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ROBERT K. SPRADLING FEBRUARY 28, 1988

Bcc. Pm. 1994

A FAITH THAT IS SHIPSHAPE - NOT SHIPWRECKED

Titanic

ON APRIL 10, 1912, THE SHIP CALLED "UNSINKABLE" LEFT SOUTH HAMPTON, ENGLAND ON ITS MAIDEN VOYAGE FOR NEW YORK. IT WAS FOUR CITY BLOCKS LONG, ELEVEN STORIES HIGH AND CARRIED THE LATEST AND FINEST ENGINEERING AND EQUIPMENT. AS YOU KNOW, IT HIT AN ICEBERG AND SANK IN WATER 12,000 FEET DEEP. EVEN THOUGH THIS HAPPENED ~~OVER~~ 82 YEARS AGO, THE DISCOVERY OF ITS WRECKAGE ~~THIS YEAR~~ HAS RENEWED INTEREST IN ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS SHIPWRECKS IN HISTORY. WHAT IS KNOWN AS TELEVANGELISM HIT ITS SECOND "ICEBERG" THIS WEEK WHEN ITS MOST VISIBLE, VOCAL AND APPARENTLY MOST VULNERABLE PREACHER FELL FROM HIS PINNACLE. WHEN HE DID, THE FAITH OF MANY PEOPLE FELL WITH HIM. THE OLD CLICHE, "THE BEST OF MEN ARE ONLY MEN AT BEST" IS NOT ENOUGH TO DESCRIBE THIS SITUATION. WHAT KIND OF BLOW DID THIS EVENT RENDER TO CHRISTIANITY? I DO NOT KNOW, BUT I DO KNOW THAT THOSE WHO HAVE THEIR FAITH WHERE IT OUGHT TO BE, IN CHRIST, WILL KEEP ON SERVING HIM AND THAT FAITH, IN THAT PERSON, IS STILL IN GOOD SHAPE. LET US EXAMINE THE WORD FAITH IN SEVERAL KEY PASSAGES IN THE WORD OF GOD IN ORDER TO BE HELPED AND ENCOURAGED THAT OUR FAITH IS INDEED SHIPSHAPE AND NOT SHIPWRECKED.

I. A FAITH THAT IS SHIPWRECKED - I TIMOTHY 1:19-20

THE WORD SHIPWRECK IN OUR TEXT IS USED ONE OTHER PLACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHERE PAUL DESCRIBES A LITERAL SHIPWRECK IN WHICH HE WAS INVOLVED. (II COR. 11:25) SHIPWRECKED FAITH IS ONE THAT HAS RUN AGROUND, BROKEN TO

PIECES ON THE ROCKS OF HERESY, ADVERSITY AND IN SOME CASES PROSPERITY! IT IS A FAITH THAT IS NOT HELD IN GOOD CONSCIENCE. IT IS A FAITH THAT WILL NOT "HOLD." IT IS A FAITH THAT IS A FALSE FAITH, PERPETUATED BY FALSE TEACHERS THAT FILLS THE LIVES OF ITS SUBJECTS WITH LIES AND ERROR. (COMPARE I TIM. 4:1, 5:8, 12, 6:10) CAPE HATTERAS, OFF THE COAST OF NORTH CAROLINA, HAS BEEN CALLED THE GRAVEYARD OF THE ATLANTIC. OVER A 30 SQUARE MILE AREA OFF THAT COAST, THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN IS SCATTERED WITH THE SKELETONS OF SHIPS THAT HAVE SUNK THERE - SOME 382 ACCORDING TO THE RECORDS HAVE GONE TO THE BOTTOM IN THE PAST 400 YEARS. IT IS A "SHIP GRAVEYARD." AS SOME PEOPLE SAIL THE SEA OF LIFE, THEIR FAITH HAS COME TO REST IN THE WRONG PERSON OR SYSTEM. IN A MATTER OF TIME, THAT WEAK, FALSE FAITH HAS LED THEM TO SPIRITUAL WRECKAGE AND DISASTER. (NO OTHER PLEA - MY FAITH HAS FOUND A RESTING PLACE, NOT IN DEVICE NOR CREED; I TRUST THE EVER LIVING ONE, HIS WOUNDS FOR ME SHALL PLEAD. I NEED NO OTHER ARGUMENT, I NEED NO OTHER PLEA, IT IS ENOUGH FOR ME THAT JESUS DIED, AND THAT HE DIED FOR ME.)

"my Anchor Holds"

II. A FAITH THAT SAVES - LUKE 7:36-50

Ship shape Faith

THIS IS THE STORY OF A "BAD WOMAN" AND A "GOOD MAN." THE GOOD MAN WAS LOST BUT THE BAD WOMAN WAS SAVED! THE TEXT SAYS SHE WAS FORGIVEN AND THAT FORGIVENESS CAME BY FAITH. THEY GO TOGETHER. (EPHESIANS 2:8-9) MOST PEOPLE ARE NOT MURDERERS, ADULTERERS, DRUNKARDS OR DRUG ADDICTS. THEY DO NOT STEAL LARGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY AND THEREFORE SENSE NO NEED OF FORGIVENESS. OR THEY MAY SAY AS A MAN SAID RECENTLY: "I ASK GOD TO FORGIVE ME ALL THE TIME - WHAT ELSE DOES HE EXPECT?" THIS IS NOT FORGIVENESS, IT IS

CALLED FAKING! WE CANNOT MANIPULATE GOD TO DO OUR BIDDING ON OUR TERMS. FORGIVENESS COMES WHEN WE PLACE OUR FAITH IN CHRIST AND ALONG WITH THAT FORGIVENESS - PEACE. (VERSE 50) (ROMANS 5:1, JOHN 14:27, 16:33)

III. A FAITH THAT SANCTIFIES - ACTS 26:18

THE WORD SANCTIFY IS A MYSTERY TO SOME, AND A MISERY TO OTHERS. SANCTIFICATION, LIKE JUSTIFICATION, IS THREE-FOLD. (1) BY BLOOD - HEBREWS 10:10, 13:12; (2) BY THE BOOK - JOHN 17:17; (3) BY THE BLESSED HOPE - I THESS. 5:23. BY THE WAY, I HAVE BEEN HARD-PRESSED TO FIND THE WORD PRAY LINKED TO SANCTIFICATION ANYWHERE IN THE BIBLE! THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATION DISTINGUISHES JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION. PICTURE A SHIP TIED AT THE HARBOR. IT MAY OR MAY NOT BE SEAWORTHY. IT IS SAFE IN THE HARBOR BUT IT MAY NOT BE SOUND FOR SEA TRAVEL. JUSTIFICATION MAKES US SAFE IN CHRIST, SANCTIFICATION MAKES US SOUND. THE QUALITY OF THE VOYAGE DEPENDS ON THE SANCTIFICATION PROCESS.

IV. A FAITH THAT IS SOUND - TITUS 1:13, 2:2

THE WORD SOUND IN THE TEXT IS THE WORD HYGIENE. IT IS ELSEWHERE TRANSLATED WHOLE OR HEALTHY. HYGIENE IS THE SCIENCE OF THE PRESERVATION OF HEALTH. IT IS A SYSTEM OF RULES DESIGNED FOR THE PROMOTION OF HEALTH. IT IS LEARNED IN THE HOME AND THE SCHOOL. JUST AS THERE ARE RULES OF HEALTH, THERE ARE RULES FOR A HEALTHY SOUL OR CHRISTIAN LIFE. THERE ARE "SICK SAINTS" BECAUSE THEY DO NOT FEED ON A HEALTHY SPIRITUAL DIET KNOWN IN BIBLE TERMS AS SOUND DOCTRINE! ONE REASON WHY SOME SAINTS ARE SICK IS BECAUSE THEY ARE IMMATURE AND LIKE CHILDREN WANT ONLY THAT WHICH TASTES GOOD LIKE CANDY, CAKE AND COKES BUT SOLID SPIRITUAL

I Shipwrecked
II Savos
III Safety
IV Soul

FOOD THEY REJECT. A SPIRITUAL HEALTHY DIET IS BOTH PERSONAL AND PUBLIC. FROM THE PUBLIC SIDE, A HEALTHY SPIRITUAL DIET INVOLVES A LOT OF BIBLE. (GOD HAS NOT PROMISED TO BLESS SERMONS - HE HAS PROMISED TO BLESS HIS WORD.) IT INVOLVES BALANCE. (EVANGELISM, TEACHING, MISSIONS) IT INVOLVES BACKBONE. SOMETIMES IT TAKES COURAGE TO SAY WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID WHEN THE HEARERS MAY NOT BE READY TO ACCEPT IT. IT INVOLVES BEHAVIOR. ILLUSTRATE AND UNDERSCORE THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUND PREACHING AND TEACHING IN CHURCH LIFE. IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE WIDE PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT BUT WITHOUT PREACHING IT IS LIKE THE BLANK IN A GUN. IT WILL MAKE THE RIGHT NOISE BUT NOT ACCOMPLISH THE GOAL.

V. A FAITH THAT IS STRONG - ROMANS 4:20

55 Faith

THE CONTRAST OF THIS CHAPTER IS BETWEEN WEAK (VERSE 19) AND STRONG (VERSE 20) FAITH. PAUL REHEARSES GOD'S DEALING WITH ABRAHAM AND GOD'S PROMISE TO GIVE HIM A SON THROUGH WHOM HE WOULD BLESS THE WORLD. A CASUAL READING OF THIS STORY COULD MISS THE WHOLE POINT. IMAGINE, A MAN 100 YEARS OLD AND HIS WIFE 90 WHO HAD GIVEN THE GOOD NEWS THAT SHE IS GOING TO BEAR A SON IN HER OLD AGE. SUCH A STATEMENT IS PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE AND MAKES NO SENSE AT ALL UNLESS THE ONE WHO PROMISED IS GOD! WHEN GOD MADE HIS STARTLING DECLARATION, SARAH LAUGHED BUT ABRAHAM STARTED BUILDING THE NURSERY! STRONG FAITH LETS DOWN THE NET EVEN AFTER ONE HAS FISHED ALL NIGHT AND NOT CAUGHT A SINGLE FISH! ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD. IN THE FACE OF HOPELESS CIRCUMSTANCES, WHEN EVERYTHING DICTATED THE REVERSE, ABRAHAM SIMPLY BELIEVED GOD. NO WONDER THE BIBLE CALLS HIM A FRIEND OF GOD. THE WORD FAITH OR BELIEVE IS MENTIONED 16 TIMES IN THIS CHAPTER.

VI. A FAITH THAT SHIELDS - EPHESIANS 6:16

THERE WERE TWO KINDS OF SHIELDS IN THE ROMAN ARMY. ONE WAS A SMALL GLADIATOR SHIELD WHICH COULD BE HELD IN ONE HAND. THE SHIELD IN OUR TEXT HOWEVER WAS ANOTHER KIND, APPROXIMATELY 30 INCHES WIDE AND 48 INCHES HIGH. IT WAS BIG ENOUGH FOR A SOLDIER TO CROUCH BEHIND AND BE FULLY PROTECTED. THESE SHIELDS WERE SO CONSTRUCTED THAT THEY COULD INTERLOCK AND SOLDIERS COULD MARCH AS ONE MAN IN A SOLID WALL AGAINST AN ENEMY. IT WAS MADE OF BRASS, COVERED WITH LEATHER. ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS AND EFFECTIVE WEAPONS IN ROMAN TIMES WAS THE DART THAT COULD BE DIPPED IN PITCH AND SET AFLAME. THIS SHIELD WAS MADE OF TWO SECTIONS GLUED TOGETHER SO THAT THE DART WOULD PENETRATE INTO THE OUTER LAYER TO A CERTAIN DEPTH AND THEN BE EXTINGUISHED. SOMETIMES SOLDIERS, AFTER MARCHING LONG DISTANCES, WERE TEMPTED TO PUT DOWN THE SHIELD BUT THIS PROCEDURE WAS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS IS OUR SHIELD AGAINST SATAN'S DARTS OF TEMPTATION AND QUESTIONS.

VII. A FAITH THAT SOJOURNS AND SUBDUES - HEBREWS 11:9, 33

THIS KIND OF FAITH "GOES OUT" WHEN IT DOES NOT EXACTLY KNOW THE DESTINATION. IT IS A PILGRIM FAITH IN THE PILGRIM LIFE THAT KNOWS NO PERMANENT DWELLING PLACE SYMBOLIZED BY AN ALTAR AND A TENT. ABRAHAM RECOGNIZED THAT HE WAS SIMPLY PASSING THROUGH ON HIS WAY TO AN ETERNAL CITY. IT WAS A FAITH THAT "GOES ON." IT IS AN UNSTOPPABLE FAITH. (I JOHN 5:4) PETER - EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM FAILED BUT HIS FAITH. PAUL - II TIM. 4:7 HE "KEPT THE

FAITH." PAUL DID NOT QUIT ON THE LORD UNTIL HIS HEAD WAS SEVERED FROM HIS SHOULDERS. ONE EVIDENCE OF GENUINE FAITH IS OUR TENACITY TO OVERCOME ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AND TO FINISH THE COURSE. QUESTION: IS YOUR FAITH IN SHIPSHAPE OR SHIPWRECKED TODAY?

TRUMP — NOT the money ... it's the game, the deal, he loves the process —
NOT what we get — it the Conflict — For Him —

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JANUARY 10, 1988

A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE

ACTS 23:1, 24:16

EVERYONE HAS A CONSCIENCE AND NO TWO ARE EXACTLY ALIKE. FREUD CALLED THE CONSCIENCE OUR SUPEREGO. CONSCIENCE IS BOTH HARD TO SPELL AND SILENCE. WE USE THE TERM IN CONVERSATION: "LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE, MY CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR, PANGS OF CONSCIENCE, A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE, A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR AND UNCONSCIONABLE. WOODROW WILSON WAS ONCE ASKED TO DO A QUESTIONABLE DEED AND HE REPLIED "MY BOSS WON'T LET ME DO IT" - HE WAS REFERRING TO HIS CONSCIENCE AS BOSS. SOME PEOPLE TREAT THE CONSCIENCE LIKE THE MAN WHO WROTE THE IRS STATING: "I CAN'T SLEEP, MY CONSCIENCE IS BOTHERING ME. ENCLOSED FIND A CHECK FOR $50.00. IF I STILL CAN'T SLEEP, I'LL SEND YOU THE BALANCE!" A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER WAS DISCUSSING CONSCIENCE WITH HER CLASS. SHE ASKED: "WHAT IS THAT SMALL VOICE YOU ALWAYS HAVE WITH YOU?" ONE YOUNGSTER REPLIED: "A TRANSISTOR RADIO." IN HIS BOOK ENTITLED HOLY WAR JOHN BUNYAN REPRESENTS THE HUMAN FAMILY UNDER THE FIGURE OF A CITY CALLED MANSOUL. ONE OF ITS CITIZENS IS CALLED MR. CONSCIENCE. WHEN DIABOLUS CAPTURED THE CITY, HE SOUGHT TO DESTROY ALL TRACES OF ITS FORMER OWNER - EMMANUEL. SINCE HE COULD NOT KILL MR. CONSCIENCE HE SOUGHT TO IMPRISON HIM IN A DEEP DUNGEON. WHEN EMMANUEL UNDERTOOK THE RECAPTURE OF MANSOUL HE DID SO WITH A VETERAN SOLDIER NAMED CAPTAIN CONVICTION WHO LED THE ASSAULT UPON EARGATE. MR. CONSCIENCE WAS SO STIRRED BY THE BATTLE THAT HE BEGAN TO SHOUT FROM

THE DUNGEON UNTIL THE WHOLE CITY WAS STIRRED BY HIS VOICE. HIS CRY WAS TO REMIND HIS HEARERS THAT THEIR ALLEGIANCE WAS TO EMMANUEL AND NONE OTHER. SO IT IS IN THE HUMAN SOUL, CONSCIENCE IS THE CRY OF THE INNER-MAN TO DO RIGHT AND NOT TO DO WRONG. (5) A HINDU ONCE SAID TO A BRITISH ADMINISTRATOR, "OUR CONSCIENCE TELLS US THAT IT IS RIGHT TO BURN WIDOWS ON THE PYRE OF THEIR HUSBANDS. THEN OUR CONSCIENCE TELLS US IT IS RIGHT TO HANG YOU IF YOU DO SO." THIS STORY INDICATES HOW IMPORTANT THE MORAL STANDARD BY WHICH CONSCIENCE ACTS BE A CORRECT ONE. THEREFORE, JUST AS A BULLET CAN ONLY REACH THE BULL'S EYE IF THE SIGHTS ARE IN CORRECT ALIGNMENT ON A FIREARM, SO CORRECT MORAL JUDGMENT CAN ONLY COME FROM THE CONSCIENCE WHEN IT IS ALIGNED WITH SCRIPTURE. LIKE A WATCH THAT IS REGULATED BY STANDARD TIME SO OUR CONSCIENCE MUST BE REGULATED BY GOD'S WORD. SANDERS CALLS THE CONSCIENCE: "THE NERVE CENTER OF THE SOUL." THE WORD MEANS KNOWLEDGE SHARED WITH SOMEONE, THAT IS JOINT KNOWLEDGE. IT IS THAT INNER JUDGE AND COURT THAT ENABLES MAN TO PERCEIVE MORAL DISTINCTIONS. IT IS THAT INNER FACULTY THAT ENABLES A PERSON TO JUDGE RIGHT AND WRONG. (6) AN AMERICAN INDIAN SAID THAT IN HIS HEART WAS AN ARROWHEAD WITH THREE ~~POINTS TO IT.~~ IF HE ~~DID~~ WRONG, THE ARROW TURNED AND CUT HIM. IF HE CONTINUED TO DO WRONG THE TURNING WOULD WEAR OUT THE POINTS SO IT ~~DIDN'T HURT SO MUCH~~ BUT WHEN ~~THE PAIN WAS GONE~~ HE WAS IN BIG TROUBLE. CONSCIENCE IS ONE OF THE INNER-FACULTIES THAT DISTINGUISHES MANKIND FROM ANIMALS. ANIMALS HAVE NO SUCH CAPACITY AND THEREFORE DO NOT SIN. CONSCIENCE IS THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION WHY SOME UNBELIEVERS APPEAR TO HAVE HIGHER MORAL PRINCIPLES THAN BELIEVERS.

THE CONSCIENCE ACCUSES OR APPROVES, CONDEMNS OF COMMENDS OUR EVERY ACT. IT IS THE CONSCIENCE THAT GIVES MAN MORAL AWARENESS. THE CONSCIENCE MAY BE COMPARED TO A WINDOW A. THAT LETS THE LIGHT INTO THE SOUL. IF THE WINDOW GETS DIRTY, IT LETS IN LESS LIGHT AND THEORETICALLY MIGHT GET TO THE PLACE WHERE IT LET NO LIGHT IN AT ALL! CONSCIENCE MAY BE COMPARED TO A THERMOMETER. IT B. MEASURES OR INDICATES THE TEMPERATURE BUT DOES NOT CREATE OR CONTROL THE ATMOSPHERE. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF THE CONSCIENCE IN THREE GENERAL CATEGORIES:

(1) A GOOD CONSCIENCE

(2) AN EVIL CONSCIENCE

(3) A WEAK CONSCIENCE

THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT KINDS MENTIONED UNDER THESE BROAD CATEGORIES.

I. A GOOD CONSCIENCE - ACTS 23:1

A GOOD CONSCIENCE IS ONE THAT IS WORKING AS IT WAS DESIGNED TO FUNCTION, THAT IS, DOING ITS JOB, KEEPING THE BELIEVER ON TARGET, ON COURSE, WITHOUT DIGRESSION OF EITHER DOCTRINE OR DEPORTMENT. IN PAUL'S CASE, HE WAS FOLLOWING THE DICTATES OF HIS CONSCIENCE EVEN WHEN HE PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS, HE DID IT THINKING HE WAS DOING GOD'S WORK! HE WAS WRONG BUT HE WAS CONSCIENTIOUS IN HIS ACTIVITY. PAUL'S GREAT CHANGE CAME WHEN HIS CONSCIENCE WAS PURGED OR CLEANSED. (HEBREWS 9:14) THE SAME ROOT WORD IS USED TO DESCRIBE A PURE CONSCIENCE IN II TIM. 1:3. SUCH A CONSCIENCE IS NO LONGER STAINED WITH SIN NOR STYMIED IN ITS FUNCTION. THESE

TERMS ARE USED TO TALK OF THE ACT OF GOD THAT RELATES TO FORGIVENESS OF SINS. IT IS THE REMOVAL OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST OF THE DEAD WEIGHT OF DEAD WORKS FROM ONE'S LIFE GIVING HIM A CLEAN OR CLEAR CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD. IN HEBREWS 9:9, PAUL TALKS ABOUT A PERFECT CONSCIENCE, IN OTHER WORDS ONE THAT IS ACCOMPLISHING THE GOAL FOR WHICH IT WAS DESIGNED. PAUL WAS CAREFUL ABOUT HIS CONSCIENCE. WHEN THE CONSCIENCE ALARM WENT OFF, PAUL PAID ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY. (COMMENT REGARDING EXCHANGE BETWEEN KEMPTON AND TREASURER AT ABWE - AN ACT OF GOOD CONSCIENCE ALONG WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES.) IN HEBREWS 13:18, PAUL ASSOCIATES HONESTY WITH A GOOD CONSCIENCE. MORE BELIEVERS WOULD HAVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARD GOD AND THEIR FELLOWMEN IF THEY SPOKE THE TRUTH, PAID THEIR BILLS, HONORED THEIR CONTRACTS BOTH WRITTEN AND VERBAL! THE PHRASE "EXERCISING OPTION" IS AN OVERUSED CLICHE. WE MIGHT DO WELL TO FOLLOW PAUL'S ADVICE AND EXERCISE OUR CONSCIENCE AND KEEP IT CLEAN BEFORE GOD AND MEN! (THIS COULD BE THE MOST NEGLECTED EXERCISE IN THE WORLD.)

II. AN EVIL CONSCIENCE - HEBREWS 10:22

THE PERSON WHO IS DETERMINED TO DO EVIL MAY DO SO MORE AND MORE AND HIS CONSCIENCE WILL HAVE LESS AND LESS INFLUENCE UNTIL FINALLY HE MAY DELIGHT IN DOING WRONG ALL THE TIME. HE THEN BECOMES THE POSSESSOR OF AN EVIL OR WICKED CONSCIENCE. (BY THE WAY, THE WORD EVIL HERE IS TRANSLATED "WICKED" AND IS USED TO DESCRIBE SATAN AS THE "WICKED ONE." THE WORD IS PONEIROS. THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER BOTHERED BY EVIL ACTS. AS A MATTER OF FACT,

THEY MAY CONFUSE RIGHT AND WRONG, GOOD AND EVIL (ISAIAH 5:20) SUCH A CONSCIENCE GETS TO THE PLACE WHERE NOTHING BOTHERS IT ANY MORE. THE PERSON MAY KILL, STEAL, LIE AND HURT OTHER HUMAN BEINGS AND LOSE LITTLE OR NO SLEEP. NOTHING OF AN EVIL NATURE UPSETS THEM ANYMORE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, SUCH A CONSCIENCE BRAGS ABOUT BEING BAD! THERE IS NO SENSE OF SHAME. AN EVIL CONSCIENCE CAN GET TO THE PLACE WHERE IT PROTESTS AGAINST EVIL NO LONGER. IT IS UTTERLY INSENSITIVE TO SIN. PAUL SPOKE OF SUCH A CONDITION IN I. TIM. 4:2. THE TERM IN THE TEXT IS HARDENED, CALLOUS OR CAUTERIZED, THAT IS, SOMETHING THAT HAS NO FEELING ANYMORE. (PICTURE A HOT IRON THAT HAS BEEN RUN OVER FLESH TO SUCH A POINT THAT IT IS NO LONGER SENSITIVE. ALL NERVES HAVE BEEN SEVERED AND THE FLESH IS SIMPLY HARDENED BY THE REPEATED ACTION OF THE IRON. SUCH PEOPLE ONCE BLUSHED WITH SHAME BUT NOW BRAG AND SWEAR. PHILLIPS SAYS OF THIS VERSE: "WHO CONSCIENCES ARE AS DEAD AS SEARED FLESH." THE CORRECTION OF SUCH A PROBLEM IS THE BLOOD OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE HEBREWS TEXT.

III. A WEAK CONSCIENCE - I COR. 8:7-12

(NOT CLEAR if AN ACT is Right (wrong)

A WEAK CONSCIENCE IS ONE THAT IS TROUBLED BY DOUBTS, VACILLATES QUICKLY, IS OFFENDED EASILY, STUMBLES OVER LITTLE THINGS, IS CRITICAL OF OTHERS AND LEGALISTIC IN HIS APPROACH TO CHRISTIAN LIVING. (BY THE WAY I HAVE NEVER MET A SELF-CONFESSED LEGALIST.) THE CORINTHIAN SITUATION ILLUSTRATES HOW THIS PERSON IS SAVED BUT SHAKY. THE PROBLEM IN CORINTH WAS THAT THE CHEAPEST MEAT IN TOWN WAS AVAILABLE AT THE BUTCHER SHOP NEAR THE TEMPLE. PROBLEM: SOME BELIEVERS FELT THAT MEAT OFFERED TO IDOLS WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR

PERSONAL CONSUMPTION. THIS WAS A REAL SPIRITUAL HANGUP FOR THE SPIRITUALLY IMMATURE AND CREATED A SERIOUS DIVISION IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH. LISTEN TO WIERSBE'S CHARACTERIZATION OF SUCH A CONSCIENCE: "THE PERSON WITH THE WEAK CONSCIENCE IS THE PERSON WHO, WHEN HE SEES ONE THING IN A MAGAZINE THAT HE DOESN'T LIKE, CANCELS HIS SUBSCRIPTION. WHEN HE HEARS A PIECE OF MUSIC HE DOESN'T LIKE HE EITHER LEAVES CHURCH OR STOPS SUPPORTING THE MINISTRY ALTOGETHER. THE PERSON WITH THE WEAK CONSCIENCE IS ONE WHO WHEN THE PREACHER USES A DIFFERENT TRANSLATION THAN WHAT HE PREFERS WILL NOT SUPPORT THE CHURCH ANYMORE. HE IS A PERSON WHO IS NOT REALLY SPIRITUAL, HE IS SIMPLY IMMATURE AND NEEDS TO GROW UP SPIRITUALLY. THE WEAK-CONSCIENCE CHRISTIAN IS ONE WHO PHOTOGRAPHS HIMSELF, THEN DEVELOPS AND TOUCHES UP HIS OWN NEGATIVE! SUCH A PERSON MEASURES EVERYONE BY HIS OWN STANDARDS AND RULES AND EVEN IF THEY ARE BIBLICAL STANDARDS THEY ARE STILL STANDARDS BY WHICH EVERYONE ELSE MUST CONFORM. (THIS IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THE AREA OF CHRISTIAN SEPARATION IN EVANGELICAL AND FUNDAMENTAL CIRCLES. IT IS EASY TO LET SECONDARY ITEMS OF DEPORTMENT DIVIDE US AND TO IGNORE THE PRIMARY AREAS OF DOCTRINE. THE REASON FOR A WEAK CONSCIENCE IS THE FAILURE ON THE PART OF THE BELIEVER TO GROW IN GRACE. HE FEARS FREEDOM, REVELS IN RULES AND INSISTS THAT EVERYONE ELSE FIT IN THE MOLD OF HIS MAKING. OUR CONSCIENCE IS A WONDERFUL GIFT FROM GOD AND A TRUE GUARDIAN OF DECENCY AND MORALITY AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE TREATED WITH GREAT CARE BY ALL PEOPLE. IT IS TO THAT COURT OF CONSCIENCE THAT PAUL APPEALED IN ROMANS 2:15 AS A FINGER OF ACCUSATION TOWARD ALL MEN IN THE PROCEDURE OF

ESTABLISHING GUILT IN THE WORLD. THE CLEANSED CONSCIENCE IS THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE WORK OF REGENERATION. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST IS THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM OF GUILT.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING MARCH 27, 1988

BETRAYED

DON RICHARDSON, FORMER MISSIONARY TO IRIAN JAYA, TELLS OF A NATIVE TRIBE WHOSE TRADEMARK WAS TREACHERY. (EXPLAIN) JUDAS ISCARIOT COULD HAVE BEEN CHIEF OF THAT TRIBE! THERE ARE CERTAIN BIBLE NAMES PASSED ON WITH PRIDE SUCH AS JOSEPH, JOHN, JACOB AND JAMES. HOWEVER, THERE ARE TWO NAMES SELDOM IF EVER HEARD IN THIS CAPACITY - JEZEBEL AND JUDAS. IN AMERICAN HISTORY, AARON BURR IS A SYMBOL OF TREACHERY AND TREASON. HOWEVER, THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE TO THE BURR STORY SELDOM HEARD. HIS GRANDDAUGHTER ATTENDED AN EVANGELISTIC SERVICE AND RECEIVED THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. THE NEXT TIME SHE SAW HER GRANDFATHER, SHE SAID: "I WISH YOU WERE A CHRISTIAN TOO." BURR REPLIED THAT WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG MAN HE TOO WENT TO AN EVANGELISTIC MEETING AND FELT THE NEED OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS BUT STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO SUBMIT TO CHRIST. HE SAID THAT NIGHT I WALKED OUT UNDER THE STARS, LOOKED UP TOWARD HEAVEN AND SAID, "GOD, IF YOU DON'T BORTHER ME ANYMORE, I'LL NOT BOTHER YOU." "GOD KEPT HIS PART OF THE BARGAIN," SAID BURR, "HE NEVER BOTHERED ME AGAIN." (BURR BEST KNOWN FOR THE DUEL WITH ALEXANDER HAMILTON IN WHICH HAMILTON WAS KILLED AND BURR DISCREDITED. HE LATER BECAME INVOLVED IN A PLOT TO ESTABLISH A SEPARATE STATE EXPECTING WAR TO DEVELOP BETWEEN SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES. HE WAS INDICTED FOR TREASON BUT AFTER A SIX-MONTHS TRIAL IN RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, WAS ACQUITTED. HE SPENT THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE A POLITICAL UNKNOWN.) IN MATTHEW 26, THE WORD BETRAYED OR A FORM THEREOF, OCCURS AT LEAST TEN TIMES. THE WORD MEANS "TO HAND OVER." IN THIS CHAPTER, WE SEE THE HEINOUS NATURE OF JUDAS' BETRAYAL. I AM TOLD THAT MANY YEARS AGO IN

OLD FASHIONED SLAUGHTERHOUSES, THEY WOULD SELECT A KEY ANIMAL TO LEAD THE REST OF THE ANIMALS INTO THE SLAUGHTER AREA - THAT ANIMAL WAS CALLED THE "JUDAS GOAT." THE WORD JUDAS IS THE GREEK FORM OF THE HEBREW JUDAH AND MEANS PRAISE. THE WORD ISCARIOT IS A COMBINATION OF THE HEBREW ISH WHICH MEANS MAN AND KERIOTH WHICH IS A TOWN IN SOUTHERN JUDEA. SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THAT JUDAS HAD MANY PERSONAL TRAITS THAT WERE APPEALING. UNDOUBTEDLY HE HAD ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS FOR HE WAS THE TREASURER OF THE TWELVE. HE WAS THE ONLY "SOUTHERN DISCIPLE" COMING FROM JUDEA; ALL THE REST WERE FROM NORTHERN GALILEE. IN ALL PROBABILITY JUDAS' DISDAIN WITH CHRIST'S MOVEMENT WAS A GRADUAL PROCESS THAT CAME TO A HEAD THE LAST SIX MONTHS OF HIS MINISTRY.

I. A SCHEDULED BETRAYAL - 26:2

THE PASSOVER WAS A SCHEDULED DAY ON ISRAEL'S RELIGIOUS CALENDAR. IT WAS A JEWISH FEAST, A RELIGIOUS HOLY DAY, TO REMIND ISRAEL OF ITS SUPERNATURAL REDEMPTION AND RELEASE FROM EGYPTIAN BONDAGE. IN THIS PASSAGE, CHRIST REVEALED THAT HIS BETRAYAL AND CRUCIFIXION WAS ALSO AN EVENT ON GOD'S CALENDAR! THE CONTEXT REVEALS THAT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WANTED NOTHING TO HAPPEN DURING THIS RELIGIOUS SEASON TO AGITATE MANY THOUSANDS OF PILGRIMS IN JERUSALEM WHO WERE SYMPATHETIC TO JESUS AND HIS CAUSE. IT WAS NOW TUESDAY EVENING AND THE PASSOVER WAS JUST A COUPLE OF DAYS AWAY. JESUS STARTLED HIS DISCIPLES BY SAYING THAT HIS CRUCIFIXION WOULD COME ACCORDING TO AN ETERNAL PLAN AND NOT THE ENEMY'S PLAN. HE SPOKE WITH PROPHETIC PRECISION. JESUS WAS NOT TAKEN BY SURPRISE OR OFF-GUARD, AS

A MATTER OF FACT, HE SET THE TIME OF HIS CRUCIFIXION AS TWO DAYS FROM THAT DAY! HE WAS INDEED THE TRUE PASSOVER LAMB. (GEN. 22 - A LAMB FOR A BOY; EXODUS 12 - A LAMB FOR A FAMILY; ISAIAH 53 - A LAMB FOR A NATION; JOHN 1:29 - THE LAMB FOR THE WORLD.

II. A SELFISH BETRAYAL - 26:14-15

ONE COMMENTATOR SUGGESTED THAT JUDAS MAY HAVE BEEN A BIT PERTURBED THAT JESUS WAS NOT DOING MORE TO ESTABLISH HIS POLITICAL KINGDOM ON EARTH. JUDAS WAS LOOKING FOR SOME CATALYST TO FORCE JESUS TO TAKE ACTION WHICH IN HIS OPINION WOULD BE TO SAVE HIS OWN LIFE. HOWEVER, THE TEXT SAYS, "WHAT WILL YE GIVE ME?" THE BIBLE LAYS THE PROBLEM OF JUDAS TO ONE WORD - GREED. WE HAVE A LITTLE INSIGHT INTO HIS CHARACTER WHEN HE PRONOUNCED WORSHIP AS WASTE - JOHN 12:4-6. JUDAS WAS AN OUT AND OUT MATERIALIST, A MONEY LOVER WHOSE VALUES IN LIFE WERE BASED ON MONEY. SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THAT MAYBE JUDAS SAW THE SWELLING TIDE OF OPPOSITION AGAINST JESUS AND TRIED TO SALVAGE WHAT HE COULD GET OUT OF THE MOVEMENT PERSONALLY BEFORE IT COLLAPSED. THE PHILOSOPHY WAS GET YOURS AND GET OUT. THE "WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME" IDEA IS NOT A NEW FORMULA. (COMPARE JOSEPH'S BROTHERS, GEHAZI, AHAB AND NABAL.) JUDAS HEADS THE PARADE OF THOSE WHO SELL PRINCIPLES FOR MONEY. HE TRADED EVERYTHING WORTHWHILE IN HIS LIFE FOR LESS THAN $100 IN AMERICAN MONEY. THIS WAS A COVENANT CONCOCTED IN HELL. WHAT SATAN COULD NOT GAIN BY CONFRONTATION HE WON BY INFILTRATION.

THIS CHAPTER PRESENTS AN INTERESTING STUDY IN CONTRASTS:

(1) MARY - MARY WAS THE UNSELFISH PERSON WHO GAVE THE LORD ALL SHE HAD. THAT LITTLE VASE OR VIAL WAS EQUIVALENT OF A YEAR'S WAGES AND WITHOUT HESITATION SHE GAVE IT OUR LORD.

(2) JUDAS - WAS UTTERLY SELFISH AND LOOKED UPON MARY'S SACRIFICE AS WASTE. HE WILLINGLY EXCHANGED PRINCIPLES FOR PROFIT. (RELATE THE STORY OF THE PASTOR WHO WAS COMPLETING A NEW CHURCH BUILDING. AN IRRITATED AND CRITICAL PARISHIONER COMPLAINED THAT THE MONEY WAS WASTED IN SUCH FINE THINGS AS ORGANS AND PADDED PEWS AND CARPET WHEN THE MONEY COULD HAVE BEEN USED TO HELP THE POOR. THE PASTOR REPLIED THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT LINE BEFORE. WHERE WAS THE QUESTION - JUDAS ISCARIOT!

III. A SINISTER BETRAYAL 26:16 (JOHN 18:2)

THE WORD OPPORTUNITY REFERS TO A CONVENIENT OR SEASONABLE TIME, ONE THAT WORKED TO HIS ADVANTAGE. JUDAS KNEW THE SPIRITUAL HABITS OF JESUS. HE KNEW THAT JESUS WENT TO THE GARDEN TO PRAY SO HE USED THAT PRIVILEGED INFORMATION TO SET A TRAP FOR HIS ARREST. JUDAS USED ALL OF HIS CUNNING TRICKS SUCH AS FEIGNED FRIENDSHIP AND HIS POSITION IN THE TWELVE DISCIPLES TO GET AT JESUS. LIKE A SNAKE SNEAKING UPON ITS PREY, JUDAS PREPARED TO STRIKE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE KISS IN THE EAST WAS A MARK OF INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP. FOR EXAMPLE, ACQUAINTANCES TOUCHED HANDS AND KISSED THEIR OWN HAND. INFERIORS KISSED THE PALM OF THE HAND. SLAVES KISSED THE FOOT. TO KISS THE HEM OF ONE'S GARMENT WAS AN ACT OF REVERENCE. BUT TO KISS THE CHEEK WAS A

SIGN OF WARM AFFECTION AMONG EQUALS. NOTICE HOW CLEVERLY AND CAREFULLY JUDAS WEAVED HIS WEB OF WOE. HOWEVER, JUDAS BECAME THE VICTIM - JESUS THE VICTOR.

IV. A SANCTIMONIOUS BETRAYAL - 26:25, 47-50

THE WORD SANCTIMONIUS SUGGESTS MAKING A SHOW OF PIETY OR IS A SYNONYM FOR HYPOCRISY. JUDAS WAS SITTING OR RECLINING AT THE PLACE OF HONOR AT THE PASSOVER MEAL. JUDAS ACCEPTED JESUS' HOSPITALITY AND IN RETURN GAVE CONSPIRACY AND TREACHERY. HE WAS THE CONSUMMATE ACTOR OR PRETENDER. IN OUR DAY WE WOULD SAY HE WAS "PLAYING GAMES WITH GOD." DID HE THINK THAT OUR LORD DID NOT KNOW HIS THOUGHTS, PLANS AND SCHEMES? (THE STORY IS TOLD THAT IN OLDEN TIMES THE BEST OF DOGS WOULD BE TAKEN WITH THE FEVER TO KILL SHEEP. THE KILLING WAS DONE AT NIGHT. THE GUILTY DOG WOULD FIRST OF ALL TRY TO GET OTHER DOGS TO JOIN HIM IN THE KILL. HOWEVER, DURING THE DAY THAT SAME VICIOUS ANIMAL BY NIGHT WOULD ASSUME A FRIENDLY AIR AROUND THE HOUSE AND BARN DURING THE DAY TO WARD OFF ANY SUSPICION - SO WITH JUDAS.

V. A SATANIC BETRAYAL - JOHN 6:70-71, JOHN 13:2,27

JUDAS LOOKED LIKE A SAINT, ACTED LIKE A SERPENT. (COMPARE CARLOS GIBSON) JUDAS WAS SATAN'S MAN - THE SON OF PERDITION. HE WAS A WILLING PARTICIPANT IN THIS PLOT FROM THE PIT. SATAN ATTACKED PETER BUT ACQUIRED JUDAS. QUESTION: IN WHAT SENSE DID SATAN ENTER JUDAS? THE WORD USED TO DESCRIBE HIS ENTRY IS ALSO USED TO DESCRIBE BOTH DEMON-POSSESSION AND PERSONAL ACCEPTANCE OF CHRIST.

COMPARE LUKE 8:33, REVELATION 3:20. SATAN FOUND A MAN WHOM HE PROPOSITIONED, PURCHASED AND POSSESSED. SATAN SIMPLY TOOK CONTROL OF JUDAS' LIFE AS HE WILL ALSO CONTROL THE ANTI-CHRIST IN THE END OF THE AGE.

VI. A SUICIDAL BETRAYAL- MATTHEW 27:3-5

THIS IS THE SAD END OF A SAD STORY. JUDAS WAS A PERSON OF PRIVILEGED POSITION WHO THREW IT ALL AWAY FOR 30 PIECES OF SILVER. HOW SAID THAT WHAT HE SO GREATLY DESIRED HE LATER SO GRIMLY DETESTED. JESUS SAID OF HIM - MATTHEW 26:24! JUDAS LIFE IS A SYMBOL OF TREACHERY. GOD COULD AND WOULD NOT PERMIT SUCH A DEED TO GO UNPUNISHED BOTH HERE AND HEREAFTER. (ACTS 1:16-18, 25) JUDAS' REPENTANCE WAS MORE A REMORSE FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS SIN BUT NOT REGRET AND REMORSE OVER THE NATURE OF HIS SIN. SELF-PITY IS NOT GODLY SORROW. HOW SAD THAT WHILE JESUS WAS STILL NEAR JUDAS DID NOT THROW HIMSELF ON OUR LORD'S MERCY AND SEEK FORGIVENESS. YOU AND I MAY NOT BE A JUDAS BUT WE ARE JUST AS NEEDY OF JESUS AND HIS FORGIVENESS.

"his own place" i.e. place of his own choosing...

God Has 2 places for the dead - just 2.

(1) John 14:2 .. place of Rest.

(2) Luke 16:28 ... lest they also come into this place of Torment.

2 Trees - Suicide \ Salvation.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING MAY 8, 1988

BIBLE BOATS

IF THE LORD HAD CALLED ME INTO NAVAL SERVICE, HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN ME A NEW STOMACH AS WELL AS A NEW HEART FOR I AM A POOR SAILOR! I LIKE BOATS BUT THEY DON'T LIKE ME! (COMMENT REGARDING CRUISE - MAUI) THE BIBLE HAS A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT BOATS. TODAY, WE WILL ATTEMPT TO DISCOVER THE RELEVANCE OF THE USAGE OF THIS TERM TO OUR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

I. THE BOAT THAT WASN'T NEEDED ANYMORE - MATTHEW 4:22 (18-22)

PETER, ANDREW, JAMES AND JOHN WERE ALL FISHERMEN FROM GALILEE. THE LATTER TWO OF THIS ~~PAIR~~ TRIO WERE THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE. ALL OF THEM MADE THEIR LIVING FROM THAT LARGE INLAND LAKE KNOWN AS THE SEA OF GALILEE. THEIR BOAT WAS JUST ONE OF SEVERAL ~~HUNDRED~~ DOZEN THAT WENT OUT EVERY DAY TO FISH ON THE LAKE. THESE MEN WERE TOUGH, COURAGEOUS SAILORS WHO MADE THEIR LIVING BY THEIR WITS AND HARD WORK. ONE DAY, A CARPENTER NAMED JESUS, WALKED ALONG THE SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE WHERE THEY WERE WORKING, SPOKE TWO WORDS THAT CHANGED THEIR LIVES FOREVER. THE WORDS WERE "FOLLOW ME." THE INCREDIBLE ASPECT OF THIS STORY IS THAT THESE FOUR MEN OR ONE THIRD OF JESUS' DISCIPLES, LEFT EVERYTHING, FOLLOWED JESUS, AND DID SO IMMEDIATELY. (IT IS USED ESPECIALLY IN MARK'S GOSPEL.) THE NETS AND BOAT WERE SYMBOLS OF THEIR LIFE BEFORE JESUS. HARD WORKING, BUT AFTER THE DIVINE CALL THEY WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME, NEVER FULLY SATISFIED BEING ORDINARY FISHERMEN AGAIN.

APPLICATION: THE BOATS IN OUR TEXT REPRESENT THOSE THINGS ONE LEAVES BEHIND OR ABANDONS IN ORDER TO FOLLOW A HIGHER, HOLIER CALLING. THE FISH BUSINESS WAS AN HONORABLE OCCUPATION. THEY ABANDONED IT FOR SOMETHING MORE HONORABLE. (1) (COMPARE STORY OF MARBLES, BASEBALL, EAGLE IN (2) A CHICKEN PEN, HEARING A HIGHER CALL.) THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF MEN IN HONORABLE PROFESSIONS ANSWERING A HIGHER CALL ARE NUMEROUS. FOR EXAMPLE, M. R. DEHAAN, MARTIN LLOYD-JONES, C. I. SCOFIELD, CHARLES COLSON - AND MANY OTHERS WHOSE CAREERS BECAME SECONDARY WHEN GOD ENABLED THEM TO SEE A BIGGER, BROADER, BETTER VIEW OF LIFE. I HAVE WATCHED BUSINESS PEOPLE, DOCTORS, LAWYERS, CRAFTSMEN, FARMERS AND OTHERS SELL HOME, LEAVE SECURITY BEHIND IN ORDER TO ATTEND SCHOOL AND ULTIMATELY TO A MISSION FIELD IN ANSWER TO THEIR HIGHER CALL. THEY UNDERSTOOD THE PRINCIPLE THAT "MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, AND LIKE THEIR LORD THEY HAVE BREAD TO EAT THAT OTHERS KNOW NOT OF." FOR THEM THEY DID NOT STAND ALONG THE SHORE AND CRY "BUY, BUY BOAT," BUT RATHER THEY LEFT WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT.

II. THE BOAT THAT SAILED THE WRONG WAY - JONAH 1:3-10

GOD TOLD JONAH TO GO TO NINEVAH AND PREACH A STRONG AND SIMPLE MESSAGE OF REPENTANCE. FROM THE HUMAN STANDPOINT, IT WAS A DANGEROUS ASSIGNMENT. THE ASSYRIANS WERE AMONG THE MOST RUTHLESS AND FEARED PEOPLE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH. THEY ENJOYED VIOLENCE AND BRUTALITY AND WORKED AT ~~THAT AVOCATION~~! ALSO, JONAH HAD NO GREAT DESIRE TO TELL THESE RUTHLESS PEOPLE ABOUT GOD. THEY WERE HATED ENEMIES SO WHY NOT LET GOD UNLOAD HIS JUDGMENT FOR IN HIS OPINION IT WAS DESERVED JUDGMENT.

(SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THAT JONAH DID NOT FEAR FAILURE IN HIS PREACHING MISSION BUT RATHER SUCCESS!) JONAH FLED FROM HIS CONSCIENCE AND COMMISSION AND SET SAIL FOR SPAIN PUTTING THE GREATEST POSSIBLE DISTANCE BETWEEN HIM AND NINEVAH. SIMPLY STATED, JONAH WAS A BACK-SLIDDEN PREACHER RUNNING AWAY FROM GOD'S CALL. IN DOING SO, HE PAID THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE PRICE IN DOLLARS TO GO IN THE WRONG DIRECTION. HE ENCOUNTERED A GOD-ORDAINED STORM DESIGNED TO STOP HIM FROM RUNNING. EVERY DISOBEDIENT CHILD OF GOD KNOWS THERE IS A TERRIBLE COST TO DISOBEYING GOD. JONAH KNEW THAT THE STORM WAS GOD'S CHASTENING HAND ON HIS LIFE. WHEN A BELIEVER RUNS FROM THE COMMISSION OF GOD, HE MAY EXPECT STORMS. WHEN WE TAKE THE WRONG BOAT IN THE WRONG DIRECTION GET READY FOR A SUBMARINE RIDE! (EXPLAIN) APPLICATION: THERE ARE SOME DEAR FOLK WHO HAVE SET OUT TO SERVE GOD WITH NO CLEAR CALL. THEY ARE TO BE COMMENDED AND NOT CRITICIZED WHEN THEY TURN BACK. THEY WERE WANTING AND WILLING TO SERVE GOD BUT IN THE LONG HAUL WERE NOT EQUIPPED TO DO SO. THE FACT THAT A PERSON IS A GRADUATE OF SOME KIND OF BIBLE SCHOOL DOES NOT QUALIFY HIM FOR CHRISTIAN WORK. ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS ALONE DO NOT QUALIFY. HOWEVER, THERE ARE THOSE OCCASIONS WHEN A PERSON CALLED OF GOD TO DO A SPECIFIC TASK RUNS FROM THAT RESPONSIBILITY. IN THAT SITUATION GOD WILL ACT TO BRING HIS DISOBEDIENT SERVANT BACK TO THE PLACE OF DIVINE DUTY. (COMPARE PSALM 139:7-9)

III. THE BOAT THAT COULDN'T SINK - MARK 4:35

(38)

IT HAD BEEN A VERY BUSY DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES. THEY SET SAIL ACROSS THE SEA OF GALILEE AFTER A DAY OF MULTITUDES, MIRACLES, MESSAGE AND MISERY. JESUS WAS WEARY. HE WENT TO SLEEP IN THE BACK OF A BOAT

AND WHILE HE WAS ASLEEP ONE OF THOSE SUDDEN, SCARY STORMS ENGULFED THE SEA OF GALILEE. WE KNOW SOMETHING OF THE KIND OF STORM IT WAS BECAUSE THE EXPERIENCED SAILORS PANICKED! THEY AWAKENED JESUS EXPLAINING THE CRISIS AND COMPLAINING THAT HE DID NOT CARE. THESE DISCIPLES, LIKE MANY OTHERS SINCE THAT TIME, OVERLOOKED SOME BASIC BIBLE FACTS: THE BOAT IN WHICH THEY WERE RIDING NOT ONLY WOULDN'T SINK, IT COULDN'T SINK WHILE JESUS WAS IN IT - EVEN IF HE WERE ASLEEP. STORMS COME TO ALL CHRISTIANS. PERSONAL, FINANCIAL, EMOTIONAL, DOMESTIC, SOCIAL AND BUSINESS STORMS. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT JESUS DOES CARE AND THAT HE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT OUR STORMS. THE FACTS THE DISCIPLES OVERLOOKED WERE:

(1) HE WAS WITH THEM ALL THE TIME.

(2) THE BOAT DID NOT SINK.

(3) HE CALMED THE STORM.

(4) THEY MADE IT TO THE OTHER SIDE - AND SO WILL WE!

IV. THE BOATS THAT NEVER SAILED - I KINGS 22:48

KING JEHOSHAPHAT BUILT A FLEET OF TRADING SHIPS AT A PLACE CALLED EZION-GEBER. HE INTENDED TO REOPEN AND REESTABLISHE TRADE ROUTES THAT HAD BEEN LOST TO THE NATION SINCE THE TIME OF SOLOMON. LOOKING AT THE TEXT HIS NEW SLOGAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN "GOING FOR THE GOLD." THE SHIPS MAY HAVE NUMBERED AS MANY AS 10 BUT THEY NEVER GOT OUT OF PORT BEING BROKEN TO PIECES BY A SEVERE STORM.

APPLICATION: EVERY PERSON HAS "BROKEN SHIPS" OR BROKEN OR DISAPPOINTED DREAMS WHICH NEVER LEAVE PORT. OUR PLANS FOR WEALTH AND SUCCESS THAT NEVER "FLOAT." FOR EXAMPLE, THE PERSON YOU WANTED TO MARRY BUT IT NEVER HAPPENED. THE JOB YOU WANTED TO TAKE BUT NEVER HAD OPPORTUNITY OR OCCASION TO DO SO. THE PLACE YOU WANTED TO MOVE OR THE DREAM YOU HAD ABOUT SUCCESS BUT SIMPLY NEVER LEFT PORT. EVERY PERSON HAS BROKEN DREAMS THAT WERE NEVER CARRIED OUT, THOSE "BROKEN SHIPS" THAT MAY INDEED HAVE BECOME BROKEN LIVES. HOWEVER, LET US THANK GOD FOR THE OTHER VESSELS WE BOARDED, VESSELS OF HIS SELECTION AND DIRECTION THAT WILL LEAD US ON A SURE COURSE IN THE WILL OF GOD AND INTO HIS SAFE HAVEN.

V. THE BOAT YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS -

HEBREWS 11:7; GENESIS 6:14, 7:1, 16

THE STORY OF NOAH IS ONE OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE IN THE BIBLE. GOD TOLD HIM TO BUILD A BOAT IN A LANDLOCKED REGION. THERE WAS NO BODY OF WATER NEARBY CAPABLE OF FLOATING SUCH A GIGANTIC VESSEL, SOME 450 FEET LONG. WITHOUT DOUBT, THIS OBEDIENT SERVANT OF GOD WAS KNOWN AS "CRAZY NOAH" BY THOSE WHO WATCHED HIM BUILD. THAT IS UNTIL IT BEGAN TO RAIN AND RAIN AND RAIN. THE BOAT OR BARGE WHICH NOAH BUILT IS A BIBLE TYPE, THAT IS, MEANT TO TEACH SOMETHING BEYOND ITS HISTORICAL SETTING. THE ARK WAS A BOAT IN WHICH NOAH AND HIS FAMILY SURVIVED A UNIVERSAL FLOOD SENT AS JUDGMENT BY GOD TO THIS PLANET. THE ARK KEPT THEM SAFE THROUGH THE FLOOD OF JUDGMENT. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS TO THE BELIEVER WHAT THE ARK WAS TO NOAH'S FAMILY - A PLACE OF SAFETY FROM JUDGMENT. WITH THIS STORY IN MIND, READ AGAIN AND ANEW JOHN 3:14-16 AND UNDERSCORE THE WORD PERISH.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING

AUGUST 21, 1988
EVENING SERVICE

BROUGHT OUT AND BROUGHT IN

DEUTERONOMY 6:23

THE WORDS OUT AND IN DESCRIBE IN SIMPLEST TERMS ONE'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION. THE TERM "CAST OUT" WAS USED OFTEN BY JESUS TO DESCRIBE MAN'S LOST ESTATE. (MATTHEW 22:13) IN THIS PASSAGE, GOD REMINDED ISRAEL THAT HE BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT BRING THEM IN INTO THE LAND OF PROMISE. THE LORD DID NOT BRING THEM OUT OF EGYPT IN ORDER FOR THEM TO DIE IN THE DESERT, BUT RATHER IN ORDER TO GO INTO THE PLACE OF HIS PROVISION. THE NEW TESTAMENT SPEAKS OF THE POSITIVE SIDE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING AND POSITION WITH THE LITTLE PREPOSITION IN. WE ARE IN THE BOOK, IN THE BODY, IN THE ARMY, IN THE RACE, IN SCHOOL, IN THE HEAVENLIES TO MENTION BUT A FEW. THIS STUDY WILL FOCUS ON THE BELIEVER WITH REFERENCE TO HIS "IN POSITION."

I. THE BELIEVER IS IN THE FAITH - II CORINTHIANS 13:5

THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE, WHO ATTEND OUR CHURCH, WHO DO NOT KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING IN CHURCH AND IN THE FAITH. OCCASIONALLY, FOLK WILL ASK WHY WE DO NOT RECITE CREEDS OR DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AS PART OF OUT LITURGY OR RITUAL. ONE REASON IS BECAUSE IT IS EASY FOR PEOPLE WHO HABITUALLY REPEAT WORDS SUCH AS "I BELIEVE...." TO GIVE LIP SERVICE OR INTELLECTUAL ACCEPTANCE TO CERTAIN DOCTRINES BUT WHO IN REALITY ARE NOT IN THE FAMILY OF GOD AND HAVE NEVER GIVEN THEIR

LIVES TO JESUS CHRIST. SIMPLY STATED IN FACT, THEY ARE NOT IN THE FAITH. THESE PEOPLE MAY HAVE RELIGIOUS DESIRES, AN INTEREST IN RELIGIOUS THINGS BUT ARE SIMPLY NOT "IN CHRIST." (THE STORY IS TOLD OF A BRILLIANT INTELLECTUAL WHO WAS RIDING A TRAIN AND ATTEMPTED TO OPEN THE WINDOW. HE WAS UTTERLY UNABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THE SIMPLE TASK, THOUGH A BRILLIANT MAN. A PORTER CAME ALONG AND OPENED THE WINDOW QUICKLY AND EASILY. POINT: A PERSON MAY BE AN EXPERT IN ONE REALM OF KNOWLEDGE BUT HAVE NO ABILITY TO FUNCTION IN ANOTHER REALM. LET US SUPPOSE THAT A MAN WASHED UPON A DESERT ISLAND AND DESIRED TO SEND A RESCUE MESSAGE. FINDING A PIECE OF PAPER AND A PENCIL HE WRITES A BRIEF NOTE AND THROWS IT INTO THE SEA. AT FIRST DESCRIPTION SUCH A TASK MIGHT SEEM FOOLISH INDEED BECAUSE THE WRITING WOULD BECOME BLURRED, THE PAPER SOGGY IN THE WATER. YET IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THE MESSAGE TO REACH LAND AND THE MAN TO BE RESCUED IF INTO THE STORY IS INJECTED THE IDEA THAT THE LETTER OR NOTE WAS SEALED IN A BOTTLE BEFORE IT WAS THROWN INTO THE WATER. SO IT IS WITH THE BELIEVER WHO IS IN CHRIST AND IN THE FAITH. HE IS SEALED TO GUARANTEE HIS DESTINATION. POINT: WHEN WE SPEAK OF THE FAITH, WE ARE REFERRING TO THE BODY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN ITS ENTIRETY. WHEN WE SPEAK OF FAITH IN SCRIPTURE IT MAY BE VIEWED AS SAVING, STRONG AND SHARED. (EPHESIANS 2:8, ROMANS 4:20, GALATIANS 1:23) IT IS POSSIBLE TO PUT GENUINE FAITH IN AN UNWORTHY CAUSE OR LEADER. A DROWNING PERSON MIGHT PUT FAITH IN A LIFEGUARD WHO SUDDENLY APPEARS BUT IN REALITY THE LIFEGUARD IS A PHONY AND UNABLE TO SWIM! THE FAITH WAS GENUINE, THE OBJECT WAS DEFECTIVE!

a wacko wearing a lifeguard suit!

ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS STRONG BECAUSE IT WAS PROPERLY PLACED IN ONE WHO COULD TURN THE IMPOSSIBLE INTO POSSIBLE. THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT A MOTHER WHO PUT HER DAUGHTER TO BED ONE EVENING AND SHORTLY AFTER SHE LEFT THE BEDROOM HEARD A THUMP. RUSHING BACK INTO THE ROOM, TURNING ON THE LIGHT, SHE SAW HER DAUGHTER LYING ON THE FLOOR HAVING ROLLED OUT THE BED AND BUMPED HER HEAD. WHEN ASKED WHY SHE HAD FALLEN FROM BED, THE CHILD REPLIED: "I DON'T KNOW UNLESS IT WAS THAT I WENT TO SLEEP NEAR WHERE I GOT IN." THIS STORY DESCRIBES THE CONDITION OF MANY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS. THEY GET INTO THE FAITH AND PROMPTLY SETTLE DOWN, GO TO SLEEP, INVITE THE DEVIL TO GIVE LUMPS AND BUMPS FOR THEIR INACTIVITY. OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS BELIEVERS IS TO SHARE OUR FAITH WITH OTHER PEOPLE. D. L. MOODY STARTED WINNING PEOPLE TO CHRIST THE VERY WEEK HE WAS SAVED. HE REQUESTED A PEW THAT HE MIGHT FILL ON SUNDAY SO GREAT WAS HIS INTEREST IN REACHING THE LOST.

II. THE BELIEVER IS IN THE FAMILY - EPHESIANS 2:19

THE SECOND CHAPTER OF EPHESIANS REVEALS OUR RELATIONSHIP BEFORE CHRIST. IT WAS A TIME OF "WITHOUTS." AT THAT TIME, WE WERE SPIRITUAL REFUGEES, FOREIGNERS TO THE FAMILY OF GOD. HOW ONE GETS INTO A FAMILY IS VERY IMPORTANT. IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE BORN, ADOPTED OR MARRIED INTO THE FAMILY. IN THE WORD OF GOD, THE LEGITIMATE WAY INTO GOD'S FAMILY IS BY BIRTH. A BIRTH CERTIFICATE IS IN ORDER BEFORE ACCEPTANCE. (JOHN 1:12-13) THAT REALITY IS DESCRIBED IN PRESENT TERMS. (JOHN 5:24, I JOHN 3:1-2) THERE SHOULD BE FAMILY

RESEMBLANCE. (II COR. 3:18) ONE ASPIRATION OF THE BELIEVER'S LIFE SHOULD BE TO BE MORE LIKE CHRIST. THAT CHANGE OR RESEMBLANCE TAKES PLACE AS THE BELIEVER GAZES UPON HOLY SCRIPTURE. IT IS A FACT AND AN INTERESTING LAW OF LIFE THAT ONE TAKES ON THE APPEARANCE OF THAT AT WHICH HE GAZES. MY FATHER HAD AND HAS MANY RELATIVES. HE HAS BUT ONE SON. THE REASON IS THE MATTER OF BIRTH.

III. THE BELIEVER IS IN THE FLOCK - LUKE 12:32

WHEN BRUCE DUNN WAS IN OUR CHURCH SOME DOZEN YEARS AGO HE COMMENTED ON THIS VERSE WITH REFERENCE TO THE TERM LITTLE. THERE'S A SENSE IN WHICH IN A COMPARATIVE WAY THE LORD'S WORK HAS ALWAYS BEEN A LITTLE FLOCK. HE IS THE SHEPHERD, WE ARE THE SHEEP. THE CLASSIC 23RD PSALM SUGGESTS SEVERAL FREEDOMS WE AS SHEEP ENJOY. WE WILL LIMIT IT TO FOUR:

(1) FREEDOM FROM FATIGUE - "HE RESTORETH MY SOUL." THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A TIME IN CHURCH HISTORY WHEN MORE PEOPLE WERE MORE TIRED AND WEARY. WHETHER THIS IS REAL OR IMAGINARY, THE SAINTS COMPLAIN ABOUT WEARINESS AND DIFFICULTY ALL THE TIME. NOT TO MENTION DEPRESSION, DISSATISFACTION WITH LIFE AND THE WORLD IN GENERAL. THE LORD KNOWS WHAT HIS SHEEP NEED AND THEIR PERPETUAL CARE IS HIS RESPONSIBILITY.

(2) FREEDOM FROM FEAR - "YEA THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL" IN THE MIDDLE EAST, SOMETIMES THE PATH OF THE SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP PASS THROUGH DEEP, DARK VALLEYS OVERSHADOWED BY ROCKS AND INFESTED WITH

ENEMIES. THE EMPHASIS IN THE PSALM IS ON WALKING, NOT STANDING STILL, SITTING OR SHAKING WITH FEAR. IT ALSO MAKES NO MENTION OF TURNING BACK IN TERROR. IT TALKS ABOUT WALKING QUIETLY THROUGH THE VALLEY.

(3) FREEDOM FROM FOES - "IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES" THE SHEPHERDS CROOK OR CLUB WAS A CONSTANT REMINDER THE SHEPHERD WAS EVER PRESENT TO PROTECT THE FLOCK FROM INTRUDING ENEMIES. SATAN'S ATTACK AGAINST THE SHEEP COMES FROM EVERY SIDE IN MANY FORMS AND SUBTLETIES. EVEN PETER, ONE OF THE TWELVE, WAS ATTACKED BY SATAN.

(4) FREEDOM FROM FEVER - "THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD WITH OIL" - AT THE END OF A BUSY DAY, THE SHEPHERD WOULD COUNT THE SHEEP AT THE DOOR OF THE SHEEPFOLD AND CAREFULLY OBSERVE THE SICK AND WOUNDED. SOMETIMES SHEEP WOULD BUMP INTO SHARP ROCKS OR WOULD BE BITTEN BY REPTILES AND TO LEAVE THEIR WOUNDS UNATTENDED WOULD BRING FEVER AND PERHAPS DEATH. THE SHEPHERD ALWAYS CARRIED MEDICINAL OIL TO TENDERLY MINISTER TO THE WOUNDS OF THE SHEEP. (COMPARE PSALM 37)

IV. THE BELIEVER IS IN THE FELLOWSHIP - I COR. 1:9

THE GREEK TERM FELLOWSHIP MEANS TO HAVE IN COMMON, TO SHARE OR BE PARTNERS WITH SOMEONE. IN SCRIPTURE WE ARE SAID OR SPOKEN OF AS FELLOW CITIZENS, HEIRS, HELPERS, LABORERS, PRISONERS, SERVANTS AND SOLDIERS. THE WORD FELLOWSHIP IS THE THEME OF I JOHN. FROM THE DAY OF CONVERSION UNTIL WE MEET THE LORD, FELLOWSHIP IS THE GREAT CONCERN OF THE BELIEVER. IN THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF

I JOHN THERE ARE 5 "IF'S" OF FELLOWSHIP. (SEE BIBLE MARGIN I JOHN 1) THIS SAME IDEA OF FELLOWSHIP IS CALLED ABIDING IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, CHAPTER 15. ABIDING IN CHRIST IS SIMPLY KEEPING CLOSE CONTACT, OR LIVING UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST. IT IS A CHAPTER OF RELATIONSHIPS. THE RELATIONSHIP OF FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNION IS DESCRIBED AS FRUITFULNESS. THEREFORE, TO ABIDE IN CHRIST IS TO HAVE NO KNOWN SIN, UNCONFESSED OR UNJUDGED. TO HAVE NO INTERESTS OR GOALS IN LIFE IN WHICH HE IS NOT IN FULL CONTROL. ABIDING ALLOWS NOTHING TO COME BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE BELIEVER. IT IS NOT A HOT AND COLD, OFF AGAIN ON AGAIN, LUKEWARM ARRANGEMENT BUT A STEADY, COMFORTABLE, FRUITFUL LIFE.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING

MAY 15, 1988
May 1993 PM Bec

CHAPTER ONE, VERSE EIGHT

1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D.C., No. 10 DOWNING STREET, LONDON, ENGLAND, 1111 OAKHURST DRIVE, CHARLESTON, WV ARE ADDRESSES WE RECOGNIZE. IN THE BIBLE, THERE ARE WELL-KNOWN VERSES IN THE 3:16 "BLOCK": JOHN 3:16, I TIM. 3:16, COL. 3:16, I COR. 3:16. (WHEN JOGGING WATCH HOUSE NUMBERS AND MAIL BOXES AND ASSOCIATE VERSES WITH THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD 1558 = I COR. 15:58!) SIMILARLY, THERE ARE SEVERAL VERSES IN THE FIRST CHAPTER AND EIGHTH VERSE OF DIFFERENT BOOKS IN THE BIBLE. TIED TOGETHER, LIKE PEARLS ON A STRING OF BEADS, WE MAY LEARN HELPFUL BIBLE LESSONS:

I. THE ONE EIGHT OF CHRISTIAN WITNESS

(GOD HAS A PLAN FOR EARTH'S EVANGELIZATION)
ACTS 1:8 (MISSION)

ACTS 1:8 PRESENTS AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS AND THE OUTREACH PROGRAM OF GOD FOR THIS DISPENSATION. (OUTLINE: JERUSALEM, CHAPTERS 1 THROUGH 7), JUDEA AND SAMARIA - 8 THROUGH 9, ENDS OF THE EARTH - 10 THROUGH 28. THIS PROGRAM INVOLVES EVER-WIDENING CIRCLES OF WITNESS FROM HOME TO HOMETOWN, FROM COUNTRY TO CONTINENTS, TO EVERY PERSON EVERYWHERE. THIS VERSE INCORPORATED THE PLAN AND THE POWER OF GOD INTO THE PROGRAM WHICH IS SIMPLY STATED AS "MY WITNESSES." SIMPLY STATED, THE TASK OF INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER IS TO FIND SOMEONE - JUST ONE AT A TIME! (JOHN 1:41-42) GOD'S METHOD IS BOTH MAN TO MAN AND MASS MEETINGS. ((COMPARE HIGHLAND PARK CONTROVERSY OVER ONE WHEN THE SCRIPTURE INDICATES BOTH ARE SCRIPTURAL.)) THERE IS ANOTHER ONE EIGHT ON

EVANGELISM IN I THESSALONIANS 1:8. IT IS ACTS 1:8 IN ACTION! WITNESSING IN A LOCAL CHURCH IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A PROFESSIONAL STAFF BUT RATHER EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY. (EPHESIANS 4:11-12) THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH POSSESSED AN INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM. THEY WERE BOTH "RECEIVERS" AND BOTH "TRANSMITTERS" OF THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL. WHEN A CHURCH EMPLOYS A PROFESSIONAL TO DO ALL THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY, NOT ONLY DOES IT WEAKEN THE WORK BUT IT MAKES THE TASK OF WORLD EVANGELISM IMPOSSIBLE! (COMPARE MOODY'S STATEMENT ABOUT ONE MAN AND TEN MEN.)

II. THE ONE EIGHT OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE: I. (THE PLACE OF THE GOSPEL IN GOD'S PROGRAM FOR THIS AGE) GALATIANS 1:8

(RECENTLY, DURING A WEEKDAY, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT A CHURCH UNLIKE OUR OWN. THE PASTOR WORE A CLERICAL COLLAR AND PREACHED IN A ROBE. THE CHOIR SANG ANTHEMS EVERY SUNDAY WHICH MOST OF US HAVE NEVER HEARD, THERE WERE KNEELING BENCHES AT THE FRONT AND PULPITS ON THE SIDE AND NOT CENTER OF THE SANCTUARY. WHILE REFLECTING ON SOME OF THESE AREAS, IT OCCURRED TO ME WHY SOME CHURCHES FROWN ON LITURGY AND RITUAL. QUESTION: DOES WEARING A ROBE MAKE A PASTOR PREACH BETTER OR WORSE? DOES THE CHOIR SING BETTER OR WORSE IN ROBES? IN ONE SENSE OF THE WORD SUCH ITEMS ARE TOTALLY INCIDENTAL. THE FACT IS THAT THESE OUTWARD TRAPPINGS ARE SYMBOLS OF SUBSTITUTES. TOO OFTEN THE WORSHIP SERVICE WITH ALL OF ITS LITURGY BECOMES THE END IN ITSELF. THE MESSAGE IS EITHER NON-EXISTENT OR VEILED TO SUCH AN EXTENT IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE ITS

CONTENT. IN BIBLE-BELIEVING CHURCHES, THE MESSAGE IS EVERYTHING - IT IS VITAL AND PRIMARY. PAUL WAS SHOCKED AT THE SUDDEN DEFECTION OF THE GALATIANS FROM THE TRUE GOSPEL. THE GALATIANS WERE OFFENDED BY THE GOSPEL WHEN THEY SHOULD HAVE CONTENDED FOR IT! (JUDE 3) THE TEXT REFLECTS SEVERE LANGUAGE BECAUSE THERE WAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN GALATIA. OUR CHURCH IS A GOSPEL CHURCH. OUR MESSAGE IS A GOSPEL MESSAGE. I TRUST OUR METHODS ARE GOSPEL METHODS AND OUR PASTORS ARE GOSPEL PREACHERS. THE TEST OF A CHURCH'S MINISTRY IS NOT HOW FAR PEOPLE COME TO WORSHIP. IT IS NOT HOW GREAT THE FACILITIES. IT IS NOT HOW FAMOUS ITS PULPIT AND PEWS. IT IS NOT HOW FASHIONABLE THE CONGREGATION. IT IS NOT HOW GREAT ARE ITS FINANCES. THE TEST OF A CHURCH'S MINISTRY IS HOW FAITHFUL IT IS IN PRESENTING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE. (I COR. 4:2-3) GOSPEL MESSENGERS ARE RESPONSIBLE TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE AND NOT DETERMINE ITS CONTENT. IN THE TEXT, PLEASE NOTICE THAT GOD REPEATS THE WARNING. ANYTHING GOD SAYS TWICE WE WOULD DO WELL NEVER TO FORGET! (EXAMPLE OF THE RICH YOUNG RULER - MARK 10:22) THE RICH YOUNG RULER LIKED JESUS AND JESUS LOVED HIM. THIS YOUNG MAN HAD EVERYTHING THE WORLD ADMIRES, HE WAS RICH, YOUNG, HIGH MORAL VALUES, AN EXEMPLARY CITIZEN. HOWEVER, JESUS' MESSAGE OFFENDED HIM BECAUSE OF THE SEVERITY OF ITS DISCIPLINE. INSTEAD OF BRINGING JOY TO HIS HEART AS IN THE CASE OF ZACCHAEUS, IT BROUGHT SADNESS. THIS IS OFTEN WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PROMINENT PEOPLE ENCOUNTER CHRIST. THE PROBLEM ARISES WHEN CARNAL OR UNSAVED PEOPLE SEEK TO SIGN THEM UP, GIVE THEM A BOX OF OFFERING ENVELOPES, MAKE THEM A MEMBER OF THE BOARD, CHOIR, OR SOME OTHER JOB IN CHURCH, WATER DOWN THE MESSAGE IN ORDER TO MAKE IT PALITABLE TO THE INFLUENTIAL, SEND A DELEGATION AFTER

HIM APOLOGIZING FOR MAKING HIM UPSET AND OFFERING TO WORK OUT SOME MUTUALLY AGREEABLE SOLUTION SO THAT HE MIGHT BRING HIS MONEY AND MORALS INTO THE CHURCH APART FROM THE NEW BIRTH. WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET THAT THE PATH TO HEAVEN IS CALLED NARROW. (MATT. 7:13-14) THE DOOR IS SOLITARY. (JOHN 10, ACTS 4:12) VERSES ON THE GOSPEL: (EUAGGELION) (ROMANS 1:16, I COR. 15:1, II COR. 4:3, PHILIPPIANS 1:5, 7, 12, 17, 27.)

III. THE ONE EIGHT OF SPIRITUAL PURPOSE

(THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING PROPER CHOICES IN LIFE) - DANIEL 1:8 (MORALS)

THE WORD PURPOSE IN THE TEXT SUGGESTS THAT DANIEL MADE UP HIS MIND TO DO WHAT GOD EXPECTED HIM TO DO. DANIEL WAS A TEENAGER. (14 YEARS OLD WHEN CARRIED AWAY INTO BABYLON.) HE WAS FAR FROM FAMILY, FRIENDS AND THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE. IF YOU THINK "PEER PRESSURE" IS GREAT CONSIDER "POTENTATE PRESSURE". DANIEL WAS SUBJECTED TO A TOTAL INDOCTRINATION PROGRAM DESIGNED TO BRAINWASH HIM TO THE EXTENT THAT HIS WHOLE PHILOSOPHY, LIFESTYLE AND VALUE SYSTEM WOULD BE CHANGED. HE WAS EXPECTED TO ADOPT THE BABYLONIAN WAY OF THINKING AND LIVING. IN OUR TEXT, DANIEL WAS NOT CONCERNED THAT THE FOOD WOULD MAKE HIM FAT, BUT THAT IN EATING IT HE WOULD BE INCURRING THE FAVOR OF THE KING INCLUDING HIS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SO AS TO UNDERCUT THE SPIRITUAL CONVICTIONS OF DANIEL. POINT: DANIEL DID NOT LET OTHER PEOPLE MAKE MORAL CHOICES FOR HIM. (ROMANS 12:1-2) HE WAS NOT DISCOURTEOUS IN HIS RESPONSE TO THE KING BUT HE WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE. FIDELITY OF HEART WAS MORE IMPORTANT TO DANIEL THAN FAVOR WITH THE KING. DANIEL

HAD A SINGLE WORD IN HIS VALUE SYSTEM THAT HAS BEEN LARGELY FORGOTTEN AND ABANDONED TODAY - THE WORD IS ABSTAIN. PEOPLE WHO HAVE STRONG SPIRITUAL CONVICTIONS KNOW HOW TO SAY NO.

IV. THE ONE EIGHT OF BIBLE MEDITATION

JOSHUA 1:8

GOD'S DEALING WITH MOSES HAD BEEN ON A FACE TO FACE BASIS. MOSES WROTE DOWN WHAT GOD TOLD HIM AND RECORDED IT IN THE PENTATEUCH OR BOOK OF THE LAW. THERE WAS NO WRITTEN SCRIPTURE BEFORE MOSES. AFTERWARD, THE BIBLE WAS SET UP AS THE SUPREME COURT OF OUR MORAL DECISIONS TO BE SUPERSEDED BY NONE. THE NAVIGATORS HAND ILLUSTRATES THIS PRINCIPLE: (1) HEAR - ROMANS 10:17; (2) READ - REV. 1:3, I TIM. 4:13; (3) STUDY - II TIM. 2:15; (4) MEMORIZE - PSALM 119:11; (5) MEDITATE - JOSHUA 1:8. SATURATE THE SOUL WITH SCRIPTURE IN ORDER TO BE GIVEN STRENGTH IN COURAGE AND DECISION MAKING. GRASP THE WORD OF GOD AND LET IT GRASP US.

(HRSMM)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING SEPTEMBER 4, 1988

CHEER UP YE SAINTS OF GOD

JOHN 16:33

"CHEER UP YE SAINTS OF GOD THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, NOTHING TO MAKE YOU BE AFRAID, NOTHING TO MAKE YOU DOUBT...." (CHORUS) SOMETIMES IT IS HARD TO BE CHEERFUL. A MAN WAS TOLD TO CHEER UP THINGS COULD BE WORSE SO HE CHEERED UP AND THINGS GOT WORSE! (COMMENT REGARDING SICK PEOPLE AND A DIFFICULT YEAR, YET FOR MANY THEY STILL HAVE MANY BLESSINGS SUCH AS EXCELLENT MEDICAL CARE, LOVING FAMILY, CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, FOOD, SHELTER, FINANCIAL SECURITY, SO EVEN IN SICKNESS WE MAY BE OF GOOD CHEER. SOMETIMES THE WORDS CHEER UP SEEM TRITE, USELESS AND OUT OF PLACE. HOWEVER, THERE IS SELDOM A CIRCUMSTANCE IN WHICH THE BELIEVER CANNOT TAKE HEART AND CHEER UP. GOOD CHEER IS A DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTIC IN ALL PEOPLE BUT ESPECIALLY AMONG CHRISTIANS. WE SAY TO THE SICK, "CHEER UP." THE PATRONS OF BARS AND TAVERNS RESORT TO "THREE CHEERS" AS THEY RAISE THEIR VOICES IN PRAISE. SPORTS EVENTS HAVE CHEERLEADERS AND BREAKFAST EATERS HAVE CHEERIOS! IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, ACCORDING TO DEUTERONOMY 24:5, A HUSBAND WAS GIVEN IMMUNITY FROM MILITARY SERVICE IN ORDER TO CHEER UP HIS NEW WIFE. JESUS IS OFTEN PICTURED AS A MAN OF SORROWS BUT I AM FULLY CONVINCED THAT HE WAS ALSO A PERSON OF GOOD CHEER SIMPLY BECAUSE HE ENCOURAGED HIS FOLLOWERS TO BE OF GOOD CHEER. WE WILL EXAMINE SEVERAL VERSES WHERE THE PHRASE GOOD CHEER APPEARS IN THE BIBLE.

I. CHEER UP BECAUSE YOUR SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN - MATTHEW 9:2-22

THERE ARE FOUR PRIMARY IDEAS IN THIS VERSE WITH REFERENCE TO FORGIVENESS:

(A) THE FEEBLE - ONE GREEK WORD IS USED TO DESCRIBE THIS MAN'S CONDITION, PARALUTIKOS. THIS MAN WAS PARALYZED. HE HAD NO CONTROL OF CERTAIN MUSCLES IN HIS BODY AND WAS BEDRIDDEN. UNABLE TO WALK, HE WAS DEPENDENT UPON OTHERS FOR ALL PHYSICAL MOVEMENT. THE LAST WORDS A PERSON IN THIS CONDITION WANTS TO HEAR ARE "CHEER UP!" HOWEVER, JESUS WOULD DEAL WITH BOTH HIS HEALTH AND HEART PROBLEM AT THE SAME TIME. IN THE BIBLE, PHYSICAL INFIRMITY IS OFTEN USED TO POINT TO MAN'S DEEPER INFIRMITY - NAMELY SIN. (ROMANS 5:6) MAN'S GREATEST NEED IS SPIRITUAL IN NATURE. ONE OF MAN'S GREATEST PROBLEMS IS FAILURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE PERSONAL SINNERSHIP. CHRIST CANNOT FORGIVE WHAT WE DO NOT HAVE IF WE FAIL TO RECOGNIZE OUR NEED.

(B) THE FRIENDS - THE WORD "THEY" POINTS TO TRUE FRIENDS WHO UNDERSTOOD THE TRUE NEED OF THIS MAN - GET HIM TO JESUS. COMMENT REGARDING NEW BOOK ("WINNING THE WINNABLE") - A NEW BOOK ON FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM. STATISTIC: 6% ARE WON BY THE PASTOR, 6% THROUGH VISITATION PROGRAMS, 86% THROUGH FRIENDS AND RELATIVES. IN THE BOOK, ELMER TOWNS TELLS OF A MEETING HE ATTENDED IN NEW YORK IN WHICH HE TOOK A CENSUS OF A LARGE CONGREGATION. HE ASKED IF THEY FELT THEIR GREATEST NEED WAS AN EVANGELISTIC MEETING. THE ANSWER WAS NO. A THURSDAY NIGHT VISITATION PROGRAM. THE ANSWER WAS STILL NO. HE LISTED SEVERAL OTHER APPARENT NEEDS STILL WITH A NEGATIVE ANSWER. "DO YOU NEED A PROGRAM THAT WORKS THROUGH EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS TO BRING PEOPLE TO THE CHURCH AND TO CHRIST?" THE RESPONSE WAS AN ENTHUSIASTIC YES!

(C) THE FAITH - "SEEING THEIR FAITH". FAITH WAS EVIDENCED BY ACTION. LACK OF FAITH IS EVIDENCED BY DOING NOTHING. PEOPLE HAVE GENUINE FAITH AND MANIFEST IT BY GETTING PEOPLE TO JESUS.

(D) THE FORGIVENESS - RELIGION IS CONTENT TO LEAVE PEOPLE IN THEIR SINS AND ON THEIR BEDS OF AFFLICTION. RELIGION IS INTERESTED IN HAVING PEOPLE SUPPORT THEIR SYSTEM, PAY HOMAGE AND DUES BUT IS NOT INTERESTED IN FORGIVENESS OF SINS. THE WORD FORGIVEN CARRIES THE IDEA TO SEND AWAY, LEAVE BEHIND, FORSAKE OR LAY ASIDE. IT IS THE IDEA OF THE SCAPEGOAT IN LEVITICUS 16. SIMPLY STATED, SEPARATION OF SINS FROM THE SINNER. (RELATE SAILOR - TESTIMONIES REGARDING THE CLEANSING EFFECT OF FORGIVENESS.)

II. CHEER UP BECAUSE THE LORD IS WITH US IN THE STORM - MATTHEW 14:27

JESUS WAS IN THE PLACE OF PRAYER, THE DISCIPLES WERE IN THE PLACE OF PERIL. THEY WERE TROUBLED AND TOSSED ABOUT IN THE STORM AND THIS TIME JESUS WAS NOT IN THE BOAT WITH THEM.

(A) JESUS SENT THE DISCIPLES INTO THE STORM - THE STORM CAME UPON THEM AS THE DIRECT RESULT OF INSTANT OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST. BEING IN THE WILL OF GOD DOES NOT GUARANTEE IMMUNITY FROM LIFE'S STORMS. PETER WAS NOT IN THE FAR COUNTRY, IN THE HOG PEN, BUT IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE WHEN HE BEGAN TO SINK. PETER LOVED JESUS, JESUS LOVED PETER. HE HAD LEFT ALL TO FOLLOW THE LORD AND AS FAR AS HE KNEW WAS DOING EXACTLY WHAT JESUS HAD CALLED HIM TO DO. (AN IMPORTANT PART OF WILLIAM CAREY'S WORK IN INDIA HAD TO DO WITH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO THE VARIOUS DIALECTS OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE. A FIRE IN 1812 DESTROYED THE WORK OF MANY YEARS. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE, GRAMMARS, DICTIONARIES ALL THE RESULT OF MANY YEARS OF LABOR GONE IN A FEW MINUTES. BY FAITH CAREY BELIEVED THAT GOD WOULD DO SOMETHING THROUGH THIS EXPERIENCE AND HE DID FOR IN THE FLAMES OF THAT FIRE ENGLAND SAW THE VALUE OF HIS WORK AND RENEWED INTEREST AND PERSONNEL JOINED HIM IN THE

Romans 4 Watches: ① 6-9 P.M. ② 9-Midnight ③ 12-3 A.M. ④ 3-6

Jews = 3: 6-10, 10-2, 2-Sunrise

DISTRIBUTION OF THE GOSPEL.) PETER KNEW AS WE KNOW THAT WHEN THE LORD SENDS US INTO THE STORM, HE WILL SEE US THROUGH IT. STORMS STRENGTHEN SAINTS, IT NEED NOT SINK THEM. (RELATE INCIDENT OF WALKING TO BUS LINE. I WAS INTERESTED IN MY EASE, PARENTS INTERESTED IN EDUCATION. HARDSHIPS ARE DESIGNED TO HELP NOT HURT AND HINDER DEVELOPMENT. WHEN STORMS ARISE DON'T ASK "WHY ME?" BUT RATHER ASK "WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?"

"Last Watch" 4th Watch 3:00 to 6:00 A.M.

(B) JESUS CAME TO THE DISCIPLES DURING THE STORM - VERSE 25 - PROMISE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION WAS THE LORD'S PRESENCE WITH THEM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. HEBREWS 13:5 REAFFIRMS THAT GREAT TRUTH.

(C) JESUS KEPT PETER FROM SINKING IN THE STORM - VERSES 30-31 - JESUS CAME TO PETER WHERE HE WAS AND GAVE HIM A HELPING HAND. THERE WERE OTHER DISCIPLES IN THAT BOAT BUT PETER WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO DARED TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE! IF JESUS DIDN'T HELP PETER, HE WAS IN BIG TROUBLE! (JUDE 24)

(D) JESUS STILLED THE STORM - VERSE 32. DISCIPLES AND BELIEVERS HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THE UNEXPECTED AND UNPLANNED STORMS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE. THEY OFTEN BREAK UPON US SUDDENLY AND IN SCARY FASHION. HE STILLS THE STORM BEFORE SAINTS SINK.

III. CHEER UP BECAUSE THERE IS WORK TO DO - ACTS 23:11

THIS IS PAUL'S SANHEDRIN SPEECH. HIS CONDUCT HAD BEEN CAREFUL AND ACCORDING TO A SENSITIVE CONSCIENCE. WWW REMINDS US OF AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE IN GOD'S VINEYARD, NAMELY, GOD REWARDS FAITHFUL WORK WITH MORE WORK!

(A) THE LORD STOOD BY HIS SERVANT (II TIM 4:16-17) - WHEN THE LORD CALLS HIS OWN, HE ACCOMPANIES THEM INTO THE FIELD. IN ROME, NOBODY VOUCHED FOR PAUL, THERE WERE NO SECONDS IN HIS CORNER, NO BACKUP, NO DEFENSE ATTORNEY TO PLEAD HIS CAUSE - HE WAS ALL ALONE EXCEPT FOR THE LORD. QUESTION: WHERE WERE ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHOM PAUL HAD LED TO CHRIST? WHERE THE PEOPLE WHOM HE HAD HELPED AND BLESSED IN SO MANY WAYS? THEY WERE ALL GONE. (COMPARE JESUS IN THE COURTS AND ON THE CROSS - ALL ALONE. SOMETIMES IN HIS SERVICE, SERVANTS SEEM ALL ALONE BUT HE WILL NEVER PERMIT THAT EVER. HE STANDS WITH HIS SERVANTS.

(B) THE LORD ENLARGED PAUL'S AREA OF MINISTRY AT THIS JUNCTURE IN HIS LIFE, PAUL LAUNCHED INTO THE MOST PRODUCTIVE PART OF HIS MINISTRY IN ROME. (ACTS 28:30-31) FOR EXAMPLE, LEAVING A RESPONSIVE EVANGELISTIC MEETING IN SAMARIA AND GOING TO A DESERT PLACE TO WITNESS TO ONE MAN IT SEEMED TO BE A TACTICAL AND MANAGEMENT ERROR. HOWEVER, THE MAN WAS A KEY MAN AND IT WAS GOD'S DIRECTION THAT LED PHILIP TO DO SO. (ACTS 8:26 - BY THE WAY THE MAN WAS A BLACK MAN!)

(Your) - (Trailer - Wings Auto Accident - NHL)

IV. CHEER UP WHEN LIFE HAS BEEN SPARED - ACTS 27:22-25 (Delta - Dallas 13 die "Thank G.D." 93 lived!

PAUL WAS ENROUTE TO ROME ON HIS LAST VOYAGE. HE WOULD DIE THERE IN PRISON. YET THE NEXT TWO OR THREE YEARS WOULD BE AMONG THE BEST OF HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY. IN HIS SOVEREIGN PROVIDENCE, GOD CHOSE TO SAVE EVERYONE ON BOARD THE SHIP WITH PAUL PROVIDED THEY REMAINED IN THE SHIP AFTER THE STORM. A VALUABLE LESSON IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY. OUT OF A SEEMINGLY HOPELESS SITUATION, GOD GAVE THEM HOPE THROUGH PAUL. HOWEVER, SOMETIMES

How do we know it's better - He said so! Life NOT A Dead-end alley!

IN THE PLAN OF GOD NOT EVERYBODY IS SPARED. HEBREWS 11:35 SPEAKS OF SOME PEOPLE WHO DID NOT RECEIVE DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE STRONG IN FAITH. SOMETIMES THEY FORFEITED A GOOD LIFE FOR A BETTER RESURRECTION. OUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE THE SAME AS THE HEBREW CHILDREN AS THEY FACED THE FIREY FURNACE "IF IT BE SO, OUR GOD WHOM WE SERVE IS ABLE TO DELIVER US FROM THE BURNING FIREY FURNACE....BUT IF NOT BE IT KNOWN UNTO THEE O KING THAT WE WILL NOT SERVE THY GODS..." THIS VERSE IS A PROMISE FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL. (WARREN WIERSBE TELLS OF A PATIENT WHOM HE MET IN A HOSPITAL WHO WAS TERMINALLY ILL. SOMEONE HAD GIVEN THE PERSON A BOOK ON DIVINE HEALING AND SUGGESTED THAT IF THEY READ THE BOOK AND HAD THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH THEY WOULD BE HEALED. WIERSBE USED THIS VERSE TO REMIND THE SUFFERER THAT NOT ALL PEOPLE RECEIVE MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE. THE ABSENCE OF HEALING IS NOT NECESSARILY AN ABSENCE OF FAITH. SOME PEOPLE'S FAITH ENABLES THEM TO ESCAPE THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE, SOME TO ENDURE AND SOME TO END.

"We live by promises, not by explanations." (W.W.W.)
(Encourage don't Explain)

God has been better to us than we deserve.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING MAY 29, 1988

FORGETFULNESS

WE COMPLAIN THAT WE FORGET NAMES, PROMISES, APPOINTMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES, LADIES FORGET TO PUT GASOLINE IN THE CAR, MEN FORGET TO PHONE HOME IF THEY ARE GOING TO BE LATE FOR DINNER! EVEN PEOPLE WHO PRIDE THEMSELVES IN REMEMBERING SOMETIMES FORGET. (FOR EXAMPLE, THE STORY IS TOLD OF A MAN WHO WAS VERY CAREFUL ABOUT HIS APPEARANCE, HIS HEALTH - OVERSHOES, UMBRELLA, DRESSED WARMLY, SLEPT WITH THE WINDOW OPEN FOR FRESH AIR, ATE CAREFULLY PREPARED DIET, HAD PHYSICAL EXAM EVERY YEAR, NEVER SMOKED, NEVER DRANK, LIVED AN EXEMPLARY LIFE AND INTENDED TO LIVE TO BE 100 YEARS OF AGE. HIS FUNERAL WAS CONDUCTED NOT LONG AGO - HE FORGOT TO LOOK AND STOP AT A TRAIN CROSSING! SEVERAL YEARS AGO IN JAPAN, THEY ESTABLISHED A GROUP KNOWN AS "THE ASSOCIATION OF FORGETTERS." THE TIME FOR THE FIRST MEETING WAS SET BUT NOBODY SHOWED UP - EVERYONE FORGOT ABOUT THE MEETING! (PASTORS ARE NOT IMMUNE - RELATE CAR LICENSE EXPERIENCE. ALSO, NORTHVILLE FUNERAL - CASTERLINE - METHODIST PASTOR - CHILDREN LEFT AT CHURCH.) SOMEONE HAS SAID THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH WE NEVER FORGET ANYTHING. INFORMATION IS BURIED DEEP IN THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND. THERE IS ALSO A SENSE IN WHICH WE FORGET ANYTHING WE WANT TO. THE MIND JUST SIMPLY PUSHES SUCH MATERIAL OUT OF ONE'S CONSCIOUSNESS. THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE FACTORS THAT AFFECT MEMORY:

(1) POOR RECEPTION - LACK OF CONCENTRATION WHEN INFORMATION IS GIVEN.

(2) POOR RETENTION - THE MIND IS CLUTTERED WITH MENTAL TRASH TO THE EXTENT THAT THE GOOD IS CROWDED OUT BY THE UNNECESSARY.

(3) POOR REACHABILITY - INFORMATION IS STORED IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE MIND BUT IS NOT READILY ACCESSIBLE.

WE KNOW THAT IT IS POSSIBLE AND EVEN LIKELY THAT WE WILL BECOME FORGETFUL REGARDING SPIRITUAL THINGS. IN THE BIBLE, WE ARE ADMONISHED BY THE LORD HIMSELF TO NOT FORGET CERTAIN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES:

I. DON'T FORGET WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR HIS PEOPLE - DEUTERONOMY 6:10-12, 21-23

WE ASK OURSELVES, HOW COULD ISRAEL EVER FORGET THE EXODUS? THEY DID - WE DO TOO! (DEUT. 8:10-18) JESUS QUOTED FROM DEUTERONOMY, IT WAS ONE OF HIS FAVORITE BOOKS. THE WORD MEANS "SECOND LAW" FOR IT WAS A REVIEW TO THE SECOND GENERATION IN ORDER TO PREPARE THEM FOR THE PROMISED LAND. LET ME SUGGEST JUST TWO AREAS OR PERILS WHERE ONE MIGHT FORGET GOD.

(A) THE PERIL OF PLEASURE - THREE HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE CHRIST WAS BORN THE EPICUREANS TAUGHT THAT MATTER IS ALL THAT MATTERS IN LIFE. THEY BELIEVED THAT HAPPINESS WAS THE CHIEF PURPOSE IN LIFE AND MIGHT BE GAINED BY INDULGING IN SENSUAL PLEASURES AND AVOIDING ALL PAIN. ALSO, THIS HAPPINESS MIGHT BE ATTAINED THROUGH MENTAL AND INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS. THEY REASONED THAT IF DEATH ENDED EVERYTHING THEN ONE SHOULD INDULGE HIS FLESH HERE AND NOW. THIS PHILOSOPHY HAS GRIPPED CIVILIZATION AFTER CIVILIZATION AND OUR COUNTRY IS NO EXCEPTION. FOR MANY PEOPLE, PLEASURE IS THE SUPREME GOOD OF LIFE. EVERYTHING IS SECONDARY TO PERSONAL PLEASURE.

IN HISTORY, ROME COLLAPSED UNDER THIS KIND OF THINKING. THE "BREAD AND CIRCUS" PHILOSOPHY DOMINATED THE LATTER YEARS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE. PEOPLE WERE ABSORBED WITH GOODS AND SHOWS. PUBLIC HOLIDAYS - EVERYTHING AND PEOPLE THRONGED TO THE STATE-PROVIDED AMUSEMENTS. DURING THE TIME OF TITUS THERE WERE 100 CONSECUTIVE DAYS OF SHOWS AND HOLIDAYS. THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE WAS THEIR HARDEST LABOR. THERE WAS A PASSION FOR GAMBLING, GLUTTONY, CHARIOT RACES AND BIG-TIME SPORTS EVENTS. IT IS INTERESTING THAT CHRISTIANITY CAME ONTO THE WORLD'S STAGE SURROUNDED BY SOCIETY THAT THRILLED TO MURDER IN THE NAME OF SPORT. THE MORE BRUTAL THE BETTER. FOR ISRAEL, FOR US, THERE WAS ALWAYS THE DANGER OF THE "ME FIRST" IDEA WITH GOD FIFTH OR SIXTH OR NONEXISTENT ON OUR LIST OF PRIORITIES.

(B) THE PERIL OF PROSPERITY - THE PERIL OF POVERTY IS WIDELY BELIEVED. THE PERIL OF PROSPERITY IS HARD TO BELIEVE. GOD GAVE ISRAEL THE LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY - RICH IN NATURAL RESOURCES. IT WAS ALL GOD'S DOING AND NONE OF THEIR OWN. ISRAEL HAD REBELLED AGAINST GOD DURING THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY. NOW IN THE PROMISED LAND THEY FACED A NEW KIND OF DANGER. WE UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION. WHEN INCOME WAS MODEST AND TIMES WERE DIFFICULT IT WAS EASY TO BE REGULAR IN CHURCH ATTENDANCE INCLUDING PRAYER MEETING AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES TO GOD. THEN CAME A PROMOTION WITH INCREASED OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY AT THE JOB WHICH ABSORBED MORE TIME AND ENERGY AND SLOWLY BUT SURELY CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES SUFFERED. THE PERSON FORGOT TO READ THE BIBLE, PRAY. SUNDAY WAS A TIME WHEN WEARINESS

Pam - MG - Best!

Lost. 1:15

AND REST WERE SO NECESSARY AND CHURCH WAS ABANDONED. RECREATION BECAME PRIMARY AND WORSHIP SECONDARY. I REMEMBER A FAMILY IN EASTERN KENTUCKY WHO HAD BEEN VERY FAITHFUL IN CHURCH. HOWEVER, A NEW JOB, NEW HOME, NEW CAR, NEW CLOTHES, NEW FRIENDS ALSO MEANT NEW GODS! IN THE MIDST OF PROSPERITY, ISRAEL RECEIVED A KINDLY WARNING FROM GOD. PLEASE UNDERSTAND, THE BIBLE DOES NOT PLAY DOWN THE IMPORTANCE OF FINANCIAL SECURITY. IT IS A FACT THAT OFTEN TOO LITTLE IS AS DEVASTATING AS TOO MUCH. NO HONEST PERSON IS GOING TO SAY THAT MONEY AND SECURITY DOESN'T MATTER, IT DOES. HOWEVER, THE QUESTION IS DO I POSSESS MY POSSESSIONS OR DO THEY POSSESS ME? THE STORY OF THE RICH YOUNG RULER IS THE STORY NOT OF A MAN WITH TOO MANY POSSESSIONS BUT OF A MAN GRIPPED BY POSSESSIVENESS. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID: "THE WEALTHIER THE MAN IS, THE MORE HE NEEDS GOD."

II. DON'T FORGET WHAT GOD HAS WRITTEN IN HIS BOOK - PSALM 119

"Forgetful" (JAMES 1:24)

THE BIBLE IS A MORAL MIRROR. WHEN WE READ, WE SHOULD REMEMBER AND OBEY. IN THIS PSALM, THERE ARE SEVERAL AREAS WHICH THE BELIEVER SHOULD NOT FORGET:

VERSE 16 - THE BIBLE IS A DELIGHTFUL BOOK. DELIGHT IN IT! (Feast on Word - Forget Not!)

VERSE 83 - THE WORD OF GOD FITS OUR NEED.

(1) WINE SKINS HANGING NEAR THE FIRE RESULT IN AGE OR MELLOWING PROCESS - MATURITY.

(2) WINE SKINS OR WATER SKINS HANGING NEAR THE FIRE - UNUSED, SMOKED AND SHRIVELED - FORGOTTEN OBJECTS, YET THE WORD NOT FORGOTTEN.

WHO CAN SAY FOR SURE WHAT IS THE INTERPRETATION? POINT: THE WORD OF GOD SHOULD FILL OUR MINDS.

VERSE 93 - THE WORD OF GOD GIVES LIFE.

VERSE 109 - WHEN LIFE HANGS IN THE BALANCE, WHERE THERE ARE RISKS AND DANGERS, THE WORD OF GOD IS DESPERATELY NEEDED. (LAW ENF. OFFICERS!)

VERSE 141 - THIS VERSE IS WRITTEN TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOW SELF-ESTEEM. IF YOU HAVE FEELINGS OF WORTHLESSNESS, SO DID DAVID. THE WORD OF GOD HELPS IN THIS REGARD.

VERSE 153 - GOD'S RESCUE OPERATION - HE WILL DO SOMETHING ABOUT OUR CONDITION.

VERSE 176 - FOR THOSE WHO HAVE WANDERING FEET, GOD FINDS AND FIXES OUR DILEMMA IF WE CENTER ON THE WORD OF GOD. SIMPLY STATED, MAKE THE WORD OF GOD CENTRAL IN YOUR LIFE. FRIENDS, FINANCES, FAILURES, FUTURE ALL ARE INVOLVED BUT THE WORD SHOULD HAVE THE PRIMARY PLACE IN OUR LIFE. GOD'S BOOK EQUALS YOUR BENEFIT.

BENEVOLENCE

III. DON'T FORGET WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF US - HEBREWS 13:2,16

"disposition TO do good" → Mgm - clothes, home - Manners

Be kind Charitives

THE WORD FORGET IS USED IN THIS CHAPTER CONCERNING TWO AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BELIEVER:

(A) HOSPITALITY - IN THE DAYS OF THE EARLY CHURCH, PROBLEMS OF TRAVEL WERE MANY. THE PRICE AND THE PROBLEMS OF STAYING IN SUCH PLACES WERE GREAT. MANY OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS WERE SLAVES AND VERY POOR PEOPLE.

HOSPITALITY WAS A FORM OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. MEN LIKE ABRAHAM, GIDEON, AND MANOAH WERE HISTORIC PERSONAGES WHO ENTERTAINED ANGELS SOME UNAWARE OF THAT FACT.

(B) LIBERALITY - VERSE 16 THE WORD COMMUNICATE MEANS TO SHARE. ALSO, PLEASE NOTICE THAT THE TERM "DO GOOD" IS A PERFECTLY GOOD BIBLE WORD. SOMETIMES PEOPLE WITH MORAL STANDARDS OR RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS ARE CALLED "DO-GOODERS". IT IS A TERM OF RIDICULE SUCH AS "HOLY-ROLLER", "BIBLE-BANGER", "FUNNY-MENTALIST." HOWEVER, THESE ARE BIBLE TERMS TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY THE LORD'S PEOPLE. HERESY HUNTING COULD CRIPPLE THE TENDENCY TO DO GOOD, HENCE THE ADMONITION OR WARNING IN SCRIPTURE. (POINT) LISTENING TO A SERMON MAY BECOME A SUBSTITUTE FOR LIVING FOR THE SAVIOUR! (COMPARE WES DESIRE FOR INVITATION - THE INVITATION WAS THE END AND NOT CHURCH ATTENDANCE.) TWO OF THE SADDEST WORDS IN SCRIPTURE ARE RECORDED IN LUKE 16:25. THE WORDS "SON REMEMBER" SUGGEST THAT THIS MAN HAD FORGOTTEN SOMETHING TERRIBLY IMPORTANT IN HIS LIFE...HE HAD FORGOTTEN GOD. PSALM 9:17 IS A TIMELY REMINDER TO EVERY GENERATION: "THE WICKED SHALL BE TURNED INTO HELL AND ALL NATIONS THAT FORGET GOD."

"WE HAVE BEEN THE RECIPIENTS OF THE CHOICE BOUNTIES OF HEAVEN. WE HAVE GROWN IN NUMBERS, WEALTH, AND POWER AS NO OTHER NATION HAS EVER GROWN. BUT WE HAVE FORGOTTEN GOD. WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THE GRACIOUS HAND WHICH PRESERVED US IN PEACE AND MULTIPLIED AND ENRICHED AND STRENGTHENED US, AND WE HAVE VAINLY IMAGINED IN THE DECEITFULNESS OF OUR HEARTS, THAT ALL THESE BLESSINGS WERE PRODUCED BY SOME SUPERIOR WISDOM AND VIRTUE OF OUR OWN. INTOXICATED WITH UNBROKEN SUCCESS, WE HAVE BECOME TOO SELF-SUFFICIENT TO FEEL THE NECESSITY OF REDEEMING GRACE; TOO PROUD TO PRAY TO THE GOD THAT MADE US." (ABRAHAM LINCOLN)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING SEPTEMBER 11, 1988

HOLD HANDS AND HUM

THIS MESSAGE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR SPECIAL CHOIR PROGRAM! (NEWSWEEK ARTICLE) THE BIBLE HAS MUCH TO SAY ABOUT HANDS. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS IN THE BIBLE, APPEARING OVER 1600 TIMES. WE TALK WITH OUR HANDS. (STOP, COME, OK, QUIET, PAT, ANGER, GOODBYE.) (KISS THE HAND = RESPECT, SHAKE = GREETING, RAISE = ATTENTION OR RECOGNITION, HOLD = AFFECTION) THE HEBREW WORD FOR DEDICATE OR CONSECRATE MEANS "TO FILL THE HAND." THE IDEA BEING UNLESS ONE IS CONSECRATED OR DEDICATED TO THE LORD, HE HAS NOTHING TO OFFER HIM.

I. BELIEVING HANDS - MATTHEW 12:13

TO THE PHARISEES, THE SABBATH AND SHEEP WERE MORE IMPORTANT THAN SINNERS. TO THEM, RELIGION WAS RITES, RITUAL AND RULES. TO THEM RELIGION WAS A BURDEN TO ENDURE, NOT A BLESSING TO ENJOY. THINGS SUCH AS HUNGER, SICKNESS AND SIN WERE SECONDARY MATTERS. KEEPING THE RULES NO MATTER HOW TRIVIAL OR TRITE WAS THE ESSENCE OF THEIR RELIGION. WHEN THE MAN IN OUR STORY STRETCHED FORTH HIS HAND IT WAS AN INDICATION OF AN OBEDIENT BELIEVING HEART. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT FAITH IS THE HAND OF THE HEART. WHAT THIS MAN DID FOR PHYSICAL HEALING, ALL MEN MUST DO FOR SPIRITUAL CLEANSING. (EPHESIANS 2:8-9, ACTS 16:31) THIS IS THE BIBLE WAY OF EXPRESSING FAITH, TO REACH OUT BY FAITH AND RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST INTO ONE'S LIFE.

ILLUSTRATION: MARK 5:25-30.

(*) - a woman in need of a hysterectomy... a med. not known yet — procedure
So... the Great Physician one touch...

"Idle hands are the Devil's Workshop"

II. WORKING HANDS - I Cor. 4:12

of service

"AND THAT YOU STUDY TO BE QUIET, AND TO DO YOUR OWN BUSINESS AND TO WORK WITH YOUR OWN HANDS...." (I THESS. 4:11) (IMPLICATION OF THIS VERSE IS TO MIND OUR OWN BUSINESS, TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN AFFAIRS AND DO OUR OWN WORK.) "LET HIM THAT STOLE STEAL NO MORE: BUT RATHER LET HIM LABOR WORKING WITH HIS HANDS THE THING WHICH IS GOOD...." (EPH. 4:28) (THE PHILLIPS TRANSLATION SAYS "IF YOU USED TO BE A THIEF YOU MUST NOT ONLY GIVE UP STEALING, BUT YOU MUST LEARN TO MAKE AN HONEST LIVING...") THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO VIEW WORK.

(1) AS A PUNISHMENT OR PENALTY.

(2) AS A PRIVILEGE OR PLEASURE.

(1.) SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT NOTHING COULD BE BETTER FOR THEM THAN FOR TODAY TO BE THE LAST DAY TO WORK. FOR OTHERS, NOTHING COULD BE WORSE. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN ONE READS GENESIS 3:19: "IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE SHALT THOU EAT BREAD, TIL THOU RETURN UNTO THE GROUND...." ONE MIGHT GET THE IDEA THAT PHYSICAL LABOR IS A PUNISHMENT FOR MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD. HOWEVER, THERE ARE

(2) OTHER VERSES IN THE BIBLE WHICH REFLECT ON THE WONDER OF WORK, EMPHASIZING THE JOY OF A COMPLETED TASK AND THE BLESSINGS AND REWARDS OF PHYSICAL LABOR. FOR EXAMPLE, THE JEWISH IDEA OF WORK WAS THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL AND THE ESSENCE OF LIFE. THEY HAD A SAYING THAT HE WHO DOES NOT TEACH HIS SON A TRADE TEACHES HIM TO STEAL. JEWISH RABBIS WERE THE EQUIVALENT OF COLLEGE PROFESSORS BUT ACCORDING TO JEWISH LAW HE COULD NOT TAKE A SINGLE PENNY FOR TEACHING BUT MUST HAVE

A TRADE AT WHICH HE WORKED WITH HIS HANDS IN ORDER TO SUPPORT HIMSELF. THAT IS WHY MANY RABBIS WERE COBBLERS, TAILORS, BAKERS AND IN THE CASE OF PAUL, TENTMAKER. BY CONTRAST, THE GREEKS AND ROMANS LOOKED UPON MANUAL LABOR AS WORK SUITED FOR SLAVES AND SLAVES ALONE. NOTHING WAS MORE DEMEANING AND AGAINST THE CULTURE THAN TO DO MANUAL LABOR. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT CHRISTIANITY ADOPTED THE SAME PHILOSOPHY AS JUDAISM WITH REFERENCE TO WORK. (ILLUSTRATE WITH DAD WHO ENJOYED WORK, LOVED TO CLEAN UP LAND, GARDEN, HAVE LIVESTOCK AND ANYTHING THAT PERTAINED TO THE LAND.) JESUS WAS A WORKMAN...A CARPENTER. LEGEND SAYS THAT HE MADE OX YOKES AND UNDOUBTEDLY THE BEST AVAILABLE. OUR WORK IS A REFLECTION OF AND ON OUR CHARACTER. WORK IS A TEST OF TRUST. THE QUALITY OF OUR WORK REVEALS THE QUALITY OF OUR CHARACTER. ALSO, THE ATTITUDE ONE HAS TOWARD HIS WORK IS REFLECTED ON HIS SPIRIT TOWARD LIFE. TO BE SURE, MANY DO NOT CHOOSE WORK THEY ENJOY SIMPLY BECAUSE THEIR JOB WAS THE ONLY ONE AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A BELIEVER TO DO A MENIAL JOB IN AN OUTSTANDING WAY TO THE GLORY OF GOD. OUR JOB IS ONE OF LIFE'S GREATEST INVESTMENTS CONCERNING ENERGY AND TIME. WITHOUT IT, HOWEVER UNDESIRABLE, LIFE WOULD BE MEANINGLESS AND BORING FOR MOST. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT SOME PEOPLE VIEW THEIR WORK IN THE EXCESS AND EXTREME AND ARE REFERRED TO AS WORKAHOLICS, THAT IS, WORK IS BASICALLY EVERYTHING THEY LIVE FOR. HOWEVER, MAYBE MORE OF US OUGHT TO THANK GOD FOR WORK TO DO EVERY DAY AND THEN DO IT TO HIS HONOR AND GLORY.

(*) JACK ECKLUND

See "Work" Book.

Too much re workaholics ... not enough about shirkaholics!

"there were no rear view mirrors on ancient plows"

III. PLOWING HANDS - LUKE 9:62

PLOWING IS THE AGE-OLD METHOD OF BREAKING GROUND FOR PLANTING. THE ANCIENT PLOW WAS LITTLE OR MORE THAN A FORK STICK, HITCHED TO AN OXEN THAT DID LITTLE MORE THAN SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF THE SOIL. THE ANCIENT FARMER GUIDED THE PLOW WITH HIS LEFT HAND AND GOADED THE OXEN AND CLEANED THE PLOW WITH THE GOAD IN HIS RIGHT HAND. TODAY, IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD - IN EGYPT FOR EXAMPLE - ONE MAY SEE AN OXEN AND A TRACTOR PLOWING IN THE SAME FIELD. BEATING SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES HAS BEEN THE ANCIENT SYMBOL OF PEACE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. (COMMENT REGARDING GRANDFATHER AND THE EARLY 1940'S AND AN EXPERIENCE OF PLOWING.) EVERY PLOWMAN KNOWS THAT HE CANNOT LOOK OVER HIS SHOULDER AND PLOW A STRAIGHT FURROW. THE OBJECT AND GOAL OF PLOWING IS JUST THAT - TO PLOW A STRAIGHT LINE IN A FORWARD DIRECTION. IN THIS PASSAGE, OUR LORD IS TEACHING SEVERAL LESSONS BUT LOOMING ABOVE ALL OTHERS IS THE IDEA (1) THAT ONE CANNOT MOVE IN TWO DIRECTIONS AT THE SAME TIME. THE BELIEVER CANNOT HAVE A DIVIDED HEART. THOSE WHO FOREVER LOOK BACKWARD WILL NEVER GO FORWARD FOR HIM. THE PLOWMAN IS A SYMBOL OF A "STRAIGHT AHEAD SERVANT." TO BE A GOOD PLOWMAN THERE CAN BE NO DETOURS BUT RATHER DOGGED DETERMINATION TO PRESS TO THE END OF THE ROW. THE PLOWMAN WHO LISTENS TO THE CALL TO TURN BACK WILL NEVER TURN MUCH GROUND FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD. STRAIGHT AHEAD, A STRAIGHT FURROW, NO LOOKING BACK IS THE COMMAND OF OUR LORD.

mule / Hannon

IV. PRAYING HANDS - Tim. 2:8

These verses in the pastoral epistles give valued instruction about prayer in the church. The phrase FIRST OF ALL talks of the priority of prayer. Prayer is fundamental, not supplemental in the church. SUPPLICATION - this is prayer out of the sense of need. PRAYERS - praying in general. INTERCESSION - praying for others but also in intimate conversation. THANKS - not always asking or complaining but thanking. FOR ALL MEN - this is a reference to all mankind. No man is beyond the reach of prayers. KINGS - A reference to praying for civil authorities. PRAYER IS AN ACT OF PATRIOTISM! MEDIATOR - A go-between. This verse tells why churches need PASTORS and not PRIESTS. We are our own priest. HOLY HANDS - Verse 8. What is a HOLY HAND? Since the hand is also a symbol of life - DIRTY HANDS, BLOODY HANDS, CLEAN HANDS - this is a reference to holy living. (Compare Exodus 17:8-12) In ancient times, men stood with outstretched hands, palms lifted toward heaven. It was the POSTURE OF EXPECTANCY. HOLY HANDS refers to holy people living holy lives with no barriers to prayer, getting through to God. (Psalm 66:18)

V. WRITING HANDS - Gal. 6:11

The hands that wrote the SCRIPTURE are not writing scripture today. Paul was in prison and turned from PUBLIC PREACHING to the PRIVATE PEN to serve Christ. Approximately one half of the New Testament is written by Paul and much of this in prison. His prison

MINISTRY IS A CONTINUING MINISTRY EVEN TODAY. THE WRITINGS OF PAUL BLESS US EVERY DAY. THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH ONE MIGHT SUGGEST THAT WRITING OF SCRIPTURE OCCURS TODAY. HOWEVER, THERE IS A GENERAL SENSE IN WHICH WRITING IS STILL A MINISTRY. (1.) THOSE WHO WRITE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE-THINK OF THE ENORMOUS BLESSING BOOKS, MAGAZINES, PAMPHLETS AND TRACTS HAVE BEEN TO PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. WARREN WIERSBE, CHARLES SWINDOLL, OSWALD SANDERS, F. B. MEYER, D. L. MOODY, CHARLES SPURGEON AND ON AND ON THE NUMBER OF BOOKS AND AUTHORS WHO HAVE BLESSED THE SAINTS THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY. MOST OF US WILL NEVER WRITE BOOKS (2) BUT THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH WE MAY HAVE A WRITING MINISTRY. YOU AND I MAY BE A BLESSING FOR 25 CENTS! THAT IS THE COST OF A STAMP TO SEND A LETTER OF APPRECIATION. FEW THINGS LIFT THE SPIRIT OF A PERSON LIKE A LETTER OR NOTE OF GRATITUDE FOR SOME DEED OR WORD. NOTES OR CARDS OF CONGRATULATIONS. A BABY, A PROMOTION, SUCCESS IN BUSINESS ARE ALL TIMES WHEN A WORD OF CONGRAULATIONS FROM A FRIEND OR ACQUAINTANCE IS DEEPLY APPRECIATED. FOR MOST OF US IT IS EASIER TO WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP THAN TO REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE. TOO OFTEN ENVY AND JEALOUSY KEEP US FROM DOING A GENEROUS DEED. IN TIMES WHEN SYMPATHY IS NEEDED, A CARD EXPRESSING CARE AND PRAYER AND SHARE IN SORROW WILL FORGE A BOND FOR TIME AND ETERNITY. SUGGESTION: WHEN WE ARE IMPRESSED TO WRITE SUCH A NOTE, DO IT NOW. SUCH IDEAS ARE LIKE BIRDS THAT FLY INTO OUR LIVES BUT UNLESS PUT INTO CAGES WILL FLY AWAY. THE ENCOURAGEMENT CARDS IN OUR CHURCH HAVE BEEN AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO MANY. REMEMBER TO WRITE SOMEONE THIS WEEK. JUST A NOTE OR WORD FROM YOU AND ME COULD TURN THE COURSE OF A

PERSON'S LIFE. RELATE TO FILES - A FEW LETTERS FROM WELL-KNOWN CHRISTIAN SERVANTS WHO HAVE NOW GONE ON TO GLORY - TREASURES TO BE KEPT AND TREASURED. (COMMENT ON LETTERS C AND C DATING BACK TO 1802 FROM A RELATIVE NAMES HUGH. ALSO CIVIL WAR CORRESPONDENCE.)

Letters of interest over a century later —

Pastor's App (Bob Barbour) ?
A note = Thanks.

Priest - Come to absolve your sins? Let me ask your hand - my Reverend but maybe it the palms of the hands!

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JULY 31, 1988

HOPE FOR A HARLOT

HEBREWS 11:31

RAHAB IN THIS CHAPTER IS A SURPRISE. AFTER ALL, THIS IS THE CHAPTER DEALING WITH GOD'S HONOR ROLL OF OLD TESTAMENT HEROES INCLUDING ABRAHAM, JOSEPH AND MOSES. SOFTENING THE WORD HARLOT TO INNKEEPER WILL NOT CHANGE THE IMPACT. THE POINT IS CLEAR, FAITH IN GOD IS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF THIS CHAPTER.

JESUS CHRIST DIED ON THE CROSS FOR ALL MEN AND WOMEN - HARLOTS, HOMOSEXUALS, HERMITS AND HYPOCRITES. ALL PEOPLE ARE SAVED EXACTLY THE SAME WAY - "BY FAITH" AND ARE WELCOME IN THE FAMILY OF GOD. ONE'S PAST OCCUPATION IS NOT THE ISSUE BUT RATHER HIS PRESENT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST. (COMMENT ON HAROLD MORRIS' BOOK - BEYOND THE BARRIERS. A RECORD OF CONVERSIONS THAT ILLUSTRATE GRACE IN ACTION.) MEN WANT TO BELIEVE THAT SALVATION IS FOR SAINTS BUT THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT SALVATION IS FOR SINNERS. DR. IRONSIDE TELLS THE STORY OF THE LADY WHO SPOKE TO CHARLES WESLEY AND REQUESTED THAT HE PRAY FOR HER FOR SHE SAID "I AM A GREAT SINNER." HIS REPLY WAS, "INDEED, YOU CERTAINLY ARE A GREAT SINNER, AND I'LL BE GLAD TO PRAY FOR YOU." THE WOMAN WAS TAKEN BACK EXCLAIMING: "WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE TALKING TO, I AM JUST AS GOOD AS ANYONE ELSE!" ONE OF THE REAL PROBLEMS IN OUR SOCIETY IS THERE ARE NOT MANY, AND IN SOME CASES ANY, SINNERS ANYMORE! THE STORY OF RAHAB IS RECORDED IN JOSHUA 2. IT DEALS WITH THE PREPARATION FOR AND INVASION OF THE PROMISED LAND, CANAAN. GENERAL JOSHUA SENT TWO SCOUTS OR SPIES INTO THE LAND PRIOR TO THE INVASION.

THIS PARTICULAR STORY DEALS WITH THE FORTIFIED CITY CALLED JERICHO. THE CANAANITES WHO WERE OCCUPYING THE LAND WERE A WICKED AND FIERCE PEOPLE AND WOULD NOT GIVE UP THE LAND WITHOUT A FIGHT. WHEN THE SCOUTS ARRIVED IN JERICHO THEY WENT TO THE HOUSE OF A HARLOT NAMED RAHAB. THIS CHAPTER CENTERS AROUND HER AND HER RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. IT IS A STUDY IN HUMAN NATURE AND DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

I. RAHAB WAS A CONDEMNED WOMAN - V. 1-7

RAHAB WAS CONDEMNED ON THREE COUNTS:

(A) LOCATION

RAHAB WAS CONDEMNED BECAUSE OF WHERE SHE LIVED. JERICHO WAS A CITY SCHEDULED FOR DIVINE JUDGMENT. IT HAD BEEN DECLARED A CONDEMNED CITY. EVERYTHING IN THE CITY WAS READY FOR DESTRUCTION (JOSHUA 6:21) THE CITY WAS UNDER CONDEMNATION NO MATTER HOW PEOPLE IN THE CITY REACTED. THEY MAY HAVE HAD A SENSE OF FALSE SECURITY, LVING IN CONFIDENT TRANQUILITY WHEN JUDGMENT WAS IMMINENT. POINT: WHAT WAS TRUE OF RAHAB IS TRUE OF ALL MEN. (JOHN 3:19, ACTS 17:30-31) WHEN PAUL ARGUED HIS CASE BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT OF ATHENS HE STATED A SIMPLE FACT THAT THIS WORLD HAS A DATE ON THE DIVINE DOCKET. THE DESIGNATED JUDGE WILL BE JESUS CHRIST AND THE STANDARD WILL BE JUSTICE. THE WAY TO AVOID THE DISAPPOINTMENT IS REPENTANCE. GOD KEEPS HIS APPOINTMENTS AND ALL MEN WILL BE THERE WHO HAVE NOT REPENTED AND CHANGED THEIR MINDS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST. PROBLEM: EVERYONE IN THE CITY WAS CONDEMNED BUT NOT EVERYONE ACCEPTED THAT FACT. ONE REMARKABLE ASPECT OF THIS STORY IS THAT OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN JERICHO, WE KNOW THE NAME OF ONLY ONE - A HARLOT NAMED RAHAB. WE KNOW SOMETHING OF HER IMMORAL BACKGROUND BUT SHE

WAS THE ONLY WOMAN SAVED OUT OF THAT GODLESS CITY. PEOPLE OF THAT CITY MAY HAVE BRAGGED ABOUT THEIR ANCESTORS, PROMINENT PEOPLE IN THE CITY, WEALTH AND VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS. HOWEVER, GOD IS NOT IMPRESSED WITH THE THINGS THAT IMPRESS MEN - HE LOOKS FOR ONE THING "FAITH".

(B) OCCUPATION

RAHAB LIVED AMONG A PEOPLE OF LOW OR NO MORAL STANDARDS. THE ENVIRONMENT IN JERICHO MADE IT DIFFICULT TO LIVE AN HONORABLE LIFE. THE PEOPLE WERE CRUEL AND IDOLATROUS WORSHIPPERS OF THE GODS OF FERTILITY, BAAL AND ASHTAROTH. THE CANAANITE RELIGION HAD ITS TEMPLE PRIESTESSES AND SUCH CONDUCT WAS NOT CONSIDERED WRONG BUT WAS ENCOURAGED AS ACTS OF WORSHIP. HER OCCUPATION AND LIFESTYLE WAS SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE TO MEN BUT NOT SPIRITUALLY ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, JESUS DEALT WITH A WOMAN WHO MIGHT BE CLASSIFIED AS A PROSTITUTE. (JOHN 8) WHEN HE FORGAVE HER OF HER SINS HIS FINAL ADMONITION WAS "GO AND SIN NO MORE." SHE WAS FORGIVEN BUT FORBIDDEN TO RETURN TO HER OLD LIFESTYLE. THERE IS A SIMPLE LAW OF LIFE THAT THE FURTHER PEOPLE GET FROM GOD, THE MORE THEY MOVE INTO THE REALM OF SEXUAL PROMISCUITY. PROSTITUTION WAS A WIDELY-PRACTICED EVIL IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. IT IS ALSO A WIDELY-PRACTICED IN OUR DAY. AMERICANS ARE BEING BRAINWASHED BY THE MEDIA TO LOOK UPON PROSTITUTION AS SOMETHING WORTHWHILE IN OUR SOCIETY. FOR EXAMPLE, A DRAMA IS PORTRAYED WHERE A PROSTITUTE IS CAST IN THE ROLE OF A HEROINE - A WOMAN OF GREAT COURAGE RAISING HER CHILDREN IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT ALL THE WHILE PICTURING PROSTITUTION AS ANY OTHER KIND OF HONORABLE LABOR. IT IS "PACKAGED PORNOGRAPHY" BEING SOLD TO A GULLIBLE PUBLIC. (IF YOU

D. Association

WANT THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS PICTURE, THE CORRECT SIDE OF THE PICTURE, TALK TO A POLICEMAN WHO DEALS WITH THE TRAGEDY OF PROSTITUTION WITH ITS DRUGS, DISEASE, DEBAUCHERY AND DEATH. HE UNDERSTANDS THE SHATTERED LIVES, SLAVERY OF HUMAN BEINGS WHO ARE CAUGHT IN THIS HORRIBLE, DOWNWARD SLIDE OF SIN.

(C) CONVERSATION

IN THIS STORY RAHAB TOLD A LIE TO SAVE THE LIFE OF THE SPIES. LYING WAS PART OF HER LIFESTYLE. SHE, LIKE YOU AND ME, DID NOT "LEARN TO LIE" IT CAME NATURALLY. DR. JAMES GRAY HAS CORRECTLY POINTED OUT THAT GOD WAS NO MORE PLEASED WITH RAHAB'S LIE THAN HE WAS WITH HER UNCHASTITY. IT WAS HER FAITH IN GOD THAT PLEASED HIM. LYING WAS SUCH A WIDE-SPREAD VICE AMONG PAGANS THAT RAHAB PROBABLY FELT NO PANGS OF GUILT OR CONSCIENCE FOR THE DECEIT SHE USED AGAINST THE CITY OFFICIALS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, IN ORIENTAL ETHICS, TO PROTECT ONE'S GUESTS FROM HARM WAS THE HIGHEST VIRTUE. EASTERN HOSPITALITY REQUIRED A MAN TO PRESERVE THE LIFE OF HIS HOUSE GUESTS AT ANY EXPENSE EVEN AT THE LOSS OF HIS OWN LIFE. THERE IS NOTHING IN THIS RECORD TO SHOW THAT GOD CONDONED OR APPROVED RAHAB'S LIE. HE DID NOT NEED RAHAB TO LIE IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE SPIES. HE COULD HAVE SAVED THEM A DOZEN OTHER WAYS BUT THE POINT OF THE STORY IS THAT SHE DEMONSTRATED SOMETHING OF HER CHARACTER BY HER CONVERSATION. THE WAY A PERSON HANDLES TRUTH IS A TESTIMONY OF WHAT HE BELIEVES.

II. RAHAB WAS A CONVINCED WOMAN - V. 8-11

RAHAB WAS CONVINCED GOD WAS GOING TO DEAL WITH JERICHO IN JUDGMENT. RAHAB KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT THE HAND OF GOD IS HISTORY. SHE BELIEVED

GOD WAS THE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. RAHAB HAD THE GOOD SENSE, JUST ONE GENERATION AWAY FROM THE EXODUS, TO BELIEVE GOD DID ACT ON ISRAEL'S BEHALF IN THE PAST AND WAS GOING TO DO IT AGAIN IN THE FUTURE. SHE TOOK THE FACTS OF HISTORY AND THE FAITH IN HER OWN HEART AND ACTED UPON IT. GOD DOES NOT ASK YOU AND ME TO HAVE FAITH IN A VACUUM. ACCORDING TO I JOHN 5:11, OUR FAITH RESTS UPON THE RECORD. "AND THIS IS THE RECORD, THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON." ALSO, THERE IS ONE WHO DECLARES THE RECORD TO BE TRUE. (JOHN 16:8) "AND WHEN HE IS COME HE WILL CONVINCE THE WORLD OF SIN...." THE HOLY SPIRIT TAKES THE FACTS OF SCRIPTURE AND PRODUCES FAITH IN THE HEARTS OF MEN.

III. RAHAB WAS A CONCERNED WOMAN - V 12-13

RAHAB WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HER FAMILY IN THE FACE OF COMING JUDGMENT. SAVING FAITH IS A SHARED FAITH. EXAMPLE: A PERSON COMES TO KNOW CHRIST, IF THAT PERSON IS A MOTHER OR FATHER THERE IS CONCERN ABOUT CHILDREN. RELATIVES. IF IT IS A YOUNGSTER THERE IS CONCERN ABOUT PARENTS. SCHOOL CHUMS, FELLOW WORKERS. IN MORRIS' BOOK, ONE GETS THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT EVERY PERSON HE MET FROM "CONS TO CONGRESSMEN." QUESTION: WHY AREN'T MORE PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE? WHY DON'T PEOPLE IN CALIFORNIA WHO LIVE ON OR NEAR THE SAN ANDRAES FAULT MOVE AWAY? HOW CAN THE PEOPLE IN SAN FRANCISCO LIVE THERE IN THE LIGHT OF PRESENT PROJECTIONS? ANSWER: THEY DON'T KNOW FOR SURE THERE'S GOING TO BE AN EARTHQUAKE AND THEY HOPE IT WON'T HAPPEN IN THEIR LIFETIME. THERE ARE MANY BELIEVERS WHO REALLY DON'T THINK ABOUT FUTURE JUDGMENT SERIOUSLY. THEY REALLY DON'T TAKE THE BIBLE SERIOUSLY - NOT REALLY.

IV. RAHAB WAS A COURAGEOUS WOMAN - V. 4, 15

REHAB DEVISED AND DEPLOYED A PLAN OF OPERATION TO PROTECT THE SPIES. SHE WAS WILLING TO ENDANGER HER OWN LIFE TO PROTECT THEM. (COMMENT AGAIN REGARDING MORRIS' OBSERVATION REGARDING TOUGH FAITH. WHAT HE SAW ON TELEVISION WAS NOT THE FAITH HE HAD IN HIS HEART.) RAHAB WAS WILLING TO IDENTIFY WITH A MINORITY GROUP - THOSE WHO BELIEVED GOD AND TOOK HIS WORD SERIOUSLY. IT TAKES COURAGE TO DO THAT IN OUR WORLD. (COMPARE NOAH)

V. RAHAB WAS A CHANGED WOMAN

CHANGE IN HER LIFE WAS CHARACTERIZED BY WHAT SHE DID. THE SCARLET THREAD OR CORD WAS A SYMBOL. PUTTING THAT CORD IN THE WINDOW WAS AN ACT OF FAITH THAT SAVED RAHAB AND HER FAMILY FROM DEATH. THE CORD WAS A SYMBOL OF IDENTIFICATION AND DELIVERANCE. IT IS A BIBLE TYPE. BEGINNING WITH GENESIS 3:21 AND RUNNING THROUGH THE BOOK OF REVELATION, THE SCARLET THREAD OR CORD OF BIBLE REDEMPTION THROUGH THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD IS OBVIOUS EVERYWHERE. (EPHESIANS 1:7) QUESTION: HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE SAVED FROM DESTRUCTION AT THE INVASION OF JERICHO? ANSWER: ONE FAMILY AND ONLY ONE FAMILY. DO YOU SUPPOSE THERE WERE ANY OTHER MORAL OR RELIGIOUSPEOPLE LIVING IN JERICHO? DO YOU SUPPOSE THERE WERE SOME WELL-MANNERED, CULTURED, REFINED SOPHISTICATED PEOPLE LIVING THERE? THAT IS NOT THE QUESTION. WHEN GOD LOOKS DOWN UPON THE EARTH HE IS LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WHO TRUST HIM AND THE KEY WORD IS THE WORD IN OUR TEXT - FAITH. (HEBREWS 11:6) THE STORY OF RAHAB IS ASTONISHING AND INCREDIBLE. HER EVIL DEEDS HAD EARNED HER A REPUTATION AS A HARLOT. SHE

LIVED AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE LEVEL OF SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE. THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN HER CHARACTER TO MERIT FAVOR WITH GOD. YET SHE AND HER FAMILY WERE THE ONLY ONES SAVED FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF JERICHO. SHE HAD THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH IN THE RIGHT KIND OF PERSON. SIMPLY STATED, RAHAB WAS SAVED BECAUSE SHE DID WHAT GOD TOLD HER TO DO.

VI. RAHAB WAS A CHOSEN WOMAN - JOSHUA 6:22FF

THERE IS AN OVERLAPPING ELEMENT IN THIS POINT AND THE PREVIOUS ONE. THE EMPHASIS HERE IS THAT RAHAB WAS PROTECTED BY A COVENANT OR OATH. WHAT GOD SAID HE WOULD DO - HE DID. THEREFORE, THERE WAS HOPE FOR ANYONE AND EVERYONE WHO WOULD PAY ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORD! MANY YEARS AGO, A MAN WAS TALKING TO ANOTHER MAN ABOUT SAVING FAITH. THE SECOND MAN CLAIMED TO BE A CHRISTIAN BUT WHEN PRESSED ON THE MATTER OF PERSONAL FAITH OR ACCEPTING CHRIST HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANT. IN DEFENSE, HE SAID: "I BELONG TO A LONG LINE OF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. MY PARENTS ARE CHRISTIANS, RELATIVES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FAMILY ARE CHRISTIANS, SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS ARE CHRISTIANS. I HAVE PRACTICED CHRISTIAN MORALS ALL OF MY LIFE." THE SECOND MAN'S REPLY WAS, "YOU REMIND ME OF A FELLOW I TALKED TO RECENTLY ABOUT MARRIAGE. WHEN I ASKED HIM IF HE WAS MARRIED, HE SAID I BELONG TO A LONG LINE OF MARRIED PEOPLE. MY MOTHER WAS MARRIED, MY GRANDMOTHER WAS MARRIED, HER MOTHER WAS MARRIED. I BELIEVE IN MARRIAGE, IT IS A WONDERFUL INSTITUTION. HOWEVER, WHEN I ASKED HIM POINTBLANK ARE YOU MARRIED, HE SAID, NO, BUT I BELIEVE IN MARRIAGE." KNOWING ABOUT MARRIAGE, BELIEVING IT'S A GOOD INSTITUTION, DOESN'T MAKE ONE MARRIED. NEITHER DOES KNOWING ABOUT GOD OR BELIEVING HE EXISTS MAKE ONE A CHRISTIAN. LIKE RAHAB, IT TAKES PERSONAL FAITH TO AVOID IMMINENT DESTRUCTION.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING FEBRUARY 21, 1988

I BELIEVE GOD

ACTS 27:25

DOESN'T EVERYONE BELIEVE GOD? SURELY WHAT HE SAYS ABOUT ANYTHING SHOULD BE WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT IT. IF WE ARE GOING TO BELIEVE ANYONE ABOUT ANYTHING, SURELY IT SHOULD BE WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT ANY GIVEN SUBJECT. SOME GIVE LIP SERVICE TO THIS IDEA BUT THEIR LIFESTYLE DENIES IT. (MATTHEW 15:8) THE PHARISEES WERE THOSE WHO ...."SAY AND DO NOT." (MATTHEW 23:3) IN OUR STUDIES OF THEMES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS (PRAYER, HOLY SPIRIT, VISION, TOGETHER) WE WILL EXAMINE THE WORD BELIEVE. THE VERB IS BELIEVE (PISTEUOO) AND THE NOUN IS FAITH (PISTIS). BELIEVING GOD SHOULD BE A PRIMARY CONSIDERATION IN LIFE. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN MENTIONS THE WORD BELIEVE IN EVERY CHAPTER EXCEPT THREE (15, 18, 21) FOR EXAMPLE: 1:12, 2:11, 3:16, 5:24, 11:25, 14:1 AND 20:31 (KEY VERSE) JOHN EMPHASIZES THE FACT THAT MEN NEED TO BELIEVE GOD.

I. BELIEVING GOD BEGINS BY LISTENING TO HIS WORD - ACTS 4:4

THE SAME FORMAT IS MENTIONED IN ACTS 2:41 WHERE THE PHRASE IS "WELCOMED THE WORD." THE WORD HEARD IN THE TEXT IS THE GREEK AKOUOO FROM WHICH WE GET OUR ENGLISH ACOUSTIC. FOLK NEED THE RIGHT KIND OF SPIRITUAL ACOUSTICS, THAT IS, A WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD. (ROMANS 10:17, JOHN 5:24, JOHN 10:27, JOHN 18:37. MATTHEW 13:9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23. IN THIS CHAPTER, ONE WOULD GET

THE IMPRESSION THAT GOD WANTS US TO LISTEN TO HIS WORD - SO LISTEN! LET US STOP TALKING SO MUCH ABOUT GOD AND START TRUSTING HIM. (MATTHEW 17:5) QUESTION: WHAT IS JESUS CHRIST TRYING TO SAY TO US? (MATTHEW 11:28) OUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE: LORD, I'M LISTENING, WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO? (ACTS 9:6)

II. BELIEVING GOD AND SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES GO TOGETHER - ACTS 17:11-12, 34

THE PEOPLE IN BEREA WERE BIBLE BELIEVERS, THEIR PHILOSOPHY WAS IF IT IS IN THE BIBLE, THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY WAS THEIR WATCHWORD. WHEN THEY GOT SERIOUS ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES, THEY FOUND ANSWERS FOR THEIR SOULS. THERE WAS AN EAGERNESS ABOUT THEIR INVESTIGATION THAT WAS INFECTIOUS. THEY TOOK TIME TO FIND OUT WHAT THE BIBLE SAID. (GEORGE LYTTLETON WAS A GRADUATE OF ETON AND OXFORD AND SERVED IN PARLIAMENT IN ENGLAND DURING THE 18TH CENTURY. THIS PERIOD OF TIME WAS THE DARKEST IN THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ENGLAND. ALSO ABOUT THAT TIME A FRIEND OF LYTTLETON NAMED GILBERT WEST AND HE DECIDED THAT THEY WOULD PROVE CHRISTIANITY AND SPECIFICALLY THE BIBLE AN IMPOSTER AND THEY DECIDED TO EXPOSE ITS LIES. (1) LYTTLETON CHOSE THE CONVERSION OF SAUL AND WEST (2) THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AS THE TARGET OF THEIR CRITICISM. BOTH SET OUT WITH FULL PREJUDICE BELIEVING THAT THEY COULD REVEAL IN AN OBJECTIVE MANNER THE ERRORS OF CHRISTIANITY AND ACCOMPLISH WHAT SAUL DID NOT - THE OVERTHROW OF CHRISTIANITY AS A SERIOUS RELIGION. YOU KNOW THE OUTCOME - BOTH WERE CONVERTED TO CHRIST! HENRY M. STANLEY'S SEARCH FOR DAVID

LIVINGSTONE RESULTED IN HIS OWN CONVERSION AND THE ONLY BOOK THEY KEPT OF THE NEARLY 100 THEY TOOK ON THAT TREK WAS THE BIBLE. READING THE SCRIPTURES WILL KEEP US FROM RUNNING AWAY FROM GOD IN FEAR BUT RATHER RUNNING AFTER HIM IN FAITH. IT ALL STARTS WITH THE BIBLE. CONTRAST:

(1) THE RICH YOUNG RULER - MARK 10:17 THIS RICH YOUNG MAN MADE THE RIGHT MOVES AND HAD THE RIGHT LANGUAGE. THE TEXT MENTIONS HIS RUNNING, KNEELING, GOOD MASTER - ALL PART OF HIS EAGERNESS TO FIND OUT ABOUT JESUS BUT HE WAS NOT EAGER TO FOLLOW HIM ON JESUS' TERMS. HIS WAS AN EAGERNESS OF ACQUAINTANCE BUT NOT ACCEPTANCE.

(2) ZACCHAEUS - LUKE 19:6 ZACCHAEUS RAN TO SEE JESUS AND "RECEIVED HIM JOYFULLY." BY CONTRAST THE RICH YOUNG RULER WENT AWAY "SAD AND GRIEVED." BOTH OF THESE MEN WERE RICH AND BOTH RAN TO JESUS. HOWEVER, THAT IS WHERE THE SIMILARITY DIFFERS. ONE CHOSE RICHES AND THE OTHER CHOSE REDEMPTION.

III. BELIEVING GOD INVOLVES A WONDERFUL WORD CALLED GRACE - ACTS 18:27

THREE KEY PEOPLE ARE MENTIONED IN THIS CHAPTER. APOLLOS WAS A GREAT PREACHER WHO WAS WILLING TO BE HELPED BY SOME GRACIOUS LAYMEN. THE WORD HELPED LITERALLY MEANS TO "BE THROWN TOGETHER." HE CONTRIBUTED MUCH TO THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF HIS HEARERS. WE MIGHT CALL HIM A "SPIRITUAL CONSULTANT." (COMPARE FINANCE, CAREER, BEAUTY, ADVERTISING) THOSE WHO WERE HELPED BY APOLLOS WERE THOSE "HAVING BELIEVED THROUGH GRACE." GRACE IS A WONDERFUL HELPER WORD. (HEBREWS 4:16)

IN GRACE, GOD HELPS THOSE WHO DON'T DESERVE IT AND THOSE WHO ARE UTTERLY HELPLESS. (COMPARE II SAMUEL 9) EVEN AFTER WE ARE SAVED, WE STILL NEED GRACE TO HELP IN OUR DISTRESSES. (RELATE STORY OF DR. CHARLES STEVENS)

IV. BELIEVING GOD IS MORE THAN INTELLECTUAL ASCENT - IT IS INWARD ACCEPTANCE - ACTS 26:26-29

AGRIPPA WAS A ROMAN RULER WHO WAS CONVINCED THAT PAUL WAS SPEAKING THE TRUTH. PAUL'S ARGUMENTS AND LOGIC CARRIED WEIGHT WITH AGRIPPA BUT NOT ENOUGH TO BRING HIM TO SAVING FAITH. AGRIPPA DEMONSTRATES THE PRINCIPLE THAT WHEN ARMED WITH TRUTH MEN DO NOT ALWAYS RESPOND IN FAITH. IN HIS CASE, ALMOST WAS NOT ENOUGH, ALTOGETHER WAS A MUST. AGRIPPA WAS NO DIFFERENT IN HIS BELIEF THAN THE DEMONS OF HELL! (JAMES 2:19) AGRIPPA'S PROBLEM WAS NOT INTELLECTUAL BUT MORAL AND SPIRITUAL - HE WAS AFRAID JESUS WOULD MESS UP HIS LIFESTYLE AND TO THAT HE SAID NO WAY! PAUL'S LEARNED AND SCHOLARLY PRESENTATION BROUGHT FROM (1) FESTUS - "YOU'RE CRAZY"; FROM (2) AGRIPPA - "YOU'RE CONVINCING!" FESTUS WAS BLUNT AND DISCOURTEOUS; AGRIPPA WAS INTERESTED AND COURTEOUS BUT NEITHER RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO THE GOSPEL. WHAT BOTH LACKED WAS COMMITMENT. AGRIPPA BELIEVED HE COULD DISMISS THE TRUTH OF WHAT PAUL WAS SAYING BY DISMISSING THE WITNESS - THAT DOES NOT WORK. THE PICTURE IS ONE OF "A PRISONER AND A POTENTATE." THE QUESTION IS WHO IS THE PRISONER AND WHO IS THE POTENTATE? HAVING HEARD PAUL SPEAK, AGRIPPA DID NOT WANT THE MATTER PRESSED ANY HARDER. SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THAT PERHAPS WITH AN EMBARRASSED LAUGH AND SHRUG OF THE SHOULDERS HE SAID IN EFFECT: "YOU SURELY THINK IT IS NOT GOING

TO TAKE LONG TO MAKE ME A CHRISTIAN." IN THAT REGARD, HE JOINED A LONG LIST OF PEOPLE. AN EVANGELIST NAMED BRUNDAGE WAS PREACHING IN CHICAGO MANY YEARS AGO ON THIS TEXT - ACTS 26:28. HE CONCLUDED THE SERMON WITH THIS STATEMENT: "HE WHO IS ALMOST PERSUADED IS ALMOST SAVED, AND TO BE ALMOST SAVED IS TO BE ENTIRELY LOST!" PHILLIP BLISS WAS IN THE AUDIENCE AND WAS SO IMPRESSED BY THESE WORDS THAT HE WROTE THE WORDS AND MUSIC TO THIS SONG: ALMOST PERSUADED NOW TO BELIEVE; ALMOST PERSUADED CHRIST TO RECEIVE, SEEMS NOW SOME SOUL TO SAY, GO SPIRIT GO THY WAY SOME MORE CONVENIENT DAY ON THEE I'LL CALL, ALMOST PERSUADED, COME, COME TODAY; ALMOST PERSUADED, TURN NOT AWAY. JESUS INVITES YOU HERE, ANGELS ARE LINGERING NEAR, PRAYERS RISE FROM HEARTS SO DEAR, ON WANDERER COME. ALMOST PERSUADED, HARVEST IS PAST! ALMOST PERSUADED, DOOM COMES AT LAST! ALMOST CANNOT AVAIL; ALMOST IS BUT TO FAIL! SAD, SAD THAT BITTER WAIL, ALMOST - BUT LOST.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING MAY 22, 1988

OUR SAVIOUR GOD

ALL GODS ARE NOT GREAT AND GOOD. THE PAGAN GODS OF THE PAST WERE LOOKED UPON AS BEING ABLE TO MAKE MAN'S LIFE BETTER OR WORSE, DEPENDING UPON THEIR DISPOSITION TOWARD HIM. SO, MEN SPENT TIME TRYING TO APPEASE AND MANIPULATE THE GODS USUALLY THROUGH SACRIFICE. THE GENERAL RULE WAS THE BIGGER THE SACRIFICE, THE BETTER ONE'S CHANCES FOR FAVOR FROM THE GODS. BY NATURE, GODS WERE SELFISH, JEALOUS AND HEARTLESS. RELIGION WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A KIND OF COMMERCIALISM TO BRIBE THE GODS SO THEY WOULD SMILE ON AND NOT SMITE THEIR SUBJECTS. THE PAGAN GODS OF THE PRESENT ARE NOT PERSONAL BEINGS BUT RATHER IMPERSONAL FORCES, ENERGY OR PRINCIPLE. AN EASTERN WORLD VIEW HAS SWEPT THE ENTERTAINMENT AND BUSINESS WORLD WITH ITS NEW PRACTICE OF PANTHEISM. (PANTHEISM TEACHES THAT THE UNIVERSE IS GOD. THERE WAS NO SINGLE GOD BUT THE COMBINED FORCES AND LAWS IN THE UNIVERSE. WHAT IS BEING ESPOUSED IN THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT IS SIMPLY A MODERN FORM OF THIS ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY. J. I. PACKER, IN HIS BOOK KNOWING GOD HAS SUMMARIZED THE FEELING OF MODERN MAN AND HIS HIGH OPINION OF HIMSELF. PACKER SAYS THAT MAN VIEWS MATERIAL WEALTH AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN MORAL CHARACTER. IN THE REALM OF MORALS, HE SEES HIS SMALL VIRTUES AS COMPENSATING FOR HIS GREAT VICES AND REFUSED TO SEE ANYTHING VERY WRONG WITH HIMSELF. EVEN THOUGH HE DRINKS TOO MUCH, GAMBLES, IS RECKLESS ABOUT SACRED THINGS, TELLS WHITE LIES, AND A LOT OF OTHER "LITTLE THINGS" AT HEART HE IS REALLY A PRETTY NICE GUY! PACKER SAYS THE MODERN PAGAN "IMAGINES GOD AS A MANIFIFIED IMAGE OF HIMSELF, AND ASSUMES THAT GOD SHARES

HIS OWN COMPLACENCY ABOUT HIMSELF." THE IDEA THAT MAN IS A FALLEN CREATURE, UNCLEAN AND GUILTY BEFORE GOD, DOES NOT FIT HIS PHILOSOPHY. AS A MATTER OF FACT, HAS NEVER ENTERED HIS MIND! HE HAS DEVELOPED A TOLERANCE FOR ALL OF THE WRONG THINGS AND SADLY BELIEVES THAT GOD, IF THERE IS SUCH A BEING, FEELS ABOUT HIS WEAKNESSES AND FAILURES EXACTLY THE SAME WAY. THEREFORE, IF MAN IS IN NEED OF REDEMPTION OF SOME KIND IT IS A SELF-MADE REDEMPTION, THEREFORE MAN DOES NOT NEED A DIVINE SAVIOUR BECAUSE HE REALLY ISN'T LOST! IN THE BIBLE, GOD IS PRESENTED AS BOTH SOVEREIGN AND SAVIOUR. IN THE EPISTLES TO TIMOTHY AND TITUS, PAUL USES THE TERMS "OUR SAVIOUR" NO LESS THAN SIX TIMES REFERRING TO THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF GOD THE FATHER AND GOD THE SON. AT THE HEART OF GOD AND THE BIBLE IS A BASIC CENTRAL THEME - THE SALVATION OF LOST MEN. (LUKE 19:10, ACTS 4:12, ROMANS 1:16, PHILIPPIANS 2:12, I THESS. 5:9) THE FACT THAT GOD IS CALLED "OUR SAVIOUR" REMINDS THE INHABITANTS OF THIS PLANET THAT WE NEED SAVING! LET US EXAMINE PLACES IN TITUS WHERE THIS PHRASE APPEARS.

I. THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR - 1:3

THE SUBJECT IS ETERNAL LIFE. (THE WORD HOPE PRESENTS ETERNAL LIFE IN AN ASPECT NOT YET REALIZED. IT DOES NOT SUGGEST UNCERTAINTY.) THE ONLY PERSON QUALIFIED TO TALK ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE IN AN AUTHORITATIVE WAY IS THE ETERNAL GOD. ETERNAL LIFE IS NOT JUST LIFE WITH NO END BUT RATHER THE LIFE OF GOD HIMSELF WHICH HE OFFERS TO SHARE WITH MEN. THAT OFFER IS CONDITIONAL. (JOHN 3:16, JOHN 5:24) THESE VERSES REVEAL

THREE SALIENT TRUTHS OR FACTS ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE:

(1) IT WAS PROMISED BEFORE CREATON - THE FALL OF MAN AND HIS NEEDED REDEMPTION WAS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAUGHT GOD BY SURPRISE. SALVATION WAS NOT AN ADD-ON TO DEAL WITH AN EMERGENCY.

(2) MAN IS MADE AWARE OF ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH PREACHING - I COR. 1:21

(3) IT WAS PROTECTED BY FAITHFUL SERVANTS - II TIMOTHY 2:2

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY WAS NOT A VOCATION PAUL SELECTED, HAVING TRAINED FOR IT IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS. HE WAS COMMITTED BY COMMANDMENT. (WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WERE NOT TEN SUGGESTIONS FROM GOD, NEITHER WAS PAUL TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.) GOD SENT FORTH HIS MESSAGE REGARDING ETERNAL LIFE BY MESSENGERS LIKE PAUL TO MEN. THE MESSAGE IS SIMPLY MAN IS A SINNER AND GOD IS THE SAVIOUR. THE MESSAGE IS SIMPLE, STRAIGHT AND SURE. (ILLUSTRATION: LUKE 19:1-10 - JESUS KNEW WHERE HE WAS. JESUS KNEW WHO HE WAS. JESUS KNEW WHAT HE NEEDED. JESUS KNEW HOW TO REACH HIM.)

II. THE APPEARING OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR - 2:13

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST IS A FAVORITE THEME OF CHRISTIANS BUT ALSO OF CULTS AND CRAZIES. FROM THE MILLERITES OF THE 1800'S TO THE RADICAL RELIGIOUS RIGHT GROUPS OF OUR TIME, THIS DOCTRINE HAS BEEN ABUSED. IT IS A SUBJECT FASTENED UPON BY SOME MENTALLY ILL AND MENTALLY INCOMPETENT. (COMMENT ON BOY PREACHER IN ARKANSAS - THIS THEME ALONE WITH OTHER FAVORITES.) HOWEVER,

THE FACT THAT IT IS FASCINATING TO FANATICS DOES NOT NEGATE THE TRUTH OF THE DOCTRINE. WE DO NOT DETERMINE BIBLE DOCTRINE BY THOSE WHO CHAMPION OR CRITICIZE IT. THE TEST IS WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY? THE NEXT PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF JESUS CHRIST WILL BE ON THIS PLANET. THE FIRST PHASE OF THAT APPEARANCE IS CALLED THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH, I COR. 15:51, I THESS. 4:13-18. THAT PART OF THE SECOND COMMING IS ALSO CALLED THE BLESSED HOPE. (THE WORD BLESSED IS ALSO TRANSLATED HAPPY ELSEWHERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT THE BLESSED HOPE OF CHRIST'S COMING IS THE ONLY BLESSED HOPE WE HAVE! THE CONTEXT CONTRASTS THE TWO APPEARINGS OF CHRIST: ONE IN GRACE, THE OTHER IN GLORY. THE LOGIC OF THE DOCTRINE: DID JESUS CHRIST APPEAR IN HISTORY IN FULFILLMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY? THERE ARE THREE TIMES MORE VERSES IN THE WORD OF GOD DEALING WITH THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST THAN IN THE FIRST COMING. THE CONCLUSION IS OBVIOUS. (SCHOLARS HAVE BEEN ARGUING OVER THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE BLESSED HOPE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING WITH REFERENCE TO THE TIME SEQUENCE. MANY ANTI-DISPENSATIONALISTS LIKE TO LINK THE TWO AS OCCURRING AT ONE AND THE SAME TIME. IT IS TRUE THAT BOTH OF THESE PHASES ARE LINKED TO ONE EVENT, NAMELY THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, BUT THE BLESSED HOPE IS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL TO THE BELIEVER AS IT RELATED TO THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. LOOKING FORWARD TO THE 70TH WEEK OF DANIEL IS HARDLY A "BLESSED" ANTICIPATION! THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF CHRIST RELATED TO HIS JUDICIAL FUNCTION AS COMING KING. SO THE VERSE SPEAKS OF THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE ONE GREAT EVENT - THE RAPTURE AND THE REVELATION.

BY THE WAY, THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF CONFUSION CONCERNING THE IDEA OF SIGNS AND THE COMING OF THE LORD. SIGNS RELATE TO THE SECOND PHASE OF THE SECOND COMING AND NOT THE RAPTURE. HOWEVER, EVENTS LIKE THESE DO NOT HAPPEN APART FROM TENDENCIES OR COMING EVENTS THAT CAST THEIR SHADOWS FORWARD AND WE ARE SEEING THE SHADOWS THAT ARE SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD. HOWEVER, THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH IS TIMELESS IN NATURE. NOTHING ELSE NEEDS TO BE FULFILLED, NOTHING ELSE MUST HAPPEN BEFORE THE BLESSED HOPE TRANSPIRES.

III. THE LOVE OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR - 3:4

THE WORD LOVE IN THE TEXT IS NOT ONE OF THE THREE USUAL WORDS FOR LOVE IN THE BIBLE. IT IS THE WORD PHILANTHROPY - LOVE FOR MANKIND. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT GOD'S LOVE? THE SKIES REVEAL GOD'S GLORY, THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL GOD'S GRACE. (PSALM 19:1, ROMANS 5:8) QUESTION: WHEN DID THIS LOVE AND KINDNESS APPEAR? ANSWER: 2:11! THERE IS AN OLD TESTAMENT STORY THAT ILLUSTRATES GOD'S KINDNESS AND LOVE TO US. (II SAMUEL 9) IN ADDITION TO KINDNESS AND LOVE, THE TEXT MENTIONS MERCY AND SALVATION.

(1) WHAT DID GOD DO FOR US? - HE SAVED US.

(2) HOW DOES HE DO THIS? - WASHING AND RENEWING.

(3) WHY DOES HE DO IT? - BECAUSE HE LOVES US.

(4) IS THERE A WRONG WAY TO GO ABOUT IT? - NOT BY WORKS OR RIGHTEOUSNESS

THE NEXT TIME SOMEONE SAYS "I'M SAVED" PLEASE REMEMBER HE IS USING PERFECTLY GOOD BIBLE LANGUAGE. IT IS NOT FANATICAL BUT FACTUAL TO SPEAK OF ONE'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AS "BEING SAVED." (EPHESIANS 2:8-9) IF THE TERM SAVED BOTHERS YOU, MAYBE IT IS BECAUSE YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN SAVED! THIS VERSE TELLS US HOW. (COMMENT ON STORY OF SAVIOUR AND JUDGE.)

Being Saved as certain as Being Alive, Being Somewhere.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING OCTOBER 9, 1988

SIMPLY DIVINE

THE WORD DIVINE HAS BEEN USED TO DESCRIBE DIETY OR A DATE. MAN IS INTERESTED IN THE DIVINE SIDE OF EXISTENCE TO THE EXTENT THAT HE WILL EVEN EXPLORE ASTROLOGY, CULTS OR SPACE LOOKING FOR ANSWERS CONCERNING HIS ORIGIN AND DESTINY. THE WORD DIVINE APPEARS 3 TIMES IN THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. THE HEADING OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS A BIT MISUNDERSTOOD BY SOME.

(1) IT IS THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST RECORDED BY JOHN.

(2) JOHN WAS NO MORE SAINT THAN ANY OTHER CHILD OF GOD.

(3) JOHN WAS NOT DIVINE IN THE BIBLICAL SENSE BUT RATHER THE TERM USED WITH REFERENCE TO A CLERGYMAN.

THE WORD DIVINE OR DIETY WAS USED IN THEOLOGY BOOKS TO REFER TO THE DIETY OF CHRIST. IT SIMPLY MEANS BELONGING TO OR PERTAINING TO GOD. LET US EXAMINE SEVERAL DIVINE TRUTHS IN SCRIPTURE BOTH WHERE THE WORD DOES AND DOES NOT APPEAR.

I. A DIVINE EXCHANGE

(A) II CORINTHIANS 8:9 - "....ON ACCOUNT OF YOU HE IMPOVERISHED HIMSELF...." QUESTIONS: (1) WHEN WAS JESUS RICH? (2) HOW POOR WAS HE? JESUS SAID OF HIMSELF THAT HE HAD NO HOME. HE HAD NO APPARENT FINANCIAL RESOURCES OR RESERVES. EVEN WHEN HE DIED THERE WAS NO SECURITY FOR HIS FAMILY. (COMMENT REGARDING MARY TO JOHN) WHEN JESUS

DIED MEN GAMBLED FOR HIS ONLY PERSONAL POSSESSION - A ROBE. JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THINGS SUCH AS RICHES REVEALS HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD RICHES. THEY WERE SECONDARY TO THE GREAT MORAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF MAN. J. OSWALD SANDERS POINTS OUT: "ONE OF THE FACTORS WHICH MAKES WEALTH SO DESIRABLE IS THAT IT CAN SECURE THE SERVICE OF OTHERS." MEN WANT OTHER MEN TO SERVE THEM. HOWEVER, JESUS CAME TO EARTH NOT TO BE SERVED BUT TO BE A SERVANT. (MARK 10:45, PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11) THE PURPOSE OF HIS POVERTY - TO MAKE OTHERS RICH. HE DID NOT BECOME POOR BECAUSE HE WAS FORCED INTO IT OR HE FAILED FINANCIALLY BUT HE DID IT FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS. THE EXCHANGE IN THIS PASSAGE IS ALMOST PARADOXICAL OR A RIDDLE. HE WHO WAS RICH BECAME POOR THAT WE WHO WERE POOR MIGHT BECOME RICH.

(B) II CORINTHIANS 5:21 - IN THIS PASSAGE CHRIST IS DESCRIBED AS THE ONE NOT KNOWING SIN WHO BECAME SIN FOR US. WE IN TURN WERE THE ONES NOT KNOWING RIGHTEOUS WHO BECAME RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE OF HIM. HE HAD NO SIN, WE HAD NO RIGHTEOUSNESS - HENCE DIVINE EXCHANGE! QUESTION: WHY IS RIGHTEOUSNESS SO IMPORTANT? THERE ARE NOT NOW NOR WILL THERE EVER BE ANY UNRIGHTEOUS IN HEAVEN. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE ARE NO SELF-RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE ON EARTH TODAY! (ROMANS 3:10 - EXPLAIN) MAN-MADE RIGHTEOUSNESS WON'T WORK IN HEAVEN. (ISAIAH 64:4, PHILIPPIANS 3:9) WE BECOME RIGHTEOUS THE SAME WAY ABRAHAM AND EVERYBODY ELSE IN BOTH OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT BECOMES RIGHTEOUS. IT IS BY FAITH. (ROMANS 4:3) QUESTION: WHOM DO WE BELIEVE WHEN IT COMES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS? PAPER, TELEVISION, TEACHER, EMPLOYER, NEIGHBOR - WHAT ABOUT GOD? IN GENESIS 3:21, GOD GAVE A DIVINE ILLUSTRATION OF THE INNOCENT DYING FOR THE GUILTY.

SINFUL MAN MUST BE CLOTHED IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST IN ORDER TO GET TO HEAVEN.

II. A DIVINE GIFT - II PETER 1:3-4

IT IS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD BY MOST BELIEVERS THAT ACCEPTING JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME AS HAVING ETERNAL LIFE. (I JOHN 5:11-13, JOHN 3:16, JOHN 5:24) HOWEVER, THE BELIEVER RECEIVES SOMETHING IN ADDITION TO DIVINE LIFE, BOTH DIVINE POWER AND A DIVINE NATURE. GOD GIVES THE BELIEVER POWER TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE DESIRE TO LIVE IT IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT. THE WORD POWER IN THE TEXT IS THE GREEK WORD FROM WHICH WE GET THE ENGLISH DYANMITE AND DYNAMO. GOD'S POWER TO CHANGE PEOPLE (ROMANS 1:16, ACTS 1:8, I COR. 1:18) GOD DOES NOT WASTE TIME TRYING TO EDUCATE OR OVERHAUL THE OLD NATURE. TO BE SURE, IT MAY BE TAUGHT OR TRAINED TO DO BETTER BUT THE TAINT WILL NEVER CHANGE. (ONE MAY PAINT THE PUMP OVER A SALTY WELL BUT THAT WILL NOT CHANGE THE WATER. ONE MAY MAKE A PIG INTO A PET BUT THAT WILL NOT CHANGE HIS NATURE.) THE NEW NATURE MEANS THE BELIEVER HAS NEW INTERESTS, DESIRES AND ASSOCIATIONS AND DIRECTION. THIS IS A FAR CRY FROM THE IDEA OF EVERY MAN HAVING "A DIVINE SPARK" IN HIM. IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT MAN BEARS THE MARRED IMAGE AT THE HAND OF THE CREATOR BUT THAT IS A FAR DIFFERENT THING THAN NATURE. IF MANKIND IN GENERAL HAS GOD'S NATURE HE VIRTUALLY NEVER MANIFESTS SUCH A SIDE OF HIMSELF. THEOLOGICALLY SPEAKING, MAN IS A MORAL FAILURE. JESUS CHRIST CAME TO EARTH TO CORRECT THAT PROBLEM (JOHN 10:10). THE WORD ABUNDANT MEANS BEYOND MEASURE OR MORE. THAT IS, JESUS CAME TO EARTH IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT LIVE A FULL, MEANINGFUL, JOYFUL, GOOD AND GODLY LIFE.

3 pts - Body | Soul | Spirit - ↑ God

"T.V. Talk Shows" -4- (Then in public Forum)

ONLY CHRIST IN THE LIFE CAN PROVIDE SUCH A LIFE.

III. A DIVINE APPOINTMENT _ ACTS 17:31, HEBREWS 9:27, II TIMOTHY 4:8

PAUL'S MISSIONARY TRAVELS BROUGHT HIM TO THE ANCIENT CITY OF ATHENS. IT WAS A GREAT UNIVERSITY TOWN, SEAT OF LEARNING, PHILOSOPHY AND MYTHOLOGY. ATHENS WAS A MECCA FOR SCHOLARS. IT WAS A CITY OF TALKERS. IN ADDITION TO THE EDUCATIONAL CENTER OF THE CITY THERE WERE TWO OTHER PRIMARY AREAS OF INTEREST, THE AGORA - COMMERICAL CENTER AND THE AREOPAGUS - THE JUDICIAL CENTER OR COURT OF THE CITY. BY THE WAY, THIS WAS THE COURT THAT CONDEMNED SOCRATES TO DEATH. PAUL PRESENTED A MESSAGE TO THE 30 JUDGES OF THE SUPREME COURT OF ATHENS. IN THAT DISSERTATION HE SPOKE TO THEM ABOUT THE JUDGE AND A JUDGMENT THEY PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF BEFORE. FROM THAT GREEK COURTROOM HE TALKED ABOUT GOD'S COURTROOM. SIMPLY STATED, THESE JUDGES HAD AN APPOINTMENT ON GOD'S JUDICIAL DOCKET. THEY WERE GUILTY OF HAVING BROKEN GOD'S LAW. (ROMANS 3:19) SPEECH - (COMPARE TO RECENT DEBATE) (1) A COMPLIMENT; (2) THE EXISTENCE OF GOD - TO ATHEISTS - DID NOT SEEK TO PROVE IT; (3) GOD IS CREATOR; (4) MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER; (5) GOD HAS REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS OF ALL MEN; (6) A FUTURE DAY ON GOD'S CALENDAR - PROOF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. PAUL STATED IN THIS SERMON THAT THESE JUDGES AND ALL MEN HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH GOD. IT IS NOT A WALK-IN ARRANGEMENT, YOU WILL NOT BE LATE, LYING WON'T HELP, THE EVIDENCE WILL BE ABSOLUTE FOR DOCUMENTATION WILL BE NOT ONLY AVAILABLE BUT VISIBLE.

THE REACTION: (1) SOME LAUGHED; (2) SOME POSTPONED; (3) SOME BELIEVED. THE SAME IS TRUE TODAY.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING MARCH 13, 1988

I would like for our Ch. to get into tell-evangelism But

TELL EVANGELISM

MARK 5:19

THE WORD "TELEVANGELISM" DOES NOT APPEAR IN MY OLD EDITION OF WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY. THE TERM IS A RELATIVELY NEW PHENOMENON RELATING TO TELEVISION. IN THE MINDS OF MANY PEOPLE, THIS WORD EPITOMIZES GREED, RELIGIOUS SUPERSTARS, ILLICIT SEX, BIG MONEY BUT NOT A BIG MESSAGE. FOR SOME IT HAS BECOME A JOKE, A LAUGHING STOCK. EDITORIALS HAVE LINKED AND LUMPED THE TWO JIMMY'S INTO THE SAME CATEGORY AS GARY HART. LET US LIFT THE TERM FROM ITS MODERN CONTEXT AND LOOK AT THE NEW TESTAMENT IDEA OF EVANGELISM WHICH SIMPLY STATED IS TELLING PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS - THE TRUE "TELL EVANGELISM." THE STORY IN MARK IS EVANGELISM AT ITS BEST. IT IS THE STORY OF AN OUTCAST, OUT OF HIS MIND, OUTSIDE THE CITY, OUT TO GET OTHERS. HE WAS A SOCIAL MENACE WHO TERRORIZED THE NEIGHBORHOOD BUT NOBODY KNEW WHAT TO DO WITH THIS NOBODY WHO WAS DEMON POSSESSED. JESUS CHANGED HIS LIFE INSTANTLY AND FOREVER. THE MAN'S CONVERSION INTERRUPTED THE "PIGS FOR PROFIT" OF THE COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS OF THE AREA BEGGED JESUS TO LEAVE TOWN! JESUS TURNED "PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1" INTO A SOUL WINNING EVANGELIST AND THE CIVIC LEADERS WERE TERRIBLY UPSET. TO THEM, PIGS WERE MORE IMPORTANT THAN PEOPLE. THIS STORY REMINDS US THAT THE DEVIL TURNS MEN INTO PIGS - NOT GOD. ALSO, REMEMBER WHERE THE PRODIGAL WOUND UP WHEN HE LEFT GOD OUT OF HIS LIFE! IT SEEMS TO ME, TELLING PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST IS OUR PRIMARY THRUST IN THE CHURCH. (COMMENT REGARDING DIXON MEETINGS - GET PEOPLE HERE, GET INVOLVED, GET SOME OF YOUR LOVED ONES AND FRIENDS UNDER THE SOUND OF THE GOSPEL. IT

God-Provides

WON'T HAPPEN UNLESS YOU GET A PERSONAL BURDEN TO BECOME A "TELL EVANGELIST"!)

I. WHAT WE ARE TELLING - ACTS 8:35

IN THIS PASSAGE PHILIP BEGAN WITNESSING BY "OPENING HIS MOUTH". THIS SEEMS LIKE A GOOD PLACE TO START. (RELATE THE COWARD'S APPROACH TO WITNESS - "I DON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT MY FAITH, MY LIFE SPEAKS FOR ME.") RELATE THE SAME PHILOSOPHY TO A WITNESS IN A COURTROOM OR ANY OTHER WITNESS. THE TERM WITNESS SUGGESTS SOMETHING TO BE SAID! "SCRIPTURE" PHILIP USED SCRIPTURE. KNOW THE SCRIPTURE, KNOW WHERE VERSES ARE LOCATED, KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN, MEMORIZE PORTIONS OF THE WORD OF GOD - GET INTO THE BOOK. SUPPOSE YOU WERE A DOCTOR YET HAD NEVER TREATED A PATIENT. SUPPOSE YOU WERE A LAWYER AND HAD NEVER WON A CASE. SUPPOSE YOU WERE A MECHANIC AND HAD NEVER FIXED AN ENGINE. SUPPOSE YOU WERE A CARPENTER AND HAD NEVER USED A HAMMER OR SAW. WHAT KIND OF TECHNICIAN, CRAFTSMAN, PROFESSIONAL WOULD YOU BE? APPLY THE SAME PRINCIPLE TO A CHRISTIAN WHO CANNOT RECITE A SINGLE VERSE IN THE BIBLE FROM MEMORY OTHER THAN JOHN 3:16 AND PERHAPS ONE OR TWO OTHERS. A CHRISTIAN WHOSE BIBLE IS UNMARKED - AND SO IS HIS LIFE. HIS PRAYER CLOSET GATHERS COBWEBS DAILY AND HIS SOUL-WINNING EFFORTS ARE ZERO. HE CANNOT THINK OF A SINGLE PERSON WITH WHOM HE HAS TALKED ABOUT CHRIST. WOULD WE DARE CALL SUCH CONDUCT - CHRISTIAN? "JESUS" THE MESSAGE PHILIP TOLD WAS SIMPLY JESUS. THE MESSAGE OF OUR DAY, EVEN IN CHURCH, IS CONFUSED. SOME SAY WE OUGHT TO PREACH "BE YOURSELF, FIND YOURSELF, BETTER YOURSELF." THE EMPHASIS OF SCRIPTURE IS NOT YOURSELF AND MYSELF, BUT HIMSELF. WE

Tells about restraints Bait for Bargains!

FIND OURSELVES IN FINDING HIM. THERE IS SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT EACH CHRISTIAN AND THAT IS HIS PERSONAL TESIMONY. JESUS CHRIST HAS DONE SOMETHING FOR YOU AND ME THAT IS WONDERFULLY DIFFERENT. IT IS OF INTEREST TO OTHERS IF IT IS OF INTEREST AND VALUE TO YOU. ACTS 5:42 THIS VERSE TEACHES THAT PEOPLE WERE TOLD ABOUT JESUS EVERY DAY. IT WAS NOT A ONCE A YEAR REVIVAL SYNDROME. THEY DID NOT STOP WITNESSING - FOR MANY IT IS NEVER STARTED. (COMPARE MATTHEW 1:21, MARK 10:45, LUKE 19:10, JOHN 20:31, ACTS 1:8) THE GOSPEL IS NOT TALE-BEARING BUT TRUTH-TELLING. SONGS: "I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY", "TELL ME THE OLD, OLD STORY", "WE'VE A STORY TO TELL TO THE NATIONS."

I WHAT

II. WHO (WHOM) WE ARE TELLING - ACTS 13:32, 38, 39

1

NOTICE THE EMPHASIS OF THE PHRASE "UNTO YOU." THE GOSPEL IS TO YOU AND ME. WE CAN SAY TO EVERY MAN EVERYWHERE THAT THE GOSPEL IS TAILOR-MADE FOR HIM. IT IS EXACTLY HIS SIZE - FITS HIS SPIRITUAL NEED. ACTS 10:43, JOHN 3:8, 15, 16, 20, 26, 31, 35 THE GREEK WORD PAS IS TRANSLATED WHOSOEVER, EVERYONE, ALL. JOHN NEWTON SAID WHEN HE READ THE WORD WHOSOEVER IN JOHN 3:16, HE KNEW IT WAS GOD PUTTING HIS NAME THERE. FOR EXAMPLE, IF HIS NAME HAD APPEARED THERE - JOHN NEWTON - HE MIGHT HAVE SURMISED IT WAS SOME OTHER JOHN NEWTON BUT WHOSOEVER MEANS THIS VERY JOHN NEWTON AND EVERY OTHER JOHN NEWTON AND EVERYBODY ELSE WHATEVER HIS OR HER NAME MIGHT BE! HOW DO YOU SPELL YOUR NAME IN THE BIBLE - W - H - O - S - O - E - V - E - R! I CAN'T RECALL EVER HAVING READ BEFORE THE ACCOUNT OF BILLY SUNDAY'S

1

2

CONVERSION. ONE SUNDAY AFTERNOON IN CHICAGO, A GROUP OF BASEBALL PLAYERS ENTERED A SALOON. WHEN THEY EMERGED THE SAW A GROUP OF PEOPLE PLAYING INSTRUMENTS AND SINGING GOSPEL HYMNS, GIVING PERSONAL TESTIMONIES ON THE STREETS OF CHICAGO. WHAT ONE YOUNG BALLPLAYER SAW BROUGHT BACK CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF A TIME IN IOWA WHERE A GODLY MOTHER PRAYED THAT HER CHILDREN WOULD BE SAVED AND TOOK THEM TO CHURCH. AS THEY WALKED BY SOME OF THE PLAYERS MOCKED THE GOSPEL GROUP BUT OTHERS WERE SILENT. SUNDAY TURNED FROM THE GROUP AND ENTERED THE PACIFIC GARDEN MISSION. HE SAYS OF HIS OWN CONVERSION: "I CALLED UPON GOD'S MERCY, I STAGGERED OUT OF MY SINS INTO THE OUT-STRETCHED ARMS OF THE SAVIOUR. I BECAME INSTANTLY A NEW CREATURE IN HIM." THE NEXT MORNING AT BALL PRACTICE THE TEAM MANAGER GREETED BILLY SUNDAY AND SAID: "BILLY, I READ INT HE PAPER WHAT OCCURRED YESTERDAY. RELIGION ISN'T MY LONG SUIT, BUT I WON'T KNOCK YOU AND I'LL KNOCK THE DAYLIGHTS OUT OF ANYONE WHO DOES."

I what
II whom

III. WHERE ARE WE TELLING - ACTS 8:4, 25, 40, AND ACTS 16:6-9

THE WORD "EVERYWHERE" IS DEFINED AS SMALL COMMUNITIES - WHERE SOCIAL OUTCASTS HOSTILE TO THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL LIVE. IT GOES TO THOSE FOLK WITH WHOM WE DON'T NORMALLY MIX SOCIALLY OR ETHNICALLY - THE GOSPEL IS FOR THEM. IT ENCOMPASSES COMMUNITIES, CITIES, COUNTIES, COUNTRIES AND CONTINENTS IN AN EVER-ENLARGING CIRCLE OF EVANGELISM THAT GRADUALLY ENCOMPASSES THE EARTH. MATTHEW 28:19 - NATIONS. MY WORLD ENDS ACROSS THE TABLE, ACROSS THE STREET, AND ACROSS THE SEAS. MY MISSION FIELD IS WHERE I AM AND

I what
II whom
III where

WHERE I GO. THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IS TO EVERYONE EVERYWHERE.

IV. WHEN WE ARE TELLING

ACCORDING TO ACTS 5:42, ACTS 16:13 AND (20:7) ACTS ~~20~~, THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IS FOR EVERY DAY INCLUDING THE LORD'S DAY. THE GOSPEL IS A DAY AFTER DAY, DAY BY DAY, DAY IN DAY OUT MINISTRY. ((A LADY WAS WALKING THROUGH A VERY ORNATE CATHEDRAL. BEING USED TO A GOSPEL PREACHING CHURCH SHE NOTICED THERE WAS NO PULPIT, NO MOURNERS BENCH, NO REGULARLY SCHEDULED EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS. SHE ASKED HOW MANY SOULS HAD BEEN SAVED IN THE CATHEDRAL IN THE PAST YEAR. THE CLERGYMAN GIVING THE TOUR REMINDED HER THAT THIS WAS A CATHEDRAL NOT A CHAPEL! DEAR FRIENDS, IT IS NOT THE BEAUTY OF A BUILDING, THE MAGNIFICANCE OF SCULPTURE, STATUES AND PAINTINGS ALONG WITH THE PAGENTRY AND COLOR - MUSIC OF CHOIRS AND PAID PROFESSIONALS THAT COUNTS, IT IS THE MESSAGE!

V. WHY WE ARE TELLING - ACTS 4:12, 16:31, 10:36-43

THESE VERSES LOOKED AT IN A COLLECTIVE SENSE MENTION WORDS LIKE SALVATION, SAVED, PEACE, REMISSION OF SINS. IF WE BELIEVE THAT MAN'S ONLY HOPE FOR HEAVEN IS JESUS CHRIST, THEN OUR MESSAGE IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE AND DESERVES PRIORITY IN CHURCH. THE PAYING OF PROFESSIONALS OR SURROGATES TO DO OUR WORK IS NOT ACCEPTABLE WITH GOD. THE IDEA THAT PROFESSIONALS WORK WHILE LAYMEN WATCH, THAT THEY ARE THE SPECIALISTS AND LAYMEN ARE THE SPECTATORS, THAT THEY HAVE TIME AND LAYMEN DON'T IS BAD THEOLOGY, BAD PSYCHOLOGY.

FEW PASSAGES ARE MORE INFORMATIVE AND HELPFUL ON THE SUBJECT OF EVANGELISM THAN JOHN 1:40-45. IT IS THE PICTURE OF ANDREW FINDING PETER AND BRINGING HIM TO JESUS. PHILIP FINDING NATHANIEL AND DOING THE SAME. IT WAS A ONE ON ONE PROGRAM. ANDREW CAST THE GOSPEL NET AROUND PETER - JUST ONE PERSON BUT THAT PERSON WON THOUSANDS TO CHRIST. JUST ONE IS THE PLACE TO START. (ILLUSTRATE WITH SUGDEN'S STORY ABOUT "WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT IF THIS ONE WOULD GET A MAN.") IN OUR ADVERTISEMENT-CONSCIOUS WORLD THE STORY OF THE "PENTEL" PEN IS VERY INTERESTING. A DOZEN OR MORE YEARS AGO THIS LITTLE WRITING INSTRUMENT INVADED AMERICA AND IN ONE YEAR WITHOUT MAJOR ADVERTISING, RELYING ON WORD OF MOUTH TESTIMONY, THIS COMPANY SOLD TWO MILLION PENS! "THE CLOCK OF LIFE IS WOUND BUT ONCE, AND NO MAN HAS THE POWER TO TELL JUST WHEN THE HANDS WILL STOP, AT LATE OR EARLY HOUR. TO LOSE ONE'S WEALTH IS SAD INDEED. TO LOSE ONE'S HEALTH IS MORE. TO LOSE ONE'S SOUL IS OUR GREATEST LOSS THAT NO MAN CAN RESTORE." IN THE FIFTEEN SECONDS IT TOOK TO READ THIS SHORT COUPLET, MORE THAN 50 PEOPLE DIED AROUND THE WORLD. IF OUR CHURCH AND EVERY OTHER LOCAL NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH DOESN'T GET IN THE TELL EVANGELISM BUSINESS, IT WILL BE OUT OF BUSINESS IN SHORT ORDER. THE CHURCH THAT DOES NOT SEE THE MISSION FIELD WILL SOON BECOME A MISSION FIELD!

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JUNE 13, 1993

THE ANATOMY OF SIN

WHEN THE PROPHET ISAIAH DESCRIBED THE MORAL CONDITION OF ISRAEL HE DID SO USING THE ILLUSTRATION OF THE HUMAN BODY. FROM THE TOP OF THE HEAD, TO THE SOLES OF THE FEET, ISRAEL WAS DEPICTED AS ONE LARGE MASS OF OOZING UNTREATED SORES. LIKE A SICK PATIENT IN DESPERATE NEED OF MEDICAL ATTENTION, ISRAEL WAS A MORAL MESS! THEY WERE A SPIRITUALLY SICK PEOPLE. (ISAIAH 1:6 "FROM THE SOLE OF THE FOOT EVEN TO THE HEAD THERE IS NOTHING SOUND IN IT, ONLY BRUISES, WELTS, AND RAW WOUNDS, NOT PRESSED OUT OR BANDAGED, NOT SOFTENED WITH OIL.") THE SIGHT OF THE NATION SO SIN SOAKED WAS ENOUGH TO TURN THE STOMACH, EVEN AND ESPECIALLY THE STOMACH OF GOD! JEREMIAH THE PROPHET, A GENERATION LATER, PICKED UP A SIMILAR COMPARISON IN DEALING WITH HIS DECADENT AGE. HE CHARACTERIZED THEM AS STIFF NECK, EVIL, CORRUPT AND SINFUL BEYOND DESCRIPTION. HE WAS A PREACHER WHO STOOD VIRTUALLY ALONE AGAINST THE EVIL TIDE OF HIS DAY. HE LIVED APPROXIMATELY 600 YEARS BEFORE JESUS WAS BORN. HE CAME FROM A POOR BACKGROUND TO BECOME THE VOICE OF GOD TO THE NATION OF JUDAH. AT THE AGE OF 14, GOD BEGAN TO WORK THROUGH HIM WARNING THE NATION OF FUTURE JUDGMENT. THIS TIMID, SHY PRIEST LOYAL TO THE NATION HAD FEW CLOSE FRIENDS AND HIS MINISTRY WAS CHARACTERIZED BY WEEPING AND WARNING. HE WAS MISUNDERSTOOD, MALIGNED AND MOLESTED YET HE REMAINED COURAGEOUS AND FAITHFUL TO HIS GOD APPOINTED TASK. LET US EXAMINE THE ANATOMY OF SIN THAT CHARACTERIZED THE WRITINGS OF JEREMIAH:

I. THE HEART - JEREMIAH 17:9

JUST AS THE HEART IS THE VITAL INTERNAL ORGAN OF THE BODY, SO THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT MAN'S EMOTIONAL, PHYSIOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL CENTER IS CALLED - THE HEART.

IT IS AS SOMEONE SAID, "THE WELLSPRING OF LIFE". IT IS THAT INNERMOST PART OF A PERSON THE SEAT OF INTELLIGENCE, EMOTIONS, WILL AND MORAL DECISIONS. IT IS THE SOURCE OF AND REPOSITORY OF MANS PHYSIOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL MAKEUP. (EVERY FARM PERSON REMEMBERS A SPOT IN A HOLLOW WHERE A SPRING WAS THE SOURCE OF WATER SUPPLY. OFTEN COVERED WITH TIN OR BURLAP, OR LEAVES EVEN BOARDS - IT NEVER SEEMED TO GO DRY EVEN DURING THE HOTTEST SUMMER.)

(1) THE HEART IS DECEITFUL - THIS WORD IS USED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND TRANSLATED CROOKED OR POLLUTED. IN OTHER WORDS, THE HEART IS SOMETHING THAT IS CROOKED NOT STRAIGHT, POLLUTED NOT PURE. IN THEOLOGY THIS IS CALLED TOTAL DEPRAVITY. THESE TERMS ARE GROSSLY MISUNDERSTOOD BY MANY. BY TOTAL DEPRAVITY WE DO NOT MEAN THAT MEN, WITHOUT CONSCIENCE, OR LACKING IN MORAL QUALITIES, OR PRONE TO EVERY KIND OF SIN. TOTAL DEPRAVITY IS NOT DEALING WITH THE DEGREES OF SIN BUT RATHER THE DISPOSITION TO SIN. (LUKE 11:13) IT MEANS THAT MAN HAS MISSED GOD'S MORAL AND SPIRITUAL TARGET. (ROMANS 3:23) IT MEANS THAT FOR THE NATURAL MAN SELF COMES BEFORE GOD AND IN FACT MAN HAS A DISREGARD FOR GOD AS WELL AS AN AVERSION FROM GOD. (ISAIAH 53:6) BY NATURE, MAN IS AN ALIEN FROM GOD. HE CANNOT DO ANYTHING TO GAIN MERIT BEFORE GOD. GRACE IS HIS GREATEST NEED. SOMEONE HAS SAID "THAT THE NATURAL MAN DOES NOT NEED A "HEART TOUCH UP" BUT RATHER A HEART TRANSPLANT! SOLOMON SAID "HE THAT TRUSTETH IN HIS OWN HEART IS A FOOL...." (PROVERBS 28:26) THE REASON THIS STATEMENT IS SO SIGNIFICANT IS THAT THE HEART IS FULL OF SELF DECEIT. IT IS MANS NATURE TO MAKE HIMSELF LOOK GOOD EVEN BEFORE GOD. THE TEXT DOES NOT SAY THAT THE HEART "MIGHT BE, USED TO BE" BUT SAYS IT IS DECEITFUL. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS. THE HEART IS SET IN THE DOWNWARD

POSITION INDICATING A PROPENSITY TO BE DOWNWARD AND WAYWARD AND NOT GODWARD. IN OTHER WORDS, THE HEART IS ON A COLLISION OR CRASH COURSE WHEN IT COMES TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS. IF YOU LISTEN TO YOUR HEART IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS YOU'LL WIND UP ON THE WRONG ROAD EVERY TIME. MOST MEN BELIEVE THEMSELVES TO BE GOOD HEARTED AND NOT HARD HEARTED. SOME WILL OFTEN SAY "IF I KNOW MY HEART" - WHICH THEY DON'T!

(2) THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS WHEN ONE THINKS OF ALL THE DANGERS CONCERNING MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DIFFICULTY - THE HEART IS THE #1 NUMBER ONE DECEIVER! THE FACT THAT PEOPLE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE HEART IS DECEITFUL SHOWS HOW EFFECTIVE AND DECEPTIVE THE HEART REALLY IS! THE HEART PLOTS AND PLANS TO KEEP FROM DOING THAT WHICH IS BY FAITH AND THROUGH GRACE.

(3) THE HEART IS DESPERATELY WICKED - THIS PHRASE MAY BE TRANSLATED "INCURABLY SICK, HOPELESSLY DISEASED, BEYOND HUMAN CURE." WHEN IT COMES TO MANS NATURAL SPIRITUAL CONDITION, HE IS A TERMINAL CASE! HOWEVER, THE HEART MAKES ONE BELIEVE THAT HE CAN FIX HIS OWN SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS. THEREFORE MAN KEEPS ON TRYING AND FAILING. GOD'S DIAGNOSIS REQUIRES GOD'S REMEDY. ACCORDING TO ROMANS 3:10 WHEN IT COMES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS - ALL ARE REGISTERED EMPTY. MAN IS LIKE A STREAM THAT HAS BEEN CORRUPTED IN THE HEAD WATERS ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE DELTA - NONE HAVE ESCAPED.

(4) WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT? THE HEART OF THE PROPLEM IS THE PROBLEM OF THE HEART. METAPHORICALLY SPEAKING, MAN HAS A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM A KIND OF SPIRITUAL HEART DISEASE WHICH CANNOT BE HELPED BY A TRANSFUSION ONLY A TRANSPLANT. "THEN WILL I SPRINKLE CLEAN WATER UPON YOU, AND YE SHALL BE CLEAN: FROM ALL YOUR

FILTHINESS, AND FROM ALL YOUR IDOLS, WILL I CLEANSE YOU. A NEW HEART ALSO WILL I GIVE YOU AND A NEW SPIRIT WILL I PUT WITHIN YOU; AND I WILL TAKE AWAY THE STONY HEART OUT OF YOUR FLESH, AND I WILL GIVE YOU A HEART OF FLESH. . . ."
(EZEKIEL 36:25-26) (ROMANS 10:9-10)

II. THE HANDS - JEREMIAH 20:13

THE PERSONS IN THE TEXT ARE CHARACTERIZED AS THE POOR AND EVILDOERS. EVILDOERS ARE SIMPLY DOERS OF EVIL AND NOT DOERS OF GOOD. A DOER OF GOOD IS CHARACTERIZED AS OPEN HANDED. THE POOR IN JEREMIAH ARE OFTEN CHARACTERIZED AS HAVING HANDS THAT HANG DOWN OR ARE LIMP. THIS IS THE BIBLE WAY OF DESCRIBING FEEBLENESS, AND WEAKNESS. THE HAND IS A SYMBOL OF LIFE. THE BIBLE TALKS ABOUT HOLY HANDS AND PRAYERS. WE USE THE WORD HELPFUL HANDS TO SPEAK OF THOSE WHO CARE FOR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS. ACTS 2:23 USES THE EXPRESSION "WICKED HANDS". THE TERM REFLECTS THE CENTRAL DISPOSITION OF PILATE AND OTHERS WHO CRUCIFIED THE LORD JESUS. THE WORD EVILDOERS UNDERSCORED IN THE TEXT IS USED VARIOUSLY THROUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT TO DESCRIBE HOMO-SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR, CROOKED BUSINESS DEALINGS, CRUELTY TO MAN AND ANIMALS, SLAVERY, AND SCHEMES AGAINST OTHERS. THE HAND OF THE EVILDOER IS ONE THAT SEEKS TO HURT AND NOT HELP OTHERS. FOR EXAMPLE, TWO MEN GRASP A KNIFE. ONE IS A SURGEON THE OTHER IS A CRIMINAL. WHETHER A HUMAN BEING USES THAT KNIFE TO HELP OR HURT DEPENDS ON THE HEART OF THE HOLDER!

→ HAND

III. THE FEET _ JEREMIAH 14:10

THIS VERSE MAKES TWO SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS IN A FIGURATIVE SENSE ABOUT FEET:

(1) FEET THAT LOVE TO WANDER

WE ARE ALL "DEFORMED IN THE FEET". THERE

IS A SENSE IN WHICH WE ARE ALL LIKE MEPHIBOSHEPH. (II SAMUEL 9) MEPHIBOSHEPH HAD NOTHING TO MERIT ROYAL FAVOR. HE WAS OF NO BENEFIT TO THE KING, COULD DO NOTHING FOR THE KING BECAUSE HE WAS LAME AND IMPOVERISHED. ((THE PRACTICE OF BINDING THE FEET OF CHINESE WOMEN EXISTED FOR MORE THAN 1000 YEARS. ANCIENT CHINESE BELIEVED THAT SMALL, LOTUS-SHAPED FEET WERE A SIGN OF BEAUTY. PARENTS UNDERSTOOD THAT GIRLS WITH NORMAL FEET WOULD BE HARD TO MARRY OFF. SO THE DEFORMING PROCESS WAS BEGUN WHEN CHILDREN WERE BETWEEN THE AGES OF TWO AND SIX YEARS OF AGE. THEIR FEET WERE TIGHTLY BANDAGED TO RAISE THE ARCHES IN AN UPWARD WAY AND THE BIG TOE WAS TURNED UPWARD AND THE OTHER FOUR TOES WERE BENT UNDER THE SOLE OF THE FOOT. WHEN THE MUTILATION WAS COMPLETE THE HEELS AND THE FOUR SMALLER TOES BORE THE WEIGHT OF THE BODY. THE WORD WANDER CARRIES THE IDEA OF A FUGITIVE, HOBO OR VAGABOND. IT IS USED IN SCRIPTURE TO DEFINE SOMETHING THAT LACKS PURPOSE THAT MOVES UP AND DOWN TO AND FRO IN AN AIMLESS FASHION. THE WORD IS USED TO DESCRIBE ISRAEL'S ERRATIC BEHAVIOUR WANDERING IN THE DESERT. (NUMBERS 32: 13) ISRAEL WAS GOING NOWHERE FAST AND APPARENTLY UNCONCERNED ABOUT THE JOURNEY.

(2) FEET HAVE NOT BEEN RESTRAINED - THE WORD RESTRAIN MEANS TO HOLD BACK. THE FEET OF TH UNSAVED PERSON ARE DESCRIBED AS FOOLISH FEET. IN ROMANS 3:15, PAUL DESCRIBES FEET THAT ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD. THE FEET OF THE NATURAL MAN FIND THEIR WAY TO THE GAMBLER'S TABLE, TO THE TAVERN, TO PLACES OF SENSUAL PLEASURE AND ENTERTAINMENT. VANCE HAVENER SAYS THAT A PERSON'S HEART AND HEELS GO TOGETHER. OUR TRACKS ARE VERY TELLING. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE A PERSONS HEART LIES, FOLLOW HIS TRACKS. THE MAN WHO GIVES OUT GOSPEL TRACTS WILL LEAVE A TRAIL OF GOSPEL TRACKS. ((WHEN JOHN DILLINGER WAS FINALLY CAPTURED IN A HAIL OF BULLETS OUTSIDE

A THEATER IN CHICAGO A VERY UNUSUAL PICTURE APPEARED THE NEXT DAY IN A CHICAGO NEWSPAPER. THE PHOTOGRAPHER HAD PHOTOGRAPHED ONLY THE FEET OF THE DEAD DESPERADO. THE CAPTION UNDER THE PICTURE SAID: "THESE ARE THE FEET OF JOHN DILLINGER!"

HEBREWS 10:29 - SPEAK OF FEET THAT TRAMPLE UNDER FOOT THE BENEFITS OF REDEMPTION. THAT IS THEY ACCOUNT AS UNIMPORTANT, SPURN AND NEGLECT, TREAT AS COMMON OR ORDINARY OR NOTHING THE BLOOD OF OUR BLESSED LORD! SUCH A JOURNEY LEADS EVER FURTHER INTO SPIRITUAL DARKNESS.

IV. EYES AND EARS - JEREMIAH 5:21

WHEN WE USE PHRASES SUCH AS: "I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN, I HEAR WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, I'M ALL EYES OR I'M ALL EARS," THESE PHRASES REVEAL MANS AWARENESS OF INNER EYES AND EARS TO PERCEIVE AND UNDERSTAND. JEREMIAH SAID THAT THE NATION OF ISRAEL WAS SPIRITUALLY BLIND AND DEAF. THE THINGS OF GOD SIMPLY DID NOT REGISTER WITH THEM! THEY HAD EYES BUT THEY DID NOT SEE. THEY HAD EARS BUT THEY DID NOT HEAR GOD. IN OTHER WORDS, THIS IS GOD'S WAY OF SAYING THEY HAD SPIRITUAL HEARING AND SIGHT PROBLEMS. THEY SIMPLY DIDN'T LOOK TO NOR DID THEY LISTEN TO GOD.

V. THE TONGUE - JEREMIAH 9:3, 5, 8

VERSE 3: THE TONGUE IS A DANGEROUS WEAPON! IT MAY BE DRAWN LIKE A BOW READY TO WOUND AND KILL.

VERSE 5: THE IMAGERY IS INTERESTING FOR IT DEPICTS THE TONGUE AS TAKING LESSONS IN LYING, THAT IS IT LEARNS HOW TO DO WHAT IT DOES SKILL-FULLY. IN OTHER WORDS, THERE IS A KIND OF "SICK

SCHOOL" THAT TEACHES LYING FROM LYING 101 THROUGH 501! THIS IS THE BIBLE WAY OF SAYING THAT THE TONGUE WORKS AT ITS TREACHERY. TRUTH IS NOT ALWAYS ITS OBJECTIVE.

VERSE 8: THE TONGUE IS POISON PACKED. IT IS PICTURED AS A DEADLY ARROW TIPPED WITH THE POISON OF LIES AND DECEIT. IN PAUL'S SUMMATION OF THE WORLD BEFORE GOD, HE LISTS ONE OF THE INDICTMENTS THAT "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN SEPULCHER WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY USE DECEIT, THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS: WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS...." (ROMANS 3:13)

AT THE INAUGURATION OF JFK A STORY APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS ACCUSING FRANK SINATRA OF TERRIBLE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR DURING THE INAUGURATION NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WAS DRUNKENNESS IN THE REVIEWING STAND DURING THE CEREMONY. SINATRA CALLED HIS PR MAN AND COMPLAINED BECAUSE HE WASN'T EVEN AT THE INAUGURATION AND HAD TWELVE WITNESSES WHO WOULD SWEAR TO THIS FACT. THE PR MAN CALLED THE PAPER AND SAID: "EXCUSE ME SIR, YOU RAN A STORY IN THIS MORNING'S PAPER WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY UNTRUE. MY CLIENT HAS TWELVE WHO WILL SWEAR THAT HE WAS NOT AT THE INAUGURATION. YOU SAID HE WAS DRUNK. THIS IS DAMAGING AND HARMFUL TO HIM. YOUR REPORTER MADE A MISTAKE. HE SAW SOMEBODY IN THE CROWD WHO LOOKED LIKE SINATRA AND THOUGHT IT WAS HIM. ANYONE CAN MAKE A MISTAKE. ALL WE'RE ASKING IS FOR A CORRECTION OF YOUR MISTAKE. THAT ISN'T UNREASONABLE IS IT? THIS IS THE ANSWER THE PAPER GAVE ACCORDING TO HENRY ROGERS IN A BOOK ENTITLED WALKING THE TIGHT ROPE. "LOOK, FELLOW, I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND. WE'RE NOT DOING ANYTHING ABOUT THIS. WE'RE NOT RUNNING A RETRACTION AND WE'RE NOT ADMITTING WE MADE A MISTAKE. YOU SEE,

WE DON'T LIKE FRANK SINATRA AT THE NEWS. WE TOOK CARE OF HIM TODAY. IF HE WANTS TO SUE US, LET HIM SUE. WE'LL SEE HOW FAR HE GETS. HE HUNG UP. SAME AUTHOR SAME BOOK SIGHTS STORY AFTER STORY MANY OF THEM PURE FABRICATIONS OUTRIGHT LIES DESIGNED TO DAMAGE AND HURT PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT LIKED BY OTHERS. MAN HAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IT IS SPELLED SIN. IT WON'T GO AWAY, IT WON'T GET BETTER, IT MUST BE DEALT WITH IN ORDER TO GET TO HEAVEN. GOD IS WILLING TO FORGIVE MAN IF MAN IS WILLING TO FACE HIS SIN. LET JEREMIAH COME TO A FITTING CONCLUSION - JEREMIAH 13:23, 10:23.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING

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THE ANATOMY OF SIN

WHEN THE PROPHET ISAIAH DESCRIBED THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL, HE SAID THAT FROM THE TOP OF THEIR HEAD TO THE SOLES OF THEIR FEET THERE WAS NO MORAL SOUNDNESS - NOTHING BUT ONE LARGE MASS OF OOZING, UNTREATED SORES - THE PROPHET'S WAY OF DESCRIBING THE NATION AS A MORAL MESS IN THE EYES OF GOD. LIKE A SERIOUSLY ILL PATIENT IN DESPERATE NEED OF MEDICAL ATTENTION, ISRAEL WAS IN SUCH A SPIRITUAL CONDITION ONLY GOD COULD HELP THEM. FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, INSIDE OUT, ALL AROUND EVERYWHERE THE NATION WAS A SOCIETY OF SPIRITUALLY SICK PEOPLE. THE SIGHT OF THEM WAS ENOUGH TO TURN THE STOMACH - EVEN THE STOMACH OF GOD BUT IN THEIR EYES EVERYTHING WAS GREAT. THE SPIRITUAL DIAGNOSIS OF THE PROPHET WAS ONE OF UTTER DEPRAVITY. THE PROPHET JEREMIAH USED A SIMILAR IMAGERY IN REFERRING TO THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE HUMAN BODY TO DESCRIBE THE NATION'S MORAL CONDITION. (ISAIAH Jeremiah) LIVED APPROXIMATELY 600 YEARS BEFORE JESUS WAS BORN. HE CAME FROM A POOR BACK-GROUND TO BECOME THE VOICE OF GOD TO THE NATION OF JUDAH. AT THE TENDER AGE OF 14, GOD BEGAN TO WORK IN AND THROUGH JEREMIAH, WARNING THE NATION OF FUTURE JUDGMENT. A TIMID, SHY PRIEST, LOYAL TO THE NATION WITH FEW CLOSE FRIENDS HE BEGAN A MINISTRY OF WEEPING AND WARNING. WHEN HE SPOKE UP HIS CRITICS TRIED TO SHUT HIM UP. HE WAS MISUNDERSTOOD, MALIGNED, AND MOLESTED YET HE REMAINED COURAGEOUS AND FAITHFUL TO HIS GOD-APPOINTED TASK.

I. THE HEART - JEREMIAH 17:9

JUST AS THE HEART IS THE VITAL INTERNAL ORGAN OF THE BODY, SO THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT MAN'S EMOTIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL CENTER IS CALLED - THE HEART. THIS VERSE MAKES FOUR SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS ABOUT THE HEART:

(1) THE HEART IS DECEITFUL - THIS WORD IS USED IN TWO OTHER PLACES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND IS TRANSLATED "CROOKED AND POLLUTED." IN OTHER WORDS, THE HEART IS SOMETHING THAT IS CROOKED NOT STRAIGHT, POLLUTED AND NOT PURE. IT DEALS IN LIES AND NOT TRUTH WHEN ASSESSING ITS OWN SPIRITUAL CONDITION. THE WORD DECEITFUL IS USED TO DESCRIBE JACOB BEFORE HIS LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE AT BETHEL. (GENESIS 27:36) "HE THAT TRUSTETH IN HIS OWN HEART IS A FOOL..." (PROVERBS 28:6) THE REASON FOR SUCH A STATEMENT IS THAT THE HEART IS FULL OF SELF-DECEIT. IT IS THE NATURE OF MAN TO ALWAYS MAKE HIMSELF LOOK GOOD, EVEN WHEN HE ISN'T! REFERRING TO JACOB, HE WAS A MAN IN WHOM PROFIT OVERRULED PRINCIPLE. HIS EARLY GOAL IN LIFE WAS TO STEAL AND CHEAT FROM HIS BROTHER ESAU. POINT: THE TEXT DOES NOT SAY THAT THE HEART "MIGHT BE", "USED TO BE", "IS THOUGHT TO BE", DECEITFUL. IT SAYS IT IS! THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS - THIS INCLUDES EVERYBODY. "THE FLAPS" OF THE HEART ARE SET IN THE DOWN POSITION INDICATING ITS PROPENSITY TO BE DOWNWARD AND WAYWARD, NOT GODWARD." IN OTHER WORDS, THE HEART IS ON A COLLISION OR CRASH COURSE WHEN IT COMES TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS. IF YOU LISTEN TO YOUR HEART IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS YOU WILL WIND UP ON THE WRONG ROAD EVERY TIME.

(2) THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS - WHEN ONE THINKS OF ALL THE THINGS THAT COULD GET HIM INTO MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DIFFICULTY - THE HEART IS THE NUMBER ONE DECEIVER. (THE FACT THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE THIS SHOWS HOW EFFECTIVE AND DECEPTIVE THE HEART IS!) THE HEART PLOTS AND PLANS TO KEEP ONE FROM DOING THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL IN NATURE.

(3) THE HEART IS DESPERATELY WICKED - THIS MAY BE TRANSLATED "INCURABLY SICK, HOPELESSLY DISEASED, BEYOND HUMAN CURE." WHEN IT COMES TO MAN'S NATURAL SPIRITUAL CONDITION, HE IS A "TERMINAL CASE." HOWEVER, THE HEART MAKES ONE BELIEVE THAT HE CAN FIX HIS OWN SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS. THEREFORE, ONE KEEPS ON TRYING AND KEEPS ON FAILING. GOD'S DIAGNOSIS REQUIRES GOD'S REMEDY. ACCORDING TO ROMANS 3:10, WHEN IT COMES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS ALL MEN ARE IN THE SAME CONDITION - NONE POSSESS ANY - WHATSOEVER. WITH REFERENCE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, MAN IS LIKE A STREAM THAT HAS BEEN CORRUPTED AT THE HEADWATERS AND IS CORRUPTED ALL THE WAY TO THE DELTA.

(4) WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT? - ONE OFTEN HEARS THE EXPRESSION "IF I KNOW IN MY HEART." THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM IS THE PROBLEM OF THE HEART. METAPHORICALLY SPEAKING, MAN HAS A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM, A KIND OF HEART DISEASE WHICH A TRANSFUSION WILL NOT HELP. THE ONLY REMEDY IS A TRANSPLANT. (JEREMIAH 13:23, EZEKIEL 36:25-26, 33, ROMANS 10:9-10)

II. THE HANDS - JEREMIAH 20:13

THE HAND IS USED AS A SYMBOL OF LIFE. THE BIBLE TALKS ABOUT HOLY HANDS AND PRAYER. WE USE THE WORD HELPFUL HANDS TO SPEAK OF THOSE WHO CARE FOR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS.

IN ACTS 2:23 THE WORD "WICKED HANDS" IS USED TO REFLECT THE EXPRESSION OF SINFUL HEARTS. (COMPARE PILATE - MATTHEW 27:24) THE WORD "EVILDOERS" IN THE TEXT IS VAGUE TO SOME. A STUDY OF THIS WORD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IS VERY REVEALING FOR THIS WORD EVILDOER IS APPLIED TO THE FOLLOWING:

(1) HOMOSEXUAL BEHAVIOR - GEN. 19:7

(2) CROOKED BUSINESS DEALINGS - DEUT. 15:9

(3) CRUELTY TO PEOPLE AND ANIMALS - NUMBERS 16:15

(4) SLAVERY - NUMBERS 20:15

(5) SCHEMING AGAINST OTHERS - PSALMS 64:2-3

THE HAND OF THE EVILDOER IS ONE DESIGNED TO HURT AND NOT HELP OTHERS. (COMPARE SURGEON/CRIMINAL/KNIFE) WHETHER A HUMAN BEING HELPS ANOTHER WITH KNIFE DEPENDS ON THE HEART OF THE HOLDER.

III. THE FEET - JEREMIAH 14:10

THIS VERSE MAKES TWO SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS IN A FIGURATIVE SENSE ABOUT FEET:

(1) FEET LOVE TO WANDER - WE ARE ALL "DEFORMED IN THE FEET." (THE PRACTICE OF BINDING THE FEET OF CHINESE WOMEN EXISTED FOR MORE THAN 1000 YEARS. ANCIENT CHINESE BELIEVED THAT SMALL, LOTUS-SHAPED FEET WERE A SIGN OF BEAUTY. PARENTS UNDERSTOOD THAT GIRLS WITH NORMAL FEET WOULD BE HARD TO MARRY OFF. SO THE DEFORMING PROCESS WAS BEGUN WHEN CHILDREN WERE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 2 AND

6 YEARS OF AGE. THEY WERE TIGHTLY BANDAGED TO RAISE THE ARCHES IN AN UPWARD WAY AND THE BIG TOE WAS TURNED OUTWARD AND THE OTHER FOUR TOES WERE BENT UNDER THE SOLE OF THE FOOT. WHEN THE MUTILATION WAS COMPLETE THE HEELS AND FOUR SMALLER TOES BORE THE WEIGHT OF THE BODY.) THE WORD WANDER CARRIES THE IDEA OF A FUGITIVE, VAGABOND, HOBO. IT IS USED IN SCRIPTURE TO DEFINE SOMETHING THAT LACKS PURPOSE THAT MOVES QUICKLY UP AND DOWN, TO AND FRO IN AN AIMLESS WAY. THE WORD WAS USED TO DESCRIBE ISRAEL'S ERRATIC BEHAVIOR WANDERING IN THE DESERT AS RECORDED IN NUMBERS 32:13. THEY WERE GOING NOWHERE AND APPARENTLY LOVING EVERY STEP AWAY FROM THE PROMISED LAND.

(2) FEET HAVE NOT BEEN RESTRAINED - THE WORD REFRAIN MEANS TO HOLD BACK. THE FEET OF THE UNSAVED PERSON ARE "FOOLISH FEET." IN ROMANS 3:15, PAUL DESCRIBES FEET THAT ARE "SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD." THE FEET OF THE NATURAL MAN FIND THEIR WAY TO THE GAMBLER'S TABLE, TO THE TAVERN, TO THE PALACES OF SENSUAL PLEASURE AND ENTERTAINMENT. VANCE HAVENER SAID THAT WHERE A PERSON'S HEART IS, HIS HEELS WILL SOON FOLLOW. OUR TRACKS ARE VERY TELLING! IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE A PERSON'S HEART LIES, FOLLOW HIS TRACKS. ROMANS PRESENTS AN INTERESTING CONTRAST. IN THE EARLY CHAPTERS IT SPEAKS OF FEET THAT ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD BUT IN ROMANS 10:15 IT SPEAKS OF FEET THAT CARRY THE GOSPEL. IF OUR HEART IS SET ON GOSPEL TRACTS, WE WILL LEAVE A TRAIL OF GOSPEL TRACKS! WHEN JOHN DILLINGER WAS FINALLY CAPTURED IT WAS IN A HAIL OF BULLETS OUTSIDE A THEATER IN CHICAGO. A VERY UNUSUAL PICTURE APPEARED NEXT DAY IN A CHICAGO NEWSPAPER FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER HAD PHOTOGRAPHED ONLY THE FEET OF THE DEAD

DESPERADO. THE CAPTION UNDER THE PICTURE SAID: "THESE ARE THE FEET OF JOHN DILLINGER!"

IV. EYES AND EARS - JEREMIAH 5:21

WE USE PHRASES SUCH AS: "I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN, I HEAR WHAT YOU ARE SAYING," OR "I AM ALL EYES OR I AM ALL EARS." THESE PHRASES REVEAL MAN'S AWARENESS OF "INNER EYES AND EARS" TO PERCEIVE AND UNDERSTAND. JEREMIAH SAID THAT THE NATION OF ISRAEL WAS SPIRITUALLY BLIND AND DEAF. THE THINGS OF GOD SIMPLY DID NOT REGISTER WITH THEM! YOU HAVE EYES BUT YOU DO NOT SEE, YOU HAVE EARS, BUT YOU DO NOT HEAR. IN OTHER WORDS, THIS WAS GOD'S WAY OF SAYING THEY HAD A SPIRITUAL HEARING AND SIGHT PROBLEM, THEY SIMPLY DIDN'T LOOK TO NOR LISTEN TO GOD! (COMPARE MATTHEW 13:9, 15, 16, 43, ALSO LUKE 9:455 AND ACTS 7:51, 57) "LET THESE SAYINGS SINK DOWN INTO YOUR EARS...." (LUKE 9:44)

V. THE TONGUE - JEREMIAH 9:5,8

THE TONGUE IS PICTURED AS A DEADLY ARROW, TIPPED WITH THE POISON OF LIES AND DECEIT. IN PAUL'S GREAT SUMMATION OF A WORLD GUILTY BEFORE GOD, HE LISTS AS ONE OF THE INDICTMENTS "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN SEPULCHER; WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY HAVE USED DECEIT, THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS: WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS...." (ROMANS 3:13) USUALLY, WHEN LOOKING FOR ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH WE LOOK IN BIBLE COMMENTARIES. THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TONGUE IS REVEALED IN AN INTERESTING BOOK ENTITLED WALKING THE TIGHTROPE BY HENRY ROGERS. ON PAGE 164, A STORY ABOUT FRANK SINATRA. THE DAY AFTER THE INAUGURATION OF J. F. K. THE STORY APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

ACCUSING HIM OF TERRIBLE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AT THE INAUGURATION, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WAS DRUNKENESS IN THE REVIEWING STAND DURING THE CEREMONIES. THE CELEBRITY CALLED HIS PR MAN AND COMPLAINED BECAUSE HE WASN'T EVEN AT THE INAUGURATION AND HAD 12 WITNESSES WHO WOULD SWEAR TO HIS LOCATION. THE PR MAN CALLED THE PAPER AND SAID: "EXCUSE ME SIR, YOU RAN A STORY IN THIS MORNING'S PAPER WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY UNTRUE. MR. SINATRA HAS 12 WITNESSES WHO WILL STATE THAT HE WAS NOT AT THE INAUGURATION. YOU ALSO SAID HE WAS DRUNK. THIS IS DAMAGING, HARMFUL AND COULD MAKE A LOT OF TROUBLE FOR HIM. YOUR REPORTER MADE A MISTAKE. HE PROBABLY SAW SOMEONE IN THE CROWD WHO LOOKED LIKE SINATRA AND THOUGHT IT WAS HIM. ANYONE CAN MAKE A MISTAKE. ALL WE ARE ASKING IS THAT YOU CORRECT YOUR MISTAKE. THAT'S NOT UNREASONABLE IS IT?" "LOOK, FELLA, I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND. WE ARE NOT DOING ANYTHING ABOUT THIS. WE ARE NOT RUNNING A RETRACTION AND WE'RE NOT ADMITTING WE MADE A MISTAKE. YOU SEE, WE DON'T LIKE FRANK SINATRA HERE AT THE NEWS. WE TOOK GOOD CARE OF HIM TODAY. IF HE WANTS TO SUE US, LET HIM SUE. WE'LL SEE HOW FAR HE GETS." HE HUNG UP. IN THIS CHAPTER, HE RECITES STORY AFTER STORY, MANY OF THEM FABRICATIONS, PURE OUTRIGHT LIES DESIGNED TO DAMAGE AND HURT PEOPLE WHOM OTHERS DID NOT LIKE.

CONCLUSION: IF MAN IS A SPIRITUAL MESS WITHOUT GOD, WHAT IS THE ANSWER TO HIS DILEMMA?

ANSWER: ISAIAH 1:18. GOD IS WILLING TO FORGIVE IF MAN IS WILLING TO FACE HIS SIN. HE CANNOT DO IT BY HIMSELF - JEREMIAH 13:23.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING OCTOBER 23, 1988

THE LIFE YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN

OR/THE DEATH PENALTY

1 THE SIGNS AROUND THE BUILDING SAID "WARNING - HIGH VOLTAGE - KEEP OUT." THERE WAS A HIGH FENCE AROUND THE BUILDING. HOWEVER, THE MAN CLIMBED THE FENCE, BROKE THE LOCK, TAMPERED WITH THE EQUIPMENT AND ELECTROCUTED HIMSELF. WHO WAS TO BLAME, THE POWER COMPANY OR THE 2 MAN? A PERSON CLEANING A LOADED REVOLVER LOOKS DOWN THE BARREL, ACCIDENTALLY PULLS THE TRIGGER. WHO IS TO BLAME, THE MANUFACTURER OF THE GUN OR THE CARELESS CLEANER? A PERSON 3 STARTS HIS AUTOMOBILE IN A CLOSED GARAGE. HE SITS THERE FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME READING A BOOK UNTIL HE SUCCUMBS TO CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING. WHO IS TO BLAME? THE MANUFACTURER OF THE CAR, THE CONTRACTOR WHO BUILT THE HOUSE OR THE PERSON WHO STARTED THE CAR 4 ENGINE? THE SIGN ON THE BRIDGE ALONG THE TURNPIKE STATED: "DO NOT STOP ON BRIDGE." DISREGARDING THE SIGN, A MAN WITH A CAMERA LEANS OVER THE RAILINGS TO TAKE A PICTURE, LOSES HIS FOOTING AND FALLS FROM THE BRIDGE TO THE HOLLOW BELOW. WHO IS TO BLAME, THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS, THE BUILDER OF THE BRIDGE, OR THE MAN WHO DISREGARDED THE SIGN? THESE HYPOTHETICAL CASES ALLUDE TO A FACT OF LIFE, NAMELY, THERE ARE PENALTIES FOR CARELESSNESS AND NEGLECT. THIS IS TRUE IN THE NATURAL AND PHYSICAL REALM, IT IS ALSO TRUE IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM. PEOPLE WHO BREAK OR VIOLATE GOD'S LAWS MUST PAY THE PENALTY AND SOMETIMES THE PENALTY IS PHYSICAL DEATH. CRITICS OF THE BIBLE AND ENEMIES OF CHRISTIAN FAITH HAVE LONG FASTENED UPON WHAT THEY CALL THE MORAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. THESE CRITICS LOOK UPON THE GOD OF THE OLD

TESTAMENT AS BARBARIC, VINDICTIVE AND CRUEL. THE LATE G. BROMLEY OXNAM REFERRED TO HIM AS "A DIRTY BULLY." THEY POINT TO SUCH HISTORIC REFERENCES AS TO GOD'S DEALING WITH RACES, NAMELY THE CANAANITES AND AMALEKITES AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THEIR POINT. FOR EXAMPLE, THE CANAANITES FOR YEARS TRAMPLED UNDER FOOT ALL LAWS OF JUSTICE AND DECENCY. THEIR IMMORAL AND IDOLATROUS PRACTICES HAD PLUNGED THE NATION DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO SIN TO SUCH A POINT THAT THE ONLY CURE FOR THEIR GROSS SIN WAS A SURGICAL REMOVAL. ONLY GOD COULD MAKE SUCH A WIDE-SWEEPING JUDGMENT AND HE DID. HOWEVER, ONE DREADFUL ASPECT OF SUCH WIDE-SWEEPING RACIAL DEGRADATION IS THAT IT DRAWS MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN INTO THE WAKE OF ITS DESTRUCTION. FOR EXAMPLE, A GROUP OF PEOPLE FROM A CERTAIN COMPANY SCHEDULED A BOAT FOR AN OCEAN VOYAGE OR CRUISE AS PART OF A COMPANY ACTIVITY. A COUPLE OF HUNDRED FAMILIES ARE INVOLVED. THE ADULTS ON BOARD TAKE TO WICKED VICE AND CORRUPTION TO THE POINT THAT THE SHIP'S SAFETY IS NEGLECTED AND IN A COURSE OF TIME THE SHIP BEGINS TO SINK. THERE IS NO DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN WHEN A SHIP IS GOING DOWN. WHO IS TO BLAME? GOD OR MEN? THE AMALEKITES HAD FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS OVERRUN WEAKER NATIONS, SLAUGHTERING, RAPING, TORTURING, AND PILLAGING FOR THE SHEER DELIGHT OF DESTRUCTION. THEY SCOFFED AT RELIGION, WORSHIPPED ONLY THE GODS OF STRENGTH AND HAD FOR 500 YEARS LEFT A TRAIL OF BLOOD AND WRECKAGE BEHIND THEM. THEIR WARS WERE THOSE OF AMBUSH AGAINST THE WEAK, THE AGED AND THE HELPLESS. THEY TORTURED THEIR CAPTIVES TO DEATH BY HACKING OFF THEIR LIMBS, KICKING OUT THEIR TEETH, BREAKING JAWS, GOUGING OUT EYES. THEY BURNED CITIES FOR THE SHEER DELIGHT OF WATCHING THEM BURN AND JEERED AT THE IDEA

OF GOD. ISRAEL'S SURVIVAL WAS AT STAKE WHEN GOD COMMANDED SAUL TO JUDICIALLY REMOVE THE AMALEKITES FROM ISRAEL'S BORDERS. CONCERNING THIS ACTIVITY, DR. ALVA J. MCCLAIN STATES: "IF THIS COURSE OF ACTION SEEMS UNDULY HARSH, ITS JUSTIFICATION MAY BE FOUND IN THE UNSPEAKABLE DEGRADED PRACTICES WHICH ARE ASCRIBED IN HORRIBLE DETAIL IN LEVITICUS 18. THE CHAPTER TO BE READ AND PONDERED BY THOSE WHO ARE TROUBLED WITH THE ALLEGED "MORAL PROBLEM" IN RELATION TO THE CHARACTER OF GOD. THERE WAS INDEED A MORAL PROBLEM IN THE LAND OF PALESTINE AND IT SEEMED TO REQUIRE WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED A SURGICAL OPERATION ON THE HUMAN RACE FOR THE SAKE OF SELF-PRESERVATION. AND IF THE NATION OF ISRAEL WAS MADE THE DIVINELY CHOSEN INSTRUMENT IN THE OPERATION, IT SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN THAT THE SAME NATION WAS THUS PRESERVED FROM FATAL CONTAMINATION IN ORDER TO FULFILL HER DESTINY AS A CHANNEL OF DIVINE SALVATION ON BEHALF OF ALL NATIONS." TODAY, WE WILL LOOK AT THREE PASSAGES WHERE PHYSICAL DEATH IS USED AS A PENALTY FOR SIN AGAINST GOD.

— CARELESS —

I. THE MAN WHO PAID NO ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORD - I CHRONICLES 13:10

DURING THE REIGN OF KING SAUL, THE ARK HAD BEEN NEGLECTED. FOR TWENTY YEARS, IT HAD BEEN AT A PLACE CALLED KIRJATH-JEARIN. THE ARK, WAS A BOX THAT CONTAINED THE TABLES OF THE LAW. THE TOP WAS GOLD PLATED AND CALLED THE MERCY-SEAT. THE ARK SYMBOLIZED THE PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG HIS PEOPLE. IT WENT BEFORE THE PEOPLE WHEN THEY BROKE CAMP AND WAS CARRIED BY DAVID IN BATTLE AND ULTIMATELY PLACED IN SOLOMON'S TEMPLE AS A PERPETUAL REMINDER OF GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE. IT DATED BACK TO THE TIME OF MOSES AND THE EXODUS.

IT HAD BEEN CAPTURED BY THE PHILLISTINES AND DISAPPEARED AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM. IN BIBLICAL TYPOLOGY, THE ARK WAS A TYPE OF CHRIST. WHEN DAVID BECAME KING, HE DESIRED TO TRANSFER THE ARK TO JERUSALEM IN ORDER TO FOCUS ATTENTION UPON IT AND ALSO THE CITY AS THE CENTER OF NATIONAL AND SPIRITUAL WORSHIP AND ACTIVITY. THE TRANSFER OF THE ARK TO JERUSALEM WAS AT A TIME OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR THE NATION AND THEY WERE IN A FESTIVE MOOD. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MOVING THE ARK FELL TO THE SONS OF ABINADAB WHOSE NAMES WERE UZZA AND AHIO. THE INCIDENT IN OUR TEXT SEEMS TO BE A TERRIBLY SEVERE PENALTY FOR A VERY INNOCENT ACT. FOR WHAT APPEARS TO BE A TRIVIAL MATTER, A MAN WAS GIVEN A MAXIMUM PENALTY. FOR EXAMPLE, MEN LIKE MOSES AND DAVID MURDERED OTHER MEN WITHOUT A PENALTY ANYWHERE NEAR THIS SEVERE. ACCORDING TO NUMBERS 4:15, THE ARK AND OTHER VESSELS WERE NOT TO BE TOUCHED WITHOUT PROPER AUTHORIZATION AND THE PENALTY FOR DOING SO IS CLEARLY MARKED OUT AS DEATH. THE HEART OF THIS PASSAGE IS THAT DESPITE OF GOD'S CLEAR AND SPECIFIC COMMAND, UZZA DID NOT HEED GOD'S WARNING. IN THAT RESPECT, UZZA REPRESENTS A CLASS OF PEOPLE WHO IGNORE DIVINE REVELATION AND RESORT TO NATURAL WISDOM AND REASON IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS. THESE PEOPLE MAY BE SINCERE, WELL MEANING AND HIGH PRINCIPLED, BUT TO DISREGARD GOD'S CLEAR INSTRUCTION IS NO SMALL MATTER. WHEN PEOPLE DO NOT TAKE SERIOUSLY WHAT GOD SAYS, IT LEADS TO CARELESSNESS IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS. LEVITES WERE WELL-TAUGHT IN OLD TESTAMENT LAW AND KNEW THE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION OF THESE LAWS. APPLICATION: THE RELIGIOUS WORLD IS FILLED WITH PEOPLE LIKE UZZA. THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE SAVED BY DOING THE BEST THEY CAN. THEY, LIKE UZZA, PUT THEIR OWN HAND OUT TO STEADY

THE EVENTS OF LIFE WITH CLEAR DISREGARD FOR GOD'S MESSAGE AND INSTRUCTIONS. THEY, LIKE CAIN, PERSIST IN APPROACHING GOD UPON THE BASIS OF THEIR OWN MERIT RATHER THAN ACCORDING TO HIS SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS. THEY WANT TO APPROACH GOD ON THE BASIS OF PERSONAL WORTH AND NOT GOD'S PRESCSRIBED WAY OF FAITH THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. THE RELIGIOUS WORLD IS FILLED WITH MEN LIKE UZZA WHO PAY LITTLE OR NO ATTENTION TO DIVINE REVELATION.

QUESTION: IS THIS A SERIOUS MATTER? IT IS IF ONE CONSIDERS THE ETERNAL WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE AS WORTH CONSIDERATION. GOD STRUCK UZZA DEAD IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT LEARN THE VITAL LESSON OF PAYING ATTENTION TO OR HEEDING GOD'S WORD. FOR EXAMPLE, THE TABERNACLE WAS BUILT "ACCORDING TO PATTERN" OR DIVINE SPECIFICATIONS. GOD DOES NOT ASK FOR NOR DOES HE NEED YOUR OPINION AND MINE AS THE BEST WAY TO TAKE PEOPLE TO HEAVEN. BUT RATHER, HE TELLS US OF HIS WAY AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS INSTRUCTIONS. (RELATE STORY OF CHUCK YEAGER OF WORKER IN ASSEMBLY PLANT WHO INVERTED ONE SINGLE BOLT AND THREW THE WHOLE PERFORMANCE OF THE AIRCRAFT OFF. IT NEARLY CAUSED YEAGER HIS LIFE. THERE ARE REASONS FOR DOING AS THE INSTRUCTION STATE.)

(The thought = no difference - he was wrong!)

II. THE MEN WHO PAID NO ATTENTION TO GOD'S WAY IN WORSHIP (CARELESS) - LEVITICUS 10:2-10

NADAB AND ABIHU WERE THE SONS OF AARON AND PRIESTS. THESE TWO WERE NOT THE INNOCENT VICTIMS OF AN ANGRY GOD. THE ACT OF THESE TWO PRIESTS WAS A WILLFUL TRANSACTION AGAINST CLEAR AND SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION FROM GOD. THEY HAD BEEN SCHOOLED ON THE LAWS OF RITUAL AND REGULATION OF RELIGIOUS CEREMONY. THEIR INFRACTION SEEMS TO INVOLVE THREE MAJOR AREAS:

(1) UNAUTHORIZED FIRE - ACCORDING TO LEVITICUS 9:24 AND LEVITICUS 6:12-13, THE FIRE TO BE USED WAS KINDLED BY GOD, KEPT ALIVE BY THE PRIESTS. THE FIRE CAME FROM THE BRAZEN ALTAR SUGGESTING ITS DIVINE ORIGIN AND GOD PERMITTED FIRE FROM NO OTHER SOURCES. THESE TWO PRIESTS FLAGRANTLY DISREGARDED THAT REQUIREMENT.

(2) THE HOLY OF HOLIES - THESE TWO HAD NO RIGHT TO ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES. THAT WAS DONE ONCE A YEAR BY THE HIGH PRIEST ALONE ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

(3) PUBLIC INTOXICATION - THE CONTEXT WOULD SUGGEST THAT THESE MEN MAY HAVE BEEN DRINKING WHILE PERFORMING THEIR PRIESTLY DUTIES. THESE MEN WERE PRIESTS, THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO LIVE HOLY LIVES AND TO SERVE GOD ACCORDING TO GOD'S DIRECTION. THEY WERE RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS, NOT INNOCENT VICTIMS OF ACCIDENTAL MISCALCULATIONS. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT THE POINT OF THIS CHAPTER IS SIMPLY: "IN WORSHIP AND SERVICE TO GOD, HE DOES NOT PERMIT MEN TO DO WHATEVER THEY THINK IS RIGHT. GOD DESIGNED SPECIFIC WAYS FOR MEN TO APPROACH HIM. IF THEY ARE GOING TO WORSHIP AND SERVE GOD, THEY MUST DO IT GOD'S WAY. SIMPLY STATED, THESE TWO PRIESTS LACKED THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF RESPECT FOR GOD'S WAY IN WORSHIP. FOR THEM, JUDGMENT WAS IMMEDIATE AND NOT FUTURE BUT THE DANGER EXTENDS TO ALL MEN. THE PENALTIES FOR SUCH NEGLECT ARE NOT AS SEVERE TODAY BUT THE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES ARE JUST AS DEVASTATING. SELF-IMPOSED, SELF-WILL IN WORSHIP IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.

CARELESS

III. THE PEOPLE PAID NO ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORK - ACTS 5:4

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA STEPPED ONTO THE STAGE OF EARLY CHURCH HISTORY FOLLOWING THE GENEROUS ACT OF BARNABUS. WHAT WAS THEIR SIN? THE TEXT MAKES IT VERY CLEAR THAT THE PROPERTY THEY SOLD AND THE MONEY RECEIVED FROM THE SALE WAS THEIRS IN ITS ENTIRETY. THEY WERE FREE TO KEEP IT ALL AND TO GIVE NOTHING AWAY. THE PROBLEM IN THE PASSAGE IS THAT THEY TRIED TO MAKE IT SEEM AS IF THEY GAVE MORE THAN THEY ACTUALLY GAVE. THE SIN WAS HYPOCRISY, DECEIT AND LYING. THEY POSED AS GENEROUS PEOPLE WHEN IN FACT THEY WERE GREEDY PEOPLE. THEY TRIED TO APPEAR BETTER THAN THEY ACTUALLY WERE. THEY WANTED PEOPLE TO THINK OF THEM AS OPEN-HANDED WHEN IN REALITY THEY WERE RIGHT-FISTED. SIMPLY STATED, THEY LIED ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS AND HOW MUCH THEY HAD GIVEN TO THE CHURCH. SURELY, MULTIPLIED THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HAVE DONE THE SAME THING WITH NOT NEARLY THE SERIOUS DISCIPLINARY ACTION FROM GOD. HOWEVER, IN THESE EARLY DAYS CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN THIS FORM WAS ADMINISTERED TO PRESERVE PURITY OF THE EARLY CHURCH. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THESE TWO WERE NOT THE LAST IN THE CHURCH TO LET REAL ESTATE AND MONEY GET THE UPPER HAND. GOD USED THIS SEVERE DISCIPLINARY ACTION TO SHARPEN THE SPIRITUAL SENSES OF THE EARLY CHURCH. GOD WAS CONCERNED THAT PEOPLE DID NOT USE THE CHURCH AS A PLATFORM TO PROMOTE THEMSELVES INSTEAD OF HIMSELF. ONCE AGAIN, THE EMPHASIS IS ON DOING GOD'S WORK, GOD'S WAY. LIKE UZZA, NADAB AND ABIHU, ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA - PEOPLE MAY BE CARELESS AND NEGLIGENT ABOUT THE THINGS OF GOD. TO BE SURE, HIS JUDGMENT IS NOT TODAY IMMEDIATE AND SEVERE. MEN MAY GO THROUGH AN ENTIRE LIFETIME PAYING LITTLE OR NO ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORD BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THEY WILL ESCAPE.

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THE MIND GAME IS NOT A GAME

THERE IS A WAR GOING ON THAT IS NOT VISIBLE. THE BATTLEFIELD IS THE MIND OF MEN. SATAN IS THE MASTERMIND WAGING THE CONFLICT AND IT IS AS OLD AS EDEN. THERE HE ATTACKED EVE'S MIND. "BUT I AM AFRAID THAT JUST AS EVE WAS DECEIVED BY THE SERPENT'S CUNNING, YOUR MINDS MAY SOMEHOW BE LED ASTRAY FROM YOUR SINCERE AND PURE DEVOTION TO CHRIST." (II COR. 11:3 NIV) THE MIND IS AN AMAZING COMPUTER THAT STORES MATERIAL FOR RECALL LATER. FOR EXAMPLE, WE ARE TOLD TEN THOUSAND THOUGHTS GO THROUGH THE HUMAN MIND EVERY DAY - THREE AND A HALF MILLION PER YEAR. IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT WE NEVER REALLY FORGET ANYTHING. THE MEMORY STORES MATERIAL ON THE SURFACE, BELOW THE SURFACE AND IN THE SUB-CONSCIOUS. OUR MIND AFFECTS HOW WE FEEL, HOW WE ACT, HOW SOON WE GET WELL. WE TALK ABOUT BEING "PSYCHED-UP" TO DO OUR BEST OR TO SUCCEED. SOLOMON SAID: "FOR AS HE THINKETH IN HIS HEART, SO IS HE," (PROV. 23:7) DOCTORS TELL US WE ARE WHAT WE EAT, PSYCHIATRISTS TELL US WE ARE WHAT WE THINK. THE MIND IS A TARGET FOR CULTS, COMMUNISTS, COMMERCIALS, AND A STEADY FLOW OF INFORMATION THAT BOMBARDS THE EYE AND EAR GATE DAILY. WE ARE A MIND-CONSCIOUS SOCIETY AS REFLECTED IN EXPRESSIONS: MIND SET, MESSING WITH THE MIND, MIND BOGGLING, MIND THE STORE, MAKE UP THE MIND, OUT OF, ABSENT, FEEBLE, OR LOSE ONE'S MIND. MENTAL PROBLEMS RANGING FROM MILD TO MASSIVE WILL AFFECT ONE OUT OF TEN OR MORE. QUESTION: WHAT IS THE MIND? IT IS THAT PART OF US THAT DEALS WITH HUMAN CONSCIOUS-NESS, THAT PART THAT THINKS, PERCEIVES, PLANS, REFLECTS AND MAKES JUDGMENTS.

THE BIBLE HAS A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT THE MIND. THERE IS NO SINGLE WORD FOR MIND AND NONE FOR BRAIN. DIFFERENT TERMS DESCRIBE VARIOUS FUNCTIONS SUCH AS THE EMOTION, WILL, INTELLECT AS RELATED TO THAT ACTIVITY CALLED HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS. SINCE SATAN HAS A STRATEGY FOR THE MINDS OF MEN, WE SHOULD KNOW WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT. EPHESIANS 6:11 - THE WORD "WILES" IS THE GREEK METHODEIAS FROM WHICH WE GET THE ENGLISH WORD METHODS. BELIEVERS WERE WARNED TO UNDERSTAND SATAN'S SCHEMES. HIS BATTLE PLAN IS TO DECEIVE, DISARM AND DESTROY AND MUCH OF HIS ACTIVITY IS MIND-ORIENTED. II COR. 2:11 - THE WORD DEVICES IS THE GREEK WORD FOR MIND. IT REFERS TO DESIGNS OR PLANS AND ORIGINATE AND EMANATE FROM SATAN'S MIND. WE SHOULD KNOW WHAT IS IN "HIS BAG OF TRICKS."

I. THE BLINDED MIND - II COR. 4:4

UNDERSCORE THE MAJOR WORDS IN THIS VERSE. THE UNSAVED MAN WAS BORN SPIRITUALLY BLIND. (COMPARE KITTENS) HE WILL STAY THAT WAY UNTIL AND UNLESS HE HEARS THE GOSPEL WHICH ACTS AS SIGHT-GIVING AND LIGHT-GIVING TO THE SOUL. (USE SAUL OF TARSUS AND THE MAN IN ACTS 9 FOR ILLUSTRATION) THE NATURAL MAN IS "BLIND-MINDED" - THIS IS WORSE THAN ~~CLOTHES-MINDED~~ CLOSED FOR IT IS A BARRIER EVERY PERSON MUST FACE AND OVERCOME. NOT ONLY IS HE SPIRITUALLY BLIND BUT ALSO SPIRITUALLY DEAD! (EPHESIANS 2:1)

A. EPHESIANS 4:17 - THE WORD VANITY OR VAIN IN THE TEXT IS A WORD USED TO DESCRIBE SOMETHING THAT IS GOING NOWHERE. A PERSON WHO HAS MISSED THE GOAL OR TARGET (ROM. 3:23) LIKE MULLINS SPIRAL STAIRCASE IT LEADS

NOWHERE. THE UNSAVED MAN IS TREADING A RELIGIOUS TREADMILL. IT WILL KEEP HIM BUSY BUT NOT GET HIM ANYWHERE IN TERMS OF ETERNITY. THE VAIN MIND KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT GOD, HIS WILL OR PURPOSE FOR US IN CHRIST. THE WRITER OF ECCLESIASTES CAME TO A VAIN CONCLUSION REGARDING HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE.

B. COLOSSIANS 1:21 - THIS VERSE PAINTS THE NATURAL MAN IN DARK HUES - AN ENEMY OR HOSTILE PERSON AGAINST GOD'S LAWS, WILL AND CLAIM UPON HIS LIFE. HE RESISTS ANY AND ALL EFFORTS OF GOD IN HIS LIFE. (PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT RESISTANCE IS BOTH ACTIVE AND PASSIVE. SOME PEOPLE WILL NOD TO GOD, EVEN SPEAK HIS NAME IN PRAYER, BUT THEY ARE NOT FRIENDS!)

II. THE RENEWED MIND - EPHESIANS 4:23

IN THIS CHAPTER THERE ARE TWO WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE THE NEW MAN IN CHRIST. THE WORD NEOS MEANS NEW THAT HAD NOT EXISTED BEFORE. BOTH IDEAS ARE IN THIS CONTEXT. WHEN A PERSON GETS SAVED, GOD DOES A WONDERFUL WORK IN HIS MIND. ONCE HE SET GOALS FOR HIS OWN INTEREST, NOW HIS GOALS INCLUDE THE GLORY OF GOD. OLD (1) STORIES ARE DROPPED FROM THE ROSTER OF THE MIND. RELATE 1948 STORIES DROPPED IN THE MENTAL DUMPSTER NEVER TO BE BROUGHT UP AGAIN - NOT EVEN ONCE. (2) VOCABULARY - PROFANE AND GODLESS WORDS NO LONGER IN USE, PART OF THE OLD LIFE GONE FOREVER. (3) HABITS - PLACES AND PRACTICES ONCE PRIMARY NO LONGER SO. (4) ATTITUDES - THE LIE NOT A MAJOR WEAPON - GET EVEN NO LONGER IMPORTANT. THE MIND DID NOT CHANGE IN ESSENCE AND OPERATION BUT THE CONTENT SURE DID AND THE USAGE OF SUCH MATERIAL. IN ONE OF SWINDOLL'S BOOKS HE TELLS THE FOLLOWING STORY TO ILLUSTRATE

Nixon Tapes

A RENEWED MIND. HE SUGGESTS THAT THE CHRISTIAN LOOK AT HIMSELF AS LIVING IN AN APARTMENT HOUSE. HIS OLD LANDLORD MADE LIFE MISERABLE. HE CHARGED EXHORBITANT RENT AND WAS NEGLIGENT CONCERNING ITS UPKEEP. HE WOULD OFTEN ENTER THE APARTMENT UNANNOUNCED, LEAVE TERRIBLE MESSES BEHIND, THEN CHARGE EXTRA FOR CLEANING UP THE MESS. IN THE PROCESS OF TIME, A NEW LANDLORD TOOK OVER THE BUILDING. HE ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS GOING TO LIVE IN AND MANAGE THE APARTMENT. HE BROUGHT A DRAMATIC CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT. ONE DAY, THE OLD LANDLORD SHOWED UP AT THE DOOR, MEAN AS EVER, GROWLING, DEMANDING THE RENT. QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU DO? DO YOU PAY? OF COURSE NOT. IT IS NOT HIS BUILDING ANYMORE AND IN THE FACE OF HIS THREATS AND INTIMIDATION, YOU QUIETLY TELL HIM: "TAKE IT UP WITH THE NEW LANDLORD." IF HE KEEPS COMING BACK, THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS THE SAME. NOW THAT YOU ARE A BELIEVER, YOU HAVE A NEW LANDLORD AND WHEN THE DEVIL KNOCKS AT YOUR DOOR, SIMPLY REMIND HIM THAT YOU ARE UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT - SEND HIM TO JESUS!

III. THE TRANSFORMED MIND - ROMANS 12:2

THERE IS AN OVERLAPPING IN POINTS II AND III BUT THIS VERSE SEEMS TO EMPHASIZE DEDICATION AND SERVICE, EMPHASIZING THE RENEWING PROCESS FOR WHAT SWINDOLL HAS CALLED THE "MENTAL METAMORPHOSIS". THE BELIEVER IS NOT TO LET THE WORLD DECIDE AND DICTATE WHAT AND WHO WILL REGULATE HIS CONDUCT - GOD HAS THAT PREROGATIVE. THE WORLD WITH ITS FADS AND FASHIONS CHANGE BUT WE DO NOT GET OUR ETHICAL STANDARDS AND BELIEFS FROM SOCIETY ALONE - WE ARE TO STOP SAYING AMEN TO WHAT THE WORLD SAYS AND DOES BUT RATHER WE ARE TO FIND OUT WHAT JESUS CHRIST WANTS US TO DO AND DO IT!

IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK, SOMETHING MUST HAPPEN IN THE MIND.

A. PHILIPPIANS 2:5 - THE BELIEVER IS ENCOURAGED TO HAVE A MIND THAT REVEALS AND REFLECTS JESUS CHRIST. WHAT MOTIVATED HIM SHOULD MOTIVATE US. HIS ATTITUDE AND DISPOSITION SHOULD BE OURS. SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT OUR FAILURE TO DO THIS HAS MADE LITTLE OR NO IMPACT ON THE NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD. "THE WORLD DOES NOT BELIEVE IN HIM WHOM IT HAS NOT SEEN BECAUSE IT HAS NO CAUSE TO BELIEVE IN US WHOM IT HAS!" (J. STUART HOLDEN) ACCORDING TO THIS PASSAGE THE "TRANSFORMED MIND MANIFESTS THE FOLLOWING TRAITS."

1 - POSITION IS NOT PARAMOUNT - THE TRANSFORMED MIND DOES NOT COVET OR CLING TO POWER. IT IS CONTENT TO BE WHAT GOD WANTS US TO BE.

2 - WEALTH IS NOT ITS CHIEF GOAL IN LIFE - THE ALMIGHTY DOLLAR IS NOT ALMIGHTY WITH ALMIGHTY GOD! (II COR. 8:9 - HE HAD IT ALL AND GAVE IT UP FOR US.)

3 - DESIRES TO SERVE AND NOT BE SERVED - MARK 10:45 - THE KING OF KINGS LIVED IN A TIME OF CAESARS AND POMPOUS RULERS. HE CHOSE TO MANIFEST HIS LIFE AS A SERVANT!

IS IT POSSIBLE TO VIEW THIS VERSE FROM A PRACTICAL VIEWPOINT? HOW MAY WE HAVE SUCH A MIND? LET ME SUGGEST FOUR KEY WORDS.

(1) METHOD - NOTHING IS ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT A PLAN. IF THERE IS NO METHOD THERE IS NO MASTERY AND THERE MUST BE METHOD IN BIBLE STUDY.

(2) MEMORY - PSALM 119:11 - A MENTAL ASSAULT ON THE WORD OF GOD. COMMITTING IT TO THE MIND.

(3) MEDITATE - JOSHUA 1:8 - PRAYER IS PART OF THIS PROCESS. THE CHEWING ON THE CUD - MAKE SURE YOU'RE CHEWING ON THE RIGHT MORSELS.

(4) MOVE - GET GOING FOR GOD. I THESS. 1:8 - "SOUNDED OUT....SPREAD ABROAD...." THESE FOUR STEPS LEAD TO WHAT SOMEONE HAS CALLED "SATURATION SPIRITUALITY". WE NEED TO STOP SOAKING UP "STUFF" AND START SOAKING UP SCRIPTURE! W. E. SANGSTER TELLS THE FOLLOWING STORY: A MAN NAMED FRANK HAD HIS LIFE CHANGED BY THREE BRIEF PHONE CALLS. FRANK HAD A YOUNGER BROTHER NAMED ED. THE FATHER IN THE FAMILY DIED BEFORE THE BROTHERS WENT AWAY TO COLLEGE. FRANK TOOK THE OVER-SIGHT TO PROVIDE FOR HIS YOUNGER BROTHER'S EDUCATION. AFTER COLLEGE ED MARRIED AGNES. ED AND AGNES MOVED AWAY. A FEW YEARS LATER FRANK CAME TO TOWN, (1) PHONED HIS BROTHER - AGNES ANSWERED AND THEY WERE INVITED TO COME TO DINNER WITH FRANK THAT NIGHT. AGNES DECLINED SAYING THAT ED HAD A BUSINESS APPOINTMENT AND COULD NOT COME. DISAPPOINTED (2) FRANK CALLED AN OLD COLLEGE FRIEND AND ASKED HIM TO JOIN HIM FOR DINNER. AT THAT TIME, THE FRIEND REPLIED THAT HE WAS GOING TO ED AND AGNES' HOME FOR DINNER THAT NIGHT. STUNNED BY WHAT HE HAD HEARD AND BEFORE HE COULD RECOVER HIS BROTHER ED CALLED SAYING HE WAS TIED UP THAT NIGHT BUT WOULD FRANK HAVE LUNCH WITH HIM TOMORROW. FRANK MUMBLED SOME REPLY AND HUNG UP. NOW HE KNEW, HIS BROTHER AND SISTER-IN-LAW WERE HAVING A PARTY AT THEIR HOME AND NOT ONLY WAS HE NOT INVITED, THEY DIDN'T WANT HIM THERE. ALSO,

(3)

THEY HAD LIED TO HIM. NEXT MORNING, WHEN HIS BROTHER HAD GONE TO WORK, FRANK CALLED HIS SISTER-IN-LAW AND LET HER HAVE IT! SHE EXPLAINED THAT FRANK'S BROTHER HAD WANTED HIM AT THE PARTY BUT SHE DIDN'T BECAUSE HE WOULD HAVE SPOILED EVERYTHING. SHE TOLD THE STORY OF HOW WHEN THEY CAME TO TOWN ONE REASON WAS TO GET AWAY FROM FRANK. SHE SAID: "YOU DOMINATE EVERYTHING. YOU'RE A BIG SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN AND IN EVERY CONVERSATION YOU MUST BE THE CENTER. IF YOUR BROTHER TELLS A STORY, YOU HAVE TO TELL A BETTER ONE, IF HE EXPRESSES AN OPINION, YOU WILL EXPRESS A DIFFERENT ONE AND TRY TO MAKE HIM LOOK FOOLISH. THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT DINNER MEETING FOR YOUR BROTHER WITH IMPORTANT PEOPLE THERE AND I WANTED HIM TO PUT FORWARD HIS BEST FOOT AND WITH YOU THERE HE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT." AFTER SEVERAL FEEBLE PROTESTS HIS SISTER-IN-LAW SAID, "YOU OUGHT TO GET WISE TO YOURSELF." THAT PHRASE BEGAN A SELF-EXAMINATION PERIOD FOR FRANK IN WHICH HE BEGAN TO SEE WHAT OTHERS SAW WAS A SIDE OF HIMSELF TO WHICH HE HAD BEEN BLIND ALL OF HIS LIFE. POINT: WE NEVER MAKE REAL SPIRITUAL PROGRESS UNTIL WE SEE OURSELVES AS WE REALLY ARE. UNTIL WE DO, WE WILL NEVER SEE THE NEED FOR A TRANSFORMED MIND.