

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

Vol. 71 No. 10

OCTOBER, 2004

*"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"*

## *Editorial* Cultivating the mind of God

On the face of it, Peter is the unfortunate recipient of one of the harshest reprimands recorded in the New Testament. It had only been a few days since his Lord, Jesus, had commended him for his apparent understanding of his nature and purposes, yet imagine the dismay of the disciple when Jesus turns on him with the words, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you

are not on the side of God, but of men." (Matt 16: 13ff)

It is of course a compelling juxtaposition of events that culminates in this response of Jesus. Jesus had challenged his disciples with the question, "But who do you say that I am" and Peter had stepped in with his glorious affirmation of the true nature of Jesus, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God." Indeed, Jesus goes on to reveal that this critical insight of Peter's was the result of divine revelation rather than any wisdom on Peter's part. So what went wrong? Why did a remark of Peter's that was suffused with love and a desire to protect his Lord meet with such a damning response?

I am of the view that there was nothing that was casual, haphazard or cavalier in the life of Jesus but rather that every action was designed to reveal or reinforce some truth about his nature and/or his mission. It is clear from the scriptural record that Peter's affirmation of His Sonship represented something of a watershed for Jesus. It is as if this statement of Peter confirmed that the time was now right for Jesus to move into the final phase of his ministry. **"From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."** It was of course in response to Jesus' preparation of the disciples for what was to come that Peter uttered the fateful words, **"God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you."** Jesus' response was designed (and I use that word quite deliberately) to leave no doubt in the mind of his

**Contents:** 1-Editorial; 3-The Road to Recovery; 6-Balaam's Ways; 7-Word Study; 9-Spiritual Souls; 12-Question Box; 14-What do you think?; 15-News & Info.

disciples that nothing, but nothing, was going to be allowed to stand in the way of Jesus fulfilling his eternal mission on the cross. It had been wonderful to have Peter's acknowledgement of the Sonship of Jesus, but this was Jesus now dramatically demonstrating to his disciples that His Sonship carried a cost that he (Jesus) was compelled to bear. That is the model for the single-minded commitment that Jesus then goes on to demand of those who would be followers of him.

It seems that whilst Peter had been led to understand the true nature of Jesus, he was still some way from understanding his purpose. He was failing to see the spiritual dimension of the incarnation and thinking in purely physical terms about the well-being and protection of his Lord. He had a worthy desire to protect but that desire was diametrically opposed to the fulfillment, by Jesus, of his eternal purpose. Even after having been a witness to the transfiguration, Peter still reverted to the physical mind-set when he sought by force (according to John) to prevent Jesus being taken as the mob came to arrest Jesus to take him to trial. Having told Peter to put his sword away, and confessing that he could bring legions of angels to defend him, Jesus states the crux of the issue, "But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

Many translations record Jesus' words to Peter during his rebuke as "you do not have in mind the things of God, but of men," (NIV) or similar. When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome he said, "the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot;..." Part of our process of sanctification, an integral element of our renewal as spiritual people, is that our minds should be set "on things that are above, not on things that are below." Jesus demonstrated on several occasions during his ministry, and it was evident in the teaching of the apostles, that he was a compassionate, loving and indeed forgiving Lord. He understood human frailty and weakness, without ever condoning it, taught his disciples the lesson of forgiveness to repentant sinners. Paul urged Christian communities to work together, the strong bearing with and nurturing the weak.

What Jesus was not prepared to tolerate was anything or anyone that threatened to stand in the way of his achieving salvation for his people. Whether the challenge came from the devil's attempts to tempt him in the wilderness, the Jew's claims to undermine his divinity, the misguided attempts of his disciples to protect him physically, his own anguish in the Garden and not even the cross itself was going to be allowed to stand in his way. Jesus had the 'mind of God'.

We will never make much progress on our journey to Christlikeness so long as we think like 'men' – i.e. with our minds devoted to the physical, transient, fleshly or worldly things of life. Our minds need to be set on higher things, not in a sense of superiority or 'highmindedness' or pomposity, but in the sense of acknowledging God as Father and Jesus as Lord and committing to living lives that are in accordance with their will and not our own. One of the great dangers of our world today is that there is a diminishing sense of spirituality or acknowledgement of God. For now, humankind is content to 'think like men', believing that man rather than God has the wisdom to define how we should behave and organize ourselves. So mankind in its wisdom careers down the road of, for example, an 'any type of relationship that suits you' mentality in utter defiance of God's design.

"The wisdom of God is wiser than men" is just as true today as it ever was. Peter didn't understand the purpose of Jesus and was taught a hard lesson by him. We will not always understand why God requires certain things of us, but as we learn more of Him, our minds will become more attuned to His will and our lives will be all the richer as we grow to think more like God and less like men.

# Practical Christianity

## THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

### LESSON 4

(David Yasko, USA)

We're in part four of the road to recovery. We call this "the housecleaning step" because it has to do with cleaning up the past, letting go of guilt, getting a clear conscience and learning to live a guilt free life, which is the way God wants us to live because we are more useful to him. Take this step with me and it will change your life. Let me give it to you:

**O****PENLY EXAMINE AND CONFESS MY FAULTS TO MYSELF, TO GOD AND TO SOMEONE I TRUST.** Now, why is this a part of the recovery process? Simple ... Guilt keeps us stuck in the past. It keeps us from growing and being all God wants us to be so if we're going to learn how to enjoy life, we've got to learn to let go of guilt. We aren't faultless. All of us would like to turn back the clock every now and then or undo things we feel bad about. The trouble is, we carry it around and it manifests itself in guilty feelings. Now, there are two kinds of guilt. **Unconscious guilt**, stuff we're carrying around that we aren't even aware of. It comes out in different ways. It may come out through denial, repression, blame, excuses, rationalization.

Then there is **conscious guilt**. Either way, we have to learn how to let go of it. We try to rationalize it but rationalization is just your heart telling you something is OK when your mind knows it's wrong.

***Psalm 32:1-2 "What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record." (LB)***

The reason for this step is because of what guilt does for us. Guilt does three things that can devastate our lives:

- 1. GUILT DESTROYS MY CONFIDENCE.** Guilt eats us up and makes us feel insecure. When we are like this we constantly worry that somebody is going to really find out about what we are; that we aren't the super Christians we like to think we are; that we struggle and because of that we may get rejected by our friends. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle liked to play practical jokes on people. One day he played one on the five most prominent men in England. Here's what he did. He sent an anonymous note to each one of them that said, "All is found out. Leave at once." Within 24 hours all five men had left the country! Guilt is a cloud that hangs over our head and it robs our confidence. We can't get on with our lives because we are so afraid somebody is going to find that skeleton in our closet; that deep, dark secret that nobody knows about and it robs us of our confidence.
- 2. GUILT DAMAGES MY RELATIONSHIPS.** Guilt makes us respond to people in ways we don't understand. Guilt makes us impatient with others. It makes us overreact in anger. Guilt can cause us to buy people off. We feel guilty so we buy them stuff. Guilt can cause us to avoid commitment in relationships. We get just so close, but we are not able to get any closer.

- 3. GUILT KEEPS ME STUCK IN THE PAST.** Living in the past is like driving a car while you're looking through the rear view mirror. You end up in a wreck. Life in the rear view mirror gives perspective, but you can't constantly look that way. If we're stuck in the rear view mirror, we never get ahead because we get stuck replaying all the things we'd have liked to change but never will be able to. Guilt can't change the past just like worry can't change the future but both guilt and worry can make today absolutely miserable. It can make us ill. Psychiatrists tell us that 70% of all illness could be cured if we could learn to come to terms with our guilt. When I swallow my guilt, my stomach keeps score! If I don't talk it out with somebody else, I take it out on myself.

This step separates the people who want to talk about getting better from those who are willing to do whatever it takes to get better. You know, we can't bury the past as long as it's alive. It just doesn't work that way. So we have to know:

- **HOW TO DO THIS STEP.**
- This one takes a lot of guts. There are five things necessary:

### **TAKE A PERSONAL MORAL INVENTORY.**

1. Get alone somewhere, take a pencil and a notepad and sit down. Ask yourself these questions: "What is wrong with me?" "What do I feel guilty about?" "What are my regrets?" "What do I feel remorseful about?" "What are the faults in my life that I know I need to change?" "What are the things I feel resentful about?" Ask God to help you out. Ask him to bring to your mind all the things that you feel guilty about, both consciously and unconsciously, that are messing up your life. **Lamentations 3:40** ***"Let us examine our ways and test them."***

We need to examine our lives and pray to God for his help. Look at **Psalms 139:23-24** ***"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me."*** Say, "Lord, I'm sitting here, I've got my pencil and paper and I need you to bring stuff to my mind." The first time I ever did this took about three hours. I thought I was going to write a book. I wrote about people I had wronged and stuff I'd pulled, and issues that weren't consistent with Christianity, never mind ministry. Let me say this up front... This doesn't work unless you are ruthlessly honest with yourself.

- Why is it important to put our faults in writing? Because it forces us to be specific.
- Why can't we just pray about it all in general? Because thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips.

If we think about it, then say it, then write it down, it gives us a clear picture of what the issue is. And, if we can't put the issue down in writing, it's still too vague to deal with. Confront yourself.

2. **ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY FAULTS.**

**Proverbs 20:27** ***"The Lord gave us a mind and conscience. We cannot hide from ourselves."*** (GN) The greatest hold up to the healing from your hang-ups is you. It starts with being radically honest by admitting we have seen

the enemy and it is us. Oh, we can change churches, or boyfriends or girlfriends or husbands or wives but wherever we go, we're there, too. Don't minimize your list, don't blame other people for your list. Maybe it wasn't all your fault but God holds you responsible for the part that was your fault **John 1:8** ***"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."*** If we really want to stop defeating ourselves, then we've got to stop deceiving ourselves.

### **3. ASK GOD TO FORGIVE ME.**

**1 John 1:9** ***"If we freely admit that we have sinned, we find God utterly reliable ... he forgives our sins and makes us thoroughly clean from all that is evil."***

How do we get God to forgive us? Just believe he will. Have faith in him, he's God. If we freely admit our sins to God he will be reliable. See that word admit? Let me give you some background on it. It comes from the same Greek word that means "confess." The word is "homologeō" (homo, "same," lego, "to speak"), "to assent, accord, agree with." So to admit means to look at your list and agree to speak the same way about it God does. "You're right God, it's wrong." That's what it means to confess.

**Isaiah 1:18** ***"No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you clean as freshly fallen snow."***

### **4. ADMIT MY FAULTS TO ANOTHER PERSON.**

God says it is essential to our recovery. Look at **James 5:16** ***"Therefore confess (admit) your sins (faults) to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*** God says we find healing when we admit our faults to each other. The secrets we hold on to are the secrets that make us sick. The revealing of the feeling is what brings on the healing. When we risk honesty with one person, we get to breathe the air of freedom. You're going to find out everybody has problems, most of the time the same problems we're fighting with. So everybody needs somebody they can be totally honest with. Why? It's God's way of freeing us. **Who** do you tell? Somebody you can trust. You need to talk to somebody who understands the value of what you are doing. The most important aspect is finding somebody who knows the Lord enough well enough to be able to relate his forgiveness to you.

### **5. ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND FORGIVE MYSELF.**

**Romans 3:23-24** ***"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*** How does God forgive us when we take this step:

1. Instantly. When we ask, it's done.
2. Freely. Because he wants to.
3. Completely. He wipes it out.

**Romans 8:1** ***"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,"*** Do you know how it feels to live without condemnation? It feels wonderful. Are you perfect then, Dave?

No - just forgiven... !!

Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand;

# Balaam's Ways (8)

(Brian J Boland)

Last month we studied the cases of several individuals who were judged for their pride. But whole cities are likewise judged, Tyre [Isa. 23.8]; Jerusalem [Ez.16.56], as were nations, Egypt [Ez 30.6]; Edom [Ob.1.3]; Moab [Zeph.2.9/10]; Philistines [Zeph.9.6], are also judged. In fact John says, "all nations have drunk of Babylon's wine." [Rev 18.3] The angel then implores "come out of her, my people that you may not receive her plagues" [Rev 18.4] Paul also

advises us, "Therefore come out of them and be separate says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean" [2 Cor.6.17].

The New Testament story begins with Mary the mother of Jesus saying to Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour for he has looked upon my humble estate... he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate" [Lu. 1.46-48,52 ESV]. King Herod hearing that the people of Tyre and Sidon wished to seek peace from him dressed in all his finery and addressed them. They proclaimed he was not a man but God. Immediately the Lord struck him down and he died [Act 12.20-] "because he did not give God the glory". Today this arrogance is all around us.

In complete contrast is the message of the gospel that is well portrayed in the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip started to tell him the good news of Jesus by explaining "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter. And like a lamb before a shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation. For his life was taken from the earth." [Act 8.32-33 ESV] This led to the Eunuch immediately submitting to the gospel. Jesus in denouncing the religious of his day warns them "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted [Mt.23.12 ESV] He had previously given examples of this self exaltation in condemning their titles of Teacher/Leader, Rabbi, Father, Instructors, rather than just accepting they were all 'brothers and servants' [Mt.23.8-11].

Christianity must be the complete antithesis to Balaam's ways, Paul writes, " Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, and patience, bearing one another on love" [Col 3.12 ESV]; " Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves [Phil. 2.23 ESV]; "I... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love [Eph 4.21 ESV]; "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves [Phil.2.3 ESV]. Not only Paul keeps on making this point but also Peter. "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble [1Pe. 5.5 ESV quoting Prov. 3.34] James confirms this, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble [Jam.4.6.10 ESV] Jude warns "the Lord is coming to execute judgement upon all... these are... they who speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining advantage" [Jude 15,16 NAS] Who are among these? -"those that rushed headlong into error of Balaam" [Jude 11 NAS]. "But you beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life" [Jude 20/21 ESV]

James makes it clear that "God opposes the proud" [James 4.6], and just saying "tomorrow we will go into such and such a town" is to be arrogant [James 4.13,16]. What then should we do? - "See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven" [Heb.12.25 ESV]

# Word Study FAIRNESS

(Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell)

There are many beautiful Greek words. One of them is *epieikeia* and " denotes fairness, moderation, gentleness, ' sweet reasonableness ' [ Matthew Arnold ] " ( W.E. Vine ). The noun is found only twice in the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 10:1 and Acts 24:4. In the A.V. the translation in the former is " clemency " and in the latter, " gentleness ". The adjective is *epieikes* and is found in Philippians 4:5; 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 3:2; James 3:17 and 1 Peter 2:18. The translators used three English words: moderation, patient and gentle. So we can see that both the noun and the adjective are difficult to translate into English. The Greek word possesses a richness that no English word can match.

It is interesting to note that Paul uses *epieikes* twice in detailing the qualifications of an elder. An elder, among other things, must be *patient* ( I Tim. 3:3 ) or *gentle* ( Titus 3:2 ). In other words, he must be fair and even-handed in all his dealings with members of the Lord's body. He must never show favouritism. But before I develop this point, I must continue to highlight the meaning of the Greek terms. Other translations of the noun are 'consideration', 'fairness', 'courtesy', 'kindness', 'reasonableness', 'softness', 'modesty', 'forbearance' and 'magnanimity'. Other translations of the adjective are 'genial', 'yielding', 'fair-minded', 'forbearing', 'mild', 'modest' and 'courteous'.

## RICHARD CHEVENIX TRENCH

Richard Chevenix Trench is worth quoting here. In one of the Internet web sites, he is described as an Irish clergyman, philologist and poet. He once wrote: "For what, after all, is a word, but the enclosure for human use of a certain district, larger or smaller, from the vast outfield of thought or feeling or fact, and in this way a bringing of it under human cultivation, a rescuing of it for human uses?" "Language never deceives, if only we know how to question it aright."

"Language is the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved. It has arrested ten thousand lightning flashes of genius, which, unless thus fixed and arrested, might have been as bright, but would have also been as quickly passing and perishing, as the lightning." "Grammar is the logic of speech, even as logic is the grammar of reason." He also wrote this of *epieikeia*: "It expresses exactly that moderation which recognises the impossibility cleaving to all formal law... 'Gentle' and 'gentleness', on the whole, commend themselves as the best; but the fact remains, which also in a great measure excuses so much vacillation here, namely, that we have no words in English which are full equivalents of the Greek. The sense of equity and fairness which is in them so strong is more or less wanting in all which we offer in exchange." William Barclay has written: "The basic and the fundamental thing about *epieikeia* is that it goes back to God. If God stood on His rights, if God applied to us nothing but the rigid standards of law, where would we be? God is the supreme example of one who is *epieikes* and who deals with others with *epieikeia*."

## DAVID KING

A study of the qualifications of an elder is a very profitable exercise. Many have dealt



with the subject over the years, but, perhaps, none better than David King. David King was a wonderful scholar. He is best described as "the Alexander Campbell of the Restoration Movement in the U.K." He was a voluminous writer in his day and I am glad that my beloved sister Ruth Payne of Kentish Town congregation in London recently reproduced some of his outstanding material.

One of my favourite books is `MEMOIR of DAVID KING with various Papers and Addresses advocating THE RESTORATION in Principle and in Practice of PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY'. The book was compiled by his wife. In it he wrote: "Though elders are not essential to the being of a church, they are most certainly indispensable to its well-being...Extraordinary material is not needed in order to their formation; ordinary men with fair devotion to the Lord and His truth, looking for, and giving themselves to usefulness in the Church of God, are all we need in order that the Lord may raise among us shepherds after His own heart – good shepherds, who shall receive from the Chief Shepherd the reward of life eternal, when He appears."

Interestingly, he says of *epieikes*: "Distinguished for meekness under provocation, and candour in judging the failings of others". Personally, I think it can be very difficult to be candid in certain situations. I suppose the difficulty lies in the fact that some are very easily offended. I remember the late brother Jack Nisbet telling me once that he strove at all times not to be easily offended. I've tried to follow his example. I think the Church would be better off if more members were thicker-skinned, if you see what I mean.

### **'FAIRNESS' AND JESUS**

However, it is the point of *fairness* I wish to highlight in the definition of *epieikeia*. It is a great challenge to treat everyone fairly, reasonably and equitably at all times in a congregation. You see, all of us are closer to some than others. We tend to identify more with those who think like us than with those who don't. We might shun troublesome brothers and sisters. Blood relationships might affect our thinking and deliberations. But should they? Elders have to put aside such things and decide impartially on all matters. Indeed, elders must avoid, at all costs, favouritism. Look what favouritism did to Jacob's family. Brothers and sisters, there are wider lessons for us here. Not only should we treat everyone in a congregation fairly, but we should also treat everyone in the big wide world the same way. To effect this is difficult, but Jesus will help us.

Christ Jesus is our supreme example in all things. We should walk in His footsteps as best we can. He manifested perfect fairness, kindness and understanding at all times. Sometimes His audience did not reciprocate. Sometimes they were even hostile. No matter, He carried on regardless. He showed the world the correct approach in every situation. The Master was master in all circumstances. He passed the test every time. For example, He could have shunned the Samaritans, but He did not. He entered their territory and was even willing to stay with them for two days following His encounter with the woman at Jacob's well (John 4). He did not write them off as a lot of Jews did in His day. They were human beings who needed His love and message. His labours in Samaria paved the way for Philip's successful efforts later on (Acts 8). Jesus had courage in abundance. To do what is right is not always the easier course in this world. After all, Jesus' fairness or *epieikeia*, among other things, led to His being put on a cross. Was anything less fair than that?





# Spiritual Souls

(Ernest Makin, Wigan)

**"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ."**

## **TOWARDS MORAL EXCELLENCE**

This short quotation from Peter's writings defines the real nature of scriptural spirituality. The same apostle states, **"those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, and that because of the righteousness of God and Saviour, Jesus the Christ" "may become partakers of the divine nature."** This promise has its roots in divine power. The basis of New Testament spirituality (n.b. the word pneumatikos – spirituality, is a New Testament word) is faith in Jesus of Nazareth. Peter exhorts his readers by the exercise of 'all diligence' to develop moral excellence, to increase knowledge of the Christ and of the Word of God, to exercise self control, perseverance in seeking godliness (i.e. piety), to share in brotherly kindness and to allow love to underscore all our living (love-agape; there is no one English word to express fully the meaning of this word; the word 'charity' is far too narrow and the word 'love' emphasises far too much the emotional aspect of the word. We require a circumlocution to explain the word. It is a dynamic from which springs our actions, an attitude of the mind allowing a profound and practical concern for the dignity, welfare and humanity of all people.)

If we are able to attain Peter's target we will **"walk by the Spirit and not carry out the desires of the flesh"**. The words of Paul, **"if we live by the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit,"** find an echo on practically on every page of Scripture. This is obviously hyperbole but illustrates the importance of spirituality. Walking by the Spirit produces divinely acceptable fruit of living: **"the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control."**

The word pneumatikos –spiritual is used severally in the New Testament but this article is concerned with those who live so as to be pleasing to the Lord. It is significant that the community of saints, i.e. those who are immersed into the Christ for the remission of trespasses and are in receipt of the gift of the Holy Spirit, is referred to as a spiritual house (pneumatikos oikos) - **"you as living stones are being built up as a SPIRITUAL HOUSE for a holy priesthood, to offer up SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES acceptable to God through Jesus the Christ."**

## **THE WORKMANSHIP OF GOD**

The total dependence of the spiritual man on God is emphasised by Paul's words, **"we are the workmanship (masterpiece) of God, created in the Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."** (Eph.2:10). The word 'workmanship' means the 'product' of God's redemptive process. The spiritual man is not his own, he belongs to God who lovingly owns him for a higher purpose in life than he previously pursued as a natural man. The spiritual man has been 'born anew' to do 'good works', which were defined in the wisdom of God before the foundation of the world. Identified with the death, burial and resurrection of the Christ (events which Paul describes as 'matters of first importance') in immersion for the remission of sins and the gift of the divine Holy Spirit, (Please read Romans 6:v1-10), the believer begins the newly sanctified life as a 'babe in the Christ'.

**"Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual (pneumatikos) but as worldly (sarkikos-carnal), mere infants in the Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you**

**were not ready for it. Indeed you are still not ready. You are still worldly (carnal/fleshly). For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting as mere men?" (1Cor.3:1-3)**

Christians, if they do not grow, face the danger of remaining worldly and reverting to 'mere men'. Normality for the believer is the spiritual state. However not all believers attain to this state, and sometimes when it is reached it is lost or not retained as the attractions of the world prove too strong to resist or behaviour in the House of God falls short of the divinely required standard.

The process towards spirituality, that is the journey into increasing sanctification, demands diligent study of the Word accompanied by prayer; such an experience demands obedience and commitment to a loving heavenly Father. Such a state of holiness is not a permanently fixed point in the life of a believer, neither is it an absolute - spirituality is subject to growth or decay and dependent on the diligence of the believer: **"when I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I put away childish things."** Paul contrasts the believers' spiritual understanding when they know only a little, with a future when everything will be made clear. In the interim, Peter's injunction to apply all diligence to the spiritual learning curve comes into operation in the life of the obedient, prayerful committed follower of Jesus.

In 1Cor.2:14 Paul has written, **"the unspiritual man (psychikos) does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."** The unspiritual man is characterised by his natural soul or psyche. This is the life force we share with the animals. Here is the man who is 'dead in trespasses and sins'; 'following the course of the world'; 'following the prince of the power of the air' and defined as a child of disobedience and wrath. It is by His 'determinate purpose and counsel' that God has made us 'alive'; 'even when we were dead in trespasses'; 'and out of the great love He has for us and through the riches of His mercy and through the work of the Christ has saved us.'

## **GROWING IN GRACE**

The contrast between the natural and spiritual soul is starkly outlined in Ephesians 2:vv11-22. We neglect to apply ourselves, diligently, to growing in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus at the risk of our eternal peril. The soul that is carnal, (sarkikos) still lives under the domination of the self-pleasing nature or the selfish ego (sarx). While such a soul might recognise the divinity of Jesus he has not fully committed himself to a diligent pursuit of those qualities listed in 2Peter 1:vv3-11. The life of the believer who retains a carnal/worldly/fleshly element does not produce the wonderful, God pleasing characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit. Spirituality demands a diligent pursuit of knowledge, holiness and righteousness.

**"Put on the new nature, which is being renewed in KNOWLEDGE after the image of its creator;"**

**"Put off your old nature, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature created after the likeness of God in true RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS."**

The new birth is that work of the Holy Spirit by which the soul, previously dead in sins, is created anew in righteousness. The full nomenclature of spirituality is to be found in various phrases in the New Testament. There follows but a few such phrases:

1. being born anew and born from above; John 3:vv3-7
2. being a renewal of the mind; Romans 12:vv1/2
3. becoming a new creature; 2Cor.5:vv16/17
4. having the Christ formed in the heart; Gals.4:19

5. being quickened to a life of holiness; Ephs.2:vv1-6
6. being made a partaker of the divine nature; 2Pet.1:vv3/4
7. being a passage into spirituality; 1John3:14
8. being born of God; John1:vv12/13
9. seeing the Kingdom of God; John 3:3

## **GOD'S POWER TO TRANSFORM**

Those souls which are designated spiritual are born to righteousness, 1Peter1:23, and 1 John 2:39, and entitle the believer to claim son-ship of God, 1 John 5:vv1/2. The above is a superficial glimpse of the profound and unfathomable promises and spiritual riches supplied by God and awaiting the soul that diligently, obediently and prayerfully pursues the life of the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:vv15-20 is a statement in which Paul prays that those who are faithful in Jesus and also love the saints, **"may be given a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, (that) the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened, (that) they may know what is the hope to which they have been called, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe, according to the working of His great might which He accomplished in the Christ..."**

The power of God can transform the weakest of individuals into strong spirit filled believers who are willing diligently to offer spiritual sacrifices to a loving heavenly Father. Paul lists three examples of the power of God that underlie the transforming process. These are,

- that He raised the Christ from the dead;
- the Christ, with honour and glory, is seated in heavenly places at the right hand of the Father
- the Christ **"is above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and He has put all things under His feet and has made Him the head over all things in the Church, which is the body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."** In view of this remarkable power 'if God is for us, who can be against us?'

The spiritual soul is being cleansed from sins (read 1John1vv7-10); he surrenders or yields himself without reservation to the full control of God, (see Romans 12:1) and he walks by the spirit and does not gratify the desires of the flesh, (see Galatians 5:16-24).

The choice for the individual is simple yet stark:

**"FOR THOSE WHO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE FLESH SET THEIR MINDS ON THE THINGS OF THE FLESH, BUT THOSE WHO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT SET THEIR MINDS ON THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT. TO SET THE MIND ON THE FLESH IS DEATH, BUT TO SET THE MIND ON THE SPIRIT IS LIFE AND PEACE. FOR THE MIND THAT IS SET ON THE FLESH IS HOSTILE TO GOD; IT DOES NOT SUBMIT TO THE LAW OF GOD, INDEED IT CANNOT, AND THOSE WHO ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD. BUT YOU ARE NOT IN THE FLESH, YOU ARE IN THE SPIRIT IF IN FACT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU. ANYONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT OF THE CHRIST DOES NOT BELONG TO HIM. BUT IF THE CHRIST IS IN YOU, ALTHOUGH YOUR BODIES ARE DEAD BECAUSE OF SIN, YOUR SPIRITS ARE ALIVE BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. IF THE SPIRIT OF HIM WHO RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD DWELLS IN YOU, HE WHO RAISED THE CHRIST JESUS FROM THE DEAD WILL GIVE LIFE TO YOUR MORTAL BODIES ALSO THROUGH HIS SPIRIT WHICH DWELLS IN YOU."** Romans 8:vv5-17.

We beseech all to choose the Spirit filled way, to live by the Spirit and walk in the Spirit; destroy the egocentricity of your life and give honour and glory to the Lord Jesus, the Christ.



---

## "What are 'the imprecatory psalms?'"

---

Let us begin with that word 'imprecatory', since it is not a word we either use or hear every day! It is the adjectival form of the word 'imprecate', which means 'to curse or swear', or 'to call down a curse or to invoke evil', and it is the fact that there are certain psalms in which the psalmist does precisely this, that has frequently been used as a weapon in the hands of unbelievers in order to discredit and criticize the Bible, and to cause embarrassment to those believers who have not

known how to give a reason for such psalms.

Examples of righteous indignation?

To know exactly what we are discussing, you may care to read a few of the seven Psalms that are usually described as 'imprecatory'.

For instance, look up the following examples: -

Psalms 79: 6. Psalm 109, from v.6, and Psalm 139: 19-22. The first 18 verses of this last psalm contain an expression of pure praise that is in stark contrast with the outburst we read in verses 19 to 22.

So also, with Psalm 143. The first 11 verses of this psalm are really beautiful, and that 12th verse, which sounds so fierce, almost seems to be an *afterthought!*

*Even that well-loved Psalm 23 - 'The Shepherd Psalm' - says, 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies', really means, 'You are my host, spreading a feast for me, whilst my enemies have to look on!'*

How, then, do we deal with these Psalms?

That the language used in such psalms is not the kind of language one would expect to hear from a Christian is obvious. So, do we ignore them? Do we pretend that they do not exist? But such an attitude would neither explain them nor get rid of them!

Do we excuse them by claiming that they do not really mean what they seem to say? I think that this would convince no one, because the language is plain enough for anyone to understand.



**We must look for some other explanation of those apparently angry verses and, in doing so, must bear in mind that we are dealing with a culture that was - and, for that matter still is - very different from our own.**

Cultural Differences really do exist, and they explain many things.

Remember that the people in the Middle East of the psalmist's day were always quite open about their feelings, whilst we today, in contrast, are clever at disguising ours. When someone does us a personal injury we may say. "Well! He'll live to regret it! Make no mistake! He'll be sorry!" This sounds rather mild - even somewhat patronizing - but we say it in a tone that suggests that we are not merely predicting the downfall of the one who has offended us, but actually predicting it with a certain sense of satisfaction!

Not only are these psalms the honest and candid expressions of genuine feeling, they even express emotions such as most people, including ourselves, probably experience in times of great stress or deep pain in life, but which we as already stated, in the western world and in our culture, tend to hide. The Hebrews, and other eastern races, had no such restraints and no such social conventions. Anger, and even hatred, was not hidden for the sake of social nicety or politeness.

Read Ps. 139: 21-22 again. This statement is even more striking and significant because of its setting - in the heart of one of most beautiful psalms of praise in the entire collection of 150 psalms. Look

again at v. 1. And then, after what has sounded like a terrible, bitter outburst, read verse 23 and ask yourself if this really sounds like an outburst from a vicious and vindictive person?

## The difference between Divinely inspired Speech and the Divinely Inspired record.

This also, is a distinction which, if borne in mind, will help us to solve a number of scriptural puzzles. There is a real difference between words *recorded* by inspiration and words *spoken* by inspiration. By this I mean that neither God, nor the Holy Spirit, is responsible for the *utterance* of every word found in the scriptures.

What about Gen. 3; 4? Whose words are these? Did God inspire Satan to speak them when he lied to Eve? Certainly not! God never inspired the speech of the one whom Jesus described as 'a liar from the beginning'. But He did inspire the recording of what Satan said.

Indeed, the Bible contains the records of many other statements made by men that were not inspired by God. Think of the deceitful and false statements made by Jacob to his blind father Isaac, when he set out to steal the birthright from his brother Esau (Gen. 27). God did not inspire Jacob to lie, but He did inspire the recording of the fact that Jacob did lie.

And, if we turn to the New Testament, we read that, in the courtyard of the palace of the High Priest, Peter lied when he denied knowing Jesus (Matt. 26:69-74). Again, God did not inspire Peter's lie, but He did cause it to be recorded that Peter did lie.

### The Principle:

The Bible is both the record of God's inspired Words, and His inspired record of words. This means that when the psalmists expressed their sincerely felt emotions in terms that we find harsh, they were doing so without God's approval even though He caused their words to be preserved.

### Eastern demonstrations of emotion.

Recent television news reports of events occurring in Middle Eastern countries that have reported the manner in which people respond to disasters and death with open displays of wild emotions ranging from grief to anger, should help us to better understand the outbursts of the psalmists. These people have always expressed their feelings in very vigorous and colourful language and with dramatic gestures.

One traveller tells of seeing a woman in a crowded marketplace in Morocco who had merely lost a chicken. She stood there, violently cursing the unknown thief. She cursed his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, and all their sons and daughters – cursing every part of their bodies, from the soles of their feet to the crowns of their heads. And no one in the market place paid the slightest attention to her because it was a quite commonplace occurrence and no one took her curses seriously.

In contrast with this, E. B. Samuel, a Church of England minister, tells us that, instead of saying a simple, "Thank you", these same people would express their gratitude by saying, "God's blessing be on you, your children and your grandchildren!"

It may be said that it is natural for the 'natural man' to use strong vindictive language. But, for the ancient people of God, it was never to be considered right. Even the Law of Moses condemned such an attitude. Lev. 19:17-18, states, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbour, lest you bear sin because of him". See, also, Ex. 23:4-5.

It is obvious that, in their emotional outbursts, the psalmists went farther than the law allowed when it laid down the law of just compensation, "An eye for an eye...", the law that was intended to control anger and curb demands for excessive retribution.

Let me conclude by quoting the truly inspired words of Solomon, found in Prov.24: 17.

**"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the LORD see it, and be displeased and turn away His anger from him".**

Questions please to: Frank Worgan, 15 Stanier Close, Corby, Northants. NN17 1XP

# What do you think?

## A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF DEPRESSION

You will have heard the saying, "I feel like I have been to hell and back". For many of the people that I have been associated with over the last few years, this has been a common expression. Why? Because I have been associated with people with depression.

I suppose that even now, and perhaps even more so amongst Christians, depression is a something of a taboo subject. The attitude may well be that we must not let people know because we are wary of what they will think about us. Or, what will people say, and I have heard all the expressions – fruit cake, nutter, bonkers, etc. Well, I now know that depression can come to anyone, even to people you would least expect, and it is no respecter of persons.

Many people expressed genuine surprise when they learned that I suffered from depression. I thank God that I have recovered as well as I have, but that recovery is due as well to the many people, from all walks of life, who helped me. I learned some important principles:

- You have to make the first move
- You have to want help
- You have to respond when help is given.

Recovery can be a very long journey. My problems started many years ago through circumstances that were beyond my control. People who love you dearly try to help but very often simply don't know how to offer the right help at the right time. My own first lifelines happened to be neighbours who had been through difficult times themselves and who were able to empathise with my condition. They made themselves available any time of day or night to offer support. When Church friends became aware of my condition they rallied round, but it was so difficult to tell people. I suspect that only when you have been to hell and back with the illness can you really understand the nature of depression.

As a Christian you might expect me to say that I felt God was with me through all of this, but I can't. What I can say now, looking back, is that God was indeed with me and directed me to some lovely people who gave me a new understanding and helped me to realise the real meaning of forgiveness and love.

I learned that God loves you as you are; and that His love is unconditional.

A few years ago, Jenny, a friend of mine at work, had a very difficult time when her husband was diagnosed with cancer. This resulted in Jenny suffering depression and being admitted to hospital. She recovered in time to nurse her husband until he died a few months later and she thanks God every day for giving her the strength to be able to do that. Below is a moving poem that she wrote, that I think says it all.

(Eileen Melling, Wigan)

### It happened to me it could happen to you.

Depression is an illness you cannot see,  
How do I know? It happened to me.

Do not make fun or stare  
At anyone troubled, sad in despair.  
For they at times have no control  
But with God's help can achieve their goal.

Enjoying life every day, making plans come what may  
When so unexpected, like a bolt from the blue  
It happened to me; it could happen to you.

My life was turned upside down  
At first I coped quite well  
But as the weeks and months passed by  
I felt myself slip; I don't know why.

I couldn't understand. I couldn't explain  
Why I was feeling so much pain.  
I couldn't explain. I couldn't understand  
Pain and hurt go hand in hand.  
A room full of people and still felt alone.  
Help was at hand if only I'd known.

I was afraid of everything  
Afraid of life itself.  
I didn't want material things.  
I wanted health, not wealth.

I didn't want gifts and flowers  
Although they were caringly sent  
I didn't want fuss and questions  
Everywhere I went.

A black cloud came over me  
I couldn't see the sun.  
I then turned to God and asked  
Why me? What have I done?  
I didn't get an answer but I carried on to pray.  
My life was grey sometimes black.  
This was every day.

I couldn't cope with daily tasks  
The tasks I'd done for years  
In a deep hole, couldn't dig myself out  
Life was unhappy, sad, many tears.

(Thanks to all who have contributed on this subject which seems to have struck a chord with a quite a number of readers. This subject is now closed but we will shortly feature another topic. Editor)

## News and Information

### ***Bethsaida Children Home, India***

I am happy to inform the brethren that there are 56 children living in Bethsaida Children Home this year. The people in Andhra Pradesh have been suffering a lot because of the prevailing famine for the last four years, and the farmers are committing suicide because of their hopelessness in their future. The largest number of suicides is recorded from the state of Andhra Pradesh. As such there is an unusual flood of children into Bethsaida for admission, and most of them are from a long distance of 100 to 150 kilometres.

They came straight away carrying their belongings as if they are sure to get admission to Bethsaida. I wondered at their confidences, as we have only 30 children sponsored by our brethren so far, the accommodation was only for 30 children, but by the generous help of our brethren in the UK, we raised accommodation for 64 children.

As the accommodation is available and the children knocked the doors of Bethsaida in their most helpless situation, I was rather compelled to provide

I wanted to turn the clock back.  
This I knew I couldn't do.  
It happened to me it could happen to you.

I needed help that people were giving.  
The first step back to a life worth living.

So think before you start to judge.  
Because if you only knew.  
It happened to me it could happen to you.

admission to the children, even though I am not sure of getting sponsors for the additional children. I was convinced in my heart that He might have already provided help for them, though it was kept away from knowledge, as it is He who has been caring for the children in Bethsaida for the last 30 years.

The present strength of the home is 30 old boarders and 26 new ones, who need help for their shelter in Bethsaida. In the name of our Lord, I request the brethren in the British Isles and at other places to prayerfully consider helping these 26 children. As you know, £15 per month is sufficient for each child. As this is an emergency situation I earnestly request the brethren and churches who are sponsoring the 30 children to consider one more child and I very sincerely invite others to engage in this blessed service to the orphan, destitute and poor girl children. You may be the one assigned by the Lord to care for at least one child, just pause and think. If the indwelling Spirit of the Lord moves you in your heart towards this blessed cause, contact:

**Bro. Tony Tyson, 152, Ormskirk Road, Upholland, Skelmersdale. Tel: 01695 632374. Email: [tonytyson66@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tonytyson66@yahoo.co.uk)**

(The above appeal was received by email from Bro John Thyagu Raju, Director of the Bethsaida Children Home, India.)



## Genesis Accepted

Genesis Accepted is a new, coloured magazine for brethren to enjoy and use to build up faith in believers and non-Christians alike. It takes themes from Genesis as a whole, not just from Creation to the Flood, though it will carry a significant amount of Creation material.

It is to be published three times a year in September, January and May. Number 1 is already out! Each copy is £1.50 to help cover postage and other costs. Cheques please to 'G.A. Fisher Magazine Account' and it would help if you subscribed in blocks of three issues (i.e. cost of £4.50 for 3 issues).

Send for your copies to the Editor: Graham A Fisher, 64 Grenville Road, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP21 8EZ. Graham's email address is: [gafisher888@aol.com](mailto:gafisher888@aol.com). You will not be disappointed.

Graham kindly sent me a copy of the first issue and I will certainly be subscribing for the magazine. On the basis of the first issue, and as you would expect from Graham, the magazine is not a 'soft' read, but rather, as the foreword states, intends to be 'thought-provoking, reflec-

tive and spiritual' in its content. It will challenge those who are prepared to take a more 'liberal' view of the Genesis account because Graham openly states that the underlying premise is that 'it is *accepted* (hence the title) that (Genesis) is historically accurate, that Moses was the author as the Lord Himself indicated, and not some mysterious unknown writers called J.E.D.P etc.'

I would recommend the magazine to readers. As well as your personal copy it might also be useful to have a copy in your Church library. You may not agree with everything but you will be better informed about **THE** foundational book of Scripture. Editor.

## Coming Events

### Stretford, Manchester

3 special Saturday meetings in the Green Hut, 538 Kings Road, STRETFORD, Manchester. Each meeting at 7.00pm followed by refreshments & discussion.

#### **Saturday 23rd October 2004**

*Speaker:* Ernest Makin, Wigan who will also speak on Sunday morning, 24th October at 11.00 am

#### **Saturday 20th November 2004**

*Speaker:* John Morgan, Hindley

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY – POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM. . . . . £10.00

OVERSEAS BY SURFACE MAIL. . . . . £10.00 (\$16.00US or \$20.00Can)

OVERSEAS BY AIR MAIL. . . . . £14.00 (\$22.00US or \$28.00Can)

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

#### **DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:**

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY.

E-mail: [john@kkneller.freemove.co.uk](mailto:john@kkneller.freemove.co.uk)

Tel: 01875 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

**EDITOR:** ROBERT MARSDEN, 4 The Copse, Orrell Road, Orrell, Wigan, England, WN5 8HL. Tel: 01942 212320 E-mail: [Marsdenrob5@aol.com](mailto:Marsdenrob5@aol.com)