HOWEVER, FOR GOOD OR ILL, IT IS "MY CHURCH." (COMMENT REGARDING C.R.W. - PIPKIN INSTALLATION) (1968-)

II. HE FOUND HELP FOR THE HARD PLACES IN LIFE - VERSES 5-8: STRENGTH NOT goats OR mules!

THE LORD'S PEOPLE ARE CALLED SHEEP. JESUS TOLD PETER TO FEED THEM. FEEDING IS A REGULAR TASK OF AN UNDERSHEPHERD - FLEECING SHOULD COME RARELY. SOME PREACHERS DON'T KNOW THAT! WHEN PEOPLE COME TO THE HOUSE OF GOD THEY SHOULD BE HELPED AND NOT HINDERED IN THEIR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. (RELATE SANGSTER STORY) VERSES 5 AND 7 THE TEXT SAYS OUR STRENGTH IS IN THEE - NOT IN ME! THE BIBLICAL FORMULA IS, STAY CLOSE TO HIM AND WE STAY STRONG. "IN CONCLUSION, BE STRONG - NOT IN YOURSELF BUT IN THE LORD, IN THE POWER OF HIS BOUNDLESS RESOURCE." (EPH. 6:10 - PHILLIPS TRANSLATION). IN JOSHUA 1:6-9 THE LORD REPEATS THE WORD STRONG SEVERAL TIMES IN ENCOURAGING JOSHUA TO BE BOTH COURAGEOUS AND STRONG IN THE FAITH OF HIS ENEMY. VERSE 6: COMES TO ALL SOONER OR LATER - EVEN TO THE STRONG. THE STRONG SOMETIMES WEEP. THE WORD "BACA" MEANS WEEPING. COMMENT REGARDING LAST SUNDAY - TWO WOMEN WHOSE HUSBANDS ARE SLOWLY DYING OF CANCER. CEMETERY EXPERIENCE - FOUR IN ATTENDANCE. VERSE 8 - SUPPLICATION FOR SORROW. IF SORROWS, DISAPPOINTMENTS AND DIFFICULTIES DID NOT INVADE OUR LIVES MANY OF US WOULD NEVER FIND THE PRAYER MEETING OR THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN OUR LIFE. WHEN OUR BACKS ARE TO THE WALL, OUR KNEES FIND THE POSTURE OF PRAYER.

CONTENTMENT

III. HE FOUND THAT REAL SATISFACTION COMES FROM GODLINESS NOT WICKEDNESS - SATISFACTION

VERSES 9-12

VERSE 10: ONE DAY WITH THE LORD IS BETTER THAN A THOUSAND ANYWHERE OR WITH ANYONE ELSE. THE DIFFERENCE IS BETWEEN A DOORKEEPER AND A DWELLER. LEUPOLD SUGGESTS THAT THE WORD DOORKEEPER REFERS TO ONE WHO IS ABLE TO ADVANCE ONLY TO THE THRESHOLD OF THE TEMPLE. IN HIS MIND HE PREFERRED A THRESHOLD EXPERIENCE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD TO A THRONE OR A TENT OF GODLESSNESS. THE PRODIGAL SON THOUGHT HIS FAME AND FORTUNE WERE IN THE FAR COUNTRY BUT IN REALITY THEY WERE IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE. HE DISCOVERED THAT WHEN YOU EAT AT THE DEVIL'S TROUGH, YOU SLEEP IN THE DEVIL'S PIGPEN. THE LORD IS THE GIVER OF GOOD THINGS IN OUR LIVES. WHEN WE FIRST CAME TO BURR OAK IN THE EARLY 1960'S, A MAN STARTED ATTENDING PRAYER MEETING WHO WAS A BUSINESSMAN IN ALBION. HE PURCHASED A SCOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE AND KEPT ON ATTENDING PRAYER MEETING EVEN BREAKING UP IN PRAYER GROUPS THOUGH HE DID NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE PRAYING. AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS OF SUCH UNUSUAL ACTIVITY, HE CAME FORWARD ONE SUNDAY MORNING TO RECEIVE CHRIST AS SAVIOUR. HE RELATED TO ME HIS STRANGE CONDUCT WHILE UNDER CONVICTION. COMMENT REGARDING SHOWER AND COVERS. THAT DAY HE DISCOVERED THAT REAL SATISFACTION IN LIFE COMES FROM GODLINESS, NOT WICKEDNESS. THAT HAS BEEN TRUE IN EVERY CHURCH OF OUR MINISTRY. RELATE NORTHVILLE - WESTPHALS. BCC - JIM HEATON.

Heb. 11:24-25

= Temporary advantage of power, position, pleasure - Faith sees greater riches than Egypt!

Chesterfield's — Permanent = Temp.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JULY 10, 1988

THE MAN WHO LOVED TO GO TO CHURCH

PSALM 84

DISTINCTION: MOST DISPENSATIONALISTS BELIEVE THE CHURCH DID NOT EXIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT BUT IS A NEW ENTITY THAT CAME INTO EXISTENCE ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST. THE IDEA IS NOT TO BLUR BIBLICAL DISTINCTIVES BUT TO APPLY THE IDEA OF WORSHIP IN THE HOUSE OF GOD BY CALLING THE LOCATION BY ITS NEW TESTAMENT NAME.

INTRODUCTION: IN THE HEBREW BIBLE, VERSE 1 BEGINS: "TO THE CHIEF MUSICIAN". IN OTHER WORDS IT WAS WRITTEN TO THE CHOIR DIRECTOR IN THE TEMPLE. "GITTITH" (1) MELODY OR (2) MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. THIS PARTICULAR PSALM WAS SUNG AT THE TREADING OF THE GRAPES AT THE WINEPRESS. "SONS OF KORAH" - THE WRITERS OF THIS PSALM WERE TEMPLE MUSICIANS AND ALSO KEEPERS OF THE GATE IN THE TABERNACLE. (I CHRON. 9:19, NUMBERS 16)

BACKGROUND: THE WRITER MAY HAVE BEEN FAR FROM HOME AND THE HOUSE OF GOD. HE REFLECTED ON THE LOST PRIVILEGE OF WORSHIP AND REVEALED HIS INTENSE DESIRE TO BE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD. POINT: THERE HAVE BEEN AND ARE PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO GO TO CHURCH. WILLIAM JAMES SAID THAT SOME PEOPLE'S RELIGION IS A DULL ACHE WHILE OTHERS IS AN ACUTE FEVER! THIS MAN HAD A SPIRITUAL FEVER FOR GOD. TO HIM CHURCH WAS A BLESSING, NOT A BURDEN. THE SPIRITUAL MAN WILL ALWAYS HAVE A HIGH PRIORITY REGARDING THE HOUSE OF GOD. (RELATE CAT STORY AND CHERYL.)

THE PSALM IS DIVIDED INTO THREE STANZAS FROM WHICH WE MAY LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT THE WRITER'S ATTITUDE FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD.

I. HE FOUND THE HOUSE OF GOD TO BE A PLACE OF "SANCTUARY" - VERSES 1-4 (Some-drag-delight)

A Sense of Belonging - CRW RKS

THE WORD SANCTUARY MAY REFER TO A PLACE OF SAFETY. A PLACE OF HELP, HIDING, AND HOPE. (IT IS SO USED REGARDING POLITICAL ALIENS.) THE SANCTUARY PLAYED A LARGE ROLE IN THE PSALMIST'S LIFE. IT WAS THERE HE COULD ESCAPE FROM THE PHILOSOPHY AND THE PACE OF THE WORLD AND WORSHIP GOD. HE MENTIONS THREE DISTINCT IDEAS ABOUT THE SANCTUARY:

A

'A Lovely Sanctuary'

(A) THE SANCTUARY OF GOD WAS A LOVELY PLACE (V. 1)

THERE IS SOME QUESTION WHETHER THE WORD AMIABLE MEANS (1) LOVELY OR (2) LOVED. BOTH IDEAS ARE TRUE. THE HOUSE OF GOD PLAYED A LARGE PART IN THIS SPIRITUAL MAN'S LIFE AND IN HIS VIEW IT SHOULD BE A BEAUTIFUL, INVITING, RESTFUL, COMFORTING AND WORSHIPFUL PLACE. BY THE WAY, IT SHOULD BE CLEAN AND WELL KEPT - OUR TESTIMONY IS AT STAKE BY OUR APPEARANCE! THOSE WHO HAVE NO MESSAGE MAKE TOO MUCH OF RITUAL AND FACILITIES AND WE WHO HAVE A BIBLICAL MESSAGE SOMETIMES MAKE TOO LITTLE OF IT! (COMMENT REGARDING CATHEDRAL IN SAN FRANCISCO - ONE OF THE BUILDINGS ON THE TOUR.) (B) SOME FOLK NEVER SEEM TO FIT IN ANY LOCAL CHURCH. VANCE HAVNER SAYS THEY ARE LIKE THE NEIGHBORHOOD DOG - THEY WEAR NO COLLAR, THEY SIMPLY ROAM ALL OVER THE NEIGHBORHOOD, NEVER HAPPY, NEVER DEPENDABLE, NEVER EVER SETTLED. (COMMENT REGARDING AL KIZMAN REGARDING THE DIFFICULTY IN DETROIT - NO SENSE OF BELONGING.) FIND A PLACE AND A PROGRAM TO WHICH YOU CAN BE LOYAL AND BE LOYAL! NO CHURCH WILL FIT ALL OF OUR FOIBLES BUT THE MESSAGE IS THE KEY!

A

The way we should spoke with one believe

"Dear Dog" Trail Made

B. A Longed For Sanctuary

(B) THE SANCTUARY OF GOD WAS A LONGED FOR PLACE - VERSES 2-3

WHEN THE WRITER-WORSHIPPER, PERHAPS IN A DISTANT LAND, THOUGHT OF THE WONDERFUL PRIVILEGE HE NO LONGER ENJOYED HE THOUGHT OF THE BIRDS WHO COULD BUILD THEIR NESTS NEAR THE TEMPLE AND HE THOUGHT OF THEM AS FORTUNATE INDEED. MANY TIMES THE VALUE OF OUR PRIVILEGE IS NOT KNOWN UNTIL IT VANISHES. (SLOGAN - "IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO BELONG TO CALVARY") WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF..."I CAN'T WAIT TO GET TO CHURCH TODAY!" MOTTO: "GET READY (BEFORE) YOU GET READY."

(C) THE SANCTUARY OF GOD WAS A LIVELY PLACE - VERSE 4

THE WORD LIVING SUGGESTS LIFE AND NOT NECESSARILY LOUD. IT MAY BE NICE WITHOUT BEING NOISY. CHURCH NEED NOT BE DULL, DRY AND DEAD. IT SHOULD BE A PLACE OF PRAISE. EVERY CHURCH SHOULD ADOPT THE MOTTO: "P.G.A. - PRAISE GOD ANYHOW." WE SHOULD COME TO CHURCH TO BE AS BLESSING AS MUCH AS RECEIVE A BLESSING. OTHER FOLK ARE NOT INTERESTED IN OUR ORGAN RECITAL. DON'T TELL THEM ABOUT ALL OF THE ORGANS THAT HURT OR WON'T WORK! (RELATE STORY OF MAN WHO SAID PRAISE GOD IN CHURCH - USHERS USHERED HIM OUT. "I CAN'T HELP IT, I GOT SAVED." "WE CAN'T HELP IT, YOU DIDN'T GET IT HERE!")

II. HE FOUND THE HOUSE OF GOD TO BE A PLACE OF STRENGTH - VERSES 5-8

MANY TESTIFY OF THE TIMES WHEN THEY COME TO CHURCH SPIRITUALLY WEAK AND LEAVE SPIRITUALLY HELPED. (RELATE SANGSTER STORY.) THE PSALM SPEAKS OF SEVERAL IDEAS REGARDING STRENGTH:

(A) STRENGTH'S SOURCE - VERSE 5

THE PHRASE IS "IN THEE" AND NOT "IN ME." FORMULA: STAY CLOSE AND STAY STRONG. "IN CONCLUSION, BE STRONG - NOT IN YOURSELF BUT IN THE LORD, IN THE POWER OF HIS BOUNDLESS RESOURCE." (EPHESIANS 6-10 PHILLIPS TRANSLATION) "I AM READY FOR ANYTHING THROUGH THE STRENGTH OF THE ONE WHO LIVES WITHIN ME." "SO, MY SON, BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT JESUS CHRIST GIVES." (II TIM. 2:1) RELATE STORY OF SAMPSON AND JOSHUA. "BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS BECAUSE YOU WILL LEAD THESE PEOPLE TO INHERIT THE LAND I SWORE TO THEIR FOREFATHERS TO GIVE THEM. BE STRONG AND VERY COURAGEOUS. BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE TERRIFIED, DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO." (JOSHUA 1:6-9)

Buds to Count Blessings

(B) STRENGTH'S SORROWS - VERSE 6

THE WORD "BACA" MEANS "WEEPING." SORROW COMES TO ALL SOONER OR LATER EVEN THE STRONG. (RELATE STORY OF COOS BAY, OREGON - DOUBLE RAINBOW) "THE WAY TO THE RAINBOW IS THROUGH THE RAIN." TEARS MAY BE A SIGN OF STRENGTH AND NOT WEAKNESS. THE STRONG SOMETIMES CRY. (RELATE STORY OF JOE GAR WITH REFERENCE TO GERALD FORD.) (PAUL REESE TELLS THE STORY OF TWO MISSIONARIES WHO WENT TO INDIA MANY YEARS AGO. THEY LEFT THEIR SIX CHILDREN WHILE THEY WENT TO ANOTHER LOCATION TO MINISTER THE WORD OF GOD. WHILE THEY WERE GONE, A LANDSLIDE CRUSHED THE HOUSE KILLING ALL SIX CHILDREN. AFTER SUCH A DEVASTATING EXPERIENCE, THE MISSIONARIES WERE NOT BITTER OR DEFEATED. THEY SIMPLY LOOKED UPON IT AS AN ACT OF TRAGEDY IN LIFE THAT HAPPENS TO SOME. THEY WENT ON TO

"Hall of Fame"

Yesterday a funeral - 5/6 checks burned —

ESTABLISH ONE OF THE LARGEST ORPHANAGES IN INDIA. YEARS LATER WHEN THEY TOLD THE STORY OF THEIR MISFORTUNE THAT RESULTED IN BLESSING TO HUNDREDS OF HOMELESS CHILDREN, THE MISSIONARIES SAID: "WE THANK GOD FOR EVERY SORROW THAT HAS COME INTO OUR LIVES." THE COMMENTATOR WHO HEARD THE TESTIMONY SAID: "THERE WERE TEARS IN THEIR EYES AS THEY SAID THIS, BUT THEY WERE RADIANT TEARS."

(C) STRENGTH'S ~~SPEED~~ SPAN - VERSE 7

THE GROWING CHRISTIAN WILL BE A STRONG CHRISTIAN. "FAR FROM FAINTING AND FALLING, HE GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH." (SCROGGIE) THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A GROWING PROCESS. ONE WOULD EXPECT TO GET STRONGER AND STRONGER. THERE MUST COME A TIME WHEN IT IS NO LONGER SURVIVAL THAT IS IN THE MIND BUT SERVICE IS UPPERMOST. (mc Cheyne - poem)

(D) STRENGTH'S SUPPLICATION - VERSE 8

STRONG PEOPLE PRAY. THE STRONGER THE MORE PEOPLE PRAY. I AM PERSUADED THAT IF A CHRISTIAN NEVER HAD DIFFICULTIES, SORROWS, DISAPPOINTMENTS, HE WOULD PRAY VERY LITTLE IF AT ALL. HOWEVER, IN THE MIDST OF ADVERSITY HE FINDS THE PRAYER MEETING OR A PRAYER PLACE A MUST IN HIS LIFE WHERE HE RESORTS TO GOD AND HIS SOLUTIONS FOR LIFE'S PROBLEMS. OUR SORROWS AND FRUSTRATIONS BRING US NEARER AND CLOSER TO GOD. IT IS ON OUR KNEES AND BACKS THAT WE GROW STRONG, ~~NOT~~ ON OUR FEET.

And get

III. HE FOUND THE HOUSE OF GOD TO BE A PLACE OF SATISFACTION - VERSES 9-12

THE WRITER OF SCRIPTURE SPEAKS OF SOME INTERESTING ODDS - 1000 TO 1! ONE DAY WITH THE LORD IS BETTER THAN A THOUSAND ANYWHERE ELSE. THEN HE CONTRASTS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A DOORKEEPER AND A DWELLER. LEUPOLD SUGGESTS THAT THE WORD DOORKEEPER REFERS TO ONE WHO IS ABLE TO ADVANCE ONLY TO THE THRESHOLD OF THE TEMPLE. IN HIS MIND THAT IS PREFERRED TO THE THRONE IN THE TENTS OF THE GODLESS. IN OTHER WORDS, REAL SATISFACTION IN LIFE COMES FROM GODLINESS, NOT WICKEDNESS. (COMMENT ON STORY REPEATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN OUR LOCAL CHURCH. GOOD JOB, NICE HOME, FANCY CAR, INFLUENTIAL FRIENDS, REAL DISSATISFACTION. THE ANSWER TO THIS DILEMMA IS IN A RELATIVELY WELL-KNOWN YET LITTLE UNDERSTOOD STATEMENT OF OUR BLESSED LORD - "MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE." EXPLAIN.) THE PRODIGAL SON THOUGHT HIS FAME AND FORTUNE WERE IN THE FAR COUNTRY BUT IN REALITY THEY WERE IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE. HE DISCOVERED WHEN YOU EAT AT THE DEVIL'S TROUGH YOU SLEEP IN THE DEVIL'S PIGPEN. THE LORD IS A GIVER OF "GOOD THINGS" - GOOD HEALTH, GOOD JOB, GOOD FAMILY, GOOD FRIENDS. IT IS A LONG LIST OF GOOD THINGS. THE PSALMIST CONCLUDES HIS WRITING AROUND THE WORD TRUST. THROUGH TRUST, HE LEARNED TO RECEIVE FROM GOD THAT SPECIAL HELP HE NEEDED WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN LIFE. (COMMENT ON REGAN'S BOOK ENTITLED FOR THE RECORD.)

POINT: HE TRUSTED IN A MAN WHOM HE BELIEVED LET HIM DOWN.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JUNE 25, 1989

Coward!

Intro
Recovering alcoholic
Sammler...
Thief....
"in recovery Room"...

Trial!

BCL PM July 16, 94

LIFE AFTER DENIAL: THE NEW PETER"

JOHN 1:42

Progress.. "In God's Recovery Room"

Actual Pub. Trial

Intro

"A recovering coward"

WHEN JESUS CALLED PETER TO BE HIS DISCIPLE HE SAW HIM AS HE WAS - IMPETUOUS, OUTSPOKEN, OFTEN MISTAKEN, VERY MUCH A SON OF HIS FATHER. BUT JESUS ALSO SAW WHAT PETER WOULD BECOME - A ROCK, PILLAR, STRONG LEADER IN THE CHURCH. THE LAST PUBLIC APPEARANCES OF PETER IN THE GOSPELS DO NOT SEEM TO MANIFEST ROCK-LIKE CHARACTER. HOWEVER, WHEN ONE VIEWS PETER AT PENTECOST AND AFTER HE IS A DIFFERENT PERSON. SPIRIT-FILLED, SPIRIT-LED, HE MANIFESTS A NEW SIDE TO HIS MINISTRY THAT ENCOURAGED AND ENLARGED THE INFANT CHURCH. (SOMEONE SAID OF PETER THAT JUST WHEN HE THOUGHT HE WAS THE ONLY PEBBLE ON THE BEACH HE LEARNED THAT THERE WAS A LITTLE ROCK IN ARKANSAS!) LET US SEE THE "NEW PETER" AS SUGGESTED BY HIS POSTURE AND PROCEDURE IN THE BOOK OF ACTS.

Keeping Updated on His Preaching

I. PETER STANDING TO PREACH - ACTS 2-14FF-37

THIS IS THE FIRST RECORDED SERMON PREACHED IN THE NEW CHURCH. THE THEME WAS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS. IT IS ALWAYS A GREAT MOMENT WHEN SOMEONE STANDS UP AND SPEAKS UP FOR JESUS. A FEW WEEKS BEFORE, PETER HAD BEEN "STANDING" IN A DIFFERENT PLACE. (COMPARE JOHN 18:[illegible], 16, 25) NOW PETER HAD FOUND BOTH HIS FEET AND HIS VOICE. HE WHO HAD DENIED CHRIST NOW DECLARES AND DEFENDS HIM. WHAT HE SAID WAS CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY HIS AUDIENCE. (A YOUNG PREACHER IN A COLLEGE TOWN HAD BEEN STUNG BY THE CRITICISM FROM HIS CULTURED CONGREGATION. HE WAS ACCUSED OF

"What we say depends on where we stand!
+ Sit! Psa 1:1!

BEING TOO BIBLICAL IN HIS PREACHING - NOT BROAD ENOUGH, WELL READ ENOUGH TO SUIT THE NEEDS OF HIS CONSTITUENTS. HE SOUGHT THE ADVICE OF AN OLDER PASTOR AND CONFIDED IN HIM THAT HIS CONGREGATION WAS INDEED MADE UP OF PEOPLE WHO WERE IN LARGE MEASURE BETTER EDUCATED THAN HIMSELF. FOR EXAMPLE, IF HE MADE REFERENCES TO GEOLOGY, HISTORY, LITERATURE, PSYCHOLOGY THERE WERE THOSE IN THE CONGREGATION WHO KNEW FAR MORE ABOUT THE SUBJECT THAN THE SPEAKER. HE WAS CONCERNED AND ASKED THE OLDER PASTOR WHAT HE SHOULD DO. "PREACH THE BIBLE, DEAR BROTHER, THEY WILL KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THAT!") PETER WAS A MODEL IN HIS PREACHING FOR OTHERS. HE FOLLOWED THE BEST HOMILETICAL TRADITION - HE STOOD UP, SPOKE UP AND SHUT UP! (COMMENT REGARDING BLOW IN, UP AND OUT.) ONE IS REMINDED IN SCRIPTURE THAT THE BELIEVER NEEDS TO **STAND**. (BY WHOM ALSO WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND...." ROMANS 5:2, GALATIANS 5:1, "WHEREFORE TAKE UNTO YOU THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND IN THE EVIL DAY, AND HAVING DONE ALL TO **STAND**. **STAND** THEREFORE...." EPHESIANS 6:13-14A. THE BELIEVER IS TOLD TO WITHSTAND OR RESIST EVIL AND TO STAND WITH HIMSELF COVERED BY THE ARMOR OF GOD. WHERE WE STAND DEPENDS ON WHERE WE SIT. H. H. HUMPHREY WE ARE OFTEN ASKED WHERE WE STAND ON ISSUES. WE ARE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE A STAND, TO STAND TALL, TOE TO TOE, TOGETHER OR FOR THE TRUTH. WE SING "STAND UP FOR JESUS." HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE CLEAR, SIMPLE FACT IN SCRIPTURE AND THAT IS PEOPLE WHO DO NOT STAND FOR THE LORD IN LIFE WILL STAND BEFORE HIM AFTER DEATH. (I COR. 15:1-REV. 20:12)

("LAST STAND")

"Moreover, brethren I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. (are your feet "set" in the gospel)

The platform for preaching!

"MOREOVER BRETHREN I DECLARE UNTO YOU THE GOSPEL WHICH I PREACHED UNTO YOU, WHICH ALSO YE RECEIVED AND WHEREIN YE STAND..." "ARE STANDING."

II. PETER'S STOOPING TO THE POOR - ACTS 3:1-7

ENROUTE TO A PRAYER MEETING, PETER AND JOHN MET A SEVERELY HANDICAPPED PERSON BEGGING FOR ENOUGH MONEY TO MAKE IT THROUGH ANOTHER DAY. I'M IMPRESSED WITH TWO FACTS IN THE STORY. (1) WHERE HE WAS BEGGING AND (2) HOW LITTLE YET HOW MUCH PETER HAD TO GIVE. THIS BEGGAR KNEW WHERE TO BEG. HE DID NOT SIT AT THE DOOR OF THE LOCAL TAVERN OR MOVIE HOUSE OR CIVIC CENTER, BUT RATHER AT THE HOUSE OF GOD WHERE MERCIFUL, WORSHIPPING PEOPLE COME AND GO. I'M NOT SURPRISED THAT PETER WAS BROKE BUT I AM SURPRISED THAT HE DIDN'T LET THE ABSENCE OF MONEY STOP HIM FROM HELPING THE SICK AND THE POOR. WHEN THIS MAN WENT TO CHURCH, HE DIDN'T GET WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR, NAMELY MONEY, BUT RATHER HE GOT WHAT HE NEEDED - JESUS. HE CAME TO CHURCH LOOKING FOR SOMETHING ELSE AND CAME FACE TO FACE WITH JESUS CHRIST AND WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. (COMPARE PSALM 41:1-3) IF THIS POOR MAN HAD DEALT WITH MANY MODERN RELIGIONISTS, SOCIOLOGISTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN GIVEN FOOD STAMPS, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE, CLOTHING FOR HIS BODY, EVEN A MEAL, SMILE, PAT ON THE BACK BUT HIS LAMENESS WOULD HAVE REMAINED! THE CHURCH HAS FORGOTTEN THAT PEOPLE NEED JESUS FIRST. THEY MAY ALSO NEED JOBS AND JACKETS, HAMBURGERS AND HOUSING BUT HE COMES FIRST. (COMMENT REGARDING WELL-KNOWN CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER WHO WAS CRITICIZED BY A FRIEND AND CHARACTERIZED BY SAYING ONCE HE PREACHED JESUS AND NOW HE PREACHES JOBS.) J. SIDLOW BAXTER MAKES A

STATEMENT AS FOLLOWS: "WE USED TO BE TOLD THERE WAS NO USE PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO MEN WITH EMPTY STOMACHS. IT IS NOW FOUND THAT MEN WITH GUARANTEED FULL STOMACHS DO NOT EVEN BOTHER TO LISTEN. FAITH IN MONEY INSTEAD OF FAITH IN GOD HAS ENGENDERED A HARD-HEADED MATERIALISM, AN EDUCATIONAL SECULARISM AND A HOLLYWOOD PROFANITY WHICH HAS WON AMERICA THE NAME - A MODERN BABEL." (COMMENT ON STORY CONCERNING THE MAN WHO FELL INTO A HOLE.)

III. PETER STRUGGLING WITH PREJUDICE - ACTS 10:9-28

THE FIRST 9 CHAPTERS OF ACTS DEAL WITH THE GOSPEL TO THE JEWS. A GREAT BARRIER OR DIVISION EXISTED BETWEEN JEWS AND GENTILES NOT UNLIKE RACE PROBLEMS OF OUR DAY. FOR CENTURIES THE JEW HAD LOOKED UPON THE GENTILE AS AN ABOMINATION. THE WALL OF SEPARATION BETWEEN THE RACES HAD GROWN HIGHER AND HIGHER WITH EVERY PASSING GENERATION. IN THIS CHAPTER, GOD TAUGHT PETER THAT GOD'S EVALUATION IS THAT ALL MEN ARE EQUAL BEFORE GOD. IN THIS CHAPTER, CORNELIUS WAS ABOUT AS GENTILE AS ONE COULD GET - LIVING IN A ROMAN CITY, EMPLOYED BY THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT, IN THE ROMAN ARMY HE WAS ATTRACTED TO JUDAISM. A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS MAN WHO REVERED GOD AND WHO ATTENDED WQRSHIP, HE MAY HAVE BEEN A PROSELYTE OF THE GATE, THAT IS ONE WHO WAS NOT FULLY INSIDE THE GATE OF SALVATION ACCORDING TO JEWISH RITUAL. TO ACCOMPLISH THE FINAL STEP HE HAD TO BECOME A "PROSELYTE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS", THAT IS ONE WHO HAD RECEIVED THE FULL RITES OF JUDAISM INCLUDING CIRCUMCISION. CORNELIUS WAS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF AN UNSAVED MAN WHO THOUGH LIVING

IN PAGANISM FOLLOWED THE LIGHT THAT GOD GAVE HIM AND THAT OBEDIENCE LED HIM TO MORE LIGHT AND ULTIMATELY TO SALVATION IN CHRIST. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT TO THIS POINT IN THE BOOK OF ACTS, THE EMPHASIS HAD BEEN ON JEWS GETTING SAVED EXCLUSIVELY. IN THIS CHAPTER, PETER, A JEW, LEARNED THAT GOD IS NO RESPECTOR OF PERSONS. HE DOES NOT SAVE PEOPLE ON THE BASIS OF RACE OR POSITION IN LIFE BUT BY FAITH AND FAITH ALONE. THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST WAS LIKE A BATTERING RAM TEARING DOWN THE WALLS OF JEWISH PREJUDICE. IT WAS WILLIAM JAMES WHO SAID THAT A GREAT MANY PEOPLE THINK THEY ARE THINKING WHEN THEY ARE SIMPLY REARRANGING THEIR PREJUDICES. IT WOULD BE A GREAT THING IF THE CHURCH IN OUR TIME ABANDON OUR PREJUDICES AS QUICKLY AS PETER ABANDONED HIS!

IV. PETER SLEEPING IN PRISON - Acts 12:1-6

PETER MAY HAVE BEEN THE BEST-KNOWN PRISONER IN JAIL AT THAT MOMENT. IT WAS OPEN SEASON BY THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST GOSPEL PREACHERS. JAMES HAD ALREADY BEEN KILLED AND IT LOOKED AS IF PETER WOULD BE NEXT ON THE LIST. WITH HIS EXECUTION SET FOR THE NEXT DAY, ONE MIGHT EXPECT PETER TO BE PACING NERVOUSLY BACK AND FORTH IN HIS CELL CRYING OUT TO GOD AND WORRYING ABOUT THE RISE OF THE MORNING SUN. IN TODAY'S WORLD HE WOULD HAVE TAKEN EVERY LEGAL STEP POSSIBLE TO STAY THE EXECUTION. PETER WAS SOUND ASLEEP WITH APPARENTLY LITTLE OR NO CONCERN ABOUT THE NEXT DAY'S SCHEDULE. ALSO, IN THIS PASSAGE, THERE IS AN INTERESTING THEOLOGICAL QUESTION AS TO WHY GOD PERMITTED JAMES TO BE KILLED AND PETER TO BE SPARED. THIS IS ONE OF THOSE MYSTERIES ASCRIBED TO THE PROVIDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. GOD MOVES ACCORDING TO HIS OWN

(Heb. 11:35-36)

I Stank
II Stinging
III Stabbing
IV. Sleeping

SOVEREIGN PURPOSE AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRAYING OF HIS PEOPLE. THIS CHAPTER IS A TIMELY REMINDER TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO SAY THAT IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER WE PRAY OR NOT - IT MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE TO PETER! BY THE WAY, SOMEONE HAS OBSERVED THAT HAD PETER BEEN JAILED IN OUR TIME HE MIGHT HAVE WRITTEN A BOOK ENTITLED How I Escaped From Jail OR Angel in My Cell. THINK OF THE REVENUE AND BOOKS HE COULD HAVE SOLD, THE FILMS AND TV APPEARANCES PETER COULD HAVE USED FOR HIS OWN PERSONAL PROFIT. PETER TOOK EVERYTHING IN STRIDE AND SIMPLY OBEYED THE LORD. IN THE MIDST OF DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES PETER LEARNED HOW GOD WORKS IN THE BELIEVER'S BEHALF. SIMPLY STATED, PETER SURVIVED THE PRISON EXPERIENCE TO SERVE THE LORD ANOTHER DAY. (Like Joseph)

V. PETER SILENCING HERESY - Acts 15:7,12

"Gospel & Believe"

HERESY IS USUALLY HERE OR NEAR IN THE CHURCH. IT SEEMS THAT BAD DOCTRINE IS CONTAGIOUS WHILE GOOD DOCTRINE IS HARD TO "TAKE". PETER WRITES IN THIS REGARD IN II PETER 2:1-3. HE SPEAKS OF THE IMMORAL WAYS AND GREED OF FALSE TEACHERS. THE EMPHASIS ON THE WORD GREED SUGGESTS THOSE WHO USE THEIR FAITH FOR COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE OR TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF THEIR OWN PERSONAL WEALTH. THIS WAS THE FIRST ECUMENICAL CHURCH CONFERENCE AND ONE OF THE MOST UNUSUAL IN CHURCH HISTORY. NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT RESOLUTIONS TO BE PASSED OR THE BEST MOTELS AND RESTAURANTS IN THE CITY, FOR THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT SPIRITUAL MATTERS AND SPECIFICALLY CORRECT DOCTRINE. CERTAIN MEN WERE TEACHING THAT SALVATION WAS DEPENDENT UPON KEEPING THE LAW. THESE MEN WERE SO ROOTED IN THE TRADITION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW THAT THEY WERE

ENDANGERING THE GOSPEL BY THEIR INSISTENCE UPON ADHERING TO LAW. SHARP DISSENT ERUPTED. SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE TO PRESERVE THE DOCTRINAL INTEGRITY OF THE GOSPEL. ONE THING THE DEVIL SOUGHT AND CONTINUES TO SEEK TO DISRUPT IS THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL. How ARE MEN SAVED? BY GRACE OR BY DOING. PETER LEFT NO DOUBT WHATSOEVER. THERE IS ONE WAY FOR JEW AND GENTILE AND THERE IS NO OTHER WAY.

RKS

BCC-AM

11/18/73

OUR FAITHFUL GOD

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23

THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS IS THE BOOK OF SORROW IN THE BIBLE. THE VERY NAME MEANS TO "CRY ALOUD IN DESPAIR." JEREMIAH, THE AUTHOR, WAS KNOWN AS THE WEEPING PROPHET AND THE THEME OF THE BOOK WAS THE INEVITABLE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM. JEREMIAH WATCHED THE NATION DECAY MORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY AND PREDICTED THAT BABYLONIAN ARMIES WOULD SWEEP DOWN UPON THE COUNTRY AND BRING JUDGMENT. IN THE MIDST OF NATIONAL CRISIS, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASY FOR JEREMIAH TO THROW UP HIS HANDS IN DESPAIR. IN THE MIDST OF GOD'S JUDGMENT, JEREMIAH SAW ONE GREAT BIBLICAL TRUTH, NAMELY, THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL. THE VERY DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY OF JERUSALEM WAS PROOF OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS WORD. JEREMIAH KNEW THAT ONE OF GOD'S GREAT CHARACTERISTICS IS THAT HE IS ABSOLUTELY CONSISTENT IN KEEPING HIS PROMISES AND THEREFORE IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP AND TRUST. ONE OF THE REASONS WHY JEREMIAH EMPHASIZED THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD WAS THAT IT WAS THE ONLY HOPE FOR A WAYWARD AND SINFUL PEOPLE. GOD'S FAITHFULNESS STOOD IN GLARING CONTRAST TO THE FICKLENESS, FAITHLESSNESS AND INCONSISTENCY OF HIS PEOPLE. EVERYTHING WAS FALLING APART AROUND JEREMIAH AND CIRCUMSTANCES WERE NOT VERY PLEASANT, HE RESORTED TO GOD'S UNFAILING FAITHFULNESS. THE BOOK OF PSALMS IS ONE OF THE GREAT SOURCES OF MATERIAL ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. "THY FAITHFULNESS REACHETH UNTO THE CLOUDS" (PSALM 36:5). "THOU IN FAITHFULNESS HAST AFFLICTED ME" (PSALEM 119:75) IN PSALM 89, SEVEN TIMES THE WRITER RESORTS TO GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. HE CONCLUDES THE PSALM BY SHOWING THAT THIS GREAT FAITHFULNESS WILL CONTINUE AS LONG AS THE SUN AND MOON STAND AS A WITNESS IN THE SKY TO GOD'S PRESENCE. THE TERM FAITHFULNESS TAKES ON NEW MEANING TO THE BELIEVER BECAUSE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE FAITHFUL GOD. "AND I THANK CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD, WHO HATH ENABLED ME, FOR THAT HE COUNTED ME FAITHFUL, PUTTING ME INTO THE MINISTRY." (I TIMOTHY 1:12). SEE ALSO I TIMOTHY 1:15 "AND THE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST HEARD OF ME AMONG MANY WITNESSES, THE SAME COMMIT THOU TO FAITHFUL MEN, WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO." (II TIMOTHY 2:2) "IF ANY BE BLAMELESS, THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE, HAVING FAITHFUL CHILDREN NOT ACCUSED OF RIOT OR UNRULY." (TITUS 1:6)

I. GOD IS FAITHFUL IN CALLING US TO HIMSELF - I CORINTHIANS 1:9

THE CALL OF GOD TO THE SINNER IS NOT UPON THE BASIS OF MERIT OR WHAT HE DESERVES. IT IS PURELY ON THE BASIS OF GOD'S GRACE. HOWEVER, THE CALL OF GOD OR THE VOICE OF GOD TO THE SINNER REQUIRES THAT WE EITHER ANSWER YES OR NO. GOD HAS CALLED THE BELIEVER TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH HIS SON IN ALL OF HIS SUFFERING AND GLORY. THE PERSON WHO IS CALLED OF GOD IS PART OF A VERY SELECT GROUP. HE IS SOMEBODY - A CHILD OF THE KING. THE CALL OF GOD TO THE CORINTHIANS GAVE MEN HOPE IN AN AGE OF DESPAIR AND DEFEAT. THE CALL OF GOD IN A MAN'S LIFE IS THE ANSWER TO HIS SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS AND INNER FRUSTRATIONS AND OPENS UP A LIFE OF ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES WITH GOD IN CONTROL OF ONE'S LIFE. THERE IS NO GREATER TRAGEDY TO THE HUMAN SOUL THAN FOR SOMEONE TO REFUSE THE CALL OF GOD TO BE SAVED. IT MAY BE SAID THAT EVERY MAN MUST ANSWER ONE OF TWO CALLS FROM GOD. HE EITHER ANSWERS THE CALL TO SALVATION IN CHRIST OR THE SUMMONS TO COURT BEFORE THE JUDGE. GOD'S FINAL CALL TO THE UNSAVED MAN IS TO ETERNAL RETRIBUTION. THIS VERSE TEACHES THAT THE BELIEVER IS NOT JUST CALLED OF GOD TO GO TO HEAVEN BUT ALSO TO ENJOY THE BLESSING AND HONORS ASSOCIATED WITH GOD'S SON. THE SINNER WHO REFUSES GOD'S CALL NOT ONLY MISSES HEAVEN BUT ALSO THE JOY OF KNOWING CHRIST HERE AND NOW. WE HAVE BEEN CALLED "UNTO THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SON JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD." THE WORD FELLOWSHIP COMES FROM A GREEK WORD THAT WAS USED IN GREEK LITERATURE TO DENOTE (1) A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP - IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING WE ARE PARTNERS WITH GOD IN THE GREATEST BUSINESS IN THE WORLD, NAMELY CHRISTIAN SERVICE. (2) MARRIAGE - IN THE FINEST SENSE OF THE WORD, MARRIAGE IS A PROCESS OF SHARING OF ONE LIFE WITH ANOTHER. (3) A RELATIONSHIP TO THE GODS - GOD HAS CALLED THE CHRISTIAN INTO THE ABIDING PRESENCE AND COMPANY OF HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST. JESUS GAVE A VERY INTERESTING STORY IN MATTHEW 22:1-14. IN THIS PARABLE, THE INVITATION GOES OUT TO THE SUBJECT OF A KING TO ATTEND A MARRIAGE FEAST FOR HIS SON. THE CALL WAS SENT OUT BUT NOT EVERYONE WOULD RESPOND. HAVING THE WEDDING GARMENT MADE THE DIFFERENCE. ONE OF FANNY CROSBY'S BEST-KNOWN HYMNS IS "JESUS IS CALLING." THE SECOND STANZE OF THAT HYMN SAYS "JESUS IS CALLING THE WEARY TO REST - CALLING TODAY, CALLING TODAY; BRING HIM THY BURDEN AND THOU SHALL BE BLESSED, HE WILL NOT TURN THEE AWAY."

II. GOD IS FAITHFUL IN TIME OF TEMPTATION - I COR. 10:13

THE PHILLIPS TRANSLATION READS AS FOLLOWS, "NO TEMPTATION HAS COME YOUR WAY THAT IS TOO HARD FOR FLESH AND BLOOD TO BEAR. BUT GOD CAN BE TRUSTED NOT TO ALLOW YOU TO SUFFER ANY TEMPTATION BEYOND YOUR POWERS OF ENDURANCE. HE WILL SEE TO IT THAT EVERY TEMPTATION HAS A WAY OUT, SO THAT IT WILL NEVER BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO BEAR IT." IN TALKING WITH MANY CHRISTIANS FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THIS COUNTRY, OVER A NUMBER OF YEARS NOW, I AM IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT MOST NEW CHRISTIANS BELIEVE TWO DEFECTIVE THINGS ABOUT TEMPTATION. (1) THAT TEMPTATION IS SIN, (2) THEIR TEMPTATION IS UNLIKE ANYONE ELSES. ALSO, DR. CHARLES RYRIE HAS SUGGESTED THAT THERE IS A DANGER IN READING THE LIVES OF SOME GREAT SAINTS BECAUSE IN THEIR BIOGRAPHY VERY LITTLE IS SAID ABOUT TEMPTATION, THAT IS, IT IS TREATED WITH AN UNREALISTIC ATTITUDE AS IF IT WAS VERY SLIGHT OR NONEXISTANT IN THE LIVES OF SOME OF THE GREAT SAINTS OF GOD. THIS IS A SOURCE OF DISCOURAGEMENT TO MOST BELIEVERS FOR THEY UNCONSCIOUSLY BELIEVE THAT TEMPTATION HAS COME TO THEM BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT TERRIBLY SPIRITUAL. IN FACT, THE REVERSE MAY BE TRUE. THE GREATER OUR SPIRITUAL INTEREST, THE GREATER OUR EXPOSURE TO TEMPTATION. LET US LOOK AT THE VERSE BEFORE US AND SEE WHAT IT TEACHES: (1) OUR TEMPTATION IS NOT UNUSUAL OR UNIQUE, THE PHRASE COMMON TO MAN IS SIMPLY THE GREEK WORD "ANTHROPOS." WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOU HAS PROBABLY HAPPENED TO THE FELLOW SITTING RIGHT BESIDE YOU IN CHURCH. HAVE YOU BEEN TEMPTED TO LIE, SO HAS HE. HAVE YOU BEEN TEMPTED TO STEAL, SO HAS HE. HAVE YOU BEEN TEMPTED TO COMMIT INFIDELITY, SO HAS HE. THIS IS SATAN'S JOB AND HE DOES IT WELL. (2) NO TEMPTATION IS BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO WITHSTAND IT. THIS VERSE SAYS THAT GOD WILL NOT ALLOW US TO BE TEMPTED ABOVE THAT WE ARE ABLE TO RESIST. SOMETIMES WE THINK THE TEMPTATION IS TOO GREAT BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE ACCORDING TO THIS VERSE. (3) THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY OF ESCAPE FROM TEMPTATION. THERE ARE NO BLIND ALLEYS OR BOX CANYONS IN THE WORLD OF TEMPTATION. THE WAY OUT WILL COME AT THE EXACT TIME OF THE TEMPTATION. USUALLY THE WAY OUT OF TEMPTATION IS THE WAY OF FLIGHT. THIS WAS JOSEPH'S ANSWER TO TEMPTATION. WE ARE NOT ENCOURAGED TO FLIRT WITH TEMPTATION BUT TO FLEE FROM IT. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT "GOD DOES NOT SHIELD US FROM TEMPTATION, BUT HE DOES SUSTAIN US."

GOD KNOWS THAT OUR MOST VALUABLE EXPERIENCES IN LIFE ARE USUALLY THE DIFFICULT AND TRYING HOURS. GOD WANTS HIS CHILDREN TO BE STRONG IN FAITH AND HE KNOWS THAT THE HEAT OF TESTING BRINGS WITH IT HARDNESS IN SERVICE. THERE IS A LIGHT-HEARTED APPROACH TO TEMPTATION THAT IS REFLECTED IN A WELL-KNOWN SAYING EMANATING FROM A TELEVISION COMEDY PROGRAM, "THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT." THIS ATTITUDE LOOKS AT TEMPTATION WITH A BECKONING GESTURE. IT IS MUCH LIKE THE OLD STORY ABOUT THE HUSBAND WHO WAS MOANING OVER THE FACT THAT HIS WIFE HAD PROMISED SHE WOULD NOT BUY A NEW DRESS. HIS QUESTION TO HER WAS, "WHAT MADE YOU DO IT?" SHE SAID, "THE DEVIL TEMPTED ME." "WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY 'GET THEE BEHIND ME SATAN'?" "I DID," SAID THE WOMAN, "BUT THEN HE WHISPERED OVER MY SHOULDER, 'MY DEAR, IT FITS YOU JUST BEAUTIFULLY IN THE BACK!'" ACCORDING TO JAMES 1:12, GOD IS VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN HOW THE BELIEVER DEALS WITH TEMPTATION. THERE IS SPECIAL REWARD FOR THOSE WHO ARE VICTORIOUS IN THIS STRATEGIC AREA OF SPIRITUAL CONFLICT. THE BELIEVER DOES NOT NEED TO FALL IN THE MOMENT OF TEMPTATION. IT IS NO SIN TO BE TEMPTED, IT IS A SIN TO YIELD.

III. GOD IS FAITHFUL IN CLEANSING OUR LIVES FROM SIN - I JOHN 1:9

THE FIRST OBVIOUS TRUTH IN THIS VERSE CENTERS AROUND THE WORD "CONFESS." THE WORD CONFESS MEANS TO AGREE WITH GOD ABOUT OUR SINS. WE ARE TO TAKE HIS VIEWPOINT CONCERNING OUR SINS AND THEN FORSAKE THEM. CONFESSION OF SIN IS SOMETHING WE NEED TO DO MOMENTARILY AND DAILY. WE ARE TOLD IN EPH. 4:26 "LET NOT THE SUN GO DOWN UPON YOUR WRATH," THIS WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE SHOULD NOT LET A DAY'S ACTIVITY GO BY WITHOUT PUTTING OUR SINS INTO GOD'S HANDS. ONE REASON FOR THIS IS THAT TOMORROW'S ACTIVITIES WILL BRING MORE SIN AND MORE PROBLEMS AND WE WILL BE INSENSITIVE TOMORROW TO TODAY'S FAILURES. FAILURE TO CONFESS OUR SINS IMMEDIATELY COULD AND PROBABLY WILL LEAD US INTO GREATER SIN AND A CONTINUED LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. I AM CONVINCED THAT THE GREATEST SINGLE PROBLEM IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE IS THAT OF LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD BECAUSE OF SIN! FESTERING OF SORES OF SIN KEEP US FROM FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM. I COR. 11:27-32 WOULD INDICATE THAT SICKNESS AND PHYSICAL DEATH WERE BROUGHT TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH BECAUSE THEY WOULD NOT YIELD TO GOD IN OBEYING THIS PRINCIPLE. HOWEVER, IN THIS VERSE, TWO WORDS LEAP FROM THE TEXT TO AWAKEN

" my policy never to say ... unless something good ..." and Roy, is this good."

OUR BLINDED EYES. NOTE "OUR SINS." ONE OF THE OUTSTANDING EVIDENCES OF MAN'S TOTAL DEPRAVITY IS OUR READINESS TO EXPOSE THE FAULTS OF OTHERS RATHER THAN EXTOLLING THEIR VIRTUES. WE ARE VERY CRITICAL OF OTHER CHRISTIANS AND VERY LENIENT WITH OURSELVES. THE GREAT PROBLEMS OF FUNDAMENTAL CHURCHES ARE NOT DRUNKENESS AND IMMORALITY NEARLY AS MUCH AS THE SINS OF CRITICISM AND GOSSIP. WE ARE FAR TOO MUCH CONCERNED WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S SINS AND NOT OUR OWN. THIS VERSE CLEARLY TEACHES THAT WHEN WE CONFESS OUR SINS, WE MAY BE ASSURED OF BOTH FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING. THIS IS GOD'S ORDER AND THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO BE RIGHT WITH HIM. IF THERE IS NO CONFESSION, THERE WILL BE NO CLEANSING AND NO COMMUNION AND NO CONTENTMENT. GOD WILL ACCEPT NO HALF-HEARTED CONFESSION. IT IS EITHER OUT-AND-OUT WITH OUR SIN OR ON-AND-ON TO LOSS OF JOY AND FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM. DR. HOWARD SUGDEN, IN ONE OF THE TAPES WE HAVE IN THE LIBRARY, TELLS THE STORY OF A MIDDLE-AGE COUPLE DRIVING DOWN THE HIGHWAY AND NOTICING A YOUNG COUPLE RIDING CLOSE TOGETHER IN AN AUTOMOBILE. THE WIFE COMMENTED ABOUT THE DAYS WHEN THEY USED TO DO THAT. THE HUSBAND'S COMMENT WAS "I HAVEN'T MOVED." GOD HASN'T MOVED AND IF WE ARE GOING TO ENJOY OUR CHRISTIAN LIFE, WE WILL HAVE TO RETURN TO THE PLACE OF HIS BLESSING. IN THIS DAY WHEN SPIRITUALITY IS ON PARADE AND MEN ARE JUDGED FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE RATHER THAN PRIVATE PIETY, LET US BE SENSITIVE TO THE LORD'S LEADING IN OUR LIVES. DR. RYRIE HAS SUMMED THE SITUATION WELL IN THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT, "TOO OFTEN MESSAGES ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE FOCUS ON CRISES EXPERIENCES IN THE BELIEVER'S LIFE. THE EXORTATIONS OF SUCH MESSAGES NORMALLY CALL FOR SOME CRISES DECISION. IF A CHRISTIAN HEARS SUCH SERMONS YEAR AFTER YEAR, EITHER HE BECOMES INSENSITIVE TO THE CONSTANT RINGING OF THE ALARM BELL OR HE ASSOCIATES SPIRITUALITY WITH CRISES SITUATIONS. LET US WALK WITH GOD IN THE ROUTINE MATTERS OF LIFE AND LET US BE FAITHFUL (I COR. 4:2) BECAUSE HE IS FAITHFUL.

Re-read - maybe put ... pray prudent

ROBERT K. SPRADLING SEPTEMBER 4, 1994

"THINGS TOUCHING THE KING"

PSALM 45

THIS IS A WEDDING PSALM. IT IS A SONG OF PRAISE TO THE KING ON HIS WEDDING DAY. DESCRIBED AS A MAN OF INTERNATIONAL PROMINENCE WHO IS MARRYING A FOREIGN PRINCESS. IN THE HEBREW BIBLE, THE FIRST VERSE OF THE PSALM BEGINS WITH THE INSCRIPTION. IT WAS USED IN THE TEMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE AND WAS PROBABLY SUNG. THE WORD SHOSHANNIM MEANS LILIES. ① Tune IT MAY REFER TO THE TUNE TO WHICH THE PSALM WAS SUNG OR IT MAY INDICATE THAT IT WAS SUNG ② Time IN THE SPRINGTIME DURING THE PASSOVER SEASON. THE LILY WAS A COMMON FLOWER IN ISRAEL. THE WORD MASCHIL MEANS INSTRUCTION. IN ADDITION TO BEING SUNG, THE PSALM WAS MEDITATED ON AND HAD PURPOSE FOR TEACHING SOMETHING ABOUT GOD. THE PSALM THEREFORE WAS SOMETHING LOVELY OR PLEASANT, THE CONTENTS WORTH MEDITATING UPON. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND MAY HAVE BEEN THE MARRIAGE OF SOLOMON TO PHAROAH'S DAUGHTER. (I KINGS 3:1) WE UNDERSTAND THAT IT HAS ONE INTERPRETATION AND MANY APPLICATIONS. DISPENSATIONALLY, WE KNOW THAT THE CHURCH IS NOT IN VIEW IN THIS OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGE. HOWEVER, IT IS STILL TRUE THAT ISRAEL'S MESSIAH IS ALSO THE BRIDEGROOM OF THE CHURCH AND SO THE TRUTH OF THE MARRIAGE OF THE MESSIAH TO ISRAEL BEARS SIMILARITIES TO HIS UNION WITH HIS CHURCH. THEREFORE, THE TRUTHS OF THIS PSALM ARE CERTAINLY APPLICABLE TO THE CHURCH. THE FIRST VERSE IS AN INTRODUCTION. THE WRITER IS OVERFLOWING OR BUBBLING UP OR OVER WITH HIS THEME. THE V.1 PSALMIST WAS SAYING THAT HE WAS VERY EXCITED ABOUT THE SUBJECT OF THIS POEM - THE KING. HE MANIFESTS A HOLY ENTHUSIASM ABOUT THIS MARRIAGE. MEN GET EXCITED ABOUT THE THINGS

THEY ENJOY DOING. THIS WRITER WAS EXCITED ABOUT THE LORD! (COMMENT REGARDING DR. SUGDEN WHOSE ENDEARING QUALITY OF MINISTRY WAS HIS INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM FOR LIFE AND THE THINGS OF THE LORD.)

HISTORY RECORDS THE ACTIVITIES OF MANY FAMOUS KINGS. FROM TUT TO EDWARD VIII TO PRINCE CHARLES - WIDE INTERESTS. IN THIS MESSIANIC PSALM THERE ARE TWO MAJOR DIVISIONS:

I. THE KING AS THE BRIDEGROOM - Vs. 2-9

A. HIS BEAUTY - VERSE 2, VERSE 8

"THOU ART FAIRER THAN THE CHILDREN OF MEN." THE KING IN THIS PASSAGE IS NOT LIKE OTHER KINGS. HE IS MORE THAN HUMAN. HIS BEAUTY IS NOT THE KIND MEN REGARD AS VITAL. ~~IMPORTANT~~. HIS IS AN INNER BEAUTY OR GRACE COUPLED WITH TRUTH. FROM HIS LIPS CAME GRACIOUS WORDS WHICH BROUGHT FORTH SOUL HEALING TO ALL WHO WOULD HARKEN TO HIM. (LUKE 4:22, JOHN 7:46) HE IS NOT MEASURED IN THE WAY MEN MEASURE BEAUTY. HIS WAS ONE OF CHARACTER AND INNER BEAUTY. HIS ESSENTIAL AND OFFICIAL GLORIES WERE OFTEN VEILED DURING HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY. THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT JESUS THAT MADE HIM DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS. HE WAS UTTERLY UNSELFISH. HE DID NOT SEEK OR SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES TO GRATIFY SELFISH AMBITION OR TO RULE THE LIVES OF OTHERS. HE WAS CONTENT TO DO HIS FATHER'S WILL AND SEEMED TO HAVE NO RESTLESS DRIVE TO ACCOMPLISH GREAT DEEDS TO BE SEEN AND PRAISED OF MEN. THE HOSTILITY OF OTHERS DID NOT EXCITE OR FRUSTRATE HIM. HE SOUGHT NO OTHER PLACE THAN TO BE AN OBEDIENT SERVANT TO GOD. OUR LORD WAS UNIQUE IN HUMAN HISTORY. GREAT MEN ARE OFTEN DISTINGUISHED BY EXTRA ORDINARY

GIFTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS WHICH SEEM TO ELEVATE THEM ABOVE THE MASSES OF ORDINARY MEN AND YET ALL SEEM TO HAVE CLAY FEET IN CERTAIN AREAS OF LIFE. THERE WAS NO UNBALANCED WEAKNESS IN THE MESSIAH IN THIS REGARD. IN HIM EVERY GRACE WAS PERFECT. NONE IN EXCESS, NONE OUT OF PLACE, NOTHING LACKING. IN THE ANNALS OF HUMAN HISTORY, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A MAN LIKE THE KING OF THIS PSALM. "GRACE IS POURED INTO THY LIPS." THERE WAS A CHARM OR PERSUASIVE ELOQUENCE AND SIMPLICITY TO THE WORDS AND MANNER OF CHRIST UNEXCELLED IN HUMAN HISTORY. THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS PRESENCE THAT ARRESTED THE ATTENTION OF MEN AND LEFT THEM IN UTTER ASTONISHMENT AND AMAZEMENT AT WHAT HE SAID. MEN LISTENED TO WHAT JESUS SAID. THEY UNDERSTOOD HIS DESCRIPTIVE WORDS. HIS STORIES ARE THE BEST KNOWN STORIES ON EARTH. FEW MEN HAVE BEEN ABLE TO USE WORDS AS JESUS DID. IN MY LIFE TIME, WINSTON CHURCHILL WAS UNIQUE IN HIS USAGE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. THE DAYS FOLLOWING DUNKIRK WERE THE DARKEST IN BRITISH HISTORY. THE INVASION OF ENGLAND SEEMED IMMINENT. FORTY-SEVEN WAR SHIPS HAD BEEN LOST IN THE OPERATION OFF NORWAY AFTER DUNKIRK. WHEN THE EVACUATION WAS FINISHED, HALF THE BRITISH DESTROYERS WERE IN DRY DOCK FOR REPAIRS WHILE THE RAF HAD LOST FORTY PERCENT OF ITS BOMBER STRENGTH. BRITAIN WAS ON THE BRINK OF FAMINE AND HER ARMIES WERE WITHOUT ARMS AND EQUIPMENT. OVER 50,000 VEHICLES HAD BEEN LEFT IN FRANCE. WHEN CHURCHILL SPOKE TO HIS DEFENSELESS FELLOW COUNTRYMEN HE DELIVERED HIS FAMOUS "FIGHT" SPEECH AND SAID: "WE SHALL DEFEND OUR ISLAND WHATEVER THE COST MAY BE; WE SHALL FIGHT ON THE BEACHES; WE SHALL FIGHT IN THE FIELDS; WE SHALL FIGHT IN THE STREET; WE SHALL FIGHT IN THE HILLS. WE SHALL NEVER SURRENDER AND IF THIS ISLAND WERE SUBJUGATED AND STARVING,

OUR EMPIRE ON THE SEA WOULD CARRY ON THE STRUGGLE UNTIL IN GOD'S GOOD TIME THE WORLD WITH ALL OF ITS POWER AND MIGHT STEPS FORTH TO RESCUE AND LIBERATE THE OLD." CHURCHILL MOVED MEN AND NATIONS WITH WORDS. THERE WAS A WINSOMENESS ABOUT JESUS THAT WAS ABSOLUTELY CAPTIVATING. THERE WAS A GRACIOUS MANNER ABOUT HIM, A KIND OF CHARM, THAT ARRESTED OTHERS IN HIS PRESENCE. WE HAVE ALL MET CHARMING PEOPLE IN THE HAPPY EXPERIENCES OF LIFE WHO HAVE TURNED DARK DAYS INTO SUNSHINE, WHO HAVE MADE PEOPLE THEIR WILLING ASSOCIATES AND COULD PERSUADE PEOPLE TO DO WHAT THEY NEVER DREAMED OF DOING. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID: "THERE IS A STRENGTH IN CHARM LIKE THE STRENGTH OF THE SUN WHICH MELTS THE ICE." OUR LORD'S SPEECH WAS A POWERFUL GRACE WHICH RADIATED FROM HIS LIFE. IT CAUSED MEN TO LEAVE BUSINESS AND FAMILY IN ORDER TO BECOME HIS DISCIPLES. IT BROUGHT TRANQUILITY TO TROUBLED HEARTS AND MADE CHILDREN LOVE HIM WITH WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION. HE DID ALL THIS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME BEING HOUNDED BY THE HYPOCRITES OF HIS DAY. OUR LORD NEVER LOST THAT SWEET WINSOME BEAUTY. A KIND OF MYSTICAL RADIANCE PERMEATED HIS LIFE. HE BEGAN HIS MINISTRY WITH WORDS OF GRACE AND ENDED THEM ON THE CROSS IN THE SAME WAY. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THIS PERSON IS CHARACTERIZED AS ENDURING - FOREVER! IN VERSE 8, HIS BEAUTY IS CHARACTERIZED BY THE GARMENTS HE WEARS. HIS GARMENTS SYMBOLIZE BOTH CHARACTER AND CONDUCT. THREE DIFFERENT SPICES OR PERFUMES ARE MENTIONED IN THIS VERSE

(1) MYRRH - A GUM RESIN WHICH COMES FROM A TREE IN SMALL DROPS. PERSONAL COSMETICS WERE OFTEN CARRIED IN SMALL STACKS. USUALLY A SACK OF MYRRH WAS WORN AROUND THE NECK. (RELATE TO SWEET SMELLING PLANT SUCH AS CALLICANCER)

(Grandmother - sheet packet for S. S.)

(2) ALOES - A TREE WITH FRAGRANT FLOWERS AND BUDS.

(3) CASSIA - PRONOUNCED KASHA - A KIND OF BARK SIMILAR TO OUR CINNAMON SOMETIMES USED FOR HEALING PURPOSES.

IN BIBLE TIMES, THERE WERE NO AFTERSHAVE FRAGRANCES AND PERFUMES AS WE HAVE TODAY. THESE NATURAL FRAGRANCES DID THE SAME. (RELATE STORY OF CHILD WHO CLIMBED UPON MOTHER'S LAP AND SAID: "YOU SMELL LIKE MY MAMMA." TO THE CHILD, HER MOTHER HAD A SPECIAL FRAGRANCE OR AROMA UNIQUE TO HER ALONE.)

IN THIS VERSE, THERE WAS A FRAGRANCE ABOUT THE KING WHICH SPOKE OF THE CHARACTER OF HIS LIFE. (SOME YEARS AGO SCIENTISTS IN A SCHOOL IN ILLINOIS FOUND THAT THE AVERAGE PERSON MAY EMIT AT LEAST THIRTY-SIX DIFFERENT DISTINCTIVE ODORS. THEY ALSO SUGGESTED THAT A PERSON MAY BE IDENTIFIED BY HIS "SCENT." JUST AS FINGERPRINTS AND VOICE PRINTS IDENTIFY THE PERSON SO WILL HIS SCENT. DOGS HAVE ALWAYS HAD A NOSE FOR DETECTING SUCH ODORS. NAPOLEON WAS ENAMOURED WITH FRAGRANCES, SO HISTORY RECORDS. IT IS SAID THAT HE USED AS MANY AS FIFTY-FOUR BOTTLES OF COLOGNE IN A MONTH AND CARRIED THEM TO THE BATTLEFIELD. JOSEPHINE, HIS EMPRESS, IS SAID TO HAVE USED SUCH STRONG PERFUME AND SUCH EXCESS APPLICATIONS THE CASTLE WHICH SHE INHABITED NEAR PARIS, WHICH LATER BECAME A MUSEUM, FOR MANY YEARS BORE THE STRONG PENETRATING SCENTS THAT CLUNG TO THE WALLS MANY YEARS AFTER JOSEPHINE DIED IN 1814.)

B. <u>HIS BATTLES</u> - VERSES 3-5

THE WORD SWORD SUGGESTS THAT HE IS A MIGHTY WARRIOR. HIS RIDING IN A VICTORIOUS WAY INTO CONFLICT ARMED WITH ARROWS THAT ARE SHARP TO DEAL WITH HIS

ENEMIES SPEAKS OF A KING WHO IS MIGHTY IN BATTLE. HE IS A CONQUERING KING. THIS IS SURELY THE CASE CONCERNING THE MESSIAH AS REVEALED IN PSALM 2 AND REVELATION 19. THIS KING GOES FORTH TO WAR NOT TO CLAIM NEW TERRITORY OR DEMONSTRATE HIS POWER BUT TO SET FORTH THE VIRTUES OF HIS KINGDOM NAMELY TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ON EARTH WHERE DURING HUMAN HISTORY THEY WERE LARGELY ABANDONED! THIS WILL BE SEEN IN THE END TIME IN CONTRAST WITH ONE WHOSE LIFE IS CHARACTERIZED AS - THE LIE. SOLOMON WAS UNIQUE IN HIS RULE. WISDOM CHARACTERIZED HIS REIGN. THE KING OF THIS PSALM LOVES RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATES INIQUITY. THAT CAN BE SAID OF NO OTHER KING WHO HAS EVER LIVED. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS KINGDOM WILL BE DOING THAT WHICH IS RIGHT. (COMPARE JOHN 3:19, ISAIAH 2:2-4, ISAIAH 11: 3-9) HE GOES TO WAR FOR THE RIGHT REASON AND DOES NOT FIGHT UNTIL AND UNLESS IT IS NECESSARY. HE ALWAYS WINS, HE IS NEVER DEFEATED.

C. HIS BOUNTIES - VERSES 6-9

THE TWO WORDS GOLD AND GARMENTS SPEAK OF THE MAGNIFICENCE OF HIS BEAUTY. HE IS NOT POVERTY STRICKEN, HE IS A KING OF SUBSTANTIAL SUBSTANCE. THE PSALM WRITER HAS DESCRIBED THE KING OF THIS PSALM AS FOLLOWS: "MY LORD HAS GARMENTS SO WONDROUS FINE, AND MYRRH THEIR TEXTURE FILLS; ITS FRAGRANCE REACHED TO THIS HEART OF MINE, WITH JOY MY BEING THRILLS. IN GARMENTS GLORIOUS HE WILL COME, TO OPEN WIDE THE DOORS; AND I SHALL ENTER MY HEAVENLY HOME, TO DWELL FOREVERMORE. OUT OF THE IVORY PALACES INTO A WORLD OF WOE, ONLY HIS GREAT ETERNAL LOVE MADE MY SAVIOR GO."

II. THE KING AND HIS BRIDE - VERSES 10-16

AFTER THE KING'S VICTORY, THE MARRIAGE PROCESSION FOLLOWS. THE JEWISH WEDDING HAD AT LEAST TWO PARTS - THE FIRST IN THE BRIDE'S HOME AND THEN IN THE BRIDEGROOM'S HOME. THE FIGURE OF THE MARRIAGE IS OFTEN USED TO EXPRESS GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO HIS PEOPLE. AS WAS STATED EARLIER, THE INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 45 HAS SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO ISRAEL BUT THERE'S CERTAINLY AN APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH. PICTURED BEFORE US IS THAT OF AN ANCIENT BRIDAL PROCESSION WHICH WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY. THOSE FEMALE ATTENDANTS ARE CALLED KING'S DAUGHTERS AND HONORABLE WOMEN IN VERSE 9. THE ATTENDANTS LIKE THE BRIDE WERE ALL BEAUTIFULLY ARRAYED CLAD IN GOLD AND GARMENTS SUITABLE FOR A WEDDING DAY. THE ATTENDANTS WORE THE VERY FINEST THEY POSSESSED.

A. HER HOMELAND - VERSE 10

THE PSALMIST SPOKE DIRECTLY TO THE BRIDE TELLING HER TO FORGET HER KINDRED AND MAKE HER BRIDEGROOM THE OBJECT OF HER ATTENTION AND AFFECTION. ON THIS HER WEDDING DAY AS THE BRIDAL PROCESSION AND THE MUSIC BEGINS AND AS SHE PREPARES TO JOIN HER BRIDEGROOM AT THE PALACE - SHE SHOULD FORGET LARGELY THE LIFE OF THE PAST AND SUPPORT HER NEW HUSBAND. RUTH IS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF A WOMAN WHO DID EXACTLY WHAT THIS VERSE SUGGESTS.

APPLICATION: THE CHURCH IS TO FORGET ITS WORLDY MOORINGS AND REMEMBER THAT WE ARE A HEAVENLY PEOPLE WITH NEW IDENTITY AND NEW AFFECTION IN ROUTE TO THE GREAT HOMELAND OF THE SOUL.

B. HER HOMAGE - VERSE 11

THE WORD WORSHIP COULD BE MISUNDERSTOOD. THE BRIDE WAS TO HONOR, RESPECT AND BE DEVOTED TO HER NEW HUSBAND. IT WAS NOT HER TASK TO CHANGE, CRITICIZE, CONTROL HIM - NOT YET! HE WAS DELIGHTED EVEN ENTHRALLED WITH HER BEAUTY. SHE SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO BE DEVOTED TO HIM - THOUGH IT MIGHT NOT BE NECESSARY. (RELATE STORY OF LEARNED HAND REGARDING FRANCES.) JUST AS THIS BRIDE IS FULLY DEVOTED TO HER HUSBAND, SO THE CHURCH SHOULD BE TO CHRIST.

C. HER HABITATION - VERSE 13

THE TERM "WITHIN" MEANS WITHIN HER CHAMBER. AS THE BRIDE PREPARES FOR THE CEREMONY, THE SPLENDOR OF HER ATTIRE AND APPAREL IS BREATHTAKING! THE PSALMIST WOULD SAY WITH SURETY THERE ARE NO UGLY BRIDES! HER DRESSING CHAMBER IS A BEEHIVE OF ACTIVITY AS THEY PREPARE TO MARCH TO THE PALACE. HER VIRGIN COMPANIONS IN VERSE 14 ACCOMPANY HER ON THE MARCH. WE CALL THEM BRIDEMAIDS.

D. HER HAPPINESS - VERSE 15

SURROUNDING THIS WEDDING PROCESSION IS A GAY FESTIVITY OF UNUSUAL GLADNESS. THE PROSPECTS OF ENTERING THE PALACE BROUGHT GREAT JOY. (COMPARE GENESIS 24 - ISAAC AND REBEKAH) SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT THERE IS A SMALL DIFFERENCE IN THIS WEDDING PROCESSION - THE ORGANIST WILL PLAY A DIFFERENT SONG NAMELY, HERE COMES THE GROOM. (RELATE TO FREUDIAN SLIP AT BETTY'S WEDDING. SUCH A SLIP WOULD BE APPROPRIATE ON THIS OCCASION. THE KING IS THE CENTER OF ATTENTION. THE BRIDE ARRAYED IN HER WEDDING DRESS SURROUNDED BY HER BRIDESMAIDS IN

HER FATHER'S HOUSE AND AT THE PROPER TIME SHE IS ESCORTED BY THE ATTENDANTS IN A SOLEMN CEREMONY TO THE HOUSE OF HER HUSBAND AND HER HUSBAND'S FATHER. AS THE PROCESSION MAKES ITS WAY THROUGH THE STREETS, ARRAYED IN GORGEOUS CLOTHING, MUSIC PLAYS, PEOPLE SING - IT IS A FESTIVE OCCASION. WE ARE REMINDED THAT GOD IS PREPARING A BRIDE FOR HIS SON AND THAT BRIDE IS CALLED THE CHURCH. IN THIS PSALM, WE GET A GLIMPSE OF WHAT UNION WITH CHRIST WILL BE LIKE.

E. HER HONOR - VERSES 16-17

HER CHILDREN ARE BLESSED INDEED. ~~HER FAMILY WILL BE FAMOUS~~.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING NOVEMBER 16, 1980

[redacted]

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS:
THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T [redacted] STOP Crying

Clinic St. Francis ..Wouldn't Stop talking.... or... or...

MARK 10:45-52

EACH GOSPEL PRESENTS CHRIST FROM A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW. MARK PRESENTS HIM AS THE PERFECT SERVANT. THE KEY VERSE IS 10:45. IN ANCIENT DAYS AND KINGDOMS GREATNESS WAS MEASURED BY POWER REFLECTED IN NUMBERS OF SUBJECTS, SOLDIERS, SUBSTANCE, AND SIZE OF ONE'S DOMAIN. THE MEASURE OF GREATNESS IN HIS KINGDOM IS THAT OF SERVICE. CHAPPELL RELATES THE STORY FROM GREEK MYTHOLOGY CONCERNING ACHILLES WHO WHEN HE WAS BORN HIS MOTHER CONSULTED THE ORACLE OF DELPHI CONCERNING THE BOYS FUTURE. THE ORACLE TOLD HER THAT HER SON WOULD EITHER LIVE (1) A LONG LIFE OF INGLORIOUS EASE OR (2) A SHORT LIFE OF BATTLE AND VICTORY. TO SAFEGUARD THE LIFE OF HER SON, THE MOTHER DRESSED HIM AS A GIRL AND PUT HIM ON AN ISLAND WHERE NOBODY LIVED BUT GIRLS. HIS FUTURE SEEMED TO BE ONE OF IDLE WORTHLESSNESS. BY AND BY, THE GREEKS WENT TO WAR AGAINST THE TROJANS. WHEN THE ORACLE WAS CONSULTED REGARDING VICTORY, HE TOLD THE INQUIRERS THAT THEY COULD NEVER WIN EXCEPT THAT ACHILLES FIGHT FOR THEM. HOWEVER, NOBODY KNEW EXACTLY WHERE ACHILLES WAS SO ULYSSES WAS GIVEN THE TASK OF LOCATING HIM. HE TRAVELLED THROUGHOUT THE LANDS OF THE GRECIAN EMPIRE UNTIL FINALLY HE CAME TO AN ISLAND WHERE NOBODY LIVED BUT GIRLS. DISGUISED AS A PEDDLER, HE WENT AMONG THE GIRLS SELLING HIS WARES WHICH THEY BOUGHT EAGERLY, WITH ONE EXCEPTION. ONE GIRL APPEARED NOT TO BE INTERESTED IN ANY OF THE TRINKETS. AT LAST ULYSSES LIFTED FROM HIS BAG OF WARES A SUIT OF ARMOR AND A SWORD. AT THE SIGHT OF THESE, THE GIRL SPRANG FORWARD SEIZED THEM EAGERLY AND BEGAN TO WIELD THE SWORD. ULYSSES RECOGNIZED THE ACHILLES THE HERO, BECAUSE HE CHOSE THAT WITH WHICH HE MIGHT SERVE INSTEAD OF THAT WITH WHICH HE MIGHT BE SERVED.

OUR LORD CAME INTO THE WORLD NOT TO GET FOR HIMSELF BUT TO GIVE. HE WALKED AMONG MEN AS ONE OF THEM. IN THIS PASSAGE, WE SEE THE PERFECT SERVANT MINISTERING TO THE NEEDS OF HUMAN BEINGS. (THERE'S ANOTHER STORY TOLD ABOUT PETER THE GREAT. AFTER HE HAS BUILT THE GREAT RUSSIAN EMPIRE, HE DECIDED TO BUILD A NAVY. NO ONE IN RUSSIA KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT

SHIPBUILDING. SO, PETER VACATED HIS THRONE FOR A TIME, APPOINTED CATHERINE AS REGENT, LAID ASIDE HIS ROYAL APPARELL, DRESSED AS A COMMON LABORER TRAVELLING TO HOLLAND AND ENGLAND. HE VISITED THE GREAT SHIPYARDS OF THESE TWO COUNTRIES AND WORKED AS AN ORDINARY HAND. NO ONE DREAMED THAT ROYALTY HAD VISITED THE SHIPYARDS BUT IN INDEED HE HAD LEARNED HOW TO BUILD SHIPS BY WORKING WITH THOSE WHO DID SO.)

WHEN JESUS PASSED THROUGH JERICHO ENROUTE TO JERUSALEM, HE WAS FOLLOWED BY A LARGE CROWD. IT WAS THE CUSTOM OF THE RABBI TO TEACH HIS FOLLOWERS AS HE WALKED ALONG THE ROAD FROM PLACE TO PLACE. THAT IS WHAT JESUS WAS DOING AS THEY PASSED THROUGH JERICHO. HOWEVER, THE RELATIVE QUIETNESS OF THE MOMENT WAS SHATTERED BY THE DESPERATE CALL OF A BLIND MAN. THE REACTION OF THE CROWD, AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT, WAS NEGATIVE. THEY BEGAN TO SHOUT AT HIM TO SHUT UP! AFTER ALL, THEY WERE TRYING TO HEAR WHAT JESUS HAD TO SAY AND IN THEIR MIND HIS LECTURE WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE BLIND MAN'S NEED. HOWEVER, THEY WOULD SOON LEARN JESUS DID NOT SEE THE SITUATION AS THEY DID. (RELATE NEWSWEEK ARTICLE REGARDING REAGAN)

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTER IN THIS STORY WAS NAMED BARTIMAEUS. THE PREFIX "BAR" ON HIS NAME LITERALLY MEANS SON. "BLESSED ART THOU, SIMON BAR-JONA: FOR FLESH AND BLOOD HATH NOT REVEALED IT UNTO THEE, BUT MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN." (MATHEW 16:17) BARTIMAEUS IS ONE OF THE TWO BEST KNOWN BIBLE CHARACTERS WHOSE CONVERSION TOOK PLACE IN JERICHO. THE OTHER WAS A TAX COLLECTOR NAMED ZACCHAEUS. COINCIDENTALLY, THE KEY VERSE OF LUKE IS 19:10 IN THE VERY CHAPTER WHICH SPEAKS OF ZACCHAEUS' CONVERSION AND THE KEY VERSE OF MARK IS IN THE PASSAGE DEALING WITH THE CONVERSION OF BARTIMAEUS. A TAX COLLECTOR AND A BEGGAR DO NOT CONSTITUTE THE HIGHER ECHELONS OF SOCIETY BUT JESUS DID NOT MEET MEN ON THE BASIS OF THEIR SOCIAL OR ECONOMIC STATUS BUT WHOLLY ON THE BASIS OF THEIR NEED. FROM THIS PASSAGE WE WILL NOTICE FOUR IDEAS OR LESSONS FROM THE CONVERSION OF BARTIMAEUS:

I. BARTIMAEUS HAD A NEED AND HE KNEW IT. vs-46-47

THE TEXT DESCRIBES THE TWO PRIMARY PROBLEMS IN BARTIMAEUS' LIFE. HE WAS BLIND. HE WAS BEGGING.

BLINDNESS WAS COMMON IN THE DAYS OF JESUS. DISEASES OF THE EYES WERE NUMEROUS TO SUCH AN EXTENT, ONE COULD NOT WALK THROUGH THE STREETS OF ANY CITY WITHOUT SEEING DOZENS OF PEOPLE WHO WERE PARTIALLY OR TOTALLY BLIND. THE REASONS WERE NUMEROUS SUCH AS UNCLEAN PLACES FOR THE BIRTH OF CHILDREN, DISEASE CARRYING FLIES OR DUST LADEN WITH GERMS - ALL CHARACTERISTIC OF THE GENERAL FILTH OF EASTERN LIFE. AS THESE POOR PEOPLE WANDERED AIMLESSLY THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE CITY WITH NONE TO CARE AND NONE TO HELP, IT IS REPORTED THAT THEY WOULD CRY: "BLIND, BLIND, REMEMBER THE BLIND." BARTIMAEUS WAS SUCH A MAN. HE KNEW HE WAS BLIND AND THAT HIS SITUATION WAS HELPLESS AND HOPELESS UNLESS SOMEONE OTHER THAN AN ORDINARY MAN CAME TO HIS ASSISTANCE. IT IS NOT UNTIL ONE SEES HIMSELF IN DESPERATE TERMS BEFORE GOD THAT HE IS EVER READY TO BE SAVED. WE TEND TO LOOK AT OURSELVES AS MAYBE NOT SO GOOD, BUT NOT SO BAD, OR AT LEAST NOT SO SURE OF OUR STATUS BEFORE GOD. NO PERSON WILL EVER BE SAVED UNTIL HE RECOGNIZES HE IS LOST. (RELATE STORY OF LIFEGUARD WHO LET A MAN GO UNDER ONCE OR TWICE BEFORE HE ATTEMPTED TO RESCUE HIM. THE REASON: EASIER TO SAVE WHEN THEY RECOGNIZE THEIR DESPERATE CONDITION.)

WHEN BARTIMAEUS HEARD ABOUT JESUS, HE CRIED OUT FOR MERCY. MEN DO NOT COME TO JESUS UNTIL THEY RECOGNIZE THEIR NEED. THE GREATNESS NEED OF ANY PERSON IS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE PLACE OF RECOGNIZING HIS SPIRITUAL CONDITION BEFORE THE LORD. BARTIMAEUS WOULD HAVE REMAINED BLIND FOREVER AND PERISHED IN HIS SIN HAD HE RESORTED TO THE EXCUSES MEN MAKE REGARDING THEIR NEED OF CHRIST. HYPOCRITES - MANY PEOPLE RESORT TO THE HYPOCRITES IN THE CHURCH AS THEIR REASON FOR NOT COMING TO CHRIST. THIS MISSES THE WHOLE POINT. EVERY SITUATION IN LIFE HAS ITS CROOKS, THIEVES AND PHONIES. THE CHURCH IS NO EXCEPTION. CERTAINLY, THERE ARE HYPOCRITES IN ANY CHURCH BUT WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ONE'S RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST? WE ARE NOT ASKING YOU TO JOIN THIS CHURCH. WE ARE ASKING YOU TO COME TO HIM. (MATT. 11:28)

Happy Hour - Get drunk enough to let him in!

2 GIVING UP TOO MUCH--SOME PEOPLE THINK OF ALL THE THINGS THEY WILL HAVE TO GIVE UP IN ORDER TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN: DRUNKENESS, ADULTRY, THIEVRY, HABITS THAT ARE RUINING HEALTH AND SHORTENING LIFE, AND A LIFESTYLE THAT BRINGS UNHAPPINESS FRUSTRATION AND DISSATISFACTION. (RELATE TO BACHELOR WHO SPENDS HIS TIME GRIPING ABOUT WHAT HE WILL HAVE TO GIVE UP IN ORDER TO GET MARRIED. THAT KIND OF THINKING MISSES THE FACT THAT IT IS NOT A GIVING UP BUT A GETTING SITUATION.)

ALL BARTIMAEUS LOST IN COMING TO CHRIST WAS HIS BLINDNESS! ALL YOU WILL LOSE IN COMING TO CHRIST IS YOUR SIN! 3 I CAN'T LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. MANY PEOPLE SAY THEY WOULD LIKE TO KNOW CHRIST BUT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AT HOME OR AT WORK OR IN THE WORLD IN WHICH THEY LIVE. I AGREE WITH THIS THINKING; IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR MAN WITH HIS OWN RESOURCES TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN HIS OWN STRENGTH. GOD GIVES THE ENABLEMENT. I HAVE MENTIONED ONLY THREE EXCUSES; THERE ARE LITERALLY THOUSANDS, BUT ALL WITHOUT FOUNDATION AND ALL PART OF SATAN'S DISCEPTION TO KEEP PEOPLE AWAY FROM JESUS. FIVE MINUTES AFTER YOU ARE DEAD, EVERY EXCUSE EVER THOUGHT OF OR USED WILL BE UTTERLY FOOLISH AND YOU WILL RECOGNIZE THE FOLLY OF SUCH THINKING. BUT THEN IT WILL BE TOO LATE! (L. Neal - Knew it)

II. BARTIMAEUS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY AND HE SEIZED IT - vs. 48-50 (See Taylor - p407)

WHEN BARTIMAEUS' CRIES SHATTERED THE RELATIVE QUIET OF THAT DAY, THE CROWD REBUKED HIM. THEY WERE UPSET BECAUSE HE SEEMED TO BE EMOTIONAL ABOUT THE SITUATION. THEY DIDN'T WANT HIM TO ATTRACT ANY ATTENTION OR MAKE NOISE. LEARN A SIMPLE FACT OF LIFE: THE CROWD IS NEVER RIGHT WHEN IT COMES TO SPIRITUAL DECISIONS! BARTIMAEUS KNEW THAT JESUS WAS PASSING BY AND IF HE WERE GOING TO GET HELP, IT WAS NOW OR NEVER. HE WAS WILLING TO RISK THE WRATH OF THE CROWD IN ORDER TO GAIN THE ATTENTION OF JESUS. (ISN'T IT INTERESTING: THE CROWD NEVER GETS NERVOUS OR UPSET NO MATTER HOW LOUDLY ONE YELLS AT A SPORTS EVENT BUT LET A SINNER CRY OUT TO CHRIST IN AN EMOTIONAL OUTBURST, FOLK GET VERY SENSITIVE TO NOISE!)

(Neighbor who is divorced - advice on happy marriage!)

THERE IS A STORY TOLD ABOUT A YOUNG MAN WHO VISITED A PUBLIC LIBRARY AND BEGAN WALKING AROUND AMONG THE BOOKS WHICH REPRESENTED THE WRITTEN RECORD OF THE ACCUMULATION OF WISDOM FOR CENTURIES. THE LIBRARY CONTAINED BOOKS ON ALMOST ANY SUBJECT IMAGINABLE TO ENRICH THE MIND AND LIFE IF PROPERLY ENERGY AND EFFORT WERE APPLIED. HOWEVER, IT WAS APPARENT TO THE LIBRARIAN, THE YOUNG MAN WAS UPSET ABOUT SOMETHING. AFTER A TIME OF BROWSING AND IN A DISGUSTED TONE, HE SAID: "WHERE ARE THE COMIC BOOKS?" THIS FELLOW WAS ONE WHO DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIS OPPORTUNITY. HIS INTEREST WAS IN ENTERTAINMENT AND IN ENRICHMENT.

THERE WERE OBSTACLES TO KEEP BARTIMAEUS FROM JESUS. THE CROWD, HIS CONDITION, THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE. THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO WHEN THEY HEAR ABOUT JESUS THEIR IMMEDIATE REACTION IS TO WAIT. WAIT FOR ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER FEELING, UNTIL THEY CAN CLEAN UP THEIR LIVES, THE DECISION OF FAMILY OR FRIEND. HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM AS IT RELATES TO HIS HISTORICAL EVENT IS THAT JESUS PASSED BY AND THROUGH JERICHO THAT DAY NEVER TO RETURN. HAD BARTIMAEUS WAITED ANOTHER HOUR OR ANOTHER DAY HIS OPPORTUNITY WOULD HAVE BEEN GONE FOREVER. JESUS WAS PASSING BY AT THAT MOMENT AND IF HE HAD LEFT THE OPPORTUNITY SLIP, THERE WOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO SEE. TOO MANY FOLK BELIEVE THAT OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SAVED ARE NUMEROUS AND AMPLE IN LIFE. (RELATE THE STORY OF SISERA'S MOTHER - JUDGES 5:28)

NO PERSON KNOWS HOW MANY OPPORTUNITIES HE WILL HAVE OR IF HE WILL HAVE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR ABOUT JESUS. (RELATE TO HERB HAYNES - BETTY BROWN AND OTHERS.) JESUS CHRIST PASSES BY AND CALLS FOR PEOPLE TO COME TO HIM. FAILURE TO RESPONS TO THAT CALL MAY BE FATAL FOREVER!

III. BARTIMAEUS HAD FAITH AND HE EXERCISED IT - Vs 52

IT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND AND EXPLAIN FAITH ON THE TERMS OF DEFINITION ALONE. IT IS EASIER TO SEE HOW FAITH OPERATES IN THE LIVES OF MEN. IN THE CASE OF BARTIMAEUS, IT CAUSED HIM TO CALL OUT TO JESUS, TO COME TO JESUS, AND IT ENABLED HIM TO SEE. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT APART FROM THE EXERCISE OF FAITH IN CHRIST, MEN CANNOT BE SAVED. (ROMANS 10 :17, EPH. 2:8, HEBREWS 11:6)

He knew what he wanted - to see!

I. NEED \ KNOW IT
II. OPPORTUNITY Seized it
III. FAITH Exercised it
IV.

FAITH IS SIMPLY BELIEVING WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT SOMETHING AND ACTING UPON IT. FOR EXAMPLE, IN HUMAN HISTORY BEFORE MEN HAD SEEN IT RAIN, GOD TOLD NOAH TO BUILD A BOAT WHICH HE DID EVEN THOUGH HE DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND WHY AND THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD ASKED HIM TO BUILD IT. HOWEVER, NOAH'S FAITH IN GOD ENABLED HIM TO DO WHAT OTHERS MIGHT HAVE BELIEVED SILLY AND NONSENSICAL. FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISE IS NEVER MISPLACED AND IT IS NEVER WRONG. WE MAY PILLOW OUR HEADS ON WHAT GOD HAS SAID.

IV. BARTIMAEUS HAD AN EXPERIENCE AND HE PROVED IT - vs. 50

THE WORD IMMEDIATELY SUGGESTS THAT BARTIAMEUS' SIGHT CAME INSTANTANEOUSLY AND NOT OVER A PERIOD OF TIME. SOME FOLK LIKE TO GROW INTO SALVATION OR SNEAK UP ON GOD IN SOME KIND OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IDEA. THEY HAVE THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE. YOU MUST BE BORN, THAT IS, YOU MUST HAVE LIFE, BEFORE YOU CAN GROW. MEN CANNOT LIVE A LIFE OF SEEING UNTIL THEIR BLINDNESS HAS BEEN DEALT WITH. WHEN BARTIMAEUS GAINED HIS SIGHT, IMMEDIATELY HE BEGAN TO FOLLOW JESUS. SUPPOSE, BARTIMAEUS HAD PROCLAIMED LOUDLY THAT HE COULD SEE BUT AS HE STOOD TO WALK HE STUMBLED AND FELL AND GROPED AND GAVE EVERY EVIDENCE THAT HIS VISION WAS STILL LACKING. THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE TODAY, LIKE JUDAS, WHO LOOK LIKE, TALK LIKE, CHRISTIANS BUT THE PROBLEM IS THEY STILL GROPE WHEN THEY WALK. THEY CLAIM TO KNOW AND LOVE JESUS BUT DO NOT FOLLOW HIM. THE FACT THAT BARTIMAEUS FOLLOWED THE LORD DEMONSTRATED THE GENUINENESS OF HIS EXPERIENCE. WHEN MEN REALLY SEE, THEIR INCLINATION IS TO FOLLOW JESUS. WOULD WE DARE SUGGEST THAT THE REASON SO MANY PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO KNOW THE LORD DO NOT FOLLOW HIM IS BECAUSE THEY ARE STILL BLIND? IN THE PHYSICAL BLINDNESS OF BARTIMAEUS, WE HAVE A SPIRITUAL PICTURE OR ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT EVERY MAN IS SPIRITUALLY. (II CORIN. 4:3-3)

Not Selfish!

Jn 10

A Beggar turned believer!
A Blind beggar to a Seeing believer

The man who wouldn't shut up or Give up until he could See!

VI. THE SPIRIT SEARCHES-- 1 Cor.2:10-11 (14)

This passage teaches us that the Spirit of God is vitally involved in the truth ofGod. He is the Spirit of revelation who was responsible for the giving of the truth of God over a long period of time in writting the Scriptures. Also, The Spirit of God is the One Who not only is the Author of Scripture, but the Teacher of Scripture It is the Holy Spirit who instructs the saints and unfolds the truth of God to us.

Verse 14

Three Things About The Natural(Unsaved) Man:

1. Spiritually Prejudiced "receiveth not" Does not welcome. He will listen to ideas on religion, philosophy, talk about the Bible at a panel discussion...but point out verses in the Bible...switch to another subject.
2. Spiritually Ignorant--"foolishness" 1 Cor. 1:18
3. Spiritually Powerless-- "neither can he know them.

Rom. 1:16...this is the power to change the natural man to the spiritual man in Christ.

VII. THE SPIRIT SPEAKS-- 1 Tim. 4:1

The Spirit of God does not speak today in an audible voice from heaven. He speaks thru the Word of God.

~~Acts 28: 25~~

Acts 8:29 (Phillip)

It is the Spirit of God who warns us of error. (My early experience with doctrinal error. He kept me in the Word and away from the cults.)

JWS C of C.

SEPARATES

VIII. THE SPIRIT OF GOD SENDS--Acts 13:1 (2) Acts 20:28

John 1:6

Isa. 6:8

JOHN 15:16 - Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you, and ordained you...

"ORDAINED OF THE LORD" (Ironside")

(NO SUB FOR A CALL....)

Minister Warned re credentials for Bible preaching Only signature on my credentials - God's

DANGERS - SCHOLARLY TALENTS/ABILITY

"LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS" - Spurgeon

(1) Strives	(5) Strengthens
2. Saves	(6) Searches
(3) Sanctifies	(7) Speaks
(4) Seals	(8) Sends

ROBERT K. SPRADLING NOVEMBER 15, 1992

"Talent on Parade" - For all to see

THE TALENTED

MATTHEW 25:14-30

WHEN WE TALK TALENTS, WE REFER TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE SPECIAL APTITUDES AND ABILITIES. WHEN JESUS TALKED ABOUT TALENTS, HE WAS TALKING ABOUT MONEY. IN JESUS' DAY, LARGE SUMS OF MONEY WERE WEIGHED, NOT COUNTED. A TALENT OF SILVER WEIGHED BETWEEN 75 AND 90 POUNDS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE WORD "SHEKEL" MEANS "TO WEIGH." (A SHEKEL WAS A BASIC UNIT OF MONEY OR COINAGE IN JESUS' TIME.) THE WORD TALENT APPEARS MORE OFTEN IN THIS CHAPTER THAN ANY OTHER PLACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE ARE ONLY TWO OTHER REFERENCES OUTSIDE THIS CHAPTER. THE TERM APPEARS IN NO LESS THAN 7 VERSES IN MATTHEW 25. SIMPLY STATED, THE WORD TALENT HAS TO DO WITH BIG OR HEAVY MONEY. (ONE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WORDS FOR RICH MEANS HEAVY. IT IS THE HEBREW KOVAID.) OUR CONSIDERATION OF THIS PASSAGE WILL DEAL PRIMARILY WITH THE FOUR PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT:

Rev 16:21

I. THE UNCOMMON MASTER - VERSES 14-19

THE WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE THE SERVANTS (DOULOS) AND LORD (KURIOS) SPEAK OF THE EXTREMES IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF JESUS DAY. THE TERM "LORD" REFERS TO A ① DIVINE TITLE, A ② TERM OF RESPECT, OR AS HERE, SOMEONE WHO HAD ③ UNDISPUTED RIGHT OF OWNERSHIP OVER ANOTHER PERSON. THERE ARE SEVERAL WORDS FOR SERVANT OR SLAVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. THIS ONE REFERS TO SOMEONE WHO WAS ANOTHER PERSON'S POSSESSION. FREEDOM INVOLVES THE ABILITY TO LIVE AND ORDER ONE'S LIFE AS HE CHOOSES. THE SLAVE HAD NO SUCH CHOICE. HIS WAS A LOWLY LIFE OF LABOR.

THEREFORE, THE FACT THAT THIS MASTER OR OWNER WOULD COMMIT SUCH FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING A LARGE SUM OF MONEY INVOLVING NO ON-SIGHT, DAY-TO-DAY, CAREFUL SUPERVISION, IS EXTRAORDINARY! THE MASTER WAS GOING AWAY, PROBABLY ABROAD FOR A LONG TIME. WE COME TO THAT CONCLUSION FROM THE PHRASE "TRAVELING INTO A FAR COUNTRY." IT LITERALLY MEANS GOING FROM HOME OR AWAY FROM ONE'S PEOPLE, OR SIMPLY ABROAD. THE ELEMENT OF TRUST IN THE TEXT IS CLEAR. IN FINANCES, SOME SPEAK OF A "BLIND TRUST" AND THIS SURELY WAS JUST THAT. HE TREATED HIS SLAVES LIKE PEOPLE, NOT PROPERTY! THE AMOUNT ENTRUSTED TO THEM IS STAGGERING! HE KNEW THEIR ABILITY AND GAVE ACCORDINGLY. HE DID NOT OVERLOAD. HE TREATED THEM AS SONS NOT SLAVES. REMEMBER IN THOSE DAYS A DAY'S WAGE WAS APPROXIMATELY SIXTEEN CENTS IN AMERICAN MONEY. FOR A SIX-DAY WEEK, THAT INVOLVES LESS THAN A DOLLAR PER WEEK. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A SMALL FORTUNE - A LIFETIME OF WAGES IN A SINGLE, LUMP SUM! THESE MEN WERE SLAVES, NOT STOCKBROKERS, SO TO BE SO TRUSTED WAS RARE. (SOMEONE HAS CALCULATED A COMPARISON OF A 22-YEAR OLD OUT OF COLLEGE ON HIS FIRST JOB AT $25,000 PER YEAR. IN 40 YEARS, AT THE SAME SALARY, WITH NO INCREASE, THAT $25,000 WOULD INCREASE TO ONE MILLION. SUPPOSE AN EMPLOYER GAVE HIM THE FULL AMOUNT THE FIRST YEAR ON THE JOB TO INVEST GOING IN - IT WOULD BE A SIMILAR COMPARISON!) THE SERVANTS HAD NO DOLLARS TO INVEST OF THEIR OWN BUT THEY DID HAVE TIME AND EFFORT. THE TEXT SAYS VERY LITTLE ABOUT THE OWNER, NO NAME, NO OCCUPATION, NO FAMILY, NOTHING ABOUT THE NATURE OF HIS TRIPS - ONLY HIS CONFIDENCE IN HIS SERVANTS. BEFORE HE TOOK THE TRIP, INSTEAD OF "LOCKING UP" HIS MONEY HE DECIDED TO "LEND IT OUT." HE TOOK RISKS TO GAIN RICHES. (TODAY WE CALL SUCH A PERSON AN ENTREPRENEUR. THIS TERM IS AKIN TO

THE ENGLISH WORD "ENTERPRISE", THAT IS, ONE WHO TAKES RISKS AND MANAGEMENT OF A BUSINESS. THE GIFTS AND THE RISKS WERE HIS - MAKING HIM A VERY UNCOMMON MASTER!

II. THE UNHESITATING SERVANTS - VERSES 15-23

THERE IS A VARIATION FROM THE AUTHORIZED VERSION IN THE WESTCOTT AND HORT GREEK NEW TESTAMENT. THE WORD "STRAIGHTWAY" OR IMMEDIATELY IN VERSE 15 ACTUALLY OCCURRED AT THE BEGINNING OF VERSE 16! (STUDY OF SUCH THINGS IS SYNTAX - IT IS A WORD THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SIN OR TAX - THUMB, CARPET, OR ANY OTHER KIND. IT HAS TO DO WITH SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND THE ARRANGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIP OF WORDS IN THAT STRUCTURE. IN THIS PASSAGE, IT IS THE SERVANTS AND NOT THE OWNER WHO GET GOING IN A HURRY! THERE IS A SPECIAL KIND OF ENERGY AND EXCITEMENT THAT COMES WITH HAVING LARGE SUMS OF MONEY TO INVEST OR WORK WITH. AN AGGRESSIVE, PERCEPTIVE WORKER DOES NOT HAVE TO BE JUMP-STARTED TO GET GOING! (ENVISION THIS MAN BUYING A WALL STREET JOURNAL, U.S.A. YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW, BARRONS AND EVERY OTHER INVESTMENT TOOL AVAILABLE. THE TERM IMMEDIATELY MEANS HE DID NOT WASTE TIME. HIS MASTER'S COMMAND WAS HIS CHALLENGE. THIS PRUDENT MAN USED HIS MONEY AND THE MOMENT WISELY. HE DID NOT WAIT FOR A BETTER CLIMATE, HE GOT STARTED. (SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE SERVANTS WERE IN THREE LEVELS: THE MUCH, MIDDLE AND MINIMUM LEVELS.) THE TEXT MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THE GIFT TO THE SERVANTS WAS ACCORDING TO ABILITY. THE PERCENTAGE OF RETURN WAS EXACTLY THE SAME WITH THE FIRST TWO AND THE REWARD WAS EXACTLY THE SAME. THE DILIGENT DOUBLED THEIR INVESTMENT. THE FIRST SERVANT MAY HAVE BEEN MORE SKILLFUL AND HIS AMOUNT WAS GREATER BUT THE PERCENTAGE OF RETURN WAS EXACTLY THE SAME AND SO WAS THE

REWARD FOR BOTH SERVANTS. ALSO HE KNEW UP FRONT THAT THERE WOULD BE A DAY OF ACCOUNTABILITY. THE EXACT DAY THEY DID NOT KNOW BUT THEY KNEW THERE WOULD BE A TIME OF RECKONING. THE TERM IN THE TEXT FOR RECKON MEANS TO SAY AND SHOW WHAT ONE HAS DONE WITH THE ORIGINAL GIFT. THE WORD "GAINED" IN VERSE 20 IS USED TO DESCRIBE WINNINGS AND ALSO THE IDEA OF A LEDGER. IN OTHER WORDS, A PERSON WHO WORKED AT BEING A WINNER! DURING THE TIMES WHEN THE OWNER WAS AWAY, THE PRUDENT EFFORT, THE INCREASE IN BOTH CASES RAN TO 100% AND THE RESULT WAS A VERY PLEASED OWNER! THE REWARD, ACCORDING TO VERSES 21 AND 23, WAS THAT WISE USE OF "A FEW THINGS" LED TO "MANY." IN OTHER WORDS, THIS LORD REWARDED GOOD WORK WITH GREATER OPPORTUNITY AND GREATER POSITION. THE TERM JOY IS USUALLY A REFERENCE TO A FEAST OF CELEBRATION WHERE JOY WAS THE DOMINANT EMOTION. THEY WERE ALSO "INSIDERS" AS OPPOSED TO "OUTSIDERS." THE WORD RULE MEANS TO APPOINT OR ORDAIN. THEY WERE APPOINTED TO LARGER RESPONSIBILITY BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITHFULNESS.

III. THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT - VERSE 18, 24-30

THIS WAS A "DO NOTHING" SERVANT. HE WAS LAZY AND MADE EXCUSES FOR HIS LACK OF INITIATIVE AND EFFORT. HE DID WHAT WAS EASY AND SAFE. BY INTERPRETATION THIS IS A REFERENCE TO THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES. THIS SERVANT HAD NO INTEREST IN GROWTH, ONLY IN THE STATUS QUO. WHEREVER THE LORD'S WORK IS BEING DONE, THERE WILL ALWAYS BE THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS WHO WILL CALL FOR THE SAFE PATH AND MISNAME IT THE SPIRITUAL PATH. "LET'S NOT WASTE THE LORD'S MONEY, LET'S NOT GET AHEAD OF THE LORD" ARE CLICHES USED WITH GREAT SKILL TO KILL AND

PARALYZE THE PROGRAM DESIGNED TO HONOR GOD. HIS FEARFUL PARALYSIS IS VERY OBVIOUS. LIKE THIS SERVANT, THEY BURY EVERYTHING THAT HAS TO DO WITH AGGRESSIVE GROWTH. THIS SERVANT ENJOYED A PLACE OF PRIVILEGE AND HE DUMPED IT IN THE DIRT. HE SIMPLY DIDN'T TRY! WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THE FIVE TALENT SERVANT HAD CHOSEN TO BURY ONE-FIFTH OF HIS INVESTMENT BUT HE DIDN'T. THIS USELESS SERVANT WENT 100% IN THE WRONG DIRECTION - HE PLAYED IT 100% SAFE AND HE WAS 100% WRONG! THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT CALLED HIS LORD A "HARD MAN." THIS WORD WAS SOMETIMES USED TO DESCRIBE THE HARD-HEARTED, HARD TO PLEASE, HARD TO GET ALONG WITH! HE SUGGESTED THAT HIS MASTER WAS A KIND OF "LOAN SHARK." MOVING IN FOR THE KILL AT THE MISFORTUNE OF OTHERS. THE MAJOR QUESTION ABOUT THIS SERVANT IS WHETHER OR NOT HE WAS A BELIEVER WHO LOST HIS SALVATION. THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE WORD SERVANT IS THE EQUIVALENT OF SON OR SAVED. LET US LOOK AT THE TEXT OF VERSE 30: THIS SERVANT IS CALLED USELESS OR WORTHLESS. NOTE THAT MEN NO WHERE IN THE BIBLE ARE SAVED BY WHAT THEY DO FOR GOD. HE IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN CAST OUT INTO OUTER DARKNESSES - TERMS RESERVED FOR UNBELIEVERS - NEVER BELIEVERS. HE IS ALSO CALLED "EVIL." A REFERENCE TO HIS NATURE. HE SAW HIS LORD IN THE MOST HARSH TERMS. THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THIS MAN IS TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE WORD SERVANT. HE WAS A SERVANT IN THE SENSE THAT ALL MEN ARE SERVANTS AND RESPONSIBLE TO GOD FOR THEIR CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOR. (COMPARE NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND CYRUS - LUKE 12:46) THE FACT THAT A MAN IS NOT A BELIEVER DOES NOT CHANGE OR NEGATE HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD. THE TRUE TEST OF ALL PROFESSION IS SERVICE. HOW WE SERVE THE LORD REVEALS WHETHER OR NOT WE ARE SAVED BY HIM. (JAMES 2:14-19) GOD HAS GIVEN US GIFTS.

WE MAY USE THEM OR BURY THEM AS WE CHOOSE. HOWEVER, THERE IS A UNIVERSAL LAW - "USE IT OR LOSE IT." IT IS VERY EASY TO SAY NOTHING, DO NOTHING, BE NOTHING. HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT TAKE AWAY FROM THE BIBLICAL FACT THAT ACCOUNTABILITY IS AHEAD (II COR. 5:10, I COR. 3FF.) FOR THE BELIEVER, THE LESSON OF DEMAS IS SIGNIFICANT. HE WAS SAFE AS LONG AS HE SERVED. WHEN HE STOPPED SERVING, HE STARTED SLIDING AND NEVER STOPPED. WITH OUR GIFTS WE MAY EITHER BURY THEM OR BLOSSOM WITH THEM. THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT A MAN MANY YEARS AGO WHO WAS GOING ON A LONG TRIP. HE HAD TWO SACKS OF GRAIN. HE GAVE ONE SACK TO EACH OF TWO FRIENDS. HIS INSTRUCTIONS WERE SIMPLY TO DO WITH THE GRAIN AS THEY DESIRED BUT UPON HIS RETURN HE WOULD ASK TO SEE WHAT THEY HAD DONE. WHEN HE RETURNED AND ASKED THE FIRST FRIEND ABOUT HIS GRAIN, THE MAN TOOK HIM TO THE CELLAR, WENT TO A PARTICULAR BIN, OPENED THE GRAIN SACK TO DISCOVER THAT IT WAS ROTTEN AND WORTHLESS. WHEN HE APPROACHED THE SECOND FRIEND AND ASKED ABOUT THE GRAIN, THE FRIEND TOOK HIM TO A FIELD NEAR HIS HOME WHERE THE GRAIN WAS GROWING, WAVING IN THE WIND. THE GIVER SAID TO HIS FRIEND, "GIVE ME ONE SACK OF GRAIN IN RETURN FOR WHAT I GAVE YOU AND THE REST IS YOURS."

ROBERT K. SPRADLING NOVEMBER 1, 1987

A FAVORITE VERSE ON ASSURANCE

JOHN 6:37

WHEN A PERSON IS IN CHRIST, HE IS THERE FOREVER. THIS IS ONE OF THE FIRST AND MOST VITAL TRUTHS A NEW BELIEVER SHOULD LEARN. HIS POSITION IN CHRIST IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON HIS FEELINGS BUT RATHER FAITH IN THE FACTS OF SCRIPTURE. FEELINGS COME AFTERWARD. BABES IN CHRIST NEED TO BE PROTECTED FROM THE RISE AND FALL OF THEIR EMOTIONS. THE EXCITEMENT AND ENTHUSIASM OF NEW-FOUND FAITH MAY LESSEN IN THE SMOKE OF SPIRITUAL CONFLICT BUT HIS CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST NEED NOT SUFFER IF HE IS GROUNDED IN THE WORD. STEADY, SOLID GROWTH SHOULD BE THE COURSE. (I PETER 2:2, II PETER 3:18) GOD GUARANTEES OUR SALVATION. THERE ARE NO IFS, ANDS, MAYBES, GUESSES, FINE PRINT, FOOTNOTES, LOOPHOLES - GOD WILL NOT BACK OUT OF HIS AGREEMENT. OUR SAFE-KEEPING IS SURE. HE HOLDS ON TO US. IT IS HIS GRIP THAT COUNTS, NOT OURS. (JOHN 10:28, 29) DOUBT IS ONE OF SATAN'S OLDEST AND MOST DEVESTATING TRICKS TO DEFEAT NEW BELIEVERS. EVERY NEW CHRISTIAN NEEDS A VERSE UPON WHICH HE MAY FASTEN HIS CONFIDENCE AND JOHN 6:37 IS SUCH A VERSE. KEEP IT WITHIN REACH AND RECALL. (RELATE BRUCE DUNN AND TWO QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS VERSE. HE TOLD THE STORY ABOUT THE GIRL IN SUNDAY SCHOOL AND HER RESPONSE WAS "HE WILL CAST YOU IN." ASSURANCE OF SALVATION IS A BIBLE DOCTRINE THAT STATES THAT THE SAVED PERSON MAY KNOW FOR SURE THAT HE IS REALLY AND TRULY SAVED. THAT IS, HE IS NOT JUST A CANDIDATE FOR ETERNAL LIFE BUT IS NOW A POSSESSOR OF ETERNAL LIFE. (JOHN 5:24, ROMANS 8:1) WE HAVE THE EXTERNAL WORD AND THE INTERNAL

STUMBLE

WITNESS WHICH GIVES SALVATION'S BASIS BOTH AN OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE THRUST. AS IN EVERY FAMILY, GOD'S FAMILY HAS NO PERFECT CHILDREN BUT THERE IS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR ALL. SOME MAY SAG, OTHERS MAY SOAR, BUT ALL ARE SAFE. (COMPARE TO NOAH'S ARK.) AS SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID, YOU AND I MAY TREMBLE ON THE ROCK BUT THE ROCK WILL NEVER TREMBLE UNDER US.

I. GOD IS SOVEREIGN - "ALL THAT THE FATHER GIVETH ME SHALL COME TO ME"

THE WORD SOVEREIGN CARRIES THE IDEA OF SUPREME, UNLIMITED OR HAVING ALL AUTHORITY. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT GOD IS ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN IN EVERY WAY YET IT ALSO TEACHES THAT MAN CARRIES RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS DECISIONS AND ACTIONS. IN THIS VERSE, OUR LORD POINTED TO THE FACT THAT SOME MEN'S UNBELIEF DID NOT CHANGE THE PURPOSE OF GOD. THOSE WHO CHOSE NOT TO BELIEVE DID NOT ALTER THAT PURPOSE. IF THEY WOULD NOT COME, OTHERS WOULD. WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER - WE'LL ALL BE THERE, THAT IS ALL WHO WANT TO BE WILL BE. OUR DIFFICULTY IS IN TRYING TO HARMONIZE OR MAKE THESE TWO PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS PALATABLE TO HUMAN REASON. SUCH A TASK MAY BE BEYOND HUMAN ABILITY. THE BIBLE TEACHES BOTH, OFTEN IN THE SAME VERSE. (LUKE 22:22, JOHN 11:39,43) LET US PREACH AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDED ON US AND PRAY AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDED ON GOD IS A WISE PROCEDURE. (MCGEE SAYS THAT SOME PEOPLE PUT ALL OF THEIR THEOLOGICAL EGGS IN THE SOVEREIGNTY BASKET. OTHERS PUT ALL OF THEIR THEOLOGICAL EGGS IN THE FREE WILL BASKET AND BOTH EXTREMES ARE INCORRECT.

IF ONE IS NOT CAREFUL, HE WILL WIND UP WITH "EGG ON HIS FACE." THE ONLY PLACE WHERE THIS QUESTION OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY IS EASILY AND QUICKLY RESOLVED IS IN THE FIRST YEAR THEOLOGY CLASS OF A SEMINARY. THEY CAN AND HAVE FIGURED IT ALL OUT BUT FOR THE REST OF US WE SIMPLY ARE NOT THAT SMART! MOODY'S FAMILIAR STATEMENT THAT THE WHOSOEVER WILLS ARE THE ELECT AND THE WHOSOEVER WONTS ARE THE NON-ELECT IS GOOD THEOLOGY. SPURGEON COMMENTED THAT IF GOD HAD PAINTED A YELLOW STRIPE UP THE BACK OF ALL THE ELECT THEN HE WOULD GO ABOUT JERKING UP SHIRTTAILS LOOKING FOR STRIPES BUT SINCE THAT IS NOT THE CASE HE WILL PREACH TO ALL MEN TO COME TO CHRIST. THE EMPHASIS ON THIS PARTICULAR PHRASE IN THE VERSE IS ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. IN JOHN 6:44 HE REFERS TO GOD'S DRAWING POWER, THAT IS THE POWER OF GOD'S GRACE AND LOVE TO DRAW MEN TO HIMSELF. ALSO, JOHN 12:32 REFERS TO OUR LORD'S REDEMPTIVE GRACE AT CALVARY. I UNDERSTAND LOVE'S DRAWING POWER - COMPARE GRS' FRIENDS TO WHOM WE ARE DRAWN. ATTACHED STORY REGARDING PRISON WARDEN'S WIFE. GOD'S WILL IS FOR ALL MEN TO BE SAVED BUT MAN MUST BE WILLING TO BE SAVED. A SEEKING SINNER WILL ALWAYS FIND A SEEKING SAVIOUR. SANDERS REMINDS HIS READERS CONCERNING JOHN 6:37 THAT "JESUS DID NOT SAY THAT SOME ARE PRE-DESTINED TO BE LOST, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEY DO. GOD HAS WILLED CERTAIN CONDITIONS BY WHICH EVERYONE OR ALL MUST BE SAVED AND THE FATHER GIVES TO JESUS ALL WHO MEET THESE CONDITIONS. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD SETS THE CONDITIONS BUT MAN IN HIS FREE WILL MAY EITHER CHOOSE TO ACCEPT OR TO REJECT THEM." THIS IS A VERY WISE AND BIBLICAL STATEMENT.

Jn. 7:37 "thirst"

II. MAN IS RESPONSIBLE TO COME TO CHRIST - "HIM THAT COMETH TO ME"

or Smell

ACCORDING TO JOHN 6:35 COMING TO CHRIST IS EXACTLY THE SAME THING AS BELIEVING ON HIM! IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS CHAPTER WE ARE REMINDED THAT THE SIGHT OF BREAD DOES NOT SATISFY, IT MUST BE EATEN. SO, HEARERS AND READERS OF SCRIPTURE ARE ENCOURAGED TO STOP EXAMINING THE BREAD AND EAT IT. JESUS CHRIST IS TO THE SOUL OF MEN WHAT BREAD AND WATER IS TO THE BODY. WHEN YOU HAVE FOUND THE BREAD OF LIFE, THE HEART FINDS THAT FOR WHICH IT HAS BEEN SEARCHING AND STOPS SEARCHING FOR IT IS SATISFIED. IN MATTHEW 11:28, JESUS DESCRIBES SIN AS A LOAD TOO HEAVY FOR ANY MAN. THE INVITATION IS TO BRING THAT HEAVY LOAD TO HIM. THE BOOK OF REVELATION BEGINS AND ENDS WITH AN INVITATION. REVELATION 3:20 AND REVELATION 22:17 - THIS IS GOD'S LAST INVITATION. "AND THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME. AND LET HIM THAT HEARETH SAY COME COME. AND LET HIM THAT IS ATHIRST COME, AND WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE OF THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY." GOD USES THE WORD COME THREE TIMES IN ONE VERSE. NO PERSON CAN EVER BLAME GOD OR SOME PAST DIVINE DECREE FOR HIS PRESENT PLIGHT. THE RESPONSIBILITY IS ON EVERY MAN'S SHOULDERS. SOME FLEE TO THE INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM OF THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD THE GOSPEL - WHAT ABOUT THEM. IT IGNORES AN EVEN MORE PRESSING QUESTION, WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE HEARD - THAT IS FAR MORE SOBERING!

III. THE BELIEVER IS SAFE IN CHRIST - "I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT"

SOME FOLK LOOK ON SAFETY LIKE A BASEBALL PLAYER WHO IS SAFE UNTIL AND UNLESS HE IS DRAWN OFF BASE. IN THE SAME ANALOGY, I PREFER

TO LOOK UPON IT AS ONE WHO HAS ALREADY CROSSED HOME AND IS SAFE. LET US LOOK AT THE TEXT IN REVERSE ORDER: "CAST OUT" - THE IDEA IS THAT OF BEING CAST OUTSIDE OF SOMETHING AND WAS USED TO DESCRIBE THOSE WHO WERE CAST OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE. (JOHN 9:22) TO BE CAST OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE WAS LIKE A LEPER BEING SHUT OUTSIDE THE CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL. IT WAS TANTAMOUNT TO SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL SUICIDE. JEWS FEARED THIS TYPE OF ISOLATION. ABRAHAM WAS ONE OF ISRAEL'S GREATEST LEADERS BUT UNDER PRESSURE HE CAST OUT HIS OWN FLESH AND BLOOD! (GENESIS 21:10) (VERSES: JOHN 10:28, 17:6, ROMANS 8:31-39, PHILIPPIANS 1:6) THE PHRASE "NO WISE" MEANS NEVER UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. PEOPLE SOMETIMES RESIST THE IDEA OF ETERNAL SECURITY BUT SECURITY IS ETERNAL OR TEMPORAL AND IF IT IS TEMPORAL IT ISN'T MUCH! NEVER MEANS NEVER AND IF IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A BELIEVER TO BE LOST THEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD SELECTED THE WRONG WORD WHEN HE USED NEVER. (LET US SUPPOSE THAT IT WERE POSSIBLE TO ATTEND A SEMINARY CLASS IN ADVANCED GREEK GRAMMAR. THE PROFESSOR INTRODUCES THE STUDY FOR THE DAY AS A STUDY IN NEGATIVE PARTICLES. THERE ARE TWO PRIMARY NEGATIVE PARTICLES IN GREEK - THE WORDS ARE OU AND MEE. OU IS THE STRONGER OF THE TWO AND IS A CLEAR-CUT, POINT BLANK FINAL - NO. WHEN THEY ASKED JOHN THE BAPTIST IF HE WERE THAT PROPHET, HE REPLIED SIMPLY - OU OR NO! (JOHN 1:21) MEE IS THE MILDER NEGATIVE USED WHEN ONE DOES NOT WISH TO SAY NO TOO STRONGLY. WHEN THE WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WANTED TO STATE DENIALS OR PROHIBITIONS EMPHATICALLY, IN FACT VERY EMPHATICALLY, THEY DOUBLED THE NEGATIVE OR PUT THESE TWO WORDS TOGETHER. THERE ARE 96 PLACES WHERE THIS OCCURS IN THE NEW

TESTAMENT AND JOHN 6:37 IS ONE. THIS IS GOD'S WAY OF SAYING - IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN! OUR SAFETY IS NOT A POSITION FROM WHICH A BELIEVER MAY CHOOSE TO LIVE A LIFE OF PRACTICING SIN - ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE IF HE DOES THAT HIS PROFESSION IS A FALSE PROFESSION. (I JOHN 3:9) IN OTHER WORDS, NO CHRISTIAN CAN LET SIN DOMINATE HIS LIFE OR BECOME THE POLICY OF HIS LIFE. FOR HIM SIN IS ACCIDENTAL AND OCCASIONAL, NOT THE HABIT OR LIFESTYLE OF HIS NEW FOUND LIFE IN CHRIST. QUESTION: ARE YOU SURE BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT, WITH SCRIPTURAL CONFIDENCE, THAT YOUR CONDITION IS WHAT JOHN IS DESCRIBING IN THIS VERSE. IF NOT, WE MAY BE ABSOLUTELY SURE. THIS IS NOT PRESUMPTION, IT IS SIMPLY CLAIMING WHAT IS OURS BY DIVINE RIGHT AS GOD'S SONS. — News Week Clipping

re Egyptian P's — boat.
To Sail to Hum eternity —
What's Your Boat? Everybody
has one —

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JULY 10, 1983
AM

THE ANGER OF JESUS:

ANGER FOR THE RIGHT REASON

ANGER FALLS INTO TWO CATEGORIES, UNJUSTIFIED AND JUSTIFIED. UNJUSTIFIED ANGER IS THE KIND WE ALL KNOW ABOUT: WHEN OUR FEELINGS HAVE BEEN HURT, WHEN THINGS DON'T GO OUR WAY, SOMETHING HAPPENS OR IS SAID TO US WHICH CAUSES THE FACE TO REDDEN, TEETH AND FISTS TO CLENCH, RESPIRATION DEEPENS, THE HEART BEATS FASTER AND WE OFTEN SPEAK LIKE THE WOMAN WHO STORMED INTO THE CREDIT DEPARTMENT OF A DEPARTMENT STORE AND PROCLAIMED TO THE CREDIT MANAGER: "YOU MAKE ME SO THINK, I CAN'T MAD STRAIGHT." WE HAVE ALL HAD OUR SHARE OF UNJUSTIFIED ANGER WHICH THE BIBLE CONDEMNS.

THERE IS, HOWEVER, A KIND OF ANGER WHICH IS SOMETIMES CALLED "RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION." THAT IS, ANGER FOR THE RIGHT REASON. EPHESIANS 4:26-27 SPEAKS OF BEING ANGRY, BUT NOT CARRYING IT TO THE POINT OF SIN. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN NOT TO BE ANGRY IS INHUMAN AND UNEXCUSABLE! (RELATE CURRENT ARTICLE IN READER'S DIGEST ON THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN FOR PORNOGRAPHIC PHOTOS--TO READ THE ARTICLE MAKES ONE'S BLOOD BOIL!)

THE BIBLE RECORDS SEVERAL INSTANCES IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY IN JESUS WHEN HE WAS ANGRY AND NEEDLESS TO SAY ANGRY FOR THE RIGHT REASON.

I. JESUS WAS ANGRY AT THE HARD-HEARTEDNESS OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE -- MARK 3:1-6

("porosis") = hardening of the heart

THIS STORY HAS TO DO WITH AN UNNAMED MAN. HIS WITHERED HAND LITERALLY MEANS "TO DRY UP." THIS WORD WAS USED TO DESCRIBE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FIG TREE IN MATTHEW 21:19-20.

OVER

Not the first group to go the a hard or bad for the wrong reason!

IT WAS USED TO DESCRIBE FRUIT THAT HAD DIED OR WITHERED ON THE VINE. LUKE REMINDS HIS READERS THAT IT WAS HIS RIGHT HAND AND TRADITION SAYS HE WAS A BRICK OR STONE LAYER. THIS SITUATION BEGAN IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPERNAUM WHERE THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE SAT IN THE FRONT SEATS OR PLACES OF HONOR. THIS WAS THEIR TERRITORY BUT THE TEXT REMINDS US THAT THEY WERE NOT IN THE SYNAGOGUE TO BE TAUGHT OR TO WORSHIP GOD. THEY WERE THERE TO WATCH. THIS PARTICULAR TERM MEANS TO WATCH CAREFULLY OR MORE SPECIFICALLY TO GUARD SOMETHING. WE MIGHT SAY TO BUILD A FENCE AROUND IT! THESE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE HAD NO CONCERN FOR THIS ORDINARY PERSON'S HANDICAP. THEY WERE CYNICS AND CRITICS LOOKING FOR SOME WAY TO CONDEMN JESUS WITH NO CONCERN FOR THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND. THIS ALL TOOK PLACE ON THE SABBATH DAY. WE ARE NOT IMPRESSED OR RESTRICTED BY THE SABBATH, BUT IN ISRAEL STRICT RULES WERE OBSERVED. FOR EXAMPLE, BARCLAY SAYS IF A WALL FELL ON SOMEONE ON THE SABBATH ENOUGH MIGHT BE CLEARED AWAY TO SEE WHETHER THE PERSON WAS DEAD OR ALIVE; IF HE WAS ALIVE HE COULD BE HELPED UP TO A POINT BUT IF HE WERE DEAD THE BODY MUST REMAIN THERE UNTIL THE NEXT DAY. A FRACTURED BONE COULD NOT BE ATTENDED TO; A CUT FINGER COULD BE BANDAGED BUT NO OINTMENT PUT ON IT. THE RULE OF THUMB WAS THAT AN INJURY INFLICTED ON THE SABBATH COULD BE KEPT FROM GETTING WORSE BUT IT COULD NOT BE MADE BETTER! HISTORY RECORDS THAT ISRAEL'S ENEMIES KNEW THE FANATICAL ZEAL FOR THE SABBATH AND IN FACT JEWS WOULD NOT DEFEND THEMSELVES ON THE SABBATH. SUCH WAS THEIR RIGID AND UNBENDING PHILOSOPHY. JESUS WAS INTERESTED IN HELPING THE MAN ABOVE ALL ELSE, BUT THEY WERE INTERESTED IN TRAPPING JESUS. THE WORD HARDNESS IS TRANSLATED IN SOME PLACES BLINDNESS. IT IS USED TO DESCRIBE THE HARDNESS OF STONE OR MARBLE, LOSS OF FEELING, INSENSITIVITY AND THE INABILITY TO SEE.

(τὴν χεῖρα)

1. Synagogue

Wrong verses to ch.

SABBATH

2.

(over)

THESE RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAD CLOSED THEIR EYES AND HEARTS TO THE NEED OF PEOPLE. KEEP IN MIND THAT THIS MAN HAD NONE OF THE BENEFITS OF MODERN MEDICINE, NO HOSPITALS OR DOCTORS, NO INSURANCE, NO SOCIAL SERVICES. HE HAD NOTHING AND ON TOP OF THAT HE COULDN'T WORK--HE WAS PHYSICALLY DISABLED! HOWEVER, HIS BITTER EXPERIENCE IN LIFE DID NOT KEEP HIM FROM CHURCH. EVEN THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE DID NOT KEEP HIM FROM CHURCH WHEN HE HEARD THAT JESUS WAS GOING TO BE THERE. THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THE SYNAGOGUE CLAIMED TO REPRESENT GOD AND YET WERE TOTALLY INDIFFERENT TO THE NEED OF THIS NAMELESS PERSON.

JESUS' ANGER AT THIS ATTITUDE IS A SIGN OF MORAL HEALTH -- HOW COULD A MORAL PERSON BE ANYTHING ELSE BUT ANGRY AT SUCH INDIFFERENCE TO HUMAN NEED? COULD IT BE POSSIBLE THAT EVEN TODAY THERE ARE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AND CHURCHES WHERE THE MORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY "WITHERED" COME FOR HELP BUT RITUAL IS OBSERVED AND THE SPIRITUALLY NEEDY GO AWAY UNNOTICED, UNATTENDED, UNHELPED IN THEIR TERRIBLE DILEMMA?

Heavy Handed Treatment

II. JESUS WAS ANGRY CONCERNING THE EXPLOITATION OF THE POOR -- JOHN 2:13-17 (Heavy-Handed Poor)

THE WORD ANGER DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE TEXT, BUT BARCLAY IS CORRECT IN TITLING THIS SEGMENT IN HIS COMMENTARY: "THE ANGER OF JESUS." THE JEWISH PASSOVER BROUGHT AS MANY AS 2-MILLION PEOPLE TO THE CITY OF JERUSALEM. MANY WHO CAME COULD NOT AFFORD TO PAY A LITTLE FOR THE REQUIRED SACRIFICE AND, TO BE FORCED TO PAY THE MONEYCHANGERS' INFLATED PRICES WAS A TERRIBLE MORAL AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE. FOR EXAMPLE, EVERY JEW OVER 19 YEARS OF AGE WAS REQUIRED TO PAY A TEMPLE TAX. HE PAID THIS TAX IN ORDER TO MAKE SACRIFICES AND IT AMOUNTED TO ABOUT 2-DAYS WAGES. THIS TAX MUST BE PAID WITH

JEWISH COINS. PILGRIMS ARRIVED FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD WITH DIFFERENCE KINDS OF MONEY SO THE MONEYCHANGERS WERE READILY AVAILABLE TO MAKE THE CHANGE, BUT IT IS EASY TO SEE HOW UNSCRUPULOUS PEOPLE COULD EXPLOIT THE POOR. ALSO, IN ORDER TO OFFER PROPER SACRIFICES, THERE WERE INSPECTORS WHO CHARGED A FEE AND ANY ANIMAL PURCHASED OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE AREA WAS REJECTED, SO A KIND OF BLACKMAIL WAS CONDUCTED REQUIRING PEOPLE TO PURCHASE SACRIFICE ANIMALS FROM THE TEMPLE BOOTHS. WHEN JESUS ENCOUNTERED THIS KIND OF THIEVERY, IT MOVED HIM TO ANGER; AND HE COULD NOT STAND IDLY BY AND SEE ALL THIS GOING ON IN THE NAME OF RELIGION.

THE HOUSE OF GOD HAD DEGENERATED INTO A PLACE WHERE MONEY-MAKING SCHEMES AND EXTORTION WERE PARAMOUNT AND WORSHIP OF GOD WAS SECONDARY, IF NOT NON-EXISTENT ON THE PART OF MANY. ONE COMMENTATOR OBSERVES WHAT JESUS DID NOT DO: HE DIDN'T SAY, "FELLOWS, I DON'T WANT TO STEP ON ANYONE'S TOES BUT MAYBE OR DON'T YOU THINK THAT IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA, THAT IS IF NOONE GETS UPSET, TO SET YOUR MONEY BOOTHS SOMEWHERE ELSE SO NOBODY WILL BE OFFENDED." JESUS ATTACKED THE PROBLEM HEAD ON WITH TWO WORDS: "GET OUT!" THIS IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE INDIGNATION OF GOD AGAINST THOSE WHO TRAFFIC IN RELIGIOUS EXTORTION AND EXPLOITATION OF THE POOR. (THIS KIND OF ACTIVITY CONTINUES TODAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS -- PEOPLE EXTRACTING FUNDS FROM THE POOR IN ORDER, IN THE NAME OF RELIGION, TO PROMOTE THEIR OWN COMFORT.)

III. JESUS WAS ANGRY CONCERNING THE HYPOCRACY OF THE PHARISEES -- MATTHEW 23:13-20

THIS CHAPTER IS AN INDICTMENT AGAINST THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ISRAEL. POSING AS MORAL GUIDES IN RELIGION, THEY GAVE LIP-SERVICE TO OUTWARD SHOW, BUT INWARDLY THEY WERE CORRUPT AND GODLESS.

THE STRONG LANGUAGE IN THE CHAPTER SEEMS TO BE OUT OF CHARACTER FOR JESUS, BUT HIS DENUNCIATION OF RELIGIOUS HYPOCRASY SHOULD AWAKEN US TO THE SERIOUS NATURE OF THIS KIND OF SIN. THE KEY WORD OF THE CHAPTER IS HYPOCRITES. THE WORD MEANS "TO ANSWER BACK." IT WAS USED TO DESCRIBE AN ACTOR OR PRETENDER WHO PLAYED A PART OR WORE A MASK ON STAGE WHEN ASSUMING ANOTHER'S IDENTITY. JESUS SAID THAT THE PHARISEES WORE RELIGIOUS MASKS TO CONCEAL THE WICKEDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS. THEIR HYPOCRASY PREVENTED SINCERE PEOPLE FROM COMING TO GOD. THE WORD WOE APPEARS 8 TIMES IN THE CHAPTER AND THE WORD HYPOCRITE 7 TIMES. THE TERMS, SUCH AS "CHILD OF HELL, FOOLS, BLIND LEADERS OF THE BLIND, SERPENTS AND VIPERS" ALL DESCRIBE JESUS' FEELING TOWARD THESE RELIGIOUS PRETENDERS!

IN THE INTEREST OF BREVITY, LET ME SUGGEST SEVERAL AREAS ALL BEGINNING WITH THE LETTER T TO SEE THE ENORMITY OF THEIR SIN WHICH CAUSED JESUS TO REACT SO STRONGLY.

(1) TALK -- VERSE 3. HYPOCRITES ARE ALL SAY AND NO DO. THEY LOVE TO TELL OTHERS WHAT THEY SHOULD DO, BUT THEIR RELIGION IS IN THEIR MOUTH AND NOT IN THEIR HEART. TALK IS CHEAP AND EASY.

(2) TASSELS -- VERSE 5. FRINGES ON THE BORDERS OF GARMENTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WERE PLACED THERE AS A REMINDER TO OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD. THROUGH THE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION, THESE TASSELS REMAINED ON THE PRAYER SHAWL WORN IN THE MOURNING BY JEWS IN PRAYER. HOWEVER, THE PHARISEES WORE THEM ALL THE TIME AS A REMINDER TO ALL OBSERVERS OF THEIR SPIRITUAL PIETY AND DEEP DEVOTION TO GOD.

THAT IS TO SAY, THESE WERE OUTWARD SIGNS OF SUPPOSED INWARD PIETY. THROUGH THIS OUTWARD DISPLAY, THEY WERE CALLING ATTENTION TO THEMSELVES AS BEING EXTREMELY RELIGIOUS -- THAT IS GOD'S ELITE. (BY THE WAY, VERSES SUCH AS THIS COULD BE INTERPRETED TO REJECT THE IDEA THAT CLERICS OR CLERGYMEN WEAR OUTWARD RELIGIOUS GARB TO CALL ATTENTION TO THEIR PROFESSION. GARB DOES NOT MAKE ONE HOLY. IT IS NOT A COLLAR THAT COUNTS, BUT RATHER, CHARACTER THAT IS IMPORTANT. I SHALL LONG REMEMBER THE STORY A MAN RECITED TO ME OF A WEDDING RECEPTION WHERE A CLERGYMAN, WEARING A COLLAR, WAS DEAD DRUNK!)

v.6

(3) TEMPLE--VERSE 3, VERSE 6. THESE FOLK ASSUMED THE PLACE OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERPRETING THE WRITINGS OF MOSES. INSTEAD OF LIFTING THE PEOPLE OUT OF THE MIRE OF SIN, THEY LAID HEAVY WEIGHTS UPON THEM. PHARISEES LOVED A PLACE OF PROMINENCE IN SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE. WHEN HE ATTENDED A PLACE OF PUBLIC EATING HE DEMANDED A SEAT WHERE HE COULD BE SEEN BY ALL AND IN THE SYNAGOGUE THE FRONT SEATS WERE THE MOST DESIRABLE, THAT IS, THE SEATS OF HONOR WHICH FACED THE CONGREGATION AND IT WAS THERE THAT THE PHARISEES POSITIONED THEMSELVES. THE BACK SEATS IN THE SYNAGOGUE WERE RESERVED FOR UNIMPORTANT PEOPLE AND WERE OFTEN OCCUPIED BY CHILDREN. (NOTICE HOW THIS HAS CHANGED)

v.7-8

(4) TITLES -- VERSE 7, VERSE 8. WHEN THE PHARISEES WALKED IN THE MARKETPLACE, THEY LOVED TO BE GREETED WITH TERMS OF RESPECT AND VENERATION. THEY LOVED TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE. THEY LOVED TO PARADE THEIR PIETY AND THE TERM RABBI OR TEACHER WAS THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER. (THERE IS A PHENOMENON IN OUR CIRCLES WHICH I CALL THE "DOCTOR SYNDROM." IF YOU LOOK AT ANY FUNDAMENTAL GATHERING THIS BECOMES VERY OBVIOUS. DIPLOMA MILLS CRANK OUT BOGUS

Smith T. Valley

DOCTERATES AT A FRIGHTENING RATE. I SHALL NEVER FORGET THE DAY I ENTERED A PASTOR'S STUDY. HIS TOTAL ACADEMIC TRAINING WOULD NOT EXCEED FIVE YEARS POST HIGH SCHOOL, BUT THE WALL OF HIS STUDY WAS PLASTERED WITH PHONY DEGREES FROM SEVERAL WELL-KNOWN DIPLOMA MILLS. WHEN I ASKED THE SECRETARY TO SEE PASTOR SO-AND-SO, SHE CORRECTED ME AND SAID, "DOCTOR SO-AND-SO IS NOT AVAILABLE." DEAR FRIENDS, THIS BROTHER WAS NO MORE DOCTOR THAN I AM A NURSE! SOMETIMES WE GET UP IN ARMS WHEN NEWSPAPER REPORTERS EXPOSE THIS KIND OF PHONINESS, BUT IN MY JUDGEMENT, IT'S GOOD TO EXPOSE THIS BECAUSE ALL SUCH ACTIVITIES DO DAMAGE TO THE WORK OF CHRIST. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT ALL HONORARY DEGREES ARE WRONG -- RELATE SUGDEN HONOR.) Wilkie – Lakeview

v. 23 (5) TITHES AND TRIFFLES -- VERSE 23. THE PRINCIPLE OF TITHING WAS TAUGHT BY GOD IN THE BIBLE AND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT SUPPORT OF THE LEVITES REQUIRED TITHING. THIS INVOLVED THE GIVING OF MATERIAL GOODS FOR THE WORK OF GOD. THE PHARISEES WERE SO METICULOUS IN THIS PRINCIPLE THAT THEY EVEN TITHED GARDEN HERBS. THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT SMALL ITEMS OR TRIFFLING MATTERS AND TOTALLY INSENSITIVE TO GREAT MORAL ISSUES OF THE DAY. THEY WOULD TITHE GARDEN HERBS BUT THROW A POOR WIDOW INTO THE STREETS BAG AND BAGGAGE! IN VERSE 24 THE WORD AT SHOULD BE TRANSLATED OUT AND REFERS TO THE PRACTICE OF STRAINING UNCLEAN WINE THROUGH A TYPE OF MUSLIN CLOTH IN ORDER TO STRAIN OUT ALL IMPURITIES. THERE IS A BIT OF HUMOR IN THIS VERSE FOR IT CONJURES UP A RIDICULOUS PICTURE IN THE MIND OF A PERSON WHO HAS LOST ALL SENSE OF PROPORTION OR WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN LIFE.

(6) TOMBS -- VERSE 27-29. TOMBS WERE COMMON SIGHTS ALONG THE HIGHWAY IN PALESTINE. THEY WERE PAINTED WHITE WITH A KIND OF WHITEWASH IN ORDER THAT PILGRIMS COMING TO JERUSALEM WOULD NOT TOUCH THEM ACCIDENTALLY AND CEREMONIALLY DEFILE THEMSELVES. JESUS SAID THE PHARISEES WERE LIKE TOMBS IN THE CEMETERY. OUTWARDLY APPEARING TO BE WHITE, CLEAN AND RESPECTABLE BUT INSIDE FULL OF ROTTENESS AND CORRUPTION.

Conclu: POINT:

IV. JESUS' ANGER THAT IS RESERVED FOR THE FUTURE -- REV. 6:16-17

NOT Lion, Leopard,

THE TERM "WRATH OF THE LAMB" IS BOTH STARTLING AND FRIGHTENING. THE LAMB IS ONE OF THE MEEKEST OF ALL ANIMALS AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE A SHEEP OR LAMB BEING ANGRY AT ALL! HOWEVER, THE THOUGHT OF ANGER CONTRARY TO ONE'S NATURE WOULD EXPLAIN WHY THIS IS A PICTURE OF TERRORIZED EARTH OF FRIGHTENED MEN. SIMPLY STATED, UNDER THE WRATH OF THE LAMB THEY FIND NO PLACE TO HIDE. (RELATE VARIATION OF SAVIOR-JUDGE STORY) JESUS IS NOT ANGRY WITH YOU. HE IS ANGRY CONCERNING OUR SIN. TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM SIN MUST BE ADDRESSED.

45

WHICH DISTURBS YOU MOST?

(1) A SOUL LOST IN HELL OR A SCRATCH ON YOUR NEW CAR?

(2) MISSING WORSHIP SERVICE OR MISSING A DAY'S WORK?

(3) A SERMON 10 MINUTES TOO LONG OR LUNCH HALF HOUR LATE?

(4) A CHURCH NOT GROWING OR YOUR GARDEN NOT GROWING?

(5) YOUR BIBLE UNOPENED OR YOUR NEWSPAPER UNREAD?

(6) CHURCH WORK NEGLECTED OR HOUSEWORK NEGLECTED?

(7) MISSING A GOOD BIBLE STUDY OR YOUR FAVORITE TV PROGRAM?

(8) YOUR TITHES DECREASING OR YOUR INCOME DECREASING?

(9) YOUR CHILDREN LATE FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL OR PUBLIC SCHOOL?

ROBERT K. SPRADLING

JANUARY 8, 1978
A.M.
REVISED - Aug. 1982

SISERA

JUDGES 5:20, 28-31

Sisera's mother

THE BOOK OF JUDGES IS ONE OF SADDEST BOOKS IN THE BIBLE. IT IS SAD BECAUSE ONE WOULD EXPECT GREAT AND WONDERFUL THINGS TO FOLLOW IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY AFTER THE OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP OF MEN LIKE MOSES AND JOSHUA. HOWEVER, THE BOOK IS FILLED WITH FAILURES ON THE PART OF MEN. ISRAEL FAILED TO DRIVE IT'S ENEMIES FROM WITHIN ITS BORDERS AND THE RESULT WAS A 350 YEAR PERIOD OF UPS AND DOWNS FOR THE NATION. DURING THAT PERIOD, GOD RAISED UP NATIONAL LEADERS CALLED JUDGES TO RULE OVER THAT NATION. THEIR MAIN FUNCTION WAS TO DELIVER ISRAEL FROM THE TYRANNY OF ENEMIES AND THAT WAS USUALLY DONE BY MEANS OF WARFARE. DELIVERANCE WOULD COME DURING THE LIFE OF A SPECIFIC JUDGE BUT AFTER HIS DEATH OR DEPARTURE APOSTASY WOULD SET IN AGAIN. JUDGES IS FILLED WITH THE REBELLION OF GOD'S PEOPLE AGAINST GOD'S DIRECTION AND AUTHORITY AND THE MISERY WHICH FOLLOWS IN THE WAKE OF DISOBEDIENCE. THE CHAPTER BEFORE US SHOWS THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL UNDER THE DOMINATION OF A CANAANITE KING NAMED JABIN. HIS CHIEF MILITARY COMMANDER WAS A MAN NAMED SISERA. THE WORD SISERA LITERALLY MEANS "THE LEADER." SISERA WAS A MIGHTY MAN ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND THE CHIEF OR PRIMARY WEAPON IN HIS ARSENAL WAS SOMETHING CALLED "CHARIOTS OF IRON" 900 IN NUMBER. (JUDGES 4:3) FOR 20 YEARS SISERA AND HIS TROOPS HAD TERRORIZED THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THEY NO LONGER TRAVELED THE MAIN ROADS, BUT HID ALONG THE BACK [redacted] PATHS FOR FEAR OF OPPRESSION AND DEATH. DURING THIS TIME OF OPPRESSION, GOD RAISED UP A WOMEN JUDGE NAMED DEBORAH. HER MILITARY ADVISOR WAS NAMED BARAK. DURING DEBORAH'S RULE BARAK CHALLENGED THE TROOPS OF SISERA. BARAK ENLISTED SOME 10,000 TROOPS AND BRPUGHT THEM TO MT. TABOR TO DO BATTLE. THIS PARTICULAR TERRAIN OF MOUNTAINS (AND TREES) PROVIDED DEFINITE ADVANTAGE FOR A FOOT SOLDIER AGAINST [redacted] CHARIOTS. HOWEVER, THE TEXT REMINDS THE READER THAT THE DECIDING FACTOR IN SISERA'S DEFEAT WAS NOT BARAK'S MILITARY GENIUS BUT

HAND OF GOD. THE FORCES OF SISERA WERE THROWN INTO TOTAL CONFUSION ACCORDING TO JUDGES 4:15 AND IN HER VICTORY SONG, DEBORAH SUGGESTS THAT THE VERY FORCES OF NATURE WERE AGAINST SISERA. (JUDGES 5:20-21) AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE BATTLE WAS GOING SO BADLY AGAINST SISERA THAT THE SOLDIERS JUMPED FROM THEIR CHARIOTS AND FLED FOR THEIR LIVES IN SHEER PANIC AND CONFUSION. (THE IDEA OF THE FORCES OF NATURE ROUTING THE PROGRAMS AND PLANS OF EVIL MAN IS A FASCINATING ONE AND HAS SOME SIGNIFICANCE IN HUMAN HISTORY. FOR EXAMPLE, THE SPANISH ARMADA IN ROUTE TO ENGLAND WITH THE BLESSING OF THE POPE HAD AS ITS SOLE OBJECT TO DESTROY ENGLAND, UPROOTING THE RELIGION OF THE COUNTRY AND THE LIBERTY OF ITS PEOPLE. 130 VESSELS IN THE ARMADA OPPOSED THE ENGLISH FLEET OF ONLY 80, BUT IN FACT ONLY 30 OF THE BRITISH NAVY WERE TRUE NAVAL BATTLE VESSELS. WITHOUT DISTRACTING FROM THE ABILITY OF THE ENGLISH HEROS, THE REAL DESTRUCTION TO THE SPANISH FLEET TOOK PLACE TO THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND ON THE ROCKY ISLANDS AND SHOALS, AND THEMIGHTY WINDS WHICH BROUGHT SHIP AFTER SHIP TO ITS DOOM. IN FACT, QUEEN ELIZ-ABETH ATTRIBUTED THE WINDS OF DESTRUCTION AS BEING FROM THE HAND OF GOD: "GOD BLEW UPON THEM AND THEY WERE SCATTERED" WAS THE DESCRIPTION OF THE VICTORY. NAPOLEON INVADED RUSSIA AND WENT ALL THE WAY TO MOSCOW, 600,000 CRACK TROOPS. UNABLE TO DEFEAT THE RUSSIANS HE WAS CAUGHT IN AN EARLY WINTER WHICH UPSET HIS PLANS. THE SEVERE WEATHER REDUCED HIS TROOPS TO 150,000 IN THE BITTER COLD AND BLINDING SNOW. HITLER HAD A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE IN RUSSIA.) BACK TO THE BIBLE STORY. SISERA IN FLEEING FOR HIS LIFE CAME TO THE TENT OF A WOMAN BY THE NAME OF JAEL. THE STORY THAT IS RECORDED IN DEBORAH'S SONG OF VICTORY IS AMAZING. JAEL LURED SISERA INTO HIDING AND THEN PROCEEDED TO DRIVE A TENT PEG INTO HIS TEMPLE WHILE HE SLEPT. NOW, THE SCENE SHIFTS FROM WHERE SISERA LIES DEAD IN JAEL'S TENT. (JUDGES 5:21) SISERA'S MOTHER AND HER LADIES IN WAITING STAND LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW WAITING FOR SISERA'S RETURN FROM BATTLE. FOR YEARS THEY HAD BEEN DOING THE SAME THING IN THE SAME WAY, AWAITING SISERA'S RETURN WITH THE SPOILS OF VICTORY TO BE PUT ON DISPLAY. HOWEVER, PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 20 YEARS, SISERA WAS OVERDUE AND HIS MOTHER WAS CONCERNED. SHE EXPRESSED HER CONCERN TO THE LADIES OF THE COURT BUT THEY WERE QUICK TO REASSURE HER THAT ALL WAS WELL AND UNDOUBTEDLY THE VICTORY SPOILS

WERE THE BEST EVER. SURELY SISERA WOULD RETURN WITH MANY COSTLY ITEMS AND A VICTORIOUS FEAST IN CELEBRATION WOULD COME SOON. THESE WISE LADIES WERE MISTAKEN AND THEIR LIGHT HEARTED SPIRITS COULD NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT SISERA WAS DEAD. IN SISERA'S MOTHER'S CONCERN ONE MAY SEE THE ILLUSTRATION OF A PRINCIPLE WHICH PREVAILS THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE: SISERA'S MOTHER WAS WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN THAT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN. HER SON WAS DEAD AND SHE WAS WAITING FOR A DEAD MAN. THERE WAS NO WAY HE WOULD EVER COME HOME AGAIN.

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD WHO ARE LIKE SISERA'S MOTHER. THEY ARE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN BEFORE THEY COME TO CHRIST. THEY ARE UNAWARE OF THE FACT THAT WAITING IS DANGEROUS, DEADLY AND COULD RESULT IN ETERNAL DOOM. (AS THE YEARS SLIP BY, SITUATION AFTER SITUATION COMES TO MIND OF PEOPLE WHO WAITED TOO LONG TO BE SAVED. RELATE THE STORY OF MR. WESTFALL WHO LIVED BEHIND THE NORTHVILLE CHURCH. ALSO, THE FOLK WHO LIVED IN THE RED HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET. THEY BOUGHT THEIR CHILDREN CARS, GUITARS, AND THE BEST OF EVERYTHING BUT WERE ALWAYS TOO BUSY, TOO TIRED OR TOO SOMETHING TO COME TO CHURCH, EVEN THOUGH THEY LIVED NO MORE THAN 300 FEET FROM THE DOOR. THEIR SON, ALONG WITH HIS FIANCEE WAS MURDERED LESS THAN 5 MILES FROM THE CHURCH 3 YEARS AFTER I CAME TO CHARLESTON. IT WAS TOO LATE FOR THAT BOY, EVEN THOUGH HE LIVED UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE STEEPLE OF AN INDEPENDENT, BIBLE PREACHING BAPTIST CHURCH. GOD ONLY KNOWS HOW MANY INVITATIONS THEY HAD, NOT ONLY TO BE SAVED, BUT TO COME TO CHURCH. NEXT DOOR TO THEM WAS AN AGED MAN, WW I VETERAN, WHO TOLD ME HE WOULD NOT WANT TO LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY IF THE CHURCH WAS NOT THERE, BUT NEVER DARKENED THE CHURCH DOORS, AND DIED WITHOUT CHRIST,) LET US CONSIDER SEVERAL OF THE EXCUSES PEOPLE GIVE, FLIMSY AS THEY MAY BE FOR WHY THEY DO NOT ACCEPT CHRIST.

I. SOME PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR A FEELING - EPH. 2: 8-9

THIS V. DOES NOT SAY "BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED, THROUGH FEELING...." AND YET SOME PEOPLE MEASURE EVERYTHING BY THE EMOTIONS. IF A PERSON WEEPS A GREAT DEAL IT IS INDICATIVE OF GREAT REPENTANCE. IF HE SHOUTS LOUDLY THAT IS AN INDICATION OF GREAT SPIRITUALITY. IF HE PRAYS LOUDLY, THAT IS INDICATIVE OF GREAT

POWER WITH GOD. IF HE SANCTIONS SERMONS LOUDLY THAT INDICATES GREAT INTEREST IN WHAT IS BEING SAID.

LET ME HASTEN TO SAY I DO BELIEVE IN FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS. IT CERTAINLY DOES FEEL GOOD TO BE SAVED, BUT THE FEELING COMES AFTER SALVATION AND NOT BEFORE. (POEM FEELING, FAITH AND FACT) IF YOU DO NOT KNOW JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOUR, CHANCES ARE YOU WILL FEEL AWFUL IN CHURCH. YOU WILL FEEL AS IF THE PASTOR OR EVANGELIST IS PREACHING DIRECTLY TOWARD YOU; SO IN ORDER TO FEEL BETTER SOME PEOPLE STAY AWAY FROM CHURCH. LET US STRUCTURE A HYPOTHETICAL SITUATION: ON CHRISTMAS MORNING YOUR CHILDREN AWAKEN YOU AT 5 A.M. NORMALLY THIS WOULDN'T BE SO BAD BUT YOU WERE UP UNTIL 2:30 PUTTING TOYS AND GIFTS TOGETHER. WHEN YOU GET OUT OF BED YOU FEEL TERRIBLE. YOUR HEAD HURTS, YOUR BACK HURTS, YOUR STOMACH IS UPSET. THE KIDS ARE PULLING AT YOU, TALKING ALL AT THE SAME TIME AND IN GENERAL PANDEMONIUM RULES AT YOUR HOUSE. AFTER THE CHILDREN OPEN THEIR GIFTS YOUR ACHES AND PAINS CONTINUE, YOUR WIFE TAKES YOU BY THE HAND OUT INTO THE GARAGE, TO SHOW YOU YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFT. IT IS A NEW CADILLAC WITH ALL OF THE EXTRAS IMAGINABLE. AS YOU LOOK WITH ASTONISHMENT AND BEGIN TO EXAMINE THIS CHRISTMAS PRESENT SUDDENLY YOUR ACHES AND PAINS ARE GONE IN THE EXCITEMENT OF THE MOMENT. PLEASE REMEMBER THE FEELING CAME AFTER THE GIFT WAS GIVEN AND NOT BEFORE. SO IT IS WITH SALVATION, THE FEELING COMES AFTER YOU RECEIVE GOD'S GIFT, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND NOT BEFORE. IF YOU WAIT UNTIL YOU GET A FEELING TO COME TO CHRIST, LIKE SISERA'S MOTHER, YOU WILL WAIT IN VAIN.

II. SOME PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR A BETTER CHURCH - ROMANS 3:23

HARDLY A WEEK GOES BY THAT THE OLD TIRED, WORN OUT EXCUSE OF HYPOCRITES IN THE CHURCH IS BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION. I FEEL CONFIDENT I HAVE HEARD THAT EXCUSE NO LESS THAN 1000 TIMES. IT IS REALY NO EXCUSE AT ALL. (RELATE THE STORY OF KEN QUELLETTE WHOSE RESPONSE TO THIS EXCUSE WAS WONDERFUL. IF THERE IS ANY PERSON WHO NEEDS TO BE IN CHURCH, ITS THE HYPOCRITE WHERE HE MAY HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. I HAVE ALWAYS HAD THE DESIRE TO INVITE THE PERSON GIVING THIS EXCUSE TO CHURCH WITH THE ADDED COMMENT

THAT ONE MORE HYPOCRITE WON'T HURT! EVERY POLITICAL PARTY HAS ITS CROOKS BUT THAT DOESN'T STOP PEOPLE FROM VOTING. EVERY COUNTRY CLUB OR SOCIAL ORGANIZATION HAS MEMBERS WHO DON'T PAY THEIR BILLS AND WHO DO NOT MEASURE UP TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THAT PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION. RECENTLY MY ATTENTION WAS AROUSED TO HEAR THAT COUNTERFEIT $20 BILLS WERE BEING CIRCULATED THROUGHOUT SOUTHER WEST VA. BUT IT DIDN'T STOP ME FROM USING MONEY. DISHONEST CAR DEALERS ABOUND EVERYWHERE BUT IT DOESN'T KEEP ME FROM DRIVING A CAR INSTEAD OF RIDING A HORSE. IF YOU EVER FIND A PERFECT CHURCH PLEASE DON'T JOIN IT, YOU WILL RUIN IT! CHURCHES ARE MADE UP OF ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE FROM EVERY WALK OF LIFE, SOME GOOD, SOME BAD, SOME SPIRITUAL, SOME CARNAL, SOME HONEST, SOME DISHONEST AND TRY AS THE CHURCH WILL, IT CANNOT KEEP OUT EVERY UNDESIRABLE PERSON. EVEN THE 12 DISCIPLES WERE INFILTRATED BY A THEIF AND CROOK. IT IS UNTHINKABLE THAT A PERSON WOULD LET A HYPOCRITE STAND BETWEEN HIMSELF AND GOD, HEAVEN AND HELL.

III. SOME PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR THEIR HUSBAND OR WIFE TO BE SAVED - Family

THIS IS ONE OF SATAN'S OLDEST TRICKS. YOU AND I ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE BEFORE GOD FOR THE CONDUCT OF OUR HUSBAND OR WIFE. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT EVERY MAN MUST GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD. WE ARE TERRIBLY INTEREESTED IN THE WELL BEING OF OUR FAMILIES BUT EVERY MAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OWN ACCEPTANCE OR REFUSAL TO ACCEPT CHRIST. AS A MATTER OF FACT, YOUR COMPANION MAY BE WAITING FOR YOU TO MAKE A DECISION. I CANNOT RELATE THE NUMBER OF TIMES PEOPLE WHO COME FORWARD TO RECEIVE CHRIST TO DISCOVER ONLY AFTER THAT DECISION THAT HIS OR HER HUSBAND OR WIFE FOLLOWED THEM DOWN THE AISLE. THE MOST DRAMATIC ILLUSTRATION OF THIS FACT HAD TO DO WITH AN ELDERLY COUPLE WHO LIVED IMMEDIATELY BEHIND THE CHURCH IN MICHIGAN. THEY LIVED THERE FOR 40 YEARS. THEIR SON AND HIS FAMILY HAD COME TO CHRIST AND AS A MATTER OF FACT IS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DEACONS THERE TODAY. THEY USED TO MOW THEIR LAWN DURING SUNDAY SERVICE. HOWEVER, THE AGED MOTHER CAME TO CHURCH PRIMARILY AT THE INSISTENCE OF HER SON AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW. SHE LISTENED TO THE GOSPEL, CALLED ME TO THEIR HOME ONE MONDAY MORNING, WHERE SHE RECEIVED CHRIST AS SAVIOUR. THE HUSBAND REFUSED. SHE WAS BAPTIZED AND SIX WEEKS LATER DIED. IF SHE HAD WAITED FOR HER HUSBAND SHE WOULD BE IN HELL TODAY

AS FAR AS I KNOW, HE DIED WITH NO CONCERN AND NO PROFESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST. IT IS DANGEROUS TO WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO MAKE A DECISION BEFORE YOU DECIDE FOR CHRIST.

IV. SOME PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR ANOTHER TIME AND ANOTHER PLACE - II CORIN. 6:1-2

Fate

MOST OF US BELIEVE THAT WE ARE GOING TO LIVE A LONG TIME WITH AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO REPENT ALONG LIFE'S WAY. SURELY WE PLAN TO REPENT BEFORE WE DIE. THE TERRIBLE TRUTH IS THAT VERY FEW PEOPLE WITH THIS ATTITUDE EVER COME TO CHRIST. EVERY DAY YOU LIVE MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT TO BE SAVED. HABITS BLIND US. OFTENTIMES IT IS NOT UNTIL TRAGEDY STRIKES THAT WE ARE WILLING TO LISTEN TO THE GOSPEL. IT IS AN UNUSUAL THING FOR A PERSON PAST 60 YEARS OF AGE TO COME TO CHRIST. NOTICE I SAID UNUSUAL NOT IMPOSSIBLE. DEATH BED REPENTANCE IS RARE TODAY BECAUSE OF THE MEDICAL HELPS GIVEN TO PEOPLE SUFFERIN AND NEAR DEATH. THEY ARE USUALLY HEAVILY SEDATED AND AT THAT TIME THEY DO NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO MAKE A RATIONAL DECISION. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF FELIX WHO WAITED FOR A MORE CONVENIENT SEASON BUT IT NEVER CAME. IT SPEAKS OF AGRIPPA WHO WAS ALMOST PERSUADED BUT NOT QUITE. THE YOUNG ARE PRONE TO THIS FATAL PHILOSOPHY BECAUSE THEY MISTAKENLY BELIEVE THAT IF YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN YOU HAVE NO FUN, NO FRIENDS AND NO FUTURE. ONE OF THE AMAZING FACTS OF LIFE IS THAT IF YOU OFFER A MAN A GIFT OR MONEY FREE HE WILL TAKE IT GLADLY. OFFER HIM ETERNAL LIFE FREE, AS A GIFT, AND HE BEGINS MAKING EXCUSES WHY HE CAN'T ACCEPT IT. THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO WOULD BE A CHRISTIAN BUT THEY COMPLAIN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS TOO HARD AND THEY HAVE TOO MUCH TO GIVE UP. AND THIS IS TRUE, THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A NARROW WAY AND THERE ARE SINS TO GIVE UP, BUT IN EXCHANGE THERE IS HAPPINESS, PEACE OF MIND, PURPOSE IN LIFE. THEY GIVE UP THE CONFUSION AND FRUSTRATION OF WORRYING ABOUT THEIR ETERNAL DESTINY. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS BIBLICAL FACT ABOUND. I CAN THINK OF A KENTUCKY COAL MINER CRUSHED IN A SLATE FALL, WHO HAD NO INTEREST IN TALKING TO ME ABOUT CHRIST, EVEN THOUGH HE HAD LESS THAN 48 HOURS TO LIVE. I THINK OF ANOTHER WOMAN ADDICTED TO ALCOHOL WHOM I SPOKE IN A HOSPITAL IN MICHIGAN. WITH EVERY

GOOD INTENTION SHE PLANNED TO ABANDON HER DRINKING AND TURN TO CHRIST. BUT IN LESS THAN A MONTH SHE WAS KILLED IN AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT. I THINK OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE SAT IN THIS AUDITORIUM ON SUNDAY BEFORE THEY COMMITTED SUICIDE ON FRIDAY. OF THOSE WHO HAVE TALKED WITH ME EARNESTLY ABOUT THEIR NEED OF CHRIST, WHO HAVE BEEN SHOT IN CONFRONTATIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS. LIKE SISERA'S MOTHER MANY OF THESE PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN BEFORE THEY CAN GET SAVED BUT LIKE SISERA'S MOTHER THEY ARE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN. THIS FACT IS BROUGHT HOME BY THE STORY OR LEGEND ABOUT THE MAN WHO FELL ASLEEP AND DREAMED THAT HE WAS CARRIED TO HELL, WHERE A CONFERENCE WAS IN SESSION BY SATAN AND HIS DEMONS. THE POINT OF DISCUSSION WAS HOW THEY COULD STOP THE PREACHING OF THE BIBLE ON EARTH. HOW COULD THEY SECURE THE LOST FOR ETERNITY IN HELL. ONE SUGGESTION WAS TO GO TO EARTH AND PREACH THAT THE BIBLE IS A FABLE, A MYTH, THAT THERE IS NO GOD, NO SAVIOUR, NO HEAVEN, NO HELL. IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD PLAN BUT AFTER DISCUSSION THEY DETERMINED THAT THIS WOULD NOT DO FOR DEEP DOWN IN THE HEARTS OF MEN THEY KNOW BETTER. FINALLY ONE WISE DEMON SUGGESTED THAT HE GO TO EARTH AND LET THE GOSPEL GO OUT, TELLING MEN THERE IS A HEAVEN TO GAIN AND A HELL TO FEAR-LET THEM BELIEVE IT. BUT IN BELIEVING, WHISPER IN THEIR EAR, THERE IS A HEAVEN, THERE IS A HELL, BUT THERE IS NOT HURRY, TOMORROW WILL DO. THIS WAS THE PLAN, HE WAS THE DEMON THAT WAS SENT AND HE HAS DONE HIS WORK WELL. THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE EXACTLY WHAT I AM SAYING, THEY JUST SIMPLY DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE NEED FOR HASTE. (RELATE THE STORY OF THE SURGEON WHO TOLD ME LATE IN THE NIGHT THAT SURGERY WAS NECESSARY, IT WAS TOO DANGEROUS TO WAIT UNTIL MORNING. I AM GLAD HE HAD THE GOOD JUDGMENT TO OPERATE EVEN THOUGH HE WAS WEARY AND I WAS SICK. HAD HE WAITED, I MIGHT NOT BE HERE TODAY TO TELL THE STORY.)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 26, 1993

SECRETS ABOUT SAINTS

MANY ~~THIRTY~~ YEARS AGO, DR. HERBERT LOCKYER WROTE A BOOK ENTITLED THE SINS OF THE SAINTS. THE INFERENCE WAS THAT SAINTS DO SIN, THEY ARE NOT PERFECT, AT LEAST NOT YET. THE TITLE WAS STARTLING. MANY OF THE IDEAS ABOUT SAINTS ARE NOT BIBLICAL. THERE ARE TWO WORDS MOST PEOPLE SHY AWAY FROM - SINNER AND SAINT. MOST PREFER TO BE SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN BUT NOT ONE OF THESE! IN THE BIBLE, SAINT IS NOT USED AS A TITLE FOR INDIVIDUALS BUT IS APPLIED TO GROUPS. THERE ARE NO REFERENCES IN SCRIPTURE TO SAINT PAUL, PETER, MARY OR MICHAEL. JESUS NEVER CALLED A PERSON A SAINT. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE CALLED SERVANTS, SONS, SLAVES AND SAINTS - TO LIST BUT A FEW OF THE MANY NAMES IN SCRIPTURE. THE NEW TESTAMENT WORD FOR SAINT IS HAGIOS WHICH MEANS HOLY. GOD IS THE HOLY ONE, HIS CHILDREN ARE HOLY ONES OR SAINTS. SAINTS ARE MORE THAN STATUES AND SONGS, THEY ARE LIVING PERSONS - THEY ARE SAINTS ALIVE! LET US CONSIDER SEVERAL IDEAS COMMONLY BELIEVED ABOUT SAINTS WHICH HAVE NO BIBLICAL BASIS.

I. THERE ARE NO STEPS TO SAINTHOOD - ROMANS 1:7

THERE IS NO CITY OR CATHEDRAL WHERE ONE MAY GO AND CLIMB STEPS TO SOME SACRED SHRINE TO ENHANCE PROSPECTS OF SAINTHOOD. SOME PEOPLE VIEW SAINTS AS A VERY SPECIAL, SPIRITUAL, SELECT STATUS RESERVED FOR A KIND OF SPIRITUAL ELITE WHO ARE WORTHY OF ECCLESIASTICAL VENERATION. SUCH STATUS COMES BY RELIGIOUS DECREE BASED ON A SERIES OF GOOD WORKS AND EVEN MIRACLES TO THE POINT THAT

= no living Saints

Conformed to a religious rite or standard

Ironside Story.

2

THAT PERSON RECEIVES A TITLE CALLED BLESSED AND A STATUS CALLED CANNONIZED. ACCORDING TO MY UNDERSTANDING, THIS IS A PROCESS THAT TAKES PLACE AFTER THE PERSON HAS BEEN DEAD FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. IT USUALLY BEGINS WITH A BISHOP AND IS PASSED ON TO THE PAPACY FOR THEIR APPROVAL. THIS IS A RELIGIOUS RITE AND IS SUPPOSED TO LEAD TO SAINTHOOD. WHEN ONE EXAMINES THE SIMPLE STATEMENTS OF SCRIPTURE, IT REVEALS SOME STARTLING SECRETS. (1) ALL OF GOD'S SONS ARE CALLED SAINTS. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS. PEOPLE WHO BECOME SAINTS DO NOT GO TO A SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR SAINTS BUT RATHER ALL WHO ARE SAVED ARE MADE SAINTS. THERE IS NO "STAIRWAY TO SAINTHOOD." SAINTS BECOME SAINTS BY DIVINE CALLING AND THROUGH GOD'S GRACE AND NOT THROUGH GOOD WORKS. (COMPARE EPHESIANS 1:1, [illegible], [illegible] "GOD MAKES SAINTS"

4:12, 5:3 1:15&18 2:19 3:8,18

II. SAINTS MAY BE FOUND IN UNLIKELY PLACES - 1 COR. 1:2 - Corinth/Rome

WHERE WOULD ONE GO TO LOOK FOR SAINTS? THE VATICAN, A CATHEDRAL, A MONASTARY, A REMOTE HOLY PLACE OCCUPIED BY GURUS AND GROUPS? A FEW SAINTS IN THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM OR MAYBE EVEN THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI MIGHT BE IN ORDER BUT CORINTH NEVER! CORINTH WAS A VERY PROSPEROUS, POPULOUS CITY. ONE OF THE GREAT COMMERCIAL CENTERS OF THE DAY. HOWEVER, IT WAS A BY-WORD FOR AN IMMORAL LIFESTYLE. TO "LIVE LIKE A CORINTHIAN" WAS A SYNONYM FOR DRUNKENNESS AND DEBAUCHERY. CORINTH BOASTED THE TEMPLE OF APHRODITE, THE GODDESS OF LOVE. THERE WERE A THOUSAND PRIESTESSES OR SACRED PROSTITUTES WHO WERE ATTACHED TO THE TEMPLE AND EACH EVENING INVADED THE STREETS OF CORINTH TO PLY THEIR ILLICIT TRADE IN THE NAME OF RELIGION.

Sosthenes 1:1

SUCH A "SIN CITY" WOULD HARDLY BE THE PLACE ONE WOULD LOOK FOR A THOROUGHLY BIBLICAL CHURCH - THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED IN CORINTH. PAUL MENTIONED SEVERAL OF THE (1:14) SAINTS IN THE CHURCH. THEY WERE CHRISPUS, GAUIS, STEPHANOS, AND THE SAINTS WHO RECEIVED THE COLLECTION. (I COR. 16:1) POINT: WHERE (1:16) IS A CHURCH MORE NEEDED OR NECESSARY THAN IN A PLACE WHERE SIN IS RAMPANT? THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH HAD PROBLEMS ON TOP OF PROBLEMS. PAUL SAW THEM AS BABES IN CHRIST AND YET THEY ARE ALSO CALLED BRETHREN. (3:1)

III. WE DO NOT PRAY TO SAINTS, WE PRAY FOR THEM - EPH. 6:18

THERE IS NO SAINT TO WHOM YOU AND I MAY OR MUST PRAY AND THEREBY EXPECT AN ANSWER TO OUR PRAYERS. THERE IS, HOWEVER, A PERSON WHO CAN DO JUST EXACTLY THAT AND HE IS MENTIONED IN ROMANS 8:27. REV. 5:8 AND REV. 8:3-4 SPEAK OF THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS. PLEASE NOTE IT IS OF AND NOT TO THEM. IT WOULD NOT BE UNUSUAL FOR (1) SAINTS TO PRAY FOR SINNERS OR FOR (2) SINNERS TO PRAY TO SAINTS BUT FOR SAINTS TO PRAY FOR SAINTS - THAT IS DIFFERENT. PAUL DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE OR SPEAK OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SAINTHOOD. HE SPEAKS OF PRAYER WITH REFERENCE TO ALL SAINTS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, PAUL OFTEN REQUESTED PRAYER FROM THE SAINTS. COMPARE I THESS. 5:25 AND SUBSTITUTE THE WORD SAINT FOR BRETHREN - THE MEANING IS EXACTLY THE SAME. TO BE SURE, NOT ALL SAINTS ARE SAINTLY. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A BELIEVER TO BE SAFE IN CHRIST AND NOT SWEET IN CONDUCT. THE BIBLE MAKES CLEAR THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BELIEVER'S POSITION AND HIS PRACTICE.

"Pray for your Sisters & Brothers... (Saints) And don't forget to Pray for me!" (Peterson)

"ALL Saints Prayer"

Symbol of holy person, consecrated to God. Scripture – a glow in the heart not on the head!

IV SAINTS DO NOT HAVE HALOS BUT THEY ARE ASSOCIATED WITH LIGHT - COL. 1:12

(TNIV) "the light"

HOW DOES ONE KNOW IF ANCIENT SAINTS HAD HALOS? THE "LIGHT" OF THE BELIEVER IS NOT A GLOW AROUND THE HEAD LIKE THE RINGS AROUND A PLANET BUT IT IS THE LIGHT OF GOD IN HIS SOUL THAT RADIATES FROM WITHIN. (COMPARE EPH. 5:8, 13; JOHN 3:19-21; I THESS. 5:5; I PETER 2:9. JESUS SPOKE OF SOME IN JOHN 11:10 AS "NO LIGHT IN HIM."

V. THERE ARE NO SAINTS IN HEAVEN WHO DID NOT FIRST BECOME SAINTS ON EARTH - JUDE 3

a glow in the heart

THE SALVATION MENTIONED IN THE TEXT WAS NOT GIVEN TO A GLORIOUS COMPANY OF SPIRITUALLY ELITE PERSONS WHO INHABIT HEAVEN BUT TO SAINTS ON EARTH WHO STAND STRONG FOR THE GOSPEL AND ITS PROPAGATION. ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, IF YOU ARE NOT A SAINT BEFORE YOU DIE YOU WILL NOT BECOME ONE AFTER. THERE IS NO HOLDING AREA SHORT OF HEAVEN WHERE GOD BEATS "THE DEVIL" OUT OF FOLKS TO GET THEM READY OR MAKE THEM FIT FOR HEAVEN. THERE IS SIMPLY NO SUCH PLACE AND IF YOUR HOPES ARE PINNED ON THAT, IT IS A FALSE HOPE. YOU WILL NEVER BE A SAINT UNTIL YOU FIRST BECOME A SINNER. PAUL WAS A REMARKABLE PARADOX - CHIEFEST OF SINNERS, LEAST OF SAINTS. HOW AND WHEN DO WE GET READY FOR HEAVEN? IS IT SOME WAY, SOME DAY, IS IT SOME HOW BUT NOT NOW? GOD'S CALENDAR OF SALVATION FOR ALL MEN IS MARKED - TODAY IS THE DAY OF SALVATION. IT IS NOT A MATTER OF CHANCE, IT IS A MATTER OF CHOICE. YOU MAY CHOOSE TODAY TO SAY YES OR NO TO CHRIST. THE DECISION IS YOURS, THE RESPONSIBILITY IS YOURS.

Our old Name – "Sinner" (1 Tim 1:15)
Our New Name – "Saints"
(1 Corinthians)

Work – always the designation

A preacher was studying the subject of Grace. So excited, ran out into St... first person: "what do you think of Grace?" Grace who? "The Son of God— that's who!"

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JANUARY 23, 1994

"THE CHARMING SOUND OF GRACE"

A Favorite Song:

"GRACE TIS A CHARMING SOUND, HARMONIOUS TO THE EAR: HEAVEN WITH THE ECHO SHALL RESOUND, AND ALL THE EARTH SHALL HEAR, SAVED BY GRACE ALONE! THIS IS ALL MY PLEA: JESUS DIED FOR ALL MANKIND AND JESUS DIED FOR ME." THE BEST KNOWN GOSPEL SONG IN AMERICA IS AMAZING GRACE. PEOPLE SING THE WORDS BUT DO NOT NECESSARILY BELIEVE NOR HAVE THEY EXPERIENCED WHAT THE SONG SAYS. IT IS THE MELODY AND NOT THE MESSAGE THAT CATCHES THEIR FANCY. (YOU MAY BE SURE THAT THE PHRASE "A WRETCH LIKE ME" IS NOT WHAT THEY think. ~~DESIRE TO SING~~. THE WORD GRACE IS APPLIED TO SEVERAL AREAS OF LIFE: NOT wretched but wonderful!!!

(1) GRACE IN MOVEMENT. (ATHLETES SUCH AS SKATERS AND DANCERS)

(2) GRACE IN MANNERS. (SOCIAL GRACES SUCH AS EMILY POST TEACHES AND "CHARM SCHOOL" ETIQUETTE)

(3) GRACE FROM THE MOUTH. (KIND, TACTFUL, GRACIOUS SPEECH) (JOHN 1:14-17, COLOSSIANS 4:6 "USE YOUR HEAD AS YOU LIVE AND WORK AMONG OUTSIDERS. DON'T MISS A TRICK. MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY. BE GRACIOUS IN YOUR SPEECH. THE GOAL IS TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN OTHERS IN A CONVERSATION, NOT TO PUT THEM DOWN, NOT CUT THEM OUT." (THE MESSAGE)

In Wesley "the 1st"

EPHESIANS IS AN EPISTLE WHERE GRACE IS DISPLAYED. (RELATE DR. MCCLAIN'S OBSERVATION WHEN IT WAS TIME TO NAME THE NEW SEMINARY.

THEY CONSIDERED SEVERAL BIBLICAL TERMS BUT GRACE REFLECTED THE SENTIMENT OF THE DISSENTERS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE WHOLE GROUP THAT BROKE AWAY FROM ASHLAND COLLEGE CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE "GRACE BRETHREN".)

I. GRACE AS A GREETING - EPHESIANS 1:2 (AS A SIGNATURE) AND GOOD BYE - 6:24

I WAS SURPRISED TO DISCOVER THAT THE WORD GRACE APPEARS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN ONLY THREE OR FOUR TIMES - IN THE VERY FIRST CHAPTER. (1:14-17) WITH PAUL, GRACE WAS A FAVORITE AND FREQUENT GREETING AS WELL AS CONCLUSION TO HIS EPISTLE. (I CORINTHIANS 1:3, 16:23, II CORINTHIANS 1:2, 13:14, GALATIANS 1:3, 6:18, EPHESIANS 1:2, 6:24, PHILIPPIANS 1:2, 4:23, COLLOSSIANS 1:2, 4:18, I THESSALONIANS 1:1, 5:28, II THESSALONIANS 1:2, 3:18, I TIMOTHY 1:2, 6:21, II TIMOTHY 1:2, 4:22, TITUS 1:4, 3:15) 13:11-14

THE TERM GRACE ALONG WITH OTHER WORDS, BECAME PART OF PAUL'S STYLE AND SIGNATURE IN HIS LETTERS. A SIGNATURE ON A DOCUMENT HAS TO DO WITH IDENTIFICATION. FOR EXAMPLE, A NAME ON A CHECK, DEED OR LETTER SPEAKS OF THE PERSON'S INVOLVEMENT IN THAT TRANSACTION. PAUL USED THE TERM GRACE AS A KIND OF SPIRITUAL TRADEMARK IN HIS WRITINGS AND PREACHINGS. PAUL KNEW THAT APART FROM GRACE MAN HAS NO INTEREST IN OR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE GOD OF THE BIBLE. NOBODY KNEW BETTER THAN PAUL HOW CRITICAL AND VITAL GRACE IN THE LIFE IS. ROMANS 5:1 RELATES GRACE AND PEACE. IN OTHER WORDS, PEACE WITHIN COMES FROM PEACE WITH HIM. ROMANS 3:24 SPEAKS OF THE FREENESS OF GOD'S GRACE IN REDEMPTION. IN OTHER WORDS, SALVATION IS FREE BUT IT IS NOT CHEAP. (COMPARE JOHN 15:25) THE DEFINITION OF GRACE IS USUALLY A TWO WORD DEFINITION - "UNMERITED FAVOR." THAT IS, GOD DOING FOR US WHAT WE DON'T DESERVE AND COULDN'T EARN. THE HEBREW IDEA OF GRACE IS TO BEND, STOOP OR REACH DOWN TO SOMEONE. "Rom 3:23 ... 24 "Being justified (freely by his grace) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"

Signature Sig? In Person

(Jn. 15:25)

GRACE IS FAVOR WITHOUT RECIPROCITY. ((FOR EXAMPLE LET US SUPPOSE A FRIEND INVITES YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE TO DINNER ON A CERTAIN OCCASION. THE DETAILS OF PREPARATION ARE VERY ELABORATE AND YOU AS A RECIPIENT OF THIS DINNER ARE OVERWHELMED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT AFTER IT IS ALL OVER YOU SAY TO YOUR HOST AND HOSTESS "HOW MUCH DO I OWE YOU?" SUCH A STATEMENT IS A FAUXPAS OF ENORMOUS MAGNITUDE. TO PROPOSE SUCH A QUESTION IS AN INSULT TO THE FRIENDS BECAUSE NO PAYMENT IS EXPECTED OR PERMITTED.)) ~~LET US ASSUME THAT~~ A VERY FAMOUS SINGER WHO RECEIVES A FEE OF SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS PER CONCERT COMES TO VISIT A FRIEND HERE IN THIS CHURCH. THE FRIEND CALLS AND ASKS IF THE FAMOUS SINGER COULD SING A SOLO IN CHURCH ON SUNDAY. NO FEE IS EXPECTED OR OFFERED BECAUSE IT IS A "GRACE APPEARANCE." A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF GRACE IS THE STORY OF ~~MEPHIBOSHETH~~ RECORDED IN II SAMUEL 9.

II. GRACE AND THE GLORY AND RICHES OF GOD - EPHESIANS 1:6-7

THERE ARE TWO PRIMARY IDEAS IN THESE TWO VERSES WITH REFERENCE TO GRACE.

A. GRACE AND THE GLORY OF GOD

THE GLORY OF GOD IS SOMETHING ONE HEARS LITTLE OR NOTHING ABOUT OUTSIDE OF A CHURCH LIKE OURS. ROMANS 3:23 INDICTS MAN AND HIS SIN IN MAN'S ABANDONMENT OF HIS PRIMARY REASON FOR LIVING ON THIS PLANET -- THE GLORY OF GOD. THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION WAS EXACTLY RIGHT WHEN IT SAID THAT THE CHIEF END OF MAN IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND ENJOY HIM FOREVER. GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED THROUGH HIS GRACE EXTENDED FREELY TO SINFUL MEN.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING AUGUST 4, 1991

Man's World-View - Conclusion: a life not centered on God is purposeless and meaningless! (Vanity!)

A TIME TO LAUGH

ECCLESIASTES 3:4

ECCLESIASTES IS A SERMON BY SOLOMON IN WHICH HE TALKS ABOUT "LIFE UNDER THE SUN." (1:3) SOLOMON VIEWS LIFE AS MAN SEES IT. LIKE THE TV EDITORIAL, THE VIEWS OF THIS BOOK ARE NOT GOD'S BUT MAN'S WORLD VIEW. CHAPTER 3 IS NOT A SANCTION OF THE SUBJECTS MENTIONED BUT A STATEMENT THAT THESE SEASONS ARE PART OF THE CYCLE OF EVENTS ON EARTH. EVERYTHING HAS ITS TIME OR SEASON - IT COMES, IT GOES. LIKE THE PREACHER WHO SAID THAT THE BIBLE SAYS: "IT CAME TO PASS" AND THAT'S WHAT IT DID - IT CAME AND PASSED. OFTEN WE HAVE LITTLE OR NO CONTROL OVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE. IN THE SEASONS OF LIFE, THERE IS A SEASON OR TIME FOR LAUGHTER. SCIENTISTS AND SOCIOLOGISTS DO NOT ALWAYS KNOW WHY WE LAUGH BUT THEY KNOW WHAT IT DOES TO US AND THAT IS USUALLY FOR OUR GOOD. LAUGHTER REDUCES TENSION, RELAXES TISSUES. THERE IS MYSTERY AND MAGIC ABOUT LAUGHTER CALLED "MERRY MEDICINE" IN PROV. 17:22: "A MERRY HEART DOETH GOOD LIKE MEDICINE." FOR EXAMPLE, A PERSON DESCRIBING A WAYWARD UNCLE SAID: "HE OCCUPIED THE CHAIR OF APPLIED ELECTRICITY AT ONE OF THE GREAT INSTITUTIONS OF OUR STATE. HE DIED IN HARNESS." WE SMILE AT THIS DESCRIPTION OF A HORRIBLE EVENT - CAPITAL PUNISHMENT!

SIMILARLY, A MAN WAS HANGED, YEARS AGO, FOR STEALING A HORSE. HIS HANGING WAS DESCRIBED BY A FAMILY MEMBER AS HIS HAVING DIED WHILE TAKING PART IN A PUBLIC CEREMONY WHEN THE PLATFORM UPON WHICH HE WAS STANDING SUDDENLY COLLAPSED! ONE IS SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT NOT A GREAT DEAL IS SAID IN THE BIBLE ABOUT LAUGHTER. MORE IS SAID ABOUT TEARS. ONE

An appointed time for everything

PSALM 65

OF THE GREAT DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF MAN AS OPPOSED TO ANIMALS IS MAN'S ABILITY OR CAPACITY TO LAUGH. A DOG MAY BARK, SHOW HIS TEETH, WAG HIS TAIL. A CAT MAY PURR AND DIG ITS CLAWS INTO WHATEVER IS NEAR BUT DOGS AND CATS DON'T LAUGH. THERE IS NO RECORD OF LAUGHTER IN EDEN. YET, I AM SURE THERE WAS LAUGHTER THERE. THERE IS NO RECORD OF LAUGHTER IN THE BIBLE UNTIL ABRAHAM. HOWEVER, PRAISE, SHOUTS OF JOY, SINGING AND THANKSGIVING ARE ALL PART OF SCRIPTURE. SOMEONE WONDERED ALOUD IF JESUS EVER LAUGHED SINCE THE BIBLE PROTRAYS HIM AS A MAN OF SORROWS. IN MY OPINION, IT IS UNTHINKABLE TO PICTURE JESUS WITHOUT A SMILE OR A SENSE OF HUMOR. TO LOOK AT SOME OF US WHO PROFESS TO KNOW CHRIST, WHO THINK IT BENEATH OUR DIGNITY TO LAUGH MIGHT CONVEY THIS MISTAKEN IMPRESSION THAT JESUS WAS A SOUR, SOLEMN PERSON. REMEMBER THE STORY OF THE NEW CONVERT WHO WAS ASKED THIS QUESTION. HIS REPLY WAS "I DON'T KNOW BUT HE SURE FIXED ME SO I COULD!" LET'S EXAMINE SEVERAL KEY VERSES IN THE BIBLE ON THE SUBJECT OF LAUGHTER.

I. THE LAUGHTER OF SURPRISE - GEN. 17:17

ISAAC'S BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT DID NOT COME FROM HIS MOTHER OR THE LOCAL PAPER - BUT FROM GOD! IT BROUGHT SURPRISED LAUGHTER FROM ABRAHAM AND CYNICAL LAUGHTER FROM SARAH. (18:12-15; 21:6) IN ABRAHAM'S CASE IT WAS THE LAUGHTER SIMILAR TO A SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY WHERE JOY AND LAUGHTER FOLLOW. IN ROMANS 4 IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT ABRAHAM DID NOT DOUBT THAT GOD COULD AND WOULD KEEP HIS PROMISE. HE SEEMED TO HOPE THAT GOD MIGHT CARRY THE PLAN OUT THROUGH ISHMAEL WHO WAS ALREADY BORN.

ISHMAEL WAS ABRAHAM'S PRIDE AND JOY AND HE WANTED HIM TO BE PART OF GOD'S PLAN. (WILLIAM EVANS POINTS TO THE FACT THAT GOD IS NOT A CAPTIVE TO THE THINGS THAT ENSLAVE US. FOR EXAMPLE:

(1) NUMBERS - ONE IS A MAJORITY WITH GOD. (SIZE over SUBSTANCE) Samson!

(2) MONEY #

(3) TIME - JOHN 2 WHERE GOD CAN DO IN IN A MOMENT WHAT IT TAKES MAN AND NATURE MONTHS TO DO.

Evolutionist are Slaves To Time!

(4) MAN'S WISDOM - 1Cor. 1

(5) HUMAN POWER - Isa.

(6) NATURAL LAW —

(7) THE ORDINARY AND USUAL - miracle — No!

WITH SARAH, THE BIRTH OF A SON IN HER ADVANCED AGE WAS PREPOSTEROUS - LAUGHABLE - AND THAT'S WHAT SHE DID. ABRAHAM'S LAUGH WAS A "HURRAH OF ANTICIPATION." SARAH'S WAS A "NO WAY OF UNBELIEF." TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER GOD MADE THE INITIAL PROMISE, IT WAS FULFILLED. ISAAC MEANS LAUGHTER AND IS A PLAY ON THE WORD. SARAH LAUGHED IN BOTH UNBELIEF AND RELIEF. SHE LEARNED THAT NOTHING - ABSOLUTELY NOTHING - IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD. SHE DIED AT AGE 127 - THE ONLY WOMAN WHOSE AGE, DEATH AND BURIAL ALL THREE ARE MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE. LESSON: GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES - EACH AND EVERY ONE - NO EXCEPTIONS, EXCLUSIONS.

If He doesn't — I'd have a Big Problem!

(1) Surprise

Ridiculed Taunt (Mock)

(2)

II. THE LAUGHTER OF SCORN - MARK 5:40

FUNERALS AREN'T FUNNY. IT IS NO PLACE TO MAKE FUN OR MOCK ANYONE. IF EVER THERE IS A SOLEMN MOMENT IN LIFE, IT IS IN THE CEMETERY. THESE PROFESSIONAL MOURNERS COULD DO NOTHING TO HELP A CRUSHED AND GRIEVING FATHER OVER THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER. WHEN JESUS SAID HE COULD AND WOULD DO SOMETHING THEY ADDED TO THE GRIEF BY PUTTING DOWN JESUS WITH SCORNFUL LAUGHTER. THEY WERE WRONG ABOUT THE SITUATION, AND THEY WERE WRONG ABOUT JESUS. THEY LAUGHED - HE GAVE LIFE. THINK OF THESE TWO WORDS - LAUGH AND LIFE. SOMEWHERE IN LIFE YOU AND I MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN BEING LAUGHED AT OR HAVING LIFE. (2) (EXPLAIN)

(1) Point.

(3)

III. THE LAUGHTER OF SORROW - PROVERBS 14:13

THE WORD "SORROWFUL" IN THE TEXT REFERS TO SORENESS, PAIN, SADNESS. THE HURTS OF THE HEART ARE NOT AS VISIBLE AS OUTWARD HURTS. MUCH SADNESS IS MASKED BEHIND A SMILE. EVERY COMEDIAN KNOWS WHAT IT IS TO BE HAPPY ON STAGE WHILE THE HEART IS HEAVY. FOLKS LOOK FOR AND WILL PAY FOR SOMEONE TO BE FUNNY AS A MEANS OF LIFTING LIFE'S BURDENS. SOME OF THE HIGHEST PAID MEN IN THE WORLD ARE COMEDIANS. WE SEE IN OUR TIME THE REPLAY OF THE OLD COURT JESTER OF MEDIEVAL TIMES. (STORY OF DOCTOR AND: "I AM THAT CLOWN.") SUBCONSCIOUSLY, MAN HOPES THAT HE CAN BE HAPPY WITHOUT KNOWING GOD AND WITHOUT DOING RIGHT. IT IS MY BELIEF THAT HAPPINESS IS A VERY ELUSIVE COMMODITY FOR THE NATURAL MAN. HE MAY FIND TEMPORARY PLEASURE BUT IT IS A FADING FEATURE BECAUSE MAN IS SO CONSTITUTED THAT NOTHING REALLY SATISFIES THE SOUL BUT GOD HIMSELF. EVERYTHING ELSE IS A SUBSTITUTE. THERE IS AN ETERNAL DIMENSION TO LIFE WHICH MEN DO NOT UNDERSTAND. CARL JUNG SAID: "THE CENTRAL NEUROSIS OF OUR TIME IS EMPTINESS." PAUL LITTLE SUGGESTS

God made MAN TO INHABIT ETERNITY SO the things of time CANNOT satisfy his deepest longings. (MATT. 4:4)

THAT AN AUTOMOBILE, WITH ALL OF ITS FINE-TUNED EQUIPMENT, WILL NOT RUN ON WATER. IT WAS MADE TO RUN ON GASOLINE OR DIESEL FUEL AND IT WILL NOT FUNCTION PROPERLY UNTIL THESE ARE USED. MAN WAS DESIGNED TO FIND FULFILLMENT AND FELLOWSHIP IN GOD. SIN MARRED THE DESIGN AND RUINED THE FELLOWSHIP SO THE NEW BIRTH IS SIMPLY CORRECTING THE SIN PROBLEM BY FINDING FULFILLMENT IN OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS CHRIST. (RELATE BILLY GRAHAM'S STORY ABOUT HENRY FORD FIXING HIS OWN PRODUCT.) MAN TURNS TO EVERY SOURCE ON EARTH TO FIND SATISFACTION ONLY TO COME UP EMPTY. ECCLESIASTES 3:11 EXPLAINS WHY THAT IS.

IV. THE LAUGHTER OF SONG - PSALM 126:2

THIS PSALM WAS SUNG BY THE LORD'S PEOPLE WHEN THEY RETURNED FROM THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY. IN TODAY'S TERMINOLOGY, IF WE CALLED IT A SONG IT WOULD BE TITLED: "BACK FROM BABYLON," BY THE EXILES! IT WAS A DREAM COME TRUE. IT WAS WONDERFUL AND MARVELOUS TO SEE HOW GOD BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE BACK FROM EXILE. PSALM 137:1-4 EXPRESSES THEIR FEELING WHILE IN CAPTIVITY AND THIS PSALM THEIR FEELING OUT OF CAPTIVITY. IT IS A HARVEST OR JOY.

V. THE LAUGHTER OF A SOVEREIGN GOD - PSALM 2:4

THE SCENE IN PSALM 2 IS NO LAUGHING MATTER. THIS IS A MESSIANIC PSALM REFERRING TO A GREAT CRISIS IN HISTORY AND PROPHECY. IT REFERS TO ARMAGEDDON. THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD HAVE MARSHALED THEIR FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN AN AREA SOME 200 MILES LONG

See "Greatness of the Kyhm" - pg 52!

Zech. 14: 2-3

multiplied

WHERE APPROXIMATELY ~~FOUR HUNDRED~~ MILLIONS SOLDIERS WILL GATHER IN EARTH'S FINAL HOLOCAUST. ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON WILL BEGIN WITH THE SEIGE OF THE CITY OF JERUSALEM. ARMIES REPRESENTING THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD WILL PRESS UPON THAT CITY ACCORDING TO ZECHARIAH 12:2-3 AND ZEPHANIAH 3:8. THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE THERE ALONG WITH THE OTHER MAJOR BLOCKS OF NATIONS IN THE WORLD. THEIR SINGLE PURPOSE WILL BE TO DESTROY ISRAEL AND ISRAEL'S MESSIAH. ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, ISRAEL WILL BE DESECRATED, THE CITY OF JERUSALEM CAPTURED, THE WEALTH OF THE CITY CONFISCATED AND LEFT IN RUINS. THE CLIMAX OF THE WHOLE MOVEMENT OF NATIONS AGAINST GOD WILL BE THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. SOMEONE HAS CALLED IT AN INVASION FROM OUTER SPACE! ARMAGEDDON, THEN, IS THE FINAL CONFLICT OF THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD AGAINST GOD AND THIS PSALM DEPICTS THAT ATTITUDE AND ACTION. THE PSALM SPEAKS OF AN EVIL CONSPIRACY, BANDING TOGETHER OF THE NATIONS WITH THE INTENT OF BREAKING ALL DIVINE CONTROL AND RESTRAINT UPON THIS PLANET. IT SOUNDS VERY MUCH LIKE THE WORLD BEFORE THE GENESIS FLOOD. AFTER SETTING THIS SCENE, THE SCENE SHIFTS FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN WHERE GOD IS PICTURED AS SITTING IN THE HEAVENS LAUGHING! WHY IS HE LAUGHING? JESUS WEPT OVER THE CITY OF JERUSALEM SO WHY WOULD GOD LAUGH AT THE NATIONS? THIS IS THE "LAST LAUGH" SO TO SPEAK. DURING THE LONG YEARS OF HUMAN HISTORY, GOD'S OUTSTRETCHED HANDS TO ALL MANKIND HAVE SAID COME. NOW IT IS THE LAST CHAPTER AND MAN HAS NOT CHANGED SINCE THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THIS BOOK, HE IS STILL IN REBELLION AGAINST GOD AND NOT FOR GOD. SO, MAN'S FINAL ASSAULT AGAINST GOD IS MET WITH DIVINE LAUGHTER. IT IS THE PICTURE

The Divinity Code

Heaven Plane

Earth - Chaos

See WWW Part 2

400 M. + the laugh...

OF GOD IN FULL CONTROL AND AT EASE PRESIDING OVER THE AFFAIRS OF HUMAN HISTORY AND MANKIND. THE PRESUMPTION OF THIS SCENE WOULD BE SIMILAR TO RED ADAIR CALLING A PRESS CONFERENCE DISPLAYING A WATER PISTOL AND DECLARING THAT HE PLANS TO PUT OUT THE MANY HUNDREDS OF OIL-WELL FIRES IN KUWAIT WITH HIS WATER PISTOL! THIS IS DIVINE DISDAIN AGAINST MAN'S FEEBLE EFFORT TO THRUST GOD FROM EARTH. SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT ONE REASON GOD LAUGHS IS BECAUSE HE KNOWS THE OUTCOME AND THAT HIS SON WILL BE VICTORIOUS OVER THE EARTH WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT! THE APPEAL TO THE NATIONS IN VERSE 9 IS TO SUBMIT TO HIS AUTHORITY OR BE JUDGED BY HIM. CONCLUSION: THERE IS A TIME OR SEASON FOR LAUGHTER WHEN IT IS NEEDED AND NECESSARY. HOWEVER, THERE IS A TIME FOR SOBER REFLECTIVE CAREFUL THOUGHT ABOUT ONE'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. WHAT WILL BE TRUE OF THE NATIONS IN THE FUTURE IS TRUE OF INDIVIDUALS TODAY.

Drawn by cords of love
Bound by chains of justice

ROBERT K. SPRADLING NOVEMBER 30, 1986

BCC. April 1994

"SAINTS ON EARTH"

THE EPHESIAN SAINTS - NOT IN THE NFL

TODAY WE DIGRESS FROM OUR STUDIES IN CHAPTER 4 TO DEAL WITH A WORD THAT APPEARS OFTEN IN THIS EPISTLE. (WORD STUDIES: HOLY SPIRIT, FATHER, CHURCH, LOVE, WALK, ETC.) THE WORD SAINT IS USED BOTH CAREFULLY AND CARELESSLY. ALMOST NOBODY WANTS TO BE CALLED A SAINT! (FRANK REYNOLDS - HE WAS A GOOD MAN, BUT NO SAINT.) MOST LOOK UPON SAINTHOOD AS A SPECIAL PLACE IN THE CHURCH RESERVED FOR AN ELITE FEW WHO HAVE ACHIEVED SOME MIRACULOUS WORK AND STATION HERE ON EARTH. ON THE OTHER HAND, A FOOTBALL TEAM IN NEW ORLEANS IS CALLED THE SAINTS - IT GOES ON THE FIELD EACH SUNDAY TO BEAT UP ON ITS OPPONENTS WHICH IS HARDLY AN ACT OF SAINTHOOD! PEOPLE ENJOY SINGING "WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN," BUT IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THE FOLK DOING THE MARCHING ARE VERY SAINTLY! EVEN FOLK WHO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLICAL TERM SAINT SHY AWAY FROM CALLING THEMSELVES SAINTS BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO SUGGEST A LACK OF MODESTY RELATING TO A HIGH POSITION MOST NEVER EXPECT TO ATTAIN. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE ARE TWO TERMS IN THE BIBLE FROM WHICH MOST PEOPLE RETREAT - SAINT AND SINNER. SAINTS ARE TOO GOOD, AND SINNERS ARE TOO BAD! SAINTS ARE LIKE "MORAL MOVIE STARS" - THE SUPER-SPIRITUAL SOMEBODIES WHO ARE NOT LIKE THE REST OF US BUT MORE LIKE RELIGIOUS SUPERSTARS! BY CONTRAST, SINNERS ARE THE DRUNKARDS, PERVERTS AND CRIMINALS WHO SLINK THROUGH THE SEWERS OF OUR CITIES. LET US SEE WHAT EPHESIANS SAYS ABOUT SAINTS.

Start

Both - Extremes.

"AT Ephesus!

I. THE IDENTITY OF SAINTS - 1:1, 2:19

1:1 v 8

THE WORD SAINT IS A SYNONYM FOR CHRISTIAN, BELIEVER, SON OR CHILD OF GOD. SAINTS TODAY ARE BOTH IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH. MAYBE SOME SAINTS ARE IN ROME OR JERUSALEM BUT ALSO CHARLESTON! THE BELIEVERS AT EPHESUS - ALL OF THEM - WERE CALLED SAINTS. THIS WAS ALSO TRUE AT CORINTH. COMPARE I COR. 1:2. THE WORD SAINT IS THE GREEK "HAGIOS" WHICH MEANS TO SET APART, TO BE SEPARATED, HOLY. IF YOU ARE IN CHRIST YOU ARE A SAINT POSITIONALLY IF NOT SAINTLY CONDITIONALLY! DR. BARNHOUSE USED TO TELL THE STORY OF A SON OF A CERTAIN ENGLISH FAMILY WHO DISGRACED THE FAMILY NAME TO THE POINT THAT HIS FAMILY WAS OUTRAGED BY HIS CONDUCT. HE WAS TOLD BY HIS FAMILY THAT IF HE WOULD LEAVE THE COUNTRY HE WOULD RECEIVE A CHECK REGULARLY, ENOUGH TO LIVE ON, BUT IF HE REFUSED, ALL INCOME WOULD BE CUT OFF. THE BOY IMMIGRATED TO CANADA AND RECEIVED HIS CHECK REGULARLY WHICH HE SPENT QUICKLY. OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS, THE FATHER AND THE OLDER BROTHER IN THE FAMILY BOTH DIED. ACCORDING TO BRITISH LAW, THE WAYWARD SON BECAME HEIR TO THE TITLE AND THE ESTATE OF HIS FAMILY. HOWEVER, HE HAD DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT AND COULD NOT BE TRACED. AFTER A PERIOD OF TIME HE WAS FINALLY LOCATED BY DETECTIVES WHO DISCOVERED HIM OPERATING AN ELEVATOR IN A CHEAP HOTEL. HIS POSITION WAS THAT OF A NOBLE EARL IN ENGLAND WITH ACCESS TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS. HIS CONDITION WAS THAT OF A WORKER IN A JOB NOT BEFITTING HIS TITLE. SO IT IS WITH MANY OF US. WE ARE POSITIONALLY SAINTS BUT CONDITIONALLY NOT VERY SAINTLY. (COMMENT ON ST. PETER, NICHOLAS, GEORGE.) IF YOU ARE SAVED, YOU ARE A SAINT, A SON, A SERVANT, AND IN SOME CASES A SIGHT!

Rom. 1:7

Poem

II. THE HUMILITY OF SAINTS - 3:8

SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY WRONG WITH THE WAY WE VIEW THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN AMERICA. IT IS FAR DIFFERENT FROM THE BIBLE WAY. FOR EXAMPLE, A MOVIE STAR, PROFESSIONAL BALL PLAYER, POLITICAL FIGURE OR SOME OTHER HIGHLY VISIBLE PERSON PROFESSES FAITH IN CHRIST AND SUDDENLY IS ELEVATED TO PLACES OF HIGH VISIBILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CHURCH. AT BANQUETS WE BRAG AND BOAST OF THESE FOLKS WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO BE OUR MODELS FOR CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR, OFTEN TO THEIR RUIN AND OURS! THERE ARE NO CELEBRITIES IN THE CHURCH, NONE! GOD IS NOT IMPRESSED WITH SINNERS! IF THE CHURCH EVER HAD A CELEBRITY, IT COULD HAVE BEEN PAUL BUT HIS OWN DESCRIPTIONS OF HIMSELF ARE FAR FROM CELEBRITY STATUS: I TIM. 1:15 - CHIEFEST OF SINNERS, I COR. 15:9 - LEAST OF THE APOSTLES, AND HERE LEAST OF THE SAINTS. THE COMMENTATORS SAY PAUL BROKE THE RULES OF GRAMMAR BY CONSTRUCTING A COMPARATIVE WITH A SUPERLATIVE. THAT IS, IF YOU ARE LEAST HOW CAN YOU BE LESS THAN LEAST? PAUL COINED A TERM - "LEASTER" - IT WOULD BE LIKE OUR SAYING MOST AND MOSTEST! ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10, PAUL LOOKED UPON HIMSELF AS A-0! PRIDE IS NOT A SIN OF THE PEW ALONE, IT BEGINS IN THE PULPIT AND THE CHOIR LOFT AND FROM THAT VANTAGE POINT RUINED LUCIFER AND UNTOLD MILLIONS SINCE. PAUL WAS THE BRAINIEST OF THE BRAINY, GREATEST OF THE GREATS BUT NOT IN HIS OWN SIGHT. HE WAS GENUINELY HUMBLE BEFORE GOD IN GRACE.

(1) Beaten 5 times 39 lashes
(2) Stoned 3 times (not dead)
(3) Shipwrecked
(4) Robbed
(5) Hungry & Cold
(6) Shut in jail & Lost

(1) Servant?

(A) Imagine St. Paul going to a modern psychiatrist - talk about his "self-worth"! How do you feel about yourself?

(1) Paul

(2) John the Baptist! Voice crying in wilderness! Prepare Him a highway!

I. Identity
II. Ministry

III. THE MATURITY OF SAINTS - 4:12

THIS VERSE IS IN A SPIRITUAL GIFTS CONTEXT. PASTORAL GIFTS ARE FOR SEVERAL PURPOSES NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS. QUESTION: IF SAINTS ARE ALREADY PERFECT, WHY DO THEY NEED TO BE PERFECTED? THE TERM PERFECT IN THE TEXT MEANS MATURE. IT IS USED TO DESCRIBE A PHYSICIAN SETTING A BROKEN BONE, A FISHERMAN MENDING HIS NET, A POLITICIAN GETTING TWO POLITICAL FACTIONS TOGETHER TO AGREE. THE BASIC IDEA IS THAT OF PUTTING SOMETHING IN THE CONDITION AND PLACE IT OUGHT TO BE. THERE ARE NO SINLESS PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET AND FOR SAINTS THE PROCESS OF MATURING IS VERY NECESSARY. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS CALLED PASTORS TO HELP BELIEVERS GROW IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY. LACK OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY CREATES ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS WITH BOTH LEADERSHIP AND LAITY IN A LOCAL CHURCH. IN THE BIBLE, SOME OF THE PROMINENT SAINTS SINNED TERRIBLY: ABRAHAM LIED, DAVID COMMITTED ADULTERY, MOSES LOST HIS TEMPER, NOAH GOT DRUNK. GOD IS IN THE PROCESS OF PERFECTING HIS CHILDREN THAT WE MAY GROW UP SPIRITUALLY AND SERVE HIM BETTER.

1 Cor. 3:1

Kill a man

IV. THE PURITY OF SAINTS - 5:3

WHEREVER CHRISTIANITY HAS GONE, IT HAS BROUGHT A HIGHER STANDARD OF MORALITY TO HUMANKIND. CHASTITY AND VIRTUE GO WITH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. THE GREAT CIVILIZATIONS AND CULTURES OF THE PAST SUCH AS GREECE AND ROME LAID GREAT EMPHASIS ON KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, AND JUSTICE

BUT LITTLE ON MORALITY. BARCLAY POINTS OUT THAT 14 OF THE FIRST 15 ROMAN EMPERORS WERE PRACTICING HOMOSEXUALS! ACCORDING TO I PETER 2:9, WE ARE TO LIVED CHANGED LIVES: "BUT YE ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PECULIAR PEOPLE; YE SHOULD SHOW FORTH THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO HAS CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT." SPIRITUAL BIRTH REQUIRES SPIRITUAL BEHAVIOR! (II COR. 5:17) SAINTS MAY STUMBLE, ALL DO BUT HE DOES NOT SAVOR HIS SINS BUT RATHER SHUNS THEM. THE STORY IS TOLD OF A BELIEVER WHO WORKED IN A HIGH STRESS SITUATION AT HIS COMPANY. HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY HIS SUPERIORS TO TAKE A PHYSICAL EXAMINATION. AFTER A THOROUGH CHECK, HIS PHYSICIAN SUGGESTED THAT HE ENGAGE IN A CERTAIN KIND OF ACTIVITY IN AREAS OF ENTERTAINMENT THAT BOTHERED THE BELIEVER. HE THANKED THE DOCTOR FOR HIS SUGGESTION BUT DECLINED TO ENGAGE IN THE ACTIVITY. THE PHYSICIAN WAS SURPRISED AND ASKED FOR AN EXPLANATION. "DOCTOR, YOU ARE A PHYSICIAN, A SURGEON AND WHEN YOU OPERATE YOU SCRUB YOUR HANDS METICULOUSLY UNTIL THEY ARE CLEAN. YOU WOULD NOT DARE OPERATE WITH DIRTY HANDS. I AM A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST. MY LIFE AND TESTIMONY INFLUENCE OTHER PEOPLE AND I DARE NOT DIRTY MY LIFE LEST I CONTAMINATE ~~THEM AND ME~~."

Airline Pilot & Kodey

the ENTREATY

V. THE ACTIVITY OF SAINTS - 6:18

FOR

WHAT DO SAINTS DO? THEY ARE NOT ANGELS, HAVE NO WINGS SO THEY CAN'T FLY AROUND THE UNIVERSE. IN THE MINDS OF SOME PEOPLE THEY HAVE BECOME METALS AND STATUES.

We do not pray to Saints
" pray FOR

AN Earnest A
" Petition... request

CONVENTS

DO THEY WALK AROUND MONASTERIES IN STRANGE LOOKING CLOTHES? IN THIS VERSE WE LEARN THAT THEY PRAY. IT IS NOT ALL SAINTS DO BUT PRAYER IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE SAINT'S LIFE. IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR SAINTS TO PRAY FOR SINNERS BUT IT IS UNUSUAL FOR SAINTS TO PRAY FOR SAINTS. IN THIS PASSAGE THE BIBLE TEACHES SEVERAL INTERESTING TRUTHS ABOUT PRAYER.

(1) PRAY ALL THE TIME - DAY, NIGHT, EARLY, LATE, ANYTIME.

(2) PRAY ALL KINDS OF PRAYER.

(3) PRAY WITH PERSISTENCE - DON'T GIVE UP OR QUIT EVEN IF IT APPEARS AS IF ONE'S PRAYERS ARE NOT ANSWERED. (Luke 18:1)

(4) PRAY FOR FELLOW CHRISTIANS.

(5) PRAY FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS LIKE PAUL.

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT GOD SEES ALL MEN IN ONE OF TWO CATEGORIES, EITHER SAINTS OR SINNERS. TAKE YOUR PICK, THERE IS NO NEUTRAL GROUND!

Dr. Hanney Ironside enroute to West Coast many yrs ago - group of News. Greetings - "Ever seen a living Saint?" NO. Like to? "I am Saint Hanney!!" Showed them from Bible ——— Sons = Saints - all.

QUESTION: WHO GETS THE GLORY FROM YOUR LIFE AND MINE? IN MOST OR MANY CASES THAT GLORY IS RESERVED FOR SOME HUMAN BEING - NOT GOD. WHEN A PERSON GETS SAVED, THEN AND ONLY THEN CAN HE PURSUE THAT PURPOSE FOR WHICH MAN WAS CREATED AND THEREBY BRING GLORY TO GOD THROUGH REDEMPTIVE GRACE.

B. THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE

THE WORD RICHES HERE IS THE GREEK PLOUTOS. IT IS USED TO DESCRIBE CHRIST IN II COR. 8:9 AND PAUL USES THE TERM IN PHIL. 4:19. SIN MADE MAN POOR. GRACE MAKES HIM RICH. MAN IS BORN IN SPIRITUAL RAGS AND THROUGH CHRIST MOVES TO SPIRITUAL RICHES. GOD IS RICH AND HIS RICHES OF GRACE HAVE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE BELIEVING SINNER. TO UNDERSTAND THE TERM RICH IS TO UNDERSTAND THE WORTH OF SOMETHING. HOW MUCH IS FORGIVENESS OF SINS WORTH TO YOU AND ME? CAN IT BE TALLIED IN DOLLARS? ANSWER, NO. WHAT WOULD A PERSON PAY TO HAVE A CLEAN CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD? (I PETER 1:18) GRACE DOES NOT COME TO US IN SMALL, SHALLOW, SCARCITY. IT IS DESCRIBED IN OVERFLOWING TERMS AS A TORRENT OF GOD'S LOVING KINDNESS TO THE BELIEVING SINNER. LIKE THE PRODIGAL SON, YOU AND I BRING NOTHING BUT SIN AND FAILURE TO THE FATHER AND RECEIVE IN TURN NOTHING BUT KINDNESS, TENDERNESS AND GRACE.

III. GRACE AS A GIFT FOR SERVICE - 3:7-8, 4:7, 29

IN THIS CHAPTER, PAUL IS PICTURED AS A PRISONER AND MINISTER. THE TERM STERWARDSHIP SUGGESTS SERVICE. IT IS A WORD TO DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO MANAGED A HOUSEHOLD - USUALLY A FAIRLY LARGE ESTATE. JOSEPH WAS SUCH A MANAGER. WHEN A PERSON'S ESTATE WAS LARGE,

ANOTHER PERSON WAS HIRED TO OVERSEE THAT ESTATE AND THE PERSON WAS ANSWERABLE TO THE OWNER FOR EVERY ASPECT OF HIS STEWARDSHIP. GOD HAS DIFFERENT WAYS OF MANAGING HIS PROGRAM ON EARTH AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN HISTORY. THESE PERIODS ARE CALLED DISPENSATIONS. GOD GAVE PAUL GRACE TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD TO THE GENTILE WORLD. THE EPHESIANS IN A CERTAIN RESPECT HAD COME FROM COMMON SLAVERY TO THE UNCOMMON POSITION AS SONS OF GOD. PAUL DID NOT DECIDE TO BECOME A DISCIPLE NOR DID HE PLAN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST - GOD'S GRACE MADE IT POSSIBLE. AS ONE COMMENTATOR HAS SUGGESTED IT CAME AS A SHEER GIFT - A REAL SURPRISE TO PAUL. GOD EQUIPPED PAUL FOR THE TASK OF MINISTERING TO THE GENTILES FAR BEYOND HIS NATURAL ABILITIES. TO BE SURE, THESE ABILITIES CAME INTO PLAY BUT WERE NOT USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THAT PURPOSE. IN A SENSE PAUL SAID HE WAS PREACHING AND WRITING ABOUT THINGS THAT WERE WAY BEYOND HIS COMPREHENSION - NAMELY THE INEXHAUSTIBLE RICHES AND GENEROSITY OF CHRIST THROUGH GRACE TO THE WORLD.

IV. GRACE AND PERSONAL SALVATION - EPH. 2:8-9

THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO BIBLE FACTS THAT MOST PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND UNTIL THEY HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY GRACE DIVINE.

(1) PEOPLE ARE BORN SPIRITUALLY LOST AND STAY LOST UNTIL AND UNLESS THEY GET SAVED.

QUESTION: DO YOU REALLY UNDERSTAND JOHN 3:16? I DID NOT ASK IF YOU COULD QUOTE IT OR IF YOU'VE EVER READ IT IN THE BIBLE, BUT DO YOU UNDERSTAND IT? IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THIS VERSE, YOU MUST SEE AND DEFINE THE TERMS IN THE VERSE NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE TERM PERISH. THAT WORD IS TRANSLATED LOST IN LUKE 19:10 AND LUKE 15:24. IN OTHER WORDS, THE PRODIGAL SON WAS

If you get saved – on God's Terms – God's way — why "you" insist set it – can't do it there way! Isa 53:6

LOST WHEN HE WAS AWAY FROM THE FATHER'S HOUSE AND OUT OF THE FATHER'S FAVOR. TO BE LOST MEANS TO BE FAR FROM GOD AND FAILING IN SIN.

(2) PEOPLE GET SAVED WHEN THEY GET IN TOUCH WITH CHRIST.

THE QUESTION "ARE YOU SAVED?" IS A QUESTION MOST PEOPLE ASSOCIATE WITH FUNDAMENTAL FANATICS, THE LUNATIC FRINGE, THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT. HOWEVER, THE BIBLE HAS A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT THE TERM SAVED. (MATTHEW 1:21, ACTS 4:12, ACTS 16:31, TITUS 3:5, ROMANS 10:13)

SALVATION AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN IS CALLED SAVED IN THE BIBLE. GOD'S SALVATION IS BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH BECAUSE GOD IS TOO RICH TO CHARGE US FOR SALVATION AND WE ARE TOO POOR TO BUY IT!

QUESTION: ARE YOU SAVED? ARE YOU SURE, ARE YOU SCARED? ARE YOU A LITTLE SHAKY ON THIS SUBJECT? SATISFIED?

THIS IS A SIMPLE BIBLE FACT THAT MANY STUMBLE OVER. WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER WILL YOU BE THERE? HOW DO YOU KNOW? (COMMENT REGARDING VISIT WITH KATHY LAYNE AND HUSBAND MANY YEARS AGO. EXPLAIN PROCESS OF GIVING THAT PERSON A DIME TO KEEP. YEARS LATER A THANK YOU NOTE FROM FLORIDA. THEY'D GONE TO CHURCH AND HEARD THE GOSPEL, BEEN SAVED AND WAS SENDING ME THE DIME BACK EXPRESSING THEIR APPRECIATION FOR FINALLY SEEING THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL.

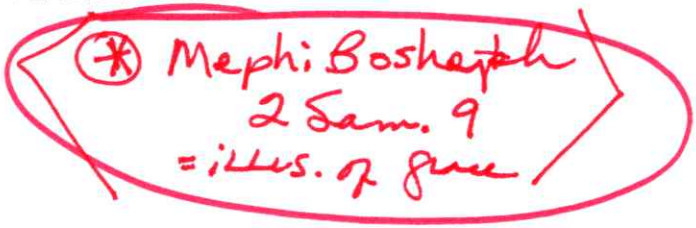
(1)

SOME YEARS AGO, I READ THE TESTIMONY OF DR. KENNEDY WHO WAS SAVED BY LISTENING TO THE LATE DONALD BARNHOUSE OVER THE RADIO. KENNEDY HAD BEEN THE MANAGER OF A DANCE STUDIO IN TAMPA, FL. AFTER HAVING SPENT THE NIGHT AT A PARTY HE WAS AWAKENED ON SUNDAY MORNING WHEN THE CLOCK

(2)

RADIO CLICKED ON THE VOICE OF A PREACHER. HE REACHED TO CHANGE THE STATION BUT WAS STOPPED WHEN BARNHOUSE ASK THIS PENETRATING QUESTION: "WHAT ANSWER WOULD YOU GIVE IF DEATH HAD JUST CLAIMED YOU AND GOD SAID TO YOU, WHAT RIGHT HAVE YOU TO COME INTO MY HEAVEN?"

IF YOUR ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS ANYTHING OTHER THAN GRACE AND GRACE ALONE, IT IS THE WRONG ANSWER. MANY PEOPLE BASE THEIR WORTH OF HEAVEN ON GOOD WORKS, A GOOD NAME, A GOOD DISPOSITION AND A GOOD MANY OTHER THINGS EXCEPT GRACE. IF YOU AND I COULD GO TO HEAVEN ON ANY BASIS OTHER THAN GRACE WE WOULD BRAG ABOUT IT SOMEDAY SOMEWHERE IN ETERNITY. GOD KNOWS THAT AND THEREFORE RESTRICTS SALVATION TO GRACE AND GRACE ALONE.



ROBERT K. SPRADLING AUGUST 22, 1993

MARRIED TO A FOOL"

"A FOOL FOR A HUSBAND"

"I MARRIED A FOOL" Sup — Title

I SAMUEL 25:25

FOOL IS A WORD NOT MANY WIVES USE TO DESCRIBE THEIR HUSBAND. BUT THAT IS EXACTLY THE TERM ABIGAIL USED TO DESCRIBE NABAL AND HE LIVED UP OR DOWN TO HIS NAME! THE HUSBAND IN THIS STORY WAS VERY MUCH LIKE THE "RICH FOOL" OF LUKE 12. AS A MATTER OF FACT, SOMEONE SAID IF THEY NEEDED A MODEL TO SIT FOR THE RICH FOOL'S PORTRAIT - NABAL WAS THE MAN! THIS IS INDEED A "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST" DRAMA. A BEAUTIFUL INTELLIGENT WOMAN MARRIED TO A BOORISH, BAD MAN.

4 - Counting Samuel.

I. THREE PRIMARY PEOPLE IN THE STORY

A. NABAL

Crude, uncouth, ill-mannered, Evil, hot tempered — drunk!

HE IS MENTIONED IN TWO CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE. ~~IN EACH INSTANCE~~, HIS WIFE AND NOT HIMSELF IS THE PRIMARY CHARACTER. HE WAS RICH, HE HAD A BAD DISPOSITION AND AN EXPLOSIVE TEMPER. HE WAS RUDE, SELFISH AND LITTLE OR NO INTEREST IN ANYONE EXCEPT HIMSELF. THE PERSON WHO KNEW HIM BEST CALLED HIM A FOOL. SHE SHOULD KNOW! ANY MAN WHO COULD PROVOKE DAVID, A FEARLESS WARRIOR WITH GREAT LEADERSHIP ABILITY, COULDN'T BE VERY BRIGHT! HIS SENSE OF VALUES WAS TWISTED. HE TREATED PEOPLE OF GREAT MORAL WORTH WITH UTTER DISRESPECT AND CONTEMPT. HIS INTEREST WAS IN POSSESSIONS AND PARTIES. SOMEONE DESCRIBED NABAL AS HAVING A HEAVY PURSE AND A LIGHT OR EMPTY CRANIUM. NABAL WAS NOT THE FIRST "NUCKLE HEAD MAN" TO BE MARRIED TO A "KNOCKOUT" WOMAN. FROM THE DAY DAVID SAW HER, HE COULD NEVER FORGET HER AND HE FINALLY GOT HER!

"PARTY ANIMAL"?

B. DAVID

DURING THIS PERIOD OF HIS LIFE, DAVID WAS HIDING FROM SAUL BUT IN CONTROL OF 600 CRACK TROOPS. FOR MONTHS, DAVID HAD PROTECTED NABAL FROM WANDERING MARAUDERS AND HAD EVERY RIGHT TO EXPECT NABAL TO EXPRESS HIS GRATITUDE BY SHARING AND RESPONDING TO DAVID'S PEACEFUL REQUEST. NABAL'S FOOLISHNESS IS REFLECTED IN HIS LACK OF SENSITIVITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD DAVID - THE FUTURE KING OF ISRAEL! TO BE SURE, NABAL HAD NOT STOLEN HIS WEALTH BUT IT WAS BECAUSE OF DAVID THAT HE WAS ABLE TO ENJOY IT. SELDOM IN HEBREW HISTORY WAS DAVID CONSIDERED WITH SUCH RUDE INSULTS AND DISCOURTESY. DAVID HAD THE MILITARY POWER TO TAKE BY FORCE ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING NABAL OWNED - BUT HE DIDN'T. HE COULD HAVE RUN ROUGHSHOD OVER NABAL BUT HE DIDN'T. ONE WONDERS HOW A MAN COULD BE SO FOOLISH AND UNGRATEFUL.

C. ABIGAIL

NIV: A = "intelligent & beautiful" N = "surly & mean"

ABIGAIL WAS MRS. NABAL. EVERYTHING ABOUT HER WAS OUTSTANDING. SHE WAS BRAINY AND BEAUTIFUL. SHE WAS WISE, REASONABLE, DIPLOMATIC AND GENEROUS. SHE WAS HUMBLY WILLING TO TAKE THE BLAME FOR HER HUSBAND'S UNFORGIVABLE BEHAVIOR. WHEN IT CAME TO HIGH PRINCIPLED VIRTUE - ABIGAIL HAD IT ALL. LET US EXAMINE WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HER.

VERSE 3: "GOOD UNDERSTANDING" - THE BIBLE WAY OF DESCRIBING INTELLIGENCE, WISDOM AND SOUND JUDGMENT. "BEAUTIFUL" - WHEN THE BIBLE SAYS SOMEONE IS BEAUTIFUL - SHE'S BEAUTIFUL! IN FACT, SHE WAS SUCH A KNOCKOUT THAT DAVID WAS SMITTEN WITH LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT THE MOMENT HE LAID EYES ON HER.

VERSE 18: DECISIVE - ABIGAIL MOVED WITH DISPATCH IN A CRISIS TO PREVENT BLOODSHED. GENEROUS - SHE RECOGNIZED DAVID'S NEED AND HER FAMILY

RESPONSIBILITY TO REPAY HIS PROTECTIVE POLICY. TACTFUL - HER DEALING WITH THE FUTURE KING OF ISRAEL WAS AS A TRUE SUBJECT. HUMBLE - HER SELF-EFFACING ATTITUDE AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE THE BLAME FOR HER HUSBAND'S BOORISH BEHAVIOR REVEALS BOTH TACT AND CHARM IN HER PERSONALITY. - VERSE 28.

VERSE 36 REVEALS HER PATIENCE. SHE WAITED FOR HER HUSBAND TO SOBER UP BEFORE SHE GAVE HIM THE SOBERING NEWS.

II. THREE LESSONS ABOUT LIFE

A. HOW TO ENDURE A BAD MARRIAGE

THIS WAS A ONE-SIDED MARRIAGE. ALL OF THE BENEFITS WERE NABALS - ALL OF THE BURDENS WERE ABIGAILS. SHE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE ARRANGEMENTS. IT HAD BEEN BY PARENTAL DECISION MAYBE EVEN BEFORE SHE WAS BORN - SO WERE THE CUSTOMS OF THE ANCIENT EAST. THE FACT THAT NABAL WAS RICH AND COULD BUY WHAT HE WANTED MAY HAVE LED TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES INTO WHICH ABIGAIL BECAME A BRIDE. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE A WOMAN IN WORSE MARITAL SURROUNDINGS. HER HUSBAND WAS A MEAN, SHORT TEMPERED, ABUSIVE DRUNK. A STRANGER COUPLE NEVER LIVED. ONE OUTSTANDING THE OTHER OUTRAGEOUS. SHE WAS THE BEAUTY HE WAS THE BEAST. HOWEVER, HER HUSBAND'S EVIL DISPOSITION DID NOT SPOIL HER GOOD CHARACTER AND HER DEVOTION TO GOD. ALL OF HER HUSBAND'S BAD BEHAVIOR DID NOT WRECK HER LIFE. SHE DID NOT DESCEND TO HIS LEVEL, NOR DID SHE QUIT HER MARRIAGE.

APPLICATION: IN EVERY MARRIAGE, THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES UNKNOWN AND UNSEEN BY OUTSIDE JUDGES. NOR DO I PRETEND TO BE ABLE TO GIVE ADVICE TO PEOPLE IN EXTREME SITUATIONS. HOWEVER, IT DOES APPEAR TO ME THAT MANY PEOPLE QUIT THEIR MARRIAGE TOO SOON. ALSO, BE CAREFUL ABOUT SUDDEN AND DRASTIC ~~CONCLUSIONS~~ SOLUTIONS. HAD ABIGAIL LET DAVID

UNLEASH HIS FURY AGAINST NABAL SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN A WIDOW IN A HURRY. SHE ADOPTED IN SCRIPTURAL TERMS WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED THE "MORNING LIGHT METHOD." SHE LET GOD'S APOPLEXY DO THE JOB INSTEAD OF DAVID'S SWORD. THERE ARE FEW THINGS IN LIFE MORE DIFFICULT AND MISERABLE THAN A MATE WITH WHOM YOU ARE NOT COMPATIBLE. SOMEONE HAS LIKENED IT TO A FORM OF ROMAN PUNISHMENT WHERE A DEAD CORPSE WAS STRAPPED TO A LIVING BODY AS A FORM OF PUNISHMENT. THE PUNISHMENT WAS TO CARRY THE VICTIM AROUND STRAPPED TO ONE'S SELF LOOKING HIM IN THE FACE DURING THE PROCESS OF DECOMPOSITION - A HORRIBLE CONDITION. FOR THAT REASON, YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO BE REMINDED OFTEN THAT THEY SHOULD BE WISE IN THOUGHTFUL, CAREFUL, PRAYERFUL SELECTION OF THEIR LIFE COMPANION. THERE ARE AS MANY "NABALS" AS THERE ARE NICE GUYS - MAYBE MORE! BEFORE YOU CONNECT YOURSELF FOR LIFE WITH A RELATIVE STRANGER CHOOSE WISELY AND EVEN TAKE TIME TO BE "PICKY". YOUR HAPPINESS AND WELL BEING IS WORTH THIS KIND OF SCRUTINY. HOWEVER, WHEN ONE FINDS HIMSELF IN A DIFFICULT MARRIAGE, EXERCISE DISCRETION AND WISDOM IN ITS DISSOLUTION.

B. HOW TO DEAL WITH INSULTS AND REVENGE

IT IS PARADOXICAL THAT DAVID COULD HANDLE THE INSULTS AND STINGING ACTS OF HOSTILITY OF SAUL WITH GREAT GRACE AND COURAGE. HOWEVER, NABAL'S INSULTING WORDS WENT THROUGH HIM LIKE LIGHTENING. WHEN NABAL CALLED DAVID A NOBODY, NOBODY GOT AWAY WITH THAT NOT WHILE DAVID HAD HIS SWORD. DAVID'S ORDERS TO HIS TROOPS WERE SIMPLE - "TAKE NO PRISONERS." DAVID HAD NO LEGAL RIGHT TO ANYTHING NABAL OWNED. THERE WAS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR KILLING HIM JUST BECAUSE HE HAD A BIG MOUTH AND A SMALL MIND! MCGEE SAYS DAVID WAS BOTH RED HEADED/HOT HEADED! LET US BE CANDID. THERE IS A BIT OF "GET EVEN" PHILOSPHY IN

Children

MOST OF US. WHEN OUR FEELINGS HAVE BEEN HURT THE DESIRE FOR PERSONAL REVENGE IS GREAT. (ONE RECALLS THE STORY OF A COLLEGE PROFESSOR WHO ANSWERED HIS PHONE AT 3 A.M. TO HEAR HIS NEIGHBOR SAY: "THIS IS YOUR NEIGHBOR, MR. SMITH. YOUR DOG IS BARKING AND KEEPING ME AWAKE." THE PROFESSOR THANKED HIM KINDLY AND HUNG UP THE PHONE. NEXT MORNING AT 3 A.M., MR. SMITH'S PHONE RANG. "THIS IS PROFESSOR SO AND SO, YOUR NEIGHBOR - I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I DON'T HAVE A DOG!")

WHEN ONE IS TEMPTED TO GET EVEN, WE COULD HOPE THAT GOD WOULD HAVE A SENSIBLE PERSON LIKE ABIGAIL NEARBY TO CALM ONES HEATED TEMPER. ON THE MATTER OF PERSONAL REVENGE, THE BIBLE IS VERY CLEAR.

(1 Sam. 24- David/Saul)

See ROMANS 12:19 STATES CLEARLY THAT WE NEVER TO TAKE REVENGE - NEVER, ONE PARAPHRASE SAYS: "DON'T HIT BACK....DON'T INSIST ON GETTING EVEN. THAT'S NOT FOR YOU TO DO. I'LL DO JUDGING. I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT SAYS GOD. (DEUT. 32:35) (Fred Brown)

= Divine justice!

WHEN WE ARE PRONE TO WONDER IF GOD DOES WHAT HE SAYS HE WILL DO - READ THIS CHAPTER AGAIN!

WARREN WIERSBE IN HIS BOOK ON ROMANS ENTITLED BE RIGHT TELLS THE STORY OF A FRIEND WHO WAS CRITICIZED UNKINDLY AND WITH UNTRUTH. THE FRIEND BECAME ANGRY AND PLANNED TO FIGHT BACK IN FACT MAPPED A STRATEGY TO DO SO. A FRIEND REMINDED HIM "DON'T DO IT. IF YOU DEFEND YOURSELF, THE LORD CANNOT DEFEND YOU. LEAVE IT IN HIS HANDS." THE FRIEND FOLLOWED THE COUNSEL AND GOD VINDICATED THE MALIGNED BROTHER. REVENGE WILL WRECK ONES LIFE. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME YEARS AGO A MURDERER WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH. THE MURDERER'S BROTHER HAD BEEN A PUBLIC SERVANT WITH A LONG AND DISTINGUISHED HISTORY. HE BESOUGHT THE GOVERNOR OF THE

Gun that Blows up at the Breech!

STATE FOR A PARDON FOR HIS BROTHER. OVER A PERIOD OF TIME THE PARDON WAS GRANTED AND THE MAN VISITED HIS BROTHER WITH THE PARDON IN HIS POCKET IN PRISON. HE ASKED THE BROTHER WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING HE WOULD DO WHEN HE GOT OUT OF PRISON. THE REPLY WAS THAT HE WOULD TRACK DOWN THE JUDGE WHO HAD SENTENCED HIM, KILL HIM AND THE NEXT MAN ON HIS MURDER AGENDA WOULD BE THE WITNESS WHO HAD TESTIFIED AGAINST HIM AT THE TRIAL. THE BROTHER ROSE TO HIS FEET AND LEFT THE PRISON WITH THE PARDON IN HIS POCKET. HE WANTED NOTHING TO DO EVEN WITH HIS OWN BROTHER SO FULL OF VENGENCE. WILFRED FUNK, FAMOUS DICTIONARY PUBLISHER SUGGESTED MANY YEARS AGO THAT THE TEN MOST IMPRESSIVE WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARE: Expressive

(1) ALONE - THE BITTEREST WORD.
(2) MOTHER - THE MOST REVERED WORD.
(3) DEATH - THE MOST TRAGIC WORD.
(4) FAITH - THE MOST COMFORTING WORD.
(5) FORGOTTEN - THE SADDEST WORD.
(6) LOVE - THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WORD.
(7) FRIENDSHIP - THE WARMEST WORD.
(8) NO - THE COLDEST WORD.
(9) TRANQUILITY - THE MOST PEACEFUL WORD.
(10) REVENGE - THE CRUELEST WORD.

MANY PEOPLE BENT ON REVENGE QUOTE "THE LEX TALIONIS" AS JUSTIFICATION FOR REVENGE. SIMPLY STATED THAT LAW SAYS THAT THE PUNISHMENT SHOULD FIT THE CRIME AND IT IS SPECIFIED TO COURTS AND JUDGES AND HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH PERSONAL REVENGE. LET US BE GRATEFUL FOR PEOPLE WHOM GOD PUTS IN OUR WAY LIKE ABIGAIL TO KEEP US FROM DOING WRONG IN FITS OF ANGER. LET US BE GRATEFUL FOR PEOPLE WHO CALL US TO A HIGHER ROAD IN LIFE THAT OF MORAL PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT, NOBILITY AND SENSIBILITY IN CONDUCT. DAVID MIGHT HAVE MADE ABIGAIL A WIDOW AND EVEN MARRIED HER BUT THE MARRIAGE WOULD HAVE BEEN UNDER A DARK CLOUD OF BLOOD AND GUILT UNDER WHICH THEY COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN HAPPY AS HUSBAND AND WIFE.

Dan TO Beersheba —
national mourning.
for the nation.
((Chas. Hardy's father)) wonderful if anyone would weep at his funeral.

↓ No leader since Moses anything like Samuel — Served God & Country well.

~~F.B Meyer~~ —

* Do something with your life. Don't waste time critizing others — Do a solid work — something that will live after you die. Purpose in life — life is worth living — live it for the glory of God.

POINT: - what each left behind when he died. Let us so live that we will be missed when we are gone.

(*) (Jenny Jones funeral)

D. Samuel

@

III ~~III~~. How To Live So People Will Mourn When You Die
The Legacy of Two Lives:

1. Nabal – "and he died.
Nabal lived for himself and his possessions. He died suddenly and many were relieved maybe even rejoiced when he passed away – Abigail the most relieved! He left nothing behind except his "stuff" and his widow got that – and David too. Nobody wept – (maybe his mother!! Not many if not any. (David ask for an offering + got an estate + 1 wife) (LOST IT ALL)

2. Samuel (1 Sam. 25:1)
When he died all Israel mourned. His godly life began as a boy. In a time of perversion Samuel was pure. His life as prophet, priest, educator and judge was one of honor, integrity, service to the nation. "He was more valuable to Israel than an army." a moral light

ROBERT K. SPRADLING ~~MAY 26, 1991~~

"The Charming Sound of Grace" ~~1994~~

GRACE IN EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS IS A SPIRITUAL TREASURE CHEST. ON OTHER OCCASIONS WE HAVE EXAMINED SUBJECTS IN EPHESIANS SUCH AS HOLY SPIRIT, CHURCH, LOVE, SAINTS, RICHES, WALK - ALL PARTS OF THE BELIEVER'S WEALTH, WALK AND WARFARE. RECENTLY THE WORD GRACE IN THAT EPISTLE CAME TO MY ATTENTION. A PREACHER WAS STUDYING THE SUBJECT OF GRACE, GOT SO EXCITED THAT HE RAN OUT INTO THE STREET AND ASKED THE FIRST PERSON HE MET: "WHAT DO YOU THINK OF GRACE?" THE RESPONSE WAS: "GRACE WHO?" "THE GRACE OF GOD - THAT'S WHO!" WE RECOGNIZE GRACE IN MOVEMENT (CF. ATHLETES AND DANCERS). GRACE IN MANNERS (SOCIAL GRACES). GRACE FROM THE MOUTH (KIND, TACTFUL WORDS). IN THE BIBLE, JESUS WAS THE PERSONIFICATION OF GRACE. (LUKE 2:40,52; JOHN 1:14-17) THESE VERSES TEACH THE GRACE OF GOD WAS UPON HIM, IN HIM AND FROM HIM. LET US EXAMINE THE USAGE OF THE TERM GRACE IN THE EPHESIAN EPISTLE.

I. GRACE AS A SIGNATURE - 1:2, 6:23-24

THIS IS THE GRACE OF GREETING. IT IS PART OF PAUL'S SIGNATURE. A SIGNATURE ON A DOCUMENT PROVES ITS IDENTIFICATION AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE SIGNATOR. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE'S NAME ON A CHECK, DEED, LETTER OR NOTE SUGGESTS HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRANSACTION. ONE MIGHT ASK IF WE, LIKE PAUL, HAVE PUT OUR SIGNATURE ON ANYTHING FOR GOD! THE TERM GRACE AND PEACE IS REVERSED AT THE END OF THE LETTER. GRACE IS WHAT WE NEED. GRACE LEADS TO PEACE. APART FROM GRACE MAN HAS NO PEACE. MAN IS BY NATURE AGAINST GOD. PEACE "WITHIN" COMES FROM HAVING PEACE "WITH HIM."

(ROMANS 5:1) WHAT IS GRACE? THE HEBREW IDEA OF GRACE IS TO BEND, STOOP OR REACH DOWN TO SOMEONE. IT MEANS TO SHOW FAVOR OR KINDNESS TO SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T DESERVE IT. GRACE IS FAVOR WITHOUT RECIPROCITY. (ILLUSTRATION OF DINNER AT HOME OF FRIEND - "HOW MUCH DO I OWE YOU?" THIS IS A FAUX PAS - AN INSULT BECAUSE NO PAYMENT IS EXPECTED, REQUIRED OR PERMITTED. COMMENT REGARDING JIM MCQUERREY AND A SINGER WHOSE FEE IS $5000 PER CONCERT. SHE SANG IN CHURCH AS A FAVOR TO A FRIEND - NO FEE BECAUSE IT WAS A GRACE APPEARANCE.) (ILLUSTRATE MEPHIBOSHETH IN II SAMUEL 9. HE HAD DONE NOTHING TO MERIT FAVORABLE TREATMENT OF A REGAL NATURE. HE COULD DO NOTHING TO GAIN FAVOR YET HE RECEIVED FAVOR FROM DAVID.

II. GRACE FOR SUPPLY - 1:6-7

RICHES IS THE KEY WORD IN EPHESIANS. IT APPEARS IN 1:7, 18; 2:4,7; 3:8,16. IT IS THE GREEK WORD PLOUTOS. COMPARE II COR. 8:9, PHILIPPIANS 4:19 WHERE THE SAME WORD APPEARS. SIN MADE MAN POOR. GRACE MAKES HIM RICH. MAN IS BORN IN SPIRITUAL RAGS AND MOVES TO SPIRITUAL RICHES ONLY THROUGH CHRIST. GOD'S RICH GRACE HAS FLOWED OVER OUR LIVES. GOD'S GRACE AND GOD'S GLORY GO TOGETHER. THERE WAS SOMETHING DRAMATICALLY MISSING IN THE SINNER'S LIFE - THE GLORY OF GOD. (ROMANS 3:23) THE CHIEF END OF MAN IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND ENJOY HIM FOREVER. GOD'S GLORY IS REVEALED THROUGH GRACE. QUESTION: WHO GETS THE GLORY FROM YOUR LIFE AND MINE? IN MORE CASES THAN NOT IT IS RESERVED FOR US OR SOME OTHER HUMAN BEING - NOT GOD. GOD IS RICH IN EVERY WAY BUT HIS RICHNESS IN GRACE IS SPECIAL. TO UNDERSTAND RICH IS TO UNDERSTAND WORTH. HOW MUCH IS FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Suppose a psychiatrist says...

WORTH? WHAT WOULD A PERSON PAY TO HAVE A COMPLETELY CLEAN CONSCIENCE? (I PETER 1:18) GRACE DOES NOT COME TO US IN SMALL, SHALLOW AMOUNTS BUT IN OVERFLOWING TORRENTS. LIKE THE PRODIGAL SON, WE BRING NOTHING BUT SIN AND FAILURE BACK TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE AND RECEIVE NOTHING BUT KINDNESS AND GRACE.

III. GRACE FOR SERVICE - 3:2,7,8 - 4:7

IN THIS CHAPTER, PAUL IS PICTURED BOTH AS PRISONER AND MINISTER. PAUL WAS IN NERO'S PRISON - NEVER HIS PRISONER. THE TERM STEWARDSHIP SUGGESTS SERVICE. IT IS A COMBINATION OF THE GREEK WORD HOUSE AND LAW. A STEWARDSHIP IS THE LAW OR MANAGEMENT OF A HOUSEHOLD. JOSEPH WAS SUCH A MANAGER. WHEN A PERSON'S ESTATE WAS LARGE, ANOTHER PERSON WAS HIRED TO OVERSEE THAT ESTATE AND HE WAS ANSWERABLE TO THE OWNER FOR EVERY ASPECT. GOD HAS DIFFERENT WAYS OF MANAGING HIS PROGRAM ON EARTH AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN HISTORY. THESE PERIODS ARE CALLED DISPENSATIONS. GOD GAVE PAUL GRACE TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD TO THE GENTILE WORLD. THE EPHESIANS IN LARGE PART HAD COME FROM COMMON SLAVES TO UNCOMMON SONS OF GOD. PAUL DID NOT DECIDE TO BE A DISCIPLE OR PLAN TO PREACH, GOD'S GRACE MADE IT POSSIBLE TO BE BOTH.

IV. GRACE FOR SALVATION - 2:8-9

THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO BIBLE ~~WORDS~~ FACTS THAT ~~SEEM TO BOTHER~~ MOST FOLK: THEY ~~ARE LOST AND SAVED.~~ don't understand;

(A) PEOPLE ARE BORN LOST AND STAY LOST UNTIL AND UNLESS THEY GET SAVED. QUESTION: DO YOU UNDERSTAND JOHN 3:16? NOTICE, I DID NOT ASK IF YOU CAN QUOTE IT OR IF YOU HAVE

(Mk. 2:17)

Read

SEEN IT, BUT DO YOU UNDERSTAND IT? IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND IT, YOU MUST SEE AND DEFINE THE TERM PERISH. HAVE YOU EVER READ JOHN 3:18? THE WORD PERISH IN THE TEXT IS THE SAME WORD TRANSLATED LOST IN LUKE 19:10 AND LUKE 15:24. THE PRODIGAL SON WAS LOST IN THAT HE WAS AWAY FROM HIS FATHER'S HOUSE AND OUT OF HIS FATHER'S FAVOR. TO BE LOST MEANS TO BE FAR FROM GOD AND FAILING IN SIN.

Relationships = Big but what about the relationship.

(B) PEOPLE GET SAVED WHEN THEY GET TO CHRIST. THE QUESTION "ARE YOU SAVED?" IS OFTEN HEARD ON TELEVISION PROGRAMS WHERE SOME FUNDAMENTALIST FANATIC WHO APPEARS TO BE SOARING THROUGH LIFE ON A KIND OF RELIGIOUS HIGH, IDENTIFIED AS BELONGING TO A LUNATIC FRINGE, SLINGS THE TERM SERVED AROUND EVERY OTHER BREATH. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE WORD SAVED MEAN? (MATT. 1:21, ACTS 4:12, ACTS 16:31, TITUS 3:5, ROMANS 10:13) THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF A CONDITION AS SAVED. IT IS SAID TO BE A GIFT FROM GOD. I WAS SAVED IN 1948 AND AM STILL SAVED - AND KNOW IT! YOU AND I ARE TOO POOR TO EARN GOD'S SALVATION AND HE IS TOO RICH TO CHARGE US FOR IT! QUESTION: ARE YOU SAVED? ARE YOU SURE? ARE YOU SHAKY? ARE YOU SCARED TO FACE THE QUESTION? IT IS SO SIMPLE THAT MEN STUMBLE OVER THIS BIBLE FACT. WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER - WILL YOU BE THERE? ((COMMENT REGARDING VISIT WITH KATHY LAYNE AND HUSBAND MANY YEARS AGO - NICKEL OR DIME SENT BACK FROM FLORIDA WITH A THANK YOU NOTE.) (1) SOME YEARS AGO I READ THE TESTIMONY OF D. JAMES (2) KENNEDY WHO WAS SAVED BY LISTENING TO THE LATE DONALD BARNHOUSE OVER THE RADIO. KENNEDY HAD BEEN THE MANAGER OF A DANCE STUDIO IN TAMPA, FLORIDA. AFTER HAVING SPENT THE NIGHT AT A PARTY HE WAS AWAKENED ON SUNDAY MORNING WHEN THE CLOCK RADIO CLICKED ON THE VOICE OF A PREACHER. HE REACHED OVER TO CHANGE THE STATION BUT

STOPPED WHEN BARNHOUSE ASKED THIS PENETRATING QUESTION: "WHAT ANSWER WOULD YOU GIVE IF DEATH HAD JUST CLAIMED YOU AND GOD SAID TO YOU, WHAT RIGHT HAVE YOU TO COME INTO MY HEAVEN?" IF YOUR ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS ANYTHING OTHER THAN GRACE AND GRACE ALONE, THE ANSWER IS WRONG. MANY PEOPLE BASE THEIR WORTH OF HEAVEN ON GOOD WORKS, A GOOD NAME, A GOOD DISPOSITION AND A GOOD MANY OTHER THINGS BUT THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF GRACE AS A GIFT, SOMETHING THAT ONE RECEIVES AND THE INITIATIVE IS GOD'S, NOT THE SINNER'S. TO SUM UP HIS STATEMENT, PAUL MAKES IT VERY CLEAR THAT BEING SAVED IS NOT A BRAGGING MATTER. IF WE EARNED SALVATION, IT WOULD BE WAGES DULY WORKED FOR. BECAUSE IT IS A GIFT IT COMES BY GRACE - SOMETHING WE CANNOT WORK FOR.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING AUGUST 7, 1988

THE DISCOVERIES OF PETER

MAN IS A DISCOVERER. HIS RESTLESS NATURE CAUSES HIM TO REACH OUT FOR SOMETHING NEW. FROM THE BEGINNING OF CIVILIZATION, MAN HAS BEEN DISCOVERING THE WORLD AROUND HIM. THE CONTINENTS, ISLANDS OF THE SEAS, POLES AT THE EXTREMITIES OF THE GLOBE. HE HAS GONE TO THE TOP OF THE HIGHEST MOUNTAINS AND TO THE BOTTOM OF THE DEEPEST SEAS. TODAY IT IS A MAN ON THE MOON, TOMORROW A MAN ON MARS. WITH TELESCOPE AND MICROSCOPE MAN HAS LOOKED FOR NEW WORLDS TO DISCOVER. PETER WAS A DISCOVERER. NOT IN THE PHYSICAL SENSE BUT REGARDING SPIRITUAL LIFE AND PRINCIPLES. WE WILL LIMIT OUR CONSIDERATION TO THE BOOK OF ACTS AND CONSIDER FIVE DISCOVERIES OF PETER IN THAT BOOK.

I. PETER DISCOVERED THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SOURCE OF THE BELIEVER'S POWER - ACTS 2:4 (1:8)

"Homo of Holiness"

TEXT: "ALL TOGETHER...ALL FILLED" THE WORD TOGETHER IS THE GREEK HOMO. MEANINGS OF WORDS ARE DETERMINED BY USAGE AND THIS ONE HAS A NEGATIVE CONNOTATION. HOWEVER, IT IS A PERFECTLY GOOD WORD AND THERE IS A SAMENESS OR COMMONALTY THAT IS BOTH PERMITTED AND PLEASING TO GOD. THESE EARLY BELIEVERS WERE CONTROLLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. HE IS MENTIONED OVER 50 TIMES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS AND RECOGNIZED AS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE CHURCH. EARLY CHURCH LEADERS WERE "FILLED" WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. PENTECOST WAS THE POWERHOUSE OF THE INFANT CHURCH. IT WAS SECOND IN IMPORTANCE ONLY TO CALVARY. PETER, WHO HAD DENIED THE LORD IN SUCH A COWARDLY MANNER ONLY A FEW DAYS BEFORE, WAS TRANSFORMED THROUGH THE SPIRIT'S POWER.

THESE WERE "GOD-INTOXICATED MEN." GOD TOOK UNLEARNED, UNSOPHISTICATED MEN AND CHANGED THE WORLD FOREVER. APPLICATION: MANY CHURCHES HAVE ADOPTED "PSEUDO-POWER SOURCES": (1) PERSONALITY, (2) PURSE, (3) PEOPLE, (4) PROGRAMS. (COMMENT ON SAVAGE STATEMENT TAKEN FROM TOZER IN HIGHLAND PARK SERMON.) WHEN IT COMES TO LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL CHURCHES ALL TOO OFTEN MONEY TALKS AND THE VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT SOUGHT. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT EVERY EMPTY SEAT IN OUR CHURCHES ATTESTS TO THE LACK OF POWER. WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE ARE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT SO WILL THE CHURCH BE FILLED WITH SEEKING SOULS. SIMPLY STATED, THE CHURCH WILL NEVER ACCOMPLISH THE TASK GOD HAS GIVEN US UNTIL WE DEPEND UPON THE TOOLS GOD HAS GIVEN US!

II. PETER DISCOVERED THAT PREACHING IS PRIMARY IN REACHING THE MASSES FOR CHRIST - ACTS 2:14 (PEOPLE)

"STOOD UP...SPOKE OUT" PETER'S SERMON AT PENTECOST IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE EVER DELIVERED. THERE, HE DEMONSTRATED THAT A PREACHER MAY NOT BE A GREAT MAN IN ORDER TO PREACH A GREAT MESSAGE! THE THEME WAS THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND HE CALLED FOR REPENTANCE AND THE RESPONSE WAS 3000 IN NUMBER. EVERY GENERATION ATTEMPTS TO SUBSTITUTE SOMETHING ELSE FOR PREACHING. ENTERTAINMENT OVER EXPOSITION, PLAY OVER PULPIT. QUESTION: IS THERE A PLACE IN CHURCH FOR SEMINARS, FILMS, VIDEOS, LITERATURE, DISCUSSION GROUPS, SOCIAL GET-TOGETHERS -- CERTAINLY. HOWEVER, THESE ARE SUPPLEMENTS OF MINISTRY AND NOT SUBSTITUTES. THEY MAY REINFORCE BUT NOT REPLACE GOSPEL PREACHING.

(Social over Spiritual)

Money II

AN INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH WILL NEVER REPLACE A PREACHING CHURCH. THE WORLD WILL ALWAYS NEED BETTER SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, NURSING HOMES FOR THE AGED, FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY, MEDICINE FOR THE SICK, JOBS FOR THE UNEMPLOYED, BUT THESE WILL NEVER REPLACE GOSPEL PREACHING. GOD HAS MOVED CHURCHES, CITIES, COUNTRIES AND CONTINENTS THROUGH PREACHING OF HIS WORD. MEN CAN NEVER FORGET NOR BE THE SAME WHEN BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH GOD. VERSES: I COR. 1:18-24 - THE WORD FOOLISHNESS IS THE GREEK MOORIA FROM WHICH WE GET THE ENGLISH WORD MORON. THE NATURAL MAN LOOKS UPON THE GOSPEL AS FOOLISHNESS. GOD LOOKS UPON IT AS THE SOURCE OF HIS POWER. ACTS 8:4, 12, 25, 35. WHEN THERE IS NO GOSPEL IN CHURCHES, THERE IS NO GLORY. THE GLORY OF GOD ON EARTH SHOULD BE OUR HIGHEST GOAL AND THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL HONORS HIM. MARTIN LLOYD-JONES SAID IT WELL WHEN HE SAID: "THE BUSINESS OF PREACHING IS NOT TO ENTERTAIN BUT TO LEAD PEOPLE TO SALVATION... TO FIND GOD."

Colson To Dinner Group I

(Ch. 62 at Westminster Chapel)

~~III~~ IV. PETER DISCOVERED THAT WORLDWIDE MISSIONS IS GOD'S PROGRAM FOR THIS DISPENSATION - ACTS 10:34-36

IN THIS CHAPTER, PETER A JEW, LEARNED THAT GOD IS NO RESPECTOR OF PERSONS AND DESIRES THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST BE PRESENTED TO ALL MEN EVERYWHERE. (ACTS 10-43) THE GREAT COMMISSION, FROM THE GREAT COMMISSIONER, SHOULD BE OUR GREAT CONCERN. THE CHURCH THAT DOES NOT HAVE A MISSIONS FOCUS WILL BECOME A MISSION FIELD. EVANGELISM IS NOT SOMETHING IN WHICH THE CHURCH ENGAGES FOR AN 8-DAY SPECIAL MEETING ONCE EVERY YEAR OR TWO. IT IS THE EVERY DAY MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD. ACROSS THE STREET

Standard Oil
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AND ACROSS THE SEAS OUR TASK IS TO EVERY PERSON EVERYWHERE. WHAT YOU AND I BELIEVE ABOUT MANKIND IS TERRIBLY, TERRIBLY IMPORTANT. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT MEN ARE LOST UNTIL FOUND BY JESUS CHRIST? (LUKE 19:10) IF MEN ARE LOST WITHOUT HOPE AND WITHOUT GOD THEN A SPIRITUAL CRISIS EXISTS IN THIS WORLD FOR PEOPLE ARE PERISHING - THEIR GREATEST NEED IS THE GOSPEL. FOR THAT REASON, WE SEND OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, OUR RESOURCES AND OUR PRAYERS TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH TO SEND THE GOSPEL LIGHT TO THE DARK PLACES OF THE WORLD.

IV. PETER DISCOVERED THAT WHEN THE CHURCH PRAYS GOD ANSWERS PRAYER - ACTS 12:5

THE LEADERSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH WAS IN GRAVE DANGER. SATAN WAS PICKING OFF PREACHERS ONE AT A TIME. THE CHURCH DID NOT HAVE INFLUENCE ENOUGH TO KEEP ITS LEADERS OUT OF JAIL. THEY HAD NO ACCESS TO CAESAR'S THRONE, THEIR ONLY RECOURSE WAS GOD'S THRONE! (HEBREWS 4:16) WHEN ALL DOORS ON EARTH WERE CLOSED THERE WAS AN OPEN DOOR IN HEAVEN. SIMPLY STATED, PRAYER WAS THE TURNING POINT IN THIS STORY. A PRAYING CHURCH WILL GET ANSWERS FROM HEAVEN. IT WAS TRUE THEN, IT IS TRUE TODAY. BY THE WAY, THE PRAYING WAS INTENSE AND FERVENT. THEY MEANT BUSINESS. QUESTION: WHAT MUST GOD DO TO MAKE CHURCHES PRAY? LOSS OF LEADERSHIP OFTEN DOES WHAT NOTHING ELSE WILL DO. IT IS EASY TO DEPEND UPON ONE'S LEADERS - AND NOT THE LORD. A PRISON EXPERIENCE MAKES PRAYERS OUT OF BOTH PASTORS AND PEOPLE! THE LORD DOES NOT ASK US TO DO HIS WORK THE BEST WAY WE KNOW HOW AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE ODDS. HE ASKS US TO TRUST HIM, SEEK HIS DIRECTION AND DYNAMIC. QUESTION: CHURCH LEADERS MIGHT ASK WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME

WE SENT UP PRAYERS TO GOD AND RECEIVED ANSWERS THAT COULD ONLY BE EXPLAINED AS GOD'S HAND ON THE WORK? IT WAS NOT WORKED OUT BUT RATHER PRAYED DOWN. (COMMENT ON WWW BOARD MEETING LAST WEEK.)

V. PETER DISCOVERED THAT MONEY IS NOT THE CHURCH'S GREATEST NEED - Acts 3:5-6

PETER WOULD NOT HAVE MADE A VERY GOOD TELEVISION EVANGELIST. WHEN ONE READS THE BOOK OF ACTS THERE WERE NO FUND RAISING PROGRAMS, NO GIMMICKS, NO ENTERTAINMENT, NO BEGGING FOR JESUS. PLEASE UNDERSTAND, I AM AWARE OF THE FACT THAT MINISTRY TAKES MONEY HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM ARISES WHEN MONEY TAKES OVER THE MINISTRY! THE WORLD IS GETTING THE IMPRESSION THAT MONEY IS THE PRIMARY MOTIVE IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. IF MONEY IS NOT OUR GREATEST NEED IN THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST, THEN MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T SPEND SO MUCH TIME TALKING AS IF IT WERE! (LEST WE BECOME TOO SELF-RIGHTEOUS ABOUT TELEVISION MINISTRIES THAT BEG FOR MONEY, OUR LOCAL CHURCH IS NOT IMMUNIE. OUR INDEBTEDNESS IS A MILLION DOLLARS. MANY NEW PEOPLE AND YOUNG FAMILIES WHO ENJOY THESE FACILITIES FEEL NO BURDEN TO PAY FOR THEM SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT HERE AT THE BEGINNING. IT IS TRUE THAT WE NEED OVER A HALF MILLION DOLLARS TO KEEP THE DOORS OPEN EVERY YEAR, NOT COUNTING DAY SCHOOL, DAY CARE EXPENSES. HOWEVER, BY DESIGN WE DON'T SAY MUCH ABOUT IT. THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT THERE IS NOT AN UNHEALTHY PRE-OCCUPATION WITH DOLLARS. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN OUR BUDGET FALTERS, COMMITTEES AND BOARDS GET VERY DIFFICULT. IN THE PAST 30 YEARS I HAVE PROBABLY ATTENDED SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 3,000 AND 5,000 BOARD AND COMMITTEE

MEETINGS AND THERE IS A RULE THAT PREVAILS ALWAYS - THE LOWER THE OFFERINGS THE LONGER THE MEETINGS. IN THOSE 30 YEARS I HAVE NEVER HEARD A LAYMAN DURING A FINANCIAL CRISIS SUGGEST THAT THIS IS A MATTER FOR PRAYER, HERE AND NOW, FOR THAT GROUP. YOU SEE, TOO MANY OF US CHRISTIANS BELIEVE AT LEAST SUBCONSCIOUSLY THAT RAISING MONEY IS OUR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IN A LOCAL CHURCH. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT MONEY IS THE UNIVERSAL PASSPORT TO EVERYWHERE EXCEPT HEAVEN AND EVERYTHING EXCEPT HAPPINESS. WHY MUST IT BE THAT BUDGETS AND BUILDINGS ARE ALWAYS THE PRIMARY CONCERN IN A LOCAL CHURCH? PETER HAD NO MONEY, BUT HE STILL HAD SOMETHING TO GIVE. LET US LEARN THAT OUR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY IS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST WITH A SICK AND SORROWING WORLD. PETER WAS MATERIALLY POOR YET RICH IN FAITH AND NO PERSON IS POOR WHO POINTS MEN TO JESUS CHRIST. THE STORY IS TOLD HOW THOMAS AQUINAS CALLED UPON POPE INNOCENT II WHEN HE WAS COUNTING A LARGE SUM OF MONEY. "YOU SEE, THOMAS," SAID THE POPE, "THE CHURCH CAN NO LONGER SAY, SILVER AND GOLD HAVE I NONE." "TRUE, HOLY FATHER," SAID THOMAS, "AND NEITHER CAN SHE SAY ARISE AND WALK."

VI Jesus Christ Discovery
Jn. 1:41

RKS

(Remark)

BCC-AM
10/7/73

THE GROWTH OF A SOUL

YOU AND I ARE MORE LIKE THE APOSTLE PETER THAN ANY OF THE OTHER 12 APOSTLES. WE SEE IN PETER A REFLECTION OF OUR OWN SPIRITUAL INCONSISTENCIES. PETER WAS THE COMMON MAN OF HUMBLE BIRTH AND OCCUPATION WITHOUT EDUCATIONAL TRAINING. AND YET, FEW MEN WERE MORE DRASTICALLY CHANGED THAN WAS PETER. HIS LIFE MOVED FROM VASSALATION AND SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS TO THAT OF MATURITY AND CONFIDENCE. WHEN WE READ THE TWO LETTERS WHICH HE WROTE, PETER IS NO LONGER A MAN OF MANY MOODS BUT RATHER ONE WHO ENDURES SUFFERING AND SPEAKS OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES AND MATURING GRACE. TODAY, WE ARE GOING TO STUDY BRIEFLY THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE APOSTLE PETER AND HOPEFULLY SEE A PARALLEL IN OUR OWN CHRISTIAN LIFE.

I. GROWTH AND SPIRITUAL LIFE - JOHN 1:40-42

A PERSON CANNOT LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE UNTIL HE HAS RECEIVED LIFE FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT. SIMPLY STATED, SPIRITUAL LIFE IS LIFE GIVEN TO THE BELIEVING SINNER BY THE REGENERATING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. (COMPARE JOHN 3) PEOPLE CANNOT LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE FLESH. THE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM OF MANY CHURCHES IS THE ATTEMPT TO DO GOD'S WORK ON EARTH WITH UNREGENERATE PEOPLE. THE FIRST STEP IN ANYONES SPIRITUAL LIFE IS TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOUR. THE CHURCH CANNOT HELP PEOPLE SPIRITUALLY; PASTORS, SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND BOARD MEMBERS CANNOT MAKE PEOPLE BETTER. THE NEED FOR EVERY SINNER IS TO RECEIVE LIFE FROM GOD. THIS IS WHERE PETER BEGAN AND THIS IS WHERE WE MUST BEGIN. THE EMPHASIS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN IS ON THIS VERY SUBJECT - LIFE. "IN HIM WAS LIFE; AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN." - JOHN 1:4. (COMPARE JOHN 3:15, 16, 5:24) "AND JESUS SAID UNTO THE THEM, I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE; HE THAT COMETH TO ME SHALL NEVER HUNGER; AND HE THAT BELIEVETH ON ME SHALL NEVER THIRST." (JOHN 6:35) "THE THIEF COMETH NOT, BUT FOR TO STEAL, AND TO KILL, AND TO DESTROY: I AM COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, AND THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY." (JOHN 10:10) "AND I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE...." (JOHN 10:28) (COMPARE JOHN 11:25, JOHN 14:6) "AS THOU HAST GIVEN HIM POWER OVER ALL FLESH, THAT HE SHOULD GIVE ETERNAL LIFE TO AS MANY AS THOU HAST GIVEN HIM. AND THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL, THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THEE THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST, WHOM THOU HAS SENT." (JOHN 17: 2-3) (COMPARE ROMANS 6:23) "BUT THESE ARE WRITTEN

I Pet. 1:23
Jn 1:12

THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD; AND THAT BELIEVING YE MIGHT HAVE LIFE THROUGH HIS NAME." (JOHN 20:31) "AND THIS IS THE RECORD, THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON. HE THAT HATH THE SON HATH LIFE; AND HE THAT HATH NOT THE SON OF GOD HATH NOT LIFE." (I JOHN 5:11-12) "WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, SHALL APPEAR, THEN SHALL YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY." (COLOSSIANS 3:4) PETER RECEIVED SPIRITUAL LIFE WHEN HE WAS INTRODUCED TO JESUS. AT THAT MOMENT, JESUS SAW WHAT PETER WAS AND WHAT HE WOULD BE. EVERYTHING BEGINS WITH ETERNAL LIFE.

II. GROWTH AND SPIRITUAL VALUES - MATTHEW 4:18-19

(Some interps. reverse the logic)

ON THIS MEMORABLE DAY, WHEN JESUS CALLED PETER INTO CHRISTIAN SERVICE, HE DISCOVERED THAT THE SPIRITUAL THINGS IN LIFE TAKE PRECEDENT OVER THE MATERIAL. FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, FISHING FOR MEN WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO PETER THAN FISHING FOR FISH. THE LORD'S MEASURE OF EVERY MAN IS NOT NECESSARILY HIS SUCCESS IN BUSINESS OR HIS POPULARITY OR INFLUENCE IN SOCIETY. OUR LORD'S MEASURE OF GREATNESS IS THAT OF DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST. I DO NOT MEAN TO ASSUME THAT GOD CALLS EVERYONE TO THE SAME TASK IN HIS SERVICE. BUT EVERYTHING ELSE SHOULD BE SECONDARY TO THE THINGS OF GOD. I THINK THIS CHALLENGE CAME AFTER THE EVENTS IN JOHN I. PETER HAD NO SPECIAL SKILLS TO GIVE TO JESUS. ALL HE HAD WAS A WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW HIM. THE LORD IS MORE INTERESTED IN OUR OBEDIENCE THAN OUR SKILLS. IT IS MY FIRM CONVICTION THAT THIS MOMENT OF DECISION COMES TO MOST BELIEVERS. FOR SOME IT COMES TOO LATE TO DO MUCH ABOUT IT. AFTER THE ACCUMULATION OF A CERTAIN NUMBER OF MATERIAL POSSESSIONS, WE SHOULD LEARN THAT THEY DO NOT BRING SATISFACTION AND PEACE TO THE HEART. GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO MEASURE PURPOSE IN LIFE WITH A SPIRITUAL YARD STICK. GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH OF SALVATION ARMY FAME WAS ASKED ON ONE OCCASION TO TELL THE SECRET OF HIS GREAT SUCCESS. HE ANSWERED, "GOD HAS HAD ALL THERE WAS OF ME. THERE HAVE BEEN MEN WITH GREATER BRAINS, GREATER OPPORTUNITIES THAN I, BUT FROM THE DAY I HAD A VISION OF WHAT GOD COULD DO WITH POOR OLD LONDON, I MADE UP MY MIND THAT GOD WOULD HAVE ALL THERE WAS OF WILLIAM BOOTH." GREATNESS IN GOD'S SIGHT IS MEASURED IN OUR YIELDEDNESS AND SURRENDER TO THE WILL OF GOD. WE TEND TO FORGET THAT OUR BLESSED LORD WILL TAKE SECOND PLACE TO NOTHING AND NO ONE IN OUR LIVES. HE IS EITHER FIRST OR NOTHING! THIS WILL

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Confession of wrong

EXPLAIN THE WIDE-SPREAD UNHAPPINESS AND RESTLESSNESS AMONG SO MANY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. (ILLUSTRATION OF WHEATON REVIVAL AND BOOK BY THE RAYMOND EDMOND) (ILLUSTRATION OF MY CONVERSATION WITH HOMER COOMBS) SALVATION COSTS US NOTHING BUT THERE IS A HIGH PRICE FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. THE MATTER SIMPLY STATED IS, EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS TO DETERMINE WHO IS GOING TO CONTROL HIS LIFE. WILL IT BE CHRIST OR OURSELVES? IF CHRIST IS IN CONTROL, OUR AMBITIONS, ACTIVITIES, STANDARDS WILL BE GEARED TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND NOT WITH THE METHODS AND PROGRAMS OF THE WORLD.

III. GROWTH AND SPIRITUAL DECLINE - LUKE 22:54-62

PETER'S DECLINE WAS DUE TO MANY FACTORS, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WAS HIS FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE FLESH. WE ALWAYS GET INTO TROUBLE SPIRITUALLY WHEN WE ARE OVERLY CONCERNED WITH WHAT MEN THINK ABOUT US RATHER THAN WHAT GOD THINKS! PETER GOT INTO TROUBLE WHEN HE WAS PREOCCUPIED WITH SITUATION RATHER THAN WITH GOD. THERE ARE MANY SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL DECLINE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN. LOSS OF INTEREST IN THE BIBLE, WITNESSING, PRAYER, GIVING AND NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS A WARMING UP TO THE FORCES WHICH OPPOSE CHRIST! THE CHRISTIAN WHO IS FAILING SPIRITUALLY WILL HAVE A STRANGE AFFINITY FOR THOSE WHO ARE AGAINST THE SAVIOUR. THE SAD PART ABOUT THIS EPISODE IN PETER'S LIFE WAS THAT HE WAS THE LAST TO KNOW! OUR BACKSLIDING IS USUALLY OBVIOUS TO OUR FAMILY, OUR FRIENDS, OUR PASTOR, BUT WE ARE USUALLY OBLIVIOUS TO THE DEGREE OF OUR SPIRITUAL DECLINE. IT IS NOT UNTIL ONE HITS THE BOTTOM, SO TO SPEAK, THAT HE IS SUDDENLY AWARE OF THE EXTENT OF HIS FALL. SELF-JUSTIFICATION IS USUALLY BACKSLIDERS PRIMARY WEAPON. IT IS NOT UNTIL WE SEE OUR UTTER FAILURE BEFORE THE LORD THAT THERE WILL BE ANY REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION.

Ch. Troubles Carnal men in Sp. Prog.

IV. GROWTH AND SPIRITUAL MOTIVES - JOHN 21:15-17

PETER'S REJECTION OF CHRIST HAD BEEN PUBLIC AND THREE-FOLD IN NATURE. THE SAVIOUR'S RESTORATION OF PETER WAS IN THE SAME VAIN, NAMELY, THREE-FOLD IN NATURE. THREE TIMES PETER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO AFFIRM HIS LOVE FOR CHRIST. I DO NOT KNOW THE DEGREE WHICH PETER UNDERSTOOD OUR LORD'S LESSON BUT I THINK WHAT JESUS WAS TRYING TO GET PETER TO SEE IS THAT LOVE IS

THE CHIEF MOTIVE FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE. THE MEASURE OF PETER'S LOVE WOULD BE HIS CARE FOR THE LORD'S SHEEP. ONLY LOVE FOR CHRIST WILL ENABLE AN UNDER SHEPHERD TO MINISTER TO THE NEEDS OF THE SHEEP. LET ME INTERJECT A NECESSARY WORD ON THE SUBJECT OF LOVE. LIKE MANY GREAT DOCTRINAL TRUTHS IN THE WORD OF GOD LOVE HAS BEEN ABUSED RECENTLY. IT IS THE THEME OF LIBERALS AND NEO-EVANGELICALS. THEY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THAT LOVE IS THE FLOWER ON THE PLANT OF CHRISTIANITY BUT THE ROOTS OF THAT PLANT MUST BE IN THE DOCTRINES OF GOD'S WORD. ANY KIND OF LOVE DEVOID OF A DOCTRINAL BASIS IS NOT LOVE IN THE BIBLICAL SENSE OF THE WORD BUT RATHER PURE SENTIMENTALISM. IF WE ARE GOING TO SERVE CHRIST ACCEPTABLY WE MUST LOVE HIM PRIMARILY. MOTIVATION IS THE BASIS FOR ALL SERVICE. IF LOVE IS NOT THE MOTIVATION THEN OUR SERVICE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO CHRIST.

V. GROWTH AND SPIRITUAL POWER - ACTS 2:14, 41

ON THE DAY OF PENTACOST, PETER LEARNED THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SOURCE OF THE BELIEVER'S POWER. THIS CHAPTER MARKS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA, NOT ONLY IN CHURCH HISTORY BUT IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF PETER. PETER WAS A VERY ORDINARY MAN WHOM THE SPIRIT OF GOD FILLED AND USED IN A VERY UNORDINARY WAY. THE CHURCH DOES NOT NEED NOR WILL IT EVER HAVE ANOTHER PENTACOST. THIS DAY WAS AND A HISTORICAL DAY ON GOD'S CALENDAR. HOWEVER, THE CHURCH DOES NEED THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MANIFEST IN THE CHURCH TODAY. IF THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTIC OF THE EARLY CHURCH WAS ITS GREAT POWER IN WITNESS, THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHURCH TODAY IS ITS POWERLESSNESS IN ITS MOST DESPERATE HOUR. TOO MANY TIMES WE ASSOCIATE SPIRITUAL POWER WITH SOME KIND OF ECSTATIC EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A MAN TO BE POWERFULLY USED OF GOD AND NOT NECESSARILY BE CONSCIOUS OF SPIRITUAL POWER. (COMPARE TO THE IDEA OF RECEIVING X-RAY TREATMENT) GREAT CARE SHOULD BE EXERCISED IN SEEKING POWER IN OUR OWN PERSONAL CHRISTIAN LIVES OR SPIRITUAL POWER IN A CHURCH. GOD WILL BLESS WITH RENEWED SPIRITUAL POWER ANY CHURCH OR PERSON WHO WILL RENOUNCE SIN IN THE LIFE, DETERMINE TO DO GOD'S WILL, SEEK CHRIST'S GLORY ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE, AND BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL DO WHAT HE HAS PROMISED TO DO. WE ARE NOT TOLD TO STRAIN EVERY NERVE AND BEND EVERY EMOTION SEEKING POWER IN OUR LIVES. WE ARE TOLD TO YIELD TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HE WILL EMPOWER. A WORD OF CAUTION SHOULD

BE SAID WITH REFERENCE TO A CHURCH FAMILY AND HINDERING THE BLESSING OF GOD UPON A LOCAL CHURCH. THIS IS NOT MENTIONED MUCH IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES BUT IT NEEDS TO BE STRESSED OVER AND OVER. (COMPARE JUDOR MC CLANNAHAN AND HIS OBSTRUCTION AT BURR OAK) Doris Ray - dead.

VI. GROWTH AND A SPIRITUAL PROGRAM - ACTS 10:9-15

PETER Acts 15:14

ON THIS MEMORABLE OCCASION/LEARNED THAT WORLD-WIDE MISSIONS IS GOD'S PROGRAM FOR THIS AGE. GOD MAKES NO DISTINCTION CONCERNING RACE OR COLOR; HIS WILL DURING THIS DISPENSATION IS THAT ALL MEN HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR THE GOSPEL AND BE SAVED. PETER LEARNED THAT GOD'S PROGRAM IS TO CALL OUT FROM THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME SAKE AND THAT HE WAS VITALLY INVOLVED IN THAT PROGRAM. (EMPHASIZE OUR MISSIONARY CONFERENCE) ONE WAY TO SHOW INTEREST IN MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IS TO GIVE SOME TIME TO CONSIDERING THE FIELDS OF THE WORLD.) IN PETER'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH WE MAY SEE OUR OWN. GOD HELP US TO EVALUATE OUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND SEE IF WE ARE PROGRESSING IN A STEADY FASHION.

Lesson
Missions Vision
Col 1:28
every man
Sr Ref
R98

ROBERT K. SPRADLING FEBRUARY 5, 1989

VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST

I CORINTHIANS 15:57

LOWELL THOMAS, FAMOUS FORMER RADIO NEWSCASTER, SAID IN HIS BIOGRAPHY OF COL. T. E. LAWRENCE, THAT THE JOINT OPERATION OF THE BRITISH AND ARABIAN FORCES IN PLANNING AND CARRYING OUT THE CAMPAIGN THAT LED TO THE FALL OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE WAS ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT AND WELL-EXECUTED OPERATIONS IN THE ANNALS OF MILITARY HISTORY. THOMAS SAID THAT GENERAL ALLENBY ALONG WITH COLONEL LAWRENCE FORMULATED ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS IN THE HISTORY OF WARFARE. THEY LOST ONLY 450 MEN WHILE COMPLETELY ANNIHILATING THE TURKISH ARMY, CAPTURING OVER 100,000 TURKS AND BREAKING THE BACKBONE OF THE TURKISH EMPIRE IN LESS THAN A MONTH. THIS WAR THAT TOOK PLACE IN 1917 IS CONSIDERED FANCY AND NOT FACT BY MANY AMERICANS. THEIR ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE CONFLICT IS LIMITED TO THE FILM ENTITLED "LAWRENCE OF ARABIA." LAWRENCE WAS 28 YEARS OLD IN 1916 WHEN HE STARTED ACROSS THE ARABIAN DESERT TO RAISE AN ARMY. AT FIRST HE HAD THREE COMPANIONS, NO MONEY, NO MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION EXCEPT A FEW CAMELS, NO MEANS OF COMMUNICATION EXCEPT CAMEL RIDERS. HE WAS SEEKING TO RAISE AND EQUIP AN ARMY IN A COUNTRY WITH NO MANUFACTURING RESOURCES THAT PRODUCED LITTLE OF ITS OWN FOOD AND LIVED WITH A CHRONIC WATER SHORTAGE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THEN, WATER HOLES WERE SOME 5 DAYS APART BY CAMEL TREK. THERE WERE NO LAWS OR GOVERNMENTAL FORCES TO HELP. THE COUNTRY WAS IN LARGE MEASURE MADE UP OF BEDOUIN TRIBES, SEPARATED BY GENERATIONS OF BLOOD-FEUD.

THEY WERE A QUARRELING PEOPLE WITH LITTLE TO BIND THEM TOGETHER BUT SOMEHOW LAWRENCE DID MOBILIZE THEM TO THE EXTENT HE BECAME A CONQUERING HERO IN THE HISTORY OF ARABIAN PEOPLE. WE READ HIS BIOGRAPHY WITH WIDE-EYED FASCINATION. HOWEVER, THERE IS A MORE SPECTACULAR RECORD IN THE BIBLE. A GALILEAN CARPENTER WHO DIED BEFORE HIS 34TH BIRTHDAY AMASSED THE LARGEST ARMY EVER ASSEMBLED IN THE PAGES OF HUMAN HISTORY. THAT ARMY CONTINUES TO MOVE THROUGH THE WORLD TODAY WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT, BRANDISHING A WEAPON AND IS HELD TOGETHER BY A COMMON LIFE AND LOYALTY CALLED FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. THE IRONY IS THAT HE, WHO WAS THE VICTIM OF AN ANGRY CROWD OF RELIGIOUS BIGOTS BECAME THE VICTOR OVER SIN ON OUR TINY PLANET. HIS ULTIMATE VICTORY EVEN IN THE POLITICAL ARENA IS SURE. THE WORD VICTORY IS USED IN APPROXIMATELY A DOZEN PLACES IN THE ENTIRE BIBLE EVEN THOUGH THE IDEA APPEARS MORE OFTEN. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IT IS PRIMARILY WITH REFERENCE TO WARFARE. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THE WORD FOR VICTORY IS "NIKE". WE HAVE NAMED EVERYTHING FROM ROCKETS TO RUNNING SHOES WITH THIS WORD. IT IS TRANSLATED VICTORY, OVERCOME, CONQUEROR, PREVAIL. WHAT KIND OF VICTORY DID JESUS CHRIST GAIN BY HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS AND WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH US IN THE 21ST CENTURY? LET US EXAMINE JUST THREE SPECIFIC REFERENCES WHERE THE WORD VICTORY APPEARS IN THE BIBLE.

I. THE VICTORY OF JUSTICE ON EARTH - MATT. 12:20

THIS VERSE HAS ESCAPED MY ATTENTION FOR MANY YEARS BUT THAT IS ALSO TRUE OF THE COMMENTARIES I CONSULTED! IT IS A QUOTATION OF JESUS FROM ISAIAH 42:1-3. BOTH THE NIV AND

"My SERVANT = Christ
Bringer of justice to the NATIONS
He will be gentle — not riots in streets —
NOT even break a reed — nor blow out a dim flame.

"dimly burning wick"

THE NASV TRANSLATE AS FOLLOWS...."UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY." THE TEXT DESCRIBES WHAT MESSIAH IS LIKE IN PROPHETIC LANGUAGE. A BRUISED REED AND A SMOKING FLAX REFER TO THE FACT THAT HE WILL NOT "STEP ON" OR "SNUFF OUT" THE WEAK OF THE EARTH. HE IS INDEED A COMPASSIONATE AND CARING SOVEREIGN TOWARD THE FEEBLE OF THE EARTH. IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS THE CHAMPION AND COMFORTER OF THE WEAK. JUSTICE IS OFTEN A STRANGER ON EARTH. MEN SPEAK OF ITS IMPORTANCE AND IN SOME MEASURE SEEK TO BRING ITS BENEFITS TO THE MASSES. HOWEVER, JUSTICE DOES NOT ALWAYS PREVAIL. THIS VERSE SPEAKS OF A TIME WHEN JUSTICE WILL BE FAIRLY AND IMPARTIALLY ADMINISTERED WITH NO EXCEPTIONS! THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT JUDGMENTS IN THE FUTURE AND NOT JUST A SINGLE GENERAL JUDGMENT AS MANY BELIEVE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE BIBLE TALKS ABOUT THE JUDGMENT OF (1) THE CROSS, (2) THE CHURCH, (3) TRIBULATION SAINTS, (4) OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS, (4) LIVING ISRAELITES, (6) SATAN, (7) EVIL ANGELS, (8) UNSAVED DEAD, (9) THE GENTILE NATIONS - MATTHEW 25:31-46. IN THE FUTURE, WHEN MESSIAH RULES ON EARTH, THERE WILL BE A WORLD-WIDE JUDGMENT TOWARD THE NATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO THEIR TREATMENT OF THE JEWS. THE MESSIAH WILL ESTABLISH JUSTICE ON EARTH. HIS REIGN WILL BE CHARACTERIZED BY RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NOT WRONG. (COMPARE MATTHEW 19:28, REVELATION 20:7-10)

"SNAP OFF"

Acts 17:30-31

Heb. 9:27

A Divine Appointment

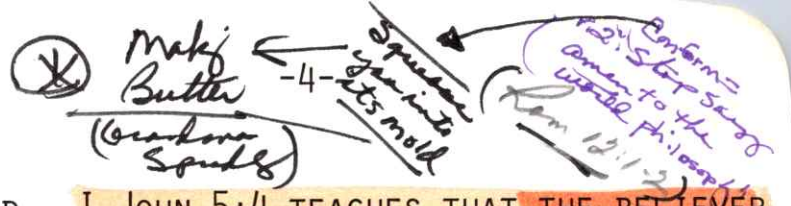
Isa. 11:4

II. THE VICTORY OF THE BELIEVER OVER THE WORLD - I JOHN 5:4

ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE, THE BELIEVER HAS THREE PRIMARY ENEMIES: (1) THE WORLD, (2) THE FLESH, (3) THE DEVIL. I JOHN 2:15 ADMONISHES THE BELIEVER NOT TO LOVE THE

Reason for eternal punishment — angels don't die!!!

a saint a little!



NOTE

WORLD. I JOHN 5:4 TEACHES THAT THE BELIEVER IS OVERCOMING THE WORLD AND NOT THE WORLD OVERCOMING THE BELIEVER. ONE OF THE MARKS OF GENUINE SPIRITUAL BIRTH IS THE CAPACITY TO OVERCOME THE WORLD. THERE ARE AT LEAST FOUR DIFFERENT GREEKS WORDS TRANSLATED WORLD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

(1) GE - THE PHYSICAL PLANET

(2) OIKOUMENE - THE INHABITATED OR POPULATED WORLD

(3) AION - AN ERA OR PERIOD OF TIME

(4) KOSMOS - THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE OR THE ORDER, ARRANGEMENT OF THE WORLD SYSTEM. (Kosmos)

THE WORLD SYSTEM THE BELIEVER IS NOT TO LOVE AND IS IN THE PROCESS OF OVERCOMING IS THAT ORDER OR ARRANGEMENT OF THINGS WHOSE PHILOSOPHY IS TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY OF GOD. IT IS THAT SYSTEM OR PHILOSOPHY THAT EXCLUDES GOD FROM ITS PLANS AND PRACTICE. IT IS THE PHILOSOPHY THAT DRAWS MEN AWAY FROM FAITH RATHER THAN DRAWING THEM TO IT. SWINDOLL SAYS THAT THIS WORLD SYSTEM OVER WHICH SATAN IS THE DOMINANT HEAD, HAS FOUR OR FIVE KEY IDEAS AS ITS CENTER.

(1) MONEY OR FORTUNE - To amass wealth, For more ... Enough / Craving Never

(2) FAME - Popular - one of the famous / To be known - Top Spot, Manipulate, Maneuver

(3) POWER - Control others, their way or no way / Smiling may work, interference for others independence

(4) PLEASURE - Sensual satisfaction no matter what

(5) PRIDE - Satan's specialty! He "invented" it! Began with him! (Isa. 14 / Ezek 28) Can't tell God what you will do — He won't let you!

THE TEXT STATES THAT GENUINE SONS OF GOD OVERCOME THE WORLD. IF A PERSON DOES NOT OVERCOME THE WORLD HE IS NOT A TRUE SON. FOR EXAMPLE, THE WORLD DID ITS WORST TO JESUS CHRIST AND HIS FOLLOWERS YET THEY OVERCAME. FAITH IS THE KEY. (COMPARE LUKE 22:31-32, JOHN 16:33) PROBLEM VERSE: REVELATION 3:5 - IN THIS VERSE JOHN IS STATING A FACT, NOT STRUCTURING A FAILURE. THOSE WHO ~~ARE~~ - WILL. IT IS NOT A THREAT, IT IS A ~~FACT~~. THIS IS HOW BELIEVERS WILL BEHAVE.

III. THE VICTORY OVER DEATH - I CORINTHIANS 15:54-57

TEXT: VERSE 54 - "SWALLOWED UP" MEANS ABSORBED OR DONE WITH DEATH FOREVER. VERSE 54 - "STING" - THERE IS NO STING IN DEATH WHO ARE NOT CONDEMNED. (ROMANS 8:1) VERSE 57 - "VICTORY" THE BELIEVER IS NOT THE VICTIM BUT THE VICTOR AS RELATED TO CHRIST. VERSE 58 - "VAIN" - THIS WORD MEANS NEVER THROWN AWAY OR WASTED. NOTHING EVER DONE FOR CHRIST IS UNNOTICED, UNAPPRECIATED AND UNREWARDED. DEATH IS OUR ENEMY. (1 COR. 15:26) IT STRIKES WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION LEAVING WIDOWS AND ORPHANS IN ITS PATH. EVERY NEWSCAST SEEMS TO BRING MORE BAD NEWS ABOUT DEATH. PLANE CRASHES, TRAIN WRECKS, EARTHQUAKES, HEART ATTACKS, AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENTS - THEY NEVER STOP. DEATH INVADES FAMILIES, TAKES FRIENDS, AND CHANGES OUR LIVES FOREVER. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW SAID: "THE STATISTICS ON DEATH ARE QUITE IMPRESSIVE. ONE OUT OF ONE DIES." DEATH IS THE COMMON LOT OF ALL THINGS - MEN, ANIMALS, PLANTS - ALL DIE.

GEORGE BURNS SAID: "I DON'T BELIEVE IN DEATH." THIS MAN WHO PORTRAYED HIMSELF AS GOD IN A FAMOUS FILM WHO HAS LIVED PAST 90 YEARS OF AGE WILL NOT GET OUT OF THIS WORLD ALIVE, DEATH WILL OVERTAKE HIM AND US. WHEN JOB CALLED DEATH "....THE KING OF TERRORS" HE WAS RIGHT. IT IS ONE OF MAN'S GREATEST FEARS. (JOB 18:14) BECAUSE DEATH IS A FEARFUL EXPERIENCE, MEN TRY TO DENY AND IGNORE IT. IN SO DOING, THEY OFTEN FAIL TO PREPARE FOR DEATH. EVERYWHERE IN SCRIPTURE, MEN ARE ENCOURAGED TO BE READY WHEN DEATH KNOCKS AT THE DOOR. SOONER OR LATER AND MAYBE SOONER THAN WE EXPECT, DEATH WILL COME. THE REALITY OF DEATH IS ONE REASON WHY INSURANCE COMPANIES ARE SO BIG IN AMERICA. FOR THE BELIEVER, DEATH NEED NOT BE A MATTER OF DESPAIR. VANCE HAVNER SAID MANY OF US WILL MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME BUT AS BELIEVERS WE WILL NEVER MEET FOR THE LAST TIME. HEAVEN IS A PREPARED PLACE FOR A PREPARED PEOPLE BUT RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE DEATH. FOR SOME, THOSE RESERVATIONS ARE NOW OR NEVER. (RECENTLY TALKING TO A SALESPERSON WHO TRAVELS ALL OVER THE WORLD AND STAYS ON A REGULAR BASIS IN SOME OF THE FINEST RESORTS, HOTELS AND EATS IN THE FINEST RESTAURANTS KNOWN TO MAN, HIS COMMENT, "THE MORE I TRAVEL, THE MORE I LIKE TO BE HOME." FOR THE BELIEVER, HEAVEN IS OUR HOME. DEATH IS THE DOORWAY BY WHICH WE ENTER THAT ETERNAL GLORYLAND. VICTORY OVER DEATH IS BEHIND US AND AHEAD OF US. DR. H. A. IRONSIDE USED TO TELL THE STORY OF A SHOP IN HIS PARTICULAR TOWN THAT CLOSED. ONE DAY, WHILE WALKING THROUGH THE DOWNTOWN SECTION, HE NOTICED A NEW SIGN IN THE WINDOW - CLOSED FOR ALTERATIONS. THE OWNER HAD SUSPENDED BUSINESS IN ORDER TO RENOVATE THE STORE. SOMETIME LATER, A SIGN

Repairs"

(Man in other room)
Fonzie
Let dog in — when at door, scratch, whimper, bark
Why? His master or other folk

APPEARED IN THE WINDOW "OPEN FOR BUSINESS." THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH WHEN THE BELIEVER DIES HE CLOSES HIS TIME ON THIS PLANET FOR REPAIRS. THE REPAIRS INCLUDE A NEW BODY AND WE OPEN FOR BUSINESS ON THE OTHER SIDE IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

Ivan's and
Closing Sentence —

Illus
Boy after biscuits
clothes over P. J's

ROBERT K. SPRADLING APRIL 14, 1985

these things (Bee PM NOV. 1990)

IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN

THERE ARE SEVERAL THINGS ABOUT CHURCH LIFE THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN.

(1) NEVER HAVE EVERYBODY ON TIME AT THE SAME TIME. (3 week cycle)

(2) NEVER HAVE THE FRONT ROWS FILLED UP FIRST.

(3) NEVER HAVE PEOPLE MOVE TO THE CENTER OF THE PEW FIRST LEAVING THE OUTSIDE VACANT. - S.O.S.

(4) NEVER HAVE A SERVICE WHERE THE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OFFERING ARE FORGOTTEN. Regular Omitted.

(5) NEVER HAVE THE TEMPERATURE AND SOUND RIGHT FOR EVERYONE.

(6) NEVER HAVE THE PASTOR FINISH HIS MESSAGE AT 12 O'CLOCK SHARP.

(7) NEVER HAVE A STANDING OVATION BY THE CONGREGATION AT THE END OF THE SERVICE. (Before (Joke at Bent Oak - Unusual laughter)

(8)

THESE THINGS SIMPLY WILL NEVER HAPPEN! THE WORD NEVER APPEARS MANY TIMES IN THE BIBLE. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE WORD NEVER IS OFTEN EXPRESSED BY THE USAGE OF THE DOUBLE NEGATIVE, THAT IS TWO GREEK PARTICLES COMBINED FOR THE PURPOSE OF EMPHASIZING DENIALS OR PROHIBITIONS. TODAY, WE WILL EXAMINE THREE NEVERS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION, THREE THINGS THE BIBLE SAYS WILL NEVER HAPPEN.

(I) GOD WILL NEVER LET A CHILD OF HIS BE LOST - REVELATION 2:11

IN CHAPTER 3, VERSES 5 AND 12 SPEAK TO THIS QUESTION. ALSO, THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPTURE THERE ARE MANY VERSES REGARDING THE SECURITY OF THE SAINTS. (1) JOHN 6:37, 10:28, PHILIPPIANS 1:6, (3) ROMANS 8:39. SOME PEOPLE REACT TO THE DOCTRINE OF SECURITY BECAUSE EVERYONE KNOWS SOMEONE WHO USED TO BE BUT DOES NOT NOW SERVE THE LORD. WHAT ABOUT THIS PERSON? THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTS TO BE CONSIDERED.

(1) EVERY FAMILY, EVEN GOD'S FAMILY, HAS PROBLEM CHILDREN

NOT EVERY FAMILY AND EVERY CHILD IS WELL-ORDERED AND WELL-ADJUSTED. PAUL REMINDED THE HEBREWS THAT GOD MUST TRAIN AND DISCIPLINE ALL OF HIS CHILDREN. (HEBREWS 12:6) THIS VERSE TEACHES THAT EVERY SON IS CORRECTED IN ORDER THAT HE BE NOT CONDEMNED WITH THE WORLD. GOD CHASTENS HIS OWN CHILDREN - NOT THE DEVIL'S CHILDREN. THE CHASTISEMENT OF GOD IS A SIGN OF SONSHIP!

(2) WHO CAN KNOW WHO IS REALLY SAVED AND WHO ISN'T?

PROFESSION AND POSSESSION ARE TWO DIFFERENT MATTERS. JESUS SPOKE OF PEOPLE WHO CLAIMED TO BE DISCIPLES, LOOKED LIKE DISCIPLES, WANTED TO BE IDENTIFIED AS DISCIPLES. "NOT EVERYONE THAT SAITH UNTO ME, LORD, LORD, SHALL ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; BUT HE THAT DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. MANY WILL SAY TO ME IN THAT DAY, LORD, LORD, HAVE WE NOT PROPHESIED IN THY NAME? AND IN THY NAME HAVE CAST OUT DEMONS? AND IN THY NAME

(3)

DONE MANY WONDERFUL WORKS? AND THEN WILL I PROFESS UNTO THEM, I NEVER KNEW YOU: DEPART FROM ME YE THAT WORK INIQUITY." (MATTHEW 7:21-23) JUDAS LOOKED, TALKED, ACTED LIKE A DISCIPLE BUT WAS INDEED A WORKER OF INIQUITY! THERE IS A SIMPLE BIBLE FACT THAT CHILDREN BEAR THE NATURE OF THEIR PARENTS. PRODIGAL SONS MAY SPEND SOME TIME IN A HOG PEN BUT HE WILL NOT STAY THERE. SHEEP DON'T LIKE MUD.

Pigs do! "STUFF"

II. THOSE WHO WORSHIP THINGS WILL NEVER BE SATISFIED OR SAFE - REVELATION 18:7-23

FULLY (2) (MATT. 4:4) (See Proverbs)

REVELATION 17 AND 18 SPEAK OF THE FALL OF A FUTURE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL SYSTEM CALLED BABYLON. IT WILL MOVE TO THE FOREFRONT AFTER THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. CHAPTER 17 SPEAKS OF THE RELIGIOUS COLLAPSE OF THE SYSTEM WHILE 18 SPEAKS OF THE COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL COLLAPSE. IT WAS IN BABYLON THAT ISRAEL, AN AGRICULTURE AND PASTORAL PEOPLE, LEARNED TO TRADE AND GAINED BOTH DESIRE AND SKILL AS MERCHANTS. THIS FUTURE WORLD-WIDE SYSTEM WILL DRAW KINGS AND MERCHANTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD WHO WILL WORSHIP AT THE SHRINE OF MONEY. VERSES 2 THROUGH 7 LIKE ANCIENT BABYLON, THIS POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL SYSTEM WILL BE DEALT WITH BY GOD. VERSE 7 SUMS UP THE HIGH LIVING OF PRIDE AND ARROGANCE OVER MATERIAL THINGS. THE "QUEEN COMPLEX" THAT DECEIVED BABYLON INTO BELIEVING IT COULD SURVIVE SORROW AND DEATH WAS WRONG. BABYLON BELIEVED MONEY COULD SOLVE ALL ITS PROBLEMS. VERSE 14 THE THINGS WHICH MEN LUSTED FOR, THOSE DEEP-SEATED CRAVINGS AND DRIVES FOR MORE ARE UNSATISFYING.

1992

18:2-7

Paradox of Flesh — never satisfied!

THE WORD DAINTY IS TRANSLATED "SUMPTUOUS THINGS" AND REFERS TO THE SWEET MORSELS OF THE MOUTH SO ENJOYED BY THE GOURMET. THE WORD GOODLY LITERALLY MEANS "BRIGHT THINGS" AND IS USED IN SCRIPTURE TO DESCRIBE GORGEOUS ROBES, GAY OR BRIGHT APPAREL AND IN ACTS 10:30 TO DESCRIBE ANGELS APPAREL. ALSO IT DESCRIBES THE BEAUTY OF A RIVER AND THE BRIGHTNESS OF A STAR. THIS VERSE SPEAKS OF A UNIVERSAL GOING OUT OF BUSINESS SALE WHEN GOODS ARE GONE FOR GOOD. THE WORD DEPARTED LITERALLY IS TRANSLATED PERISH. WHERE THESE PEOPLE ARE GOING, CLOTHING AND FINERY WILL NOT BE SOUGHT OR ENJOYED. (COMPARE THE DRABNESS OF PRISON APPAREL.) VERSES 21 THROUGH 23 THE WORD PIPERS REFERS TO FLUTISTS. THIS VERSE SPEAKS OF ENTERTAINMENT AND INDUSTRY STOPPED. THOSE PEOPLE WHO RESORT TO FINE ARTS AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR WORSHIPPING GOD WILL SEE THEM GONE FOREVER. AS IN ANCIENT BABYLON, WHERE MEN SOUGHT TO ESTABLISH SOMETHING TO TAKE THE PLACE OF GOD THESE HAVE ALWAYS FAILED. ACCORDING TO VERSE 23 SOCIAL AND COMMERCIAL FUNCTIONS WILL STOP. THAT SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT THAT WORSHIPS WEALTH, LUXURY, PLEASURE AND MATERIAL THINGS WILL SEE THEM DISSIPATE BEFORE THEIR EYES. PEOPLE WHO KNEW THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING AND THE VALUE OF NOTHING WILL FIND THEIR FOUNDATION FOR LIFE, THAT IS THOSE WHO WORSHIP AT THE SHRINE OF MATERIALISM, WILL SEE IT DISAPPEAR FOREVER. THIS IS THE FATE OF CIVILIZATION AND PEOPLE WHO SEEK TO FIND SATISFACTION AND SECURITY APART FROM GOD.

5 Things Bill's outline

ADMIT

III. GOD WILL NEVER ~~LET~~ ANYONE INTO HEAVEN WHOSE NAME IS NOT IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE - REVELATION 21:3-27

Rev. 20:15

THIS CHAPTER DEALS WITH THE ETERNAL STATE. IT IS THE ~~FIFTY~~ MAJOR DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION. (EXPLAIN OUTLINE) THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES A CITY 1500 MILES SQUARE, DESIGNED BY GOD, SPOKEN OF IN SCRIPTURE AS THE ABODE OF THE SAINTS. AFTER DESCRIBING IT AS THE PLACE WHERE GOD HIMSELF WILL DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE, ALL OF THE EMOTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH SIN WILL BE GONE. THERE WILL BE NO MORE CEMETERIES, HOSPITALS, FUNERAL HOMES, OBITUARIES - THEY WILL NEVER RISE AGAIN. ALSO, IN VERSE 8, A CLASSIFICATION OF THOSE WHO WILL NOT BE IN THAT ETERNAL CITY. IN OTHER WORDS, THE WICKED WILL NOT CONTAMINATE HEAVEN AND THE SINS MENTIONED IN VERSE 8 REFER TO THOSE WHO PRACTICE THESE VICES. THE WORD FEARFUL MEANS COWARDLY OR THOSE WHO WERE AFRAID TO CONFESS CHRIST. (MATTHEW 10:32, ROMANS 10:9) THE UNBELIEVING REFER TO THE FAITHLESS - APISTOIS ABOMINABLE REFERS TO THE FOUL-MOUTHED, FOUL-MINDED, POLLUTED IN CHARACTER AND DESIRES. MURDERERS - THERE WILL BE MURDERERS IN HEAVEN, LIKE DAVID AND MOSES, BUT ONES WHO HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN AND WHO DID NOT PRACTICE THIS LOW VIEW OF HUMAN LIFE AND THE SANCTITY OF LIFE. WHOREMONGERS IS ANOTHER WORD FOR FORNICATION OR PORNOIS. SORCERERS - PHARKANOIS THE WORD LIARS SIMPLY MEANS FALSE ONES. SECOND DEATH REFERS TO A STATE OF DEATH AS OPPOSED TO LIFE. DEATH IN ITS BASIC MEANS IS SEPARATION FROM GOD SO SECOND DEATH IS THAT ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD! (REVELATION 20:6) ONE WORD APPEARS OVER AND

21:8

"Dad Series"

OVER IN THIS CHAPTER. IT'S THE WORD LAMB. THE LAMB OF GOD IS THE CENTRAL FIGURE IN THE CITY OF GOD. WHAT HE ACCOMPLISHED ON CALVARY IS THE CENTRAL AND MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENT IN HUMAN HISTORY. THEREFORE, ADMITTANCE TO THAT CITY DEPENDS UPON ONE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE LAMB! (JOHN 1:29) THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE STRESSES THE FACT THAT ONLY THE QUALIFIED MAY ENTER HEAVEN. ELIGIBILITY AND ENTRANCE INTO HEAVEN DEPENDS UPON ONE'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S SON, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. MOST PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT WE ARE NOT READY FOR HEAVEN IN OUR PRESENT CONDITION. ONE MUST BE CHANGED TO BE FIT FOR HEAVEN. THAT CHANGE MUST TAKE PLACE ON EARTH BEFORE DEATH IN ORDER TO BE ELIGIBLE TO ENTER HEAVEN. (II COR. 5:17)

(RELATE STORY OF GRANDFATHER AND WAGON)