

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

I asked the New Year for some motto sweet -
Some rule of life with which to guide my feet:
I asked and paused; he answered sweet and low,
"God's Will to know".
"Will knowledge, then suffice, New Year?" I cried;
And ere the question into silence died,
The answer came; "Nay, but remember, too,
"God's Will to do".

ANOTHER YEAR IS DAWNING

Another Year is Dawning,
Dear Master let it be
In working or in waiting,
Another Year with Thee.

It is difficult, I suppose, to take the old calendar off the wall, and replace it with a new one, without reflecting upon the passage of time. This is particularly true as we get older and as time becomes more precious. Surely we are thankful, and may even marvel, that we have been spared to see another New Year. Poets have waxed lyrical about "The March of Time" (as have hymn writers), but, more importantly, the Bible has much to say about this seasonal subject.

In the first place, we are the creatures of time (some might even say, the slaves of time) and in the context of Eternity, the human life-span (of three-score years and ten) is exceedingly brief. The Bible describes our lives as "a tale that is told" (Ps. 90:9) and sometimes it is a very short tale indeed (as is the case of these poor little infants in the Third World who, annually, die in their thousands from malnutrition). Job confirmed this view when he said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. . . ." (7:6) and the Psalmist said, "Behold, thou hast made my days as a handbreadth, and mine age is nothing before Thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." (39:5). Coming closer into the N.T. times, James rightly remarks that we know not what the morrow shall bring "for what is our life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (4:14). If life is

so brief (and it is) we are right to ponder the passage of time and recognise that it, like our health, is one of our most precious possessions. If we could all start life afresh, we would all doubtless spend our time more wisely, especially the years we seem to have frittered away in our youth. Someone has said that "Youth is wasted on the young" and no doubt we have all contributed to the basic accuracy of that observation. Since life is so short, Time is something we can't afford to ignore.

Solomon said that, **"A wise man's heart discerneth the time: both time and judgement."** because to **"every purpose"** there is a prescribed time (**"for every purpose under heaven"**). He kindly enumerated a few. There is, apparently, **"A time to be born, and a time to die: a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted: a time to kill, and a time to heal: a time to break down, and a time to build up: a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance: a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together: a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing: a time to get, and a time to lose: a time to keep, and a time to cast away: a time to rend, and a time to sew: a time to keep silence, and a time to speak: a time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war, and a time of peace"** (Ecc. 3).

Other Bible writers talk of **"troubulous times"**; of **"ancient times"**; of **"perilous times"**; of **"times of refreshing"**: of **"times of restitution"**; of **"times of ignorance"** (that God winked at), and of **"times of rejoicing"**. As the hymnwriter says, **"The sands of Time are sinking"** and a few moments rumination on the fact are always 'timely' and profitable.

ALL THE TIME THERE IS

At one time, in nearly every home, there used to be at least one clock with an exceedingly loud tick, which also used to announce each passing hour with a musical chime, thus making us all very conscious of the relentless and inexorable march of time, but now with the silent battery clocks time slips past us on tiptoe leaving us largely unaware of its swift departure. Only the necessity of changing the calendar, nowadays, reminds us that it is later than we think and that time is of the essence. Given that we sleep for a third of our lives, and go to places of employ for a third of our lives, how do we spend the remaining third? This is a good question, I suppose, at the beginning of another New Year. How do we spend our time, and how much of it is used in the Lord's Service?

We often complain about not having enough time, yet surely we have never had so much time: and in fact we have all the time there is. When we look around at all the gadgetry in the kitchen, and around the home generally, we can readily see that we have infinitely much more spare time available to us than in any other age. Our forefathers had to go to draw water at the well, chop wood to light a fire in the oven to bake the day's bread, wash clothes at the river-bank, etc. and a great many other arduous and time-consuming tasks. A switch on the gas fire now gives us heat, another switch on the washing machine takes care of the clothes and we can cook a whole meal in minutes on the 'micro-wave'. Surely we have never had more spare time than we have now: but how do we utilise it? When the typewriter was invented: (a machine destined to save hours of tedious scribbling with a quill pen), one of the manufacturers adopted as their sales slogan, **"To Save Time Lengthens Life"**. While this slogan was, of course, true and false at the same time, it never-the-less highlighted the great value and spread of time-saving machinery, a process which has made incredible strides since the Industrial Revolution and has been the means of the men of today having 'early retiral' and wondering how they are going to occupy themselves with all the time at their disposal.

Indeed there are now classes giving instruction to those who have so much time on their hands that they don't know how to use it: a circumstance which surely would have astounded all those who slaved from dawn to dusk in the 'Satanic Mills' of the last century.

THE TRUE PURPOSE OF TIME

And so, nothing can be more obvious than that we now have much more spare time at our command: but how has this affected our lives? Clearly our life-style has changed out of all recognition and there is now such a rush and bustle about modern living that doctor's waiting-rooms are full of patients suffering from the stresses of present-day living; and some even wish for a return to the 'good old days' with a very much slower pace of life. In some homes, family members rarely have time for conversation; some children exist on 'junk' foods and live separate lives in their own homes watching their own personal T.V. sets. Any chance conversation usually concerns some T.V. programme. Thus much time saved by time-saving gadgetry is frittered away watching the 'one-eyed monster'! Certainly it is extremely tempting, after a hard day at the office or other workplace, to come home to an evening in the easy-chair watching T.V.

Plainly we must keep abreast with what is happening in the world, and many T.V. programmes can help us to do this, but we must also be aware that we could easily spend our whole life-time (as some do) watching the 'box'. This is a real danger.

To the business-man "Time is Money". What then, is time to the disciple of Christ? Time, to him, is opportunity. The alarming increase in suicides is explained by the fact that 'modern living' is seen, increasingly to be futile. If we were to think deeply enough about the matter we might, perhaps, agree that there is a certain futility about Time, and indeed about life itself, unless we consider these things in the context of God's eternal purposes. Taken on their own (Time and Life), there is apparent futility to them. Without God, life, indeed seems pointless and aimless. The true purpose of Time is, therefore, that we might engage in the outworkings of God. The year just gone has proved that man never basically changes: his conditions might improve but he doesn't. Crime-rates of all kinds have never been higher: more people than ever die of starvation in a world of plenty (with 'butter mountains' and 'grain mountains'); murder and violence abounds; 'Amnesty' tell us that torture and barbaric treatment of political prisoners has never been worse, etc., etc. No: man does not change: he merely becomes more sophisticated in the realms of evil. The only hope for man is in the person of Christ and in the preaching of His gospel. The real purpose of time is, therefore, that it is 'A Day of Grace' to the world: that men might 'set their house in order'. God's goodness, forbearance and long-suffering with man is designed to steer him in the right direction, for man is "God's offspring". Paul could say to the disciples at Rome, **"Or despiseth thou the riches of His goodness, forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance"**. (Rom. 2:4). When Christ returns Time will be no more, but why does Jesus tarry? Has He forgotten or lost interest? **"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise (to return), as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."** (2 Peter 3:9). This, then, is the true purpose of Time: that all should have the opportunity to come to repentance. Time, is God's day of grace to the world.

IMPORTANCE OF TIME

Time can be regarded in three ways, or has, as it were, three dimensions; Past, Present and Future. The Past is as water under the bridge and there is not much we can do about it. It has some value, however, in the sense that we can profit by experience

and not repeat the mistakes of the past. Notwithstanding, all around us, in politics and even in the Church, we can see men busily engaged in repeating some of the catastrophes of history. The New Testament does not recommend that we spend too much time commiserating and fretting about our past failures but rather that we get on with the present. Indeed, Paul claimed that **"... this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** (Phil. 3:13). The apostle was not, it seems, too preoccupied with remorse for a past, which at other times made him regard himself as 'chief of sinners', but relished future opportunities of making up for lost time in the work of the Lord. Time is indeed precious. Occasionally doctors have the awesome task of telling a patient that they have only a very short period to live. We would all dread such news but must, at some time or other, have wondered how we would spend our remaining days in such circumstances. Such a situation would certainly concentrate the mind and, if we had only six months to live, our real priorities would truly come to the surface. We would count as precious each fleeting second, and certainly give to time its true and proper value. Such a thing actually befell King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20). The prophet Isaiah was sent to King Hezekiah to give him the news that his illness was terminal and that he should use the remaining moments to **"set his house in order"**. This news certainly concentrated the mind of the king and his weepings and prayers moved God to give him a reprieve of 15 years. Thus Hezekiah was thereafter living on borrowed time, and doubtless had a completely different attitude to time, and an entirely new set of priorities.

We are all living on borrowed time. This, I believe, is to what Paul refers when he exhorts the Ephesian Christians to REDEEM THE TIME. He says, **"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."** (Eph. 5:16). The word here rendered "redeeming" means to buy back from the power of another, and in the present context means to recover or rescue our time from idleness or waste. "Because the days are evil" signifies that there are, and always will be, allurements and temptations in the world encouraging us to squander our time. As Jesus remarked, **"The fields are white unto harvest, but the labourers be few."** There is so much to be done and so few to do it that time is at a premium. The Church is small numerically (even minute) and 'all hands are required on deck'. The shortage of labourers is a problem twice compounded when they are not to be found in the fields but in halls of amusement, revelry, snoozing or just watching T.V. The same apostle gave a similar exhortation to the Church in Rome when he insisted that **"It was HIGH TIME to awake out of sleep" for "the night was far spent, and the day was at hand."** (Rom. 13:11). Yes, it is later than we think. The past is gone: the future, for us, might not arrive; all that we have is NOW: now is the time to put our weight behind all efforts in the preaching of the gospel and in the progress of the Church.

God will judge every man's work, or absence of it. Perhaps that is why Peter advises us **"to pass the time of our sojourning here with fear knowing that the Father, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work."** Let us resolve that in 1998, if we should be spared to see it, we shall endeavour to accomplish much more for the Lord than we did in the year just gone. That we shall endeavour to give Time its true value, as those bent on **redeeming the time**, and that we shall find work to do in the harvest fields to the saving of souls. **"So teach us, Lord, to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."** (Ps. 90:12).

TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION

Often the statement has been made that **truth is stranger than fiction**. Many have found the statement to be valid, especially when the reference is to the love of God for sinners. God's freely offered blessings seem just too good to be true if one is accustomed to thinking at the human level. So difficult is it for many to accept the fact of God's free gift and to believe that God really loves them that they stumble at His wonderful promises.

Jesus, in sending out the twelve, instructed them, "**Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give**" (Matt. 10:8, NEV).

Such instruction may or may not have been easy for the original disciples to follow, but for one who lives in a greedy, grasping, materialistic, self centred society which believes the highest possible human happiness is to be found in the acquiring and accumulating of things to which monetary value can be assigned, this type of direction is most difficult to follow. Because men are selfish and greedy and stingy it is so easy to assume that God must have a like nature.

Even for many who have heard the good news of salvation that is in Jesus Christ and have at least outwardly obeyed God, it seems almost impossible to accept the fact that God wants to give freely. Most people think of God in terms of his wanting something from them or in terms of his wanting to make a swap with them. It is so common to find Christians today who think they can trade God a conduct he desires in return for his salvation. Many in the Church today simply cannot accept that "**it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not of works, so that no one can boast**" (Eph. 2:8,9).

This truth that salvation is by grace is stranger than fiction. It seems just too good to be true, and so we reject. Let it be made plain that this writer does not believe that grace is all that is involved in salvation. The plea is not for the rejection of obedience, but for the acceptance of grace.

GOD IS A GIVER

As strange as it seems to man, God never deals with men on the basis of their financial worth, or on the basis of their merit. Salvation is not dependent upon how good an individual is. Those who strive to be saved by being good and doing good works need to face reality. They are not good enough nor do they do enough good works to make it. God's salvation and mercy come to us because of his love and grace. Because he loved us, he gives!

The love of God for man is demonstrated in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, upon the cross. "**He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?**" (Rom. 8:32).

FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED

Yes, truth remains stranger than fiction. Man finds it difficult to deal with the fact that God does not sit behind a counter offering various blessings for sale. Freely given are the blessings God has to dispense to man.

No charge was placed upon his services by the Saviour for what he did. Freely, he came from heaven. Freely he went about doing good and healing the sick. Freely he gave sight to the blind, made the deaf to hear and the lame to walk. No price tag was attached to any of these actions.

As the Lamb of God he went to the cross and suffered unspeakable agony of both

body and spirit in order to wash away our sin and allow us to come freely to God. The awfulness of death that sin brings was accepted by the Christ for us. On the third day following his burial he burst forth victorious over death to demonstrate the reality of eternal life promised to those who are God's elect. Freely, we have received this gift.

Salvation cannot be purchased, but it is available free of charge to those who will respond to God's love. Eternal life is God's gift (Rom. 6:23). It cannot be purchased. It cannot be merited. Only as a gift of God is it received. Likewise has God given the Holy Spirit to those who obey him (Acts 5:32).

What should be the response of man to all this giving on the part of God? What does love require then of man?

FREELY GIVE

Only one proper response can be made to the gracious giving actively of God and his Son. That response is to follow the divine example. Nowhere are our selfishness and lack of faith so clearly revealed as at the time when we have an opportunity to be a giver. Few men, regardless of their professed belief in Jesus, really subscribe to the basic philosophy of the Lord who said. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 14:35). The usual response of man is to treat this verse as if it were a gimmick to get at our pocket-book. Our devil-inspired pocket-book protection instinct causes us to miss the point completely, The Saviour was not talking about the collection plate, but about a total way of life. He was saying that while there may be a joy, a satisfaction, a thrill that comes to the receiver, there is actually more adventure, joy and satisfaction for the person who lives to be a giver.

The Master Teacher was not using double-talk to deceive people. He was speaking from personal experience and deep-seated truth. He came from heaven to be a giver. He lived and laboured to be a giver. He died on the cross and arose from the dead, all for the purpose of giving because of the love in the heart of God.

Because of the way man has been made by his Creator he is happy who interprets success not in terms of what he can get, but in terms of service and help that he can give. One will never find happiness by searching for it. It always eludes the seeker, but attaches itself to the giver.

Freely ye have received, freely give! Let us give God our hearts, our minds, our time, and total allegiance. As strange as it seems, the truth is that only through giving do we really enjoy living.

G. COOK.

TRIUMPH THROUGH FAILURE

How greatly all Christians need the lesson of James 1:2,3. We are not to thank God for the trials but thank God *when* the trials come, since we know that the trying of our faith will work patience. Scripturally I'm not sure that I could and would develop patience - endurance - if I never had trials or apparent failures in life. When the reverse or failure hits I should remember that such will develop qualities I need in life, which qualities I would not have without travail.

Could I ask some questions? What is failure in life anyhow? When have we really failed? Is tragedy always tragic in the long run? Can I succeed while apparently failing? Cannot failure become eventually success? Paul's great lesson found in 2 Corinthians 4:8,9 will answer these questions. He was pressed on every side but not straitened;

perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued but not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; the daily dying of his body brought out in that body the life of Jesus. Death in Paul brought life in and to others. Triumph through failure - yes, 'twas true in Paul's life.

EXAMPLES INVOLVING PAUL

Consider some more examples in the apostle's life and experiences. He calls attention in Philippians 1:12-14 to a clear example. His trials which had disturbed his brethren in Philippi "**fell out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.**" How? Let Paul give two explanations. These trials gave him opportunity to preach to the whole guard of Caesar and then this strengthened other preaching brethren to boldly speak the word. Here is triumph through failure. Were they really failures? I think not because Paul didn't think so. He may have at the moment but not later. "God may have to put us in reverse sometimes to get us where he wants us to go." Horace agreed with James when he wrote "Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain dormant."

It took a vision from the Lord to bring Paul across the sea into the land of the Macedonians to preach to them. God himself arranged this mission trip and ordered the steps of the preacher until he arrived in Philippi. Yet, within a few days God allowed Paul to be arrested, cast into the inner prison in complete darkness with his flesh torn by whips, and to be in chains. Like many other martyrs Paul "took these chains of adversity and made them into harp strings" as he sang that night unto God. Had he failed? Was it tragic that he had been arrested? The jailer and his entire household believed in and accepted Christ as the result. Good fruits of failure, I'd say. What if he had not been put in prison?

The great apostle expressed his plans to go to Rome in chapters 1 and 15 in his letter beforehand to the Church. However, his trip to that city finally was not as planned. God did the planning instead. Paul was shipped in chains to the city; but, what if he had not thus gone? He converted Onesimus; he converted some of Caesar's household and his personal guards; he wrote from that prison a large portion of the New Testament which has influenced countless millions and doubtlessly strengthened the Church in Rome beyond measure. Again, good fruits of failure. Or was it really failure?

Think how the history of the Jewish nation might have been different just in case Joseph in Egypt had not been put into prison. Joseph from indications did not give up, but let God in his own good time work it out. And, God did just that, finally bringing success out of failure and triumph out of tragedy.

There's no defeat, in truth
 Save from within
 Unless you're beaten there
 You're bound to win - Austin

What if Zacchaeus had not been short? Imagine the different results.

THE CHURCH'S EXAMPLE

The story of the early Church exemplifies this great principle so vividly. It was God's plan for his Church to start in Jerusalem. That is where he allowed the people to kill his Son, but among those very murderers heaven's kingdom began and flourished for some days. It had hardly begun when persecution was so bitter it drove the disciples

out of the city save the apostles. He had already lost one of the 12 apostles. It would appear the Church was destined to failure. Was it really? "The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the kingdom" as they went everywhere preaching the word. So, in place of one congregation there were dozens. Putting them in "reverse" brought them where God wanted them to go.

I can't believe that God brought about the persecution, but I do know that he allowed it to come to them and then overruled it to advance the very cause it was endeavouring to destroy - his kingdom. God outwits the devil every time. When it appears that Satan has succeeded and that we have failure on our hands, if we will but trust in the Lord he can and will bring triumph through failure. What a strengthening thought. "Persecution came to the early Church like a tidal wave but that Church got on top and rode it to victory." We should too in our triumph through failure.

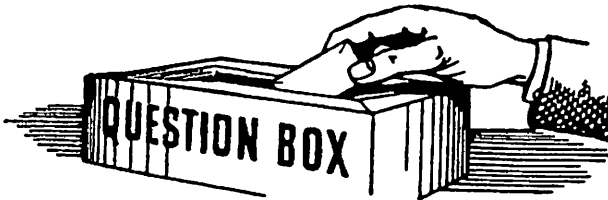
FAILURE

The apostle thought momentarily upon the death of Jesus that he had failed, but they soon learned that out of that "failure" God brought his glorious scheme of human redemption. Satan killed him, but God brought Him forth and made that very death (failure to some) the foundation of our faith and our salvation. John Huss so believed and thus while burning at the stake sang the songs of Zion so loudly he could not hear the crackle of the flames. Cronin reminds us "One should remember that the defeated still have everything if they still have God." When tragedy or reverses come to me the words of E. Markham might help -

Only the soul that knows the mighty grief
Can know the mighty rapture. Sorrows come
To stretch our spaces in the heart for joy.
Defeat may serve as well as victory
To shake the soul and let the glory out.

Christians ought to face the failures of the future with faith.

H. JACKSON.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Please explain 1st Corinthians 7:14, 'For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her (believing) husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy'".

To understand 1 Cor. 7:14, one must first look at the entire 7th chapter. In other words, the verse needs to be seen in proper context. That 7th chapter of 1st Corinthians presents us with a concise summary of Christian teaching on marriage, especially as it applied to the various groups which existed within the Church at Corinth.

It is evident that the Corinthians themselves had raised the subject of marriage in their communication with Paul and had asked, not one question, but a series of

questions. Now, we all know what happens when a topic is raised in group-discussion! The consideration of one aspect of the subject leads to another, and, quite quickly, other issues rise to the surface! This is what happens in this chapter.

In this case, however, Paul does not attempt to give exhaustive answers to the queries posed by his brethren in Corinth. As we see when we read the entire chapter, his replies are relatively concise and, for convenience, made by summaries in the following sections.

1. In vv. 1-7, he lays down the principle that **marriage is both right and proper**, and that it brings **mutual responsibilities**.
2. In vv. 8-9, he turns his attention to the situation of the **unmarried believers and the widows in the Church**.
3. Then, in vv. 10-11, he addresses **married believers** - (i.e., believers who are married to believers) - on the matter of **divorce and separation**,
4. In vv. 12-16, he turns his attention "to others" who are faced with the **problem of being married to pagans, or 'unbelievers'**.
5. Next, in vv. 17-24, he lays down a principle which amounts to this; "**Live the life of a Christian in whatever circumstances you find yourself, and in whatever circumstances God found you!**" (And notice that he says that this is the rule in *all* the Churches.)
6. There follows, in vv. 25-28, a long section for "**unmarried ones**"; i.e. **single believers**.
7. Finally, in vv. 39-40 we have a concluding statement in which he **re-emphasises the permanent nature of the married relationship**.

Look at the verse 14.

In verses 10-11, Paul refers his readers to teaching already given by the Lord himself, found in Matt. 5:31-32 and Mark 10:2-12, etc. This means that he does not deal with the general and fundamental grounds for divorce. Instead, in verses 12-16, he deals with a problem which *could not have arisen* during the Lord's earthly ministry, but only after the Christian dispensation had begun, and he deals with it on the basis of his apostolic authority; that is, his authority to speak in the name of Christ and for Christ.

He discusses the case of **one who has become a Christian, but now finds himself/herself married to someone who is still a pagan**. (Remember we are discussing the contents of a letter sent to the Church surrounded by the pagan city of Corinth.)

The question which has evidently been put to the apostle is this; **Ought a person - a Christian - to divorce the non-Christian partner?**

The verse to which we refer gives Paul's inspired, apostolic answer.

Speaking on behalf of the Lord and, remember, with apostolic authority, he says that the believing partner should *not* forsake the unbelieving partner. He realises that, if a Christian had the right to 'leave' - i.e., 'divorce' - a marriage-partner, solely on the grounds that he or she is *not* a Christian, there could well be a tremendous influx of unconverted people into the Church because of this possibility of easy divorce! Therefore, the principle he lays down is, that if anyone leaves, it must not be the believer! If the relationship is broken and the marriage abandoned, the break must come from the pagan - not from the Christian (v13).

Furthermore, Paul obviously realises that there is always the possibility that the *pagan* may not wish to remain married to the Christian and decide to leave, and in such

circumstances there is little that the Christian can do (v.15).

However, if the two are able to live together, they should by all means do so, because, as Paul implies, the situation is never completely hopeless. There is always the possibility that the unbelieving partner may be won for Christ by the Christian's behaviour (v.16).

This is precisely what Peter says in 1st Peter 3:1-3.

Now let's take a closer look at the verse which has caused problems; v. 14, and notice two things which Paul is *not* teaching!

1. **He does not say that the unbelieving husband is saved because of the faith of his wife.** He says that the husband is '*consecrated*', which means '*is made acceptable*', and is referring to the Old Testament principle, laid down in Exodus 29:37, of 'consecration by association', which states that "*Whatever touches the altar shall become holy*".

Such was the sanctity of the altar that if anything came into contact with it, that thing was deemed acceptable and fit for service.

Paul makes this point because it is evident that there were those in Corinth who were arguing that, for a Christian wife to remain married to a partner who was still a pagan, affected her holiness; claiming that she was, in some way, contaminated by the relationship.

He declares, therefore, that the Christian wife is not defiled, or made unclean, by her association with her unbelieving husband, because to think that would be to say that uncleanness is more powerful than holiness. It would imply that the husband's paganism is more powerful than the wife's holy Christian life. And that cannot be true. On the contrary, their relationship will benefit from the grace of God which the wife has experienced and which is revealed in her manner of life.

2. **Nor does the relationship between a partner who has become a Christian and a pagan partner affect the legitimacy of their offspring,** as would be the case if the marriage was considered invalid (v. 14). In the eyes of God, any child born to that marriage will be perfectly legitimate.
3. Notice, again, that he is *not* saying that the child is saved, or regarded as a Christian, because of the faith of the mother. **The passage says nothing about the salvation of either father or child,** for that is the issue here. The question is merely one of **legitimacy**.
4. And, remember, also, that **this is the case of one who has become a Christian, but whose partner is a pagan.**

It does *not* justify a Christian deliberately choosing to marry 'an unbeliever'. We see that, when writing about the widows here in Corinth, Paul makes it plain that a Christian widow is free to marry again, '*but only in the Lord*' (v. 39).

According to the teaching of this passage, therefore, it is clearly wrong, for a Christian to *choose deliberately and wilfully* to become "*yoked together with an unbeliever*" in marriage.

Of course, it may be reasonably argued that this applies to *more* than the marriage relationship - a fact which is frequently ignored. But it certainly does apply to marriage. Read 2nd Corinthians 6:14-18.

(All questions please to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire, Scotland PA6 7NZ.)

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

The last Passover meal that Jesus ate with His disciples was a particularly important one. Jesus knew that before that very night was finished He would be betrayed by one of His apostles, denied by another one, and abandoned by the others.

He knew that within hours a train of events would result in arrest, trials, abuse and mistreatment, and finally scourging and crucifixion. So it was that to Jesus this Passover meal, which we usually call the Last Supper, was not just the usual annual Jewish feast remembering the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery by Moses - it was rather a time to prepare Himself and His apostles for the events soon to occur.

One part of that last meal together was especially important, although not fully understood nor appreciated by the Apostles at the time. This incident is given in Matthew 26:26-29: *"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body'. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine under that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'"* After His death, His resurrection, and His ascension back to heaven, this simple feast of which Jesus asked His followers to partake would become one of the vital elements of the Christian faith - the Lord's Supper.

BIBLICAL DESIGNATIONS

"The Lord's Supper" is one way of referring to this commemorative meal, as indicating that it is of divine origin. (I Corinthians 11:20) The New Testament writers also refer to it as "The Lord's table" or "the table of the Lord". (I Corinthians 10:21; Luke 22:29,30) Sometimes it is simply called "the breaking of bread", which was the common expression for a meal.

ON THE LORD'S DAY

The evidence is strong that the New Testament Church, under the direction of the Apostles, observed the Lord's Supper on **the first day of every week** (the day we call Sunday) as a part of the Lord's Day worship. Acts 2:42 tells us that the early Christians at Jerusalem **"devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."** Some years later, although he was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem (Acts 20:16), the Apostle Paul waited a week at Troas so that he might be at the regular assembly of the Christians to "break bread" on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Commenting on this passage, A.C. Hervey points out that "This also is an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians" (**Pulpit Commentary**). Other commentators, such as Thomas Scott and Phillip Doddridge, recognize the same practice in the passage. The New Testament evidence for a weekly Lord's Day observance is confirmed by the writings of Justin Martyr (150 A.D.) and **Didache** (early second century).

Although most denominations do not practice weekly observance of the supper, from time to time voices are heard pointing to its divine origin and value. Such a case is

mentioned by Carl Henry: "In discussing the bankruptcy of our worship. Reformed scholars in Continental Europe such as J.J. von Allmen . . . reserve their strongest judgement for the removal of the Lord's Supper from the regular pattern of Sunday worship. They protest the denial of it to Christians as they assemble every Lord's Day . . . They ask, not for crypto-sacramentarianism, but for an acknowledgement that certain patterns of worship were dominically instituted and are neglected or treated as appendages at our peril" ("A Hard Look at American Worship", *Christianity Today*, Dec. 8, 1967, p. 29).

WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER?

What is the Lord's Supper? The Scriptures picture it as several things.

1. **The Lord's Supper is a memorial.** It is a means of remembering Christ, what He did for us and what He means to us. Paul states that Jesus specifically asked us to remember Him in eating of the bread and drinking of the cup (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). The bread was the unleavened bread of the Passover meal, and was a memorial of His body sacrificed on the cross. The cup contained the "fruit of the vine" or the juice of the grape, and was a memorial of the blood He shed in dying for mankind, making a new relationship with God possible for us sinners. The Lord's Supper is partaken by Christians, then, as a means of remembering Jesus and the salvation He has provided.
2. **The Lord's Supper is also a proclamation.** Paul wrote, in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." The Christian, in partaking of the supper, proclaims to the world his belief in the life, death, resurrection and second coming of Jesus Christ! The Lord's Supper declares that Jesus was dead, but lives again - indeed, is alive for evermore (Revelation 1:18)!
3. **The Lord's Supper is a reminder of the communion, sharing or fellowship of God's people.** Thus it is often referred to as "the communion". We read in 1 Corinthians 10:16,17: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." In the Lord's Supper, Christians are reminded of their rich fellowship in the blessings of Christ's death and life, and of their vital association with Him and with one another. The supper represents the common commitment Christians have to Jesus and their common hope of salvation in Him, and serves to draw them together in love and service.
4. **The Lord's Supper is a declaration of allegiance to Christ.** One who remembers Jesus in the supper must intend to be true to Him. As the Apostle Paul wrote; "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21). The Christian who partakes of the bread and the cup is affirming a sincere desire to live a life pleasing to Christ.

Properly understood, the Lord's Supper is a remembrance, a proclamation, a communion, and a declaration of allegiance. Properly observed, the Lord's Table will assist us in not forgetting our salvation, its cost, or our real place and purpose in life.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Feb. 1	Numbers 11:16-30	1 Corinthians 12
Feb. 8	Leviticus 19:1-18	1 Corinthians 13
Feb. 15	Amos 3	1 Corinthians 14:1-20
Feb. 22	Proverbs 31:10-31	1 Corinthians 14:21-40

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND THE BODY

Paul liked to describe the Church as a body. He saw it as an organism rather than an organization. (In fact, I remember reading somewhere that the ancient Greeks did not have a word in their language for an organisation.) So it is more accurate to say, brothers and sisters in Christ, that we are members of the body rather than the Church. It is important to remember that when Jesus came to earth He came in a body. In other words, He operated through a body. The great thing is that He still operates through a body and we in Christ constitute that body wherein the Holy Spirit dwells. **"For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many"** (12:12-14).

There is only one body. There never has been any more than one. Every saved person on earth is a member of that one body, even although some are unaware of it or do not even recognise it. The division of the body of Christ is one of the greatest tragedies in the history of the world. No wonder Jesus prayed so ardently for the unity of all believers in Him. The salvation of the world hinges upon this unity (John 17:20-21).

I know a lot of talented people in the Church. In fact, there is not one saint I

have met who has not possessed at least one talent. (The parable of the talents comes to mind: Matthew 25:14-30.) The task for all brothers and sisters is to identify their talent or talents and to use it or them in the service of the Master. Failure to do so will result in rejection by God (Matthew 25:30). Remember, all of us are a part of the body and, for the body to remain healthy, every part has to function as intended.

The early Church simply could not have survived without the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. Think of it: many of these disciples came out of paganism. They had no knowledge of the Old Testament and the New Testament scriptures were, as yet, not available to them. The apostles could not always be with them and, therefore, they required supernatural aid. This was provided by the Holy Spirit Himself. He guided them in their speaking, praying and singing. One writer put it thus way: "In these congregations, then, everything was done by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit . . . The same wisdom which made apostles out of rude fishermen, and hid the gospel treasure in those humble vessels, chose to fill rude barbarians and ignorant pagans with supernatural gifts, that the excellency of the power might appear Divine and not human".

In the Corinthian church we read of such gifts as the word of *wisdom*; the word of *knowledge*; *faith*; *healing*; working of *miracles*; *prophecy*; discerning of *spirits*; speaking in different kinds of *tongues*; and the *interpretation* of tongues (12:8-10). There were apostles, prophets; teachers; workers of miracles; those having gifts of healing; those able to help others; those with gifts of administration; and those speaking in different kinds of tongues (12:28-30). This congregation lacked none of the gifts (1:7). The same could not be said of the Church in Rome when Paul wrote to it (1:11). I regret I do not have space to

analyse each of the gifts mentioned. I leave each reader to do his or her own research. But allow me to touch on one - "faith". I used to wonder about this. Why is faith a special gift when all Christians possess faith? Indeed we are a people who **"walk by faith, not by sight"** (2 Corinthians 5:7). The late brother Tom Nisbet of Haddington helped me here. He wrote in a letter: "This special faith was undoubtedly a miraculous gift of the Spirit and is not in the Church today. This special faith cured the lame man at the gate of the Temple called 'Beautiful' (Acts 3:16). Note: this spiritual gift of Faith was given to persons who had already exhibited ordinary faith like us by hearing the gospel, believing, repenting, and being baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It was something additional". Earlier, in commenting on James 5:14,15 he wrote: "We don't have the same faith today. This was a special faith; a miracle-working faith; one of the spiritual gifts with which some in the Church were endowed in the days of miracles and before the complete law of liberty was written down which could make the man of God complete".

LOVE

Paul wrote: **"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show unto you a more excellent way"** (12:31). The "more excellent way" is the way of love. Among other things he also declared: **"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing"**. Love is the Greek word *agape*. It is one of four words in Greek for love. The Holy Spirit clothed it with new meaning. But what is *agape*? "It is unconquerable benevolence, invincible good will. It is not simply a wave of emotion; it is a deliberate conviction of the mind issuing in a deliberate policy of

the life; it is a deliberate achievement and conquest and victory of the will" (Barclay). "It is the love which seeks not to possess but to give, to spend and be spent for the object beloved. It is the energy which Christians are called to radiate among their fellow men, and its exemplar is Christ's own love" (Hunter). "It is God's super love . . . God's love (*agape*) is a binding agent which unites Christians more strongly than mere human love (*philia*) or superficial sexual love (*eros*)" (Detzler). "Christian love is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, and works no ill to any; love seeks opportunity to do good to **'all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith'**, Gal. 6:10" (Vine). These definitions should be read in conjunction with chapter 13. Why is love greater than faith and hope? Because God Himself is love and faith and hope will one day be realised in the presence of God. Faith and hope will last till time lasts. Love is eternal.

GIFTS OF PROPHECY AND TONGUES AND ORDERLY WORSHIP

The gift of prophecy (Greek, *propheteia*) was a gift which involved the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God. "Prophecy is not necessarily, nor even primarily, foretelling. It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means; it is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, present or future" (W.E. Vine). "But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the Church" (14:3-4, N.I.V.). Prophesying was a greater gift than speaking in tongues.

Speaking in tongues was the super-

natural gift of speaking in another language without its having been learnt. Why was this gift bestowed on certain saints? "Wherefore tongues are for a sign not to them who believe, but to them who believe . . ." (14:22). "There is no evidence of the continuance of this gift after Apostolic times nor indeed in the later times of the Apostles themselves . . . The completion of the Holy Scriptures has provided the Churches with all that is necessary for individual and collective guidance, instruction and edification" (Vine).

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all Churches of the saints" (14:33). "Let all things be done decently and in order" (14:40). These verses should, of course, be read within their context. **"Let your women keep silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also says the law. And if they learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the Church" (14:34-35).** How do these words tie in with ch. 11:5? Does the injunction to "keep silence" mean absolute silence? If so, how many congregations forbid the sisters to praise God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? Does Adam Clarke hit the mark here? "It is evident from the context that the apostle refers here to asking questions and what we call dictating in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, altercation, attempt to refute, etc. in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman. Paul confirms this in reference also to the Christian Church . . . it was perfectly indecorous for women to be contending with men in public assemblies, on points of doctrine, cases of conscience, etc."

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who has sons called Muppim and Huppim?
2. In the census of Moses and Aaron which tribe was the largest?
3. How old was Adam when he died?
4. What did the Rechabites refuse to drink?
5. How many days did it take for Nehemiah and his men to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem?
6. What was Delilah's nationality?
7. At what hour was Jesus crucified?
8. Who planted a crown of thorns on Jesus' head?
9. Who wrote the book of Acts?
10. Who was the first person to respond to Paul's preaching on European soil?

Response to "Anointing With Oil" in Nov. Issue.

Dear Bro. Editor,

Usually I am well pleased in passing my copy of the "Scripture Standard" to my friends. But the November issue with the article from Mr. D. Smith was blasphemy. When the apostle James, directed by the Holy Spirit, distinctly said in James 5:14 "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him". To this Mr. Smith adds "Elders need not use oil today." This is open defiance. Shame on Smith that would take away from the inspired word of God. The publisher, editor and writer need to read again the warning in Rev. 22:19, "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book Of Life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this book."

Kindly,

FOY MITCHELL,
Benton. AR. USA.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: Another Quarterly Mutual Meeting took place on Saturday 6th December, this time at the Meeting-house of the Church at Tranent, when the Chairman was Mark Plain and the speaker was David Chalmers. The question under discussion was, "Where do the righteous and the wicked go at death". An absorbing discussion took place on the matter and, as usual, many points of interest were raised. A visitor for the day, Bill Mair, from Buckie, participated in the discussion input, and a very pleasant time was enjoyed by all. Our next meeting, God willing, will be at Haddington, on 7th March, at 4 p.m. when the Chairman will be Jimmy Grant and the question (from Ghana) will be "(1) How should the Church deal with a new member who has two wives? Should he attend the Lord's Table? and (2) How should the Church deal with a woman who becomes a Christian and is the first of two wives? Should she be allowed communion?" Speakers yet to be allocated.

H. MCGINN,
(Secretary).

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COMING EVENTS

KIRKCALDY

200th Anniversary Celebration
(God Willing)

Principal Speaker: Albert Winstanley
SATURDAY, 14th NOVEMBER, 1998
at 2.00pm and
SUNDAY, 15th NOVEMBER, 1998
at 3.00pm (Anniversary Day)

KIRKCALDY

LADIES DAY

on Saturday, 18th April, 1998

1. Benjamin (Genesis 46:21).
2. Judah (Numbers 1:27).
3. 930 (Genesis 5:5).
4. Wine (Jeremiah 35:6).
5. 52 (Nehemiah 6:15).
6. Phillistine (Judges 16:4,5).
7. Third (Mark 15:25).
8. Soldiers (John 19:2).
9. Luke (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1).
10. Lydia (Acts 16:14).

ANSWERS

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