

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

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THE CRUX

'Take up thy cross' the Saviour said,
'If thou wouldst My disciple be:
Deny Thyself, the world forsake,
And humbly follow after Me'.

AT this 'Easter' time of the year it seems that in Manila, in the Philippines, certain men (and women) endeavour to have themselves 'crucified'. A brief report in the local paper a few days ago reported that three men, and a woman, had tried to have themselves nailed to crosses. Certain medical precautions had, apparently, been taken to prevent blood-poisoning (which would seem of little consequence to a victim of crucifixion); only nails of stainless steel had been used and care had been taken to avoid damage to bones or sinews. One of the men was having his third annual attempt at being crucified and on this occasion had to be removed (screaming) to hospital after being suspended on the cross for less than a minute. The newspaper did not specify the reason for such goings on but one can assume that some kind of demonstration or protest was being made against the poverty and privations of that country. No one denies the right of an individual to protest peacefully against any form of injustice but personally I believe (1) that we should not commit suicide for any cause, and (2) that if the men of Manila do not intend to die on their crosses, but are merely engaging in some political, social or religious charade, then their antics are in very bad taste. I believe that because Jesus died on the cross, the cross (loathsome and vile instrument of death as it was), thereafter, endowed with some vague but real form of respectability and men should leave it well alone. Also, within the last few days, some marvellous films have been showing on British television depicting the various stages of the Passion of our dear Lord, and were of such a high quality that one could have imagined that one was actually eye-witnessing these dreadful events. Even the superficial viewer would find it difficult not to be moved by the unspeakable physical suffering and mental anguish to which our dear Lord submitted. What certainly emerged was that crucifixion was truly a dreadful way to die. During the travesty of a 'Trial' the gospel narratives present Jesus as bearing Himself throughout with unswerving dignity towards men, and with uncomplaining submission towards God. Deserted by all His followers; betrayed by one of His apostles; publicly denied by another; flogged and spat upon by the soldiers;

laughed to scorn by the populace; crucified between two criminals; forsaken by man and, as it seemed, by God, no form of bitterness was missing from the cup from which the Lord drank - the cup of apparent failure, shame, pain and death. He obeyed His Heavenly Father "even unto the death of the Cross".

His Cruc

The word 'cross' was introduced into Old English by the Vikings and was borrowed from the latin '*crux*' (*crux* meaning a cross of torture). Thus, when we refer to 'the crux of the matter' we are referring to *the real issue* or 'the *cross of the matter*'. 'The crux of the matter' in the context of the gospel was the crucifixion (the cross). The Greek word for 'cross' signified *a stake* upon which virtually anything might be hung but this was modified somewhat as Roman rule extended throughout Greek-speaking countries. Even amongst the Romans *the crux* appears to originally have meant essentially an upright pole. However from the time that such stakes began to be used as an instrument of punishment, a transverse piece of wood was added, but not always. There were more kinds of death than one, by the cross. Sometimes death was inflicted by transfixing the criminal with a stake driven through his back and spine and coming out at his mouth. Seneca is quoted as mentioning at least three differing forms - "I see", says he, "three crosses not indeed of one sort but fashioned in different ways; one sort suspending by the head persons bent down towards the earth; others transfixing them through their secret parts; others extending their arms on a patibulum." There can be little doubt however, that the latter sort was the more common at the time of Jesus' crucifixion and that He would be suspended on a patibulum (cross-piece of wood). Seneca wrote these words about 40 A.D. which was just about the time of the death of Jesus.

Death by the cross was confined to slaves, and to malefactors only of the most base kind. Death was slow, painful and lingering caused by thirst, starvation, exhaustion, and, where appropriate, loss of blood. Those condemned to this death were usually stripped nearly naked, flogged and then forced to carry their stake to the place appointed. When the place of doom was reached the victim was either nailed or bound with thongs to the cross. If being nailed to the cross was more painful initially, to be tied to it was more painful in the end because in the latter case the sufferer was left to die of sheer exhaustion. This might take as long as a week for, usually, a strong pin projected out of the central stem and on this the weight of the poor wretched man rested. Instances are on record of persons surviving for nine days in such agony.

Crucifixion, as a capital punishment, was abolished by the Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great, about 300 years after Christ died. Before his victory over Maxentius in 312 A.D. Constantine is alleged to have had visions of a flaming cross in the noon sky inscribed "By this shalt thou Conquer" and thereafter he became 'A Christian' and adopted Christianity as the religion of his empire. He also thereafter erected 'crosses' on public buildings and indeed all over the place. Constantine now regarded it as sacrilegious to put anyone to death on a cross.

The central importance of the death of Jesus in God's great scheme of redemption, having been accomplished on the cross, inevitably lent to the cross a certain kind of esteem. The cross was now a hallowed object - in the sense that it had been set apart for God's use. From being, in itself, the most vile and repulsive of objects the cross became, in the minds of the early believers, that which was precious and holy. As 'Christ crucified' is the wisdom and power of God unto salvation, it was not unnatural, I suppose, that those who experienced the power, and the salvation, should glory in the cross, the instrument by which it had all

been obtained. This feeling evidently needed to be controlled and kept within strict bounds lest it should grow into a species of idolatry. Indeed we can look around us today, 2,000 years later, and see that in many quarters the cross is given a reverence which seems to transcend the attention paid to the One who actually died on it.

The 'crucifix', today, attracts the same kind of superstitious veneration that the African witch-doctor gives to his tiger's tooth, and the 'signs of the cross' and the sight of men 'crossing themselves' must surely rank in the same category. The cross never was any 'good-luck charm' as those who died upon it would testify. There was nothing charming about it - it was extremely violent and caused hours of feverish thirst; cold sweats and delirium; raw nerve-ends, crushed bones and torn sinews. It was a place of torment, horror and indescribable pain.

Our Cross

I do not wish in any way to disparage the good men of Manila but neither would I wish to join them, or recommend that anyone else should flirt with the cross, even with stainless-steel nails. I must confess however to a feeling of great personal inadequacy when confronted, from time to time, by the challenge of 'the cross'. For instance, when I watch the crucifixion being portrayed on the television screen and I am seated in a comfortable armchair beside a cosy fire I certainly squirm in a feeling of shame and guilt. When I read the words of Jesus, "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me," I am forced to consider the extent of any self-denial I have made. I am also forced to consider 'the weight of the cross' I am carrying around. No doubt others do the same and share this frustrating feeling of complete inadequacy. It almost makes us yearn for persecution. In Acts 5 the apostles were soundly beaten for preaching the gospel but they rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name". It seems that today we are more concerned with our comfort, as individuals and churches, and with tranquility and convenience. If its *convenient* we shall do the Lord's work or go to a meeting. We hope no-one will ask us to do anything too drastic in the quest of preaching the gospel. We spend valuable hours watching the trivia of life on our coloured T.V.'s, sitting in padded armchairs on wall-to-wall carpets in centrally heated little mansions, or sit listening to the latest 'in the charts' on our expensive Hi-fi while the world races on to a Christless eternity. We lavish great expense on ourselves and our homes, holidays, cars etc. while at the same time the work of the church is strangled through lack of funds. I plead guilty to all these charges and probably other brethren will feel this way too. What's the answer? Clearly we must resolve to do more in the Lord's vineyard, and be addicted to His ministry. I am not advocating that we get rid of our carpets, and or even that we smash our television sets, but perhaps we should make a sober re-appraisal of *exactly what we do*, or have done, for Him? Resolve perhaps, to take the 'Do Not Disturb' signs off the Meetinghouse door. What real sacrifices *do we make* in our lives for Him? How does it compare with the sacrifice that He made for us? *What do we contribute* to His cause - is it as little as we think we can get away with? *What do we give to Him*, in terms of our talents, our time or our money? How does it compare with what He freely gave for us? *What privation, hardship, discomfort, or inconvenience* do we experience in our efforts to extend His kingdom? "If any man will come after Me", said Jesus, "let him deny himself". *What do we really deny ourselves?* "Let him take up his cross, and follow Me", said Jesus. How conscientiously do we carry the cross - or have we dumped it somewhere? These are all painful questions, I know, but if they lead us to a serious reconsideration of

those words of Jesus, and to a much higher standard of service in His kingdom, then surely they will have been well worth while. Perhaps the men in Manila feel they fall so very far short of our Lord's sacrifice that their only misguided solution is to literally attempt to crucify themselves, as He was crucified. Doubtless we all know and understand God's word much better than to agree with the men of Manila, but a little of *the spirit* behind such a desire might be well worth capturing.

Take up thy cross and follow on,
 Nor think till death to lay it down,
 For only he who bears the cross,
 May hope to wear the glorious crown.

EDITOR

CAN WE MEASURE GOD'S LOVE?

GOD'S love for man has been revealed in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:6). If therefore we can measure the love of Jesus Christ, we shall fully comprehend the love of God. The apostle Paul prayed that believers might "be able to comprehend . . . what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ." Here then we find dimensions appertaining to the love of Christ. Let us meditate upon them in order to understand God's love for us. Let us measure the length, the breadth, the depth, and the height of divine love.

The Length of the Love of God

When speaking of a man's love or convictions, we sometimes ask: "To what length will he go to prove his sincerity?" In like manner, we might well ask to what length Jesus would go to prove his love for us. Let the Saviour himself answer: "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd *giveth his life* for the sheep" (John 10:11). The world recognises that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends". Yet, here is a greater love, "For, while we were yet *sinner*s, Christ died for us" (John 15:13; Romans 5:8). This is the love that God "commends toward us" in Christ Jesus. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). What a length of love this is! We are sinners. We are guilty. We deserve to die. Yet God loves us, and has given his Son to die to save us.

The Breadth of the Love of God

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of *all* acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." (1 Timothy 1:15). "*All* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). From these two statements we learn that the love of Jesus embraces all the world. All have sinned. Christ Jesus died for all. His final commission to the Apostles, before he ascended to heaven, was: "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved..." (Mark 16:15-16). How broad his love is! No race of man is excluded. No colour bar. No prejudice. There are no limits to this unique love. He invites all to come to him, and promises: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

The Depth of the Love of God

None are too vile or sinful to be excluded from this love. "Down to lowest depths it reaches, the all-loving Father's arm". The drunkard, the gambler, the

pickpocket, the woman of the streets, the loathsome, the untouchable, the outcast from society, the scum of the earth; *all* come within the scope of his love. No matter how greatly a man has sinned, the Saviour is willing to stoop down and lift him up again. Over and over again, we read the Saviour's word: "Thy sins be forgiven thee", and even in the darkness hour, on the cross, he was still swift to answer the penitent cry of a needy soul.

The Height of the Love of God

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called *children of God*" (1 John 3:1, R.V.). From the depths of sin and death, his love lifts us up to the heights of heaven. In him we have eternal life. Well may a Christian sing:

"From sinking sands he lifted me;
With tender hands he lifted me;
From shades of night
To plains of light,
Oh, praise his name; He lifted me."

Dear reader, you too can appreciate the length, breadth, depth, and height of God's love for you by reading the New Testament Scriptures. There Jesus is clearly set forth as your Saviour. You can experience the wonder of that love by accepting his will for you. You are a sinner. Christ died for you. Do you desire salvation? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved..." "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 16:31; 2:38). When you have believed, repented and been immersed then "be thou faithful unto death" and the Lord will "give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

T. KEMP, Wigan

GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2:15

WE QUOTE - PHILIP MAURO

"Dean Burgon, one of the famous scholars of Oxford, says:- 'I must be content with repudiating in the most unqualified way, the notion that a mistake of any kind whatever is consistent with the texture of a narrative inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. The Bible is none other but the Word of God, not some part of it more and some part of it less so, but all alike the utterance of Him that sitteth upon the throne, absolute, faultless, unerring, supreme. 'The witness of God which He hath testified of His Son'."

The time is at hand when the haughtiness of man shall be brought low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in the day. Then the Word of God shall judge the critics. Meanwhile the living Word shall continue to be the discerning companion of all who resort to it for such help as is not to be had elsewhere in this world of the dying. In going to the Bible, we never think of ourselves as going back to a book of the distant past, to a thing of antiquity; but we go to it as to a book of the present - a living book. And so indeed it is, living in the power of an endless life, and able to build us up and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)."

The Peace of a Restful Heart

"Thus loving the law of God, not only with delight in the vehicle of its expression, but with inward submission to its behests, we shall have, first of all, the peacefulness of a restful heart.

Such a heart has found an adequate and worthy object for the outgoings of its affections. Base things loved always disturb. Noble things loved always tranquillise. And he to whom his judgment declares that the best of all things is God's manifested will, and whose affections and emotions and actions follow the dictate of his judgment, has a love which grasps whatsoever things are noble and fair and of good report, and is lifted to a level corresponding with the loftiness of its objects. For our hearts are like the creatures in some river, of which they tell us that they change their colour according to the hue of the bed of the stream in which they float and of the food of which they partake. The heart that lives on the will of God will be calm and steadfast, and ennobled into reposeful tranquillity like that which it grasps and grapples.

Little boats which are made fast to the sides of a ship rise and fall with the tide, as does that to which they are attached. And our hearts, if they be roped to the fleeting, the visible, the creatural, the finite, partake of the fluctuations, and finally are involved in the destruction, of that which they have made their supreme good. And contrariwise, they who love that which is eternal shine with a light thrown by reflection from the object of their love, and 'he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever,' like the will which he doeth. 'Great peace' - the peace of a restful heart - 'have they that love Thy law'."

Alexander Maclaren

For There Remains The Human Heart

"We hear a great deal, and we cannot hear too much, of a proposed federation of the peoples of the earth, to ensure eternal peace. But we must never allow the rhetoric of that proposal to conceal from us the hidden rock on which that, and every other fine proposal for the future life of man, may easily rush and go down into the depths of the sea. For there remains *the human heart*, which, uncontrolled, unrebuked, unredeemed, will in the long run spread a poison in the world."

John A. Hutton.

Things Not Seen

"'Things not seen', are very real. A blind man cannot see the sun but he knows the sun is real for its warm rays comfort him. The blind cannot see their loved ones but they never doubt their presence. And don't we all live in a world where the things that really matter cannot be seen or handled! Pain is not seen but it is not a phantom. Love is not seen but it is the greatest thing in the world. How shortsighted are those who say that seeing is believing. We believe much it is impossible to see. We have never seen God but we know that He exists. The presence of God in the soul cannot be proved by mathematics. The soul that trusts in Him will never doubt His reality. Love cannot be seen but it expresses itself."

Gardner Miller

Selected by LEONARD MORGAN

THE ART OF LISTENING

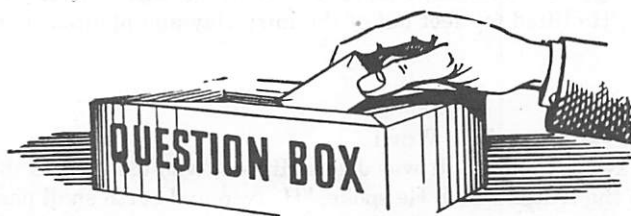
LISTENING is considered the essential factor in face-to-face communication. To appreciate the full meaning of this statement, the following analogy will help:

When we "tune in" a certain radio station, we at the same time, "tune out" other stations. If the station drifts, we try to focus it again for better reception. We are not satisfied with anything less. The human mind operates very much on the same order. When we speak to someone, the listener may or may not have anything on his mind. To listen well, he must clear his "mental decks"; he will then be "in tune" with the person who is speaking.

It is quite true that on subjects in which we have deep interest, and in which we are personally involved, it is difficult not to be in a listening mood. However, we assume that a student has a lot to gain even from material with which he is only vaguely familiar.

To help the student get the most from listening, the following guideposts are offered:

1. Listen actively — not passively.
2. Train yourself to get the main idea and meaning from material spoken.
3. Exclude from your thinking while listening, interfering thoughts and feelings.
4. Make the speaker realise that you are with him while he speaks.
5. Have an open mind on what the speaker has to say.
6. Allow the speaker to finish before asking questions.
7. Check yourself to see if you "drift" while supposedly listening.
8. Remember that there is no limit on improvement in listening habits.
9. Make it your business that once you decide to listen, this will serve as motivation for further listening.
10. Don't be annoyed by a poor speaker, he still may have something important to say.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

"Could you please tell me what has been the most important thing in your Christian experience?"

THIS is not the type of question that I usually get but I welcome it because it gives me the opportunity to say something about the spiritual values of Christianity rather than what I term the technical considerations which are inherent when one attempts to interpret troublesome passages of Scripture. After all, I think all Christians would agree that it is not the technical expertise demonstrated in *explaining* the Word, important though that is, but the degree of *personal commitment* that one has, and the importance that one attaches to the Christian life. Surely, the appropriation of a personal Saviour will do much to assist us in understanding and explaining those details which we find so puzzling yet which generate so great an interest. For me personally, there is not *one* important aspect of Christian experience but *three*, and I want to discuss these with you now.

The Saviour

Do you remember dear brother, dear sister, how it was before you came to know the Saviour? As Paul put it to the Ephesians, "at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). And you, dear reader, who may not have accepted Christ as Saviour, how can you stay in the wilderness of sin, knowing that you are estranged from your heavenly Father? His great love for you resulted in Jesus dying so cruelly on the Cross,

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commandeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:7).

Can you picture in your mind Jesus wearily bearing His Cross to the place of execution after having withstood the abuse and the perfidy of the Jews and the High Priests and rulers who had subjected Him to that travesty of justice which they had the audacity to call a trial? If you can, then cast your mind back to a little time before His death, and contrast the attitude of Jesus with the attitude of those who gave Him to be crucified. John records, "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). What a wonderful Saviour Jesus is. It was the understanding of this awesome love of the Saviour which led Paul to exclaim, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Eph. 5:2). In the face of such pure love, how can anyone argue about being obedient to the things which He commanded. How can so pure a love evoke such contention and bitterness as that which exists between people who call themselves Christians? This must be the greatest paradox in human history. Why, you may ask, is the Saviour so important to you. Because, I would reply, He lifted my feet out of the miry clay and planted them firmly on the rock.

The Word

Book Divine, how sweet thou art. It was Jesus Himself who testified to the imperishable nature of the truths which He spoke, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31). Luke records, "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Luke 4:22). Contrast this with the dirty, obscene, unwholesome writings of today which are being foisted onto a long-suffering public by authors who have the effrontery to claim that they are writing literary works of art. Or is it a fact that large numbers of people are getting what they want, and perhaps what they deserve? Anyway, we know this to be the predictable response of sinful flesh who delight in responding to such stimuli, and who view as an anachronism that very Word which could cleanse their souls if they would only let it.

Why is the Bible a priority in my life? Because it is the only book that has ever been written that cannot be improved upon. Why is it necessary for churches to keep on changing their prayer books and confessions of faith? Surely it follows that if such books contain more than the Bible they contain too much; and if they contain too little then they contain less than the Bible. So why do professing Christians need anything more than the Bible?

Why is the Bible a priority in my life? Because it tells me what I am before I am saved; poor, wretched, blind, a sinner. But thanks be to God, it also tells me what I can become with the help of the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It makes no attempt to hide the complexities of my human nature; it reveals the bad things done by such great men as Moses, Paul, Peter, and others. It shuns nothing. It is the monitor of my Christian life. Without it I should fall prey to the vagaries of every wind of doctrine. But with it, I can walk forward confidently in the sure knowledge that the pathway will be lit by the revealing and illuminating truths which it contains. As that grand hymn says,

Give me the Bible, all my steps enlighten,
 Teach me the danger of these realms below;
 That lamp of safety o'er the gloom shall brighten,
 That light alone the path of peace can show.

The Brethren

It was Peter who said, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. You will notice here that we are to honour the king and all men, but we are to *love* the brotherhood. Similarly Paul when he wrote to the Church at Thessalonica, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).

Why are the brethren important to me? Because I know that they love me and I them. Isn't this what God taught us in Christ, and isn't this what is manifested by the brethren on so many occasions? Has there ever been an appeal made to the brethren which has not evoked the right response. Have you ever been sick without their arms being extended towards you in the way of telephone calls, visits, and well wishes; and all of this compounded by whatever practical help that can be given? Have you ever been in black despair when you have felt like letting go of everything, only to be brought back to some state of reasonableness by the quiet word of encouragement spoken by some brother or sister? There is an empathy in the Church of the Lord such as does not exist anywhere else. Peter seems to sum it up when he says, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8-9),

Yes, those are the three important things in my Christian life; the Saviour, the Word, and the Church. Life to me would be meaningless without them.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 377 Billinge Road, Hayfield, Wigan, Lancs.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JUNE 1983

5—Prov. 25:1-22	Luke 14:7-35
12—2 Sam. 18:9-33	Luke 15:1-32
19—1 Kings 3:1-15	Luke 16:1-18
26—Deut. 15:1-15	Luke 16:19-31

HUMILITY

JESUS in this portion of Scripture rebukes social pride and teaches humility. There is so much that can be written on this word. It might surprise us to learn that "humility" was normally a dirty word with the Greeks. It was used in profane Greek very often in a morally contemptible sense, namely, cringing, servile, low,

common. It was Jesus who changed the meaning of the word. Indeed, He did more than that. He clothed this term with beauty and grace by His own sacrifice and service. He humbled Himself to come in the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross (Philippians 2).

Here are some thoughts on humility to chew over with your evening meal. "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour and life" (Proverbs 22:4). "Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:19). "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). "The first step towards humility is to realise that one is proud" (C. S. Lewis). "Now we may with

propriety say, that as it respects God, there is an understanding distance. All beyond that distance can not understand God; all within it can easily understand Him in all matters of piety and morality. God Himself is the centre of that circle, and humility is its circumference" (Alexander Campbell). "A Christian writer has called TAPEINOPHROSUNE (humility) not merely a grace, but the casket or treasure house in which all other graces are contained" (Richard Chenevix Trench).

The Parable of the Great Supper

"The Jews had a series of ever-recurring conventional pictures of what would happen when God broke into history and when the golden days of the new age arrived. One of these was the picture of the Messianic banquet. On that day God would give a great feast.... It is of this banquet that the man who spoke to Jesus was thinking. When he spoke of the happiness of those who would be guests at the banquet he was thinking of Jews, and Jews only, for the average, orthodox Jew would never have dreamed that Gentiles and sinners would find a place at the feast of God. That is why Jesus spoke this parable" (Barclay's Daily Study Bible).

When I read this parable, my mind immediately reflected on the great marriage supper of the Lamb of which we read in Revelation 19. At that wedding the Lamb (Jesus) will be united with his bride (the church), after which a great feast will follow. "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (verse 9). The question is: are you ready, dear reader, as the bride and as a guest?

On Counting the Cost

If one is a servant of Christ then one is sold out to him lock, stock and barrel. The word servant in the N.T. scriptures is very frequently the Greek word DOULOS which means SLAVE. This

term therefore lays down the absolute authority of Jesus Christ over the Christian. One writer has put it this way: "It is true that the Christian has no will of his own; the Christian has no possessions of his own; he is the possession body and soul of Jesus Christ. The title slave does stress and underline the absolute authority of Christ over the Christian, and the absolute submission of the Christian to Christ".

Jesus therefore must come before everything and everyone. Such include father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, and even one's own life (verse 26). The verb "hate" in this context must be properly understood. When Jesus tells us to hate our nearest and dearest, he does not, of course, mean that literally. (Eastern language very often uses strong terms to make comparison). The word quite simply means to LOVE LESS. Our first love should be Jesus.

Discipleship is not an easy-osey business. It involves counting the cost and forsaking all (Verse 33). Sadly, looking at some of the Master's followers today, one could be forgiven into thinking that Paul once said: "Walk worthy of the vacation wherewith you are called" rather than "Walk worthy of the VOCATION wherewith you are called" (Ephesians 4:1).

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

The two parables prior to this one dealt with a lost sheep and a lost coin. This parable deals with a lost son. The sheep was lost through sheer foolishness; the coin was lost through no fault of its own; but the son deliberately went lost, callously turning his back on his father.

The two other characters in this parable are sometimes over-looked, but should not be. There is the loving father and there is the elder son. Some would re-name this parable "The Story

of the Loving Father" because they rightly see strong similarities between him and our Heavenly Father. The elder son is also important because his attitude can perhaps be identified with that of the Pharisees and scribes who had murmured against Jesus saying: "This man receives sinners, and eats with them" (verse 2).

Bro. John Dodsley at a recent Social pointed out to us a very important clause in the story of the prodigal son: "And when he came to himself" (verse 17). It was this that led him to make the right decision and return to his father. Oh, that all sinners might do the same today!

God is concerned for the lost. He loves them. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Note again Jesus' words here: "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (verse 10). One sheep, one coin, one son, one sinner - the lesson is that even ONE soul is precious unto the Lord.

The Parable of the Unjust Steward

This parable should be read especially in the Modern Translations. Trench said of it: "This parable of which the difficulties are exceedingly great, has been the subject of manifold, and those the most opposite, interpretations. I cannot doubt, however, that we have here a parable of Christian prudence, Christ exhorting us to use the world and the world's goods in a manner against itself and for God". Bro. James R. Gardiner dealt well with the parable in Question Box in October 1967. In that article he wrote: "Dishonest business transactions regrettably occur many times every day and Jesus, by parable, is certainly not commending dishonest dealings provided they are cleverly carried through, nor is he encouraging

'sharp practice' in any shape or form. The parable, I think, simply teaches that sagacity, effort, diligence and forethought in making provision for the future is something to be calculated by the disciple of Christ - a zeal for the life to come so that when earthly values fail and death leaves all earthly distinctions, he may be received into eternal habitations".

The Pharisees derided Jesus when they heard these things for they were covetous (verse 14). God knew their hearts (see Hebrews 4:13). He knew in reality their service was not to Him but to mammon (a common Aramaic word for riches). Jesus once said to His disciples: "...But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

The Rich Man and Lazarus

There was a great gulf between the rich man and Lazarus in life, and there was a great gulf FIXED between them in death (verse 26). We read that Lazarus (helped of God) died (no burial?) and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. And being in torments in hell, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"Hell" must be correctly understood here. It is a translation of a Greek word HADES which is found eleven times in the N.T. scriptures. Hades is simply the abode of spirits after death. There, the just and the unjust await the last day and their appearance before the great white throne of God (Revelation 20). Hades was visited by Jesus Himself (Acts 2:27-31). Some day there will be no further need of this abode and God will destroy it. (Revelation 20:14).

Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom. This is synonymous with a state of

bliss. The Greeks had another term for this state - paradise (Luke 23:43). The rich man was in a different place and his state was one of torment. He could not be relieved of his suffering, and it was so great that he did not wish the same punishment to befall his five brothers yet alive on earth. His answer was to send the risen Lazarus to preach repentance unto them. But God already had the answer. "They have Moses and the prophets", said Abraham, "let them hear them". As the Thomson's Chain Reference Bible boldly has it in the margin of this verse - "GOD'S WORD SUFFICIENT".

What, one may ask, is the true design of this story? Is it not to be gathered from the previous conversation, as Albert Barnes has suggested?

IAN DAVIDSON, Motherwell

BELIEF : (9)

Sanctification of the Spirit

SO far we have investigated how the Christians at Thessalonica were chosen by God to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. We have studied the nature of belief in detail and found that the central truth men and women are required to believe is that **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

We have also pondered the nature of the salvation concerned and found it to be the salvation of the soul, which is equated in the Scriptures with salvation from the wrath to come, or eternal life. So between belief and salvation stands sanctification of the Spirit.

How important then, to anyone who has the salvation of his soul at heart, to know what **sanctification** means. Some would say that belief alone is all that is necessary to salvation. But the Word of God clearly shows in the statements to the Thessalonians, that

without the sanctification of the Spirit there can be no salvation.

What then does it mean?

Praying to the Father on behalf of his disciples, our Lord said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so I also sent them (the apostles) into the world; and for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be **sanctified through the truth**" (John 17:17-19).

Belief

"Neither pray I for these alone (his apostles), but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one..." (John 17:20-23). This is the Lord's prayer for the unity of the saints - or, those who have been sanctified through the truth.

Believers and non-believers

John 17:9 makes it plain that such sanctification applies **only** to the apostles and those who would subsequently believe in the Lord through their word, Christians, and not to the unbelieving world. In support of this, Jesus says, "I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine."

Salvation

The Lord says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am (in glory after his resurrection), that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me" (v. 24). Surely this is the eternal salvation which follows the sanctification of all who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. No words could be plainer in their meaning than these.

Sanctification

"Sanctify" comes from the Greek word *hagiazō*, meaning "to separate or set aside" for a sacred use. It also means "to purify".

These two ideas (separation and purification) are the substance of our Lord's prayer for his disciples and all who would become his disciples (John 17). Those who became his disciples were separated from the world by God, and belonged to him (verses 9-11). The means by which this relationship came into being was the word of truth, or God's word (v 17). It was for this purpose that our Lord set apart his life and died on the cross (v 19). This he did not only for his immediate disciples (the apostles), but also for all those who would believe on him through their word. Through this they would enjoy eternal blessedness with the Father and the Son, *i.e.*, salvation.

It's important position

So we see in this wonderfully beautiful and significant prayer of our Lord, that belief in Christ, *i.e.*, belief in the truth, leads to sanctification (involving a new relationship with God and Christ) and subsequently to salvation or eternal life. It is important to note that this new relationship is **not** sanctification itself, but merely one of the results of sanctification, as is also salvation.

How effected?

In John 17 our Lord does not specifically state the manner in which the disciples would be sanctified (apart from the apostles who were selected personally by the Lord), nor indeed how men and women could become such disciples. He merely states that it would be **through or by means of God's truth, as delivered by his apostles.**

This must imply the acceptance of such truth as a prerequisite to discipleship. Again such acceptance was in some way to **separate** his disciples from the world; and not only to separate them, but to purify them, or make them free from sin. Further, it was the enabling power by which they would be given by God to his Son (John 17:24). How then are we given to the

Christ? How joined together in an eternal relationship with our Lord and our God?

If we find the answers to these questions from God's word we shall find the answer to the greatest question that ever presented itself to the mind of man, viz: what is meant by **sanctification of the Spirit?** Shall we seek and find?

Exercises in Belief

John 10:9,11, 14-17 and 27-29.

W. BROWN

(To be continued)

SORRY, MR. CAMPBELL

by DENNIS CRAWFORD

Elders,
Main Street Church of Christ
Bobbinville, GA
Mr. Alexander Campbell
Bethany, WV

Dear Mr. Campbell:

We have been reviewing our gospel meeting plans for 1983 and see that you are scheduled to preach a meeting April 10-13 in Bobbinville. We are saddened that after much prayer, we must cancel the meeting due to the doctrinal problems you manifest.

It has come to our attention that you hold unscriptural views on the millennium. By your own admission you look for the "introduction of that political and religious order of society called the millennium." We cannot tolerate a man with such views speaking from our pulpit. Incidentally, we feel that naming your most recent publication "The Millennial Harbinger" was ill-advised to say the least.

We also found that your baptism has been questioned by some faithful brethren. We understand that you did not discover that the Scriptures teach baptism for the remission of sins until some years after your baptism.

Frankly, we have doubts about whether you are even a member of the church of Christ.

It has been reported that you habitually attend unity meetings and often preach in denominational churches. These are very dangerous, if not unscriptural practices.

You strongly suggest there are Christians in other churches, do you not? We have a quote from your publication, "The Christian Baptist" in which you say, "I have no idea of seeing, nor wish to see, the sects unite in one grand army. This would be dangerous to our liberties and laws. For this the Saviour did not pray. It is only the disciples of Christ dispersed among them, that reason and benevolence would call them out".

Because of these doctrinal problems and being soft on other issues too numerous to mention in this letter, we have chosen to cancel the April, 1983 meeting with you.

We sincerely hope that you will reconsider your teaching in the clear light of Scriptural truth.

Sincerely,

Elders, Main Street Church of Christ

(From "Firm Foundation".)

APPEAL - Support for Bro. Masood

I write concerning Steven Masood and have no reservations about recommending him to the brethren as a brother who ought to be supported in the Lord's work with emphasis on the growing Muslim field. I am in process of writing an invitation to him to come and work with the church here. He would then present this to the Immigration Authority in Cyprus. Brethren in the Wigan area are prepared to testify that we are a bona-fide congregation. I have learned that

providing he can provide periodic evidence to the Home Office that he is in funds he would then be able to get an indefinitely renewable visa providing he does nothing to upset the authorities. I will have to stand surity for him. Doing it this way he will not require a work permit because he will be working as an evangelist. Steven's visa in Cyprus expires in June and it might not be renewed. It takes up to two months for this type of application to be considered that is why I am proceeding now. Brethren have shown interest but very little positive has been offered in the way of support.

Steven and his wife would live with us. So if sufficient support does not come in he will not exactly be destitute but we might have a little hardship. Not as bad as being suspended from nails driven into a tree.

Our idea is that Steven would have access to the University library which has an excellent eastern section. He would be able to gather and hopefully publish for the brotherhood's use, information on the Muslim religion that would be useful in gospel work amongst Muslims. He would also be able to publish gospel tracts in their languages. The Pakistani brethren would benefit from his deep knowledge of the scriptures, especially where their culture gives rise to moral problems.

Once he has 'established' himself he would be available for congregations that would like help or advice with regard to taking the gospel to Muslim immigrants in their localities.

For further information, contact:

ALLAN ASHURST,
60 Kenwood Road,
Stretford,
Manchester M32 8PT.
Telephone: 061 865 6540

(A letter was attached to this appeal but too lengthy to be included. Ed.)

PERSISTENCE

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.

Talent will not, for there is nothing so common than the unsuccessful man with talent.

Genius will not, for unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education alone will not, for the world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and determination alone, are omnipotent.

Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933)

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Peterhead, Scotland: Already a quarter of 1983 has flown by, and it hardly seems but days since we celebrated together the dawning of a new year. The church here continues to be built up in the faith, and visits from Alex and Jack Strachan plus Jim Maberry for week-end meetings have helped us to continue our growth thus far this year, and as we have grown spiritually our numbers were increased and blessed by the addition to the Body of Christ by a new brother. Peter Buchan, like Apollos of old had found more perfectly the way of the Lord, and in loving obedience to Jesus demonstrated his faith by being born again. We rejoice in this new life in Jesus, and pray that others who are near to the kingdom will like our new brother, have the courage to translate the new truths found into the action of faithfulness. When you read this we should (DV) have enjoyed our Social Week-end. Plans are well in hand for this time of teaching and we anticipate great fellowship as we learn more of God's greatness and glory. We continue to be encouraged as we see the family of God growing like our older brother, lives are being changed, characters are being formed that will have great affects on future generations. We

rejoice with Alex John & Sheila Wedderburn, on the birth of Emma, also with George and Lynne Massie on the safe arrival of Louise. How good it is to be a part of the greatest family in the world. We rejoice and take courage.

M. GAUNT

OBITUARY

Bristol, Bedminster: Brother S. W. Collins, a member of the church since 1920, and secretary for many years has died at the age of 90 years.

He commenced his Christian life in the church at Melbourne Road, Leicester, his home town. It was just over a year ago that he moved to South Devon to be near to his daughter, Jean. We treasure his memory and commend his daughter Jean to the comfort of our Lord and Father.

L. DANIELL

Peterhead, Scotland: It is with a sense of deep loss that we inform you of the death (after a brief illness) of sister Elsie Strachan on March 14th. She had been a member of the Body of Christ for over 60 years, deciding to give her life to Jesus as a girl of 14; and her faith never wavered as she left this earthly scene for heaven's joys at the age of 74.

Sister Elsie leaves a husband John (with whom she celebrated their golden wedding anniversary last year), five sons, two daughters, plus grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Bro. Jack Strachan (E. Kilbride) conducted the funeral service, paying tribute to a home of faith, and as if to prove this truth, many gathered to pay their respects to this dear sister.

We thank God for the Christian hope, and are sure that the one who committed herself to His service at 14 can be confident of His love at 74. We rejoice that Sis. Elsie is at home with the Lord, which is far better. She will be missed for her seat will be empty but we thank God for her life. M. GAUNT

ANNUAL SOCIAL

The Annual Social of the church at Slamannan will be held on Saturday 21st May, at 4 p.m.

Speaker - John Morgan (Hindley)

All Welcome

ACT NOW

WAIT not till the leaves are scattered
Ere you seek the woodland gloom,
Wait not till the rose is shattered
Ere you gather its perfume.

Wait not till the house is emptied
Ere you call and knock for Peace,
Wait not till the heart is exempted,
From all cares and welcomes cease.

Speak now your word of loving
kindness
Ere the ears are shut and barred,
Look with love before death's blindness
Hath that glance of duty marred.

Do all good deeds humane and tender
Now some darkened life to cheer,
Flowers but mock the tardy sender
When too late laid on the bier.

THERE are times when silence is golden, and there are times when silence is yellow. It is high time the church found out which is which.

PRICE OF THE "S.S."

I HAD a letter the other day from America from a brother who wanted to subscribe to the 'Scripture Standard' and wanted two copies sent regularly. When I was replying to him I felt slightly guilty in telling him that the price was as much as ten dollars. I am sure that brother Kneller and I wish it were less, just as we would like it to be less than £5 per annum for British readers. However when I remember that I get only one evening newspaper per day, and it costs me over £5 per month, then I suppose we ought not to grudge £5 per annum for the 'S.S.' I would like to assure readers that every effort is made to keep costs down. Not a penny is spent that is not absolutely essential. We have no 'letterheaded' stationery and I type all my articles and notices on odd bits of scrap paper. All personnel give their services entirely free. The price of the magazine, is therefore, the lowest price it can be.

We occasionally get letters of appreciation from satisfied readers, especially from America and Canada, and I thank all very much for such encouragement. EDITOR

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