

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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STICKERS AND SANDWICH BOARDS

IN the newspaper yesterday there was a report concerning a lay preacher who was fined £50 for displaying religious signs on his house in Fife, without Planning Permission. He told the Judge that he could not pay the fine and would prefer to go to prison instead. He said, "I may be sinning against civil law, but I am obeying God's law". It should be added that one of the signs on his house consisted (not of a handbill) but of painted letters two feet high on the roof of the house which said, "Jesus says Go and sin no more". It would seem certain that he was 'sinning against civil law' but I am not altogether certain that he was right in saying that he was obeying God's law. I have been trying to think of what law of God he thought he was obeying. The Planning Department are sometimes a very tiresome lot but nevertheless one of their functions is to prevent all and sundry sticking up signs and slogans wherever they please and to control the number, size and type of sign for display. Imagine the disfigurement of the villages and countryside if there was no form of control of signs. Even with control there seems to be far too many eyesores in the country and I often think the Planning Department should exercise a stronger hold on signs. No doubt the lay preacher will go to prison with the strong conviction that he is one of the modern martyrs for Christ and will be slapped on the back a few times by his fellow-brethren but he gets no points from me. I certainly admire the zeal he has displayed in wanting to festoon his house with scripture in letters two-feet high, but I think he is ill-advised. I believe that signs of this magnitude on any dwelling house will be a complete eyesore to the whole community and will accomplish much more harm than good. The community will not be drawn to Christ by the signs but are more likely to be repelled and surely that can not be accounted as a success. This is quite apart from the lay preacher's obvious refusal to respect the local regulations regarding the use of signs administered by the Planning Department for the good of the community generally. I think the lay preacher is to be commended for at least making some effort to confront his fellowmen with the word of God but is to be faulted for the way he is going about it. In trying to publicise God's word he is giving God bad publicity - publicity God can do without. I am sure we are all guilty of that from time to time - giving God the kind of publicity He can well do without.

When the lay preacher said that in erecting these sign boards he was obeying the law of God perhaps he had in mind the passage in Deut. 6:4-15 which he says, "And these words that I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write

them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates". See also Ex. 13:16. The Jews certainly took Moses literally and they bound little boxes, (with portions of scripture written inside), on their hand, arms and forehead. Jesus refers to the practice of wearing these phylacteries and mentions the motives of the Pharisees in wearing more of them than was usual - i.e. to be seen of men. There are also many buildings in the world with portions of scripture cut into the stonework - there are certainly many in this locality and it obviously was a practice when Old Edinburgh was being built. To my knowledge Jesus did not place such a duty upon His followers, and in any case surely the size of the letters must be immaterial. Does the lay preacher imagine that if he erects letters twelve feet high that the world will be six-times more likely to do what Jesus commanded than with letters two feet high? Does the size of the print matter? If it did then we would all have very large Bibles. I rather think that the way in which the gospel is presented is more important than the size of the print, and I rather fancy that the lay preacher's signs (which fell foul of the Planning Department) are not the best medium through which to communicate the teachings of Christ - others may disagree.

In paragraph one of this article I am critical of the lay preacher and what I say is really what our American friends would call a 'gut reaction' to the newspaper report, but is my criticism justified? Some readers might say that we could do with many more men of the calibre and resource of the lay preacher. The world today is steeped in sin and requires drastic action, Perhaps the lay preacher sees himself in the role of a John the Baptist, as a voice crying in the wilderness, or as the preacher Jonah trying to convert evil cities, or as one of the many great Old Testament prophets, set on fire for God. Perhaps some think that that is exactly what the world needs (and who cares about the reservations of the Planning Department?) Does the New Testament not say that we should obey God rather than men? It is certainly true that the world is steeped in sin and completely unmindful about God. It is true that the world needs men 'on fire for God'. It is true that the New Testament says that we must obey God rather than men. However, as good citizens, we must obey all civil laws which do not conflict with the laws of God and certainly in this country, perhaps more than in most other countries, there are no limitations placed upon any man who wants to preach the gospel of Christ. Erecting huge signs on the roof of one's house is quite another matter. It should be possible to point the sinful world to Christ without the use of such hoardings. It is also possible to preach in such a way that we turn men away from God rather than attract them. One ponders what reaction stirs in the minds of passers-by when they see such hoardings on this man's house. To a lesser extent I often ponder the true reaction on the minds of ordinary citizens when they see a man with sandwich boards pass by, bearing the words, "Prepare to meet thy God". Is it good publicity? I have a great admiration for the men who carry sandwich boards for it must take a certain brand of courage. Others might say that it does not take courage, it takes only a mixture of misguided zeal and stupidity. A man bearing sandwich boards always has a profound affect on me but I am never sure whether it is because I feel guilty to see someone doing something that I ought to be doing, or whether it is because he seems to be bringing the word of God into some kind of disrepute or mockery. Is it bad publicity? Does it help to bring men to Christ? Does it make men conscious of their duty to their Maker? This question might be worth further discussion at Bible Studies. The apostle Paul certainly didn't like all kinds of publicity for in Acts 16:16 we read of the damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination, who followed Paul and his company for many days, saying, "These men are the servants of the most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation". She was telling the truth and she was giving publicity to the avowed purpose of the apostle Paul, but nevertheless it was publicity that Paul did not like or want. It was a form of publicity he could well do without and he put a stop to it.

There is, on a lesser level, the question of stickers and signs, bearing scriptural texts etc., one sometimes sees on the rear windows of cars. Do they do any good, or harm? At an even lower level there are such things as lapel badges bearing words like "Smile - God loves you", or "Jesus Saves". What effect do they have? Do they inspire or irritate, do they draw you or annoy you? The Faith Mission at Carubber's Close in Edinburgh campaigned for a long

against the Planning Department before it was successful in obtaining a huge red neon sign saying "Jesus Saves". What effect does it have ten years later? Probably no one notices it, and probably those who notice it think it grotesque and improperly in competition with coloured neon beer signs. Who can tell?

Of one thing Jesus leaves no doubt, that followers of Christ can glorify Him by the things that they do, by the manner of their lives. He said that a city set on a hill could not be hid and in like manner the good works of His followers would be seen of men and would thus glorify His Father in heaven. That kind of publicity is good publicity. EDITOR.

ASK

"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,
Sweetest name I know,
Fills my every longing,
Keeps me singing, as I go".

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us". Ephesians 3:20.

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? FOR "THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US".

It is said that many years ago the Post Office in Niagara Falls used to stamp letters coming to that city: "Locate at the seat of power". Shall we approach with humility the One who is the source of unlimited power, and who is well "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us". And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of age" Matthew 28:18-20 (RSV). "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God". John 1:12-13 (RSV). "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing". John 15:5.

"I cannot do without Thee, I cannot stand alone,
I have no strength or goodness, no wisdom of my own;
But Thou, beloved Saviour, art in all to me,
And weakness will be power if leaning hard on Thee."

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? FOR "THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US".

That mighty man of God, the Apostle Paul surely had the secret of a successful christian life, he knew where the power came from:— "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me". Galatians 2:20.

Alexander Whyte wrote:— "Paul has so eaten the flesh and has so drunk the blood of Christ: he has been of the Father so engrafted into Christ. that he possesses within himself the very same life that is possessed by the risen Christ. The very identical life that is in Christ glorified is already in Paul, amid all his corruptions, temptations, and tribulations. There are very different degrees of that life, to be sure, in Christ and in Paul; but it is the very same kind of life

Indeed, with all reverence, and with all spiritual understanding, let it be said Christ has no choice; He has nowhere else to dwell. If Christ is really to dwell, to be called the dwelling anywhere, it must be in Paul's heart, and in your heart, and in my heart".

The above writer also quotes a Dr. Somerville, "Let any man among ourselves carry about Christ in his own heart; let any man abide in Christ as the branch abides in the vine: let any man cleave as close to Christ as a member of our body cleaves to its head: let any man say unceasingly every day, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"; and you will be absolutely sure to find that men the most willingly, the most active, the most practical, and the most efficient man in every kind of christian work. In one word, the more evangelically mystical any man is, the more full of all vigour and all efficacy will that man be sure to be".

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? FOR "THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US".

W.E.Sangster referring to Paul says:- "But when he wrote and spoke of being "in Christ", he was not speaking of some rare transporting rapture possible only to people with peculiar gifts. This is for every man and woman; you and me; the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker All may be "in Christ..! All must be! The Christian Life on any lower level is lower than the New Testament teaches as normal. One has not come to the heart of our most holy faith till one is there. Without this, the secret of the saints is hidden from us. Not as a peculiar mystic but as a pattern we may all study, and an example we may all emulate, Paul confessed one day: "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live: and yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me". Christ lives in me! That is the secret of radiant living. Not just Christ as my "Friend, Companion, Help, and Guide" - precious and true as all those terms unquestionably are, But Christ in me". William Law, that deep sage of the eighteenth century, said: "A Christ not in us is a Christ not ours".

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" John 14:23. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" Ephesians 3:16-19.

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory". Colossians 1:26-27. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever". Amen. Hebrew 13:20-21

ASK WHAT DO I ASK? FOR "THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US".

Henry Drummond wrote:- "To have lived with Christ must have made one like Christ ; that is to say, a Christian. As a matter of fact, to live with Christ did produce this effect. It produced it in the case of Paul. And during Christ's life-time the experiment was tried in an even more startling form. A few raw, unspiritual, uninspiring men were admitted to the inner circle of His friendship. The change began at once, Day by day we can almost see the first disciples grow. First there steals over them the faintest possible adumbration of His character, and occasionally, very occasionally, they do a thing, or say a thing that they could not have done or said had they not been living there. Slowly the spell of His life deepens. Reach after reach of their nature is overtaken, thawed, subjugated, sanctified. Their manners soften, their words become more gentle, their conduct more unselfish. As swallows who have found a summer, as frozen buds the spring, their starved humanity burst into a fuller life".

"I need not journey far, this distant Friend to see,
Companionship is always mine; He makes His home with me.
I envy not the twelve; nearer to me is He,
The life He once lived here on earth He lives again in me".

What a difference it would make to our lives if we could repeat the above lines and truly mean them, shall we examine our lives in the light of His glorious life, and open our heart's door and allow Him to possess us more fully.

“Not I, but Christ, my every need supplying;
Not I, but Christ, my strength and health to be;
Christ, only Christ, for spirit, soul, and body;
Christ, only Christ, live then Thy life in me”.

Ask WHAT DO I ASK? FOR “THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US”.

May the Lord's richest blessing be your portion.

LEONARD MORGAN

A SHEPHERD'S PRAYER

By A.J.B. Patterson, M.A.

(From Life & Work, June 1934)

An Item from the papers of the late brother D. Dougal.

As a young probationer I spent my holidays in the valley of Yarrow, among the shepherds, from whom I received as fine a conception of life, and its issues, as I ever got at the Divinity Hall.

I wish to bear my testimony to the divinity of the common life as I experienced it among these shepherds. There was one especially whom I can never forget. Every night he held family worship in his humble shieling. As reverently as possible I would like to be allowed to repeat some of those petitions of his which survive in my memory, and which in these later and changed days touch a sensitive chord in the heart.

“Almighty God, we have gethered round Thy Throne of Grace to offer up our humble worship, and to render thanks for a' the mercies Thou hast dealt to us, the poor helpless creatures o' a' day. We have a' gane wanderin' like silly lambs among the thorns and briers, and we've forgethered owre often wi' sheep that werena' o' Thy fault.

Wherein our lives have been stained wi' sin, let us hear this nicht the voice o' Thy tender love and forgiving mercy. Dinna, O Lord, deal wi' us according to our backgauns, but guide us cannily back to the green pastures and the grassy braes that border on the streams o' Thy love and Grace. We ken what it means to gang gaitis o' oor ain without Thy guiding hand. But by Thy lang-suffering kindness we will daunner nae mair, and our prayer will aye be that the ill-faured enemy o' oor souls may never disturb this flock, or steal awa' any o' Thine that are marked wi' Thy buist.

Great God o' these aul solemn hills, God o' the past, the present, and the days to come, take oor trembling hands in Thine and gang by oor side as we warsel on through bog and marsh.

Let oor hame-life be like the hame-life o' Bethany, where Thy Son ever found a welcome, and blessed wi' His presence. Mak oor fire in the winter, and fill oor windows wi' Thy licht, and oor yairds wi' Thy flowers when the spring comes roond again. In a' seasons may we see the fulfillment of Thy promises.

Give strength to the sickly anes o' Thy flock and shelter them from the cauld wind. Sanctify to ane and a' every kind of decipline seest fit to send. Full weel have we been told, though we grumble when the trial comes, that over every swollen burn Thou hast cast a 'brig. Give us clearness o' veesion to see it, and strength to walk till we reach that land where Thine honour dwelleth.

And now, O Lord we commend to thee our kindly brother, Thy ain faithful servant. Bless him at his ingle-neuk, among his Godly books, but specially when he serves his fellowmen, (Thy sheep) and looks the hills and cleuchs for any dumfooned cratur' or sickly lamb

that needs hand-fed wi' ribs o' hay or sucks o' milk. Keep him oot o' the bogs o' pride when his friends bleat his praises on the high hills o' flattery. Give him a good plaid, weel woven wi' hamely counsel, ane that will keep oot a' the storms that blaw among the cleuchs and rugged glens o' this world. May his staff be ane o' the Lord's ain cuttin' that will stand him in good stead, when beset wi' trials and oft' temptations. And when the winter o' auld age creeps up on him, and its snaws drift round his cots on the hillside, may the Lord, who is the Shepherd o' us a', hap us in owre nicht and into His everlasting sheep-fauld". AMEN.

BLESSED IS THE MAN

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the un-Godly not standeth in the way of sinners, not sitteth in the seat of the scornful". Psalm 1:1.

The word "blessed used by the Psalmist is equal to our word "happy".

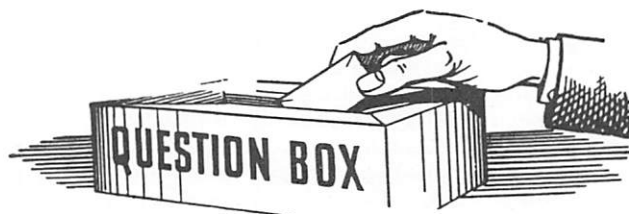
In this first Psalm the psalmist is linking life and happiness together. Happiness is a condition produced by the kind of life we choose to live.

In this Psalm there is a contrast drawn, which is repeated many times, between the righteous and the unGodly. The Godly dwell amid the blessings of our Heavenly Father while the wicked will eventually perish and die. All of us should choose our companions carefully. Verse 1 of the psalm envisages three different characters amongst mankind i.e. the unGodly, the sinner and the scornful.

- 1 The unGodly are those who practice a total disregard for God and their life is a state of rebellion against God. Without being too self-righteous it must be said that such are not fit companions for those who would be followers of Christ. "Can two walk together except they agree?" The New Testament also advises us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Whilst this admonition is usually applied to the serious matter of matrimony, surely it should also apply in many other directions and in many other forms of companionship – even business relationships.
- 2 Sinners are those who would do the right but more often do the wrong – who constantly offend against God. Sins very often overtake even the most zealous followers of Christ (and thanks be to God that we can always repent) but let us try not to take liberties with the precious blood of the Lamb. Our chances of falling into sin are much higher if we are in the wrong place with the wrong companions. Peter denied his Lord as he stood warming his hands at the fire of the enemies of Christ. How often do we warm our hands at the fire of the enemy? Peter was in the wrong place, at the wrong time and with the wrong people. The end of his associations there were not happy. He denied the Lord and wept bitterly. Happiness is a condition linked with what we do, and what others do.
- 3 The scornful are those of a proud spirit – the self sufficient – those who don't need God. Usually they have a contemptuous disregard for God and very often a similar disregard for man. We may think of Lot as a righteous man yet he was found sitting at the gate of wicked Sodom. Again we might reflect upon whether it was the right place to be. The wrong place and the wrong companions? Christ mingled with, and even sought out, the unGodly and emerged unscathed. He sought them so that He might preach to them, not join them in their misdeeds. We might not emerge unscathed from associations with such. Truly the Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not after the counsel of the unGodly".

Let us, therefore, meditate from time to time of this first verse of this first psalm and let us choose well the places to which we resort and the companions with which we are found. Let us not display a spirit of smug self-righteousness about the matter but non-the-less let us give due consideration to this recipe for happiness from the psalmist. Choose your leisure pursuits thoughtfully and your friends carefully.

T. H. BLACKMORE, Worle.



 Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

“What is the ‘strong delusion’ mentioned in the New Testament that God said that He would send?”

THE scripture referred to is found in Paul’s letter to Thessalonica when he says, “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie” (2 Thess. 2:11). This letter is very much concerned with the imminent return of the Lord, and the apostle’s attempt to allay the anxieties of the saints. It seems quite evident that many voices are saying that the Lord’s return is at hand, even to the extent that letters are being received purporting to come from the apostles, and ostensibly saying the same thing. Paul is exhorting the saints to remain unshaken in mind and in spirit, and to remain untroubled. He tells them that the mystery of iniquity is already at work, and seeks to encourage them by reminding them that God’s victory over Satan is already complete. But even though victory over Satan is assured, he warns them that deceit and error are still rampant in the world and that the saints can be in danger of succumbing to these twin evils. It is against this background that he speaks about the ‘strong delusion’ which will come upon these people who have been shaken from the truth, and have allied themselves again with the forces of evil. It seems to me that in order to answer the question we shall need to examine the following points:—

- 1 spiritual destitution
- 2 God’s reaction to spiritual destitution
- 3 His call to steadfastness

Spiritual Destitution

To be destitute means to be denied the necessities of life; to be spiritually destitute means to be devoid of the Spirit of God. It is unusual in this country today for anyone to be destitute of the necessities of life; the tragedy is, of course, that people are not generally aware of spiritual destitution even though the effects of this alarming state are evident on every hand and side. I suppose Christians should be more aware than anyone what spiritual destitution means, having escaped from such a condition, but even among Christians the passage of time dims the awful reality of being without God, and we always need to remind ourselves of what the Bible teaches.

In the O.T. we read, “Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law” (2 Chron. 15:3). No God, no teaching, no law, a state of affairs like that is almost unthinkable. When confronted with the enemy who were desolating the sanctuary, the people of Israel say through the Psalmist, “We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long” (Ps. 74:9). It’s just as if some fearsome enemy were ravaging our most venerated sanctuary and there was not even a sign of help, nor anyone to bring encouragement. Amos, the so-called minor prophet, makes the situation even more poignant, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11,12). Oh, dear reader, can you imagine it. No message from God, no comfort, no hope, no lamp to the feet and light to the pathway. Today the majority of people despise the word of God and tread it underfoot, but what if it had never come into the world? Oh, what desolation and destitution!

Now it seems to me that some in Thessalonica had voluntarily brought themselves to this spiritual destitution. Paul explains why, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10). He then goes on to say that God would send them strong delusion and the effect of this would be, "That they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2:12). When he wrote to Timothy, Paul spelled this out more clearly, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doating about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth" (1 Tim, 6:3-5). So spiritual destitution means forsaking the truth, and living as though you had everything but in fact possess nothing, just like the church at Laodicea, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17). We ought to understand that this spiritual destitution is entered into quite voluntarily and persisted in; in such cases, there is a definite reaction from God which we must now consider.

God's reaction to wilful sin

God's reaction to wilful sin is consistent, and easily understood. In the 2 Chronicle passage, the Spirit of God speaking through Azariah the son of Oded, said, The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (2 Chron. 15:2). Such a statement is direct, uncompromising, and cannot be misunderstood. We would expect the same God to say the same thing in the N.T., and indeed He does. In the catalogue of wilful and despicable sins as recorded in the first chapter of the Roman letter, Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, discloses the reaction of God three times relative to the actions of sinful men. They had changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts (Rom. 1:23,24). They changed the truth of God into a lie, for this God gave them up unto vile affections (v.26). They did not retain God in their knowledge so God gave them over to a reprobate mind (v.28).

What do we learn from these scriptures? These people had wilfully deserted God, so He merely left them to work out their own destruction. This is part of the price that man has to pay for what he likes to refer to as his 'moral freedom'. The significant lesson that all should learn is that when God takes away His restraining hand man will go deeper down into the slough of sin. Paul also asserts that the degredation of sex is the result of heathenism, and heathenism is the loss of God in the life of man. They preferred to pass God by. They tested God first and then drew away from Him, therefore, God turned aside from them and left them like old, abandoned dwellings, in which they could work the works of sin and misery. The tragedy is that in our modern cities, in the night clubs, in the houses of ill-repute, in the darkness of unrestrained animal impulses, man is reaping the same reaction from God. If darkness, and deceit, and delusion, and a despising of the truth is what men want and seek, then the awful message of the Bible is that God will hand them over to that which they have chosen and persisted in. This message needs to be hammered home in our churches today. The teaching is just as relevant now as it has always been.

In the passage under consideration, the Thessalonians would suffer the same fate as the Romans. Because they no longer loved the truth and had chosen to walk with their eyes open into error, God allowed them to be strongly deluded in their spiritual blindness and destitution.

God's call to steadfastness

Paul's message to the saints at Thessalonica was this, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15). Peter reminds us that Satan still goes about as a roaring lion seeking those whom he may devour; he then goes on, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9). In his second letter

he repeats the warning but gives us guidance as well, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and for ever. Amen". (2 Peter 3:17-18).

You will have noticed that love of the word is essential in this respect. Have nothing whatever to do with those who would seduce you from the purity of God's word. Burn those books that tell you that large portions of the Bible can be disregarded. Remember the O.T. passage, 'Stay with God, and He will stay with you'. As long as we do this we shall not be spiritually blind, but spiritually enlightened; we shall not be spiritually destitute but spiritually rich; we shall be walking with certainty to heaven, and not, in a deluded state, hastening towards hell. Remember the Thessalonians.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JANUARY 1979

7—Lev. 19:1-18	John 15:12-27
14—Jer. 38:1-13	John 16:1-14
21—Jer. 38:14-28	John 16:15-33
28—Deut. 4:1-14	John 17

JOY, LOVE, HATRED.

OUR readings of chapters 14 to 17 are John the Apostle's report of the teachings of Jesus from the last supper to Gethsemane — surely a God-breathed report! It looks as though part was spoken in the upper room (14:34), or did they stay together elsewhere in the city? (18:1).

We read of joy last week (John 15:11). We cannot doubt that there is a joy available to those who suffer. Jesus said "If ye loved Me ye would have rejoiced because I go unto the Father, for the Father is greater than I" (14:28). What joy is He speaking of when He says that "my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full" (15:11)? Gloom filled the minds and hearts of the apostles anticipating? their terrible loss of their supreme friend. What joy had Jesus then? He was satisfied because He was fulfilling His Father's appointment (17:4). When the apostles came to face the same kind of trial they had the experience (Acts 5:41), but now in the upper room or on the way to Gethsemane "sorrow filled their hearts" (16:6).

So Jesus sought to comfort and encourage them, and emphasis is upon love. Abiding in the love of Jesus was the supreme

need, So this is the commandment, "that ye love ONE ANOTHER as I have loved you" (15:12). Jesus must have the love of the apostles. It involved them inobedience. They must have His kind of love if they are to have His kind of joy, and this would come when they fully loved ONE ANOTHER — and finally ALL MEN of course. The same love which brought Jesus to die for sinners must motivate the apostles (and, yes, all His people). Giving up life for ANOTHER is the highest form of love. The relationship of Jesus and His apostles was very close but they were far from appreciating this until and unless they took His lesson of humility, and are truly united as His ambassadors to the world.

They must face with love (as Jesus was at that moment) the bitterest hatred of His and their enemies. As His friends (confidants 15:15) they must share His love for the world and accept its hatred. He had chosen them and confined in them. They must have keenly felt the hatred of the Jews as they were with Jesus when the stones were lifted. They were deeply conscious of hostility to Jesus and had dreaded a return from Ephraim to Jerusalem. Jesus assures them of the same treatment as they follow Him, and the very sad reason for it — refusal to accept the signs and the truth.

The Comforter

The translation of the Greek word Paraclete, shown in most Bibles in the margin, varies from Comforter, Advocate, Helper, Counsellor to "someone else to stand by you" (Phillips). It is only used four times here in John's gospel and once in his first letter (2:1). Thinking of the immediate position of the apostles one feels they surely needed a com-

forter, but our use of this word makes it inadequate, much more than a comforter was obviously necessary and intended — a divine person only could take the place of Jesus! Like many other things Jesus said, the apostles themselves could not have understood, and apart from inspiration indeed never could, what was really involved in the cross and the resurrection. Well did Jesus know what a testing these few loyal simple-hearted men were to survive. Therefore He gave them the encouragement involved in "Let not your heart be troubled", and His subsequent assurances of help. While the awful apparent defeat of their leader, and His death by so fearful a torment did submerge them in a short period of hopelessness. His assurances must have stayed with them and were awakened to life when He appeared to them "more alive than ever". Then they awaited in prayerful trust, the promise of THE HOLY SPIRIT, and found in Him all that was promised, a sufficiency of power from on high. The sufferings they endured only confirmed their faith instead of causing them to stumble (16:1).

It is important to note the functions of the Holy Spirit in relation to sin, righteousness and judgement. He Who inspired the sacred writings is exercising His power through the words and actions of the persons who have accepted the Saviour and are doing His work today. We explain briefly that the revelation of the person of Jesus and His words and works bring home to every honest human heart, first, conviction of sin, then the necessity of a good life, and then the fear and expectation of judgement after death.

The Lord's Prayer

We are driven to our knees when we face crises, particularly but it would be good if we did not need crises to do so, but "what HE endured no tongue can tell, to save our souls from death and hell". His thought for Himself is brief and related to us sinners. His glory is in our salvation through His work. His glorification is for the purpose of giving eternal life. Note the supreme position of the apostles in His thoughts, How great a responsibility He has placed upon them, and with what earnestness He prays for their unity. He Who has authority over all flesh has an hour or two before washed their feet in order

to teach them the humility essential to their unity. He is returning to the "highest place which heaven affords" from the lowly place of a servant of servants. Jesus gives a definition of eternal life. It is to know God and Jesus which mean relationship rather than extent of time. It must surely begin in the here and now by a close walk with Jesus — "Oh, for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame; a light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb". He speaks of the apostles as given to Him by God, indicating the overseeing selection by God through the circumstances of life. The life of Jesus with His chosen men was one of close intimate fellowship designed to teach them the truth, and we note the emphasis upon WORDS. They are our means of learning and our means of giving out the truth. How careful we need to be to keep close to the words of life in the book of life! How good that Jesus was able to say "they have kept Thy word". Jesus had "kept them in God's name — meaning His power, His character — and guarded them" (17:12) while with them, and only by God's power can they be still kept safely united in love and have the joy "fulfilled in themselves". They are to experience the same hatred of the word. It seems certain indeed that all except one suffered martyrdom, and he was persecuted and banished. Thus they were glorified with Him.

Then the thoughts of Jesus in this most wonderful of prayers widens to embrace all who come to believe on Him through the apostolic word, and the condition of the world's acceptance of Jesus as sent by the Father, is based upon the unity of believers in subsequent times. The glory of Jesus was in His acceptance of the divine will as expressed towards the world in His "bearing our sins in His own body upon the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). This great love of Jesus should be manifested in us in our relations first with ONE ANOTHER, and then towards all men. How sadly has the church in the world failed to be what it should, and yet there is a unity among God's own people spiritually where the love of Jesus abides in the heart. There is a deep consciousness of the need for unity among all believers at the present time, and this has been stimulated by the disastrous falling off of attendances at all places of professed christian worship. As these attendances

grow smaller the places of amusement, the drinking resorts and the prisons increase making the need for crime prevention greater. There is an obvious connection but this is not what will make the world believe that God sent Jesus, only a full demonstration of unity based upon love and obedience can fulfill the Saviour's design. That surely must be based upon humble acceptance of the apostolic word.

R. B. SCOTT.

Briefs

Do not sacrifice first principles on the altar of expediency.—Lewis Silkin.

Authority makes some people grow; it makes others swell.

A child may be forgiven who is afraid of the dark. The tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.

No change of circumstance can remedy a defect of character.—Emerson.

A man asking for work was informed by the foreman that he hadn't a chance because he was already overstuffed.

The man replied, 'But sure, you can take me on. The bit I'd do wouldn't make any difference.' —*Irish News*.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Haddington, Scotland: The church here held a week's mission from 23rd October with Leonard Morgan, Wigan, doing the preaching. Attendance by local people was disappointing considering that 3,000 invitations had been given out. Never-the-less we had very good meetings with ninety in attendance on one evening. We thank the brethren who rallied to our support and enlarged our meetings, some coming from as far away as Dennyloanhead. Brother Morgan's preaching was as forceful and telling as ever and everyone heard some good preaching.

We are delighted to report three immersions as a result of the week's endeavour. Mrs. Jean Jones (sister of brother Moncrieff) was baptised, as was Mrs. Robina Lorimer (daughter of brother and sister Blair) and Miss Nancy Wilson (daughter of brother and sister John Wilson from Newtongrange).

We truly give thanks to our Lord for these precious souls being added to the Lord's church and pray for His strength to be with them as they walk the narrow way. May they be faithful unto death.

Our thanks once again to the good brethren at Tranent for the use of their meeting-house and baptistry.

A. BROAD, Sec.

Newtongrange, Scotland: It is with great joy that the church here announces the addition to the family of God of Miss Nancy Wilson (daughter of brother John Wilson) who put on her Lord in baptism. During the week Nancy had been attending the mission at Haddington. At the close of brother Morgan's meeting the young lady walked forward and declared her faith in her Saviour. We trust that the Lord will bless her and keep her.

Andrew P. SHARP. (Sec)

Haddington, Scotland: Again we rejoice over the addition of another soul to the Kingdom of Christ. On Monday evening 13th November, we witnessed the immersion of David Broad, aged twelve years and Son of brother and sister Allan Broad (this writer). We give thanks again to God for the power of His gospel and pray that our young brother will remain faithful to His Lord for the rest of his days and that he will become an asset to the church. We believe that David's decision may have been prompted during the recent missions with Brother Leonard Morgan. To God be praise.

A. BROAD, Sec.

OBITUARY

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan: The church at Longshoot has again been saddened by the passing of another sister. On October 18th Sister Ellen Naylor passed away.

Sister Naylor had been troubled by illness for several years, but her sudden death was a shock to those who had broken bread with her on the Lord's Day before her death.

We commend her husband, Bob, & family to the comfort which can only be found in the Lord. D. MELLING.

VOWS

In the Old Testament vows were regarded as very serious and solemn matters, not to be lightly made, and they had to be kept: for example, one has only to think of Jephthah's vow and its awful consequences! We also read in Scripture:—

“If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, he shall not break his word”.

and,

“When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it”.

We often sing, perhaps without much thought, “O, Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end”. Surely this means that we must try to maintain our faith until the salvation of our soul is complete and we finally hear the Master's “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord”.

The gulf which separates the Christian from the non-Christian is briefly summed up by one's attitude towards God: “between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not”. Let us always try to do the will of God and to be found worthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Sister E. C. Payne, Reading.

UNITY

When approaching Newbury one sees on the top of a Catholic church a tall figure representing Christ, in an imploring attitude, bending low with outstretched arms to enfold humanity.

We must not have graven images, but whenever one looks on this majestic figure, one recalls the saying of Jesus many years ago, when He wept over Jerusalem for their hardened hearts, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and YE WOULD NOT!”

Christ prayed that all Christians might be one, but unfortunately we are still divided and in consequence, the world does not believe in Him. Christ to-day still weeps over Christendom and our divisions, but if we elevate Christ in our lives, ABOVE ALL ELSE and ALL HUMAN CREEDS, we shall be advancing His cause and bringing unity nearer. To God be the glory, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”.

Sister E.C. Payne, Reading.

The test of pleasure is the effect it has upon character, the group with which it is identified, and the question, “Would I be content for Jesus to come while thus engaged?”

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EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

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