matter of: when so far as we know we are right with God, and our prayer is a legitimate request, and we pray sincerely, fervently, and repeatedly - and God says no. I have said that we all have had this experience of unanswered prayer. Doubtless, at times this has been a sore difficulty with us all. I must suggest that you read our last issue on this, as I do not want to take too much time in review. Let a re-reading of the last issue be a review setting the stage for this discussion.

I pointed out that when God says no it is because our prayer is

not according to His will. God has predestinated everything that will ever come to pass. If we pray according to that, our prayer will be answered. If we pray contrary to that, our prayer will not be answered. It is as simple as that. However, we do not know what God's will is except as He has revealed it to us. Therefore: 1. We have the Holy Spirit who leads us in our prayer life to pray according to God's will. And 2. We are frequently to pray, "If it be thy will." God's will is the controlling principle as to an-

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There is nothing folks like to talk about more than themselves. This is an evidence of pride in the heart.

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answered and unanswered prayer. One will say that it is then no use to pray. This is not true for there are many blessings that result from prayer, and prayer is often one link in the chain of events that bring to pass the eternal predestination of God. Spurgeon said, "The prayer of faith is the divine decree commencing its operation." This is often the case. Let us proceed with our subject.

When God says no, He always has a good reason. Remember His love, wisdom, and power. God's power is able to give us anything and everything that His love desires us to have and His wisdom sees to be good for us. Read that again. Parents often do not give their children what they ask for. The little boys cries to play with the knife. Mother will not give it to him. Why? Because she does not love him? No. Because she does love him, and she knows this would not be good for him. She has a reason for that which the child may interpret as unkindness. A child should trust its mother. Can we not trust God in the matter of unanswered prayer? Always remember His love, wisdom, and power; and trust Him completely in the matter of answering or not answering your prayers. He is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind. Trust Him, my brother and sister, trust Him. He has a reason.

When God says no, it may be that He has something better in store for you. Read II Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul prayed that the

thorn might be removed from him. He prayed this three times. He was most sincere in this desire. But the Lord said no. He did not remove the thorn. What did He do. He gave Paul sufficient grace to bear that trial. Paul came to rejoice in the trial with the sufficient grace more than he would have in the removal of the thorn.

Doubtless, Daniel prayed to be spared from being cast into the lion's den. If he did, God said no. God had something better for Daniel. To be preserved by God's grace in the lion's den is better than to be delivered from being cast therein. Oh, what blessings came to Daniel from being cast into the lion's den.

It may be that the three Hebrew children prayed to not be cast into



Joe Wilson

the fiery furnace. If they did, God said no. God had something better for them. The Lord walked with them in the fire, preserved them from any hurt, and then delivered them from the furnace. Oh, how much better was this than to have never been cast therein. God had something better for them.

Job and Elijah both prayed to die. God said no. He had something better for them. Job was healed, restored to great wealth, and lived many happy years in the service of the Lord. Elijah served the Lord ten more years or so and went to heaven without dying. God loves His children. He may not give them what they desire, and then give them something better. Oh, I believe that God has done this many, many times for a multitude of His children. A foolish young girl may pray that God will give her a certain young man as her husband. God may say no, and then later give her a much better man who will be a great blessing to her. Let us learn to trust God. Let us leave it with Him. Let us make our prayers as best we can, then let us leave it to Him as to answering or not answering.

When God says no, it may not be a final no; He may be training one to perseverance in prayer. Perseverance is a most needed ingredient in prayer. We are to exercise importunity in prayer. We are to pray without ceasing. God often teaches us perseverance in prayer by saying no to us again and again; and then when we almost think we will never have that for which we pray, God gives it to us. In Matthew 15:21-28, we have a marvellous example of this. A Syrophenician woman comes to Christ pleading that her daughter might be healed and delivered from the vexation of a demon. It seems that Jesus says no. He answered her not a word. She kept on praying. She would not let go. She clung in humble faith to the Saviour. She worshipped Him. She took the place, as it were, of a little dog under the table, willing to receive but the crumbs from the Master's table. Then, after some time of

what seemed to be denial, Jesus said to her, "O, woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matt. 15:28). His "no" was not a final "no". He was training her in the school of effectual prayer. He was teaching her the lesson of perseverance in prayer.

Look at the parable of the friend at midnight in Luke 11:5-10 with its accompanying application. A man came at midnight to the home of a friend, asking for three loaves to set before a friend who had come to him. The friend at first refused, but the man would not give up. He kept on asking. Because of the man's importunity, the friend arose and gave him that for which he asked. Jesus uses this to teach us that when God says no, it is not always a final no. God is often training one in perseverance in prayer. We have many direct teachings, examples, and parables teaching this same thing. After all, if we always got what we asked for the first time we asked, prayer would come to mean little to us. It would become just a form with no real fervency and sincerity therein. The child who always gets what he wants the moment he asks for it does not grow in proper sonship qualities. He becomes a spoiled brat. God would train us in proper sonship attitudes by sometimes saying no for a while, even when He means to give us our requests, and does after a while of persistent and earnest praying, give them to us.

When God says no, it does not mean that He does not love you. Often it is because of His great love that He denies your request. Joe was seventeen or so. He wanted to buy a motorcycle. I objected long and strenuously. Joe said, "You don't love me." Why, it was because of my love for him that I did not want him to have a motorcycle. When God does not immediately answer our prayers, we might be tempted to doubt His love; but that is not the reason for His refusal. It was a stormy time at sea. It looked like the ship would surely sink with the loss of the lives of all aboard. The Master's disciples came to Him and said, "Carest thou not that we perish?" (Mk. 4:78). Of course, He cared. He arose and stilled the storm. The storm might cause them to doubt His love, but His love is everlasting through all storms and trials. My friend, if God does not answer your prayer, it is not because He does not love you. Rather, it is because He does love you. You say you cannot understand that. Well, can you trust even when you don't understand? God always answers, or does not answer our prayers, according to His great love for us.

When God says no it is because "no" is for your good. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Do you believe this Scripture? I have a sermon on this verse. My first point is that this is true. My second point is that it is hard to believe. Don't jump me yet. Have you never had any trouble believing this verse about things that came into your life? Have you not often said, "I don't see how this can be good for me"? Well, all things are for our good. If we believe this, it will give us

comfort, peace, and encouragement. If we don't believe it, it is true anyway. God's "no's" are good for you. The times when He does not answer your prayers are good for you. My friend, before the world began, God predestinated and planned everything that would come to pass in time. When He planned all these things, He had His people in mind, and planned

all things for their good. When God says no, it is for your good.

When God says no, He will give sufficient grace to bear with the unanswered prayer. My text for the first of these two articles states this. Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. Three times he prayed for its removal. God said no. He did not remove the thorn, but He did tell Paul, "My

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FROM THE EDITOR

Well, they are at it again. I would have thought that the "Rapture 1988" fiasco and hoax would have been enough, but the false prophets are at it again. After Jesus did not come on September 12, 1988; I thought these false prophets would silently steal away into the night of their shame and embarrassment. I have a book before me, "The Final Shout Rapture Report 1989". The years 1990 through 1993 are also listed. I have another book before me, "The Day and Hour Jesus Will Return." This book also has printed on the front cover, "No Scripture tells us we cannot know when the rapture will occur," and "The exact month and day Jesus will return was recorded by Moses 3500 years ago." The first book is by Edgar Whisenant and Greg Brewer. The second is by Colin Deal.

These men have discovered that the first century only had 99 years, and so their 1988 date was off by that one year. According to them, this year is really 1988. However, it seems that the false prophets are not quite as certain this time as they were last year, and so they seem to make a little allowance to move the date forward a year or two or three if it does not happen in 1989. It would be much better if they would leave the whole matter alone, and not touch that which is known only to God with their unholy speculations.

Frankly, I was shocked that anyone gave any credence to the 1988 hoax. I guess I should have heeded the statement that, "There is one born every minute." I will say that most of the people with whom I conversed about this matter thought it very sinful and silly, but I did learn that a large number of people took the hoax rather seriously. I was totally shocked to learn that a few of our kind were influenced somewhat by this foolish fable. I could wish and hope that no one will be taken in by this newest edition of "False Prophecies of the Raptures," but I guess that this is too much to hope for. I suppose that many will fall for this and help fill the coffers of the writers and publishers of these heretical books. By the way, these books will not be sold by our book store.

Please look back in the first paragraph to the two statements that are on the front cover of the book by Colin Deal. It is hard to believe that a man professing to be a Christian, and writing a book professing to be an exposition of prophecy, could write those two statements. The Bible has made it so unmistakably clear that no one can know when the rapture will occur that I marvel at one stating otherwise. The very idea that Moses recorded the month and day of the Lord's return would be funny if it was not so false, sick, sinful, and misleading.

I do dogmatically state that these men are false prophets. They are distorting and perverting Scripture to teach their heresies, and are probably doing so for unworthy motives. I truly wonder if they are even saved, but I follow my usual procedure as to this matter and leave it with them and the Lord. I dogmatically state that those who believe the lies of these two books are either unsaved, or are very immature believers. Mature spiritual growth and knowledge will deliver one from falling for the falsehoods of these false teachers.

The coming of the Lord in the rapture is imminent. This means that, so far as we do or can know, it could happen at any moment of time. We are to be always ready, loving, and watching for the coming of our Lord. That time is a predestinated moment of time. It cannot occur at any other time than that predestinated by God. But God has not revealed when that predestinated time is. Therefore, so far as God has revealed, and so far as we do or can know, it could be at any time. This is the true and proper attitude of the believer. He is not to be trying to set a time that he cannot know, for it is hidden in the knowledge of God alone. He is not to be putting the time in the distant future. He is to be always ready and watching for this blessed event.

I warn you to beware of any scheme that purports to set the time, or even the approximate time, of the rapture. Beware of the, "Six thousand years of man and the one thousand years of God" scheme. Beware of the, "Something happens every two thousand years" scheme. Beware of the, "Two days since the death of Christ, and the one day of the millennium" scheme. Beware of the, "Forty year generation from the time Israel became a nation" scheme. Beware of the, "Year of Jubilee" scheme. Beware of any and all such schemes. God has not hidden away in the Bible, in some mysterious secret way, the time of the rapture. God does not give to special men some secret understanding by which they can tell us that which only God knows - the time of the rapture. These men must have had an angel give to them some secret and special glasses by which they can see what ordinary men cannot see (sounds familiar, doesn't it?).

The Lord may surely come in 1989 so far as we know. Praise God if it be so. Oh, what a glad and glorious day that day (whenever it occurs) will be to the children of God. But these authors of these books mentioned above do not know any more about it than you and I know. You and I have sense enough to admit that we do not know the time of the rapture, and so we keep our mouths shut about it. These men remind me of Proverbs 17:28, "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." I wonder how many times these men must be put to shame by the failure of their man made (more likely, demon inspired) prophecies before others will stop buying their books and falling for their false and foolish prophetic fables.

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Grace is sufficient for us" (II Cor.12:9). Paul came to gladly glory in his infirmities, that he might know more of the grace and power of the Lord in his life. My friend, it is far better that our prayer be unanswered, and that God give us sufficient grace to bear with that, than that our prayer be answered and we be without that grace. Could I say that unanswered prayers are a source of much grace from God to our lives? We can do without answered prayers, but we cannot do without the grace of God. I believe that when God says "no," He will eventually explain that "no" unto us. We will understand things far better by and by than we do now. God's providences are often an inexplicable mystery to us now, but He will explain them all by and by. I said that He always has a reason when He says no. He may not explain that to us here and now, but He will do so later on. When God says no, it is because it is not His will to answer that prayer. He always has a good reason. He may have something

better in store for us. It may not be a final no. It does not mean that He does not love you. It will be for your good. He will give sufficient grace to bear with His "no." He will explain it by and by. Doubtless, there are other things that could be said about this important subject, but these should suffice to help and encourage, us when our prayers are unanswered.

If God does say no, if He does not answer our prayer; we will not lose anything by praying.

Prayer is a great blessing in and of itself. In prayer we commune with God. What, can one commune with his God and not be benefited thereby? It is a great blessing just to come into God's presence and commune with Him. Apart from the question of whether or not I will obtain anything in answer to my prayers, prayer itself is an inestimable blessing. There are many ingredients to true prayer: adoration, worship, confession, thanksgiving, communion, etc. Asking for things is only one part of prayer - maybe we make it too large a part of our prayer, maybe we neglect the other parts thereof - maybe we miss out on

many of the possible blessings of prayer because of this. Petition is a part of prayer, but apart from this, prayer bestows many benefits on the soul. I am not against petition in prayer. It is a very blessed part thereof. We obtain many, very many things in answer to prayer. I am only saying that prayer is more than this.

Well, I am nearly done. When it is all over down here, and we are in glory looking back over our lives down here, even the matter of answered and unanswered prayer, we will say that, "He hath done all things well." Let us keep on praying, my friend, keep on praying. Some of our prayers may not be answered, but we will not lose anything thereby. And surely the more we do pray, the more prayers we will have answered. God may not answer all the prayers we do make, but it is certain that He will never answer one for us that we do not pray. Prayer is an appointed means of obtaining things from God. Let us try it and see if things will not be better for us. Keep on praying. Nothing I have said here has been intended to discourage prayer. I have only desired to be of help in one area of the prayer life: that of unanswered prayer. But remember that many prayers are answered. Let not the matter of unanswered prayers discourage us or hinder us from continuing instant in prayer. Keep on praying, my brother and sister, keep on praying.

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cept for cursing Him.

The apostle Paul tells us in II Timothy 3:2-5, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." This gives the nature of man in the true light. Now, I know we don't see ourselves in this light, but mankind is blinded by the prince of this world. Listen to II Corinthians 4:4, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Every moral being ought to live and act for the highest good, and the highest good is the glory of our maker.

Back to self-love. Self-love is the fountain of depravity from which all evil thoughts and actions flow. Depravity is total, reaching all faculties of the soul. It is universal, taking in all mankind by nature. It is inherent, by which we mean it is transmitted from generation to generation by birth.

Let us look at the meaning of total depravity. It means this, that man is depraved or totally corrupt in all faculties of his being. It is not a question of degree, but of extent. Every man or woman is not as bad as he or she could be. I believe that the Scripture teaches that God controls the extent that

some may sin. God withheld King Abimelech from sinning against Him (Genesis 20:6). If we have not sinned as much as others, it is due to restraining grace. Jesus said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Certainly, everyone does not do murder, but everyone has the potential. Eight-tenths of an iceberg is hidden; so it is with man. John Bradford, a martyr, once watched a criminal being led to his execution and said, "But for the grace of God, there go I."

There are degrees in depravity. Drop a grain of arsenic in a glass of water, and the water is totally affected. Every drop of the water is poisoned. Put in another grain of arsenic and the poison is not extended, but merely intensified. It is not poisoned in more parts, but every part to a greater degree. In Ephesians 2:3 we read, "...and were by nature the children of wrath..." So man, a child of wrath by nature, may become depraved to a greater degree.

The natural man is not depraved in spots, but the whole of his being is depraved. Listen to Romans 8:7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The heart of man is deceitful above all things. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

The will is in bondage to sin. Jesus said in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..." Men choose what they do because of the state of their minds and hearts. Total depravity means that man, as the result of original sin, is morally or spiritually dead. There are no degrees of death, but there are degrees in death. The difference between two corpses, one dead one day and the other a week, is the degree of death. The corpse of one day will not be more dead in a week, but the degree of death is more pronounced. God told Adam he would die spiritually, or morally, when he disobeyed.

Let us look at a sixteen year old girl who is beautiful and outwardly charming. She knows nothing of the life of the brothel. But that girl, if an unbeliever of Christ, is morally or spiritually dead. She portrays that spiritual death by her lack of love for God and for her neighbours. Her depraved nature is manifested in pride of apparel, pride of beauty, disobedience to parents, lack of interest in the Word of God, and the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, let us look. She is a woman of the brothel; her virtue is gone, and she is abandoned to a life of sin and shame. She drinks, swears, smokes, lies, steals, and breaks up homes. She is no more dead than the girl of sweet sixteen, but she is in a worse condition in moral death.

Universal depravity simply means that all men everywhere are depraved. Every man, apart from inwrought grace, is lacking in all that the law of God requires. He does not love God, in fact, curses God. Neither does he love his neighbour as he loves himself. It is only the ones who are saved by God's good grace who are capable of loving God and who understand the things of God. In I John 4:7, 8, we read, "Beloved, let us

love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Again, we read in I Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned". Let us continue to read Scripture for proof: I John 5:1, "WHO SO EVER believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him".

In the days of Noah there was much wickedness. The Scripture tells us in Genesis 6:5, "...the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." In David's day, he tells us in Psalm 14:3, "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one". In Paul's day, Paul quotes this same Scripture in Romans 3:10, dealing with the people of that day. It brings us to this conclusion, that there is but one Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who was free of sin. He was born of woman, but not in the natural way. We read in Matthew 1:18, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost".

Depravity of nature is transmitted to all men by natural generation. Like begets like. Christ said, "That which is born of flesh is flesh" which means earthy, or depraved. The earthy or fleshly mind is an enemy of God, and is continually in confrontation with God. Sin is seen very early in life. The small baby will cry when nothing is wrong, just to get attention. The older it gets the more pronounced its sinning. David said in Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." The new-born baby inherits depravity from its parents. Inherent depravity is seen in the fact that the child will sin without being taught. Listen to Proverbs 29:15, "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." I have seen children who are without discipline really showing themselves in public places, putting their mother to shame. We must teach our children things that are not natural, such as behaving, manners, and many other things. Man sins naturally, but he has to be taught to be good. Inherent depravity is directly taught in the Scriptures. In Psalm 51:5 we read, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me". David is certainly not casting a reflection on his mother's virtue, but telling us the fact that we inherit from the womb.

Let us read Romans 9:8, "That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these

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would find that Joel's prophecy, as it related to them, would not be an outpouring of the Spirit, but an outpouring of God's wrath -- wrath that would result in "blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke."

Those who would believe, rather than doubt and mock, would be recipients, through the Spirit, of the outpouring of the Lord's church. Even down to the servants and handmaidens, they also would be recipients. All that was required was that they repent, believe, and become a member of the Lord's body -- the church. The Spirit was to be poured out (abundant measure) to all of these classes.

It is not to be thought that this special communication by God through the Spirit would continue throughout the church age any more than the act of speaking in other languages was to continue. This, after all, was the time of the arrival of the Spirit. He did not gently knock on the door and announce that He had arrived, but He came with many proofs of His presence.

These special gifts of the Spirit, however, did foretell what was awaiting the Lord's church. They were a pledge of how favored those were to be who were to be under the power and influence of the Spirit. They, in fact, would be given the whole truth.

Peter, under the influence of the Spirit, proceeds to speak to the other group, as Joel's prophecy related to them. They

were those who would not hear what the Spirit had to say to the church. They were the doubters and the mockers. Their future would be a black one. Their day was coming, too. It would be a day when He would pour out His wrath upon all who had turned their backs upon Him. Theirs would not be marvelous revelations about God's mercy and grace, but theirs would be a revelation of His terrible wrath.

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). This Scripture raises the same question which is raised in Romans 10:14 which reads, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed..." Believing, in other words, necessarily precedes calling. We cannot call out to someone we don't believe in, or we can't write a letter to someone we don't believe exists. The lost are never to be advised to pray in order to be saved. They must first repent and believe. It is only then that they can call on the name of the Lord. Those, then, in Acts 2:21 who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved from His pending wrath upon the earth rather than hell. They are already regenerated and thus saved from hell or they wouldn't be calling on Him.

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (Acts 2:22). Peter's audience was composed of Jews from the many countries mentioned in this chapter. He, therefore, when saying, "Ye men of Israel," is speaking to both the native and foreign Jews. Peter admonished all Jews from far and wide to "hear these words" or to receive these words. They were not to hear as stony-ground hearers, but as cultivated and rich ground receives seed -- seed which had everything in it needed to produce a stalk, leaves, and fruit.

What was Peter asking them to do? (Continued on Page 9, Col. 1)

The Baptist Examiner Forum I

SUBMIT QUESTIONS ON ANY BIBLE SUBJECT
THE BAPTIST EXAMINER--P.O. BOX 60--ASHLAND, KENTUCKY 41105-0060

Can a believer lose a reward he has already earned? Explain II John 8.

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"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (II John 8).

It should first be pointed out that rewards are of God's grace, as is His salvation. A believer is God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works as God has ordained, or "prepared" that we should walk in them. Study Ephesians 2:8, 9. The saved owe nothing to God for salvation and their works are not to that end. The saved do, however, owe God a life of "undivided" devotion. All true believers build upon the Foundation, Christ Jesus, and one day believer's works shall be tried and a reward given, or no reward given (loss of reward) according to God's standards as to Christian works and their motives. I Corinthians 3:11-15 and II Corinthians 5:10 speak of the judgment seat of Christ, for believers only, concerning believer's earthly life and service to the Lord Jesus.

Roman's 8:1 tells us that there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, but the verses in Corinthians teach us that God does hold us responsible for the deeds done in the body, whether good, or bad, as to reward. As we go through this life we are to run the course according to God's rules. We are to run with purpose and for the mastery. For our own reward? No. We are to run well to please Him who has called us and to show what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.

As we follow and practice the Scriptural teachings of the Lord, we accumulate reward for faithful and proper service. Some, however, may be influenced by false teachings as the warning given in II John 8, and thereby lose the fullest reward possible to them. They may have run well, worked well to a point, and then ruined their service as to the fullest reward possible. Are there not some Baptists (ministers and others, some even taken home) who have embraced false doctrine, new light, and led some astray? They have, therefore, ruined from that point on, what they had been working for as co-laborers with all in the truth.

Would God then not reward them for all done properly up to that point? I am inclined to think so. Even as Paul told the Hebrews in Hebrews 6:10, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the

saints, and do minister." The very phrase, "a full reward" in II John 8 points to the fact that what has been wrought properly and is worthy of reward will not be lost. If we lose by present mistakes whatever we have already accumulated (we do not know what we have accumulated), then none of us would likely receive any rewards. Let us labor for the Master by and through the guidance and power of His Spirit that our accounting to Him may not result in loss, but reward to His glory and praise. When we have done our best as we should, we have done no more than our reasonable service.

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John doesn't seem to be discussing works, but grace. In I Corinthians 3 Paul talks about rewards being earned by our labours as servants of Christ, "laborers together with God." But in II John 8 the subject has to do with the contrast between truth and error concerning Jesus Christ's coming in the flesh. Verse 7, "For as many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ." Then in verse 9, "Who so ever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." So the reward here spoken of is not of labour but of grace wrought by God through the ministry of John. By being careful to continue in the doctrine of salvation in the midst of great persecution they would reap the full benefits of God's power. Notice in verse 4 that John rejoiced greatly that he had found them walking in truth. Verse 8 is a warning to this elect lady and all others who might read the Holy Spirit inspired letter against being led astray by these deceivers in the doctrine of salvation. In his first epistle, John warns us to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God" (I John 4:1,2). Therefore, my explanation of II John 8 is that the reward spoken of primarily has to do with the grace of perseverance in the midst of trial and deception.

To answer the first part of the question, "can a believer lose a reward he has already earned?" I say he cannot. At least that is not the way I interpret I Corinthians 3. A man's reward is according to his labour. At the judgment seat of Christ, we shall give an ac-

count of our deeds. We shall receive a reward for those deeds which are acceptable, and those deeds which are not acceptable will be destroyed. Jesus said that the faithful in the Church of Thyatira, (Rev. 2:25, 26) "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." I have not found in the Scriptures having to do with heavenly reward where there is any danger of a saint losing rewards already earned. Thank you for your question.

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"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (II John 8).

John is warning Christians not to be deceived and led astray by false teachers who deny the virgin birth of Christ (see verse 7). To be led astray causes one to lose rewards which would have been received for faithful service. What is taught here is that it is possible for Satan to lead any Christian into error, or to fail in his/her service to God, thereby losing the reward for remaining true and faithful.

The Scripture very plainly teaches that God will reward His children for faithful service to Him, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). Also in I Corinthians 3:8, "----and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor".

The question, Can a believer who has earned rewards for faithful service lose those rewards by going into error, or failing to continue in faithful service? I do not think so. In Matthew 10:42 Christ said that a cup of cold water given in the "name of a disciple, --he shall in no wise lose his reward." "No wise" means "in no case" or "by no means". In Mark 9:41 Christ stated that the giver of a cup of cold water given in His name "shall not lose his reward", or according to Williams translation, "will never fail to get his reward", or "I tell you, will certainly not lose his reward" (Beck tras).

Although Moses lost the privilege (reward) of leading the Children of Israel into the promised land by his disobedience to God's command when he smote the rock instead of speaking to it, yet he is listed in Hebrews eleven as one of God's faithful men. I can not be-

lieve that he will lose the rewards for faithful service he rendered before committing this sin. No doubt, if he had remained faithful to God's commands, he would have a fuller reward than that which he will now receive.

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II John 8: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Let me begin this answer with a statement concerning what I believe about rewards. The statement is simply that I believe in them. I believe there are rewards for the children of God. I believe there are unique and special rewards for those in true churches, who faithfully serve God in and through that church. I also believe there are rewards for believers outside a true church. I believe they pale in comparison to rewards inside the church, but that there are rewards outside the church. Now let me deal with the question and the verse at hand.

This is a very difficult question to answer in that the Bible does not enter into great detail concerning rewards. I do not believe that you can lose a reward that you have already earned. I use for an example of this; the winning of a soul to Christ. The Bible gives us the example of giving a cup of water to a prophet, and not losing our reward, I also think there is a possibility of losing rewards we might have gained had we remained faithful. I use as an example of this, church attendance. Let us suppose that a person was faithful in church for ten years. This person back-slid and ceased church attendance until death. Would that person receive a reward for faithfulness in church attendance? I don't think so. In this instance the person has lost rewards that he might have gained. The Bible talks about suffering loss in I Corinthians. I believe this has reference to rewards we could have gained had we been faithful; not to rewards we had already earned. I also use as an example the "crown of righteousness" given to those who "love the appearing of Christ". Is this not a reward or crown that will not be fully earned until either death or the rapture? We might love His appearing today, and not tomorrow. I believe that once we have earned a reward, it is ours for eternity. God is not a person who gives and then takes away that gift. We used to refer to this as an "Indian giver." (The opposite is more true in that we took from the Indians). Also, I do not believe that you can lose a reward that you have already earned because the Bible does not teach this. There is not a verse in the Bible that I believe teaches you can lose a reward you have already earned. This includes the verse in this question. Let me now deal with this verse of Scripture and show you what I mean.

The first thing I want you to notice is that this book is to a specific people. The "elect lady and her children." It is from "the elder". I believe he was the one who had led them to Christ and possibly served as their pastor.

In verse seven he warns them many deceivers. Verse eight is exhortation to them to be careful of these deceivers. He tells them to "Look to yourselves." Beware of these deceivers and do not be deceived by them. I also want you to notice that the terms used in the latter part of this verse are not "ye" but "we". I realize there are some translations that change the "we" to "ye". Textus Receptus doesn't do that, therefore, neither do I. I think it is not relevant for a change to be made. I give you possible interpretations to this verse.

First, that the elder here includes himself with these dear people, thus used the word we. He knows that what applies to them, applies to him. He is teaching us we must hold on to the good things we have been taught, are to build on the good works we have already performed. If we make proper usage of these things we will live right and serve right thus gaining a full reward. Verse nine mentions the importance of "abiding in the doctrine." There are many rewards that come about by abiding faithfully in God. Rewards that only come about by continuing to build on that which we have already wrought. The receiving of a reward has reference to the reward we can receive by remaining faithful.

The second interpretation mentioned is this. The elder is a man who has been a great influence on their lives. He has probably used to bring them a knowledge of Christ. He had been used to teach and instruct them in doctrine and godly living. The people are his pride and joy. They are in a very real sense, his reward. God had given them him. All pastors will tell you what I mean. The flock that a pastor is very important to them. They are our reward. When we grow in the grace and knowledge of God it is rewarding to us. They are our reward. The elect lady and her children will receive a full reward, but the pastor receives a reward in the faithfulness to God. Members need to realize that they can be very rewarding to the pastor. To do the right things is a full reward to the pastor. That either of these interpretations is possible. I reject the possibility that this verse is teaching that we can lose a reward you have already earned. May God bless you all.

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are not the children of God..." The Scriptures teach the necessity of the new birth prove that depravity is universal, and inherent. Regeneration is not of persons. Every man needs a new birth. But for this, he will never see the kingdom of God. If depravity was not hereditary, the new birth would not be necessary. May the Lord bless each one.

There was but one place of safety in the day when the flood came upon the earth; that place was Noah's ark. So also there was but one hiding-place for the saints who would escape the storm of God's anger, he must venture his soul on Christ.

--J.C. R.

The Baptist Examiner Forum II

SUBMIT QUESTIONS ON ANY BIBLE SUBJECT

THE BAPTIST EXAMINER--P.O. BOX 60--ASHLAND, KENTUCKY 41105-0060

What is the difference between freewill and responsibility?

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"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1).

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this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Second, to fear Him and to keep His commandments. Free will is the invention of man, instigated by the devil, to mislead and confuse all those who believe they are in control of their own destiny.

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men and women to salvation stands in the forefront of those truths that are hated and rejected. This is true not only of those which make no profession of faith, but also church goers and those who claim to be Christians.

If it is true that Bible believers and theologians take their final examination in the doctrine of election let us ask a few examination questions.

I. What is the definition of election? The English word "elect" comes from the Latin "electus" and literally it signifies to pick out, to choose, to gather out. Isn't it strange that when people come to using words in a religious sense they will pervert the common, understood meaning that they use again and again in every other sense? Let me illustrate. When we speak of the election of a member of congress, do we mean that he first chose himself, then the people chose him because he had chosen himself? Or when we speak of the election of a deacon or trustee, do we mean that he first chose himself, then the people chose him, because he first chose himself? No such theory meaning there. It means the people choosing their representative by a distinctive act of their own, or the congregation choosing their representative by a distinct act of their will. And shall man have his will while God is denied His? Shall man have his choice and shall not God have His?

You know the very prominent place in Scripture the doctrine of election holds. Election meets us everywhere, both in the Old and New Testaments. Whatever may be the meaning of the word, one cannot help feeling that the truth which it expresses must, in God's sight, be a vitally important one. But how can this be the case if election means no more than God's choosing those whom He foresaw would believe of their own accord and by their own power? This is not what the Bible teaches about election. The reason why we have to usually use the term "unconditional" in front of the word election is because sinful man has perverted the definition and explanation of the word. It is a shame that we have to use adjectives in front of such words as grace, church, redemption, and election. These are great words, marvelous words, but because of man's twisting the meaning of words, we have to

say irresistible grace, local or visible church, particular redemption and unconditional election.

We believe that the Scriptural doctrine of election means that God has from all eternity sovereignly determined who shall be saved in Christ Jesus, and has ordained all the ways and means unto their salvation. We believe that the Bible teaches that this election is a personal election, not as some try to twist the word and make it mean a nation or service. Our text from Ephesians says, "...he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him..." II Thessalonians 2:13 tells us, "...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel..." In other passages in the Bible, in Romans 9, God uses not just personal pronouns but personal names such as Jacob and Esau. In the first chapter of Jeremiah, God said He knew Jeremiah before He had formed him in the womb, and had already sanctified him and ordained him as a prophet before he was born. Paul says practically the same thing in Galatians 1 when we are told, "...it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace." Certainly this is eternal, personal election.

II. Why is election so important?

(1) It begins at the right place. When a surveyor goes to work it is absolutely essential for him to place his transit-compass (the instrument surveyors use for measuring) over the exact point of beginning before any work can be done. If the point of beginning is wrong everything surveyed is wrong. How men and women need to have the exact point of beginning when it comes to salvation. The vast majority of people go wrong in the 20th century because they begin with man, which is another evidence of man's pride and sinfulness. We should begin with God. He is the only right point of beginning in the quest for salvation. If we don't begin with Him, we will only go farther astray. Elder H. G. Wells uttered a lot of sound theology when he said, "Until man finds God, and is found of God, he begins at no beginning and comes to no ending."

(2) It destroys a persistent and prevalent heresy. One of the most persistent heresies down through the centuries and certainly most popular today, is that every man's destiny is in his own hands. William Henley wrote a poem a number of years ago entitled, "Invictus." The vast majority of the world's population agrees with the last verse which goes like this:

"It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul."

The biblical doctrine of election denies this heresy. All true religion is God centered. And this is true only of that religion that has its ultimate source in God's sovereign election, for it alone confesses that God is all, and man is absolutely nothing. There remains nothing for proud man to boast. All his own

goodness, good will, works and piety, are cast into the dust as having no value before God. For we are saved according as we are chosen. And we are chosen, not because we distinguished ourselves from others, not because of any goodness or willingness on our part, but solely because it pleased God to distinguish us, and only by grace. God is all! We bring nothing to Him, He gives all to us. We have nothing in which to boast. Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord, said Jeremiah; and how true this is. Even a secular historian like Arnold J. Toynbee recognizes this truth when writing in his book, "The Historian's Struggle with Religion." He says, "Religious faith comes by grace, not by will. Religion cannot be called to heel, like a dog, to suit human convenience." If Romans 9:16 were really believed, it would forever destroy this prevalent heresy, and what does Romans 9:16 say? "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

(3) Election is one of the indispensable doctrines of grace, the denial of which leads, logically and inevitably to the denial of salvation by grace alone apart from human merit and human effort.

The whole system of the doctrine of salvation by grace is built on the foundation of election, and it will stand or fall with this truth. Deny election, and you cannot maintain the truth of total depravity, for if to some extent you present salvation as contingent upon the will and the choice of the sinner, you must ascribe to him some remnant of goodness in virtue of which he is able to make the right determination and choice. Refuse to accept the doctrine of sovereign election and you must ultimately deny the truth of vicarious atonement. For if Christ's death is substitutional, those for whom He died are certainly justified and reconciled to God. But it is evident that all men are not saved. Hence, you must choose between two alternatives: Christ represented the elect, or in His death He did not really pay for the sins of those for whom He died. Election and vicarious atonement are inseparably connected. And the same is true of the relation of election and all the blessings of salvation that are bestowed on us in Christ Jesus our Lord: of calling and faith, of justification and sanctification, of hope and love, or preservation and perseverance. Either these are all blessings of grace, and then they flow from sovereign election; or they depend upon the will and work of men, and they are not of grace. The doctrine of election is of central importance for the whole system of the truth of salvation.

(4) It is a humbling doctrine. Anything that will humble proud men is good. No wonder C. H. Spurgeon says, "Friends, if you want to be humbled, study election, for it will make you humble under the influence of God's Spirit. He who is proud of his election is not elect; and he who is humbled under a sense of it may believe that he is. He has every reason to believe that he is, for it is one of the most blessed effects of election, that it helps

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us to humble ourselves before God." In another place this prince of preachers says, "I have sometimes fallen prostrate before election, when endeavoring to understand it. When I came near election one thought possessed me - Lord, I am nothing. I am less than nothing. Why me? Why me?"

(5) It gives unspeakable consolation. Election is the source of all true comfort and assurance. Most people object to this doctrine because they say it offers no comfort to poor sinners, but nothing could be farther from the truth. True, this doctrine has no consolation for the impenitent wicked; but is there any form of presentation of the gospel that could possibly comfort the wicked and ungodly? The Bible says, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But is there a more comforting gospel than that of God's gracious election for the penitent, the seeking soul, the hungry and thirsty, the weary and heavy laden? The sinner may be assured that he will be received, and be saved, for his penitence, his seeking, hunger and thirst, are the fruit of electing grace. Moreover, when we look about us in the world, full of confusion and chaos, of immorality and apostasy, is there any assurance anywhere except in the truth of God's sovereign election, that His work shall not fail? What greater comfort and consolation can one find than in the question of Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?..." The latter part of that 8th chapter of Romans informs us that the elect will be more than conquerors over everything that could possibly assail them.

III. Has election a valid history? We will not spend much time on this question. The answer is most assuredly. Not just from the Old Testament and the New Testament, not just from Christ to Paul to Augustine, to the Waldensians, to Calvin to the Puritans, to Whitefield to Spurgeon to the present hour; but all the great creeds of all the ages have confessed their belief in this blessed doctrine of election. The Waldensian Creed, the 39 Articles of the Church of England, the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterians, the Synod of Dort, the French confession, the Belgic Confession, the Swiss Form of Agreement, the London, the Philadelphia, the New Hampshire Confessions of the Baptists have all stated they implicitly believe in election. Why then are there so many professing Christians who do not believe in election? They do not believe their creeds and they do not believe the Bible. If the word for choose, elect, is mentioned over 40 times in the New Testament alone, men and women just prove they are not Bible believers if they reject election.

IV. Does election curtail missions and evangelistic endeavor? No, just the opposite! The whole mission effort of the church rests ultimately upon this doctrine of divine election. Even before we go out into the world with the gospel of Christ, we

know that it cannot fail. For those whom God has chosen from eternity will be called, and justified, and glorified. They will be saved, not first of all because they want God, but because He wants them. When missionaries and evangelists go out with the gospel, they don't know in advance who the chosen ones are, but they do know that the gospel will find them, whoever and wherever they are.

This is the secret of the phenomenal success of the missionary effort of the early church. When Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch, they found a ready response among the Gentiles, who "glorified the word of the Lord." All of them? No, not all of them. How many? The answer is in Acts 13:48, "as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Now that's the whole story of New Testament missions. At another city, Corinth, when it appears Paul might slacken his preaching because of persecution, the Lord spoke to Paul and said, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace." Why? Listen to God's Word, "For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). All of them? No, but many, the elect in Corinth.

The same is true today. We preach the gospel everywhere. But only those whom God has chosen actually believe it. There is no other way to explain the difference between a believer and an unbeliever. Both are sinners by nature. The believer is no better than the unbeliever - perhaps worse in some respects. The difference lies in the good pleasure of God who knows what He is doing, even when He does not tell us what it is and why He does it. As the Apostle John puts it, those who receive Him, and who thus become the sons of God, are "born, not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

Christianity is not a failure in this world because so many people reject it. God never intended to save all men. He tells us plainly in His word that He has chosen some and not others. If this disturbs men, if it raises questions in their minds about the justice and the love of God, let us remember that salvation is not a matter of justice, but of grace. God is dealing with lost, guilty, condemned sinners who would have never chosen Him. They are dead in trespasses and sins and would have never moved toward Him unless He first drew them. He has to open closed hearts and minds today just as He did hundreds of years ago when He, God, opened Lydia's heart (Acts 16:14).

V. What place should election have in our ministry? We believe that election should be preached to saints and sinners alike. Much of the prevalent prejudice against this doctrine is due to ignorance as to what the Bible really teaches about it. Election is one of the best antidotes for Modernism in the whole realm of truth.

When we are told to keep this doctrine back from the people because they might make ill use of it, reply like C. H. Spurgeon did. "That is popish doctrine! It was upon that very theory that priests kept back the Bible from the people. They did not give the

Bible to them lest they should misuse it. 'But,' says the objector, 'do not some men abuse the doctrines of grace?' I grant you that they do, but if we destroy everything that men abuse, we should have nothing left. What are there to be no ropes because some fools hang themselves? and must knives be discarded as dangerous because some use them as a weapon of destruction? Decidedly not! And, besides all this remember that men do read the Scriptures and think about these doctrines, and therefore often make mistakes about them. Who shall set them right if we who preach the Word hold our tongues about the matter?"

Sometimes you will hear people say that this doctrine of election makes men complacent and careless about the matter of their salvation, for they are made to feel that there is nothing they can do about it anyway, since everything depends upon God, if they are chosen, they will be saved somehow; and if not, well, nothing they do will make any difference. But is that really true? Do you know any unbeliever who actually uses that as an excuse for his unbelief? No, of course not. That's not the reason why he rejects the gospel. The only people who raise this objection are Arminians, Conventionites, who think this doctrine will offend and antagonize those whom they want to win for Christ. How strange that God doesn't have the same fear! He certainly wants to bring sinners to Christ, and yet He doesn't hesitate to use this doctrine to call them! And God's Son did the same thing. One day preaching He said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

Are we supposed to be wiser than God? Do we think we can make the gospel more appealing and more effective if we omit this basic doctrine of divine election, and lest sinners think their salvation depends upon their own free will, which is sinful and depraved, rather than upon the sovereign will of God? Which is really the more compelling thing to say to men who are sinners by nature, prone to evil, slaves of sin, that they must choose God or that God must choose them? Which would you rather have me tell you--that God cannot save you unless you first come to Him, or that He has come to you because you would not and could not come to Him?

Conclusion: Now in spite of everything we have said about election and the Bible, men and women will still reject the doctrine, twist the doctrine, despise the doctrine and actually show their hatred toward God's revelation and those who believe and proclaim it. We who love election should not let this disturb and discourage us. Remember Paul said in II Timothy 2:10, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

To those who rant and fight against election and against the Bible because it contains the doctrine of election, we would remind them of the inscription on the monument to the Huguenots in Paris, France:

"Hammer away, ye hostile hands;

Your hammers break; God's anvil stands."

Even Christian hymnology is very deficient in expressing the doctrine of election in its words and theology set to music. True, Samuel S. Wesley in his hymn, "The Church's One Foundation" says in the second verse "Elect from every nation, Yet one o'er all the earth, Her charter of salvation, One Lord, one faith, one birth," but this is one of the very few hymns that even mentions election. I did run across an old hymn, the author whom to me is unknown, that surely grasped the great Biblical doctrine of election-- let me quote this great hymn of praise in closing.

"Tis not that I did choose Thee, For, Lord, that could not be; This heart would still refuse Thee,

Hadst Thou not chosen me. Thou from the sin that stained me.

Hast cleansed and set me free; Of old Thou hast ordained me, That I should live to Thee."

SAMSON

(Continued from Page 1)

they accomplish and represent by their lives, seems to be very little.

I think some of our modern day athletes are much like Samson. They are like kings without a kingdom. They achieve great skills in some sport and become overly famous. Then the first thing we know, they are reported as being in some scandal or in The Betty Ford Center. A former famous ball player has of recent date occupied the headlines of our daily newspapers. On the field he massed great Herculean records. But off the field, it was another matter. His off the field records have over-shadowed his on the field records. This is much like Samson. His battle field records are indisputable, but so are his non-battle field records. They read like a story from "Penthouse" magazine. And today, we seem to hear of more and more "Samsonites" among the Christian rank and file.

Why do you suppose God

would let such a man occupy such a prominent place in the Bible? Paul tells us: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (I Cor. 10:6). So it seems these things are for our instructions. The question is, will we hear and learn?

I. Samson: A Prepared Deliverer 1. In Judges 13:5: "For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head; for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." A Nazarite was not to touch a dead body, drink any strong drink, nor cut his hair.

2. Ordinarily, this was a temporary vow. However, in Samson's case, it was for a lifetime. Folks, I am here to tell you that being a Christian is restrictive, and it is for a life time. It is not something we shuck off and on like a pair of pants or a dress. The biggest problem with Christianity is Christians themselves. We don't live up to our potential, or our obligations.

3. We are told specifically he was to be a deliverer or savior for Israel. He was specifically born to this end. Do you think we, as Christians, are born to some specific end? I do. We may not always accomplish that mission but we should. We are told that Jeremiah was born to that end: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. 1:5). The same was said of John the Baptist, and even Paul makes a similar statement. I am certain that Paul teaches us in the book of I Corinthians that every believer has some special gift of God and is to develop and use it in the Lord's work. If I were a young person today, I would try to discover that gift and then develop it.

(Continued on Page 7, Col. 5)

THE INVISIBLE, MYSTICAL, UNIVERSAL CHURCH

An immense, incalculable, immaterial imagination;
An inappropriate, indiscrete, imperious interpretation;
An inept, inconceivable, incompatible inconsistency;
An improper, improbable, impractical impossibility;
An implacable, inexorable, insufficient imperceptibility;
An impoverished, impecunious, insubstantial innovation;
An idiotic, imbecilic, intoxicating inebriation;
An idyllic, inane, ideological incredibility;
An inscrutable, incomprehensible, insupportable infatuation;
An injudicious, injurious, insidious insanity;
An illegible, illiterate, inexplicable imposter;
An illegitimate, illicit, invalid, insinuation;
An impulsive, immodest, immoderate implication;
An infectuous, incurable, incorrigible incongruity;
An ideological, indictable, impeachable imitation;
An irremissible, irremediable, irresolvable irreconcilability;
An inordinate, indefinite, indescribable, intuition;
An intorted, imperitent, irrelevant intimation;
An inferior, inflated, infantile innuendo;
An impish, impetuous, impious incantation;
An invidious, intrusive, invective intrigue;
An inexact, indistinct, indecipherable invention;
An inutile, illative, infeasible inference;
An insensible, impalpable, invisible incorporeity;
An incredulous, irrational, illogical interdenominationalism, whose arguments spread out into shallowness, enlarge into smallness, and increase into nothingness.

adapted and expanded

INTERCOMMUNION UNSCRIPTURAL AND INCONSISTENT

Pt. 3, Chapter 5a The Practice of the Apostolic Churches

by J. R. Graves

They observed the ordinances as they were delivered to them.-- The Supper was delivered to be observed as a church ordinance.-- They had no authority to change any rite in the least respect. They were commanded to judge all whom they allowed to eat with them, and they cannot judge the members of sister churches. Intercommunion was unknown among the apostolic churches in the earliest ages of Christianity.

The invariable practice of the apostolic churches, and the specific instructions delivered them by the apostles, will have a conclusive bearing upon the right settlement of the question before us. If we find that these are in accord with the nature and symbolism of the ordinance as developed in the previous chapters, it will certainly be the part of Christian candor to admit that the practice of intercommunion was unknown among the apostolic churches, and is, therefore, unscriptural. Baptists endorse this as logical reasoning when opposing infant baptism and feet washing; the practices were unknown to the apostolic churches, and, therefore, must be unscriptural. To place the subject fully before the reader, I will submit this axiom: Any practice or theory which vitiates or contravenes what Christ has appointed must be unscriptural, and fraught with evil.

Now, there are two principles fundamental to the New Testament and Baptist church polity, viz.:

1. That each church of Christ is an absolutely independent organization, complete in itself, and clothed with executive functions only.

2. That to the churches, as such, Christ delivered the ordinances, and constituted each one responsible for the purity of its administrations.

I mean by fundamental, that a scriptural church cannot be constituted without them. An organization may possess every other feature; but not possessing these two, it is not a Christian or evangelical church, and should not be so called. I refer the reader back to Bishop Doggett's position recorded earlier. Any theory or practice, therefore, that antagonizes or contravenes either of these principles, must be unscriptural, and of evil tendency.

1. The theory of some that the rights, ordinances, and privileges of one church belong in common to the members of all churches, is both unscriptural and pernicious. For,

(1) It is destructive of the polity Christ appointed for His churches, abrogating as it does the principle of church independency.

Once establish this theory, and no church could discipline its own members, administer its own government: for the members of surrounding churches could command majorities, and control the business meetings of a local church; dismiss its pastor and elect another; determine his salary; arraign, try, and exclude members; receive and administer her ordinances. The reader who cannot see how utterly this theory annihilates the last vestige of

church independency is simply unreasonable. The theory must, therefore, be unscriptural and pernicious.

(2) It is equally manifest that the above theory as utterly ignores and abrogates the second fundamental principle, viz.; the guardianship of the ordinances by the local churches. If the members of one church have equal privileges in all churches, it follows, of course, that no church has the right to refuse them the exercise of any church privilege as of voting and coming to its



table--and consequently can have no control of the Supper any more than of baptism or of its discipline. The most obnoxious characters, retained as they are in the fellowship of so many sister churches,--drunkards, fornicators, adulterers, revelers, and even those unbaptized, and those excluded from her own fellowship can come to the table of any church without let or hindrance on its part. This is the monstrous theory set forth by some who propose to teach Baptists the right observance of the ordinances. It utterly annihilates both the independency of the churches and their control of, and responsibility for the right observance of the ordinances, and is therefore unscriptural and pernicious, and fraught with evil only.

We are therefore compelled to conclude that no member has a scriptural right to any church act, privilege, or the Supper, in a church of which he is not a member. All standard Baptist authors are agreed in this.

Dr. A. P. Williams, D.D., says: "He [a regular Baptist] has a right to the communion in the church of which he has been added; but nowhere else. As he had no general right when running at large, so he has no general right now" (Prerequisite to Com., p. 62).

Dr. Gardner says: "A member of one Baptist church has no more right, to claim the privilege of voting in another Baptist church than has a Campbellite, Methodist or Presbyterian. The same is equally true of communion at the Lord's table, which is a church act, and the appointed token, not of Christian or denominational, but of the church fellowship subsisting between communicants at the same table. Hence it follows that a member of one Baptist church has no more right, as a right, to claim communion in another Baptist church, than he has to claim the right of voting, for both are equally church acts and church privileges. The Lord's Supper being a church ordinance, as all admit, [That Christ has not given the members of one church a right to the table spread in another church, see Curtis, Paxton,

Adkins, Harvey, Pendleton and Hovey] and every church being required to exercise discipline over all its communicants, it necessarily follows that no church can scripturally, [and it is certain that it cannot unscripturally!] extend its communion beyond the limits of its discipline. And this, in fact, settles the question of church communion, and restricts the Lord's Supper to the members of each particular church as such" (Comm., pp. 18,19).

Now if this be true--and who will presume to doubt it?--can we for a moment suppose that the apostolic churches habitually contravened those fundamental principles, and the express instructions of the apostles without their remonstrance or reproof? If not, we cannot believe that the apostolic church practiced intercommunion.

I now propose still further to demonstrate that--the apostolic churches did not practice intercommunion.

My first argument is:

1. There is not a precept for, nor an example of, intercommunion in the New Testament. If Baptists really believe that this is a valid argument against infant baptism and feet-washing being church ordinances, or even Christian duties, they must admit its equal force against intercommunion. It is inferred to have taken place at Troas, but no one ever has, or can prove, that there was any church at Troas in the first century at the period of Paul's last visit; [this case will be treated in a future chapter] and, therefore, the expression "when we come together to break bread," refers to a common repast, and not to the Lord's Supper.

My second argument is: That the apostolic churches did observe this ordinance, as well as baptism, as the apostles delivered them unto them. The churches were especially praised for this (I Cor. 11:2; Col. 2:5).

In whatever respect any church departed from the traditions of the apostles, for this they were reproofed (I Cor. 11:17,22; Rev. 2:3). But we have no intimation throughout the New Testament that any church had transgressed in this respect (see letter to the seven churches). But I have shown, what is generally admitted, that Christ did appoint the Supper to be observed as a church ordinance, and among other things, to symbolize "church relations"--i.e., that all who unite in partaking of it are fellow members of the same church.

So Professor Curtis: "So when our blessed Savior instituted the Supper, as He did upon one of these paschal occasions, it was, we say, as a church ordinance that He ordained it" (Com., p.87).

He therefore committed it to His churches to be so observed to the end of time. Therefore, the apostolic churches did observe the Lord's Supper as a church ordinance, and intercommunion was unknown among them. But, strange to say, there are good Baptists who believe that in virtue of the independence of Baptist churches, they can invite members of other churches to participate in their church acts.

[Is it in violation of the Scriptures for a member in good standing in a church of Christ, to partake of the Lord's Supper, with another church of the same faith and order? Answer: The Lord's Supper is strictly a church ordinance; yet, by virtue of the independence of a church, she may, or may not, invite to her communion, members of sister churches of the same faith and order, who she knows to be in good standing, and we advise the brethren to moderation and forbearance (Ans. of the Suwanee Bapt. Ass'n, Fla. 1881)].

Now, it is evident that, if Christ did appoint the Supper to be observed as a church ordinance, as these brethren all admit, and as a symbol of church relations, then it is certain that He forbade the intercommunion of members of different churches. This must be as evident to a Baptist as that Christ forbade the sprinkling of water on the head for Christian baptism, by appointing the act to symbolize His death, burial and resurrection [It would not be strange for Protestants and Catholics to believe that a church may change Christ's appointments, for the right is incorporated in the very creeds of those sects--"Each particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification" (Acts 22; Methodist Discipline). And they have changed both the subjects and the acts which Christ commanded, for their convenience; but this doctrine has always been, and should be, peculiarly repugnant to all Baptists.]. Let not Baptists use the arguments they do to disprove sprinkling, unless willing to admit their force with reference to the Lord's Supper. For a Baptist church, then, to grant a right which Christ has withheld, it must be authorized by Christ to modify His appointments--in a word, to legislate. But scriptural churches are executive bodies only, and therefore have no authority to enact or abolish rites or ceremonies, or modify, in the least, any ordinance or appointment of Christ. For a church to presume to do this, would be to forfeit its claims to be considered a church of Christ.

This fact should be indelibly impressed upon the mind and heart of every Baptist--a church of Christ has no authority to enact laws or to change, in the slightest respect, what Christ has appointed. It cannot be true, therefore, that a church may grant a privilege which Christ has withheld, and much less to so modify an ordinance of His church as to change its entire character. This would be equivalent to enacting a new law. If a church can enact one law, she can a thousand; if she can change one law or ordinance of Christ, she can abolish all His laws, and enact those suited to her tastes, feelings and convenience. By granting a church the authority to modify the least appointment of Christ in the least, is to concede all the powers claimed by the papacy. A principle cannot be divided.

2. But suppose it is conceded that Christ did authorize His churches to legislate, in some things, in some peculiar circum-

stances, can we for a moment suppose that He authorized them to make changes, or do that which would contravene His own appointments, or vitiate the very symbolism of His ordinances, and thus render them null? But it has been shown that it inheres in the very nature of a church act or privilege, that its participation is limited to the members of the one church; that it cannot be extended beyond the jurisdiction of the church celebrating it; that Christ appointed the Supper to be such an ordinance, as to symbolize church relations, and therefore we cannot suppose that He has authorized His churches to change His appointment at their pleasure; and therefore we cannot suppose that the apostolic churches ever changed this ordinance, or extended the right to eat, any more than the right to vote, beyond the limits of their discipline.

3. My second argument is:

(1) If Christ appointed the eating of the "one loaf" to symbolize church relations subsisting between all those who jointly partake of it, then we must conclude that all the apostolic churches, which observed the ordinances as delivered, did symbolize the fact that all who ate together were members of the one self-same church, and they did not therefore extend the Supper to the members of sister churches.

(2) But it is admitted by all our authors, who have thoroughly examined the subject, that the symbolism of the "one loaf" is the organic unity of all the participants--i.e., that they are members of the same local church (see Symbolism of the One Loaf, Chap. 3).

(3) We are thus forced to the conclusion that the apostolic churches observed it, among other things, as a symbol of church relations, and therefore did not practice intercommunion.

SAMSON

(Continued from Page 6)

4. It is interesting to note that Samson, strongest man in the history of the world, was from the weakest and smallest tribe in Israel. This seems to be another case where God worked strength from weakness. God often times takes the weak things of the world and uses them.

II. Samson's Mission. 1. Just what was his business? In chapter 2, verse 16 we read: "Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." Now, Samson was one of those judges. There were some 13 of them altogether, the most famous of which are Samson and Gideon.

2. These men were not exactly judges as we understand the word. They were more like military leaders or "saviors" that delivered Israel out of the hands of the natives whom, under Joshua, they had not fully conquered. It is very clear as to why this situation existed: "I also will not henceforth drive out any

(Continued on Page 9, Col. 3)

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF ELIJAH - 17

THE CALL OF ELISHA by Joe Wilson

"And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (I Ki.19:15-18).

Twice Elijah had said that he was the only one left. God tells him that he is wrong, for God has in sovereign and electing grace reserved seven thousand to Himself, and had or would call them by the still small voice of the effectual work of the Holy Spirit. "So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him" (I Ki.19:19-21). What a marvelous and memorable day this was in the life of the young man who was to be the successor to Elijah, I speak to you on "The Call of Elisha."

Elijah had stood tall, brave, and strong on mount Carmel. God had wrought wonderfully through him. The next day Elijah was threatened by Jezebel. Not waiting for a word from God, not looking in faith to God, terrified by outward circumstances; Elijah fled for his life. He went south through Judah to Beer-sheba. Leaving his servant there, he went a day's journey, sat down under a jupier tree and prayed to die. God graciously ministered to him and blessed him through the ministry of an angel. Elijah, in the strength of that which the angel had provided for him, traveled forty days and nights without further food to Mount Horeb, somewhere near where the law had been given.

Elijah entered into a cave there where the Lord spoke to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" I believe Elijah's chief concern had been to be used of God to turn Israel back to the Lord. I think that he felt that the

experience of Mount Carmel had accomplished that. Then Elijah realized that this was not the case. Jezebel threatened his life. He was, I think, very despondent. He had risked his life in serving God. Now, it seemed to him that nothing had really been accomplished. Then the Lord came to Elijah and told him that there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed to Baal. God told him of the effectiveness of "the still small voice" of the Holy Spirit to do God's work. I believe that these doctrines of election and effectual calling were used of God to encourage Elijah, and God tells Elijah, "Go, return." Elijah is to return to the work of the Lord. One of the commentaries I am reading on Elijah has insisted repeatedly that because of Elijah's flight from Jezebel, God was through with using him; he was set aside. I believe that God forgave him, restored him, and sent him back to the work. I think we see that here, and will see more of it as we continue and finish our study of Elijah. Praise God that He does not throw failing servants on the junk pile of uselessness, but forgives them and uses them again. God had more work for Elijah to do. He was to go to Damascus, the capital of Syria, and anoint Hazael as king. He was to anoint Jehu as king of Israel. He was to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his stead when his work was done. Doubtless, he continued some time with Elisha, training him in the work.

We now have the account of Elijah's calling Elisha to follow him as a student and companion and to become a prophet after him. First, I want to point out the sovereignty of God over all things. Beloved friends, the Bible teaches that our God is in sovereign control over everything that takes place in this world. I often wonder if and how deniers of God's sovereignty read the Bible. I wonder if they read with a special pair of glasses that filter out the parts of the Word they do not want to believe. Brothers and sisters, I have difficulty reading the Psalms of the Bible, the prophecies, or the history without seeing everywhere the Bible's teaching of God's sovereignty, by direct statement and by example and illustration.

Daniel 4:17,25, 35 are great verses on God's sovereignty. V.17 tells Nebuchadnezzar of something that is going to take place in his life, "...to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will..." V. 25 says the same thing. V.35 is one of the great verses in the Bible on the sovereignty of God. It says, "...and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?"

We see this illustrated in Hazael and Jehu becoming kings. No matter how these men humanly came to office, behind this was the sovereignty of God and His eternal predestination that such would be the case. Hazael came to the throne by murdering his predecessor. Jehu came to the

throne the same way. Back of those sinful acts of violence was the sovereign control of God over all things. The sovereign God of the Bible causes some things; He permits some things, and He rules over and in all things. This does not excuse the sins of men. Men's sins originate in their own depraved hearts, and they are totally responsible and accountable for them; yet God controls the acts of men according to his own eternally predestinated purposes.

God is not only in sovereign control over political matters; He is also in control of spiritual matters. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom.9:15-18). I wonder what the "Free Willer" does with this verse. Salvation is not by the will or efforts of man, but by the mercy and power of God. Not only in salvation, but also in service does God choose whom He will to occupy a special place in the Lord's work. Elisha was not a prophet, but a farmer. He was busy at his work when God called him to become a prophet. God had beforehand called him to salvation. Now, He calls him to service.

In the study of this Scripture we also see the sure judgment of God upon the sins of men. A man may escape one form of judgment, but he has not gotten by with his sin; another form will overtake him. "...him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay..." (I Ki.19:17). God was going to use Hazael and Syria to inflict punishment upon Israel for their departure from the worship of the Lord and their worship of Baal and Ashteroth. Some would escape this punishment, but God was going to use Jehu to bring punishment upon them. The story of Jehu is the story of one of the "blood-baths" of the Bible. His destruction of the house of Ahab and the worshippers of Baal is a story of violence and blood. The work that Jehu did was ordained of God, but Jehu did it with a wrong spirit and was judged for this. "...him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay" (v.17). There is no way of escaping the deserved and just consequences of sin except that God provided way of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to point out to you the blessing of fellowship. Elijah had seemingly been a lonely man. You get the impression that Elijah was alone much of the time. He had spent some time with the widow and her son at Zarephath, but mostly it seems that he was alone with God. In the closing years of his earthly life God calls a young man to company with him in the work of the Lord. For something like the last ten years of Elijah's life, he had the joy and blessing of fellowship with one of like spirit and like precious faith. What a blessing this must have been! Oh, how I praise God for the

marvelous privilege of fellowship with other people in the things of the Lord. We should be willing to stand true to God even if we must stand alone. We should be willing to walk with God even if no one else walks with us. However, it is much easier and enjoyable to have brothers and sisters to talk with, pray with, and have sweet and precious fellowship with.

We come now to the call of Elisha. I believe that Shaphat, Elisha's father, was likely one of the seven thousand elect in Israel that God had told Elijah of; elected by grace and called by irresistible power. I am reading between the lines, but I think this is likely true of Shaphat, and I am sure it is true of Elisha. God never calls the unsaved to serve Him. Among the thousands of Israel, most of whom were worshipping idol gods, were some who were chosen and called; and Elisha was one of that blessed number.

Let us consider Elisha's condition when called to be a prophet. Shaphat likely had a large farm for he had many servants. There were twelve oxen plowing, and it is not likely that they were all hooked to one plow. Likely, there were six to twelve men plowing the land. Elisha was plowing with the servants of his father. Though he was likely well off he did not consider it beneath him to work. There is nothing wrong with work, but there is much wrong with one who will not work. Work is honorable in all, but idleness is a disgrace to anyone. Elisha was doing the work called for at that time in his life. He was a saved person. He was not out in full time work of preaching the Word of God. God had not yet called him to that. What is he doing? He is doing the thing God had for him to do at that time. What was that? To be a good farmer, to live a godly life before others, to bear a testimony for the God of Israel, and just to obey God in his daily life. We need to do faithfully what God has for us to do at the time, waiting on the Lord as to what we shall do in the future. God calls busy people into His business. He does not call lazy people to do His work. He who would not work hard at farming would not work hard at the ministry of the Word of God. He that is faithful in little will be faithful in much. Elisha did not seek the office of a prophet. He was faithful at the work God had given him to do when the Lord called him to a higher office and a more important work. We need to realize that the farmer, housewife, teacher, business man, or whatever your occupation may be - that this may be God's place for you, and you can be true and faithful there the same as one can be such in the ministry. God may not want you to be a preacher, (certainly not if you are a woman), He may not want you to be a full time worker for the Lord; but you can serve God faithfully behind a plow, behind a desk, over a stove, or wherever His providence might place you; and He will reward you for those works the same as He will reward the preacher and the full time worker for the Lord.

I believe that Elisha was as much in the will of God following the plow as he was performing miracles and preaching the Word. He was doing what God would have him do at that time. Beloved friends, the great need in the Lord's work today is not so

much that of more preachers, but it is for saved people who will just live for God and serve Him wherever they might be. We need people who will be a testimony for the Lord in the home, in the neighborhood, on the job, at school, or at play. The student, the housewife, and the working man or woman see people whom the preacher never sees or will see. They speak to people who will never hear the preacher's voice. Oh, what a great mission field is this, and how great the need is for men and women who will witness for Christ on this mission field that is rarely, if ever, touched by the preacher. You can be as much in the will of God in the home and school or on the job as I can in my study or behind the pulpit.

Next, let us notice the humility of Elisha. Oh, how we need humility, and how God delights to lift up the humble. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Pe.5:6). Elisha is out there with the servants. The owner's son is working just like the servants are. He does not feel that he is too good or too high and mighty to work like any of the servants on the farm. We see Elisha's humility as we see him following the plow.

God is in favor of work. God has always been against idleness and laziness. The old folks were right when they said, "An idle brain is the devil's work shop." If we would get more people off of welfare and get them out working, we would have less of the devil's doings in our land today. I have often thought that, if we are going to give a person a welfare check, we should give them some work to do - even if it meant moving rocks from one side of the road to the other, and then back again. It might not accomplish anything, but it would keep them out of meanness. I have stepped over many a drunk so I could put his welfare check in the mail box. Here is Elisha who is one day going to be a miracle working prophet of God. What is he doing? He is hard at work, sweating and laboring, following the plow. A man who will not work at one thing likely will not work at something else.

Notice that Elisha is a man who has proper affection for his family. I would not want to hear a preacher who did not have such affection. When Elijah calls him, Elisha says, "let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee" (v.20). We do not know anything about Elisha's family except his father's name, but we do know that he has family ties; and they are dear to him. There was nothing wrong with his desire to kiss his father and his mother and tell them good-by before he went off to become a preacher of God's Word. I do not link this with the New Testament Scripture which says, "...Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Lk.9:60). I believe that in that place; the father was not yet dead, and the man wanted to stay home until his father died and those earthly ties were severed before he would follow the Lord. Of course, this would be wrong. It would be loving his father more than he loved the Lord. I consider this a different matter from Elisha wanting to kiss his

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father and mother and tell them good-by. I consider this to be natural and right in Elisha. A man ought thus to honor his father and his mother. A man who will not obey the fifth commandment, and who does not have proper love for his family; how can he be qualified as a preacher of the Word of God? I admire and respect Elisha in this.

Elijah casting his mantle on Elisha (v.19) constituted and symbolized Elisha's being called to the prophetic office, and Elisha so understood it. So far as we know, Elijah did not say anything, but both men knew what this action meant.

Let us notice Elisha's tests as he faced this matter of being a preacher of God's Word. His spiritual discernment was tested.

Did he have the discernment to know what Elijah's action meant. Yes, he did, and we see this illustrated and confirmed when he took up Elijah's mantle (which had fallen from him as he was carried into heaven), and went forth and smote the Jordan river with it, saying, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" (II Ki.2:13-14). His affections for others were tested. He showed his love for his father and his mother, but he would not put them ahead of God. He would no longer stay at home with them now that God had called him to follow Elijah and be a prophet. His courage was also tested. Follow Elijah? Why, that might get you killed! Jezebel has sworn to kill Elijah. One who followed Elijah might well lose his life. Jezebel had already killed many of the Lord's prophets. She had determined to root the worship of the Lord out of Israel and replace

it with the worship of Baal and Ashteroth. Yes, it took God-given courage to obey this call.

Then Elisha is tested as to the matter of riches or possible poverty. Elijah was not a wealthy man. Elisha lived on a large farm with many servants. Likely, when Dad was gone, the farm would be his. Should Elisha give all this up for a life of great danger and near poverty. Will Elisha obey God in this? Well, Elisha had passed the other tests. He went and kissed father and mother and told them goodbye. He was determined to follow Elijah and obey God no matter what it cost. What does he now do? He burns his bridges behind him. It is sink or swim, live or die, but serve God no matter what. He forever separated himself from the old way of life. He slew the oxen. He boiled their flesh with the instrument used in plowing them. He made a feast for the people, likely the servants. He was making a total, complete, and lasting break with the old life that he might enter the new life to which God had called him.

The Bible says, "...Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him" (v.21). Compare this with II Kings 3:11, "...Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah." For a while, Elisha was a servant boy for Elijah. As John Mark ministered to Paul and Barnabas, doing the menial chores around the camp, so Elisha ministered to Elijah. He was a servant unto Elijah. He did not think it beneath him to minister to Elijah;

to build the camp fire, unroll the sleeping bags, fetch the water, and prepare the meals. For a while he was a servant, but later he became a mighty prophet of God and was ministered unto by others. What a blessed thing it was to company with the great prophet, Elijah, for about ten years! It was a marvellous thing for a young man to have the opportunity to walk with Elijah and to learn from Elijah more about the things of the Lord.

This man, Elisha, became a mighty prophet in his own right. He performed more miracles than did Elijah. He was greatly used in the service of the Lord. Elisha, did you make a wise choice when you left mother and dad, left the farm, left the wealth that might have been yours to follow Elijah? Yes, he would tell us, a thousand times, yes. Elisha was greatly blessed himself. He was a mighty blessing to others. He brought great glory to God, and he accrued great rewards for himself which will be his through eternity. Where is that farm now? I don't know. Who owns it now? I don't know. Had Elisha refused the call of God so he could stay on the farm, he would have long since lost the farm. He would have long since left any wealth he could have earned forever behind him. Elisha now has treasures laid up in heaven that will never decay and can never be lost. Elisha traded possible and temporary treasures of time for sure and lasting riches in heaven. Let us imitate this example. Let us serve God faithfully. We will be blessed, we will be a blessing, and we will have treasures in heaven.

sets and his weaknesses.

A. Assets: positive. 1. He certainly stressed the physical. Much like our modern day society. In today's world, if you are large and athletic, you can be guaranteed a great deal of success. Certainly the physical is important. But it must not be allowed to overshadow other things of even more importance. If anyone puts all his hope and faith in the physical, it will come back to haunt him.

2. Another positive asset, is one that is virtually overlooked because of his many negative qualities; and that is, he was willing to go it alone. So far as we can tell, we have no evidence of any one of his countrymen offering him any help at any time. The only possible exception is that of the lad who assisted him in the last moments of his life to grab hold of the pillars which he proceeded to pull down. This is less than the ideal situation for any Christian but if you or I were called to go it alone, would we have the courage to do it?

3. His most important positive asset was that of faith. Although it is not noticed very much during the telling of the story, it is mentioned in the book of Hebrews. "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson..." (Heb. 11:32). And I think we see it best illustrated in the last incident of his life. He was a man completely decimated by captivity, the loss of his eye sight, and doing a woman's work by grinding at the mill. Yet, he called on God one last time and did his greatest work on this occasion. He is said to have killed more Philistines in his death than in his life. So it is clearly stated, his most abiding legacy is that of being mentioned as one of many heroes of faith. But even in this incident, he is again reacting to the situation. He was motivated by the desire for revenge for the loss of his eyes.

B. Assets: negative. The negative things about this man are phenomenal. In fact, this is about all we are prone to remember. Let's look at them and see if we can identify with some of them.

1. One of the first that seems to jump out at us is that he neither took nor sought advice. Do you have this tendency? One of the most disastrous attitudes we can acquire is that of never seeking advice from those who might be able and qualified to help us. Before we borrow money, we need to seek advice; before we get married, we may need to hear good advice. Before we have children, we may need to seek advice. Before we choose a career, we need to seek advice. Before we go to college, we need to seek advice. In fact, there is hardly anything we do that we couldn't use advice about.

2. Hard on the heels of not seeking or wanting advice, is that of poor judgment. This is another bad trait for anyone. We see Samson's poor judgment cropping up in many different ways. For example, in his choice of female companions. (Girls and boys, what about your choice of a future companion?) It seems he actually was darning the devil

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hear, or what was he sowing? It was words of truth relative to the fact that Jesus was truly the Son of God. God, in fact, had approved Him and shown His approval by the various miracles and wonders which Jesus had performed -- miracles and wonders which He had performed before their very eyes, or in the midst of them. The work of the Lord Jesus, after all, had not been done in a corner or in secret. We find from John 5:36 that Jesus himself had made a similar appeal to Israel when He said, "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me"

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

The word "delivered" is the same word for surrendered. It relates to one being surrendered into the hands of the enemy or the adversary. Those who should be the protector become the very ones who perform the act of surrendering the one they should have protected.

We are to learn from the Scripture before us that there was a far greater power than man involved in the surrendering of Jesus. We, in fact, due to numerous incidents in our own lives, should not fail to recognize that God is doing a work. It was true of Job, Daniel, the three Hebrew children, Lazarus, etc. So was it in the surrendering of Jesus Christ. God's determinate counsel, or counsel which could not be altered, was being executed. There, in fact, was no other way to save us poor lost souls. It was absolutely necessary that the perfect one be surrendered to the angry mob and death by their hands. God the Father had determined that such must be done, and God the Son had consented to be obedient to God's will even unto death itself. The Spirit has consented to communicate all the benefits of His death to the elect.

All the above being true, yet the Jews were held accountable for their dastardly deed. They, after all, did not mean it for good as God did. They took Him with

wicked hands -- wicked hands which performed that which their evil minds willed to be done. That is, kill the Prince of life.

The Roman soldiers performed the acts relative to crucifixion and death, but it was Israel which motivated and delegated the ugly deed. It is the court which kills a man in the electric chair rather than the man who pulls the switch. So was it with Israel at the death of our Lord. We, however, must include ourselves as the one who nailed Him there, since He died for us, or all of those that God had given or assigned to Him to die for.

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). It had appeared to every unbeliever that that which Jesus had taught and done had come to a violent end. It appeared that the horse which had pulled the wagon in which the apostles were riding was dead and that they were whipping a dead horse. Peter, however, in the passage before us, refutes this idea. He agreed that Jesus truly had died, but he boldly asserts that the "pains of death", or the extreme sufferings related to death, did not conquer Him. The "pains of death" to the rest of us are like steel bands that bind us, but not to our Lord. God, in fact, loosed Him from the pains of death. "It was not possible that he should be holden of it."

The Lord Jesus, after dying on the tree, went into the paradise section of Sheol for a period of seventy-two hours. The thief who died beside Him also went with Him. He, however, could not be detained in Sheol. It is as stated in the following Scripture: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalms 16:10).

There are two words in the Scriptures which describe the unseen state. These words are "Sheol" and "Hades." Sheol, the Hebrew word, is found sixty-five times in the Old Testament. It is translated "hell" on thirty-one occasions, "grave" on thirty-one occasions, and "pit" on three occasions. The corresponding word in the Greek New Testament is translated "Hades." This word is found eleven times in the New Testament. It is translated "Hell"

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SAMSON

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from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not" (Judges 2:21-22). The Lord decided to leave them there as a kind of thorn in the flesh to Israel to test them. The period of time covered by the book of Judges was from the death of Joshua to about the time Saul came to the throne, or about 300 plus years. Samson was the 13th or the last one of the judges. Do you suppose God saved the best until the last? or is that the worst? Take your choice.

3. I said that to say this: Samson was a very unusual person who was raised up by God to give Israel a little relief from the heathen oppression. I use that word advisedly as the Israelites did not appear to be more than heathen themselves at times.

4. Are you and I unusual persons? Physically, I am not a Samson. But are we unusual? Yes, we are unique. There is no other person in the entire world exactly like you or me. Others are similar but not exactly like any one of us. There will never be another Samson. Yet, you and I enjoy characteristics that Samson did not have! Of course, the question is: what will I do with them in regards to serving the Lord and my fellow-man?

Do you have some worthy mission in life? I mean something of a spiritual nature. If not, then you need to decide on what you think it should be and get

started in that direction. Perhaps many of you remember the hijacking of TWA's flight 847 on June 14, 1985. Aboard that flight was a young man named Robert Stethem. It is stated by those who knew the facts that his bravery probably saved many lives. He resolutely decided to ask for and take all the skyjacker's could offer to divert attention away from innocent passengers. Though abused and mistreated, he was never heard to cry out or ask for mercy. This seemed to only infuriate the terrorists even more. Eventually, they shot him and dumped his body out of the plane onto the ground. Though it seems incredible, his was the only life lost in that terrorists' attack. It seems evident his plan worked. As I read that story in Readers Digest, I thought, what bravery! what resolution! what a sacrificial spirit! what love for country! Let's apply some of these thoughts to ourselves. Do we believe we have an even more important mission in life than this man did? are we willing to give our lives for the Lord in carrying out this mission? will we be as resolute, brave, and sacrificial as this mere mortal was?

5. Did Samson accomplish his mission? To some degree, yes. However, he did not leave any abiding work behind. One of his biggest problems was that he used the "knee jerk strategy." He acted after the fact or reacted to whatever the situation was at the time. We have to make our choice: do we want to be a "Steady Eddie" or a "Sensational Sampson"?

III. His Character. For a few moments, let's think about Samson's character. I have divided them into two sections: his as-

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when he toyed with the women of ill repute. In his constantly breaking all the rules of his Nazarite vow, just how long do you suppose he thought he could continue this line of conduct and not reap what he was sowing? Did he do it thoughtlessly or daringly? Poor judgment might be seen in the way we use our money, the way we choose our companion, or the way we use our time.

3. In my opinion, he was a very egotistical person. Now ego is something we all have and don't need. Well, perhaps that is a little far out. What we don't need is to let it rule our lives and make us obnoxious to others. It played a large part in his downfall. He was so egotistical he thought that somehow God would always be there to extricate him from all adverse and impossible situations. Self confidence is a good thing but it can be over done and become our worst enemy. Egotism needs to be tempered with the Scriptural statement: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

4. The last thing we have time for is that of anger. Now anger may not always be a bad thing. There is such a thing as a righteous anger. However, generally speaking it is thought of as being a negative factor in our lives. The vast majority of the murders committed today are based on anger. In Shreveport this week, there were several cases of attempted or successful murders. One boy attempted to kill another boy because he splashed water on him. Another boy shot his companion because he got angry. One woman killed another because of an argument over a pack of cigarettes. Anger was the determining factor. Samson was an angry man. He did most of his damage because of his anger. To continuously make decisions based on our emotions does not seem to be too wise.

Conclusion: Samson's life is comparable to an old car that has three bent fenders with the other one missing, all the glasses are out or broken, the doors won't work, but it still runs. You will get there but not with any style. The saddest words about Samson are not the ones describing his death, but rather the ones recorded after his last rendezvous with Delilah: "...And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (Judges 16:20). Does this describe our lives now? or will it be the words that describe our lives a few years from now? It does not have to be.

WHAT'S WRONG

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conditions don't get better."

Still another would suggest that we fail to get together on the Bible. Therefore, let's get together around Christ.

All three of these are wrong. To the first, I would say that we don't need a union of denominations, rather, we need a unity of spiritual truth. We can only have this by everyone accepting the statements

of the Scriptures.

To the second, I would declare that we have not had enough preaching of scriptural variety, although I am perfectly ready to agree that we have had entirely too much of certain kinds of preaching. When any one preaches Arminianism, modernism, feminism, unionism, or any heresy even in the least amount, then this is entirely too much preaching. Yet, as to biblical preaching, we will never have enough of that.

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21).

To the third I would ask, "Which Christ is it that we are to get together around?" If it is the Christ of modernism, please excuse me. If it is the Christ who is preached by those who believe in falling from grace, then excuse me again. In fact, if it be any other than the Christ of the Bible, please leave me out.

I say then, beloved, that human judgment would give various answers to the questions as to what's wrong with the church, but human judgment is not to be accepted. Heaven's judgment alone is to be trusted and accepted.

It is because of this, that we turn to this book of Revelation and study these seven churches of Revelation to get God's answer as to what's wrong with the church.

In the first of these churches of Revelation, that of Ephesus, Jesus revealed Himself in a startling manner. "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Revelation 2:1).

You will notice that He revealed Himself to this church as holding the seven stars in His right hand, and walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. The stars represent the pastors of the churches, and the candlesticks represent the churches. Therefore, Jesus reveals Himself as walking in the midst of His churches and holding His preachers in His hand.

I rejoice that the Lord Jesus still does this today. I am happy to know that He still walks in the midst of His churches, and that He still holds His preachers in His hand.

So far as the Lord Jesus was concerned relative to the city of Ephesus, it was a concern for His preachers and His churches. I think, in the main today, the concern of Jesus Christ for this town and any town, is the concern that He has for His churches and His preachers. He is not interested in the world's financial centers, such as New York or London. He is not interested in the fashions of this world, nor is He interested in the civic organizations. Many seem to think that the Rotary, the Kiwanis, and the Lions Club are great civic organizations. Perhaps they may do some good. Personally, I'm not a member of any of them - the only thing I'm a member of is a Baptist Church. Yet, regardless of how much or how little good may be accomplished by these civic organizations, the Lord Jesus is not interested in them. Then we have great educational centers such as Harvard, Yale, and Columbia, but the Lord Jesus is not interested in these. In the last book of the Bible, He reveals Himself as being interested primarily in His

churches and His preachers.

In the light of this truth, then a preacher and a church should be mighty careful concerning what they do, and their attitude toward one another. Sometimes a little group gets together and attempts to fire the preacher. That group should remember that that preacher as God's true servant, is being upheld in the very hand of God. Sometimes a preacher candidates for a job. That is, he attempts by some hook or crook or some underhanded manner, to get before some pastorless church that he might be considered for the pastorate. Many times he will write letters himself, and oft times have his friends write letters for him, and will work like a politician who is seeking some office, to become pastor of such a pastorless church. Even churches candidate too, in securing a pastor. As the poet has said:

"A Church there was, and it needed a Preacher;

So here's what it did - a ridiculous feature;

Each Sunday it "tried out" a different man;

Brought in from Beersheba or maybe from Dan.

And we who observe this affair from afar,

Would think they are buying a second-hand car.

Much depends on the age and the freedom from Knocks:

Yes, we pick out our Pastors as we shop for 'Used Crocks.'

To us has been given the Spirit to guide;

Then why run the chance that the church may divide

Over John or Apollos or Cephas or Paul:

The Spirit is willing: why cheapen the call?"

Such a preacher of a church needs to realize that Jesus is walking in the midst of His churches, and that He is holding preachers in His hand, and therefore, He is able to lead the church and preacher and will bring both together in His appointed time.

I rejoice in this revelation of Jesus at Ephesus, in that He revealed Himself as walking in the midst of the churches and holding the preachers in His hand. I rejoice to know that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all of Jesus' churches, and all of Jesus' preachers still occupy this relationship to Jesus Christ today.

II
Our Scripture further shows that there were several things for which Jesus commended this church at Ephesus. We read, "...I know thy works..." (vs. 2). This verse would indicate that this was not an idle church, but it was one of persevering service. Every church ought to be of this type. Every Christian ought to be a working Christian. Jesus could not commend lots of churches and lots of Christians today like He did this church at Ephesus, for there are a lot of churches and a lot of Christians who have no works worthy of commendation.

Furthermore, a lot of them that are doing works, are not doing works that are pleasing whereby that they might be commended. The Apostle James says, "...be ye doers of the word..." (James 1:22). In the original language, this is an interesting Greek word, for James literally said, "Be ye doers." It isn't just enough to be a doer, but you are to be a word-doer - a doer according to the Word of God. This church at Ephesus was of this type, and therefore Jesus commended it because

of its works.

The second thing for which Jesus commended this church was its patience. We read: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

The Apostle Peter would also exhort us to be patient: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness" (2 Peter 1:5, 6).

It is so easy for us to say things we ought not to, and to be impatient with other fellow-Christians. It is so easy for us to wound the feelings of others because of our impatience. Yet, here was a church at Ephesus which had learned this wonderful truth, and therefore Jesus Himself commended them because of their patience.

In the third place, He commended them because they had been practicing church discipline. We read: "...Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:..."

Every church ought to practice discipline today. Listen: "Beloved believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

All the heretics and those who hold false doctrines should be excluded. "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3:10).

All those who refuse to walk in the light of God's Word, should be excluded from the fellowship of our churches today. "Now we command you, brethren, in

the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us...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" (2 Thess. 3:6, 14).

All those who live lives of immorality should likewise be disciplined. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such as one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Cor. 5:11-13).

This church at Ephesus was just that kind of a church - it believed in discipline, and it practiced discipline. They would not allow evil characters to remain in their fellowship. Even those who seemed to be apostles, and who were prominent in the church, were tried and were discovered to be deceivers. Is it any wonder, then, since church discipline is taught through the Word of God, that Jesus commended this church at Ephesus because they practiced discipline.

There are mighty few churches today who would receive Jesus' commendation on this ground, for our churches are filled up with heretics, and those who live immorally, and contrary to God's Word. Exceedingly few churches even try to practice old-fashioned church discipline. It isn't any wonder then that the average church does not have Jesus' com-

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on ten occasions and "grave" on one occasion. We have, then, the unseen world being called "Sheol" by the Hebrew-speaking Jews and "Hades" by the Greek-speaking Jews.

Sheol or Hades was the abode of both the righteous and the wicked. One compartment was for the righteous and the other for the wicked. The spirits of the righteous went to the paradise section, or Abraham's Bosom, while the wicked went to the section of torment and fire (see Luke 16:18-31). These two sections or compartments were separated by a great gulf. "And beside all of this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke 16:26).

Sheol or Hades, according to Matthew 12:40, was in the heart of the earth when our Lord went there. "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" There are many Scriptures which show that the Jews believed Sheol to be under the earth. See,

for example, Proverbs 9:18, 15:24; Isaiah 14:15; Ezekiel 31:16, 17; and I Samuel 28:15. Note also from the following Scriptures that Paul believed that his Lord went into the lower parts of the earth. "(Now that he ascended, what is it that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" Ephesians 4:9, 10.

The Lord, when He left the paradise section of Sheol, took all of its inhabitants with Him, including the thief who had just arrived there with Him. Paradise now, in fact, is up rather than down. Paul, in II Corinthians 12:4 speaks of being "caught up into paradise." All the Old Testament saints, then, ascended from Sheol up to paradise in heaven with Jesus (read I Peter 3:18-20).

Paradise, at this moment, is the home of God, the glorified Christ, countless angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect (Hebrews 12:22-24). We know from Philippians 1:21-23 that the paradise state is far better than anything we have here on earth.

"For as David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw

(Continued on Page 12, Col. 4)

THE POWER OF GOD

By the Late C. D. Cole
"Lo! these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand" (Job 26:14).

Job gives a few illustrations of the power of God, and then says that these are only parts of His ways; and notwithstanding His manifest greatness there is but little heard of Him. In Job's day men gave little attention to God; He was not in their thoughts and speech. And it is much the same today, for human nature never changes of itself. Man is ever the same proud, hateful, rebellious creature, apart from the inwrought grace of God. There is not much heard about God today, even in the average pulpit. And in most social gatherings the very name of God is taboo. Man is the theme of the popular discourses of the day; it is human virtues that are praised and human achievements that are celebrated. God is in His world providentially, but the world knows Him not.

God's power takes two directions and has two objectives: salvation and judgment. God's power in salvation is gracious; His power in judgment is righteous. God's power in salvation is the expression of His love; His power in judgment is the expression of His holy wrath. And God's power in grace is equal to His power in wrath, for "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12). If God is unable to save (convert) "the vessels of mercy," He might also be unable to judge (punish) the "vessels of wrath." Those who deny irresistible grace cannot logically or consistently ask God to save (convert) sinners; they can only ask Him to try to convert them, or to spare sinners who convert to the Saviour; they can only ask Him to try to draw them, or deliver from punishment those who, of themselves, come to the Saviour.

The popular view of God's power in grace is given by one writer after this fashion: "The banners of God's army halt outside the little fortress of our hearts inviting us to surrender; His mighty love and grace and power wait for our decision." This statement ignores the truth of the depravity of human nature, denies the need of any inward work of grace, and overlooks the truth of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is inconsistent in talking about the "little fortress of our hearts: and at the same time talking about "His mighty love and grace and power." To the same effect are the words of another popular preacher: "We are bidden to make a choice. No man can choose for us. God Almighty cannot choose for you and me. I can put God who made me, and who gives me the breath I breathe, at arm's length and say, 'I will not'; or I can turn to Him, through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, and receive the gift of His salvation." What a strange medley of truth and error! We are bidden to choose and we ought to choose Christ as our Lord and Saviour, but because of inherent depravity nobody makes such a choice apart from the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in conviction and conversion. It is true that the sinner resists God until his resistance is overcome by the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit--an operation that makes the sinner willing to take Christ as Saviour

and Lord--an operation that imparts to the sinner a new mind and a new heart. As another has said: "It is simply preposterous to speak of God Almighty, and with the same breath to say, 'I can put God at arm's length.' But still another writer takes the prize for his description of a helpless God: "Omnipotence itself is powerless in the presence of rebellion. Even a child can raise its hand and shake its tiny fist in the face of God Almighty, and God Almighty can do nothing." In Prov. 21:1, we are told that "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will," but the foregoing statement makes Him helpless in the face of a child.

The power of God is a truth that ought to give peace and joy to the heart of the believer, and strike terror to the heart of the unbeliever. Whether Saviour or Judge, He is the Almighty. Both salvation and judgment call for a mighty God.

THE NATURE OF GOD'S POWER

1. God's power is absolute. There is nothing impossible with Him that is an object of power. He is able to do more than He does do. The exercise of His power is limited only by His desire, for in Job He says, "What His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (Job 23:13). John the Baptist tells us that He is able to raise up children unto Abraham of stones. He could have kept Satan out of the garden and thereby spared our parents the temptation which resulted in the terrible ruin of the race--but He did not so desire it. Paul says that He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). And Christ assures us that "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).

2. God's power is original and essential. The power of man is a derived power, but power belongs inherently to God. The power of human government lies in their armies and natural resources of the country. It is God's nature to be Almighty. His power is not derivative, but creative and original. He gives power to His creatures, and derives none from them.

3. God's power is the life and activity of all His other attributes. All other attributes would be worthless without His power. Without power His mercy would be feeble pity; His justice would be a slighted scarecrow; His promises would be but empty sound; and His love would be as helpless as was the love of Darius for Daniel. And vain would be all His eternal counsels if power did not step in to execute them.

THE MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD'S POWER

Whatever qualities or characteristics inhere in the Divine nature will sooner or later be manifested or exercised, for there are no idle dispositions in God. His power has been marvelously exemplified in the past as it will be in the future.

1. Divine power appears in creation, "Ah Lord God! behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there nothing too hard for thee" (Jer. 32:17). At God's word nothing began to be something. He spake and it was done. He willed and it came to pass. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou

hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). The word for create means to make out of nothing. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. 11:3). "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him" (Col. 1:16). And yet all this work of creation did not make Him tired, for He is the Almighty. (Isa. 40:28).

2. God's power is seen in the sustentation of all creation. He upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). By Him all things consist (are held together) (Col. 1:17). In Him we love and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). He gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons (Acts 14:17). We are to look to Him for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11). But somebody says that all things happen according to natural laws. But God created the law of nature and can use it or work beyond it, and without it. His hands are not tied with any rope of nature.

3. The power of God may be seen in human redemption.

(1) In the birth of the Redeemer (Luke 1:35). What mighty power it took to bring a clean thing out of an unclean! But the Holy Spirit was equal to the task of the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity, who became God with us; yea, God manifest in the flesh.

(2) In the miracles of Christ. They were all manifestations of Divine power. The blind saw, the lame leaped, the dead lived, because He willed it so.

(3) In the death of Christ. Here is the greatest of all miracles; the most stupendous and amazing act of power ever exercised; the power to die. Our minds are staggered at this thought: the power to die! Death among men is the very emblem of helplessness. The lives of men are taken from them in the ordeal of death, but Christ had power to lay down His life. He said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18). The Lord Jesus Christ was the Actor in the drama of the ages, when He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). Let nobody think of Him as the helpless victim of human hate. In His death He was performing the task assigned Him by the Father, as He said, "This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18).

(4) In the resurrection of Christ. He who had power to lay down His life had power to take it again. He triumphed over death, men, and demons. He who is life could not be holden of death. His soul was not left in hades; neither did His body see corruption (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27).

(5) In His ascension. Our Saviour had the power to overcome the law of gravitation and ascend bodily to the Father. Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

4. Almighty power is manifested in the regeneration of sinners. In regeneration men have new hearts and new desires created in them; new principles imparted to them; they are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, being made willing in the day of God's power. When we consider the nat-

ural blindness and opposition of the sinner, and the weakness of the human agent (the preacher), and the means used (the foolishness of preaching), the work of conversion appears to be the effect of the power of God. See II Cor. 4:7; Eph. 1:19.

5. The final perseverance of every believer is proof of the power of God. He is able to save unto the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). We are kept by the power of God (I Peter 1:5). No one is able to pluck us out of His hand (John 10:28). "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4).

6. Divine power will be displayed in the resurrection. What but the voice of the Almighty will be able to awake the dead? What but Almighty power can change this ugly, vile, humiliated, diseased body into a glorious, beautiful, and deathless body? What is it that can give us hope as we stand by the side of the open grave and see it swallow up the one so dear to our heart, but the thought of an Almighty God who can and will raise the dead by the word of His power?

7. The power of God will be manifested in the day of judgment. In that day it will appear how pitifully weak man is, and how great is the power of God's anger. Think of the power necessary to put down the rebellion of innumerable men and demons! But God will be equal to the task, "when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:21).

"Great God, what do I see and hear?

The end of things created!

The judge of all men doth appear,

On clouds of glory seated:

The trumpet sounds; the graves restore

The dead which they contained before;

Prepare my soul to meet Him.

"The dead in Christ shall first arise

At the last trumpet's sounding-- Caught up to meet Him in the skies,

With joy their Lord surrounding:

No gloomy fears their souls dismay,

His presence sheds eternal day

On those prepared to meet Him.

"But sinners filled with guilty fears,

Behold His wrath prevailing,

For they shall rise, and find their tears

And sighs are unavailing;

The day of grace is past and gone;

Trembling, they stand before the throne,

All unprepared to meet Him."

WHAT'S WRONG

(Continued from Page 10)

mentation. Yet this church at Ephesus was commended because of its discipline.

Again, Jesus commended this church because it did everything from the right motive - that is, they did everything for Christ's sake. We read, "...and for my name's sake hast labored..." Everything this church has done, they did it in the name of, and for the sake of Christ.

Lots of churches could not get this commendation today, for many of them do things without any thought of Christ or Christ's glory. Churches will hold so-called revival meetings, and be using unscriptural methods, will

drag great numbers of folk up to the front of the church and have them make a profession just in order to have a big report to present to the Association. Churches build buildings just in order to keep up with some other church that has built one recently. Preachers often preach for the praise of men, and choirs and choir singers entirely too often sing for the praise of men rather than for the glory of God. If you want Jesus to commend you, you want to do like the church at Ephesus - you want to do everything from the right motive - namely, for the sake of Christ.

This is what Paul taught the church at Corinth. "For the love of Christ constraineth us..." (2 Corinthians 5:14).

I can imagine three young men courting a young woman. The first declares openly that he is courting her because her father has a big pocketbook, and since she is the only child, she will get all money. The second declares that he is courting her because the doctors told him that he has tuberculosis, and since the father has lots of money, he knows he will take care of her, and won't allow him to suffer. The third is courting her because he loves her, and if the father were to lose every penny he has, he would still want to marry her. He is truly in love with the lassie. These three represent three professing Christians. The first is serving God because he wants to go to heaven when he dies. The second is serving God because he does not want to go to hell. The third is serving Him because He loves Him. Every Christian ought to serve God in the light of this last named motive. You have no business to give God your hell-scared service, nor have you any business to serve Him from a selfish hope of heaven. You ought to do everything for Him because you love Him.

Jesus commended this church at Ephesus just because they served Him out of love.

A fifth thing for which Jesus commended this church was the fact that they were not quitters. The third verse finished by saying, thou "...hast not fainted." Personally, I hate to see anybody start anything and then quit. I particularly hate to see a Christian that is a quitter, and especially to find a church that is of that class. As Christians and churches, we are in the army of the Lord Jesus Christ, with Him as our captain. We are not to be in service for a few weeks nor a few months, but for life. Lots of days are dark, and much of the time we have to walk by faith. The road gets rough, and the load is tough oftentimes. The devil and all his adversaries are against us, but we are not to quit.

Listen to these Scriptures: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to" (Continued on Page 12, Col. 1)

WHAT'S WRONG

(Continued from Page 11)

withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:10-18).

Sometimes the devil tempts me just the same as he does you. He tells me that there is no need standing for things of the Bible. He tells me that I might as well give up and just let the world believe as it wishes; but beloved, I cannot quit, I must not quit - I must stand for the things of the Bible though all the world may turn against me - I must not quit. I pray God in your behalf that you will not be a quitter, but having put your hand to the plow, may you press on. May you ever continue to serve the Lord, and thus earn the commendation which Jesus gave to this church at Ephesus.

There was still another thing for which Jesus commended them, namely, they hated false doctrine. In verse six, we read, "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." This church at Ephesus had always hated false doctrine. Paul visited this church, and found some folk there that were not saved, and had been improperly baptized. He led these to Christ, and then baptized them. We read this in Act 19:1-7. So far we see that on the question of false doctrine, concerning salvation, baptism, and even concerning the Nicolaitanes, that this church at Ephesus actually hated false doctrine.

Well, I hate it too, beloved. I hate to hear any man preach or testify anything which I know is contrary to the Word of God. I hate to hear a preacher say that you've got to join the church to be saved, for this is a false doctrine. I hate to hear anybody say there is something man can do in the realm of salvation, since this is a false doctrine, for the Word of God declares: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

I hate to hear preachers talk about sinners praying through, for the Word of God says: "...We know that God heareth not sinners..." (Jn. 9:31).

I hate to hear women testifying, praying, and preaching, for they are out of their God-given sphere. God said that their place was one of silence. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the

man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:11, 12). "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (I Cor. 14:34).

I hate to hear men talking about unionism, and urging everybody to unite; for though I love unity, I despise a false union which is based on fraternalism rather than upon Scripture. In fact, beloved, I am just like the folk at Ephesus - I hate false doctrine. How I would to God that every one who listens to these broadcasts might also come to the place where he literally hates false doctrine. To do so, means that you have the same commendation which Jesus gave the church at Ephesus.

II. While Jesus commended this church at Ephesus, He also condemned it. Though there was much about this church which was worthwhile and which deserved commendation, there were also some things which Jesus condemned. The general theme of this series of messages is "What's Wrong With The Church?" Now when we come to the particular church at Ephesus, we ask, "What's wrong with this church?" We haven't far to search, for the Word of God directly reveals that which is wrong. In verse four and five we read: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."

Here, then, was that which was wrong with this church - it had left its first love. Though this church was busy for Christ, it had left its first love. Though it was zealous in its discipline, it had left its first love. Though in patience this church had served God, it had left its first love. Though it was doing things from the right motive, and though they were not quitters, and though they were strong for the doctrines; they had left their first love. I can imagine a woman with gnarled hands showing evidences of hard work in days gone by. There she stands with gray hair and pale face, with her eyes having lost their lustre through scalding tears. Actually today she was everything she might hope for, humbly speaking. She has everything that a husband can give but love. That is gone, and her home is but a hell. Her eyes literally blaze when she would say, "What do I care about silks, your diamonds, your silver, or your china, your automobiles, and your mansions? I would go back to the cottage where you found me, and would put on the calico I used to wear, and I would walk the bare floors like a queen if I could only have again the love you gave me, which made earth a heaven to my soul."

That which is true of many a home, is true of many a church. Though churches still practice discipline, and still stand for the doctrines, and though they work zealously and patiently, and are not quitters, if that church leaves off its first love for Christ, and the love cools and wanes, all else becomes but hollow mockery.

This is a serious condition for any church to drift into. So serious was it here at Ephesus that it even threatened the very existence of the church.

Jesus said, "Repent or else". If this church did not correct this trouble, the Lord Jesus actually declared that He would remove the churches' candlestick, for He said, "I will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."

I would to God that you might pause and take inventory and see where you stand before God this day. Regardless of how much you have for which the Lord Jesus might commend you - are you positive - are you certain that He would not condemn you just like He did this church at Ephesus, because you have left your first love?

This then is that which was wrong with the church at Ephesus - it had left its first love. It is that which is wrong with many churches today. It may be wrong with you, and with your church. I ask you to be certain and be sure you have not left your first love. If you have, Jesus says, "Repent, or else."

IV. Even though Jesus found in this church at Ephesus that which He could commend as well as that which He could condemn, He also gave a promise to those who might be overcomers. In verse seven we read: "...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." This is a marvelous promise. Even though the church might not repent, if there were even a few in it who continued in their first love, this then should be their reward, and a marvelous reward it is. It is His promise to the overcomers today. I ask you, therefore in closing, a simple but pointed question: "Have you lost your first love?" I know churches by the dozens, and so-called Christians by the hundreds who have lost their first love. Lots of churches don't even have Sunday night services. Lots of them compromise His Word. Lots of so-called Christians desecrate the Lord's Day, and are more at home in a place of worldly amusement than in the house of God. Oh, if you individually, or if the church of which you may be a member, has lost its first love, then in the name of God may I plead with you to "repent, or else."

It may be thought that there are those who have never been saved. You have never yet professed a love for Him. It may be that you actually know nothing about Him, and care nothing about loving and serving Him. Oh, that you might see the beauty of Jesus today, and receive Him as your Saviour and come to love Him as every child of God should. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Faith Baptist Church of Lawtey, Florida will hold special services September 21-24 with Elder Ron Crisp of Independence, Kentucky preaching. The church will host an area wide Fellowship with several speakers, beginning

at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 23rd. Lunch will be provided by the church for all who attend. For more information call the pastor, Elder Marty Hoffman, at 904-964-2339.

CAN YOU IMAGINE THIS?

Hannah having an abortion? "And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life..." (I Sam. 1:11).

STUDIES

(Continued from Page 10)

the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." (Acts 2:25-28).

Peter, then, in this quotation, appeals to David's prediction or prophecy for proof that Jesus was alive from the dead. This fact, after all, is what David had prophesied. The words of David, of course, were what all Jews claimed to hear and accept. Note from Psalms 16:8-11 that the words spoken by Peter are the very words spoken by David hundreds of years earlier. The Lord's death and resurrection, then, should have been that which all Jews should have accepted. It, after all, was what David had taught them. David's prophecy related directly to His Saviour and Lord and the victory He would have over death. David's prophecy relates indirectly to all believers, since we were there. He, in fact, became us. That which He did, we did. We, in fact, in the act of baptism, declare that we died and rose with Christ our Lord.

David's prophecy was, "I foresaw the Lord always

LOVINGKINDNESS

"I will mention the lovingkindness of the Lord."

Awake, my soul, in joyful lays,
And sing thy great Redeemer's praise;
He justly claims a song from me,
His lovingkindness is so free.

He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all,
And saved me from my lost estate,
His lovingkindness is so great.

When I was Satan's easy prey,
And deep in debt in bondage lay,
He paid His life for my discharge,
His lovingkindness is so large.

Through mighty hosts of cruel foes,
Where earth and hell my way oppose,
He safely leads my soul along,
His lovingkindness is so strong.

When earthly friends forsake me quite,
And I have neither skill nor might,
He's sure my helper to appear,
His lovingkindness is so near.

So, when I pass death's gloomy vale,
And life, and mortal powers shall fail,
O may my last expiring breath
His lovingkindness sing in death.

--Samuel Medley (1738-1799)

before my face." He, in other words, is ever present with us. He will never leave nor forsake us. We can have the utmost confidence in Him. The Lord, in fact, "is on my right hand," or as near as that which my right hand can reach. A cowboy's gun, for example, is on or at his right hand. The right hand is also the place of honor. It is on our right hand that our Lord is honored. He, in other words, is at the highest place of our affections. The result of all this is "that I should not be moved." There can be nothing happen to me that is outside His control.

The words in Acts 2:26, 27 provide an open window whereby we are able to look into the very heart and mind of our Savior. We are able to know His thoughts as they related to His death. His precious heart rejoiced, His tongue was glad, or it probably expressed His inner gladness by praising the Father. His flesh would rest in hope -- a sure hope that the enemy of death would not defeat Him. He was confident that His soul would not be left in hell (Sheol or Hades) and that His flesh would not see corruption.

These truths about our Saviour should be a great source of joy, courage, hope, and strength to us in that He was acting in our behalf. We, in fact, can also state, "therefore does my heart rejoice, therefore is my tongue glad, therefore shall my flesh rest in hope," because the soul of our Saviour was not left in hell and His sinless body did not see corruption. His grave, in fact, is empty because He arose from the dead. Truly, our tongue is glad, and its gladness is expressed by Paul's words in I Corinthians 15:54-57: "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance" (Acts 2:28). The way of life, as it related to our Saviour -- the Holy One of God -- was by resurrection from the dead. This would be the way of life to Him. His life, in fact, would be restored to Him, and so will it be for all for whom He died. "The ways of life" relate to the ways of a full and abundant life in contrast to a highway to ruin. Death was before the Saviour, but He looked beyond it and said, "thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." He, in other words, could see Himself seated at the Father's right hand. The word "countenance" meaning "with thy face." He would behold the Father's face and be full of joy because His face signified that He would be in His presence. To be in God's presence is to be in a fully controlled environment. May we keep in heart and mind that we have great reason to rejoice in that which is before us, since we too, because of Him, will be full of joy when we see His face. It is as stated in John 17:22, 24.