

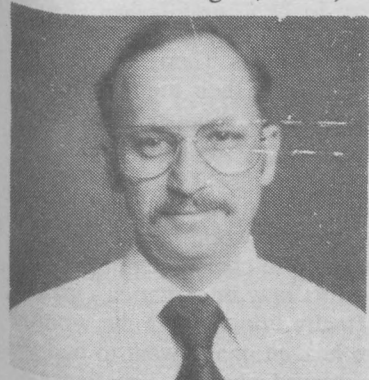
CHRIST IN YOU

Colossians 1:18-29

by John Pruitt

The book of Colossians, though containing a great deal of doctrine, is not so much a doctrinal thesis as it is a guide to progressive sanctification; or to put it in simple terms, learning day by day to live and walk closer to God and to live a life of victory in Christ. Spiritual growth (progressive sanctification) must be based on sound Biblical truth, but at the same time Christ must be revealed in us in a practical way. Theology only reveals what should be. Our goal must be to make sound theology a reality by expressing Christ in and through our daily lives. To get a better understanding of the text and what the Holy Spirit wants us to learn from it, let's do a word

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JOHN PRUITT

THE HAIRS OF YOUR HEAD NUMBERED

by C.H. Spurgeon

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." -- Matthew x. 30.

It is most delightful to see how familiarly our Lord Jesus talked with his disciples. He was very great, and yet he was among them as one that serveth; he was very wise, but he was gentle as a nurse with her children; he was very holy, and far above their sinful infirmities, but he condescended to men of low estate; he was their Master and Lord, and yet their friend and servant. He talked with them, not as a superior who domineers, but as a



CHARLES SPURGEON

brother full of tenderness and sympathy. You know how sweetly he once said to them, "If it were not so, I would have told you"; and thus he proved that he had hidden nothing from them that was profitable to them. He laid bare his very heart to them: his secret was with them. He loved them to the uttermost, and caused the full river of his life to flow for their behoof.

Now, in this chapter, if you

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Every dollar in our keeping belongs to God.

GOD'S PREDESTINATION

Messages 4 through 6

by Charles Halfp
Message IV

Do you know, beloved, that not a single one of us would be saved today if God had not elected us to salvation? If God had let us alone, every one of us would go to the pits of hell, because no one wants to know God. No one wants to have anything to do with God. The Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jere. 17:9). And in Romans 3:11 it says, "There is none that seeketh after God, no not one." You know, I am not saved today because I sought the Lord. I am saved because the Lord sought me and gave me a thirst for something

that I didn't have. And I accepted what God had to offer. That is the only reason I am saved today--because God put a thirst in my heart. Because God chose me out of Adam's fallen race and made me His child.

God's Predestination

The second link in God's plan of redemption is predestination. I want you to notice what the Scripture says here: "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." Now the word predestinate means to determine beforehand. What God predestinated, He decreed or determined should be done or brought to pass. Now the word predestinate is used four times in the Bible, and in every instance it refers to people. It

never refers to things--it always refers to human beings.

Predestination simply means that God predetermined our salvation and our service ahead of time. And His ultimate purpose is to make us like His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what the Scripture says here, "whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son..." That is why we have to go through all of these trials and testings and heartaches and disappointments. That is why God leaves us here in this world to suffer. Because through all these testings and trials, He is making

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WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

By Medford Caudill,
Goshen, Indiana

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David." (Matthew 22:41, 42). The scribes and Pharisees had been questioning Jesus. He had answered all their questions immediately and completely. Now He turns the table and puts a question to them, actually two questions.

"What think ye of Christ?" Upon this question hinges your eternal destiny. Jesus was speak-

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MEDFORD CAUDILL

HE'S COMING AGAIN

by Fred Beard

"this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

I wish to speak to you of the soon and imminent return of our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus; our Lord of Lords, our King of Kings. But before I do, before we can tell of His second coming, we must tell of His first coming. After all, without the first, there would be no second.

Now as we turn our thoughts to the first advent of our Lord, we must realize that Christ coming to this earth was not an after thought with God. Much of man's teaching today would lead one to think that God provided a saviour only after man had fallen,



FRED BEARD

but not so. For, you see, God has never started anything that the end was not already laid out in the mind of Almighty God.

Genesis 1:1 says "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Verse 3 says, "God said, Let there be light." Verse 6 says, "God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters." Verse 9, "God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered

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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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HEALING ON DEMAND?

by Leslie K. Tarr

"You realize, of course, that God is not honoured by the condition of those of us in this dining room." A young man, who, like me, was a wheelchair-bound quadraplegic, made the comment as we sat eating lunch in the Mayo-operated Saint Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota.

He explained that each of us who have handicaps to varying degrees should expect and seek full physical restoration. In his own case, he told me he had received a "word of knowledge", assuring him that he would be healed and could discard the wheelchair.

In the weeks that followed that conversation, he repeatedly came back to the subject, citing new indications and assurances from faith healers, television evange-

lists and other Christians. The issue was consuming him.

That fine, sensitive and caring Christian, who has been paralyzed for 11 years, had, I believe, accepted a popular, inadequate view of healing which trivializes the gospel and is robbing many suffering Christians of the present enjoyment of the grace of God.

In the 25 years since I became ill with the disease which confined me to a wheelchair, I have given some thought to the subject of healing and have tried to grasp a Scriptural perspective. I could only wish that the answers were as clear and pat as the advocates and protagonists of divine healing pontificate them to be! I find myself, however, uneasy and dissatisfied with the two contending extremes.

In an understandable desire to

refute the excessive deacons and wild claims of the highly visible "faith healers", we Baptists sometimes maintain or intimate that healing miracles ended in the first century. To me, that is the fruit of fundamentalism gone to seed. Can it be true that we relegate God to being the absentee landlord in His universe or the important, uncaring spectator of the human drama?

If it is indeed true that it is neither Scriptural or feasible to desire or expect God's healing touch, then one can only wonder if the mention in prayer of the congregation's sick folks and the requests for their healing are simply religious exercises or vain repetitions.

The Lord does indeed heal apart from human means and in ways

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The Baptist Examiner Pulpit

A Sermon by Pastor Joseph M. Wilson

EXAMINE YOURSELF

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (II Cor. 13:5).

Though I am writing this in the latter part of October, it is designed for the last issue of The Baptist Examiner this year. Surely, my text and subject is an appropriate one for the closing of another year. This is a good time to obey this text. There is much examination that goes on at the end of a year. Much of it does not

accomplish anything, but again, there is no harm done thereby. I hope that we will obey this text, and that this will lead to great spiritual good in the coming year.

I will be writing about examining yourself as to whether or not you are truly saved. Nothing is as important as salvation. It is more important than all other things combined. There will come a time when the only thing that will matter is whether or not one is saved. During this past year, multitudes have gone out into eternity.

Where have they gone? There is a heaven that is wonderful beyond the power of human language to describe or human mind to comprehend. There is a hell that is as bad as heaven is good. That is all there is. Purgatory is a lie. Annihilation is a lie. The "grave is hell" is a lie. Many have died this year. They are now, each and every one of them; suffering unutterable agony in eternal hell fire, or unspeakable bliss in eternal heaven. Where they are now, they will be forever. Many things meant much to them when this

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EXAMINE

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year began, and as it progressed; but now all that matters to them is heaven or hell. Being saved or not being saved when they died is all that matters now. As important as salvation is, surely it is important that you examine yourself as to whether or not you are saved.

I will also be writing about the Christian examining himself as to his spiritual condition, as to what he or she has done for the Lord during the past year. This is also very important. After salvation, the most important thing in the world is "What kind of Christian are you?" Now, examination never hurts anything; it may be very helpful. Examination precedes correction. I examine gas level, oil level, and water level in my car. It does not hurt. I learn the conditions. If low on any of these, I correct that situation. If I never examined these, I could have serious problems. We must learn by examination what the true condition is before we will take steps to correct it.

The doctor may examine for cancer. This won't hurt anything. Examination does not put cancer in the body. Often examination discovers a situation in time to do something about it; and even if nothing can be done, the examination has not hurt anything. So, as we come to the end of the year, let us examine ourselves. From what we learn by this examination, let us correct wrong situations, and may our

examination lead to a much better year ahead.

Are you saved? Am I saved? If I profess to be saved, but am not; the greatest kindness that can be done is for that to be made known to me. I gain nothing by professing to be saved if I am not truly saved. But by refusing to examine myself and being sure about my salvation, I may lose my eternal soul. There is not one of us, this editor certainly included, who does not need to obey this injunction of God's Word. There are multitudes now in hell who, while living on this earth, were satisfied that they were saved; some of them more sure of salvation in their own minds than many now on earth.



Joe Wilson

What a rude awakening, what a shocking event, what a terrible thing; to go through life, thinking one is saved, and then wind up in hell immediately after death!

The devil is a great deceiver. "The heart is deceitful above all things...." (Jer.17:9) Sin is exceedingly deceitful. The world deceives one. Many have been deceived. Many are now deceived. You might be deceived. Oh, my friend, examine yourself as to whether or not you are truly saved. If you are going to hell, go with your eyes open, know what you are doing. Don't be deceived about the most important matter of time and eternity.

I verily believe that if one sincerely wants to know about this matter, he can know. I believe God will make it known to him. I do not believe that a man can be sincere and earnest, desiring to know for sure if he is saved, seeking to know for sure; and that God will let a man go to hell with that attitude. But, on the other hand, I believe that multitudes have gone to hell, thinking they were saved; because of indifference and unconcern about the matter. They took it for granted that they were saved and never bothered to examine themselves as to this matter. They made a profession, and someone told them they were saved and should never doubt it. My friend, don't let another man tell you that you are saved. Learn the truth about this matter from the Lord. I never tell a man that he is saved. If he doesn't know, I sure don't know. I leave assurance between a man and his God. I will tell a man how to be saved, I will tell him how to have assurance, but I leave the effectiveness thereof with the Lord.

Let me urge you to go to the Lord in earnest prayer and ask Him to make it plain to you whether or not you are saved. Ask Him to search your heart and your ways and make the truth of your spiritual condition known to you. He is the Saviour. He desires His people to have sweet and blessed assurance. I believe that if you will make this a matter of earnest prayer, you will

soon know for sure about salvation. You might say that you have been saved a long time. It will not hurt to examine yourself one more time. The genuine article will stand up under every test. It is only the counterfeit that needs fear the test. I sometimes wonder about people who never examine themselves - what are they afraid of? Oh, if I am not saved, dear Lord, please let me find it out now, and not in the flames of hell, beyond the realm of hope.

Are you fully trusting the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone, for salvation? Are you trusting to any extent or in any degree upon your good works, your moral way of life, your religious activities, your church membership, your baptism, or anything else? Do you say that Jesus Christ is your only hope of eternal salvation? With you, is it Christ or damnation? Examine your faith in Christ. I do not say so much that you examine your faith, but examine if it is truly and only in Christ. You should be able to know this. You should know what, or better Whom, you trust in. As I study the examples in the Bible of those who thought they were saved and were not; I find that it is not those who thought they were trusting in Christ but were not, it was those who were trusting in something else - search and see. I ask you, where is your faith? Is it in self, others, works, or religion? You are lost. Is it fully and only in Christ? you are saved.

Have you had a salvation experience that is real to you? I know there are many who say that they are saved, but do not know when they were saved. They have not had a salvation experience that stands out in their mind. I will not judge them. I will not, no, I will not say that none such are saved. I would urge all such to examine themselves carefully and be absolutely sure that they are now totally and only trusting in Christ. I leave this with them and the Lord. Frankly, I am glad it was not thus with me. I am glad that I had a most clear and definite salvation experience. I can tell you the time and I can take you to the place. I praise God that it was this way with me. I have a little trouble reconciling the Bible descriptions of salvation, examples of salvation, the way of salvation, with one not knowing when it happened. But again, I would not judge. I have known many who talk like this, and give evidence of knowing the Lord. Still, I am glad that this was not so with me. I had a salvation experience. I walked into a building lost and undone without God or His Son. I walked out of that building a saved young man. Oh, what an experience that was! Oh, what a blessed joy came into my soul that night! I tell you before God that the memory of that glad hour has remained with me to this very hour. I have failed the Lord many, many times. I have not always lived for Him as I should have. But, I tell you the truth, things with me have never been the same since that glad hour. It's different now, praise God, it's different now! Have you had a salvation experience that is still as real and sweet to you as it was then? Examine yourself as to this.

How do you feel about the Bible? Do you believe for sure that it is the inspired Word of God? Do you love it? Do you

read and study it? Is it precious to your soul? Do you try to obey it? Examine your hope of salvation by your attitude towards the Bible. I wonder, oh, I wonder about that multitude who profess salvation, yet who treat the Bible as a strange thing. They care not for it. My professing friend, what would it mean to you to be without your Bible? If a thief broke into your home and stole only your Bible, how long before you would miss it?

How do you feel about prayer? What do you do about prayer? Do you pray? Do you enjoy prayer? Would you be willing to die before you would give up the privilege of prayer? Do you say, "I cannot live without prayer?" How much do you pray? Are you sincere and earnest in your prayers? How many prayers have you had answered lately? Is prayer a dreaded chore, or a wonderful privilege? Examine your hope of

salvation by your prayer life. It's a good test.

How do you feel about the Lord's people, your brothers and sisters in Christ if you are saved? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...." (1 Jn.3:14). I have been asked the question, "What should a Christian do if he hates another Christian?" My answer is, "he should get saved." Do you love God's people? Do you enjoy being with them? Would you rather be with God's people than with anyone else? Examine your hope of salvation by your attitude towards your brothers and sisters in Christ.

How do you feel about the Lord's work? Do you sincerely desire to serve the Lord? Do you do it? The first question of Paul, following salvation, was, "Lord, what wilt thou have

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FROM THE EDITOR

WHERE HAS THIS YEAR GONE? It hardly seems possible that another year has come and almost gone, but it has. There were times of heartache and sadness. They are gone, though their memory lingers. There were times of joy and gladness, and their memory lingers on as well. God was with us all the year long; we knew He would be. He blessed us in many ways and with many blessings; not all that we desired, but more than we deserved. Many left this world and went into eternity during the year. Many came into this world during this year. What a shame that the Pro-Murderers (not Pro-choice) kept multitudes from coming into this life this year - this may be America's greatest crime, and it may be the thing that finally brings down the wrath of God upon our country. Many went to heaven, many went to hell this year. Thank God that some who were unsaved when this year began are now saved.

The opportunities of this year have gone from us forever. The things we could have done this year can now never be done. Opportunity, once passed is gone forever. God may give us new opportunities, He may give us similar opportunities, but the opportunities of this year passed are gone forever. The prayers we could have prayed, the good we could have done, the good to and for others we could have done, the witnesses we could have given, the things we could have learned about the Bible - all these things we could have done last year will now never be done. Wasted years are just that - wasted years.

WHAT ABOUT THE RESOLUTIONS I MADE, THE THINGS I MEANT TO DO THIS YEAR? Well, they are done, or not done; but they cannot now be done. Maybe I will do them next year, but this year is gone so far as doing them is concerned. I am still fat; I did mean to lose that this year. I have not done the study and praying I meant to do. My spiritual life has suffered because of this. I am not now the Christian I meant to be by the end of this year. I have not improved my preaching as I intended to. Oh, I meant to study more about my preaching, and pray more about it and seek to improve it. Frankly, I do not see that it has improved at all this year. Oh, I hope it has at least stayed the same, but I am not at all sure about that.

My prayer life is still about what it was last year. I really have not seen much, if any, improvement in it this year. I meant to really improve on this, this year. I will say that my Bible reading and study is about as it has been for some years now. I am fairly faithful in regular reading and studying of the Bible. I know that I could greatly improve this, but I do not feel that I have failed here as much as I have in some areas. Still, I consider my knowledge of the Bible to be very, very small compared to what it could and should have been by now.

Another year of great failure in witnessing to the unsaved has gone into oblivion. It can never be recalled. It has passed forever from me. Oh, I must hurry past this point, for it is most grievous to think on the things I meant to do, but have not done this year.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THIS? Nothing. We cannot do anything about this year that has passed. It is gone forever. It cannot be changed. The record it gives stands forever. We will never have opportunity to do anything different as to this year that is gone.

But, wait a minute; maybe there are some things we can do. We can confess our sins and failures of the past year. God will forgive us and blot them out forever. We better do this if we don't want to face them at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Oh, He is merciful and forgiving. We can't change the past, but we can have its sins and failures forgiven.

We can learn from the past; we may not, but we can. We can't change the past, but we can consider the changes that we would make if we could, and we can make those things different in the future. Let me suggest that you and I consider all the things about our lives in the past year, our sins and failures, that we wish were different; and let us see to it that they are different next year. God is merciful and gracious to forgive the past. God is able to strengthen and enable us that these things will not be true of the coming year. Oh, there is hope. We do not have to have another year of failure and defeat. Next year can be different. We can pray more. We can read and study the Bible more. We can witness more. God is able.

Let us look at last year (the one almost over now). Let us examine it as to what we did and did not accomplish therein. Let us confess our sins and failures. Let us determine that, in these matters, next year will be different. Let us sincerely, humbly, believingly, and persistently seek God's help in the coming year. May God bless you all.

EXAMINE

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me to do?" (Ac.9:6). I wonder about these people who got saved several years ago; since then they have not, for many years, gone to church, prayed, witnessed, read the Bible, or anything - I wonder about them - and then, again, maybe I don't wonder all that much. Examine your hope of salvation by your desire and effort in the work of the Lord.

Did your salvation experience change your life, and is it still changed? Wow! that's a tough one, isn't it? Well, it should not be. You should immediately say, yes, praise God, my salvation experience changed my life, it has been changed ever since, and I don't want to ever go back to how it was before salvation. A profession of faith that does not change one's life is not the Bible experience of salvation. Now, I know there is sin and failure in all of God's children. I know there is backsliding in all of us. But I know also that the Bible teaches the perseverance of the saints. A truly saved person will persevere in repentance, faith,

good works, and holiness. He will follow after holiness. He will hold on his way. Frankly, I wish that sovereign gracers would return to the original language, of the fifth point. We are not saved by the way we live, but the way we live says a whole lot about whether or not we are saved. Examine yourself.

How do you feel about Jesus Christ? Here is a major matter. Do you, in your heart of hearts, love the Lord Jesus Christ? If you do not, you are not saved (I Cor.16:22). "Unto those who believe, He is precious" (I Pet.2:7). Is He precious to you? If not, you are not saved. Do you love to talk to Him? Do you love to please Him? Is He real, truly real to you? Do you actually know Him, know Him as truly as you know anyone else? Examine your hope of salvation by your attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

I could go on and on, but these are enough. If you can pass these tests, you are truly and eternally saved. Examine yourself by these things. Be sure you are saved.

Now let us move on to examining ourselves as to what kind

of Christians we have been in the past year. The most important thing is to truly be a Christian. The next most important is to be the Christian you should be. We need to examine ourselves as to this. In this way, we will learn of our failures and of our needs. We will then be in a position to seek for improvement in the coming year.

As you examine yourself in this matter, pray to the Lord to help you in this. God is pleased when His children become serious about their spiritual condition, and will help them in this matter. Ask the Lord to impress on your heart your failures, sins, and needs as a Christian. Of course, we know much of this by our own personal examination; but we do not see as clearly as the Lord does. We may be guilty of failures and sins of which we are not aware, or we may see them, but not see them as being as bad as they really are. Let us face our lives on our knees while the Lord turns the searchlight on us. The Psalmist said, "Search me, O God." Let us pray this same prayer. The Lord is pleased when His children sincerely desire to improve their spiritual lives, and will help them to do so.

Examine yourself as to the reality, sincerity, and earnestness of your Christian life. Have you put the Lord first in your life this year? Have you sincerely desired to know and do His will? Have you been truly serious about this? Can you say truly that serving and pleasing the Lord has been the most important matter in your life this year?

What have you done with your Bible this year? Have you read it through this year? Why not? How much of it have you read this year? Why so little? Have you learned more about the Bible this year? Do you know the Bible better now? Have you grown in your love for and obedience to the Bible this year?

What about your prayer life this year? Have you prayed more than ever this year? Have you grown in appreciation of the privilege of prayer? Has prayer become more real and more precious to you this year? Have you had many answers to prayer this year? Do you get more out of prayer than you used to? Have you grown in the blessing of communing with the Lord in prayer? Have you cultivated more praying with others? Do you try to have times of prayer with others? What has been true of you as to prayer in church this year? Have you met with others in church for prayer? Would you want to do this? What about your praying during the service for the preacher and for the work of the Spirit? Have you done much praying about and for your church; the pastor, the officers, the members, the services, and other works of your church? How many people have you prayed for this year: for the sick, for the needy, for the unsaved?

What about your witnessing to the unsaved this year? How many do you think you have really given a gospel witness to? How often do you witness to the unsaved? Do you visit for your church, inviting people and witnessing to them? Do you witness to those with whom you come in contact? How many have been saved through your witnessing this year; or your witnessing had some part in their salvation? How many opportunities have you had to witness and you did not do it? Have there been times

when you definitely felt that you should witness to someone, and you just did not do it? How many have you witnessed to who have joined your church this year? My reading friend, I am preaching all this to myself even as I write it down. I am hoping that every member of my church will read this carefully. I am hoping that I will pay heed to this message, and that my church will also. I assure you that this message is hitting me even as I write it down. Oh, that the Lord would use this message to speak to my heart effectively, and to many others. I do confess that this matter of witnessing has long been a major failure in my life - probably my biggest failure - but, at least, near the top of the list. I believe this is a major fault with our kind of churches. My phone just rang. A preacher friend called me. We talked some about this very thing. Sovereign grace people: hold onto the doctrines of grace, stand strongly for them - at the same time, let us become an evangelistic people, seeking to win the lost to Christ. There is no disharmony between the doctrines of grace and the doctrine of evangelism, but I fear that some of us have acted as if there were. It is not sovereign grace that keeps us from being evangelistic; it is our sin, our backsliding, our coldness of heart, and our disobedience that does this. Let us examine ourselves as to our witnessing for Christ.

What kind of church member have you been this year? Have you been faithful in attendance? Have you tried to get others to come to your church services? Have you been willing to take any job and to do anything you could do to help your church? How much do you love your church? Have you tried to be the best church member God would enable you to be?

How has your life been this year? Have you gotten victory over any sin? Have you gotten closer to the Lord? Have you lived better, cleaner, purer, holier this year than any previous year? Well, maybe we should leave that with the Lord. Still, our lives should improve as we move along in time. Did sin have more or less control over your life this year?

What has your relationship and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ been this year? Do you feel that you know Him better now? Has He been close, real, and precious to you this year? What has He meant to you this year? We should get to know Him better day by day. Every day with Jesus should be sweeter than the day before; has it been that way with you this year?

Well, I could go on and on; but this is enough to constitute a rather searching and revealing examination. I hope you will take this test. It will not hurt to examine yourself. Examination does not produce wrongs in your life, but it may reveal them; and knowing those things may well be the first step on the road to getting them straightened out. Examination may be the first step on the road to recovery, and that is the real purpose thereof. If correction does not follow examination, what good has the examination done? Let us examine ourselves and let us seek, by God's grace and power, that the coming year will be a better one spiritually. God is merciful and forgiving. God is able. Yours for a sincere self examination that

will lead to a much better life and service for the Lord. God bless you all.

HAIRS

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read it at home, you will see how wisely the Lord Jesus deals with their fears. He is afraid lest they should be afraid; anxious that they should not be anxious; so he talks to them as a very tender friend would talk to some very nervous person -- some weak-minded brother or sister -- and he speaks in such a way that if they were not comforted, surely they must have wilfully resolved to put comfort from them. He says to them, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Brethren, admire the tenderness of our Lord Jesus, and imitate it. Let us try to be equally kind to our fellow-Christians: let us never attempt to show off, or to make ourselves somebody, or to exhibit our strength of faith, for that will grieve the tender little ones, and make them shrink into self-upbraidings. Let us consider their weakness, and the help that we can render them; their sorrow, and the comfort that we can afford them. Jesus was himself a Comforter, or he could not have spoken of "another Comforter"; and so let us be comforters in our measure, treading in his steps.

This reminds me, also, to say how very homely the Saviour's talk became with his disciples in consequence of this desire to cheer their hearts. Why, he talks, I have often thought, just in the way in which any one of us would have talked to our children when desirous to encourage them! There is nothing about the Saviour's language which makes you say to yourself, "What a grand speech! What a rhetorician! What an orator he is!" If any man makes you say that of him, suspect that he is off the lines a little. He is forgetting the true object of a loving mind, and is seeking to be a fine speaker, and to impress people with the idea that he is saying something very wonderful, and saying it very grandly. The Saviour quite ignores all ideas of beautiful expression in just trying to bring forth his meaning in the plainest possible manner. He sought the shortest way to the hearts of those whom he addressed, and he cared nothing whether flowers grew or did not grow by the roadside. Hence there is no eloquence like the eloquence of Jesus: there is a style of majestic simplicity about him that is altogether his own, and in this lies unsurpassed sublimity. I now and then see in books, quotations, and the names of the authors are put at the foot of the extracts. But whenever I observe that the name of Christ is put below a quotation I regard it as a superfluity which ought to be struck out; for there is never any

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THE END OF THE YEAR

Silently but surely we are being carried forward on our journey from time to eternity and at the close of another year we approach another milestone on the way. Reflecting on the past, most of us will readily agree that the days and weeks and months have very rapidly passed by. "The spending of our years," says Matthew Henry, "is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is past is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixed, but all short and transient." Whether, in general, our recollection of 1989, if we are to see its end, be predominantly sorrowful or joyful, when the last day of the month ends it will have gone, with its account, before us. The mystery of Divine providence is such that we, in our personal circumstances cannot always trace the hand of Him who is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," but His hand is in it nevertheless. Here, our view of events and our knowledge of relationship between them, can at best be only partial and imperfect so that it is little wonder if we are often perplexed, especially when in adversity. But we shall know hereafter. "When the records of eternity shall be exposed to view, all the counsels and results of that profound wisdom looked into; how will it transport when it shall be discerned; Lo, thus were the designs laid; here were the apt junctures and admirable dependencies of things, which, when acted upon the stage of time, seemed so perplexed and intricate." (Howe) Even death, that unwearied visitant, enters our homes only according to His appointment.

At such a time we believe those who have a concern for the cause of Christ and who seek its good will be taking stock. "Who hath believed our report?" was the mournful complaint of the prophet Isaiah, himself pre-eminently one who was commissioned to speak for God, and did so with no ordinary measure of eloquence and fervor. It is clear that he was not speaking on behalf of himself alone

but for a particular class--"them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Other reports receive credence without much difficulty but experience teaches us that this report, the most momentous of all--"A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" is carelessly disregarded by most hearers. Over another year the gospel has been preached from our pulpits, often in weakness, often with a feeling of discouragement, we believe, yet at the same time with the sincere desire that sinners be saved; but how many have believed the report? The gospel reveals Christ as being so worthy of our love and devotion that He ought to be received without hesitation or delay on the part of sinners. After all that the Holy Spirit has testified of Him in Isaiah, and in all the Scriptures so wonderfully placed in our hands, and after so long a period of the Spirit's striving with us, the solemnity and significance of Paul's declaration ought to be apparent, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."

At the end of the year it is proper and comely that we should acknowledge the Lord's kindness and sparing mercy. In this connection we have, among others, the God-honouring example of David, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" and of Jeremiah, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed; because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." The "mercies" we receive so freely, so abundantly and so constantly, were dearly bought by the blood of the Son of God in our nature and the bearing of that in mind will surely have a humbling effect upon us. How precious is Christ Himself and how desirable that we should be found with a humble and contrite spirit exclaiming, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

The Baptist Examiner Forum I

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

What did Paul mean when he said he was "chief of sinners"?

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I Timothy 1:15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

I continue to learn how little I know about God's Word and the beliefs that others have concerning it. I did not realize that there were some people who interpret this as if Paul is saying that the soul of Adam passed from one body to another until it got to Paul and for this reason Paul refers to himself as the "chief of sinners." I will only quote John Gill on this belief; He said; "it is a most stupid notion." To that I say, amen. It is amazing to think of the lengths that people will go to in trying to explain the Bible. It is astounding to think of some of the different beliefs that people come up with. Let me assure you that the above was not what Paul meant when he referred to himself as the chief of sinners.

The word "chief" here should probably be rendered "first". Paul does not mean first as in number, but in degree. The question I think the querist is after is; was Paul really the chief of sinners? Was he really the most wicked person to be saved? That I cannot judge, for that is God's business. I think that in Paul's mind he was the chief of sinners. I think in the mind of most saved people there is a time when they think they are the chief of sinners. There is at least a time when they see the great extent of their sin and depravity against God. They are not concerned about other people and their sins, they just know that they have greatly sinned against God. I think that Paul actually felt like he was the worst of all sinners. I think that he felt this way because he had so actively persecuted the church of God. Read verses 13 and 14. We know that Paul often mentions his former life of persecution against the church, and this made him feel as if he were the chief of sinners. I think there is a lesson to be learned here about the awfulness of the sin of persecuting God's people. I think Paul meant what he said, that he was the chief of sinners. I think that Paul was convinced in his mind that he was.

Notice that Paul does not say he was the chief, but that he is the chief. Paul never forgot the awful life of persecution that he

lived. Morally, Paul was probably a very good person even before he was saved; but that did not lessen his terrible sins of persecuting God's people. The past life of Paul was used by him to exhort himself to service to God. Paul figured he owed God much for saving him, and he spent his life trying to repay God. When he was tired and perhaps ready to quit, it was that past that spurred him on. May we also realize that we owe God much. May God bless you all.

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Please read I Timothy 1:12-15. Note at the end of verse 15 Paul refers to himself as being the chief of sinners. Paul is no doubt thinking back as he writes verses 12-15, to his own wickedness before the Lord Jesus saved him. He says in verse 13 that he was indeed a blasphemer, a persecutor, and was injurious, or "insolent" as the Greek says. Because he was a persecutor of the early church, Paul surely feels that he was in degree, or rank, the foremost, or worst of sinners. Thus are we all who know God's grace. We are simply sinners; saved by God's marvelous grace, but still sinners. The flesh is not reformed, or changed. Hence, I Corinthians 10:12 says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall".

I am sure Paul is thinking back and has in mind his former life and conduct before that day on the road to Damascus, but I believe that Paul is expressing what all who know God's grace feel; the fact that we are all undeserving of God's grace and its aspects given to us. As we who are God's children grow in grace and knowledge of God and His ways, His holiness, the more our sense of self-imperfection, both past and present, seems to grow. We realize that we have nothing to boast of, for we find as we become more like Christ, just how much we are unlike Him. When we realize, as we all do, that there is nothing between us and destruction and failure but the Lord Jesus, we come to know that there is nothing in us to help, or recommend us to God. I believe Paul is expressing this when he says that he is chief of sinners. That self-estimate and realization must be there. It draws us, drives us to cling to Him Who is the Rock and Refuge of our souls. Some would say, "you cannot dwell on your imperfections, or you will never advance, accomplish, or achieve anything". Not so. This

self-estimate must be there, or something is wrong. We need to remember that this same Paul also said in II Timothy 4:7,8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." The Holy Spirit also reminds us through Paul, who was chief of sinners, that, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20) In Him we have salvation. In Him we have the forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from sin. In Him we are the righteousness of God, but it is all of Him for we are weak and imperfect sinners.

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The Scripture referred to is found in I Timothy 1:15 where the great apostle declared ultimate saving power of the Lord Jesus. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

An examination of the whole text will be much help in answering this question. Verses 9-11 tell us some wonderful things about the glorious gospel: first, that the law is according to the gospel. The law has no saving power, but it does have saving value. The saving value is that it reveals sin to the sinner and contrasts man's sinful nature and condition with God's holiness. Romans 7:13,14 says, "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." Secondly, the Law was not given or made for the righteous. Had it been made just for the righteous, then God could have kept it in heaven. There would have been no need for it here on earth, for there are no righteous here. No, it was for the lawless.

In verses 12-16 Paul makes a

very personal application to himself concerning the saving value of the Law, and the saving power of the gospel. The answer to your question is found in verse 16. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Paul is saying that though he had made havoc of the church, persecuted many saints, testified against many before the Sanhedrin court, and been either directly or indirectly responsible for the death of possibly scores of believer-disciples of Jesus, the redemptive work of Christ was able even to save him. He would be an encouraging example to all those in the future who labouring under the fetters of sin, and heavy laden under the guilt of sin would come to Christ for salvation. Notice the words, "for this cause", "that in me", and "for a pattern" as you read I Timothy 1:16. Thank you for your question.

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"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15).

To understand what Paul meant when he said of sinners he was chief, we need to see what was said of him as to what he was and what he did before he saw the Lord on the Damascus road. The first we read of Paul (Saul as he was then called) was at the stoning of Stephen. It seems that while he may not have thrown any stones, it is said that he consented unto his death (Acts 8:1). In Acts 8:3 we find it said of him, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church entering into every house, and hailing men and women committed them to prison." In Acts 9:1, 2, it is said, "AND Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." Paul said that, "beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it." (Gal. 1:13). He also said, "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I Cor. 15:9).

Paul, in chapter 1 of I Timothy, is telling of the "glorious gospel" which he was commissioned to preach, even though he had been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." In considering what he had been and what he had done to destroy the Lord's churches and His cause, he considered himself in the front row when it came to ranking sinners. What he is saying is that Christ Jesus came into

the world to save sinners and gives himself as an example, "of which I am chief," or "of all the sinners which Christ Jesus came to save there is none greater than I." He did not say that he was the chief of all sinners, but chief of those whom Christ came to save.

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fear of mistaking the language of the Son of God for that of any of the sons of men. He has a style all his own. This, however, is incidental to the design aimed at; for he does not study style of rhetoric in any degree, but simply aims at conveying his thought. Hence he speaks in homely words, such as those of our text - "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Your great and learned men will not talk about the hairs of your head; all their discourse is upon the nebulae and the stars, geological periods and the solidarity of the race, and I know not what besides. They will not stoop to common-place things; they must say something great, sublime, dazzling, brilliant, full of fireworks. The Master is as far removed from all this as the heavens are from the gaudiest canopy that ever bedecked a mortal's throne. He talks in homely language because he is at home; he speaks the language of the heart because he is all heart, and wants to reach the hearts of those to whom he speaks. I commend the text to you for that reason, though for many other besides. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Thinking over these words, they seem to have in them four things at least, and we may take four views of their meaning: and the first is, fore-ordination-- "The very hairs of your head have been all numbered." You will find that to be a more accurate version of the text than that which is before us. The verb is not in the present, but in the pluperfect tense. The very hairs of your head have been all numbered before worlds were made. Secondly, I see in the text knowledge. This is very clear: God so knows his people that the very hairs of their head are all numbered by him. Thirdly, there is here valuation: he sets such a high estimate upon his own servants, that of them it is said, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." You are so precious that the least portion of you is precious; the King keeps a register of every part of you. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." And, lastly, here is most evidently preservation. The Saviour has been telling them not to fear those that can kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul. He speaks of God's preserving them. In another place he told his disciples, "There shall not a hair of your head perish," and he intends the same sense in this case; there shall be a perfect preservation of his people. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

I. Come, then, to the first thought. Here is FORE-ORDINATION. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Most Christian people believe in the providence of God, but all Christian people are not prepared to follow out the truth which that involves. They appear to believe that there is a providence

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The Baptist Examiner Forum II

SUBMIT QUESTIONS ON ANY BIBLE SUBJECT

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Should a person who says he does not believe in Christmas give Christmas presents to others?

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There are at least three reasons that people observe the holiday known as Christmas. They believe that it is really the birthday of Christ. They believe that it is not the actual birthday of Christ, but since He was born it is acceptable to observe this day as His birthday. Then, there are those who believe that the holiday is not the birthday of Christ, but have over the years, out of tradition, observed the day as a family holiday. Overriding all of these reasons is the fact that there are those who do not observe the day in any way. This is the stand established by the Scriptures.

Should a person who does not believe in Christmas give presents to others? In the most strict sense, the answer is no. However, this question does not deal with exact, clear cut answers. There should be another part to this question. That is, will this person accept presents from others? What constitutes a present? Remember that a present does not have to be wrapped in paper, it can be money, time off the job, etc. Although the answer appears to be simple, it is also so complex that it only raises more questions. People will observe, or not observe, based on, not what they are told, but what they personally decide.

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"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The above quoted Scripture proves to us that it is the duty of every member of the Lord's church to attend services, but people use all kinds of excuses to stay away from God's house. The pleasures of this world are some of the things that keep people from attending the services.

The woman of Revelation 17:1-2, is spoken of as a great whore, and this great whore caused the kings of the earth to commit fornication with her and the inhabitants of the earth to be

made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

It is very plain in the Scriptures that physical adultery is a sin. The Scripture referred to above in Revelation seventeen speaks of spiritual adultery. As bad as physical adultery is it is not as bad as spiritual adultery. God's people are told not to do either. Many of God's people are committing spiritual adultery. There are many ways in which they commit spiritual adultery. God's people commit spiritual adultery today by joining in with those who teach false doctrines. This ought not to be so. God's true preachers preach against God's people taking part in false doctrines and idolatrous worship and idolatrous activities. There are some of God's people in modern churches and they give ear, eyes and heart, and their tithes to these false churches. These false churches teach and practice infant baptism, teach that there is a purgatory after death, teach and practice Christmas, Easter, and other such things. These are acts of spiritual fornication and God's people ought not to take part in any of these things.

God's people take God's money and buy presents with it, when it ought to be put in God's house. These people think that it is all right to do this, however it is not right. If it is wrong for those who do not understand the error of their way, then it is a greater sin for those who do not believe in Christmas to give presents to others.

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Christmas is a time for businesses to make money. Since the first of October the stores have begun putting out toys and merchandise that people will buy during the Christmas season; surely it is a money making thing. Christmas is a time of partying, already those who love the devil's brew are stocking up to have a merry time. Christmas is a time of all sorts of sin such as lying to little children as to Santa Claus. A time of deception as to the man in a red suit bringing presents that dad and mom worked hard to pay for and giving the credit to someone else, one who does not exist. Beloved, Christmas is a heathen day rather than a Christian day. The Bible has nothing to say about Christmas or as to celebrating Christ's birthday. There is no proof that Christ was born on December the twenty-fifth, therefore, we as Christians should not believe in Christmas or even celebrate the day in any way.

Should Christians give pre-

sents to one other on Christmas? No! However, if Christians want to get together before or after this ungodly day and have a meal, especially families and exchange gifts leaving Christmas or Christ's birthday out of it I see nothing wrong with it, but leave Santa the tree and anything else heathenistic out of it and make it a day of fellowship like Thanksgiving. Keep the drinking, partying, and the lies out of it. Teach your children the truth about this heathen holiday.

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"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). "...but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12b).

When you take a stand for the truth, there will always be those who oppose you. You need not oppose yourself by being hypocritical. To say you believe something and then act otherwise costs you dearly. You lose credibility. Your word must be backed by your action. Christ likened a wise man to one that not only heard His sayings but practiced them in his life. John said... "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 Jn. 2:6). Christ always practiced what He preached.

There is nothing wrong with the practice of giving gifts, but to give Christmas gifts is participating in the celebration of Christmas which is not Biblical. Give your gifts at a different time than Christmas, and make sure those who receive your gifts understand why.

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overruling, but they seem to have forgotten that there always was such a providence, and that providence must be, after all, a matter of divine foresight. God must have foreseen, or He could not have provided, for "providence" is, after all, but the Latin for foresight; and the provision which God makes is but the result of his vision beforehand of such and such a thing as needful to us. Foresight must essentially belong to any true and real providence.

How far does God's foresight extend? It extends, we believe, to the entire man and all about him. God ordained of old when we should be born, and where, and who our parents should be, and what our lot in infancy, and what our path in youth, and what our

position in manhood. From the first to the last it has all happened according to the divine purpose, even as it was ordained by the divine will. Not only the man, but all that concerns the man, is fore ordained of the Lord: "the very hairs of your head," that is to say, all that which has anything to do with you, which comes into any kind of contact with you, and is in any sense part and parcel of yourself, is under the divine foresight and predestination. Everything is in the divine purpose, and has been ordered, by the divine wisdom: all the events of your life -- the greater certainly, the smaller with equal certainty. It is impossible to draw a line in providence, and say this is arranged by providence, and that is not. It must take everything in its sweep, all that happens; it determines not only the movement of a star, but the blowing of a grain of dust along the public road. All this, from the very nature of the thing, is clear. God's providence knows nothing of things so little as to be beneath its notice, nothing of things so great as to be beyond its control. Nothing is too little or too great for God to rule and overrule.

All that a man undergoes is also ordained of heaven; the hairs of your head, should they turn white in a single night by grief, will not do so without divine permission. Should you be spared till every hair constitutes a part of the crown of glory of your old age, you shall not be older than God wills. You shall neither die before your time, nor live beyond it. All that concerns you, I say, from first to last, all that is of you, and in you, and around you -

"All shall come, and last, and end,

As shall please your heavenly Friend."

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

And this is what I call your attention to what is the source of this numbering? It is not that they are all numbered by some recording angel who is set to do the work. It may be so, but that is not the thing we have to consider to-night. This numbering is done by your Father, who is in heaven. The ordinances that rule your life are in his hand: unto him belong the issues from death; and this makes it to be such a happy fact. Fate is hard and cruel; but predestination is fatherly, and wise, and kind. The wheels of providence are always high and terrible; but they are full of eyes, and those eyes look with the clear sight of wisdom and righteousness, and love, and they look towards the good of them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose. Terrible, indeed, it is to think of things as fixed by an eternal plan; but the terror is taken from it when we feel that we are children of this great Father, and that he wills nothing but what shall, in the end, work out our conformity to the image of his Son, and display the glory of his own righteousness, and grace, and truth.

Dear friend, perhaps you are blind! You will feel sweet content in the dark when you can say, "This blindness was determined of my tender and loving Father; I know it was so, since the very hairs of my head are all numbered." Or it may be that you have from childhood been the subject of another physical infirmity, which has caused you great

loss and pain, and even now it is threatening to bring you suddenly to the grave. Had this cross been laid upon you by an enemy, you might have complained, but it has been ordained for you by him who cannot be unkind or unjust; therefore say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." We are taught to pray, "Thy will be done." Dare we contradict our own prayers by kicking against that will? Job glorified God, and yet he spake no more than he should have done when he said, "...the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." I always admired in Job his ascribing all his afflictions to the Lord; because apparently it was the Sabeans who took away his oxen and asses; it was the Chaldeans who took away his camels; it was the wind from the wilderness, raised by the devil, that took away his children. Job does not care so much for Sabeans, and Chaldeans, and devils, as to mention them; but he cries, looking to the First Cause of all events "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." When we can get at the back of visible things, and see, not merely the puppets, but the strings that move them, then we come near to wisdom. Wicked beings act according to their own free will, and therefore the whole of the moral evil of their doings rests wholly and solely with themselves; but the great God somehow, mysteriously, quite clear of all complicity with human sin effects his own purposes, which are always good and right. He it is who from evil, either real or seeming, still produceth good and better still, and better still, in infinite progression. When, I say, we get to this First Force, and real source of power, then we get where we learn wisdom, and we are helped in the struggle of life. When we see that all things are arranged by him who ordereth all things according to the counsel of his own will, then we bow our heads and worship.

The practical outcome of all this, to every Christian, should be just this, "If it be so, that all things in my life are ordered of God, even to the hairs of my head, then let me learn submission; let me bow before the Supreme Will which ought to have its way. Though it cost me many a tear, and many a pang, yet will I never be content until I can say, "Father, thy will be done." Human nature prompts us to ask that, if it be possible, the bitter cup may pass away from us; but the divine nature, which God has put into his true children, helps them still to struggle after full submission, till at last they are conquerors over themselves, and God is glorified in the temple of their being. I am sure, my brothers, our happiness lies very much in our complete submission to the Lord our God. If you cannot bring your estate to your mind, bring your mind to your estate. The old proverb bids us cut our coat according to our cloth, and he that clothe his mind with the garments which providence allots him needs not to envy my Lord Mayor in his robes. Joy lies more in the mind than in the place or the possession. (Continued on Page 6, Col. 1)

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sion. He that hath enough, though he hath but a few shillings a week, hath more than the possessor of millions. He that is content is the truly rich man; your money-grubber is always poor, how can he be otherwise -- poor in the worst sense of the word? Oh, it is a blessed thing when one can think of all the events of providence that God is ordering them all: then we dissolve our own will into the sweetness of God's will, and our sorrow is at an end!

This, I think, should, in addition to teaching us submission, always give us such a degree of consolation in the time of trouble that we even rise into something like joy. I was reading today of old Mr. Dodd, who is a person the Puritans are always quoting -- a man who did not write books, but he seems to have said things with which other people made their books attractive. This old Mr. Dodd, it is said, had a great trouble, a bodily complaint I will not mention, but it is one of the most painful a man can suffer from; and when he was told that this had come upon him, and that it was incurable, the old man shed a few natural tears at the great and excruciating pain; but at last he said, "This is evidently from God, and God never sent me anything but it was for my good, therefore let us kneel down together, and thank God for this." It was well said of the old man, and it was well done of him that he thanked God most heartily. Oh yes, let us kneel down together, and thank God for our trouble! It is consumption, a dying child, a farm that does not pay, a business that is gradually leaking away? -- let us firmly believe that our God has never sent us anything but what He meant good by it; therefore, let us kneel down, and thank God with all our hearts. If your child should come to you, and say, "Father, I thank you for the rod; I know it has been for my good," you would feel it was time to have done correcting him. Evidently he is not so dull and foolish as to need a sharp awakening by chastisement. He sees the evil of his disobedience, and the necessity of chastisement, and now he can be left to follow out the lessons he has learned. When you and I begin to be familiar with affliction, and to thank God for it, we are pretty nearly getting through it. I believe, myself, that there is a period often set to the sorrows of saints, and that the period is usually coincident with their perfect acquiescence in them. When they are content to have all things as God wills, God will be content to let them have it much as they will. When two wills run together, our will and God's will, then we shall find a sweet double stream of silver peace flowing throughout the rest of our lives. Therefore, let us come to this -- if even the very hairs of our head are all numbered, if everything be really ordained of the Most High concerning his people, let us rejoice in the divine appointment, and take it as it comes, and praise his name, whether our allotment be rough or smooth, bitter or sweet. Let us cheerfully say, "If the Lord wills it, and we will it,

too; if he hath purposed it, even so let it be; since all things work together for good to them that love God, even to them that are called according to his purpose."

I shall not plunge into the slough of difficulties which some of you are sure to see lying in the way; I trip over the mire with the nimble feet of faith. I shall not discuss how foreordination can be shown to be consistent with the responsibility of man, and the free-will of man, and all that. I believe in the responsibility of man, and the freewill of man, as much as I believe in predestination. I believe in the responsibility of man as much as you do, and I believe in the free-agency of man as much as anybody living. How can I believe both doctrines? I evidently can believe them both, for I do believe them. I have learned this: that the man whose creed is consistent in the judgment of others usually has a very scanty, poverty-stricken creed; and a good deal of it is rather theory than revelation. When you come to make up your theology into a system, you are very apt to act like a builder, who fills in between the great stones mortar of his own mixing. I am content to pile up the unhewn stones, and put in no cement of my own. I will not shape truth, much less add to it.

"If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." He who takes truth as he finds it in the inspired Book has enough material, and it is all sound. I believe that all the contradictions in Scripture are only apparent ones. I cannot except to understand the mysteries of God, neither do I wish to do so. If I understood God, he could not be the true God. A doctrine which I cannot fully grasp is a truth which is intended to grasp me. When I cannot climb, I kneel. Where I cannot build an observatory, I set up an altar. A great stone which I cannot lift serves me for a pillar, upon which I pour the oil of gratitude, and adore the Lord my God. How idle it is to dream of our ever running parallel in understanding with the infinite God! His knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is so high we cannot attain to it. Have you never heard of the inquisitive boy who had been forbidden to go into his father's study. He tried the door, but it was fastened: all proper and safe entrance was out of the question. But he could not be content till he had satisfied his curiosity, and therefore he climbed up to the window. To his father's horror, up two stories high, stood his little boy, looking in upon him, and crying with childish pride, "Father, I can see you." What a position of danger for the child! He must be got down, and taught not to climb there again. Shall we imitate this childish folly? Brethren, I will not attempt it. I do not want to endanger my soul, and perhaps even my reasoning powers, by straining after the unknowable. Poor child that I am, I would rather love God and wonder at him, than regard him with cold, intellectual apprehensions, and dream that I know him altogether. I pray to grow in the knowledge of that which the Lord reveals: and I pray for grace to limit my curiosity by the boundaries of his revelation; surely these are far enough apart for the largest researches. As for the difficulty before us, I do not understand it; and what good would it be to me if I did understand it? I

know that whatever a man does that is wrong, he does it of his own freewill; and all the sin in the world I believe to be caused by the willful and censurable choice of the transgressor; but I know that, at the same time, there is a grasp of foresight and predestination so comprehensive that everything accords with the divine foreknowledge and predestination. Let our hair grow as it will, or let us pluck out what hairs we please, let nothing interfere with our absolute liberty in that matter; and yet the hairs of our head are all numbered. So much for foresight.

PREDESTINATION

(Continued from Page 1)

us like His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, if the Bible teaches anything at all, it teaches that God predestinated us unto salvation before the foundation of the world. The Bible teaches election from Genesis to Revelation. Now if you want to get mad, you will have to get mad at God. I did not write the Bible. I am not Jehovah God. And I am not going to attempt to tell God what to do or how to run His business, because God is sovereign, and God can do as He pleases.

Throughout the ages, God has always worked on the basis of election. Let me give you some Scriptures. Turn to John 15:16. Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Here is set forth the great doctrine of election in the choosing of our Lord's disciples. Did the disciples choose Christ? No, beloved, Christ chose them. He said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." You know, if left to themselves, the disciples never would have chosen Christ. And I will say to you again, beloved, that if you are a saved individual you know that you would never have chosen the Lord Jesus Christ if you had been left alone. God first chose you. That is why the Scripture says in I John 4:19, "We love him, because he first loved us." You see, salvation begins with God and it ends with God. Oh, beloved, how wonderful to think that God elected us, that God knew us, that He looked upon us with favor and that He chose us as His people before the foundation of the world.

Message V

There is no Scripture which says that God elects people to go to hell or that God elects anybody to be lost--because we are all lost. Beloved, if God wanted to, He could send the whole human race to the Lake of Fire, and He would be justified in so doing. God could have let the whole human race go to destruction. Let's understand one thing as we continue on in this important series of messages. God has a perfect right to destroy every person on the face of the earth if He desires to do so because we are all sinners. We have all defiled God's universe and we have all come short of the glory of God. Do you realize, beloved, that God could be righteous and annihilate every person on the face of this earth? But God can also be righteous and show mercy upon whom He will. Beloved, don't forget that God is sovereign. God is upon His

throne and He can do as He pleases. God has a perfect right to do anything that He wants to do to fulfill His will, His plan and His purpose.

In Romans 9 the Apostle Paul discusses the great doctrine--the very doctrine that I'm preaching to you in this series of messages--the sovereign grace of God. The Apostle Paul said, "...who art thou that repliest against God?" Who are you, beloved? You say, "It does not sound reasonable that God would choose certain people and pass others by. It does not seem fair that God would do this or that or the other thing. It does not seem like justice." Well let me tell you, beloved, if we got justice, everyone of us would go to hell. We are not saved on the basis of justice. Thank God for that! We are saved on the basis of grace and mercy.

That is why the Bible says, "By grace are ye saved through faith." I do not want justice, beloved. If I got justice, I would spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. But I thank God today that I'm saved on the basis of His

SALVATION

Let it be emphasized that it is to the Jesus Christ of the Scriptures that we must come for salvation, and not to any Christ of our imagination. Many, indeed, are the modern Jesuses, all of them are characterized by this; that in order to come to them the sinner does not have to renounce the pride of his sinful heart. He is the great Teacher whose instructions we are good enough to receive, especially as it is embodied in the Sermon on the Mount, and whose precepts we must keep. Or He is the good example, who Himself walked in the light, that we might follow in His steps. And so we must ever walk and live with the question before our minds: What would Jesus do? Or He is the One who was deeply God-conscious, who was conscious of the truth that man is the son of God, and who revealed to us that we, too, are the sons of God. We must therefore believe in the Fatherhood of God, and establish the brotherhood of man in the world. We must build Christian character. We must establish the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus has shown us how good we really are, and what a power for good we have and we can work ourselves into the favour and love of God.

All this modern trash that flatters the pride of sinful man has nothing to do with the Christ of the Scriptures!

We must come to Jesus. And Jesus leaves us nothing but the confession that we are sinners, damnable, and corrupt, as far as we are concerned; sinners who must be and only can be saved by pure and sovereign grace. The Christ of the Scriptures is He who came into the world, the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, as a helpless babe in the manger of Bethlehem, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, from the virgin Mary. He is the One who tabernacled among us, and by His Word and work revealed unto us the Father, the God of our salvation. The Christ of the Scriptures is He who died on the cross of Calvary, not for His principle, not as a noble example for us to follow, but because He was delivered for our transgressions, and in our stead brought to God the perfect

love, mercy and grace. The sovereign will and grace of God is the basis of our salvation. And as I have stated before, there is no Scripture which says that God predestinates people to go to hell or that God predestinates anybody to be lost--because we are all lost. But the Scripture does say that He has predestinated certain people to be conformed to the image of His Son. Who are those people, beloved? They are the elect. They are those whom God has chosen from the foundation of the world to spend eternity with Him. And that brings us to the next Scripture.

Turn to Ephesians 1:4-5. Notice: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." This tells us when God chose us. It was before the foundation of the world. We did not live before the foundation of the world, but He elected His people before the foundation of the world. That is what the Scripture says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."

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sacrifice for sins, truly and fully satisfying the justice of God with respect to all our transgressions. He is the One who was raised on the third day because of our justification, raised to glorious, transcendent, victorious life; death hath no more dominion over Him. He is the Christ who ascended upon high, was exalted at the right hand of God, received all power in heaven and on earth. He is the quickening Spirit, the Saviour, the mighty Lord, who has the prerogative and the power to save sinners, that is, to bring them back to the Living God, to lead them into His Father's house, that they may have life and have it more abundantly than ever before!

In Him we behold the reconciler, the justifier of the ungodly, who does not impute transgressions unto us. He is the bread of life, which we must eat; the fount of living water from which we must drink. He is the way to the Father, and to come to Him is to come to God by Him!

But who wants to come to God? Does the natural man, of whom the Scriptures say that he is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1); that he is in darkness, that he loves darkness rather than light and that he hates the light, neither cometh to the light (Eph. 5:8; John 3:19-20); that he does not seek after God, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, and that his mind is enmity against God (Rom. 3:11-18; 8:7)? Does that man have the will to come to God by Jesus Christ? To ask this question is to answer it: He will never come to the Living God of himself. For the one who thirsts after the Living God has already been drawn by the Father. And if anyone will come to God through Christ, his mind has already been enlightened, and his will has been marvelously changed by the almighty grace of God, who called all things into being and who quickens the dead. Let no one doubt that he will be received, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

--Irish Christian Assembly (copied from Pilgrim Pathway, vol. 9, No. 3; Fall 1989 issue)

STUDIES IN ACTS

by Willard Willis

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 5:1, 2).

We have just read of the love and devotion exemplified by Barnabas. The Lord God had just revealed His approval by shaking the place where they were assembled. Barnabas responded by selling his possession and laying the money at the apostles' feet.

The fact that this action by Ananias and Sapphira followed immediately after the action taken by Barnabas shows clearly that they wanted to copy his action. They, however, had an entirely different motive. They wanted the results that Barnabas received, but they wanted the same at a much cheaper price. We may, therefore, call them hypocrites, or folks who pretended to be that which they were not. They wanted to see and enjoy the show, but they did not want to pay the full price to get in. There are many who like to call themselves Christians so long as it doesn't cost them anything or so long as it costs them very little. They want to warm themselves by the fire, but they refuse to help buy the wood to heat the fire.

The Pharisees were great pretenders too. They enjoyed wearing clothing that made them appear to be very religious. They also helped to gain the same recognition by way of long prayers. God, however, sees through every veil that man may concoct. God, in fact, looks on the heart rather than man's outward appearance. You and I who live two thousand years this side of Ananias, Sapphira, and the Pharisees know that they made a grave mistake by placing the applause of men above the applause of their God.

It should be pointed out that there was nothing wrong with the fact that Ananias and Sapphira held back a part of the money they had received for their sale. The wrong lay in the fact that they were deceptive in their action. They didn't have to give one red cent; but they wanted others to believe, through a deceptive act, that they were very devoted to the cause. We have all experienced, during the last few months, some TV evangelists who have not been what they pretended to be.

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" (Acts 5:3). It is important to note that Satan, rather than God, caused the action taken by Ananias and Sapphira. We, in fact, know from James 1:13, 14 that God tempts no one to commit evil acts. We also know from I Corinthians 14:33 that God is not the author of confusion. There is a warfare going on continually in high places -- a warfare between God and Satan -- a warfare that manifests itself through men and women. Ananias and Sapphira were caught up in this war. Peter is made aware of the evil plot through a revelation by God the Spirit. Ananias and Sapphira thought that they were the only two who were privy to the plot, but there was a

third person listening in, too. May we be reminded that our God is the silent listener to all of our conversations -- to all our schemes and plans.

Ananias and Sapphira had only intended to lie to Peter, John, and the rest of the brethren. They had no idea of the far-reaching effect of their sin. They, in fact, did not consider that they were lying to God the Spirit. May we, too, weigh well the impact our sins may have. It is like throwing a large stone into the water and wondering how far the waves will extend. May we be sure that all the waves we make are of a pure nature, especially in that which we believe, teach, and practice.

"While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou has not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:4).

We are to learn from this passage of Scripture that Ananias and the others were not under obligation to sell their property and give it to the church. God, of course, rewarded each one who acted so generously; but He did not require it (II Corinthians 9:6).

It is good to see someone so dedicated and devoted to the cause of Christ that they can't do enough to help. God, of course, will greatly honor a cheerful giver, whether it be the gift of money or time. We, however, must not pretend to be that which we are not. We must not do our good deeds so as to be seen or heard by men. **"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Matthew 6:1, 2).**

Our text points out that Ananias lied to God rather than to men. We should all keep in mind that the good or the bad we do relates, first of all, to God rather than men. We think much too small if we see no further than those around us. Whatever we do, we are to do for the glory of God. God is much more involved in our lives than most of us can comprehend.

"And Ananias, hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things" (Acts 5:5). Some have thought that Peter killed Ananias, but he did not kill him any more than he healed the lame man. Both were acts of God. I am convinced that Ananias was a regenerated man, but a disobedient one. He, however, sinned a sin which was unto death, even as was true with some who were members of the church at Corinth.

The result of Ananias' death was that **"...great fear came on all them that heard these things."** This brings to mind an incident which occurred in my life while I was attending a one-room school in about 1937. The man teacher, who taught all eight grades, hailed a big disobedient boy before the entire class for the purpose of whipping

him. The big lad was required to strip down to the waist, at which time the teacher began whipping him with a large switch. The prints of the switch could be seen on his back, and there was some bleeding. This action by the teacher filled me with fear. God, in like manner, by killing Ananias, caused the rest to know that this was not a game to play but that they were involved in a very serious warfare. May we hear and heed the same message.

"And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him" (Acts 5:6). You and I today would call for an ambulance if one of our group fell to the floor. We would try to revive him. It appears, however, that Peter and the others knew of a certainty that Ananias was dead; and they knew why he was dead. The young men, in fact, wound him up in many folds of linen -- a common practice in those days -- and buried him. It seems strange that Ananias died and was buried without his wife's knowledge. It was customary among the ancient Persians to bury the body almost immediately after death; and it is likely that the Jews imitated this custom, since no embalming was done.

"And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her. Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much" (Acts 5:7, 8). Peter's question to Sapphira shows that God the Holy Spirit was overseeing this entire incident. Sapphira would not have revealed her true intentions had she known what had happened to her husband. God, however, had placed them both on trial for their own lives; and she was not to be given any knowledge that would have enabled her to present a cover-up.

The cause at hand was far too important to have people like Ananias and Sapphira playing games with it. They, in fact, were like two rotten apples in a barrel of good apples -- apples which must be removed before others became like them. The death sentence, therefore, had to be invoked. What if all of the early Christians had played Ananias and Sapphira's game? Where would we be today?

"Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then she fell down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband" (Acts 5:9, 10). They had conspired together, and now they were laid in death together. They both had attempted to "tempt" God the Spirit, or to deceive Him. They, in other words, tried to pull a fast one on God, hoping that He would not be able to detect hypocrisy. They, in so doing, were limiting their God. They were placing Him on the level of a man. **"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11).** This was God's intended result.

God had more in mind than the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira. He, in fact, had the church -- His chaste virgin -- in mind. The gates of death would not prevail against the Lord's Church, even though such required the gates of death to open to those who were rebellious. The Holy Spirit had come to earth for the purpose of exalting God the Son, and there was to be nothing to detour Him. We, of course, are the beneficiaries of the exaltation of the Son of God.

"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch" (Acts 5:12). It is interesting to observe that the apostles are given credit for the signs and wonders, even though such was accomplished by God the Spirit. The apostles were God's hands on earth. Their entire bodies were dedicated to Him, in so much that they were all in one accord, or of one mind. They, as the Lord's church, were one team. They, even though being many, moved in the same direction in mind and in body. Ten men, when joining their strength and efforts, can do ten times what one man can do. The Lord's church, under the power of God the Spirit, and joined together in one accord, can move mountains. It is said that they **"were all with one accord in Solomon's porch."** Solomon's porch, no doubt, is where many people gathered. It was the best place to meet and speak with the most people. They, rather than going to the people, were having the people come to them. This proved to be a great blessing to many people, since the apostles were God's representatives and the temple was God's house. They, therefore, had a greater right to be there than did anyone else.

"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them" (Acts 5:13). The "rest" appears to refer somehow to those who were in some kind of relationship with Ananias and Sapphira. Perhaps Ananias and Sapphira had been well to do and others who fell into this category were very cautious about taking any kind of a stand. They stood completely clear of them. The "people," or perhaps the common folk, magnified them. They acknowledged that the things they said and did were of God. The "people" were not cold or indifferent toward them, but they were fully convinced; and they went out of their way to say so. We have all done things where some applauded our efforts, and others walked away quietly. One magnified us while the other appeared to be indifferent.

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them" (Acts 5:14, 15). The entire world is made up of two categories. These categories are believers and unbelievers. The believers, as noted above, are added to the Lord. They are the sheep of His pasture. They hear His voice and follow Him. They are added to Him down here, but one day they shall be like Him,

for they shall see Him as He is. Those who are added to Him are given eternal life.

It is said that those who were added to the Lord brought forth the sick with expectation that they would be healed. They went so far with their belief that they went to the trouble of bringing their beds and couches as a resting place for their sick. They, in fact, had help carrying their beds and couches back home since those who lay on them were made whole. The previous Scripture, in fact, informs us that every one of the people who needed help were helped. There was not one who went away empty. Those, or the "rest," who would not join themselves to them, missed a great blessing. They, no doubt, had people in their homes who had great needs too.

PREDESTINATION

(Continued from Page 6)

that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us" (Mark it down, beloved. There you have predestination again. The God of the Bible is a God of predestination.) "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Now, beloved, if you are saved today, the Word of God says that you were **"...predestinated... unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ..."** God foreknew you, He elected you, He chose you before the foundation of the world. Why? Because it was according to His grace and mercy.

Let me give you another Scripture. Turn to Isaiah 65:1. Listen: **"I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." Notice God says, "I am found of them that sought me not...."** Well, beloved, doesn't this prove that the God of the Bible is a God of predestination? I can take you through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and I can show you that God has always worked on the basis of election.

Let's notice some more examples of election. Remember that the word election simply means to choose. Keep in mind that God is the one who does the choosing. As Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:16, **"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you..."**

If left to themselves, the disciples would never have chosen the Lord. It was the Lord Jesus who chose them. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in I Thessalonians 1:4, **"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."** You see, Paul referred to the Thessalonians as elected ones. So it is God who does the choosing.

Let's take the case of Abraham. Go back to the Old Testament in the days of Abraham. How many people were saved in the Ur of the Chaldees when Abraham was saved? Remember that there was a tremendous population back there at that time. But how many people were saved? Just one. That's all. Just one. Let me give you the Scripture. Turn to Isaiah

(Continued on Page 8, Col. 4)

10 REASONS WHY CHRISTMAS IS UNSCRIPTURAL

REASON No. 1 --

"Christmas" is a word unknown in the Bible. It is no private interpretation, it is no prophecy of the scriptures "...holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:20, 21). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." (II Tim. 3:16). Christmas is excluded from the all scriptures.

"But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8).

Christmas belongs to that "other gospel," for Paul did not know of a gospel called Christmas, -- and what does John say about adding to the scripture? (Rev. 22:18).

REASON No. 2 --

Historical records in encyclopedias, which are available in any city library, and are noted for their authenticity and reliability, give us these facts that Christmas is of heathen origin. It is traced back to sun worshippers and observed among the pagan nations. Many such pagan leaders birthdays were celebrated by the ancient Babylonians. All these pagan festivals originated in heathendom.

Centuries later the birth of Christ was blended into this -- called Christmas. We are warned by the scriptures to "Learn not the way of the heathen." (Jer. 10:2). But through ignorance, the church has learned it.

REASON No. 3 --

Various records show us that the blending of Christ's birth with Christmas came about through Catholicism. The Catholic Church claims authorship of choosing the name "Christ" to connect with their "mass."

Here we see that Christmas is of human invention, therefore not Scriptural nor spiritual. Why will Christians follow the path of Catholicism? This church is portrayed in Revelation 17:5 where it says: "Upon her forehead was the name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

God brands this church as a mother of harlots. Will Christians follow such examples?

REASON No. 4 --

We have no scriptural record that the disciples ever celebrated the birth of Christ. So we wonder why should we?

However history reveals that about the fourth century (A.D. 440) the Church at Jerusalem commenced to celebrate this day -- following Catholicism. When it also became more defiled with the pagan world, when this mother of harlots attached the name Christ to it and called it Christmas, and placed it in the month of December which has now for centuries been the traditional month of the year.

Adam Clark in his commentary writes: "We find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer and as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that Octo-

ber had not yet commenced and that consequently our Lord was not born on December 25th when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could He have been born later than September as the flocks were still in the fields by night. On this very ground the nativity in December should be given up." Clark's reasoning on this subject sounds true and sensible.

REASON No. 5 --

No where in Scripture are we commanded to commemorate the birth of our Lord, and God the Father evidently deemed it unwise to make the date known. Hence it will always remain unknown and is not to be remembered and celebrated. Paul says, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." (II Cor. 5:16). We understand Paul to mean that we are to know Christ spiritually and not according to the letter, or after the flesh, or as an infant, for this is of no value to us as spiritual life.

But notice -- we are commanded to remember Him in His death, but no special day of the year is specified for this. He said: "Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me." (I Cor. 11:24).

To commemorate His death is Scriptural, any day of the year will do -- to commemorate His birth is non-scriptural whether you choose any day or the day December 25th.

Paul the apostle says: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross (not the birth) of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. 6:14). We find no salvation in the birth of our Lord, for Salvation was only made possible through His death. Our faith is in the cross, not in the birth.

REASON No. 6 --

The fact that there are only two incidents of birthday celebrations recorded in the Bible is evidently given for our warning and our learning, that we may know that the Lord has no pleasure in birthday celebrations or anniversaries.

One of the above was Pharaoh's big ado and the final results were the chief baker got hung. Thus ended the tragedy of a big special day. (Gen. 40:20, 22).

The other incident was a big day for Herod and his celebration ended up in the beheading of John the Baptist (Mark 6:21-27).

And now for centuries this modern special day, called Christmas, is a similar day with numerous fatalities which usually ends the day in thousands of homes with untold misery, sorrow and grief.

REASON No. 7 --

By searching the Word of God we find that the birth of Christ, the shepherds, and the wise men have no connection with the day called Christmas whatever. Christmas is human invention, but Christ came into the world to save sinners. It has no comparison.

The wise men from the Far East came and gave their gifts to Jesus or rather to His mother for Him, not to one another as is being done by the unwise in this day. And this gift giving was not even on His birthday but a number of days afterwards, also not in the stable but in the house. It is often quoted "Jesus was born in a

manger." This is not true. He was born in a stable and laid in a manger. This story is greatly misconstrued, and a mass of conglomeration has accumulated in the minds of the people.

Annually the Yuletide season is overflowed with literature and greeting cards of untrue representations. We can observe pictures with the parents in the stable and three wise men in their presence giving gifts. The Bible is silent as to how many wise men there were. Then we also see these Yuletide cards with the shepherds out with their flocks and a star in the distance. Again the Bible has nothing to mention of a star among the shepherds.

Then again we see other scenes with snow to beautify the scenery and that mystical god. "The Santa Claus lie," connected with it and thousands of people are confused by such false literature, simply because such cards and pictures are made to sell.

Let the children of God have nothing to do with it.

REASON No. 8 --

Then we think of the untold sum of the Lord's money (Haggai 2:8) that is being spent for such foolishness of worthless and useless trinkets and toys of every description in connection with the eating and over-eating of nuts and candies, feasting on roast turkey and chicken, and all kinds of dainties. Much of it results in headaches and stomach disorders and other ailments which go with it. All this is outright heathendom and an insult to the Master and has no connection with the Scriptural story of the Saviour's birth.

REASON No. 9 --

The partiality which is even exercised in the giving of gifts is another sign in failing to harmonize with scriptural principles. We do not object to the spirit of giving gifts, but why wait until the traditional month of December when often times other seasons of the year would be more practical. Also, too often the method of giving fails to reveal the spirit of charity. The major method of giving is to those whom we expect to receive again in return. This is also entirely beside the Scriptures, and all such already have their rewards. Listen:

The greatest gift that ever was given to the world was Jesus Christ Himself, not as a babe but as a sacrificed Lamb, a crucified Saviour in the redemptive work of salvation.

This is by far the greater gift than His birth, and the Lord God revealed a much greater concern in this redemption on the cross than as an infant in a manger. Nevertheless we do not belittle His birth for it "was on this wise."

The most essential part of our giving a gift is our all to Him in consecration, holiness and service.

How foolish and even embarrassing does our method of giving look to the Lord Jesus? For instance, think of the inconsistency of us giving Henry Jones a gift because John Brown has a birthday. But that is the way we use Christ when this special pagan feast day comes, when we give every Tom, Dick, and Harry a present and our feeble mind is stirred, thinking we have done something great. Who gets the glory for this? Certainly Christ does not. Think on these things.

REASON No. 10--

Why do we celebrate holidays, when the tenor of the Scriptures seems to be against it. Let's notice (Gal. 4:9-11) and (Col. 2:16) are absolute Scriptures pointing to the disapproval of all special holidays or new moons or sabbaths. Paul reproved the Galatians for turning back again to the weak and beggarly elements." He says, "Ye observe days, months, times and years, I am afraid of you..." No doubt Paul had a vision of the inconsistencies of observing such special holidays by what the prophet Amos had in view of God's displeasure of Israel's festivals when He said: "I hate, I despise your feast days and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies" (Amos 5:21). It is our firm belief that God saw fit to annul all these special holidays with the ceremonial laws since Israel, also, the Galatians and now in our day, and age the people will blend so much traditions and idols to these holidays.

To this day God has not told us one jot to observe any special days except one: The Lord's Day.

How could any Christian Bible reader harbor the thought that Paul was encouraging any special days with the above reference? He writes that they were only a "shadow of things to come." Let's not worship the shadow, since we can worship, in "Spirit and in Truth" the real sacrifice. God placed one day in seven as a "rest day" for us and to "keep it holy."

Why do Christians still desire to celebrate the shadow a day, called Christ-mass? Christ had nothing to do with it, neither any of the Apostles.

The only record we have is the Catholic Church has done this and let us be free from Catholicism.

Our chief text is: "Learn not the way of the heathen." (Jer. 10:2-3). But many Christians have learned it. (Copied)

PREDESTINATION

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51:2. Listen: "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone..." Will you notice, "...for I called him alone..." You might want to underscore those four words: "...I called him alone..."

Now, of all the people in the Ur of the Chaldees, God never called but one man--and that man was Abraham. And Abraham heard God's voice and began to follow. Tradition says that Abraham was a heathen priest in the Ur of the Chaldees, and that he was worshipping and offering sacrifices in a heathen temple when God called him. Now I don't know if that is true or not, but one thing we do know is that God had to call Abraham and reveal Himself to him or old Abraham would have just died as a heathen idolator.

And just as God had to make a revelation of Himself to Abraham, God by His Spirit must make a revelation of Himself to people today in order for them to be saved. Let me say, beloved, you will never know Jesus Christ, you will never come to a saving knowledge of the Son of God unless a revelation is given to your heart, because Christianity is a

miraculous revelation.

Message VI

The subject of predestination has perplexed theologians throughout the history of the church. Many people have been confused over this great doctrine. Some believe that God predestinated certain people to be lost, and no matter how much they try to trust Christ for salvation, they cannot be saved because God did not predestinate them to be saved. Others believe that God predestinated certain people to suffer and to be disappointed in life and to finally be cast into hell. Now it is important that we understand the Bible teaching on predestination or we cannot fully understand the Word of God. Let me say that any preacher or teacher who goes astray on the great doctrines of predestination and election generally goes astray on all the other doctrines of the Word of God. But if you understand this tremendous passage of Scripture in Romans 8, you will understand that salvation begins with God and it ends with God. Salvation is all of the Lord.

Jonah had to learn this when he was in the belly of the great fish. I call it "whale-belly theology." When Jonah was in the belly of that fish and he came to himself, he realized his inability and his utter and complete helplessness. He realized his only hope was in the Lord God of heaven. Jonah said in Jonah 2:9, "Salvation is of the Lord." And let me say to all of you today that you will never understand the greatness of God, you will never understand how wonderful salvation really is until you realize that salvation is 100% wholly and solely of the Lord.

A lot of people have the idea that the Lord "helps to save." They believe we do half the work in salvation and that God does the other half. Or they believe that man must in some way or other get his finger in the pie and earn salvation. Now nothing could be further from the truth. God does not "help save." He is either Lord of all, or Lord not at all. He does all the saving. He does all the keeping, and He takes all the glory! Salvation is 100% of the grace of God.

Beloved, God has always worked on the basis of election. God chose Abel and rejected Cain. God chose Shem as the line through which the Messiah would come. At the same time, He rejected Ham and Japheth. God chose Isaac and rejected Ishmael. God chose Jacob and rejected Esau. That is why the Scripture says in Romans the 9th chapter, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." God chose Abraham alone and rejected all of his idolatrous relatives. God chose the Jews for His people and rejected the Egyptians, although the Egyptians were far wiser. Why didn't God choose the Chinese or the Japanese or the Indians? Why? Because it seemed good in the Lord's sight. As Jesus said in Matthew 11:26, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Why God chose me out of several thousand Jewish boys here in San Antonio and put me on all these radio stations to give out the message of His wonderful saving grace is beyond my comprehension. All that I can do is to bow before the Lord and say, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Now, there are many objections offered by the natural man to the doctrine of election. Often we

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PREDESTINATION

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hear it said, "It is so mysterious." I am ready to grant that this is a mysterious doctrine. It is beyond the power of man to understand it. However, there are many things which we will never understand here in this life. I cannot understand why God permitted sin. I believe that God permitted sin so that man might see his need of a Saviour. But I do not know that that is the answer. I can only bow before God and hear Him say, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9).

There are many things that we will not fully understand until we get to heaven. But there is one thing that God would have every one of us to know, and that is that salvation is all of the Lord. There is not a single one of you listening to the broadcast today who would be saved if God had not elected you unto salvation. If God had left you alone, you would have automatically gone to hell of your own free will and accord, and you would have been perfectly satisfied in the depths of sin and degradation.

Take me, for example. Before God saved me in 1943, I had no desire for God, for Christ, for the Bible, for salvation or for anything of a spiritual nature. I just wanted to live my life and leave God out. I thought that if I did the best I could, and I was always taught this, that that was all I needed for salvation. My basic trouble was self-righteousness. You see, the Jews believe that they are God's chosen people. They never think of themselves as sinners in the sight of God. Of course, the Bible declares that we are all sinners whether we are Jews or Gentiles and that we are all separated from God because of our sins. But I had no idea that I was a sinner in the sight of God. My mother always told me that I was a good boy. But one day God revealed Himself to me by His Spirit and showed me that I was a no-account sinner in need of a Saviour. And, beloved, that is the only reason why I am preaching to you today. If God had not called me by His marvelous, matchless grace, I wouldn't be preaching to you today on The Christian Jew Hour.

Now one thing we must understand--man by nature is totally depraved. The Bible teaches that man is utterly helpless in his own strength. Man is dead in trespasses and sins, and certainly a dead man cannot bring himself back to life. You know and I know, beloved, that God must take the initiative if men are ever to be saved--because men by nature go the opposite direction from God. The Bible says, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to our own way." So God must make a revelation of Himself to our hearts and show us the way of life if we are to be saved. And that is why I keep preaching that salvation is a revelation. It does not come from a theology book. It does not come from schools of higher learning. It does not come out of the textbooks. It does not come through oratory or through the polished words of man. It comes by a revelation of the Holy Spirit.

CHRIST

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study on five words found in the passage. Please read the eleven verses of Colossians 1:18-29.

Colossians 1:18 Preeminence: This word stems from the Greek "Pro" meaning fore, as in forewarn, foreknow, fore ordain, etc. It means in front of, prior, superior, or above. This is related to the word "Protos" which means foremost, (that is, in time, place, order or importance). Scriptural examples: I John 4:19 -- "We love him, because he first loved us." God's love for us is the original in me, place, order, and importance. In time because it was designed before the foundation of all creation. In place in that it was designed in heaven where God dwells. In order because redemption for His elect was the first thing on His list. In importance because His love for us was designed in His omniscience through God the Father, delivered by His omnipresence by God the Son, and made effectual by His omnipotence in God the Holy Spirit Revelation 1:17. When John saw the Son of man clothed in a garment down to His foot; and a golden girdle around His chest; and His head and hairs white like wool and white as snow; and His eyes as a flaming torch, and a voice like Niagara Falls, he did exactly what you or I would; he fell down at His feet as dead. But the Lord Jesus laid His loving hand upon John and said "Fear not; I am the first and the last." Paul says that Christ is the firstborn from the dead. That is, the first fruits of the yet future resurrection of the people of His love. And since He is the first in all things, He is able to claim the preeminence. However, salvation alone would not suffice. If that were the case then what took place in Genesis 3:22-24 would not have happened. In this Scripture God set a watch over the tree of life so that man could not be saved except he be reconciled. God desired to fellowship with those whom He loved, but could not do so and remain holy except they be reconciled.

Colossians 1:20 -- Reconcile to change or exchange: With regard to the relationship between God and man, reconciliation is what God accomplishes when He

exercises His grace toward His elect; being based on the vicarious and propitiatory work of Christ on the cross, due to the necessary judgment toward sin. In other words, God's sovereign grace through Christ is the only means of making peace. Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God..." The wrath of God abides principally upon the elect of God as well as the reprobate, and reconciliation is the removal of that divine wrath from the sinner by means of atonement, or the offering up of the required sacrifice which was a perfect Lamb, which was Jesus Christ (Col. 1:20). Please notice also that we were delivered from this state of enmity which changed our citizenship. The word is METHISTANO meaning to initiate a change. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son." (Col. 1:13). The word darkness signifies a complete absence of any spiritual understanding, and so, though the reconciliation is on our part, the work of reconciliation is God's part; because not only is man enmity against God but he also lacks any intellectual, moral, or spiritual desire to be reconciled. Reconciliation, then, must be initiated by and through an irresistible work of grace by God Himself. Notice Colossians 1:21, 22 "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight."

This brings us to two more interesting words found in verse 22, "unblameable" and "unreprouvable." Both of these words have to do with justification. God is holy, righteous and just. Everything that He does must be in complete and perfect harmony with His holiness. Therefore, in order for God to justify the ungodly, several things had to happen. First, there had to be a perfect plan whereby God would be just according to His own righteous standards. In other words, sin had to be judged.

THE FORGOTTEN CHRIST

We usually remember our friends and loved ones on their birthday, and we try to show a special token of our love. The world in their religious zeal, though completely ignorant of the birth date of our blessed Lord, have pretended such consideration to Him as to set a special day to remember His birth, and the world falls over itself to celebrate Him, but the strange thing about this Christmas fanaticism is that He is the most forgotten person in the whole celebration. Folks buy gifts for everyone they think highly of, or for those whom they expect to receive a gift from. And the world, to show its appreciation, has cooperated to make it easy to pay for them in three, six, or twelve months.

Everywhere you hear the slogan, "Put Christ back in Christmas." Of course, Christ never was in Christmas; pagan revelry and ritualism was simply christened with a Christian name. The priesthood of pagan gods condescended to take Christianity under its robes so it could shed some of its intoxicating enjoyment and Christmas cheer to the poor saints who had to give up the world and bear a cross. Yes, all the world, Christian and pagan alike, unite to enter into the spirit of Christmas, while the Christ stands on the outside of the door and knocks, and pleads, "Come ye out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you."

It is a sad commentary that the work of Christ witnesses a decline of interest, and the Lord has to wait until Christmas is over, and everybody "gets back on their feet," to get the message of salvation to dying souls for whom He died! Yes, when Christmas is over, we'll have more time for Christ, we'll have more money for His work, we'll have more energy to labor in His vineyard and live for Him.

POOR FORGOTTEN ONE! Pity that we should pretend to celebrate and commemorate the birthday of a holy God! Pity that the tinsel of the world should dazzle our eyes and hide from view the face of Him who is altogether lovely! I pray that you will not waste His precious time and money on His enemy's heyday.

Being perfect He could not ignore, overlook, or excuse sin. So, what did He do? Since all of Adam's race became depraved through Adam's own posterity, He would have to offer Himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the ungodly. It was determined that the Son would take upon Himself the form of sinful flesh and be offered up as the sacrifice which would be vicarious and all-sufficient. The word "unblameable" comes from the Greek meaning "never to find fault: free from all valid charge." Paul, in pointing to the time when the saints would stand before the tribunal of Christ, called the BEMA or judgment seat in II Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10, tells those saints and us that we shall be established unblameable in holiness. I Thessalonians 3:13 says "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." The word "unreprouvable" is even stronger and reinforces the first word "unblameable." In our society even if a person is acquitted of a crime, that person will live with the stigma of the accusation the rest of his life. "Unblameable" signifies that which cannot be called into account i.e. with nothing laid to one's charge. It implies not merely acquittal, but the very absence of even a charge or accusation against a person. That is about as justified as you could possibly get. That's what you have in Christ. What passage of Scripture could we use to glue all of this together and nail it down? Romans 8:28-33, "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. For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

The last word that I want us to study is "mystery." Colossians 1:26, 27 "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Paul says in verse 25 that he was made a minister of God according to the commission of God, to fulfill the Word of God. In other words, to preach the whole counsel of God. So, Paul had been commissioned to make the word of God fully known unto the Gentiles, and primarily at least in the context, simply "Christ in you, the

hope of glory." It is obvious then, that the mystery is not knowledge which is being withheld, but truth revealed. Colossians 1:5, "...the word of the truth of the gospel," Colossians 1:6, "...the grace of God in truth." The way that Christ is manifested in us is through the truth of the gospel to be worked out through us. This brings us to the first positive point that I wish to make.

We are Christ's Body: Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." In verse 24 Paul speaks of partaking of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which body is the Church. I am housed in a body. If it were not for my body you couldn't see me. It is through this tabernacle that I am able to express my personality - invisible personality manifested by a visible body. You may choose to hide part of yourself in that body, but remember it is your only means of self-expression. My head, which theoretically at least, is the most essential part of my body, as far as being able to function. My head, theoretically, houses my brain. However, I had a brain-scan in 1983 and the doctor told me he couldn't find anything. The rest of my body takes orders from only one place in order to function. It is the same with Christ and His church. He is the head of all things to the church, and every true Baptist church is His body. We are harnessed with two nerve systems, one carries messages from the brain to the body, the other carries messages from the body to the brain. Suppose you are going to pick up a pin. Did you ever stop to think what all is involved? Eye signals brain; brain signals different body parts; body parts obey command; bones aided my muscles go into action; a message is wired back to the brain that the body is in position to pick up the pin. A message is wired back to the hand, index finger and thumb to grip the pin and get ready for transfer. But something happens that was not anticipated. The pin pricks the index finger. Ouch! is the normal reaction. This sets off a whole different set of commands and responses.

Well, I think you get the idea. Application: By His own design, Christ has chosen to express Himself through a body. That body is the local church. Each member of this church is a part of Christ's body; and the only way that He will express Himself is through you and me. Christ, the head, sends signals and commands to us through the Word of God which is the nerve system. We are supposed to respond accordingly. Think about this for a moment. What if Christ were to give you personally a body which would be comparable to the body that He operates out of at this location? In other words, He would give us a body like this one that belongs to Him. We would walk on only one leg. Some would be blind, fingers and toes missing, some would be suffering from senility, because we can't remember what time ser-

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"Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" is proof of the blindness of the unsaved soul.

CHRIST

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vices start. Some would have heart trouble because your heart is not really in the work. Some would have amnesia because you forget everything that was said the minute you leave. Some would have bad teeth because you pay attention to the junk on TV more than you do the spiritual food of the Word of God. And some would be suffering from narcolepsy because you fall asleep the minute you sit down in the pew.

On the other hand, the devil is an invisible spirit also, and he too expresses himself through a body. His body is apostate churches and the world in general. I am afraid that Satan's body does a much better job expressing him than Christ's body does expressing Him. It would be wonderful if Christ's body would show as much agility, ability, and stability as Satan's body does him. We are the body of Christ and He is the head, and unless we respond to His commands, we are of no practical use to Him. If my body parts did not respond correctly, or did not respond at all, I would have to go on some kind of disability status. The brain must have the preeminence over the rest of the body because, let's face it... there is simply no intelligence below the shoulders. My body can do absolutely nothing without a command from the brain, and even if it could, it would most assuredly do it wrong. Christ must have the preeminence over His body if that body is going to function in a way that pleases Him. What is the answer? (Col. 1:27) three simple words; "Christ in you." If Christ, who is the person of God's glory is not in you, then this body might as well leave right now, lock the door behind us and never look back, because if He is not working in us then we are among men most miserable. Paul now says, it is Christ in you, the hope of glory, whom we preach. We preach to warn every man, and to teach every man; that is every member of His body. Colossians 1:28 says "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and declared to them, "now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." For what purpose is the warning and teaching? "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Paul is not here speaking of our position in Christ as he did above in verses 20-22. He now speaks of spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity means a victorious life through obedience and faith: "Christ in you." Christ must be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19).

If you have been trying to live a religious life, and it doesn't seem to be working out, but you have never really been saved; what you need is Jesus. Jesus must be preeminent. He must be first and foremost, chief and head. Jesus only, as Lord, as well as Saviour. Christian, if you have been trying to serve God out of necessity, habit, guilt, obligation, or any other reason, you need Christ in you, you need to have God working in you mightily. May God Bless you in this way.

My thanks to Brother Jerry Spencer for some of the illustrations.

HEALING

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that defy explanation. We do no service to the gospel, therefore, if, in the interest of refuting those who are healing fanatics, we practically deny the possibility of supernatural intervention today.

Am I correct in sensing that we evangelicals -- myself included -- have become so wary of healing extremes that we are afraid to even consider as a practical reality the whole subject of healing?

The opposite extreme, which is more evident, however, poses a more visible threat to the credibility of the gospel. The flood of "miracle crusades", "healing meetings" and the claims of high profile television evangelists convey the impression that healing miracles constitute the major emphasis of the gospel. Onlookers must assume that the New Testament is primarily an uninterrupted record of sensational healings.

That, of course, is simply not true.

To perpetuate that view, the proponents, it seems to me, make misleading and exaggerated claims which create disgust and contempt in the minds of thoughtful people who might otherwise be open to consider the Christian message. Sincere, well-meaning advocates of the gospel, then, actually turn people off the Good News.

A more subtle effect of those excesses is that they blind earnest, thoughtful Christians to the possibility of genuine divine healing. An even more devastating effect is that the excessive claims disillusion and embitter suffering or handicapped believers who fail to be the beneficiaries of the sure-fire miracles.

Since I am in a wheelchair, I have been sent letters, tracts and articles from truly well-intentioned Christians. The thrust of many of those messages is that if I were truly a "Spirit-filled" Christian, I could discard the wheelchair. In other words, a continuing disability or chronic pain is incompatible with the Christian life in all its fullness.

That simplistic notion is surely the product of a faulty understanding of the gospel and a highly selective reading of the New Testament.

The fundamental misunderstanding, I am persuaded, is the concept that if one is truly a "Spirit-filled" Christian, he or she can expect to be delivered from the common afflictions which visit mankind. Among those afflictions, of course, are sickness, suffering or handicaps.

But, does the New Testament actually teach that the experience of a "Spirit-filled" Christian will inevitably be so tranquil?

John the Baptist is described as "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:15), but the gospels tell us that he died in his mid-thirties, brutally executed by a cowardly tyrant. Nowhere does it suggest he either performed a miracle or was the beneficiary of a miracle.

The first Christian martyr, Stephen, died at the hands of a blood-thirsty mob. Described as

"full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5), he was not spared by a miracle. Indeed the ironic touch is that the ascended Christ is described as a bystander -- neither rescuing Stephen or eliminating his executioners.

The Apostle Paul is said to have suffered from a "thorn in his flesh" and relates in some detail (II Cor. 12) how he prayed earnestly for deliverance from that fearsome and ever present physical affliction. God's answer was that the thorn, whatever it was, would not be removed but that divine grace would enable Paul to endure the affliction. "My grace is sufficient for you", stated the Lord, "for My power is made perfect in weaknesses."

It is sobering to realize that the same chapter of the New Testament which tells of the dazzling miracle which freed Peter from jail, also records the beheading of another apostle, James (Acts 12:2). Christians cannot always expect to be the recipients of miracles, but they can always be assured of the empowering grace of God!

Balance requires me to emphasize again that, while scriptures indicate that "Spirit-filled" Christians did not always experience physical deliverance from affliction in apostolic times, the New Testament and subsequent experience present examples of those who have been healed or experienced miraculous intervention.

The problem occurs when we wittingly or unwittingly leave the impression that every true Christian who is afflicted should expect -- even demand -- a physical healing. That contention does not square with scripture or with experience.

A Christian business man in western Canada was afflicted with cancer some years ago. Well-meaning friends persuaded him to go some distance to a highly touted faith healer. Encouraged and understandably desirous to be healed of the deadly cancer, he followed the advice.

In spite of his serious condition, he made the journey and went through the "healing line." Nothing happened immediately, but he went home with high hopes. As his health declined, he was understandably mystified.

He or his wife wrote to the healer and received a letter from an assistant. The letter assured the suffering Christian that the healer had made no claims that he could heal everyone. To a degree, the letter pointed out, healing was dependent on the afflicted person's faith.

To my mind, that contention has a disturbing implication. Is it true that if a Christian fails to be healed, he is, in some way, deficient in his relationship with God? One could only wish that, in the interest of honesty, those who hold widely-publicized healing meetings should state that clearly -- if indeed that is what they believe.

There are several important questions which, in the interest of clarification, should be answered by the proponents of widespread faith healings:

•Are we to assume that the many Christians who are not healed, though they have sought it, are deficient in faith?

•When a Christian has not been healed, is it right to permit and encourage a frenzied, sometimes neurotic, search for healing -- thereby robbing him or her of the

present enjoyment of God's presence and power?

•Does the emphasis placed on "faith healing" not often have the effect of crushing or embittering those who have not been healed?

•Has this vocal emphasis on faith healing not overshadowed the fact that God's intervention in many cases might be in the form of giving grace and strength to bear the affliction and to demonstrate thereby what God can do in human life?

•Finally, has this mania for miracles not cheapened the gospel?

I have met many Christians who have been persuaded that they can have healing simply because they or others have demanded it. Their whole spiritual life then revolves around that hope, which in some cases as they have grown older, has become a fading hope. Because the expectation is on something that is going to happen at some future time, they virtually surrender the present enjoyment of the presence of God.

In some cases, of course, they have become embittered. They may have the right to be embittered, but the tragedy is that they direct the blame toward God, not toward the person who held out that hope for them.

It is understandable that someone should feel that my view and

questions can be dismissed simply because I have been confined to a wheelchair for a quarter of a century and have not experienced physical healing. In other words, it is a case of "sour grapes". I trust that such is not the case.

I am persuaded that God has not short-changed me.

Maybe some of our problems in this area are due to our failure to recognize that God performs various types of miracles.

I stress again that He can perform a physical miracle apart from human means -- the miracle that defies medical explanation. In a world which denies the supernatural, let us not put ourselves on the side of those who have a materialistic, mechanistic view of life.

Then, God can also perform miracles through medical means (Luke is described, after all, in the scriptures as the beloved physician and not the accursed physician!) I, for one, thank God for the advances in medical science. I further thank God for the recent opportunity to go Mayo Clinic where, following three months hospitalization, two operations, and extensive treatment, I experienced incredible relief from pain.

And, finally, God also works miracles inside of people. For the suffering, pain-wracked or handicapped (Continued on Page 11, Col. 1)

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed?" -- Isaiah 53:5.

He came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of man. He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. He became the Son of Man that we might become sons of God. He came from Heaven, where the rivers never freeze, winds never blow, frosts never chill the air, flowers never fade, and no one is ever sick. No undertakers and no graveyards are there, for no one ever dies -- no one is ever buried.

He was born contrary to natural laws, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity. Only once did He cross the boundary of the land -- in childhood. He had no wealth or influence, and no college education, yet the profoundest wisdom of men has never equalled His last discourses in John 13 to 17 and the Sermon on the Mount. "Never man spake like this Man."

His relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential. In infancy He startled a king. In boyhood He puzzled the doctors, even at twelve years of age, proving He was far in advance of the theologians, for He was taught of God. In manhood He ruled the elements so that He quieted the raging sea and defied the laws of gravitation by walking on the water. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book, yet not all the libraries of the country could hold the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme of more songs than all songwriters combined.

He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine, and yet He healed more broken

hearts than the doctors did broken bodies.

He never marshalled an army, drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun, yet no leader ever made more volunteers, who have under His orders made rebels stack arms or surrender without a shot being fired.

He is the Star of Astronomy, the Rock of Geology, the Lion and the Lamb of Zoology, the Harmonizer of all discords, and the Healer of all diseases. Great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, Death could not destroy Him, the grave could not hold Him, and even demons obeyed Him. He fed the hungry multitudes with a boy's little lunch, broke up funerals, and gave back to life those that were dead.

He laid aside His purple robe for a peasant's gown. He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor. As to how poor, ask Mary, ask the Wise Men. He slept in another's manger; He cruised the lake in another's boat; He rode on a borrowed beast; He was buried in a rich man's tomb.

All failed, but He never.

He conquered death, rose on the third day as He said He would, ascended into Heaven, is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God, and will one day come in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory for His born-again, blood-bought ones, who will be forever with Him according to promise. After, He will judge the world in righteousness, when every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall confess Him as Lord -- His friends gladly, but His enemies in great fear, seeking for a place to hide from His face (Rev. 6:15).

The ever Perfect One -- He is the Chief among ten thousand, the only One Who can satisfy the soul and give everlasting life to those who have it not.

He is altogether lovely, and He is my Savior. --Author unknown

HEALING

(Continued from Page 10)

capped Christian, He promises and gives grace to endure and conquer. For 25 years, I have known that grace and recognize it as miracle-working!

At the very heart of the gospel is the Lord's call to the believer to exercise a trust which has no strings attached. It is similar to the trust of the three Hebrew young men who were called upon to renounce their faith or be cast into a blazing furnace. Their response was that God could indeed deliver them from the furnace, but they added that they were prepared to serve God even if He did not deliver them from it (Daniel 3:17-18).

The Christian stance, it seems to me, is to steadfastly affirm that God can and does indeed heal. At the same time, we affirm: Healed or not, I trust!

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For the believer, that is no abstract doctrine -- it is a present reality. It's a daily miracle!

--Evangelical Baptist
In the Gospel Witness

HE'S COMING

(Continued from Page 1)

together." verse 11, "God said, let the earth bring forth." verse 14, "God said, verse 20 "God said." verse 24 "God said." Now I ask you, just whom do you think God was talking to?

The very beginning of the Word of God tells us so very plainly that God spoke, He spoke verbally, He spoke with power and with the might of the Almighty sovereign and supreme God that He is. And unless you conceive of God as some muttering, senile, mindless being; then you must surly know that He wasn't talking to Himself. Nay, for God was not alone, in the be-

ginning.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The same was in the beginning with God. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

Genesis 1:26 when, "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Hear me! He wasn't talking to himself. He was talking to His Son, to our Lord, to our saviour, there with the Father before the very foundations of the world were ever formed.

Oh, beloved, before we can understand anything about the second coming of Christ Jesus, we must first understand about His first coming. He came, born of woman, into this world, a sacrifice for man, and yet, not for all mankind. (I'll come back to this later) God demanded a sacrifice for sin, and Christ Jesus, God's only begotten Son, was, and is, the only perfect sacrifice acceptable unto God. Hebrews 9:1-11 tells of that sacrifice demanded of God under the law. Verse 12 says, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, (whose blood? God's own blood, flowing in the veins of Emmanuel, God manifested in the flesh.) He entered in once, into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

That's why He came the first time. He came to die for us. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). We are all going to die. That's appointed unto us by God. But that's not the end of it all. When this life, as we know it, is over; then comes the judgment. Some day we will all come before

Almighty God to be judged for our sins. Some will be cast out into the lake of fire, a place prepared for the lost. And the others shall enter into the portals of heaven, a place also prepared, prepared for the saints of God. He came the first time to suffer in our stead. He died that we, His people, people chosen by the Father, given to the Son back yonder in the council halls of glory may live and live eternally.

He is coming again, and His second coming will be as His first coming was. For His people! He came the first time to die for His people. He is coming the second time for His people. I Thessalonians 4:13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as other which have no hope." You see, there are those that have no hope. There are some, maybe even some of you that have no hope, that believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ. If that be true, then listen to me, hear the words of the Lord. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." When will God bring these saints with Him? When Jesus returns for His own, that's when. "For this we say unto you, by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." (That's those that are asleep in death, having died believing on Christ Jesus). For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

Every one of those untold multitudes, a number that cannot even be imagined, that have gone on before, believing that Jesus came to die for their sins; every one of them will rise bodily from the grave.

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Praise God! What a day it will be when we see Jesus.

Oh, He is coming again. I don't know when; I don't know if it will be in the morning or at supper time; I don't know if He will come in the middle of the night or midday fair; but I know that He is coming, and I know, oh yes, I know that He is coming for me. I may be in the grave when He comes, or I may still be alive waiting and watching.

Whenever He comes, I know He is coming for me. Not because I am so good, for this I am not. Nor will He take me because of anything I have done, or said. Not for praying through, or begging, or what ever anyone may imagine. Nay, but He is coming for me because I am one of His people, begotten in Christ Jesus. Believing on His name.

I ask you in closing, what about you? John 3:18 "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but He that believeth not is condemned already, because He hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

WHAT

(Continued from Page 1)

ing here to some very religious people. However, he did not ask them about their religion or how strictly they adhered to it. The question is not, what church do you belong to? The question is not, have you been baptized? The question is not, are you good to your fellow man? The question is, what think ye of Christ?

There are some who do not think very highly of Him. The Pharisees did not. They were more concerned with their hypocritical religion than they were with Him. The religionists of our day are the same. What is important to them is their tradition, their theology, their converts. What they do and how they do it, is, in their eyes, much more important than who Christ is and what He has done. You could remove the very mention of the name of Christ from some churches, (so called), and their services would not change a bit. They come together to worship themselves, not to worship Jesus Christ.

There are others who do not think of Christ at all. They want no part of God and religion. They are content in their sin. They lead what they consider to be a life of pleasure and anything which would interrupt that life is unthinkable. They want to be left alone. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." (Romans 1:28).

The Pharisees answer Jesus by stating their belief that the Christ would be the son of David. They were looking for a temporal deliverer, not a spiritual one. Many times we think the same way. We believe that if only the right person were in the right place everything would be fine. If only we had the right President everything would be right with our country. If only I had the right husband or wife everything would be right with my marriage. If only we had the right pastor everything would be right with the church. You can see, can you not, why the world will be so ready to accept the Antichrist. He will be the right man, in the right place, at the right time. The Pharisees hoped for the son of David to deliver them from the bondage of the Romans. They had no thoughts of the Son of God coming to deliver them from their sins.

Jesus replies to the Pharisees with another question. "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:45). Christ is indeed the son of David, but He is also the Son of God. He is deity incarnate, God in the flesh, God with us. If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, indeed that He is God, you are yet in your sins. You can be wrong on many things and still get to heaven, but you cannot be wrong on who Jesus is and expect to make it there. If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, then you are headed for hell.

Is this a deep theological idea that God has manifested Himself as a human being? Yes, it is. In fact it was so deep that the Pharisees who were the theological doctors of their day could not

answer Him. "And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (Matthew 22:46). It was too deep a subject for them to comprehend. There are many things too deep for you to understand, yet you believe them to be true. How is it that the stars hang in the sky? Do you understand that? Yet you believe the stars are there. How does gravity pin us to the earth and keep us from flying off the planet as we circle in space? Do you understand that? Yet you believe in the effects of gravity. Many of the things of God are hard to understand. That is why He has given us the Bible. It is the Word of God. God cannot and would not lie. When He tells us in His Word that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man, we can believe that with no doubts whatsoever.

Do not be as the Pharisees. Have no doubts about the person and work of Jesus Christ. If you are to be saved from your sins, you must believe on Him. You must trust Him as your own personal Saviour. Your works are no good. Your church membership is no good. Your baptism is no good. Christ and Christ alone saves. Believe in Him today.

THE PRESIDENT KEPT THE SABBATH

The elder John Adams, while President of the United States, as he was returning from the country to his family in Boston, was interrupted by a New England snowstorm, which effectually blocked up his way. He was then at Andover, twenty miles from Boston, where his family, as he had learnt, were waiting for his arrival. On Sabbath morning the roads became, for the first time, passable. On the question of going to Boston that day, it was the opinion of the clergyman of the place that the circumstances of his detention and the sickness of his family would justify his travelling on the Sabbath. His reply was, that the justifiable occasion in this case would not prevent the bad influence of his example on those who might see him travelling on the Sabbath without knowing the cause. He, therefore, decided to wait till Monday.

--The Sower

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APPRECIATED LETTERS

Brother Wilson, I appreciate the paper very much and your stand on the Scriptures. I was very much pleased with your discourse in the July 8, 1989 paper. Keep up the good work.

Elder James Hamric,
Ellaville, Ga.

SEPARATION UNTO THE LORD FROM ALL EVIL

If the believer is to have a life of maximum blessing and the smile of God upon his enterprises, he cannot ignore the divine principle concerning separation. Be ye separate, saith the Lord (II Corinthians 6:17). This is as distinct a command as "Thou shalt not steal" or any other injunction of the Decalogue. The Christian walking worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:10) will therefore be a separated person -- separated unto Jesus and from the world and all evil associations. This must not be misunderstood. It is not isolation from perishing sinners, but only separation from defiling associations.

The Unequal Yoke will be shunned as the plague lest ruin overtake himself, delight be given to the devil, and dishonor done to the Lord. Scripture says most emphatically, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Corinthians 6:14) and this command is ignored at our peril. There is the Ordinary Friendship Yoke. Men and women are social creatures. Quite naturally and rightly they want to make friends. Disciples following their Master closely will have as their intimate companions only those who fear God (Psalm 119:63). They will not become intimate friends with those who live without God, disown His authority, reject His Son, neglect His Book, desecrate His day and resist His Spirit; although, of course, they will be courteous and kind to such, and seek by all means in their power to win the souls of these indifferent and godless ones to the Lord and His Truth.

Many believers have had brought home to them, by the Spirit of God applying the Word of God, that their friendship with the ungodly has been hindering their growth in grace and been displeasing to the Lord; and then they have had no peace of mind, and only a clouded fellowship with the Master, until the sin has been confessed and the unbecoming intimacy severed. One very truly comments, "countless discipleships are being ruined by worldly friendships". And another teacher gives this gracious and wise advice, "Learn to live and walk with God; then, no matter where you lot is cast, you will never lose your company." A lonely heart that leans on God is happy anywhere.

The same principle must be observed with respect to the marriage yoke. The Word of God very clearly teaches that no Christian should become engaged and married to one unconverted. God's command to Israel with respect to the nations around them was, "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son, for they will turn away thy son from following me" (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). The New Testament precept is "At liberty to be married... only in the Lord" (I Corinthians 7:39).

Many either through ignorance or wilfulness have acted contrary to this rule and it has led to disappointment and bitterness. Here is the confession of one such -- "I have not had one moment's happiness since I married him; and I have never had a desire for prayer since; and I have never in my married life, crossed the threshold of a place of worship." One pleads with young people thus: "Let me lovingly and faithfully warn you against allowing your affections to go after a worldling. Watch the beginning of such a course. The link may be slender at first, but it will grow stronger; and once Satan gets the yoke securely fastened upon your neck, it will cost you something to get rid of it. How many tears and broken hearts might have been saved had the evil been checked at the beginning. If at the present moment there be a single link between your heart and that of a worldling, I implore you to flee to the throne of grace, and, in deep humiliation of soul acknowledge your sin to God, and seek grace to renounce it immediately. Whatever it may cost you, let the link be cut, and that completely and manifestly. Your soul will only thus escape from the snare of the fowler."

Ministers have heard some young Christians say, "But if I marry him or her I may be the means of leading him or her to the Lord." This is a very subtle suggestion from the devil. The answer is, God forbids the unequal yoke, and there can be no ground for expecting that the line of disobedience will lead to happiness and the conversion of a soul. An old believer once said, "If you, a child of God, marry a child of the devil, you may expect to have some trouble with your father-in-law." Yes, indeed, it almost always leads to unspeakable sorrow.

The Commercial Yoke presents a similar problem. No believer should deliberately enter into a business partnership with an unconverted man. Jehoshaphat, the godly king of Judah, shared in a maritime business venture with Ahaziah, the wicked king of Israel, and this unequal yoke so displeased the Lord that He destroyed the merchant fleet (II Chronicles 20:35-37). Neither profit nor any good, but rather loss, sorrow and disappointment came from that investment and; no other dividend can ever be expected.

The Religious Yoke. Fundamentalists should never unit with those who deny the Faith. No

sound and instructed Christian should attend and support a church where the deadly errors, poisonous suggestions, and infidel doctrines of Modernism are proclaimed from the pulpit. God's command is "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Proverbs 19:27) and "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II Corinthians 6:17). So no home or foreign missionary society claiming to stand wholly for the Lord of the Word and the Word of the Lord should co-operate with those who deny the inerrancy and full inspiration of the Scriptures, and the truth (without any reservation) of all Christ's utterances. Nor should a church or denomination professing to be sound in the Faith link itself with others who are not. There should be no such unholy associations. The devil, of course, wants the line of demarcation to be broken down, and the men who are supposed to stand for the old paths (see Jeremiah 6:16) and for the old Truths to fraternize with the propagators of the new theology. This, however, is to ignore and disobey the clear, divine command to be separate. It leads to compromise, deterioration, the spread of the leaven, the toning down of Bible Truth (which is exclusive) and the opening of the floodgates to the devil's subtle lies. The Evil One has found it most successful.

The refusal to abandon this divinely commanded policy of separation is stigmatized by the carnal professor of religion as very narrow-minded, pharisaical and tantamount to proclaiming "I am holier than thou." According to the Word of God, however, it is the narrow way along which the faithful are to be found, even as it is written, "narrow is the way which leadeth unto life"; and what immediately follows, "few there be that find it," is as significant and startling as what precedes, "broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13-14). As for the rest of the taunt, it is a malicious perversion of the facts.

This separation from all erroneous and false religious circles carries with it a most blessed compensation, far outweighing the pain of the offence of the cross and the other suffering entailed. Its positive benefit is separation unto Jesus -- and so blissful fellowship with Him and all others who are discerners and

know, love, and are valiant for the Truth. In this connection, to be without the camp really means to be within the veil, enjoying communion with the Lord above His blood-stained mercy seat. The separatist has therefore chosen that path which leads to the best and most abiding portion.

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENTS

We have "Studies in First Corinthians 15" by Robert S. Candlish. It is sub titled, "Life in a Risen Saviour." Those who have read after Robert Candlish will not need much encouragement to buy this book. He is an excellent expositor of God's Word. He was one of the great Presbyterian preachers of Scotland, and was a leader in the Free Church of Scotland. This is a great chapter of God's Word, and Candlish does as fine a job of expounding it as I know of. He clearly expounds the truths of this chapter and applies them to

every day practical living for God. The book is a paper back of over 400 pages. It sells for \$12.95. I suggest that you purchase it.

We have "Studies in Romans 12" by Robert Candlish. It is sub titled, "The Christian's Sacrifice and Service of Praise." It is by Robert Candlish. All that is said above about his book on I Corinthians 15 applies to this book. Since the chapter concentrates more on practical things about the believer, this book will be more practical. The book casts much light on the believer in his relationship to God, to fellow believers, in the church, and to a sinful world. I believe that a careful and earnest reading of this book would be a great blessing to any believer and would have a good effect upon his life and service for the Lord. I urge you to purchase this book. It is a paper back of over 350 pages and sells for \$10.95. Order from our book store where the profit goes into the book ministry of our church.



Two worlds meet
(Both False)

SANTA RECEIVES communion

SATAN CLAWS



ARTIST: BOB CLARKE