

OBSERVATIONS IN AMOS

This writer is currently in the Book of Amos in his Bible reading program. The Book speaks of the national sins of a nation which ultimately was brought to destruction. When Amos came onto the scene, the nation was enjoying peace and prosperity. He warned them that their rejection of God and moral principles would bring them to inevitable judgment. Let us consider some of the great lessons outlined in the Book.

1:1

This verse compared to 7:14-15 indicates Amos' humble background. He was a fruit picker and a shepherd by occupation. He lived in a town called Tekoa about 12 miles south of Jerusalem. It was a country town and Amos was a country boy. He had little or no formal training. Amos started preaching in Bethel, which was the capital of the northern kingdom and the center of culture and learning. What a contrast from the backwoods of Tekoa to the boulevards of Bethel. By contrast, Amaziah was the professional preacher, backed by the organized religious system of the day and well favored in the eyes of the rich. God chose an Amos, who was pure in heart but lacking in sophistication, to warn His people to repent. Often this is the way God has worked in history. God does not need our talent nearly so much as our dedication to Him.

2:7

One of Israel's primary sins was that they professed to be the people of God but they misrepresented God by the way they lived. Their lives profaned God's holy name. Even their forms of worship were sin. Their houses of God were centers of sin where temple priestess performed sex acts in the name of religion. The following verses in this chapter indicate that drunkenness when hand-in-hand with their immorality.

2:13

One translation of this verse in Hebrew reads, "I will press you, as a cart presseth." God was reminding the nation that as a cart cuts deep ruts in a road, so He would bring pressures to bear upon the nation in turning them back to God. God has ways of making men heed His message, even when they seek to put it out of their minds.

3:3

This verse is one of the great principle verses of the Bible. F. B. Meyer says "Whether in marriage, or business, or journeying together, be very sure that you are in perfect accord with your companion before you start. What sorrow might have been saved in thousands of cases if only there had been stricter comparison of temperaments and methods before starting forth!" God has laid down certain requirements for those who walk with Him. We disobey these Bible principles to our peril.

4:12

This verse may well be the best known evangelistic text in the Old Testament. For those who are in Christ, there is no fear of future judgment. However, men need to be reminded that there is coming a day when men must meet God and preparation for that day is essential.

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OBSERVATIONS IN AMOS

The prophet Amos prophesied to the nation of Israel concerning coming judgment. His warning seemed very unlikely because Israel was at the height of its power and a program of peace and prosperity was everywhere present in the nation. They could not see that in less than 50 years the nation would be completely overrun by the Assyrians. Amos preached to a hardened generation of wicked people. Outwardly, he had little success, but even in this unpopular ministry, he was faithful to his calling.

8:1-3

God used symbols to show Israel the reality of coming judgment. In these verses, Amos saw a basket of fruit. It was fruit no longer hanging on the tree where it might continue to grow. The fact that it had been picked showed that it could no longer be preserved. By way of illustration, God was showing that Israel was like decaying fruit, the time of their end was near. According to verse 3, the songs of their temple worship would soon turn into howlings of misery.

8:4-6

The deplorable, moral condition of the nation is described in these verses. It was a time when the wealthy and the influential traded on the plight of the poor. The poor were victims of greedy and lustful men. It was a time when deceit was the primary word in the marketplace. One could not be sure that any commercial transaction would be carried out fairly. According to verse 6, human life was very cheap. A debtor unable to pay his debts could be sold for the price of a pair of sandals. It has always been true that with the spread of the gospel there has come liberty and a high regard for human life.

8:11

Israel would not listen to the prophets of God who proclaimed the Word of God. The time when the Word of God was held precious had departed from the nation. God predicted that a kind of famine, far worse than anything physical, would plague the nation. God would withdraw His Word from their hearing. Men who turn their back on the Holy Scriptures and trample under foot God's Word pay a terrible price. Christendom is guilty of this very sin. The thought of no bread to nurture one's physical body is a distressing thought, but even more distressing is the idea that God's Word would not be available to comfort and nurture the starving soul.

9:4

The usage of the term "evil" with reference to God does not refer to moral but rather physical evil. (Compare Isaiah 45:7. Compare plagues on Pharaoh in Egypt.)

(Over)

THE OFFICES IN THE CHURCH

Robert Spradling

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The offices of a local church are two in number: the Bishop or Elder and Deacon. In the New Testament the term bishop and elder refer to the same office. The word bishop refers to the primary function of the office, that is, an overseer. The word elder refers to the honor or dignity attached to the position. In ancient nations and tribes, often the older men were the accepted rulers of the people. This was generally true of the elders of the Jewish nation. However, the term gradually came to be used of a group of rulers regardless of age. The separation of the function of elder and bishop is not a New Testament separation but rather a development which occurred in church history. In the New Testament there was no indication that either of these offices existed apart from a local church. These offices originated through a given local church and the extent of their authority was limited to that of a local congregation. There is no New Testament reference to a bishop presiding over a number of local churches.

This study will deal with the first of these offices, namely that of a bishop or elder. The primary emphasis in the New Testament has to do with the personal qualifications and duties of an elder. In the New Testament our Lord was called a bishop. (I Peter 2:25) Peter, John and others were called elders. (Cf. I Peter 5:1; II John 2:2) Throughout the Word of God this office is one of solemn responsibility but also one having rich reward. (Cf. I Peter 5:1-4) There is a special crown for elders who are faithful in the discharge of their ministry. The two primary passages on the qualifications of an elder are I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. A comparison of these two passages of Scripture will strengthen the statement that a bishop and elder refer to the same person. A look at the Timothy passage indicates the following qualifications for a bishop.

- (1) He must be a man-V.1. There were no women elders in the New Testament. The very nature of the office excluded women. Since it is the function of this office to rule, a woman elder would violate the very principle which was set down by Paul in I Timothy 2:11-12. This principle in no way violates the principle of women missionaries or of women serving in the local church. The point of this passage is that women should not be the official teacher or dispenser of doctrine in the local church. This responsibility is reserved to the bishop. It would also be difficult for a woman to be "the husband of one wife"-V.2.
- (2) The bishop must be the husband of one wife-V.2. This does not mean that a single man cannot be the pastor of a church. The emphasis of the passage is on family relationships. The bishop must be one who has his own house, including his children, in subjection. If a bishop's family is not well ordered, how could it be expected that the members of a congregation could follow his example in this regard? A bishop must be the husband of one wife, not many. Paul does not say that he must be the husband of a wife, but the emphasis is that he can have only one. This does not mean one at a time, it means one for as long as he or she lives. In my opinion, this excludes men who have been divorced from the office of bishop. Dr. Homer Kent, Jr. says: "Consequently, when men were to be considered for this high office, there must be no record of divorce or other marital infidelity in the candidate, even before his conversion. A very practical reason for this restriction is seen. Extremely embarrassing complications might occur in the church if the minister's divorced wife, mistress, illegitimate children, or children of other marriages should come to light. Since such a condition would at least lay him open to reproach, it would violate the general qualification of blamelessness." Any situation of divorce or remarriage, regardless of the circumstances, would prohibit a man from being a "one-woman man".

THE ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Robert Spradling

February 1971

A study of the New Testament reveals the existence of organization in the early local churches. The development of this organization was gradual. The growth and development of organization came into being to deal with growth of the church and with problems which arose. The organizational aspects of the early church can be seen in the structure set forth in the New Testament. (1) There were leaders, Philippians 1:1. (2) The will of the church was made known through elections, Acts 6:5-6. (3) There were regularly scheduled meetings in the early church, Acts 20:7. (4) There was a membership list with standards of requirements for members. Cf. I Timothy 5:9 and I Corinthians 5:13. (5) There was order and arrangement in church worship. Cf. I Corinthians 11:23-26, 14:47. (6) Regular giving was part of the worship and service of the church. Cf. I Corinthians 16:1-2. The organization of the early church was functional rather than decorative in purpose. The needs of the church determined the extent of its organization. Everything in the church was designed to promote the preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of believers.

There are four basic types of church government. 1. The Papal system - the authority in this system is centered in the Pope. 2. The Episcopal system - the authority of this type of church government rests in the bishops. 3. The Presbyterian system - the authority of this system rests or is centered in the elders. 4. The Congregational system - the authority of this type of church government is centered in the local church membership. A study of the New Testament reveals that each local church has absolute authority in the management of its own affairs. No outside church hierarchy has any control over a local church. The local church has the authority and responsibility to elect its own leadership. Cf. Acts 6:1-6. Even the Apostles did not presume to choose the leaders of a local church without calling upon the church to take such action. The local church has the authority to discipline its own members. Cf. I Corinthians 5:13. The Apostle Paul in dealing with a morals problem did not take the authority to deal with such a person but rather called upon the local church to take action. (Pastors are not the policemen of local churches. Any disciplinary action must come from the congregation itself.) Every local church has the authority and responsibility to deal with its own internal problems. Cf. I Corinthians 6:1-5. In matters pertaining to different local churches, each church is sovereign in its affairs. Any association between churches in the New Testament was purely a voluntary matter. Cf. Acts 15:22-30, where even the Apostles did not dictate policy to local churches. Someone has well said: "The authority of a local church is final as far as its own affairs are concerned. There is no higher court." (A. J. McClain) The fact that a local church is autonomous in nature, does not prohibit co-operation between churches of like faith. It is apparent that church co-operation existed in the New Testament. However, such co-operation did not involve outside interference in its own internal affairs. Local churches are wholly fit to govern themselves.

OUR CHURCH LIBRARY

Robert Spradling

March 1972

The general reading pattern of most church libraries is in the area of biography or fiction. However, there are many wonderful books on the shelves of our church library that have never been discovered. This list was prepared for the purpose of introducing you to some of these "hidden friends".

1. A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament - Robert Dick Wilson
2. A Guide to the Gospel-W. Graham Scroggie (One of the most helpful books in studying the gospels available.)
3. Biblical Theology of the New Testament-Charles Ryrie (Very readable and very helpful.)
4. Biblical Demonology-Unger
5. Disciplined by Grace-Strombeck
6. God's Prophecies for Plain People-William L. Pettingill (This book has never been checked out - a gold mine of Biblical information.)
7. God's Method for Holy Living-Donald G. Barnhouse (More excellent sermons from Barnhouse's pen.)
8. Great Leaders of the Christian Church-Moyer
9. George Mueller of Bristol-Pierson
10. General Biblical Introduction-Miller
11. God's Provision for Holy Living-William Culbertson (A paper back but a valuable one.)
12. Hours in the Bible-Cunningham Geikie (5 volume set of Old Testament history - excellent material.)
13. His Own Received Him Not, But...-Donald G. Barnhouse (Some of Barnhouse's sermons in book form. Good, helpful reading.)
14. How I Know God Answers Prayer-Goforth
15. His Salvation-Harrison
16. Hudson Taylor in Early Years-Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor
17. Jesus, the Messiah-Alfred Edersheim (Edersheim, a converted Jew, and an excellent scholar. Anything he writes is worth reading.)
18. Landmarks of Old Testament History-Cunningham Geikie
19. Lectures in Systematic Theology-Thiessen
20. Life on the Highest Plain-Ruth Paxton (A classic on the deeper life.)
21. Life by the Son-Donald G. Barnhouse

22. My Servants, the Prophets-Edward J. Young
23. Methods of Bible Study-W. H. Griffith-Thomas (This book has never been checked out of the library and is an excellent survey of Bible study methods.)
24. Methods in Prayer-W. Graham Scroggie
25. None of These Diseases-S. I. McMillen (A doctor's analysis of the wholesome effect of the Christian life in relationship to diseases which affect mind and body. A must for every Christian to read!)
26. Orientalisms in the Bible-Rice
27. Old Fashioned Bible Themes-A. H. Stewart
28. Peloubets Bible Dictionary (There are several editions of this excellent dictionary for serious Bible students.)
29. Peace with God-Billy Graham
30. Prayer-Asking and Receiving-John R. Rice
31. Peace In the Valley-Havner
32. So Great Salvation-Strombeck
33. The Shepherd Psalm-F. B. Meyer (A wonderful work on the 23rd Psalm)
34. The Annotated Bible-A. C. Gaebelin (An entire set of commentaries on most of the major books of the Bible.)
35. The Great Doctrines of the Bible-William Evans (One of the most popular books on doctrine in print.)
36. The Life of Our Lord-S. J. Andrews (A classic on the life of Christ.)
37. The Ministry of Intercession-Murray
38. The Progress of Worldwide Missions-Glover
39. The Bible Basis of Missions-Glover (One of finest elementary books on missions in print.)
40. The Secret of Christian Joy-Havner
41. The Sunday School in Action-Benson
42. The Grace of God-Ryrie
43. The Signs of the Times-Haldeman
44. The Leaven of the Sadducees-Gordon (A difficult book to read but well worth the time for it shows the movement of schools and denominations toward liberalism.)
45. What's the Answer?-H. A. Ironside (An excellent book on Bible questions most frequently asked Dr. Ironside.)
46. Why Is Christianity True?-Ely Mullins (Great reading for one who wants to think about their faith.)
47. Words of the Lord Jesus (Several volumes on the life of Christ-excellent reading.)

There are a number of interesting books on missionaries and missionary activities. One of the classics in this section is Fox' Book of Martyrs. However, there are several excellent works which will challenge every reader. Also, there are several copies of the Christian classic Pilgrim's Progress-John Bunyan. Every Christian should read this work. Not much comment will be made regarding the fiction books because these usually have a wide circulation. This paper is an attempt to get the Lord's people to read something substantial for growth and development of the Christian life. As a closing remark: When you are browsing through the library-take time to look through the catalog section of Christian colleges and Bible schools, there to assist young people in evaluating Christian schools. Make yourselves a goal for the next month - read one of these books! It will open up a whole new world of blessing for you.

OUR DAILY LIFE

Robert Spradling

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Several years ago, a friend was talking with a Negro cleaning lady. He asked if she enjoyed her work. "Yes sir," was the reply, "but it's just so daily." This lady was expressing her dread of the routine of life. In this regard, she spoke for many people who have grown weary of the daily aspects of life. However, for the Christian there should be more to life than the dull routine. Every new day provides an opportunity to serve Christ. Each day can be an adventure with Christ. The Scripture has much to say regarding matters which are "daily" for the believer.

I. OUR DAILY PROVISION - Matthew 6:11

There is a tendency to forget that God makes possible the provisions of life. We are prone to think of our daily needs with reference to self-effort and ability. In reality, we are all dependent upon the Lord. We drink His water, breathe His air, enjoy His sunlight and rain and often without much thought or gratitude in our hearts. Matthew recognized that God is the ultimate source of all blessings. Even our daily food comes from His hand. God has made provision for the spiritual aspects of life. (Job 23:12, Jeremiah 15:16) One of the privileges available for the believer is the careful study of God's Word on a daily basis for growth purposes. (Acts 17:11)

II. OUR DAILY CRUCIFIXION - Luke 9:23, I Corinthians 15:31

Some Christians think of their Christian life in terms of "one". One decision, one act of dedication, one moment of sacrifice, one soul led to Christ, one week each year during the revival and that is as far as Christian dedication and service goes. Paul viewed his Christian life as a daily dedication. The cross in Bible times was an instrument of death. The man who carried a cross was identified with the shame of that instrument. Paul saw himself as a man who had died to his old life with it's sins and aspirations. He was now alive in Christ. His victory in the Christian life was a moment by moment process. Sanctification was a daily growth. There are no pills or cure-alls for instant success in the Christian life. Each day must be lived hour by hour with it's successes and failures. In Paul's life, Christ came first. He forgot his own interests and made Christ the center and circumference of his life. The way of self-renunciation is the way of Christian development. One reason for the wide-spread unhappiness among professing Christians can be traced to failure to abide by this Christian principle. To deny something is to say "No" to it. To deny oneself is to say no to selfish desires which conflict with Christian living.

III. OUR DAILY OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY - II Corinthians 11:28

God's work was primary with Paul. The establishing of local churches and the oversight of these was the heart and soul of Paul's ministry. Churches required care and could not be left to a casual ministry. Churches which Paul had established needed constant attention if they were to grow. The spiritual responsibility of these churches was shouldered by Paul and it was done so willingly, joyfully and successfully.

PHYSICAL DEATH

Robert Spradling

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Death is not a subject men enjoy discussing. Even though man knows it is the inevitable experience of all, there is much about the experience that is unknown and undesirable. As a matter of fact, the Bible portrays death as a man's last great enemy. (I Corinthians 15:24-26). Regardless of how much well-meaning and loving friends might want to cushion the jarring effects, death is not referred to as a blessing to the believer.

In the Old Testament, there is a certain amount of dread and gloom associated with death. (Psalm 6:5-6). The reason for this lies in the idea of progressive revelation. However, there was some light in certain places to dispel the darkness. (cf. Job 19:25 ff. Psalm 16:8-11).

When one comes to the New Testament, an entirely different atmosphere prevails regarding death. Christ took away its power and offers comfort and encouragement to the believer. (Romans 8:38).

1. Hebrews 2:14-15.

The believer need not fear death. Any fears the Christian might have are groundless. The area of sway and the haunting fears death once held for men is now gone. Even though Satan is not extinct, in this area his power is curtailed. Calvary sealed his doom. (John 13:31; 16:11).

2. I Thessalonians 5:10-11.

In this passage Paul uses two words which encourage the believer, "wake" / "sleep". It does not matter whether we are dead or alive at the end of this dispensation, we will live together with Him. The results of this great truth should both comfort and edify the brethren. (v.11). Even though we are assured of being with the Lord, most people do not relish death primarily because it separates from loved ones. When persons become advanced in years and most of their loved ones have gone on to glory, they find their desire to pass over to the other side is heightened.

3. I Corinthians 15:51.

It is possible for the believer to adopt the same pessimistic attitude toward life that characterizes many of the unredeemed. The Bible teaches that death is not inevitable to the believer. There will be a generation of saints who will be "changed" at the coming of the Lord. The "Blessed Hope" of the believer is the prospect that He may come today. (Titus 2:11-13).

F. B. Meyer has summed up this subject very well:

"How shall they die who have already died in Christ? That which others call death, we call sleep. We dread it no more than sleep. Our bodies lie down exhausted with the long working-day, to awake in the fresh energy of the eternal morning; but in the meanwhile the spirit is presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (The Way Into the Holiest).

One of the most helpful pieces of literature on this subject is a booklet by Dr. Lehman Strauss entitled "When Loved Ones Are Taken In Death".

THE PILLOW OF PROVIDENCE
Psalm 103:19-22

Recently, I heard a minister speak of his belief in luck. He said he believed in both good and bad luck. This, of course, is contrary to the teaching of the Word of God. There is no such thing as blind chance in the life of a Christian. However, this man may have been the victim of misunderstanding correct terms. Had he said he believed in the providence of God which involves both physical good and physical evil, then his assumption would have been correct. Dr. Alva McClain defines providence as, "that continuous work of the triune God whereby He controls all things of the universe for the purpose of certainly bringing about fulfillment of His own wise and loving plan, in ways consistent with the free moral agency of His creatures." Providence, then, is the divine care of God in providing for the movement of the universe toward a goal which God has predetermined. Everything in this world is under the scrutiny and absolute control of God, who will bring all things to pass according to His eternal purpose and plan without failure. There is absolutely nothing outside the control of God. He guides the world's movement according to His own plan. A friend of mine likes to refer to the affairs of human history as being "right on schedule." This may sound like an oversimplification, but it is absolutely true.

The doctrine of providence is affirmed repeatedly in the Word of God. In Daniel 4:17, Nebuchadnezzar was taught this great truth. Nebuchadnezzar was living under the delusion that he was the master of his own fate. God let this ruler learn a lesson in providence, namely, that earthly kings should never forget that God is in control of the affairs of human history. No man ascends to leadership over any nation apart from God's providential control. To be sure, the Bible teaches that God sometimes permits wicked men to do what they purpose to do. (Acts. 14:16) However, God reminds us that He accomplishes His will even through the heathen. Yet, they are responsible for their acts and must pay the penalty of sin. (Isaiah 10:5-15) The Bible also teaches that God permits evil devices to be carried out, but even in these activities God is giving direction. Genesis 50:20 is a prime example. God took the evil plans of Joseph's brethren and used these plans for the good of Joseph and the entire nation of Israel. In Proverbs 21:1, we are told "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." This verse speaks of God's sovereignty among His subjects. Someone has well said that God's providence extends from "the fall of a raindrop to the fall of an empire." Esther 6:1 demonstrates how God, in his providential dealings with men, can change the entire course of human history with such a minor thing as insomnia! The history of Israel pivoted around the events of this night when a heathen king could not sleep.

The providence of God is one of the comforting doctrines of the Bible for the Christian. Romans 8:28 is the most familiar passages in the New Testament on this subject. This verse is a pillow for the tired hearts of God's children. Whatever comes into the life of a Christian must come through the fingers of God. It is impossible for the Devil to "get at" the Christian apart from God's permissive will. The writer of Proverbs was so sure that God controlled the insignificant events of life to such an extent that he described the most insignificant action imaginable in Proverbs 16:33. Even to the toss of a coin, God's providential care is demonstrated. Many of God's people believe that God controls the larger things of history, such as the rise and fall of nations, but that He is not concerned with the small

(Over)

"PRACTICAL POINTS FROM PROVERBS"

The Books of Psalms pictures the Christian on his knees while the Book of Proverbs pictures him on his feet. The subject of Proverbs span the spectrum of human emotions and experiences. The book was given to man in order that man might learn to fear the Lord, and understand more about himself and the experience and relationships of life. The book speaks of practical conduct as well as perceptive sayings. It deals with one of man's major problems, namely, how to live in this world.

The early verses of chapter one speak of man's relationships. (Verse 7) - a correct relationship to God. (Verse 8) - a proper family relationship. (Verse 10) - care concerning associates and friends. (Verse 20-31) a proper response to wisdom. However, Verse 33 seems to sum up the material in the chapter. The man who is wise in his relationships may be assured of peace and safety in life because of his wise pursuits.

The key to a life free from fear is to know God. Only those who know the Lord can look with hope into the future. There is nothing on the human scene that can disturb the man whose trust is in God. Poverty, sickness and even death besides a sea of troubles may roar at the Christian's feet, but inward calm is the possession of the persons whose complete trust is in the Lord. (Rom.8:35-39) It is impossible to move the believer whose full confidence is in God.

SUGGESTION:

Read Proverbs Chapter 1 and List one practical point you will put into practice tomorrow.

1. By the grace of God, I will _____
_____.

PRACTICAL POINTS IN PROVERBS

Proverbs 2

A careful reading of this chapter indicates the recurring theme or subject of "paths". Solomon is writing words of wisdom to his son.

The first path which the writer of Proverbs mentions is called "every good path" - Verse 9. In the first section of the chapter, Solomon is encouraging his son to pursue the path of knowledge and wisdom. This requires a great deal of personal effort and sacrifice. Verse 4 suggests that the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom comes only as one searches diligently for them as for hidden treasures. Wise is the man who recognizes that one of life's chief goals is the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom in preference to material gain. This is a lesson parents need to pass on to their children. Proper education in the early formative years of one's life is vital. Young people need to be exposed to a wide amount of training. The path of wisdom is the proper path to choose. Seek it diligently is the encouragement of the writer of Proverbs.

The second path mentioned in the chapter is the path of evil men - Verse 12. This way of life, is called the way of darkness. The young are admonished to stay away from evil men and their evil ways. These men enjoy their crooked paths according to Verses 14 and 15. Everything they do is wrong. Wise is the young person who selects his companions and associates in life not for physical attractiveness or social status but rather for proper conduct. It is true that the measure of a man is often the kind of friends he makes.

The third path in this chapter is called the path to death. In Verse 16 thru 19, Solomon warns his son about the "strange woman" which is the Bible way of referring to the prostitute. Sexual perversion on the part of the young may seem to be adventurous and thrilling. However, the person who seeks this kind of life will find there is no way back from its destruction. Verse 19 says "none" return who take this path. It is the path of doom and destruction. People who take a light view of the sexual permissiveness need to read carefully the warnings of the Bible. No society or civilization has escaped ruin that has taken a perverted view of sex.

By contrast, Chapter 3:5-6 the man who trusts in God is assured of God's direction of his steps through life. Also, in 4:18-19 the contrast of the wicked and the righteous is set forth under the imagery of paths. Path of the just is like a light with all of the blessings and benefits light brings to the world. By contrast the way of the wicked is that of darkness which causes men to stumble along life's way.

PRACTICAL POINTS IN PROVERBS
Chapter 3

This chapter contains many practical helps to the Christian, however, we will consider just three in our current studies.

I. GUIDANCE - vs. 5-6

The person who would know the Lord's leading in his life must put away all desire for personal fame and influence for influence sake alone. The Christian does not live for applause and approval of men. His goal should be to honor and please God. Let us look to Him, putting His will ahead of everything else. It is easy to establish a course of life based on our own judgments and opinions without consulting Him. The best possible way of finding peace and satisfaction in this life is to seek the Lord's will and do it no matter what the costs.

II. GIVING - vs. 9-10

This principle of being generous does not mention tithing. However, it is assumed that the man who loves God will be careful about cheating Him in the realm of material giving. These verses promise God's blessing and abundance upon those who are generous in giving to the Lord. God wants more than lip service from His people. One of the real tests of true devotion to God is the "money test". If God is not Lord of our bankbook, He is not Lord of our lives. (Cf. Malachi 3:8-10, 1 Cor. 16:1-2)

III. GOODNESS - vs. 27-29

When you and I have passed away, people will not remember our achievements for very long. The lingering virtues are kindness and goodness. We could learn a very helpful lesson from Solomon on how to reach our neighbors for Christ. It is easier to preach to them than to love them. It is easier to condemn them than it is to help them. However, the way of opening their heart usually comes by opening our hands.

The New Testament abounds with the idea of doing good. (Titus 3:8) Someone has well said: "When I dig a man out of a hole, the pit from which I lift him becomes a grave where I bury my own sorrows."

A rich man once asked a Christian why he was condemned by so many when it was known that all of his wealth would go to charity when he died. "Well" replied the believer, "it's like the story of the pig and the cow." The pig was lamenting to the cow about his lack of popularity. "People are always talking about your gentleness and kindness," said the pig. "You give milk and cream, but I give even more--I give bacon and ham. Still nobody likes me." The cow thought for a moment and replied: "Maybe it's because I give while I'm still living."

The order of these three key words is significant. The person who wants the Lord's leading in his life will be generous in his giving and gracious in his living.

PRACTICAL POINTS IN PROVERBS4:18

Solomon speaks of life as two ways. The way of the righteous is characterized by light. The life of the Christian should be one of personal holiness which will influence the world for good around him. The way of the wicked is characterized by darkness. His life is a drain on the good of society because his deeds are not done "in the light." (John 3:19)

4:23

What a person thinks will determine his conduct. If his thinking is incorrect, his life will produce the wrong kind of fruit. New Testament Commentary on this verse is Mark 7:18-23 and Phil. 4:8.

5:21

This verse speaks of the omniscience of God. The word "pondereth" means He "weighs carefully" our goings. The verse also suggests that "He maketh level all His paths" (A.S.U.) It is comforting to know that the Lord goes before us leveling the road ahead in order that we will not stumble and fall. Every person will have a certain amount of suffering, sorrow, and trials in life. A fair amount is necessary for proper development. However, we have the assurance that we need not be stopped in our forward progress for God. (Jude 24)

6:20-23

If Solomon so instructed his son, how much more should the believer ponder the instructions of God. "The man who meditates on the Word of God by day will not be troubled by evil dreams at night." (F. B. Meyer) (Psalm 1)

6:27-35

These verses show the sheer folly of adultery. There is no way to win in such an affair. It opens up all kinds of unseen evil which rises up to haunt and choke its victim. Good advice for a generation like ours that believes "sex sins" can be committed without penalty.

7:7,22,27

Solomon knew the power of the sins of the flesh, especially among the young. It would be difficult to write a clearer, more forceful warning than the graphic terms in these verses. The harlots house is the way of death. (A good verse to consider in the light of current T.V. emphasis and the attempt to picture the harlot as "acceptable" in our society.)

8:13

Wisdom in the Proverbs is not an abstract quality alone but also refers to a person, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer who would know the wisdom of God will find it in His dear Son. (1 Cor. 1:30)

PRACTICAL POINTS IN PROVERBS

Robert K. Spradling

September, 1974

9:4 Life is filled with choices. Every person is required to chose every day. In this chapter, the phrase "whoso is simple" is used twice. The first call is from wisdom. The second is from the foolish woman. The voices are many which call to the young. It is always easier to follow the road to sin but the consequences are grave. Wisdom appeals to that which is best in man. Only the grace of God can enable us to overcome the temptations of the world.

10:2 In the Monday morning newspaper, there was a story about a well-known writer who had died at age 53. A novel which she had written was in its 55th. paperback edition. It had sold over 17 million copies. For her contribution to the sensual world of lust and sex, this woman went to an early grave. QUESTION: What good is her wealth to her now? Solomon gave the answer years ago. A police officer told this writer that he had never known a bootlegger to die at peace or enjoying his ill gotten game. (Comment on the tragedy of the Kennedy family.)

10:22 The wise man will make the blessing of the Lord his choice of riches. This kind of riches toward God does not bring heartache and sorrow with it. People who ignore God's warnings in the Bible are destined to live lives of sorrow and dissatisfaction even though they may not fully understand why.

11:1 This verse is God's commentary concerning His expectation in the commercial world. Men who cheat and deceive others must be prepared to answer to God.

11:2 Pride in the life leads to destruction. The New Testament teaches us that "God resisteth the proud." There is an unseen hand moving against all men who do not walk in lowly submission to the God of the Bible.

11:24 The world measures wealth by how much a man gains. God measures life by how much a man gives. F.B. Meyer has well said "We are bidden to measure our life by its losses rather than by its gains; by the blood poured out, rather than by its storage in the arteries of life; by its sacrifices, rather than its self-preservation; by its gifts, rather than its accumulations. He is the richest man in the esteem of the world who has gotten most; he is richest in the esteem of heaven who has given most."

11:30 There is some question concerning the true interpretation of this verse. In all probability it has nothing to do with evangelism. However in principle, it has everything to do with evangelism! There is no better principle in all of the Word of God than to major on winning souls to Jesus Christ. In all of my experience, I have never met a bitter disgruntled soul-winner in a church. The man who puts the large measure of his time into efforts to win the lost is usually a very spiritually healthy person.

PRACTICAL POINTS IN PROVERBS

Robert K. Spradling

October, 1974

12:13 In the makeup and order of human government, God has built in some safeguards to detect and punish evil doers. One snare is the liar's own tongue. The person who holds a strong allegiance to truth is assured of God's defense and deliverance from trouble. Our system of jurisprudence is based on this principle that truth will prevail. The person who seeks to defend a lie will eventually be caught in the web of his own words.

12:20 & 25 Solomon speaks of two psychological principles. The person who imagines evil or believes others are plotting evil against him possesses a deceitful heart. It is not possible for that person to live a life of peace and joy because his own over-active imagination will torment him day and night. In verse 25 Solomon speaks of the heavy burden of the troubled heart. He also makes mention of the fact that a word of encouragement has wonderful therapeutic value. Every person knows how much a pat on the back or a simple word of appreciation can change our whole outlook on a given situation.

13:3 This verse speaks of the inadvisability of speaking that which we do not know to be true. The person who refuses to give expression to gossip or unkind words will choke and strangle such ideas. The person who perpetually pours out the foolishness of his own heart in a torrent of words simply gratifies the evil nature that is in all of us. If, on the contrary, we refuse to voice these words we save ourselves from untold misery. The tongue will keep most believers in more "hot water" than any other single item.

14:30 America seems to be obsessed with the desire for comedy. Everywhere, comedians are paid high salaries to make us laugh. However, Solomon knew that even behind the veil of laughter oftentimes the heart is heavy and sorrowful. We make a grave mistake in assuming that laughter reflects a joyful heart. As a matter of fact, it may cover a great deal of deep-seated grief.

The word "sound" is literally translated "tranquil". The person, who is at peace with God and who seeks to make his one aim in life to please God, will discover that one by-product of such a life will be peace and tranquility of heart. The person who makes the primary goal of life to please himself will find peace has vanished.

14:34 Any nation that abandons the principle of moral righteousness as part of the warp and woof of its social fabric, is doomed for the rubbish heap of history. Our nation is rapidly moving away from righteousness and rapidly down that road of ruin.

15:1 This verse put into practical application could save many of us from the heartache of personal conflict with our fellow man.

15:8 "We too seldom consider the pleasure that the prayer of his people gives to God. Often we go to Him with no other thought than to find relief from the pressure of anxiety or sin. We hardly realize that He is looking for our coming because He loves us. Nothing delights Him more than the time we consecrate to heartfelt fellowship with Him." (F. B. Meyer)

These verses have touched the surface of the many wise and practical suggestions which Solomon passes on to men of all generations. Let us put into practice some of these great principles for Christian living. Recently the following para-

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16:2 Solomon puts his finger on one of man's most difficult problems, namely, to see the wickedness of his own heart. In every man, there is the repeated effort to justify his deeds. Simply because he wants to do as he wills and not as God directs. This verse explains why men will go to any lengths, including repeated lies, to justify himself in the eyes of his fellow man. The writer of Proverbs reminds us that God sees through this kind of activity and weighs our actions on the scales of divine justice.

16:3 Oftentimes we attempt to manage the Lord's work as if it were our own. One of the most difficult things to do in a local church is to subordinate ourselves to the place of simply trying to do the Lord's will and lay the responsibility for success in the Lord's work at His feet. This verse is especially helpful to our church as we begin an enormous financial expansion program. The success of our building program rests squarely upon the Lord. We are required to have vision, to be prudent in finances and planning, but the ultimate responsibility and success of any local church belongs to the Lord. Too often, we tend to look upon the Lord's work as any other kind of business or operation. This is a grave mistake.

16:7 This verse does not say that the believer will never have enemies. It does say that it is possible for a believer to live in the world without great animosity and hatred even from his enemies. The spiritual Christian will do his best to keep from antagonizing even his opponents. However, the one responsible for peace in our personal lives and in our churches is the Lord himself.

16:8 This verse tells Solomon's philosophy for times of recession. Our greatest need in America is not economic in nature but rather moral and spiritual. The man who is right with God and walking in fellowship with Him does not necessarily need all of the trappings of materialism to be happy. As a matter of fact, multiplication of goods is no guarantee of happiness. If such were the case, the happiest people in the world would be the wealthiest; but every person knows this is not the case.

16:9 The natural tendency of man is to plot and chart his own course through life. For the believer, the wise approach is to trust the Lord to direct our every step.

16:13 Everywhere in the Bible, pride is mentioned as something which God not only hates but resists. Pride is like a millstone around the neck of any person. It leads once and forever downward with no hope of rescue until it has been abandoned either in part or in full measure. These are strong words for all of us who have a tendency to be proud of the flesh.

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17:1 - Apart from the moral and spiritual benefit of this verse, there is a health factor involved. Physicians remind us that it is very important that we eat our meals in a favorable atmosphere for digestive reasons. Solomon knew that it was far better to eat a few crusts of bread in peace than to have a sumptuous meal in an atmosphere of strife and argument. The dinner table should be a place of wholesome conversation and not a place of conflict.

17:5 - This verse, along with others, reminds all mankind that God is interested in the poor. We should think twice before we rejoice in the misfortune of others!

17:10 - A wise man who has good judgment will accept words of reprove more readily than the rebel physical punishment. The man who is basically evil and incorrigible in his sin does not respond to physical punishment. Only a wise man will seek to remedy the folly of his ways.

17:16 - "It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a rebel who has no heart for truth." (Paraphrased Proverbs) Educators of our country would do well to take Solomon's philosophy to heart. Think of the multiplied thousands of dollars wasted each year on people who have no heart to learn.

17:22 - The person with a sunny disposition and a wholesome outlook on life is prone to enjoy good emotional and physical health. The person who is depressed and downcast, negative and despondent can make himself sick by his mental attitude.

17:23 - This verse reminds all politicians that it is sinful to accept bribes to pervert justice. The crimes of Watergate are not new; the new aspect is that men were caught.

17:27 - "It is a wise thing to say as little as possible to man and as much as possible to God." (F. B. Meyer) Solomon offers some timely advice about the ordinary conversation. When the mouth runs like the perpetual running of the tap, we are prone to say things which will afterward cause us sorrow and regret. We are all prone to say too much about senseless matters.

17:28 - Even a man of little knowledge, who keeps silent about a given subject, will be esteemed a wise man simply because he keeps his mouth shut. Solomon has good advice for the compulsive talker. It does seem in our generation that everyone is talking and no one is listening!

18:1-2 - The paraphrased edition of the Proverbs says, concerning this verse, "The selfish man quarrels against every principle of conduct by demanding his own way. A rebel doesn't care about facts, all he wants to do is yell or express his opinion."

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December, 1974

19:5 - Solomon's appraisal of the sin of lying. The implication is that liars will be tracked down.

19:11 - The wise man will overlook personal insult and not seek vengeance. Personal vendetta is a dangerous activity. The cost is too great.

19:14 - It is possible for a son to inherit wealth from his father. If he has a wise and understanding wife, it is a gift from God.

19:17 - This is an utterly astounding verse concerning lending to the poor. It portrays God as the great Borrower. It suggests that when a deserving, needy person requests aid from us, it is as if the Lord himself were asking for a loan. The implication is that God pays rich dividends or interest to those who lend in such a fashion. God will be no man's debtor. If we concern ourselves about the work and the people in whom God is interested, we may be assured of rich reward.

19:22 - It is better to be poor than to be a liar and acquire goods in a dishonest way. Even the poor man can be kind and kindness will make him attractive to other people. Kindness is something no amount of wealth can buy.

19:26 - The Bible portrays disrespect for parents as a disgraceful thing. Every child owes his parents honor and respect. Parents may not be worthy of such honor but the responsibility for giving it rests upon the children. God will recompense those sons and daughters who are careful about this biblical principle.

20:1 - The man who drinks wine or liquor will be lead into a false courage which eventually leads to fighting. There is a deceptive quality about drinking strong drink which eventually leads the participant into the gutter.

20:3 - The man who fills his life with constant quarrel and bickering can only be classified by the term - fool.

20:10 - These terms speak of the Lord's abhorrence of every kind of cheating.

20:13 - Throughout the Book of Proverbs, Solomon warns of the danger of being slothful in labor. The person who sleeps when he should be working will someday be poor and in need of the basic commodities of life.

20:15 - Wisdom and good judgment are more valuable than gold and precious stones.

20:19 - What is told to the gossip will be known by everybody.

20:29 - There are various compensations at the different periods of development in life. The young enjoy strength and the ability to

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January, 1975

21:1 - This verse speaks concerning the providence of God. God is in control of kings and kingdoms. God changes the affairs of human history in accordance with His own plan. Men propose their grand designs for history but God disposes these plans as He wills.

21:2 - Solomon was aware of man's desire for self-justification. J. Oswald Sanders comments about this problem. "It is absolutely impossible to prove self to have been in the wrong. It has always ready good reasons for every neglect or failure. It is amazingly versatile in vindicating and justifying itself. It is punctilious in exacting its rights, and is perennially busy avenging its wrongs. Self will never apologize, for it is never wrong."

21:9 - A wise husband will have little to say about this verse. Sufficient to say is the Living Letters translation "It is better to live in the corner of an attic than with a crabby woman in a lovely house."

21:23 - Many troubles come because we talk too much. One way to keep trouble from our door is to keep the door of our mouth closed. Notice the repeated warning in Proverbs concerning the sins originating from the tongue. James Chapter 3 is the New Testament commentary on this subject.

22:1 - If a person has the choice between a good reputation or name and great wealth, wisdom dictates the selection of a good name. The reverse is all too often true in our society. The pursuit of wealth has led many to ignore the importance of a good reputation.

22:6 - The word "train" literally means to catechise. Proper training in childhood will result in proper conduct in adulthood. This verse is one of the basic pedagogy ideas in the Old Testament. William Barclay reminds us in his book entitled Train Up A Child that in Jewish religious instruction, there was no textbook except the scriptures and all primary education was for the specific purpose of teaching children to read the Word of God. Therefore, the basic aim was to train children in order that they might gain knowledge of the Word of God. The center of education was the home and not public school. One of the responsibilities of good education is that of developing character and morality. One of the grave dangers among evangelical Christians is to relegate all religious instruction to the Sunday School and all secular instruction to the public school. The home should be the basic educational institution.

22:10 - The only way to rid any group of tension, quarrelings, bickerings, and fighting is to separate the person who generates this kind of atmosphere. In the text he is called a "scorner".

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January, 1975

23:4-5 -- Solomon looked upon the pursuit of wealth as wasted time! All of the effort expended in the pursuit of wealth can disappear as quickly as a bird takes to flight. This is especially appropriate at a time in which the economy of America is in serious trouble.

23:13-14 -- Some educators have missed the intent and meaning behind verses like this. To be sure, the Bible nowhere encourages child abuse. As a matter of fact, it forbids such! (Eph. 6:4) Moderate correction will not injure a child, but rather will keep him from serious trouble in years to come. Children must learn respect for truth and authority. This respect begins in the home. The emphasis in this verse is on correcting and disciplining children. It will not hurt them, but rather it will offer or provide a base upon which their lives may be built.

23:15-16 -- Solomon's great desire was that his son would grow to maturity with a large measure of common sense. It is a joy to any parent to see his children able to cope with the problems of life with the tools given to them by his parents.

23:23 -- Men of wisdom are concerned with truth. Truth and honesty are not for sale to the man who has good judgment and common sense.

23:30-31 -- Everywhere in the Old Testament, God gives warnings to those who are given to drink. The dangers far outweigh any supposed benefits one can think of. In verse 32, wine is said to "bite" and "sting". It is interesting that Solomon describes the use of excessive wine in the same context where he warns his son about prostitutes.

24:1 -- This verse says that the godly man has no company with the ungodly and should not seek out their company.

24:9 -- The idea behind this verse is that the schemes and plans are foolish.

24:16 -- This verse must have been the basis for the familiar saying "You can't keep a good man down."

24:17 -- This advice is very difficult to follow when it involves one's enemies. We are prone to look upon the fall of our foes as a direct intervention from God. Great care should be exercised in rejoicing over anyone's hurt.

24:20 -- The evil man is living by a very faint light. God can extinguish the life of the godless as simply as one can snuff out a candle. One wonders how the ungodly can be so brazen when life hangs by such a thin thread.

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26:4 -- The context of these verses equates the word fool with rebel. The term fool is used eleven times in the first twelve verses of Chapter 26. The unreliability and folly of becoming involved with this kind of man is set forth in Proverbs.

26:20 -- Gossip is to human situations what wood is to a fire. When gossip disappears, so do tensions in human relationships. "As long as there is an ear to receive, and a tongue to pass on, some piece of malicious slander will continue to circulate. But directly it reaches a hearer who will not whisper it forward, in that direction at least its progress is arrested." (F.B. Meyer) The Word of God would encourage believers never to be an accomplice with evil and spreading gossip is evil.

27:2 -- Solomon warns about self-praise. If we are to receive credit for some accomplishment, let another give it and not one's self.

27:7 -- The person who is full does not desire even a sweet morsel like honey. However, the hungry man accounts even distasteful things as desirable. This verse suggests a principle of separation. The ungodly are looking for satisfaction from many sources but fail to find it. For the Christian, "the best way of combatting worldliness is by satisfying the heart with something better. Fill your heart with God and His sacred truth, and the things of the world will lose their charm." (F.B. Meyer) The person who is wandering far from God is one who has been satisfying his soul on something other than the Word of God.

27:12 -- The wise man foresees problems and difficulties and takes appropriate action to avoid them. The person without discernment never anticipates coming problems and consequently is always caught up in them.

27:20 -- We are reminded that the person who has material gains for an end in life will never be satisfied. Things can not satisfy the spirit of man. When Jesus said "Man shall not live by bread alone," He was speaking of this very idea.

28:1 -- The righteous man should be a courageous man. The person who has nothing to hide concerning guilt and conscience should be a fearless and courageous person. The wicked are not so.

28:2 -- A paraphrased translation of Proverbs reads as follows: "When there is moral rot within a nation, its government topples easily: but with honest, sensible leaders there is stability." Our nation should understand the significance of this verse in the light of present political scandals.

28:13 -- This is a general Bible principle. There must be confession before forgiveness. The person who will not admit his transgressions cannot know the peace of forgiveness.

PRACTICAL POINTS IN PROVERBS

February, 1975

Robert K. Spradling

29:1 -- This verse is one of the most often quoted of all evangelistic texts. The principle of rejecting God's warnings is dangerous. Those who refuse the "yoke" of God must be prepared for His judgments. (Compare 1 Sam. 2:25) Not much is being said these days regarding the passive attitude of people concerning the warnings of God in the Bible.

29:2 -- Once again, Solomon, a wise ruler, speaks of the blessing of good government and the curse of poor government. When good men are in places of governmental responsibility, they bring joy to the hearts of people. But when the wicked are in power, they reproduce their sins in the land and bring suffering and groaning to the people. (Apply this verse to our government.)

29:11 -- The contrast is between a foolish man and a wise man. The wise man not only controls his temper but his words.

29:15 & 17 -- The proverbial spanking will aid the learning process of a child! If he is left unattended to go his own way, that way will be wrong and will bring shame to his mother. The son who is properly disciplined will bring to his parents peace of mind.

29:18 -- One translation reads: "Where there is ignorance of God, the people run wild...." The Hebrew word for "perish" carries with it the idea of to revolt or be unbridled. Another usage of the word literally means "to be naked." The idea is that people who have abandoned God's Word and God's Will are left to public shame and ruin. By contrast, those who are obedient to the Word of God live a happy life. (Compare Psalm 1) Only the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God can give people the moral and spiritual vision to see the needs about them. This verse is a commentary on any society that neglects God's Word. Riot and rebellion are the by-products of such neglect.

29:25 -- The natural tendency of men is to trust in the judgment of one's fellow man. However, Solomon had learned that the best of men are still men at their best! Real spiritual security rests with God. As a matter of fact, all true security rests with Him. Abraham, a man of great faith, made his greatest mistake when he feared what men might think or do to him. (Compare Genesis 12, 20.)

30:8 -- This verse teaches that "God is bound as need arises to furnish needful supplies." This is an Old Testament affirmation of the New Testament principle, "Give us this day our daily bread." In God's great storehouse, there is ample supply for the believer's need. The prodigal's prayer would remind us that in our Father's house there are servants who have enough and to spare so, therefore, for the son there is ample supply. Also, in this verse, the writer realizes there are two great extremes in life. One is poverty and the other is riches. The well-balanced Christian should have enough to satisfy his needs and be content. The ever-present danger of the wealthy is that they become content in life without God. The danger of the poor man is that without worldly goods he may stoop to crime in order to get what his eyes and heart desire. When one speaks of "middle class America", he is speaking of a desirable social status from the Biblical point of view!

PREPOSITIONS OF FAITH

Hebrews, chapter 11, has been called the faith chapter of the Bible. This chapter contains illustrations of what faith can accomplish in the lives of God's people. For example, faith took Enoch "up" into Heaven--verse 5. Faith took Noah "into" the ark--verse 7. Faith took Abraham "out" of the land of Ur. There are several prepositions in the Bible which speak of our relationship to Christ.

I. "IN CHRIST", SPEAKS OF SPIRITUAL POSITION -- II Corinthians 5:17-21

Because of the abstract nature of our spiritual relationship to Christ, it is sometimes difficult to explain spiritual benefits and blessing. The believer is in Christ. Just as a bird is in the air and dependent upon the air for flight, just as a fish is in the water and dependent upon that substance for survival, just as a tree is embedded in the soil and is dependent upon the soil for strength and growth, so the Christian is "in Christ". Everything in our spiritual life is dependent upon Jesus Christ. Compare the following verses for a study on the phrase "in Christ". Romans 3:24; Romans 6:23 (note that the word "through" is a translation of the Greek preposition "en" and literally should be read "in Jesus Christ our Lord"); Romans 8:1; Romans 8:39; Ephesians 1:3,4,6,7; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 2:10; I Thessalonians 4:16.

II. "LIKE CHRIST", SPEAKS OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS -- I John 3:2-3; II Corinthians 3:18

The Bible teaches that there are three tenses to the believer's sanctification. II Corinthians 3:18 speaks of our present sanctification and our involvement in the Word of God. The principle involved here is best illustrated by Hawthorne's story of the great stone face. He tells the story of a boy who lived in the village below the mountain, and upon the face of the mountain was the image of the great stone face, looking down upon the people of the village. There was a legend among the folk that someday a person would come to the village who looked just like the image in the great stone face. This coming stranger would do wonders for the village. The story so gripped a young boy that he used to sit, staring at the face hour by hour. As the years past and no one came, still the young boy, who had become a man, sat looking and contemplating the majesty and beauty of the great stone face. By and by, this boy slipped into middle age and still he had not forgotten the legend. Then one day in his old age, as he was walking through the village, someone looked at him and exclaimed, "He has come, the one who is like the great stone face!" The point of the story is that the man became like that upon which he gazed. There is a principle in the Bible which teaches that we become Christ-like as we look at Him. We grow in grace as we behold the reflected image of Jesus revealed in the Word of God and in prayer. Dr. Louis Chafer used to like to paraphrase the song, "Take Time to Be Holy" with the following phrase, "Take Time to Behold Him". As we behold Him, we will be changed into His moral and spiritual image.

III. "WITH CHRIST", SPEAKS OF SPIRITUAL PROSPECT -- II Corinthians 5:8

The believer is in Christ now and may become like Christ in the process of sanctification. There is coming a day when we shall not only be like Him, but we shall be with Him. Compare John 14:3 and John 17:24. Jesus promised the thief on the cross that on that very day he would be "with me in paradise". The believer does not view death as entering into a state of non-existence, but rather looks forward to being with the Lord Jesus Christ for time and eternity. Compare I Thessalonians 4:17.

PREVIEW IN PROPHECY

Robert Spradling

December 1970

This study will feature some of the great passages in the Old Testament dealing with the first advent of Christ.

1. Genesis 3:15

God predicts a conflict between the seed of Satan and the seed of the woman. "her seed" is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the first announcement of His coming. "It shall bruise thy head" - the coming Saviour would crush Satan's power. (John 12:31, 16:11; Romans 16:20) "Thou shalt bruise his heel." - a reference to Christ's physical death on the Cross. The point of the passages has been well stated by Dr. John Whitcomb: "The representative seed of the woman (Christ) would deliver a final fatal death blow to Satan (at the Cross), but in so doing would suffer physical death."

2. Genesis 49:10

Like many Messianic passages, this one has been widely disputed regarding its meaning and reference. The translators of the A. S. V. believed Shiloh was a reference to a proper name for Messiah and thus capitalized the word. Taken in proper context, the verse refers to the "peace maker" who will rule the world. He will arise out of the tribe of Judah, the center of kingly rule. Revelation 5:5.

Leupold suggests:..."from the earliest interpretation onward the passage was always understood as Messianic...."

3. Micah 5:2

The town where Jesus was born was specified in Scripture. One would expect such a king to be born in Jerusalem. (cf. Isaiah 53:2) Bethlehem would be little known today except for its association with the birth of Christ. David was born in Bethlehem and it was the city of his father Jesse.

"little among the thousands of Judah"

A reference to Bethlehem's small size in area and population. Of all the towns in Judah, this is a very small one.

"yet out of thee..ruler in Israel"

David had already been born and was dead. The reference is to another ruler.

"goings forth...from of old, from everlasting."

Man sees the "goings forth" of Jesus from Bethlehem for 33 years. Micah sees him as more than a man but from eternity, the unique Son of God.

When we think of all the circumstances of history that had to happen to make this prophecy come true, it leaves the reader astonished with the accuracy of the Bible.

Psalm 40

The book of Psalms expresses the full course of Christian experience. Whatever our needs, we may find the expression of these needs manifested in the Psalms. Perhaps this is why this Book of Psalms is such a favorite of so many. This Book was written over a period of 1,000 years and is basically four-fold in nature. There are historical, devotional, prophetic and Messianic psalms. The 40th Psalm is primarily Messianic, that is, it finds its primary interpretation and fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. The early verses of this Psalm present the deep anguish of soul through which Jesus Christ went and the deliverance which God gave to Him. In interpretation, this must be kept in view. However, for our study tonight, we are going to apply three verses to our Christian experience. Every portion of scripture has one interpretation but many applications. It is the latter with which we are dealing.

I. THE LORD BROUGHT ME UP

It is good occasionally to remember the place where the Lord found us. Our old life in Adam could well be classified as "an horrible pit." We were on the "miry clay" of sin and headed for eternal destruction. Paul never forgot where the Lord found him and frequently testified to this fact. (I Timothy 1:15, also compare John 9) The Hebrew translation of the phrase "an horrible pit" literally means "a pit of noise." When God saves a sinner He brings him from the restlessness and noise of his sins into the peace and tranquility of faith in Jesus Christ (compare Romans 5:1).

II. THE LORD SET ME UP

The phrase "and set my feet upon a rock" suggests the place of the believer's security. The Lord Jesus Christ is the rock of our salvation. He is the rock upon which the church was built. (Compare Matthew 16:17-18) The usage of Christ with the term rock is mentioned several places in the New Testament. (Compare I Peter 2:8 and I Cor. 10:4) (The testimony of the saint who said, "I have often trembled upon the Rock but never have I felt the Rock tremble under me.") This expresses the exchange the sinner received when he came to Christ. We gave up the miry clay of our old sinful life for the solid foundation of faith in Christ.

III. THE LORD HOLDS ME UP

The phrase "and established my goings" suggests that God did not save us in order that we might flounder or fail. It is God who holds onto us and not we to God. (Compare Jude 24; Phil. 1:6, John 10:28) One of the early and important lessons a new believer needs to learn is that he is secure in Christ. Our eternal destiny does not depend upon our holding on to God but rather his holding on to us.

IV. THE LORD TURNED ME UP

The phrase "he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" suggests that the saved person has a new song in his heart. There is no scriptural basis for a saint praising the gods of this world in word or music. When grace has gripped the heart the song which emerges will be different than that of the old man. Believers should learn to praise the Lord now for that is what they will be doing throughout all eternity (Rev. 5:9-14)

V. THE LORD WILL TAKE ME UP

This idea is not contained in Psalm 40. The basis for this division is located in I Thess. 4:13-18. The Lord who brought us up out of the miry clay of our sins will one day take us up at the Rapture of the church. This is the blessed hope of every Christian. A well-known Bible teacher stepped onto an elevator some years ago and asked the attendant, "Will your last trip be up or down?" I can think of no more important question than this.

THE QUIET PLACE
Isaiah 32:18

Ear pollution is a problem in America. Noise is taking its toll on our nerves. The sound of automobiles, planes, trains, radios, television, machinery, voices, and musical instruments is driving us slowly deaf and insane! A recent article in Notes and Quotes, published by the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, points to the latest research on the subject of noise. For example, a large office with many office machines in operation may range from 70-80 decibels, very near the 90 decibels produced by a pneumatic drill. A secretary who works in such an environment may complain of headaches, irritability, and the inability to sleep at night. The article mentions the fact that noise may make people grumpy and lower efficiency in production. There is a direct relationship between noise and fatigue. Dr. Karl Kryter of Harvard University says that all kinds of illness may be caused by noise, ranging from insomnia to high blood pressure.

Christians are not immune from the problems of noise. The believer is just as susceptible to the strain of noise in our society as any other person. When a professing Christian displays such emotional irregularities as undue restlessness, irritability and impatience, it is very likely that this person has not found a quiet place and a quiet time with the Lord. It is absolutely necessary that the believer find a devotional time every day where he and God may be alone in communion and fellowship with the pressures and noise of the world shut out. Failure to follow this spiritual practice will result in spiritual decline. The following ideas and suggestions may be helpful in cultivating a quiet time each day.

1. A morning devotional time is best. This may require rising 10 or 15 minutes before the rest of the family. Reading one's Bible and praying in the same place each day will help him establish correct spiritual habits.
2. Devotional books or booklets are excellent but they are not a substitute for the Bible. Such material should be studied after a time in the Word of God and prayer.
3. Ask the Lord to give you something from the Bible to fit your own specific need. This time should be very personal and suited for your own spiritual development. It is not primarily academic in nature.
4. What we get from God's word in the quiet place will be the most precious part of our Christian experience.
5. The preaching and teaching ministry of the local church is necessary but is no substitute for this spiritual exercise.

The following are some ideas about different subjects for your consideration.

(1) LUCK - Romans 8:28

Do you know anyone named Lucky? This title is usually given to people on whom good fortune is supposed to fall. We use this phrase often in daily conversation, such as, "a lucky person, good luck etc." The Bible teaches that believers are not the victims of blind chance or impersonal forces which control the life. The Christian's life is in the hands of a personal God who works all things for the good of the believer and the ultimate glory of God. The following story should be considered by those who are prone to adopt a fatalistic approach to life: Two women were talking and the first was bemoaning the fact that she found it hard to make ends meet, that she never got anything new, and that she could never get some of the things she wanted for her house. The second lady said, "Well, you know, I've taken a part time job, and from it I have managed to save enough to get a new carpet for the sitting room." The first lady said enviously, "Yes, but you are always one of the lucky ones." The second woman said with a smile, "Yes, I suppose that's true. But I have noticed the harder I work, the luckier I seem to be!"

(2) SLEEP - Proverbs 3:24

Almost any Sunday morning, you may see someone nodding half way through the sermon! Recently a prominent congressman was seen to be dozing while the President of The United States delivered a long address. Millions of people noticed this because the address was being televised. On such occasions, sleep may be embarrassing. However, there are some wonderful benefits to sleep. The blessing of sleep is best known by the middle aged who are sometimes deprived of sound sleep. Sleep does wonders for a tired body and weary soul. It can erase the burdens of the day and cure most of our left over problems. It is never poor advice when a person confronted with making a decision says "let me sleep on it." Occasionally decisions must be made immediately but usually it is good advice to "sleep on it."

(3) LOYALTY - I Chronicles 11:10-19

The Christian's ultimate loyalty must be to Jesus Christ. However true loyalty to Him will find expression in many other areas of life. It is difficult to be loyal to Christ and not manifest that loyalty in a local church. The loyalty to Christ will express itself in a wise usage of time, giving, prayer and dozens of other ways. Dr. Charles Stevens used to say: "Be loyal to something. If you can't be loyal to your own local church and its leadership find a place where you can be loyal and be loyal!"

(4) SUCCESS - Joshua 1:8

Someone has suggested that life may be divided into two groups of people:

(1) Those who believe success comes through good planning and hard conscientious work.

(2) Those who believe that success comes by knowing the right people, going to the right schools, living in a certain neighborhood, associating with influential people. Success in the Lord's work depends upon being in His will and doing His work in His way. We are prone to measure success by size where God is prone to measure success by motivation.

(5) FRIENDS - John 15:14

Most people want and enjoy lasting friendships. Our Lord was interested in his friends. Someone has suggested that friendship is like a plant, it flourishes when it is cultivated and tends to die when it is neglected. We are keenly aware of our friends and the need of them in the crises hours of life. It is never wasted time to make every effort to strengthen friendship. A phone call, letter, kind word, prayer are but a few ways to help gain and sustain strong friendships.

RANDOM THOUGHTS - Part II1. CHANGE - James 4:17

Doctrine does not change, but methods must always be open for examination and possible change. The church or believer who shuts off all ideas except the old ones is bound to fail. The fact that something is old does not necessarily make it good, just as, something new is not necessarily better. God does not require us to take the quick or short way, but he does expect us to do His work in the best way possible. "We've never done it that way before", has been called "The Seven Last Words Of The Church." One reason why God has blessed our church is because we are not afraid to change in order to grow.

2. COURTESY - Ephesians 4:32

There is a feeling among some Christians that if ones doctrine is straight it gives him the right to be brash and offensive in getting the message to others. This is not the Bible approach. Our Lord was never rude or discourteous when dealing with sinners. Believers need to be careful about an "unconscious superiority" in attitude when talking to men about Christ. I have gotten the unhappy impression that certain preachers seem to be glad that sinners were getting exactly what they deserved when they go to Hell! Our approach to men, should be as one hell-deserving sinner to another. A believer should be deeply sympathetic toward the lost as one starving man who has found bread and water wanting to share this good news with another starving man. Courtesy should be extended to fellow believers. Every person has the right to his or her opinions even if those opinions are poorly founded. "Nothing does a man more mental good than to listen to things with which he does not agree....every man should be compelled to read books which present the points of view opposite to his own." (Barclay) We seldom have the last word on a given subject let alone good thinking and sound judgment in all matters pertaining to the Lord's work. If our convictions and beliefs are founded upon the Word of God they will stand the test of scrutiny by others who differ with us. We need not "declare war" on other people who have different ideas.

3. CRITICISM - Matthew 7:1

One of the acid tests of good character is the manner in which a person accepts criticism. The first reaction to criticism is usually resentment. When we resent criticism we usually shut the door to the learning process. Even when criticism is unfair and unfounded we may learn valuable lessons from being criticized. Another common reaction to criticism is the tendency to quit. "If you don't play my way, I won't play at all," is the attitude of the immature. Most of us are more "thin-skinned" than we care to admit. It is amazing that a person whose boss may literally tear him to shreds at work, with no adverse affects, suddenly becomes super sensitive when he enters the doors of the church. The wise man is the man who realizes he does not know everything about every subject. It is possible to learn from a fool as well as from a philosopher. We do not make progress in life as long as we are satisfied with what we do. It is said that young Isaac Watts was returning from church and complained about the dreariness of the hymns. His father replied "If you don't like the hymns then give us something better." Young Watts started a career of writing hymns which has made him one of the greatest in the field. There are times when criticism is necessary. Constructive criticism may be profitable if it keeps us from being content with mediocrity.

RANDOM THOUGHTS - Part III1. GOALS - Philippians 3:13-14

Certain people have favorite words which they use frequently in conversation. Former President Nixon was fond of the term, "goals" and also "to make perfectly clear." The Lord's people need goals in order to accomplish anything for Him. The person who aims at nothing will hit it every time! We need a target in our range of vision before much effort will be made to achieve a desired end. Someone has illustrated this principle with schooling. In school, where exams are required at the end of the course, students are diligent in preparation. Where there is no testing, there is little effort exerted. This may explain why so many people stop learning, in the academic sense, after leaving school. The only way to make progress is to have a specific goal and strive to reach it.

2. ANSWERS - Isaiah 6:8

People may be divided into two classes: 1. Those who have a positive approach to the response or inresponse to a challenge. 2. Those who respond negatively to anything that is new and which they do not understand. Some people are automatically against any new idea or program which they do not suggest. God uses the man who has a ready "yes" when it comes to Christian service. "If you are going to get something done, ask the busy person to do it," is an old cliché. People whose lives are well organized and under the control of the Holy Spirit are able to accomplish things for the Lord and almost without exception their attitude is a positive one. Show me a person who says it can't be done, and it won't be! William Barclay has made an interesting observation on this subject as it relates to prayer: "So many people try to use prayer in the wrong way altogether. They continuously try to use prayer as a way of escape, as a way of averting something that they believe is going to happen. Their whole attitude in prayer, conscious or unconscious, is that they are always begging God to change His mind to suit them. There can be no real happiness in life, there can be nothing but discontent and resentment and bitterness, until we learn to say 'yes' to God." This may also require that we say "no" to ourselves in order that we may be able to say "yes" to God.

3. CONVICTIONS - Philippians 1:6

Spurgeon had great respect for a preacher who was not fundamental in doctrine. Someone asked Spurgeon why he had such respect for someone whose doctrine was not correct. They said, "You don't believe what he preaches." "No," said Spurgeon, "but he does!" A believer can have no real spiritual strength or direction unless he has strong convictions. (Ephesians 4:14) May the Lord deliver us from what has been called the "no - man's land of indecision." Let us know what we believe, why we believe it and stand firmly on convictions which are based upon the Word of God.

4. GRATITUDE - I Thessalonians 5:18

When Jesus Christ was on trial, no one spoke a word in His defense. Have you ever wondered where all of the people were whom He had healed? Where were the thousands which He had fed and helped? It is incredible to think that no one spoke a word for Christ in the hour of His maximum sorrow. It is strange that men would see the only perfect Man Who has ever lived, crucified and no one speak a word in His behalf. Few sins are as petty and as destructive as ingratitude. We forget the blessings of the Lord too soon. May God give His people grateful hearts.

SAUL: THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Robert Spradling

May 1972

Saul was a very complex person. There is wide difference of opinion concerning his spiritual state. The Bible simply does not specify whether Saul was lost or saved. In this regard, Saul is a warning to all proud men, whether saved or unsaved. Those who are determined to run their own lives and the lives of others will be dealt with by God. He was a proud man who never yielded himself to God. To be sure, over and over again, Saul was sorry for the difficult circumstances of his life but not necessarily sorry for what his sin had done to harm the kingdom of God. Saul is a perpetual reminder to all believers that God will not use the proud. This impulsive, temperamental, unpredictable, suspicious man was destined to fall from the pinnacle of power to an ignominious death on the hills of Gilboah. Also, the story of Saul establishes a Bible-study principle, that is, God in His sovereign purpose often sets aside the first and establishes the second. cf. (1) Adam and Christ. (2) Cain and Abel. (3) Esau and Jacob. (4) Ishmael and Isaac. The principle is that the natural man is lost in his first estate or condition. By grace men enter into a second or spiritual relationship with God whereby they can accomplish that which God has designed for them. In his first or natural state man walks in darkness, a rebel against God. In the second state or new birth he walks in light, as a son of God. This study will suggest three areas in which Saul made fatal mistakes.

I. SAUL'S DISREGARD FOR SACRED OFFICES - I Samuel 13:8-13

God set up certain divinely ordained offices such as the prophets and priests. A priest, for example, was authorized to minister in sacred things such as sacrifices. God made these appointments and He also restricted just anyone from performing as a priest. In this passage, Saul shows utter disregard for God's divine institutions. He was interested in his own glory and reputation and wanted to be held in high esteem in the eyes of the people. His lack of patience and humility made him venture into areas in which he had no right to function. Saul could do no wrong in his own eyes and was so arrogant he could not envision that what he had done would not be justified by Samuel. The Sauls of this world demonstrate self-will in sacred things and always to their own peril.

II. SAUL'S FORMULATION OF A SILLY OATH - I Samuel 14

I Samuel 14 tells the story of Jonathan's victory over the Philistines. However, he was unaware of the vow his father had made restricting all people from eating food on a given day. After his victory, Jonathan, unaware of his father's pronouncement, had eaten honey to renew his strength. When Saul received word of his son's inadvertent disobedience to his father's command, Saul issued Jonathan's death warrant. There are few people in the Bible more loyal, loving, unselfish, warmhearted and noble than Jonathan. Yet Saul was willing to kill his own son rather than admit that he had made a rash pronouncement. Saul was a man who could

SECURITY

Robert Spradling

November 1969

This word has been the basis for much religious controversy. Some people who appreciate and look forward to "social security" want to argue over whether or not they are eternally secure in Christ. The Bible does not teach that once we profess faith in Christ it does not really matter how we live. Such an attitude would make salvation meaningless. In fact, the Bible warns men against continuing in sin. Any man who persists in living a life of sin, has no assurance of salvation, and is headed for certain destruction. (Hebrews 10:26-29). The Bible does teach, however, that for all true believers, our salvation is sure and the God who saved us keeps us from the practice of sin which, if followed, would lead to final doom. It must be remembered that there are two aspects to this doctrine. (1) God's side - He keeps His own. (2) Man's side - We are responsible to keep on living for Him. (cf. Philippians 2:12-13).

It is not possible to consider in detail the problems surrounding this doctrine. However, a look at some of the key Bible passages may be helpful.

1. John 10:27-30

This passage teaches security in clear, simple language. God's sheep are secure. There are at least two important language considerations in these verses:

- (a) "never" - Greek double negative. "Negatives were doubled for the purpose of stating denials or prohibitions emphatically." (Dana and Mantey). The point is, there is no stronger way to use language in order to say the believer is safe!
- (b) "man" - This word is in italics. The idea is much broader than a man - it means "anyone", or "anything", for that matter! In the shepherd's fold there is security. We trust Him to keep us, we do not trust ourselves. (cf. Noah's Ark).

2. John 5:24 and 6:37-39.

If a man could have eternal life and lose it, this verse would have no real meaning. There is absolutely no indication of the possibility of loss - only of life.

3. Romans 8:31-39

The strongest possible language to say that now there is no condemnation in Christ. (Romans 8:1) for the saved man and, also, there is no separation from Christ. (Romans 8:35).

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Robert K. Spradling

Dist.
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(SEVEN) WONDERS OF THE BIBLE

year *A group from our Church*
Several months ago, ~~several of us~~ viewed the Pyramids of Egypt. The Pyramids are called one of the seven wonders of antiquity. Others in this group were the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, the statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes, and the Pharos or Lighthouses of Alexandria. In medieval times, the other wonders of the world were the Colosseum at Rome, the Catacombs of Alexandria, the Great Wall of China, the Temple of the Druids, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Porcelain Tower of Nanking and the Mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople. All of these man-made wonders captured the attention of mankind. There are some wonderful truths with reference to the Word of God which make it unique in the annals of history.

I. THE INDESTRUCTABILITY OF GOD'S WORD - I Peter 1:23-25

The empires of Caesar and Napoleon have ~~long since~~ vanished. The pride of the pharaohs' is gone and all that remains is a pile of stone to remind us of their rule. Rome, Greece, Babylon and all other civilizations have come and gone - the Word of God still survives. As the poet has well said, "Many hammers have come and gone, but the anvil of God's word remains."

II. THE ACCURACY OF GOD'S WORD - Matthew 5:18

"hang the earth upon nothing"
The Bible is not a book on science. However, when it speaks on science it is scientifically correct. Job 26:7 is a very interesting way of describing the law of gravity. Isaiah 40:22 described the earth as being round long before Christopher Columbus demonstrated the fact. The Bible is not a book filled with scientific errors but rather it is a book dealing with the subject of redemption which occasionally speaks of science but always in an accurate way. This is astounding in the light of the fact that science has changed so much in human history. What was scientifically accurate in Moses' day is looked upon as being myth and fable today! No other book *has spoken* with such accuracy with reference to so many subjects over such a long period of time. The Bible was applicable to the yesterdays of human history but it is also the book of today.

III. THE UNIVERSALITY OF GOD'S WORD - Matthew 28:19

the Most religions appeal to one general locality or ethnic group. This is not the case with the Bible. Romans 1:16 speaks of *the* the wide appeal of the Gospel. It is for the black, white, yellow, and red man. It is for all classes - for the young, the old, the educated, the uneducated, the rich, the poor, the king, the commoner, the master and the servant are all on level ground when it comes to the Bible. It is the child's storybook as well as the philosopher's textbook. It is the book of boys and girls as well as statesmen and scholars. Universal appeal of the Bible is reflected in its translation and circulation. No other book has been so widely translated and disseminated to so many people of the world. It is still our country's best seller.

he that is high upon the circle of the earth.

IV. THE INEXHAUSTABILITY OF GOD'S WORD - Romans 11:33

The Bible is food to the Christian's soul, a roadmap for his way and comfort to cheer him. It is a pilgrim's staff, pilot's compass, soldier's sword and constant companion of the believer. It is a river of pleasure, a mine of wealth, to be read and studied to make our lives holy. Many great men of strong intellectual powers have given a lifetime to the study of the Bible and no one man or group of men has even scratched the surface in understanding and interpreting its meaning to mankind. It has proved itself unfathomable for 2,000 years. Bound up in its pages are the infinite treasures of the wisdom of God.

"A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives, but borrows none."

V. THE UNITY OF GOD'S WORD - II Peter 1:21

The Bible was written over a period of approximately 1,600 years with 40 different authors. It contains 66 books written by various classes of men from kings to fishermen. However, from Genesis to Revelation there is one basic theme and that is human redemption. No other book displays such unity over such a long period of time with such (a) diversity of writers. Surely, the Holy Spirit of God, who is the author of Scripture, superintended the writing of this book. No other book can speak of such unity under such circumstances.

VI. THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE BIBLE - Romans 3:22-23

If you and I were going to write a book for the ages, we would paint flattering pictures of the heroes and seek to portray them "without their warts." However, in the case of the Bible, no such cover-up is made. There is absolutely no attempt to hide the faults of the primary characters. For example, read of the drunkenness of Noah, the lying of Abraham, the deception of Jacob, the anger of Moses, the adultery of David, the disobedience of Jonah, and the cowardness of Peter. And yet, in spite of their faults, the virtues of these men is also revealed. John Urquhart has pointed out, "While in the Bible you find the fullest knowledge of humanity, you also find the deepest veneration for man." In spite of the littleness and pettiness of man's sinfulness there is also revealed in the Bible a greatness in man. This greatness is attached to the fact that he was made in the moral image of God. While painting the human heart with a black background, the possibilities of God's glory in human lives is foremost in the picture. The Bible is like a physician who did not create disease but rather busies himself diagnosing the problem. God's word did not create evil but is very careful to describe its destructive power. Just as a good physician carefully points out the problem before he diagnoses a cure, so the Bible does with the human heart.

VII. THE FINALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD - Isaiah 40:8

Satan has always been opposed to the Bible. He opposed its writing and he has sought to destroy it since the completion of the canon. He has sought to keep it from being translated into the languages of the world. Those who have attacked the Word of God have been

THE SEVENFOLD BLESSING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

(B.C.C. 1975 P.M.)

Robert Spradling

August 1970

One of the most helpful booklets on this subject is entitled Filled With The Spirit by W. Graham Scroggie. This material was placed in the hands of your pastor during his first semester in Bible Institute, and it has been very profitable in avoiding many of the pitfalls surrounding the ministry of the Spirit. The 7-fold blessing centers around 7 key words.

1. The Gift of the Spirit - (Acts 2:38, John 14:16-17).

Ten days after the ascension of Christ, the Holy Spirit was given to the Church as a body. It is also true that the Spirit is given to individual believers the moment they are born-again. We do not need to ask for the Holy Spirit, that promise has already been fulfilled. We have all of the Spirit there is to have, our deepest need is to yield to His complete control. Luke 11:13 - This verse has been used by some as a proof text for asking for the Spirit on the part of believers. However, this reference was prior to Pentecost when the Spirit had not been given, but now He has. (Verses like Ephesians 5:18 would be meaningless and impossible if the gift of the Spirit were not a present reality.)

2. The Indwelling of the Spirit - (I Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20).

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit indwells the Church in a collective sense. And He also indwells each believer individually. The indwelling Spirit makes the believer's body the temple of God.

A Christians alt. study different re. ΠΟΡΕΙΑ than heathen! They saw it as worship!

(The carnal need to know the (3:1)

Not a temple as one of several but what dwells - a congregation as in the O.T. the Shekinah was in the center of the Holy Place.

3. The Sealing of the Spirit - (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30)

God has put His mark of ownership upon and in the believer and that seal of ownership is the Holy Spirit Himself. This act of God is not felt, seen or repeated in the life of a Christian. Just as God sealed Noah in the ark, so believers have been "shut up" securely in Christ. We who have been saved by grace are now God's property. Our eternal destiny is settled. We bear the identifying mark of Divine Ownership.

4. The Earnest of the Spirit - (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:14).

The term "earnest" means we have part payment, a first installment to secure our eternal redemption and that person is the Holy Spirit. What God has begun in our hearts, He will complete. (Philippians 1:6).

5. The Anointing of the Spirit - (2 Corinthians 1:21, Luke 4:18).

The anointing of the Spirit upon the believer is more by implication than by direct Scripture reference. The anointing of the Spirit for special blessing in service of the Lord is mentioned frequently in the Gospels re Jesus' public ministry. If our Lord was so dependent upon this ministry of the Spirit, how much more are His servants today! The preacher of the Bible knows what it means to be used and blessed by the Holy Spirit in an unusual way while ministering the Word of God.

SINS AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

D.M.T.
July 1970

Robert Spradling

A careful examination of the New Testament will indicate at least six sins which can be committed against the Holy Spirit. Three of these can be committed by unbelievers and three by believers.

I. UNBELIEVERS

1. Acts 7:51 - resisting the Spirit. The word "resist" in the text suggests the action of opposing someone by force. The word was used in connection with falling upon an enemy in order to subdue and harm him. This is the only place this exact word appears in the New Testament. The chapter presents a contrast: Stephen, a man who was full of the Holy Spirit (7:55), and his murderers who had set themselves against him and the convicting ministry of the Spirit in their lives. This was no passive, accidental circumstance in the lives of these Jews. They were opposed to Stephen and they were opposed to the Spirit's movement upon them. They fought against any such activity of the Spirit with stubborn rebellion.

2. Hebrews 10:29 - insulting the Spirit. The word "despite" in the Authorized Version means 'to insult or treat with contempt'. This sin involves personal hostility and insult to the very Person who brings God's blessing into the life. It is interesting to notice that this word "despite" does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament. The Spirit is called the "Spirit of grace" in this verse. Grace is brought to men through His ministry. How solemn and sad for men to reject this work of the Spirit.

3. Luke 12:10 - blasphemy of the Spirit. (A recent study at the Midweek Service featured a re-print of some material by Dr. A. J. McClain on this subject.) In summary of this material, it would appear that a constant opposition to the influence of the Spirit's ministry would result in the sinner's reaching a place where he cannot discern the voice of the Spirit in his life and perhaps even mistakes it for the voice of evil. Eventually a person would reach the point where he preferred darkness to light and thereby would render repentance and forgiveness for sin impossible in his life.

II. BELIEVERS

1. Acts 5:3 - lying to the Holy Spirit. This severe disciplinary action in the early church was for the purpose of keeping the church pure from selfish practices. Ananias and Sapphira were seeking to deceive others and even the Lord in their misrepresentation in giving.

2. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 - quenching the Spirit. To quench the Spirit means to suppress His influence in the life. Failure to respond to the Spirit's guidance is quenching the Spirit. To be cool towards His leading, rather than warm and enthusiastic to His direction, is quenching the Spirit. There ought to be a constant thirst in our lives for the presence and power of God. Unhindered, the Spirit of God will control the believer, but sin suppresses His leading. Contrary to common thought, the Spirit is quenched far more by unthankfulness, indifference, apathy, etc., than by failure to make loud noises in a public worship service!

3. Ephesians 4:30 - grieving the Spirit. To grieve the Spirit means to vex or offend Him. Sin is the one thing that grieves the Spirit. In every believer, the Spirit is either grieved or ungrieved. The sins of 28-31 would be a test of knowing if the Spirit is grieved:

v. 28 - stealing, helping the needy.

v. 29 - foul language

v. 31 - resentment, temper tantrums, self-assertion, slander, unkind remarks

These would be a few of the sins which would grieve the Spirit in the life of a Christian.

SNAKE HANDLERS

Mark 16:15-18

Last week, the newspaper carried an article about a 33 year old Ohio man who was bitten by a rattlesnake in a church service in Mann, W. Va. Apparently, this was an episode in a continuing series of services in which handling snakes and drinking strychnine were part and parcel of the ritual. These church groups base their belief on Mark 16. Oftentimes in Appalachia, there is a subtle kind of pride among lay ministers concerning the fact that they are not formally educated with reference to the Bible. Here is a case where ignorance was fatal. The sincerity of the persons is not questioned--it is their judgment that is in doubt. The reaction of most responsible Christians is that such behavior is not faith but foolishness. It violates several scriptural principles and common sense. In this writer's judgment, such activities are not in compliance with the teaching of Mark 16, but rather border on tempting God. Satan is the master deceiver. He sought to get Jesus to do something foolish in Matthew 4 in order to prove God's power. There is a vast difference between being a fool and being a fool for Christ's sake.

There are several reasons why Mark 16 should not be the basis for Bible doctrine. Any Bible institute student, who has studied Biblical introduction, knows that there are grave textual problems concerning the ending of Mark's gospel. It is one of the most serious textual difficulties in the New Testament. The American Standard Version, 1901 edition, has the following marginal note between verses 8 and 9 of Mark 16. "The two oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities, omit from verse 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the gospel." Even a casual glance at a critical commentary reveals the problem. It is wise not to base doctrine upon a section of the Word of God which presents critical problems. As a matter of fact, one of the primary principles of Bible interpretation is never to base a doctrine on an isolated text.

Even if the Bible student wishes to accept the genuineness of the text at the end of Mark 16, the verses do not suggest that believers today should practice these procedures. Let us examine the verses more carefully.

Verse 16 -- Contrary to some opinion, this verse does not link baptism and salvation. Condemnation and judgment rest upon disbelief and not baptism. The reason baptism is linked to believing is that there was no such thing as an unbaptized believer in the early church. Persons who received Christ as Saviour were baptized to indicate their obedience to His clear command.

Verse 17 -- Dr. Ironside says, "The miraculous powers were given to the authoritative messengers in order to accredit them as Christ's representatives (Acts 4:30-33; 5:12), but they were not displayed by any who did not believe, and we have already seen that, even among the twelve, some doubted. It is a mistake to suppose that signs follow those who believed the messengers." The activity mentioned in both 17 and 18 occurred in the early history of the church, but ceased with the completion of the New Testament canon.

(Over)

Snake Ceremony Buries Brother Talmadge Adkins

Relio - Aug 1974
April 1974

THE HANDLERS

16:15-18

EAST LYNN, W. Va. (AP) — They buried Brother Talmadge Ray Adkins Saturday in a small cemetery atop a hill near his home.

The 45-year-old Adkins was bitten last week while handling snakes during a church service at Oak Hill. He died Thursday.

"He's done went across," said Brother Lloyd Richardson at the song filled services at the Adkins home. "He believed it strong enough to lay his life on it."

A crowd of about 75 attended the services and heard Brother Richardson read from the Book of St. Mark the words "... and they shall take up serpents."

To the faithful, those words were plain enough. Lonnie Richardson, the dead man's son-in-law and Richardson's son, opened a plywood box at the ceremony and took out a copperhead.

Richardson was already suffering from three snake bites he received during services Friday night. "We stand on his word," he said, sweat running down his face.

Others took out various kinds of poisonous snakes and handled the reptiles. No one was bitten during the services.

After the singing, unintelligible "speaking in tongues," and plenty of "amens," the funeral procession moved to the cemetery.

At the entrance was a hand-lettered sign: "No snakes allowed in cemetery." *Aug. 1974*

article about a 33 year old Ohio man who was service in Mann, W. Va. Apparently, this of services in which handling snakes and of the ritual. These church groups base Appalachia, there is a subtle kind of

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the oldest Greek manuscripts, and some other authorities,

the gospel." Even a casual glance at a critical commentary reveals the problem.

It is wise not to base doctrine upon a section of the Word of God which presents critical problems. As a matter of fact, one of the primary principles of Bible interpretation is never to base a doctrine on an isolated text.

Even if the Bible student wishes to accept the genuineness of the text at the end of Mark 16, the verses do not suggest that believers today should practice these procedures. Let us examine the verses more carefully.

Verse 16 -- Contrary to some opinion, this verse does not link baptism and salvation. Condemnation and judgment rest upon disbelief and not baptism. The reason baptism is linked to believing is that there was no such thing as an unbaptized believer in the early church. Persons who received Christ as Saviour were baptized to indicate their obedience to His clear command.

Verse 17 -- Dr. Ironside says, "The miraculous powers were given to the authoritative messengers in order to accredit them as Christ's representatives (Acts 4:30-33; 5:12), but they were not displayed by any who did not believe, and we have already seen that, even among the twelve, some doubted. It is a mistake to suppose that signs follow those who believed the messengers." The activity mentioned in both 17 and 18 occurred in the early history of the church, but ceased with the completion of the New Testament canon.

(Over)

THE SORROWS OF THE SPIRIT

Robert Spradling

November 3, 1971

The New Testament speaks of two sins which believers may commit against the Holy Spirit. The very nature of these offences attest to the fact that the Holy Spirit is a person and not an influence or force of some kind. The verses which mention these sins are:

I. Ephesians 4:30

To grieve the Spirit means "to cause pain or sorrow." It speaks of a relationship of love, for only one who loves can be grieved. As Sanders has well said: "One can anger but not grieve an enemy." In the context of this chapter, Paul lists some sins which grieve the Holy Spirit.

1. Lying - v. 25

The believer is to be careful and not careless about the truth. We are to avoid falsehood. Just as the body can only be healthy when the nerves pass true messages to the brain, so we can only live in spiritual health when all deception is taken from our lives. Failure to live in this fashion grieves God's Holy Spirit.

2. Anger - v. 26

There is such a thing as righteous indignation but it is rare among the saints. Crossness, a bad disposition and temper, irritability are the kinds of anger which bring sorrow to the indwelling Spirit.

3. Stealing - v. 28

Stealing is taking something we have no right to take. It was a common practice in ancient Rome for people to steal goods from the docks and clothes from the public bath houses. Paul sets a high moral standard for believers.

4. Corrupt Communication - v. 29

The Christian's speech must help not harm others morally.

5. Bitterness - v. 31

Bitterness is never acceptable in a Christian. It is like a gun that explodes at the breech, hurting the person aiming the gun and not the intended target. Bitterness in the verse refers to a long-standing resentment which will not be reconciled with another.

The most important question for us is how do we know if and when we have grieved the Spirit? There is a very simple test. The person who is grieving the Spirit loses vital interest in the Bible and prayer. Bible study becomes a dry academic exercise with little real personal interest. Prayer is a burden and not a delight. It is the ministry of the Spirit who makes these two spiritual exercises a matter of joy. When He is grieved, our service will be powerless, our lives restless and empty. Sanders has illustrated it in the following manner: "If we draw the blind of our room in the day-time, the sun still shines outside, but we deprive ourselves of its cheering rays. If we wish to enjoy them again, all that is needed is to raise the blind, for the sun is still shining. When we grieve Him, we draw the blind and exclude His gracious influence, although He Himself has not withdrawn, He stops doing the work He delights to do - revealing Christ to the heart, and instead concentrates on revealing our sin to the heart until repentance is produced."

The remedy for this sin is also simple. Where we have sinned against God, confession will immediately cure the sin. Where we have sinned against man, apology and restitution will bring peace to the heart.

THE SPIRIT OF....

Robert Spradling

September 1970

Some of the titles and names given to the Holy Spirit are familiar to believers. Terms such as, Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, Spirit of the Lord, are ones with which we are acquainted. However, there are other references to the Holy Spirit using the preposition "of", which are not so well known. The purpose of this study will be to consider several verses in which these phrases occur.

1. The Spirit of Adoption - Romans 8:15

The idea behind the word adoption is the legal right of the believer to belong to God's family as a son with full status and privileges of a rightful heir. The indwelling Spirit is the One who enables the believer to acknowledge God properly, and to recognize fully that the born-again Christian has the right to call God "Abba, Father." William Barclay has stated our position as follows, regarding adoption: "The Christian received a new father - even God....All his past life was cancelled and there was given to him a new beginning and a new start...He became a full inheritor of the grace and the wealth of the riches of God." (The Mind of St. Paul).

The Holy Spirit was instrumental in making this a reality in the life of the believer. We have not only a new position in Christ but also a new nature, a new consciousness that now God is really our Father and not just a name to refer to deity!

2. The Spirit of Grace - Hebrews 10:29

This verse would remind us that it is the Holy Spirit who brings the grace of God into the lives of men. God's grace is the only basis whereby men can be accepted of God.

It is interesting to note that the English word "charm" is related to the word "grace". All of the wonder and glory of God's salvation is made operable in our lives through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The significance of the interpretation of this verse may be seen in the term "grace". When men refuse the grace of God, embodied in the person of the Holy Spirit, there is no alternative - they cannot be saved, for there is no other way! Men who resist God's grace in salvation choose the wrong path, shut their ears to the voice of God, and blind themselves to the truth.

One writer has pointed out that the Holy Spirit, like our Lord, has been characterized by two great Bible words, grace and truth. (I John 5:6). The Holy Spirit combines these qualities in perfect balance, as did our blessed Lord. (John 1:14).

SPIRITUAL ADVICE FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

I Thessalonians 5:12-28

(The following message was given by Pastor Robert Spradling in the Bible Center Church on June 24, 1973. At the request of some of those in attendance, it is being stenographically reproduced from his sermon notes in extended outline form.

Advice is not always welcomed by us, usually, we are looking for sympathy instead of advice. However, on occasions, all of us have received spiritual advice. Paul was leaving the Thessalonian church with some good spiritual advice. There have been occasions in my life when advice was given and heeded. (Illustration regarding Dr. McClain by Pat Henry. Illustration of how to be a successful Christian, three-fold emphasis. Illustration of seeking to do the Lord's will irrespective of denominational tag.) The first area of advice was as follows:

I. ADVICE CONCERNING SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP - verses 12-13

The phrase "to know" means to "get acquainted with." The admonition was for the Thessalonians to follow those who are their spiritual leaders. Their spiritual leaders had a responsibility before God to keep the Thessalonian believers on the right path spiritually. The word "admonish" means literally "to put into the mind" that is, putting spiritual sense into the heads of Christian people. This is not an easy task! Paul was teaching the Thessalonians to have respect for their spiritual leaders because of the work they were doing. The Thessalonian church was a young church and some of the leaders, no doubt, were young and relatively inexperienced in Christian work. Paul was laying down the principle of God-given leadership in the local church. There are always those who are rebellious and stubborn and want to run any organization to suit themselves. Some people are easy to get along with as long as everything goes their way, but anything that crosses their opinion creates instant havoc. Paul's admonition was to get in line for the sake of the work and live at peace. Some of the idle Christians at Thessalonica had refused to follow leadership. Such an attitude is as foolish as it is destructive. There is such a thing in a local church as spiritual authority. "The supernatural nature of the church requires leadership that is beyond human resources." The great need of any church is for leadership that is spiritually sensitive to the needs of the congregation. The church has always been strong and blessed of God when the leadership was, above everything else, spiritual in nature. There is a great movement away from this central need today. Leadership is vital in the Lord's work. God devoted an entire chapter, I Timothy 3:1-16, to the subject of leadership in a local church. The history of God's blessing in the Bible has focused around strong leaders. (Compare Moses and David.)

II. ADVICE CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE - verses 14-15

Paul leaves the Thessalonian church a timely admonition concerning the ministry of that local congregation.

A. Warn Those Who Are Out of Step - verse 14

The word "unruly" literally means "disorderly" or "those who break rank." It was used in military terminology with reference to those who could not march in step with others. I think this has to do with leadership in the local church. There are always those who refuse to go along with orderly progress in a church. Paul warned those who would disrupt and tear down the work of a local church. (Compare Sons of Korah-Numbers 16)

B. Comfort the Faint-Hearted - verse 14

The word "feeble-minded" has nothing to do with mental disorder. The word literally means "small souled." It refers to those people who lose heart or become discouraged quickly and are ready to abandon Christian work. These people must be helped. In every church there are those faint-hearted souls who fear the worst and see only the pessimistic side of life. It is sad but true, not all Christians are courageous and people of vision. They become discouraged quickly and need to be strengthened.

C. Hold To The Weak - verse 14

The word "support" literally means "hold onto". The church is not to let the weak brother drift away and finally be lost to the church, but rather there should be an attempt by the Lord's people to keep him in the fold. There should be a strong tie of fellowship which will strengthen the temperamentally weak and keep them from going astray. One of the responsibilities of leadership is to watch out for the weak.

D. Be Patient Toward All - verse 14

This word "patient" carries with it the idea of long-suffering. Everybody needs patience. Children need patience in school in order to learn. Mothers need patience in order to deal with growing children. Fathers need patience in the midst of heavy work or maybe more patience when there is no work at all. It is encouraging to notice that even God's choicest servants sometimes were impatient. For example, Moses shattering the tables of the law. Peter was impulsive in cutting off Malchus' ear. The believer should be patient because he knows that God is working on his side. It was Augustine who said, "God is patient because he is eternal." With all eternity to work his works, how could the Almighty fret over circumstances.

E. Good and Evil - verse 15

It was Savonrola who said, "A Christian's life consists of doing good and suffering evil." If you have not discovered this truth, you will someday. There is no place in the Christian life for a "get-even" philo-

sophy. We are not to repay bad deeds with bad deeds. Good should always be our objective even toward those who have sought to do us harm.

III. ADVICE CONCERNING SPIRITUAL HABITS - verses 16-22

The following short Biblical injunctions are words of good advice for every Christian:

1. Rejoice Always - verse 16

The church of Jesus Christ should have an atmosphere of joy. People who are basking in the sunlight of God's grace should manifest a happy attitude toward life. New Testament Christianity is not a depressing thing. The church was not designed to be a place where burdens were added to burdens. It is meant to be a place of spiritual grace and blessing. This verse is the shortest verse in the Bible. It is shorter than John 11:35 in the Greek text. It contains only two words and they are short words whereas "Jesus wept" has three words in the original and they are longer words. It may be the shortest verse in the Bible, but it has a great deal to say about Christian living. Rejoicing is a sign of salvation. Murmuring was part of Israel's history when they were in the place of great disobedience. It was the place of God's punishment. It was there that they complained about their food and their circumstances. Murmuring in the life of a Christian is a sure sign of sin. George Mueller once said, "I never allow myself to begin the day without facing before God anything that has left me unhappy or distressed because I want to be before him always in the spirit of joyfulness." We may blame others for our situations in life but usually our sadness and depression can be traced with lack of fellowship with God!

2. Pray Without Ceasing - verse 17

"Never stop praying" - (Phillips translation) The Bible teaches that we should have regular times of prayer. Daniel prayed three times a day. However, it also teaches that we should be in a constant attitude or spirit of prayer. It carries with it the idea of leaving the phone off the hook and the line open for constant communication with the Lord. The spiritual believer is always in touch with God. His life is not one of a short prayer in the morning and evening and nothing in between, but rather it is a day filled with a consciousness of his presence. Spurgeon said he could not think of a single hour in his life, after conversion, in which he was not conscious of God's presence in his life. We tend to minimize the importance of prayer today. (Story of a pastor who always asked the first question to a person who came to him, "Have you prayed about it first?") Usually we have not. We have talked about, worried about, but have not prayed about the situations in life. Prayer could solve most of our problems if we would only resort to prayer.

3. Giving Thanks - verse 18

Giving thanks in every situation is a recipe for a joyful Christian experience. There is no circumstance in life, no matter what it is, for which we cannot thank God! We may have to thank him by faith at first, but thank him we must!

4. Quench not the Spirit - verse 19

The believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The word "quench" carries with it the idea of suppressing the leadership and guidance of the Spirit in one's life. It means saying, "No" to his direction. It means not being sensitive to his control or responding to his promptings. It is not difficult to put out the fire of spiritual fervor in the life of a Christian. Sometimes older Christians, who are not Spirit-filled, cast a wet blanket over the fervor of a new Christian.

5. Despise not Prophecyings - verse 20

The believer should be always interested in the dissemination of the Word of God. The admonition of this verse is to abstain from every kind of evil. Evil has a way of coming in many forms. What may appear to be simple and without problems can be evil in disguise. Evil has a way of showing up even in Christian work.

IV. ADVICE CONCERNING SPIRITUAL VICTORY - verses 23-24

This verse deals with our final or complete sanctification. It refers to that day when we will be completely sanctified. We cannot sanctify ourselves; this is the work of God and he is faithful in this work. We may count on his faithfulness to complete the job he has begun. These verses are encouraging because they tell us that the believer is going to make it! Sometimes in the midst of our failures and distresses, we forget that our destination depends on God's faithfulness and not our own ability to remain faithful! God always completes what he begins. This verse teaches that man is a trinity. (Dr. Barnhouse used to refer to man somewhat like a three-story house. After the fall, he was more like those houses that have been wrecked by bombing, the third story has fallen into the second, the walls of the second are gaping so that a passer-by might see the debris of the two all mixed up together. The first story was lined with cracks although a part of the house might still be fit for dwelling.) When Adam sinned, the spirit of man fell down into his soul. The two are almost inseparable in the unregenerate.

Paul closes the chapter with some customary greetings and a reference to the "holy kiss." This was the greeting of rabbis. It was the token of friendship and brotherly love. In the ancient world, one kissed the hand, knee or foot of a superior but the cheek of a friend. I suppose our handshake would be the nearest social custom to describe such a greeting. I have been impressed with the conclusion of this letter . . . in verse 25, Paul asked these young believers to pray for him. There was none of the hierarchy approach of Paul to fellow believers. They were young and immature in the faith but he approaches them as brother to brother.

Conclusion:

The theme of the epistle is the second coming of Christ. Believers are to be living and working in such a way that come whenever He will, we will be ready. Unbelievers should be warned about the danger of neglecting Him.

STUDIES FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS

Lesson #1 - Learning to Use Your Bible

Every young Christian needs a personal Bible. It should be:

- I. SIZE: Not too large, not too small.
(Suitable for carrying to church with ease, yet with print large enough to read easily.)
- II. KIND: Scofield Reference Bible (Preference)
Oxford
Cambridge
Modern translations are fine as Bible Study tools, but secure a copy of the Authorized Version (King James Version) first. Make it the source of your study.
- III. COST: Usually the paper is about the same in all Bibles costing \$16.00 or more. The additional cost then is for the better bindings. Expect to pay \$20-25 for a good Bible. It will last approximately 10 years, depending on usage and care.
- IV. MARKING: There are special ball point pens available for use on India paper. A soft lead pencil will do. Do not use a regular ball point pen - it will "bleed" through with age and usage. There is a German make India-ink pen called a "Rapidograph" available in certain office supply stores.
*Illustration: How to block letters for boldness.
- V. CONTENTS:
 - A. Usage of marginal references (page 992 in Scofield Bible)
 - B. Importance of footnotes.
 - C. Supplementary material in Introduction and between Testaments.
 - D. Italics
 - E. Book headings
 - F. Scofield outlines, divisions
 - G. Index-1354 in Scofield
 - H. Concordance
 - I. Maps

Wise use of blank pages.

Put your name and address in your Bible.

- VI. Rebind--when worn with age--if you so desire.

Studies For Young Believers

Lesson #2 - Salvation and the Christian Life

This lesson will deal with some questions which every young Christian should consider. They should also know at least one verse in the Bible which answers the question.

1. What is the Bible Way to be Saved?

A. Ephesians 2:8-9.

We can no more save ourselves than a heart patient could perform a heart transplant operation upon himself!

B. Acts 4:12

There is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ. "I am the way..." John 14:6
(The only way, there is no other)

C. Acts 16:31

What is involved in the word "believer"? If someone asked you how to be saved, could you tell them how? Upon what basis?

D. Titus 3:5

Question: If good works could save a man's soul, how many would be enough to take him to heaven?

Question: Does the Bible say anything about good works?

Answer : Good works are part of a believer's life. They come after salvation in Christ, not before. (Titus 3:8).

How Can A Person be Sure They are Saved?

A. John 6:37

What does this verse say happens to "all that come to Christ?"
What are the conditions of "in no wise cast out?"

B. I John 5:10-13

The word "know" means to know for sure!

C. Poem - "Three Men On A Wall"

3. For How Long are Born-Again People Saved?

A. John 10:28 - "Eternal Life"

Does eternal life mean just until we die? If it did, then it would not be eternal, but rather temporal life.

B. John 5:24

According to John 5:24, when does a person receive eternal life? Notice the verse does not say we are candidates for salvation, it says a born-again person "has" eternal life now!

4. After A Person is Saved, Does He Ever Sin Again?

A. I John 1:1-9--Confession, Forgiveness, Cleansing.

B. I Corinthians 10:13 - There is always a way out.

5. If I am Safe As A Believer, Why Not Sin All I Want To?

Answer: If you feel safe in sinning, you are not saved! The Lord does not save us to continue living in sin, but to save us from our sins. For the believer sin is occasional and accidental, not habitual and joyful. Romans 6:1-2.

STUDIES FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS

Lesson 3 - Facts About the Bible

General Information:

Our English word "Bible" comes from the Greek word "biblos", which means book. The Bible is One (1) book made up of sixty-six (66) books. There are 2 major divisions in the Bible. The Old Testament, which has 39 books; the New Testament, which has 27 books.

There are 4 major divisions in the New Testament:

1. The Gospels-Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
2. Acts-History of the early church
3. The Epistles-Letters by Paul, Peter, John, Jude, James, etc.
4. The Revelation-Last book in the New Testament

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters and verses. There are 1,189 chapters and 31,093 verses. The reason for these divisions is to assist in locating portions of the text of Scripture.

The Bible, in one sense of the word, is a library of books; and yet, in another sense, it is one book. It was written by 40 different men who were different in background and training. Some were kings, fishermen, farmers, shepherds and scholars. The Bible was written over a period of approximately 1600 years. And yet, the basic theme is redemption and the central person of the entire volume is Jesus Christ.

Specific Questions:

1. Why Is the Bible So Important to Each Believer?

Psalm 119:11

"The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible"
(Statement in Moody's Bible)

2. What Should A Believer Do About Portions of Scripture He Does Not Understand?

II Peter 3:15-16; Luke 9:43-45

Prayer: Psalm 119:18

3. What Should A Believer Do With the Bible?

Revelation 1:3; II Timothy 2:15

Procedure:

- a. Study it through - Joshua 1:8
- b. Pray it in - Psalm 119:18
- c. Write it down - Isaiah 30:8
- d. Work it out - John 1:22
- e. Pass it on - Psalm 119:27

4. What Does the Bible Say About It's Own Origin?

II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20

5. What Was Jesus' Feeling re the Scriptures? - John 10:35; Matthew 5:18

6. Should You Carry Your Bible to Church? Should you judge a minister by the place the Bible has in his ministry? Isaiah 8:20.

STUDIES FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS

Lesson #4 - Miscellaneous Subjects

I. Prayer

Prayer is to the spiritual life what breathing is to physical life.

- A. What was Jesus' attitude and practice regarding prayer? (Mark 1:35).
- B. What are two conditions for proper praying? (John 15:7).
- C. Posture in prayer. (Daniel 6:10).
- D. Frequency in prayer. (I Thessalonians 5:17).
- E. Hindrances to prayer. (Psalm 66:18).
- F. Subjects of prayer. (I Timothy 2:2).
- G. Formula for prayer. (John 16:23).

II. Witnessing

Usually the first step in this direction is a desire to publicly declare one's personal faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour. (Romans 10:9-10). We are required to do so. (Acts 1:8; I Peter 3:15).

Seldom does a person who maintains a good witness ever become an unhappy Christian. A sure road to joy and blessing. (John 4).

III. Baptism

Should a born-again person be baptized? (Acts 2:41; Matthew 28:19-20). There was no such thing as an unbaptized believer in the early church. Baptism does not save a person--it is an act of obedience to Christ and a public witness of identification with Him.

IV. Church Attendance

- A. What does the Bible say about church attendance? (Hebrews 10:25).
- B. Does a person have to be faithful to his church in order to be a Christian?

Discussion:

- C. Find a church where the Bible is preached and Christ is honored and be loyal to that local work as long as the Saviour is exalted.

V. Giving

Give God of your energy and of your means. Giving is like sowing seed in a field, the more you sow the greater the harvest will be. (II Corinthians 9:6-7).

God expects His own family to support the propagation of the Gospel. (I Corinthians 16:1).

SUICIDE

I Samuel 31:4, Matthew 27:5

In a recent Sunday School class, the subject of suicide was raised with considerable interest and discussion in the class. This study is presented to seek further light and discussion on the subject.

Suicide is a problem in America. Each year, between 20,000-25,000 of our countrymen take their own lives. Many of this number are young people. For these people, life simply becomes unbearable and not worth living. In the contemporary setting, it is noteworthy that suicide has its highest rate among doctors, specifically psychiatrists, and lawyers. The rate is three times higher among this group than other professionals. The low rate is among teachers. The explanation given for the low rate among teachers has to do with their involvement with the young who are generally among our most emotionally healthy people. One recent article suggested that virtually all persons who commit suicide are mentally ill. A study of the eight men who were closely associated with Sigmund Freud reveal that all eight committed suicide.

The Hebrew nation classified suicide as a crime because of the high value placed upon human life. Suicide was treated as a horrible and degraded act.

The question arises: Can a Christian commit suicide? Let us consider some Biblical facts. The person who has received Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord is, in the language of the Bible, "in Christ." Nothing that person does or does not do will alter this fact. (Philippians 1:6, John 10:28) However, only God and the person himself is absolutely sure as to the fact of salvation in his life. Many people who profess to be saved are not really born again. Therefore, their conduct would not be in keeping with scriptural principles. It is possible for even a saved person to backslide and lose his joy and effectiveness as a Christian. In such a state or condition, that person is a prime target for Satan's attacks. The Devil would have no greater joy than to find a professing Christian living in a depressed, unhappy state and seek to get him to consider suicide. However, it is unthinkable that a genuine Christian could commit such a crime if he was in his right mind.

In matters of such gravity, the ultimate judgment belongs to the Lord. We are not qualified nor charged to sit in judgment on persons who have fallen victim to suicide. These matters we leave with Him.

Comments:

SUMMER CAMP

Exodus 19:2 (Spradling Version)

Summer brings a different style of living to many Americans. Vacations, cook-outs, picnics and camp have become a way of life in this country. Some "middle-aged" parents do not know much about Christian camping because opportunities were limited for such experiences while they were growing up. They were usually busy in the summertime working either on a farm or with other summer employment. For this reason, there is the possibility that some parents could look upon camp as a luxury but not a necessity worth the effort and expense involved. Let us consider some of the advantages of Christian camping.

I. SALVATION - Summer camp has been the place where many young people have come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour. During the course of a year, young people are able to avoid making a decision for Christ at home or in the church. However, when brought under the intensive program conducted in a Christian camp, all resistance is overcome and they submit to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. As a matter of fact, many of our neighborhood children do not know the advantages of camps like Alpine and The Wilds. If these children could get a taste of good, Christian camping, especially with the opportunity of hearing the Gospel, it would change their lives and perhaps the life of their family.

II. SEPARATION - Christian camp has been a spiritual haven for many kids. It is the only time in the year when they are away from home, church, friends, TV, the world and all of its influence upon them. When God began to forge the children of Israel into a nation, He led them out of Egypt with all of its distractions. The same is true when God is dealing with our children. It is imperative that they be taken out of familiar surroundings, where they are oftentimes preoccupied with the wrong things, and brought into the wholesome atmosphere of a camping program. Many parents discover to their amazement that camp counselors are usually very effective in helping their children spiritually. Also, it is possible for more to be accomplished in the life of a Christian young person in a single week at camp than an entire year in the average church program.

III. RECREATION - Wholesome fun and spiritual growth and development go together. Our young people are a part of the physical education programs in the public schools. However, there is another dimension to be learned at camp, and that is the importance of Christian conduct in sports. It is also important that our young people understand that Christian living is not a morbid, somber affair. Christian camping can be fun, especially as we get to know young people from other churches.

IV. CONSECRATION - A camp program is designed to meet the needs of a specific age group. Young people learn Bible truths on a graded level. Testimonies abound concerning the number of missionaries and pastors who have felt the call of God to Christian service while at camp. The camp fire testimony and consecration service is usually the high point of the week's activities. God is seeking an opportunity to speak to our children. It seems to me that we should take every available opportunity to get them under the wholesome influence of God's Word.

V. APPLICATION - I would encourage all of our parents to send their children to camp this year. This may involve financial sacrifice and considerable personal effort on the part of the parents. In my judgment, all such effort will be greatly rewarded by summer's end.

Observations and Testimonies:

THE "SUPER" CHURCH SYNDROME

Acts 2:41-47

The word syndrome has been overused today but it refers to a group of symptoms which occur together and characterize an abnormality. This study sheet will deal with an abnormality in the religious world.

Several years ago, a pastor friend of mine coined a word that has remained in my thinking. The word is "jumboism" and was used to describe the craze in the religious world for bigness. There is absolutely nothing wrong in trying to build a large, effective work for Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, it might be wrong to want to stay small if God gives the ability to reach large numbers with the gospel. My concern is not with wholesome church growth, even though it might be rapid in nature. The situation that bothers most thoughtful believers is the "super church syndrome," or that kind of religious sideshow that occurs in many churches on Sunday. The "show biz" concept of a bigger and better something every Sunday is just out of character for the work of Jesus Christ on earth. The church was never designed to be the place to feature "religious movie stars," professional athletes and a dozen other Madison Avenue gimmicks to entice people to come to church.

A trend has developed in some churches which requires a bigger show every week. The only gross sin among some evangelical people seems to be the sin of smallness. There is a movement afoot to get people to church by any means, ranging from a religious extravaganza to "give-away" programs. This writer's personal conviction is that much of this programming is designed to build up the preacher's ego and enlarge the church's reputation rather than reaching souls for Christ and building up the saints in the Word of God. Religious fads are not new in church history but our time seems to have spawned the multiplication of ridiculous gimmickry.

I believe in numbers and am not opposed to reaching as many people as is humanly possible as long as the effort is within the confines of Biblical methodology. I want our Church to be as large as it can possibly be because the Bible teaches that God is interested in numbers. As a matter of fact, one is a number. In the New Testament, large numbers of people came to church and were won to Christ but they were not bribed to come in order to win a free trip to the island of Bongo Bongo or receive free cokes and hamburgers at the local MacDonalds! I am not opposed to contests and reasonable methods in recruiting people to bring others to church. My reaction is to the abuse and violation of ethics and good judgment in the name of evangelism.

Ours is a day of religious apathy and spiritual decline. The ever-present danger of resorting to fleshly methods to appeal to the crowd without building the church upon the principles of the New Testament can, in the long run, hurt rather than help the cause of Christ. The success of pastors and people is all too often measured by counting nickels and noses to the exclusion of everything else. Somewhere along the "assembly line" of religious programming in our churches, there must be a place for "quality control." It would seem to me that a strong Bible teaching

(Over)

SYMBOLS OF THE SPIRIT

Robert K. Spradling

October 27, 1971

There is a great deal of obscurity in our understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Because He is not visible to the human eye, it is not easy for believers to understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit. In the Scriptures there are several emblems used to describe the Spirit which will help us to better comprehend His work on earth. To say that the Holy Spirit is like something we have seen or heard makes it possible for us to know in a more concrete form what the third person of the Trinity is really like.

I. Wind
One of the most familiar figurative representations of the Spirit is that of wind. Jesus told Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit's work in regenerating sinners can be compared to the movement of wind. (John 3:8) Peter wrote concerning the inspiration of Scripture that the writers of the text were borne along as a ship is moved by the wind. (2 Peter 1:21) On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit's presence was manifested as of a rushing, mighty wind. (Acts 2:2)

In all of the Spirit's ministry there is the unseen factor but when He is present it is quite evident that God is at work.

II. Water

Just as water is essential for cleansing, cooling satisfaction and refreshment of the natural man, so the Holy Spirit is vital to the spiritual life of the believer. To the woman of Samaria, Jesus spoke of an inner well of water. (John 4:14) "The Holy Spirit indwelling the believer is a reality as His presence is a measureless blessing, in all of which He is ever active. Like an artesian well, He is "springing up" unto everlasting life. Eternal life is not only gained and attained by the operation of the Holy Spirit, but is maintained, as are all its manifestations, by the Spirit."-Chafer.

In John 7:37-39 Jesus continued this subject that the Holy Spirit is like an unfailing fountain within the believer out from which flows streams of blessing and service.

III. Fire

Fire in Scripture is used to symbolize many things such as: (1) The Lord's presence (Ex. 3:2), (2) The Lord's protection (Ex. 13:21), (3) The Lord's promise (Zech. 2:5), (4) The Lord's purification (Mal. 3:3), (5) The Lord's punishment (Gen. 19:24).

Wherever this emblem is used in reference to God, the emphasis seems to be on the judicial aspect of the Lord's work among men. God used fire to warn men and instruct them in proper conduct toward God. The presence of fire was a reminder that God is powerful and purging in His relationships to His children. This emblem was one of the first man encountered in his contact with God. (Gen. 3:24).

TARRYING BY THE STUFF

I Samuel 30:24

Robert Spradling

May 1972

Introduction.

David and his men returned from a military expedition to discover that their headquarters had been burned and their families taken captive. David's soldiers were so discouraged that they threatened to stone David for leaving the city unprotected. David chose 600 men and started in pursuit of the Amalekites. When they arrived at the brook Besor, 200 soldiers were unable to continue because of the rapid pace of the expedition. They were left behind to watch over the excessive baggage and to await David's return. Along the way, they found an Egyptian who had been left by the Amalekites to die. This Egyptian knew the location of the Amalekite camp and was willing to lead David and his men to that location. David overtook the Amalekites, defeated them, and in addition to recovering their families secured a large amount of the spoils of battle. When David's army returned to the 200 who had fainted at Besor, the 400 who participated in the battle were reluctant to share with the 200 who had fainted at Besor and remained behind. In their greed, they refused to share the booty with their comrades, willing only to restore their families, nothing else. However, David would have none of this and suggested that those who stayed behind to guard the baggage should share alike with those who participated in the battle. In this chapter, there is set forth a biblical principle of sharing in the Lord's work.

I. THOSE WHO GIVE SHARE WITH THOSE WHO GO - II Corinthians 6:1.

Not only are believers workers together with God, but we are workers together with one another. (cf. I Corinthians 3:6-9). In a real sense of the word, all of the Lord's people are part of a team. Everyone is not called to serve in the front lines but everyone is called to serve. Just as in a great army, all personnel are not in the infantry but some are required to work in the quarter master corps to keep the supplies coming. There is a broad sense in which all of the Lord's people are missionaries. Some "go in person", others "go by purse" but all are involved in missions. One of the great privileges God gives to His people is to share both personally and financially in the great enterprise of worldwide missions. If we cannot go in person, then our responsibility is to go by helping others get to the field.

II. THOSE WHO PRAY SHARE WITH THOSE WHO PREACH - Romans 15:30.

Every student of Scripture would readily agree that Moses' praying on the mountain contributed as much to the victory over the Amalekites as Joshua's fighting in the valley. (cf. Exodus 17:11). "All Christians are not of equal strength, and some follow Christ to the conflict, others tarry with the stuff. Some fight the Lord's battles in the din of active life; others, aged men and women...weak in body but strong in faith, fight with the peaceful arms of prayers and tears...He rewards those who tarry in patience with the stuff, as well as those who go forth in march to fight valiantly in the battle."-C. J. Ellicott. Everybody has not been called to be the pastor of a church or a missionary on the foreign field, but everybody has been called to pray. Prayer is service just as much as preaching is service. God uses prayer as a means of accomplishing His purpose in the world. ***Illustration of Spurgeon's prayer group in his church.

III. THOSE WHO HAVE LESSER ABILITY SHARE WITH THOSE WHO HAVE GREATER ABILITY-I Cor. 4:3.

The size of a person's talent is not in question but rather how faithfully he uses his talent. The Lord Jesus could take the small gift of a little lad, as recorded in John 6, and bless the lives of many thousands of people. That boy was not the most talented person in that large assembly, but what he had, when given to the Lord, was able to bless the life of the most talented person there. It is a great privilege to share in the ministry of the Gospel. We do not lament over the size of our talent, but count ourselves fortunate to be able to serve our great God in whatever capacity He has given us.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

II Peter 3:15-16

Robert K. Spradling

November 8, 1972

In the study of Bible doctrine, one frequently discovers words which are not easily understood. In our church, we sometimes use words which we generally understand but would be hard pressed for a technical definition. We read many religious terms in the newspapers and in books which are difficult for us to fully define. This study is designed to render assistance in the definition of a limited number of these words.

1. Premillennialism - That view or interpretation of the Scripture which holds that Christ will return to earth literally, bodily, and visibly before the millennial kingdom or reign of Christ.
2. Dispensationalism - A system of Bible interpretation which looks upon the world as a household run by God. In this household-world, God is administering its affairs according to His own will and in various stages of revelation in the process of time. These various stages mark off the distinguishable different economies in the out-working of His total purpose, and these economies are the dispensations. (Ryrie) Dispensationalism recognizes that God has, at different times in history, dealt with men in different ways according to man's sin and his responsibility to God.
3. Eschatology - The doctrine of last things. It deals with subjects like the second coming of Christ, the anti-Christ, Resurrection, Judgment.
4. Ecumenical Movement - A movement among religious leaders and groups designed to unite on a world-wide basis, people of all faiths into a single religious organization or world-wide church. In this movement, doctrine is minimized while cooperation and organization are primary. The unity of the movement is based on external organization rather than internal spiritual unity.
5. Total Depravity - That doctrine which teaches that man's moral and spiritual corruption extends to every part of his nature, and that there is nothing good in man to make him acceptable before a righteous God.
6. Apostacy - The word literally means "to stand away from or to fall away." It refers to an abandonment of Biblical truth. It may apply to a religious person or a religious group. (In my judgment, a born-again person cannot become an apostate.)
7. Dialogue - The exchange of ideas between two persons or parties. In the theological world, it refers to the idea of sitting down with theological liberals, Catholics and Jews in an attempt to exchange information in order to find common ground upon which all may agree. (Can you imagine the Apostle Paul adopting such a procedure?)
8. Infallibility and Inerrancy of the Scriptures - The Word of God was without error in the original manuscripts. Please notice, we do not make the claim concerning various translations, only the original autographs.
9. Antinomianism - The word means "against law." It is a fanatical view of Christian freedom which refuses to recognize any kind of restrictions except ones own personal ideas which they claim to receive from the Holy Spirit.
10. Astrology - The doctrine that heavenly bodies foretell and influence the destinies of men and nations.

THE THANKFUL MAN
Psalm 112:1-10

Robert K. Spradling

November 22, 1972

INTRODUCTION

One of the dark pictures painted in the Word of God has to do with the degeneration of man as recorded in the first chapter of Romans. It was when mankind became ungrateful and unmindful of God's care for them that they lapsed into idolatry. (Romans 1:21-23) Men dare not take God for granted. This Psalm abounds with thanksgiving. In Psalm 112 there is the picture of a man who is resting in the blessing of the Lord. This is the man who is enjoying the benefits of Christian living now in addition to the blessings of eternity. The Psalm begins with two key words, "Praise" and "Blessed." The blessed man is one who delights in the things of God. The barometer of spirituality can be measured by our delights and our praise.

I. THE SEED OF THE THANKFUL MAN (Verse 2)

Our relationship to God is not hereditary. Our parents' religion will not take us to Heaven. However, there is a principle of truth in this verse which indicates God honors right actions and disdains evil. This verse is pointing out the importance of raising our family in the things of the Lord. We reap what we sow in the lives of our children. In the early days of American history, a course, lazy man built a hut in the woods of central New York. In five generations, that man whose name was Jukes had several hundred descendants. A careful case study of 1200 of these revealed some amazing statistics. Four hundred of these were afflicted with social diseases, 200 were criminals, 7 murderers, 50 women lived openly immoral lives, 300 children died of neglect, 300 were bums and panhandlers. It was estimated at the time of the study that they had cost the state of New York over \$1,000 each or \$1,200,000. By contrast, the Edwards family had 1400 cases studied. One hundred twenty were graduates of Yale University, 165 from other colleges, and this was a day when a college education required considerable effort to attain. Thirteen were college presidents, 100 college professors, 100 ministers and missionaries, 100 lawyers, 80 elected to public office, 75 were officers in the Armed Forces, 60 were prominent writers, 30 judges.

II. THE THANKFUL MAN AND HIS HOUSE (verse 3)

The word house can refer to anything from a tent to a household. It often refers to family, race, or people. This is the picture of a man whose righteousness is in God. This man's household measures wealth and riches by his relationship to God. A man may have a great deal of material riches and be poverty stricken.

III. THE THANKFUL MAN AND HIS AFFAIRS (verse 4)

The idea of this verse has to do with matters regarding the course of a righteous man's life. The direction of his life will be one of wisdom and judgment. This man in the total picture of his life and conduct will show a great deal of wisdom and judgment. The reason his life will reflect such characteristics is because he is trusting God to lead in his life. (Proverbs 3:5-6) The man who is seeking guidance for his life from God may be assured that his steps are ordered of the Lord and every detail of his life will be cared for by God.

"THESE THINGS"

Robert Spradling

January 1972

Recently, while studying the Gospel of Matthew, this writer noticed how often the two words "these things" occur in the text. A closer look at these references provides a profitable study in the Word of God.

I. The "These Things" of Satan's Proposal - Matthew 4:9

Satan's proposal to Jesus, on the mountain of temptation, had to do with an offer to rule the kingdoms of this world. It was not an empty offer. Satan had the power to do this, but he had not counted on Jesus' steadfastness even in the hour of maximum physical need. Satan's tactics have not changed through the ages. He believes that men are primarily interested in "things". The philosophy that every man has his price did not appeal to Jesus. Our Lord demonstrated by example that there are some aspects to life more important than "things". It is far more important to trust God and serve Him on earth, than to set our affections on the temporal, changing "things" of this life.

II. The "These Things" of Spiritual Priority - Matthew 6:33

The primary need of every person is spiritual. Righteousness is needed before anything else. In this passage, our Lord reminds His own that God must be first in our lives. In the context, Jesus uses the phrase "take no thought" several times. We are not to be anxious over food and clothing to the point that these are our basic considerations in life. Our first interest should be the Lord and His will. All other things will fall into place when the Lord is given His proper place.

The natural man is interested in living a life that is filled with good things but fails to see that righteousness is required before this can happen. The great cry among men today is for peace. However, men want peace without righteousness and this kind of peace will not endure.

III. The "These Things" of God's Special Program - Matthew 13:34

Matthew 13 is a great dispensational chapter in the Word of God. It explains God's program on earth during this era called the Church Age. The Church is not the Kingdom and the Kingdom is not the Church, they are two distinct groups in the economy of God. This chapter reveals that God is building His Church today. In a future age, the Church will share in His Messianic Kingdom but God is not building that Kingdom now. It will come suddenly and powerfully and not slowly and gradually by growth. (Daniel 2:44) God is permitting the parallel development of both good and evil during this age. However, in the time of harvest, He will separate the good and bad and then establish His righteous Kingdom on the earth.

IV. The "These Things" of Sure Prophecy - Matthew 24:3, 33-34

God's Word has given clear direction concerning God's program for human history. The disciples wanted to know about the "signs" that will precede the Lord's return to earth. Jesus told them what condition the world would be in just prior to His coming. (The Coming in Matthew 24 refers to the Revelation and not the Rapture. The Coming of Christ for His Church is always signless.)

God made some promises to His ancient people Israel and Matthew 24, along with other passages, makes it plain that God will keep His word. Instead of discouraging the believer, Matthew 24 should be a source of encouragement.

THINGS ETERNAL

2 Cor. 4:17 - 18

The words everlasting and eternal are used interchangeably in the N. T. Both words come from the Greek word "aionios". For example, this word is sometimes translated both eternal or everlasting in the same verse.

The Bible student will be surprised to notice how few references there are to the term eternal in the Scripture. This word occurs most often in connection with the word life. There are approximately 42 references to the term eternal life in the N. T. The primary Hebrew word for the word eternal refers to an unlimited duration of time or a cycle or age. In the O. T. this word may signify either a specific duration or an unending duration of time.

I. ETERNAL LIFE - John 3:15, 16, 36; John 5:24; John 10:28; 1 John 5:11, 13, 20.

Inherent in the word eternal is more than the contemporary idea of endless duration of time. When the word eternal is used to describe that life given by God to the believer sinner, the quality of life is the significant factor. When a person receives Christ, he receives eternal life. Augustine said "Join thyself to the eternal God and thou will be eternal." One of the most difficult aspects of eternal life is that the believer has eternal life now. It is not simply a promise of pie in the sky in the sweet by and by. The believer has everlasting life that will never end, it will outlast the stars in the sky.

II. ETERNAL PUNISHMENT - Mt. 25:46; 2 Th. 1:9; Jude 7.

The subject of eternal retribution is not popular in our sophisticated society. Men use the word Hell in a profane manner but get upset when a preacher preaches on the subject. It is paradoxical that men would use the word so often and yet deny the existence of such a place! T. T. Martin has well said "Lurking in the minds of multitudes is a vague suspicion or dread that God will be unjust in sending some to Hell, and that He will be unjust in the way that He will punish." We need to keep in mind that God is just. Not only will He do no wrong, He can do no wrong! People need to keep in mind that God must punish sin not just to reform the sinner but because punishment is right and deserved. Many people want to talk about God's love and mercy but forget that His justice is at stake when it comes to the punishment of sin.

III. ETERNAL GOD - Romans 16:26.

The existence of God cannot be measured by time. He is over and above time. He is without beginning or ending. Whenever time began, God was there. Dt. 33:27; Ps. 90:1 - 2; Ps. 102:11.

IV. ETERNAL GOSPEL - Rev. 14:6.

There is but one Gospel with different words to describe different aspects in time. The duration of the Gospel is eternal in nature by virtue of identification with the eternal God.

V. ETERNAL BLESSINGS - 2 Cor. 5:1

The Bible teaches that the best for the believer is in the future. Our present benefits and blessings are manifold. However, the prospect of a glorified body along with eternal blessings with the eternal Christ, stagger the imagination. We could say with Robert Browning, "The best is yet to be...."

THINGS FOR NOW

Robert K. Spradling

November 1972

Recently, while studying the Bible in connection with another subject, my attention was arrested by the usage of the word "now" in the New Testament. Ours has been called the "now" generation because of the great speed with which we live, and the demands to have what we want now without waiting.

The Bible speaks of some very important "now" subjects.

I. THE NOW OF SALVATION - II Cor. 6:2, Romans 8:1

The sinner has no promise of salvation tomorrow. As a matter of fact, he has no promise of salvation beyond today. The Devil's favorite word is "tomorrow" when it comes to receiving Christ as Saviour. If Satan can get a person to wait just one more day to be saved, then someday he will have waited just one day too long. God is willing and wanting to save sinners but His message is for today, for tomorrow may be too late. (cf. James 4:13-15, Luke 12:16 ff.)

II. THE NOW OF SONSHIP - I John 3:2

Some religious groups present the idea of salvation on a "candidate basis," that is, a sinner is kept on needles and pins until he dies and then he finds out if God has or has not accepted him. The Bible does not teach such an idea. The believer is right now just as much a child of God as he will ever be. He is simply awaiting a future day when his body will be redeemed. This will be accomplished at the coming of our Lord. However, John makes it very clear that we are right now God's children with all of the blessings and privileges that belong to the child of God.

III. THE NOW OF SUFFERING - Romans 8:18

Suffering is part of the believers Christian development and training. We learn lessons from suffering which cannot be learned any other way. Therefore, the believer should expect to suffer in this life. But the wonderful blessing from suffering is that it makes the glory we shall share with Christ a greatly desired thing. The people who know little or no suffering in this life know little or nothing of the anticipation of the future when the Saviour manifests His glory on earth and His own share with Him in that glory.

IV. THE NOW OF SANCTIFICATION - Romans 6:19

This verse is dealing with present sanctification. The picture Paul has in mind is that of a slave. Once we were slaves to sin. Now we are slaves of Christ so let us yield ourselves to our new master and do his will as readily as we did when we obeyed our own selfish will. The key to victory is yieldedness to Christ.

V. THE NOW OF SERVICE - Romans 13:11

Today is the measure of our service for Christ. What we did today for Him will indicate what we are going to do in the future. Many of the Lord's people think their greatest period of usefulness for Christ is yet to come. Someday they are going to be a soul winner, pray more, be more faithful, become a tither - but someday never comes. Today is the only day we have to serve Christ. Let us do so with gladness.

THREE MEN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Ezekiel 14:14-20

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter of Ezekiel, God was going to send judgment upon Israel because of her idolatry. The situation was so bad that even three of God's choice servants could not have stemmed the tide of judgment. Had they been living in the land, only they themselves would have been spared, the rest of the land was under condemnation. The question arises: Why did Ezekiel mention these three men? The answer seems to be that each of these men represents a certain virtue that has had its impact on heathenism and idolatry in every age.

I. NOAH - THE PREACHING MAN

Noah lived in an era of terrible moral corruption. God had scheduled the world for judgment. His solution to the problem of gross ungodliness was two-fold, namely, pounding and preaching. Noah was commissioned to build an ark to save himself and his family from coming judgment. However, he was also engaged in warning his generation through the preaching of God's word. In Bible history, God has always warned men of coming judgment and he has done so through the preaching of His word. God is pleased to speak to men through men. God has always had a Noah for every generation. However, whenever the warning has not been heeded, judgment has come. God's answer to the ungodliness of our age is the preaching of His precious word.

II. DANIEL - THE PRAYING MAN

Daniel was required to live in a pagan land under its terrible influences. His prayer life enabled him to withstand the pressures of his day. He had courage to stand up and stand out from the crowd. Prayer enables the Lord's servants to resist the influence of a godless society. We have the same resources at our disposal that Daniel had. We serve the same God and face similar situations today. Let us be diligent in our praying and God will act in our behalf just as He did for Daniel.

III. JOB - THE PATIENT MAN

Job was a man who "kept his cool" in the midst of adverse circumstances. He kept his faith in God when he had lost everything else. He did not react to adversity rashly nor unwisely. Job was willing to wait upon the Lord for the answer to his problems. For that reason, Job has become the personification of patience. God asks His people to trust Him and to wait upon Him for His deliverance.

These three men offer great encouragement for believers today. Preaching, prayer and patience are some of God's effective tools for accomplishing His will on earth and in the lives of His children.

THREE PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Robert Spradling

December 1971

The ministry of the Spirit to us began before we came to know Jesus Christ as Saviour. It is His ministry that makes the sinner conscious of his need of salvation.

I. CONVICTION - John 16:8-11

① The word reprove in verse 8 means "to convince or convict". It is a legal term that brings one into the courtroom where evidence is presented to show that a crime has been committed. The Holy Spirit is the Person who reveals to men that it is not just outward breaking of God's laws that alienates them from God. He touches the very heart of the matter and points to the real problem - failure to believe on Christ. (v. 9) "To the unregenerate heart, unbelief in Christ seems a minor matter...." (J. Oswald Sanders) It is the Spirit who makes it clear that this is the tap root of all sins. A student of church history cannot help remembering those records of the early days of revival in America, when men cried out for mercy as the Spirit made them aware of their own sinfulness before a holy God.

The Spirit also convicts men concerning their need of God's righteousness. The natural man does not understand the nature of righteousness nor his need of God's righteousness. The Spirit reveals to men how they can be right with God through Christ Jesus. ② Phil. 3:

③ The Holy Spirit shows men that judgment is sure. The choice is plain, either accept God's righteousness in Christ or be eternally lost.

II. CONVERSION - Titus 3:5-7

The sinner is spiritually dead. (Ephesians 2:1) It is the Holy Spirit who gives new life in Christ. It is one thing to be convicted of spiritual need in the face of certain facts, it is another matter to yield to the Spirit's prompting and be converted. One of the great theological failures of our generation has been the confusion of taking conviction for conversion. It is possible for a person to be stirred emotionally to the point of tears and yet not be born again.

III. CONTROL - Acts 2:14, Ephesians 5:18

There is a two-fold aspect to the Spirit's control.

A. Individual

Every believer is admonished to be controlled by the Spirit. Such blessing is not available for just a select spiritual elite group, but rather for every born-again Christian. The reason more believers are not Spirit controlled does not stem from ignorance but indifference and unwillingness to yield to the Lord's leading in their lives.

B. Congregational - Acts 20:28

The Spirit of God is sovereign in all that pertains to the ministry of the church. He desires to rule in the church..."but the tragedy of the church today lies in the fact that the will of the majority has almost entirely displaced the will of the Spirit. The members of the Body are more and more assuming the prerogatives which belong to the Head alone." (Sanders) Every ministry of the church is dependent on the Spirit. The call of pastors is a work of the Spirit, the power to witness must be in the Spirit (Acts 1:8), worship in the congregation is of the Spirit (Philippians 3:3), missionary activities come from His direction. (Acts 13:1-2) ✓

There is no area in the believer's life and ministry in which he may trust his own judgment and not seek the guidance of God's Spirit.

THREE TYPES OF GARMENTS

Throughout the Bible, spiritual virtues or the absence of them are described in terms like unto the putting on or removing of clothing. (Compare Colossians 3:12, Titus 2:10) The Word of God speaks of righteousness in such a fashion.

I. THE FIG LEAVES OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS - Genesis 3:7

When Adam and Eve sinned against the Lord, they sought to cover their nakedness with a garment of their own making. This kind of activity pointed to something deeper in their emotional makeup than just the desire for physical covering. Their sin made them conscious of their spiritual separation from God. They attempted to compensate for this loss by making something with their hands. The religious bent of all men craves to do something in the flesh to please God. Adam and Eve made clothing. Some men build hospitals, schools, churches or do social work, much of which is designed to be a substitute for the acknowledgment of sin and a complete trust in God for salvation. The sinner always seeks to cover his sin with the works of his hands. What Adam and Eve began in the dawn of civilization is being continued today by men who seek some kind of righteousness other than that which is described in the Bible.

II. THE FILTHY RAGS OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS -- Isaiah 64:6

Self-righteousness is the attempt of the sinner to approach God upon the basis of personal merit or worth. Cain was an outstanding example of such a person. Also, the Pharisee mentioned in Luke 18:9-12 is a classic example of self-righteousness. Notice the influence of self-righteousness in his life: Verse 9 - This man trusted in himself for righteousness and also had a low regard for others. Verse 11 - Pride of religious attainment, a superior attitude toward others, a readiness to point out the sins of others while blind to one's own sins. Verse 12 - A religious sense of duty which is devoid of love for the lowly. Self-righteousness is the sin of the religious man who is religious but lost. The self-righteous is trusting in something other than the finished work of Christ for his salvation.

III . THE FINE LINEN OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS - Rev. 19:8

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed
With joy shall I lift up my head.

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame."

Righteousness is required in order to enter Heaven. The Bible states there are only two kinds of righteousness: (1) ours (2) His - Philippians 3:9. The only kind of righteousness God will accept is

TONGUES

Robert Spradling

Aug. 1984
October 1969

The Tongues Movement is being featured in the news media. No longer is it isolated to the fanatical fringe groups generally referred to as Pentecostal or Holiness groups. Today this phenomenon has attracted many educated people in the major denominations. In some areas it is spreading like wild-fire. Latin America is one of its most fertile areas. One can only speculate as to reasons for such an increase, but it would appear that many sincere people are weary of the denominational deadness so prevalent in America. Thus, these people rush into tongues groups which appear to offer a kind of experience that is full, dynamic and satisfying. Perhaps the uncertainty of our times with all of its emphasis on materialism has added fuel to the fire. This is undoubtedly the case with reference to tongues groups that have appeared on college campuses in places like Yale, Dartmouth and Princeton.

There are two words which appear in print referring to the tongues movement. One is "glossolalia" which comes from the Greek word for "tongue". The other word is "charisma" which comes from a Greek word meaning "gift" and refers to the special gift of being able to speak in tongues.

This paper has not been prepared as a means of blanketly condemning people involved or interested in the tongues movement. Logical or even Biblical reasons seldom influence folk who are in the emotional excitement of this type of experience. However, this writer does believe that there are dangers involved in the tongues movement which should be brought to the attention of the saints of God.

1. Tongues In A Local Church Usually Causes Division.

Tongues was one of the problems at Corinth. More is said about the problems there than in any other epistle. This church was the least spiritual of all the early churches, and one contributing factor was that they were a church of extremes and excesses. The Corinthian church was talented and gifted, but also immature and carnal as no other church! This should give some instruction to the Lord's people in any era.

To be sure, there are some occasions when division may be necessary to maintain doctrinal and moral standards, but tongues is not such a basis. Cf. Romans 16:17.

2. Tongues Often Leads to Spiritual Pride.

Persons who have the ability to speak in tongues sometimes look upon themselves and their fellow "gifted" friends as a special "elite corps" in the Lord's family. The grave problem involved is that tongues people are usually just the reverse - the entire experience is based on a sensual, carnal type of self-satisfaction which excludes a kind of spiritual superiority. We are never encouraged in Scripture to fasten our eyes on a subjective experience, but on an objective reality - Jesus Christ! Hebrews 12:2. As someone has said: "We do not come to the well of truth bringing our own water." Neither do we dare substitute an experience for Him! Dr. A. T. Pierson has pointed out that: "The infallible Scriptures and no human experience alone can be the ultimate court of appeal...All true endowments of the Spirit lead to humility...any gift sought for its own sake or for self-glory is a delusion and a snare."

TONGUES

Part 2

Robert Spradling

October 1969

The concentration of Biblical material on this subject is in the Book of Acts and the book of I Corinthians.

I. The Book of Acts

There are 3 primary passages in Acts, and in all three the reference to tongues is to a real language understood by people of different countries and cultural backgrounds.

1. Acts 2:1-13 (Pentecost)

There is an emphasis on languages as even a casual look at the context of this chapter reveals. Cf. 2:4,6,8,11. This vast group from 15 countries had come to Jerusalem. They needed to hear the gospel before they returned to their homeland. God in His sovereignty overcame the language barrier, which He had imposed upon mankind, in order to evangelize these nations immediately. There is no indication in Scripture that such an event ever took place again.

2. Acts 10:46 (Caesarea)

This event was approximately 7 years after the Day of Pentecost. The purpose was to establish and confirm the fact that God had bestowed the same gifts and blessings on the Gentiles that He had upon the Jews previously at Pentecost. However, the wind and tongues of fire were absent here. The fact that these Gentiles spoke and were understood to be magnifying God would indicate they were speaking a language readily grasped by the hearers, without interpreters of any kind.

3. Acts 19:1-7 (Ephesus)

These men were 12 who had responded to the message of John the Baptist - Messiah is coming. As yet, they had not heard of His finished work at Calvary. However, upon hearing, they submitted to believer's baptism. Their position was similar to Old Testament saints. Again, when they spoke in tongues no interpreter was present or necessary, and yet they were understood by their hearers--an indication of an understandable language being the one spoken.

The transitional nature of Acts should remind one that some of the happenings were never intended to be a pattern for today. Cf. 3:1-temple worship, 4:32-37-distribution of goods, supernatural works-5:19.

II. I Corinthians 14

There is wide disagreement even among the finest Bible teachers as to the nature of the tongues mentioned in this chapter. Many believe that the tongues here are also languages, as in the Book of Acts. There is little doubt that languages are referred to several times in the chapter, as in verses 18-19 & 21. However, it would seem to this writer that the entire chapter seems to point to a problem in Corinth deeper than speaking various languages. These "tongues" seem to refer to some type of ecstatic utterance not always intelligible except via interpretation. There are obvious differences in Acts 2 and I Corinthians 14. Oswald Sanders has listed them as follows:

WELCOME WORDS

Robert Spradling

July 1972

Many newcomers to a community are acquainted with the "Welcome Wagon", a service provided by the businessmen of a community to introduce new people to the area. The Bible speaks about some "Welcome Words" which every believer should seek to incorporate into his Christian life. These words reflect the kind of Christian character which makes Christianity appealing. Last Lord's Day, this writer made reference to the rich young ruler and his interest in Jesus. There was something about Jesus that captured this young man's interest. From the text of scripture it would appear that the young ruler was impressed with that remarkable moral trait called goodness.

I. CHEERFULNESS

On several occasions the Lord admonished his disciples to be of good cheer. When Paul, in route to Rome, was caught up in a terrible wind storm called Euroclydon, he encouraged his fellow passengers with these words: "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." (Matthew 27:25) Perhaps the trait of cheerfulness is not exactly what Paul had in mind in this passage, but most of us can readily identify this attitude of heart. Cheerfulness has been described as that happy frame of mind which reflects general good temper and kindness of heart. Cheerfulness is the very opposite of the morbid and morose attitude which dominates the negative personality. Cheerfulness is that quality that brings sunshine into the life and fills the life with serenity. We associate cheerfulness with those fine Christian qualities such as joy and victory. It is the exact opposite of depression, gloom and sadness in the life. Few people enjoy being around the sombre and sad person. There is beauty and attractiveness to the good-natured and delightful Christian. This kind of person is the useful Christian who spreads happiness and good will to all who touch his life. Life is filled with problems for all of us. However, God can give to every Christian that quality of soul which enables him to approach each day in a cheerful, optimistic manner.

II. PUNCTUALITY - Ephesians 5:16

We reveal a great deal about our life and character by our usage of time. Time is a very precious gift from God and we should use it wisely. The person who has mastered the use of time in his life, moves through life accomplishing that which is necessary without the appearance of busyness which clutters up the lives of inefficient people. Our Lord moved through His ministry with a majestic and measured pace. We all have exactly the same amount of time in a given day. The question surrounding punctuality has to do with why some people are perpetually late. Is it because they are busier than other people or is it because they are poor managers of their time? The word punctuality comes from a Latin word which means "a point". The punctual person is careful about the small and important usage of time. A Christian should be punctual in every activity of his life ranging from business appointments to church attendance. Some psychologists say that the reason many folk are habitually late is because they do not value other people's time. They have an exaggerated opinion of their own importance and consequently place little value on other people's time. Promptness for appointments is important in life. Habitual tardiness is a very annoying trait and somewhere along life's road could spell the difference between success and failure. The question has often entered this pastor's mind concerning late arrivers in church. It is difficult for me to see these folks as being careful and meticulous in their habits of personal

WHAT ABOUT COLLEGE?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Every family with teenagers is faced with a question of post-high school training. The primary question for the Christian is not whether to go to college or not to go to college, but rather what is God's will for my life? A college education may or may not be God's will for you.

Young people are required to make three vital decisions usually before they are 25 years old. The decisions are (1) salvation in Christ, (2) occupation, (3) life companion.

For the past several years, I have been increasingly aware for the need of young people to give God at least one year of their life for spiritual preparation. In my own case, Bible Institute was terribly important. Exposure to the atmosphere which exists at such a school is beneficial to those who want to be Sunday School teachers, parents and workers in a local church even if they do not plan full time Christian service. (The Mormons have capitalized on this principal for a number of years.)

Question: What are some of the problems of a college education? One of the big factors has to do with cost. This is especially true in sending girls to college who have no specific leading for Christian work apart from being a wife and homemaker. Such cost is often viewed as too expensive, and a waste of time. I do not agree with this thinking. There are many values to Christian education not the least of which is exposure to an area where ones life companion may be selected from high quality Christian young people. In my judgment, this is not a secondary matter. There are some who look upon Christian education as more personal and devotional in nature rather than technical and qualifying people for a life work. Many colleges teach people how to make a living but not how to live. This is where Bible education excels. If a Christian school provides nothing more than a proper atmosphere and good associations for Christian young people, in my judgment it is worth the sacrifice. It is during this time that we hope to reclaim the damage done to many young people after 12 years in the public school system. By placing oneself in a Christian environment, even those who have no special call or desire for full time Christian work may indeed feel the call of God to a specific area.

Question: What is the role of the parent concerning Christian colleges? Parents should take the time to familiarize themselves with the facts of different kinds of Christian schools. They should show an interest in their children to the extent of discussing this matter in the home, reading catalogs and taking summer trips to look at various campuses. Also, prayer should surround these vital decisions. Parents should not super-impose their will upon their children concerning Christian training. However, they should show considerable knowledge and interest in this important part of their family life.

Question: What is the role of the church? The church staff, especially those who minister to the young, should be people who know something about the different types of training available to Christian young people. They should know the difference between a Bible College and Christian College. The minister of youth should take time to interview young people concerning their interests in life. Trips to various Christian campuses should be planned by the youth minister in order to expose young people to the atmosphere to a Christian school. Many schools provide

(Over)

WHAT CHRIST WAS MADE

Robert Spradling

January 1972

When the word "made" is used in connection with the person of Christ, it is most often used to describe the active participation of the second person of the Godhead in the work of Creation: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3) However, this word appears frequently in the Bible to show other kinds of activity of our Lord in our behalf.

I. Christ Was Made Flesh - John 1:14

The first verse in John's gospel tells how the Word was God. The reader is taken into the presence of deity and given a glimpse of the eternity of God! Then with the same wonder and majesty, John shows how this eternal God came down to dwell among men as a man. The implications of such a verse stagger the imagination. It all sounds unreal, that God would choose to become a person of flesh and blood and live on the earth. John never ceased to be amazed at this wonderful truth. Many years after he wrote the gospel, he is still taken up with this truth in his epistles. (cf. I John 1:1-3) Barclay says that John uses the word "flesh" to describe what Jesus did in coming to earth. This word is the very word Paul uses repeatedly to describe human nature in all of its weakness and failure. The very fact of its usage shows the wonder of the incarnation of Christ. Jesus Christ was God in flesh dwelling among men. In coming to earth, He did not come in royal splendor, He came as every other man must, in flesh, and in so doing understands from the experiential side what it means to be a man. (Hebrews 2:17-18)

II. Christ Was Made Sin For Us - 2 Corinthians 5:21

The Bible teaches the sinlessness of Jesus. (I John 3:5, John 8:46) During the entire course of His life, He did not commit one sin. And yet, He became sin for us in order to provide righteousness for every believing sinner.

Jesus Christ bore the penalty of our sins on the Cross. God dealt with our sins in the person of His own Son at Calvary. This verse tells how it is possible for God to take men to Heaven who are sinful beings. It does not say God made His Son a sinner, but rather He laid on His sinless Son the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6; I Peter 2:24)

Jesus Christ bore our sins. Instead of sin to our account, we have through Christ, righteousness. God's judicial verdict on the sinner who receives Christ is acquittal. Where once we stood in sinful shame and guilt, now we are not guilty but reconciled to God.

III. Christ Was Made of A Woman, Under the Law, A Curse for Us - Galatians 4:4 and 3:13

A. Made of A Woman - 4:4

The lesson of this verse pertains to the virgin birth of Christ. Our Lord came to earth through human birth but He had always existed. His true humanity is reflected in the fact that He came to earth as all men do - through physical birth.

B. Made Under the Law - 4:4

Not only did Jesus become a man but He was born a Jew. He was able to deal with man's failure under the Law. The Law condemned sinners so Christ lived and died under the Law that He might redeem those who were under its judgment. He fully met the claims of God's broken law.

C. Made A Curse - 3:13

"Christ became a curse 'over' us and so stood between us and the overhanging curse which fell on Him instead of us. Thus He brought us out and we are free from the curse which He took on Himself." (A. T. Robertson) He who was never a curse to anybody was made a curse for everybody. The man who attempts to get right with God by trying to keep the Law, and fails, is under the curse of the Law. Therefore, Christ is the only hope of deliverance from the penalty of the Law we cannot keep.

WHICH BIBLE SHOULD I BUY?

Revelation 1:3

February, 1975

Robert K. Spradling

Recently I spent some time browsing through several book stores at a well-known conference ground. At one particular store, I listened to the sales clerk advising a customer concerning the best buy in a Bible. The advice the customer was receiving was not the best in my opinion. Every believer needs to consider what is a good buy in a Bible. Some standards should be determined before the purchase. For example, how much should I pay? Should I shop around for a better price? Is a thumb index worth the extra cost? What kind of binding, width of margins, size of type and size of the Bible will be best for me? How valuable are the footnotes and study helps in the Bible? These are questions which should be asked. Please keep in mind that a good Bible may be used for ten or fifteen years and, therefore, should be purchased with some care and investigation.

Many new Christians enjoy modern translations because of the helpful changes in the language. Admittedly, some portions of the King James Version are difficult to understand. However, a word of caution is in order in purchasing various translations. Different versions are beneficial for study purposes but the Authorized Version is best in the overall when it comes to carrying a Bible for public worship and for personal study. I have a variety of modern versions such as Way, Weymouth, Williams, Phillips, The Amplified Bible, The Living Bible. (Keep in mind that The Amplified Bible and The Living Bible are paraphrased editions and in some areas are very loose with the text. For example, I Samuel 20:30 in The Living Bible is a purely vulgar translation which should not be read aloud in public assembly. I Kings 18:27 is a further illustration of the crudeness with which the translator has dealt with certain texts in the Old Testament.) Good News for Modern Man is a modern version which has generally weakened the idea of blood atonement in its overall translation. The attempt to illustrate with sketches takes away from the text of Scripture. It appears to be a "comic book" approach to a translation of the Word of God. Something has been lost in the translation.

For study purposes, the diligent student of the Word of God will want to have several good translations in his library. Such translations or versions help with archaic words and difficult passages. The New American Standard Version is a generally accepted version that has been careful with the original text. I must confess that I have not examined the text carefully in this new edition, but it does enjoy a good report among evangelical scholars. The American Standard Version of 1901 was a required text in the seminary which I attended and it is a very accurate translation. It would seem that the revision of this work would be better still.

Dollar for dollar, the Cambridge Bible is probably the best put together Bible for the money. It does not have any helpful study notes but is well-made for the money involved.

WHY, LORD?

Robert K. Spradling

May 1971

This past week I received a letter concerning the death of one of the finest Christian ministers I have ever known. This man was not yet 40 years of age but had a wide area of ministry and influence, reaching young people for Christ. The news of his untimely death in an automobile accident in the midwest was jarring. He leaves behind a wife and daughter who may be asking themselves this question, "Why does the Lord permit such things to happen?" Oftentimes in life, there appears to be no purpose in the way tragedy strikes. Sorrow and distress frequently come to those who are most yielded and serious about doing the Lord's will on earth. From these experiences in life there have come questions which we cannot answer.

There is an element of mystery about why God permits certain things to happen. However, there are some Biblical principles and illustrations which will be helpful to us. One of the outstanding examples of a man who died apparently prematurely is John the Baptist. Few men have been more courageous in the face of evil, yet at the height of his ministry, John was slain by a wicked king. His ministry lasted but 6 months or so and he died at the early age of 30. One would think, that God would not permit the death of such a great man at a strategic time in history, especially when such a voice was sorely needed. God did permit John to be killed and the reason why is hidden in the eternal councils of God. In the booklet entitled "When We Wonder Why", John Wilder lists several instances which defy human explanation:

1. A young minister in Texas was doing an effective work for Jesus Christ. He was happily married and the father of little children. One day he was moving a piano to the church and it accidentally slipped from the truck, falling on the young minister, killing him instantly. The question arises, with our jails full of men whose lives have been twisted by sin, who have preyed upon humanity with their crimes and other atrocities--why do the helpful members of society seem to die needlessly?
2. A lovely girl was surrendered to the Lord for foreign missions, gentle in heart and fully dedicated to the Lord--a model Christian and useful in her church. Sitting in the company of her Sunday School companions at a social time, suddenly without warning she slumped to the floor lifeless before friends could summon assistance. The question arises, why? Once again, we are faced with the conclusion that the Lord has not considered it needful that we understand all such circumstances now. We simply are not qualified to make judgments as to who is left in the world and who is taken away. These decisions belong to the Lord and we cannot presume to tell Him why He acts as He does. However, we do look into the Word of God for some indication and help regarding the Lord's will in such matters.

I. Isaiah 55:8-9

God does not always see things as we do. He does not think and act as men think and act. God's vantage point is infinitely better than ours. Sometimes we think we know better than God does but obviously this is foolish thinking. We, like children, often think we understand what is best for us but fail to realize that God knows what is best and sometimes there is no way of explaining to people who are caught up in the emotion of a moment how these circumstances can be beneficial. As a matter of fact, even if we did understand certain situations in life this would not make them easier to accept. God works in our lives in accordance with His own wisdom and love in our behalf.

WORRY
I Peter 5:7

Worry is sin. However, most believers look upon worry as a necessary part of life. Once this habit has become part of the life it is very difficult to break. The reason why people worry, including believers, is because of lack of confidence in God. We believe it is possible to trust God with our eternal well-being and yet are unwilling to commit the minor things of life to His loving care. Someone has classified worry as: "The interest people pay on borrowed trouble." Our Lord told his disciples not to worry. (Matthew 6:25-34) In these verses we are taught to exercise proper responsibility to provide for our physical needs but not to worry about them. The Greeks describe worry as opposing forces at work inside of a man which tear him apart. Medical authorities know that worry is one of the contributing factors to several diseases, not the least of which are heart disease and high blood pressure. Unusual fatigue and exhaustion are often the case of overworry instead of overwork. Sleep can refresh us from weariness but not from worrying. Often the very troubles with which we lie down to sleep rise up with us in the morning. The actual difficulties in life are not nearly as burdensome as the anticipation and apprehension we imagine with reference to such circumstances.

"Some of our ills we have cured,
And the gravest we still have survived.
But what horrors we all have endured
From evil that never arrived."

The Biblical cure for worry is given in Philippians 4:6-7. Also, in I Peter 5:7, we are encouraged to unload our cares upon God. The happy Christian is the person who daily leaves his cares and burdens with the Lord. This cannot be done if we do not pray and live in constant conscious fellowship with Him. Someone has said: "To worry about what we cannot help is useless: to worry about what we can help is stupid; and we may well utter the ancient prayer: 'God grant me the courage to change the things I can change; the serenity to accept those I cannot change; and the wisdom to know the difference. '"

In the Old Testament there are many helpful passages to deal with this problem. In II Kings 19:14, Hezekiah was faced with an impossible situation. There was no way he could control the outcome. Therefore, he simply spread the matter before the Lord. Other helpful passages are Psalm 23, Psalm 27, Psalm 139, Deuteronomy 33:25.

Many believers act as if God does not care for them or as if he cannot change the circumstances of our lives. We often utter the same question the disciples voiced in Mark 4:38, "Carest thou not that we perish?" Or the words of Martha in Luke 10:40, "Lord does thou not care?" The verse which we have used as our text today states emphatically, "He careth for you." There is no situation in life which we cannot bring to the Saviour and be assured of His constant care. How unwise and untrusting we Christians are. It is one thing to testify of God's loving care. It is another thing to experience that care in our daily lives. As a practical experiment, let me suggest that throughout the remaining part of this week we each find a situation in which we may cast our cares upon the Lord and see how He will resolve the problem.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

Robert K. Spradling

September 1969

Sometimes this Bible doctrine is confused with the Roman Catholic teaching of the Immaculate Conception, that is, that Mary was preserved from original sin. The Bible teaches that Jesus, not Mary, was preserved from sin in His miraculous birth.

The question is often asked: "Why is the doctrine of the Virgin Birth so important?" The following are but a few reasons:

1. The Integrity of the Scriptures.

The Bible declares this doctrine TO BE A FACT. If it is not correct here, then who is to say what is and is not true in other portions?

2. The Necessity for Redemption.

A Saviour who partook of Adam's sinful nature by birth would really not be a Saviour, but rather would be in need of a Saviour. A Saviour who was not quite God would not be a Saviour at all!

3. The Integrity of Mary and Jesus.

Mary's statement in Luke 1:34--If the Virgin Birth were not a fact, then the alternative would be that Mary was not telling the truth. Who, among men, would care to embrace such an alternative? Any person who professes to be saved and denies this vital Bible doctrine does not deserve to be identified with our lovely Lord and Saviour.

Scriptures on the Subject.

Isaiah 7:14

The sign mentioned here was not to Ahaz alone but, according to verse 13, it was to the "house of David".

The son - Isaiah saw this prophecy to reach far beyond the birth of his own son-8:3. In the context of chapters 7-9 a divine child is in view. Especially emphatic in 9:6.

The Scriptures

The New Testament commentary on this verse is Matthew 1:22-23 and Matthew interprets this prophecy to refer to Christ.

Several years ago this verse was "tampered with" by the translators of a modern version of the Bible, the Revised Standard Version. They tried to destroy the force of the word "virgin" by saying the Hebrew word simply means "young woman". Time and space will not permit a discussion of this matter. However, Dr. Edward J. Young did a masterful piece of work in knocking down their attempts in this regard. (See Young's book on Isaiah).

Matthew 1:16

The importance of the very words of Scripture is seen in this verse. "Of whom" in the Greek language is a feminine pronoun and refers the birth of Jesus to Mary, not Joseph! Joseph was Jesus' legal not biological father.

THE YOUNG

I Timothy 4:12

Recently, one of our church members commented on the fact that some youth groups in a local church act as independent entities, isolated from other church activities. This is true because many youth leaders want it that way. However, this is not the pattern of the New Testament. A church is a spiritual family where young and old alike share in responsibility and privilege. There is a cult of youth in America. Fads and fashions all point to the idea that people should try to stay young always. This is as silly as it is impossible. There are compensations for every age of life. There is a time to be young and a time for maturity. Problems sometimes develop in churches when young and old resent each other. The young resent the old because they are old and the old resent the young because they are young. Surely the Lord must have known that every well balanced church must have people from every age group as well as various and differing economic and social strata of society. One question is asked often of pastors: "What should a church do to attract young people?" There is a feeling abroad in many churches that we must entertain and "ape" the world in order to attract the young. We must change our music to "spiritual rock 'n' roll" with all of the enticements of music with a beat. Other people believe that we must have all recreational facilities and program with every ounce of energy in order to reach young people. It is amazing how young people respond to a Bible ministry. It is the only kind of ministry that will reach and hold young people. A strong Bible evangelism to reach them for Christ and a strong Bible teaching ministry to sustain them in life. All of this hinges on good leadership. The crying need today in local churches is for leaders who have spiritual maturity as well as spiritual standards and goals. Every local church must make room for its young people and seek to use them in Christian ministry. Although we are not trying to program like the world, churches must have youth centered activities which appeal to the young in vitality and method. For example, we will never reach young people by lecturing to them about the Bible. They are interested in the Bible but not in a dull presentation. People who reach young people love and understand them, listen to them, and identify with them in their needs. This does not mean that one must adopt their language, dress and standards. But it does mean that we must be willing to go after the young for Christ's sake and reach them with the gospel. There is another area of life which most parents don't like to discuss. Outstanding young people usually come from outstanding homes. There is a tendency today to relegate all youth activity and responsibility to the young peoples department of the local church. There is no way parents can push off the responsibility of training their own family to a youth leader in the church! Outstanding young people in the Bible, such as, Joseph and Timothy, came from a fine family. We parents have a responsibility to our own children and need to accept that responsibility. It is a sad fact that many churches are failing in youth ministry. There may be momentary flares of success only to be followed by the drab dull routine which leads young people to find interest outside the church. In my opinion, no church is doing what God intended it to do that is not reaching and holding young people. There is a general lack of concern for the young by many older Christians. It is a fact that we lose most of our kids by the time they reach the early teens. May the Lord give us wisdom and grace to reach out for a generation of the young who know not Christ. Most of the people in our world are under thirty years of age, surely the church should awaken to its responsibility to reach the young now.

T.V. OR NOT T.V.

Hebrews 10:25

Every Sunday morning, thousands of people across America watch church services on television. For the isolated and the shut-in, these services are vital for it is contact with fundamental churches. This writer does not desire to minimize the blessing many television and radio programs have been to the Lord's people. However, there are some dangers inherent in this kind of ministry. God never intended a television program to take the place of the local church. No picture can take the place of a person. When the living presence of people and pastor is removed from the worship scene, something dynamic is lost. There is no substitute for being with the Lord's people in the Lord's house on the Lord's Day. The "T.V." approach to worship develops spectators rather than participants. Many people like it that way, but such procedure does not develop strong Christians. In one sense of the word, this concept toward church worship keeps people from actively serving the Lord in the "front line" of Christian service. What if everyone adopted this philosophy of Christian worship? There would be no Sunday School teachers, choir members, ushers, deacons, youth workers, etc. Someone has said this kind of ministry tends to cause people to "look in" rather than "be in." No man can really get all God intended for him as long as he remains outside the services of the church. There is a lack of sharing when one is physically not present in church services. "An isolated Christian is an ill-developed Christian." (Guy King) Our text illustrates the fact that God expects His own to follow the pattern of the New Testament in being identified with a local church. The fact that people are absent from this God ordained institution illustrates the fact of spiritual weakness. Every believer knows the spiritual benefit which comes to those who join together in the worship of God at church. Many times one comes to church discouraged and weary of soul only to be blessed by the ministry of the Word of God and the fellowship of the Lord's people. The Lord knew the multiple benefits available to old and young alike by regular visits to the house of God. Recently a lady left our Sunday evening services and said: "I really enjoyed your message on the radio this morning." I inquired if she had been ill and she said, "No." She stayed home and listened to the radio rather than coming to church. I'm glad everybody doesn't "buy" her approach to worship. There is a kind of irresponsibility settling over our country and it affects our church life. The idea of letting someone else carry the burden of the Lord's work is the thinking of far too many even in Christian circles. God help us to be careful about this clear command with reference to assembling ourselves in the house of the Lord.