

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

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VEILS AND BLINKERS

The fact that all manner of differing animals eat only grass, the same grass, and yet produce a wide variety of useful commodities such as milk, wool, mutton and leather is a marvel. The fact that countless bible students study the same book and end up in just as many religious groups, some diametrically opposed to the others, is more of a strange tragedy than a marvel.

How can it be that so many earnest searchers after truth can derive such wildly varying impressions from exactly the same book. After all, while the bible is undoubtedly profound there is a simplicity in its profundity, especially the New Testament. There are very few big words and very little that the literate cannot grasp. Certainly the apostle Peter said that there were some things in Paul's epistles which were hard to be understood (but not impossible) and he went on to say that it was they who were unlearned and unstable who would wrest his sayings, just as they would wrest all the other scriptures to their own destruction. It seems possible, therefore, to wrest the scriptures to our own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

It is one thing to see life through 'rose-coloured spectacles' but quite another to read the scriptures with spiritual 'blinkers'. Racehorses (and sometimes cab horses) wear 'blinkers' so that theoretically they will see only the path ahead and will not be distracted by what they may see on either side of them. Christ's followers are exhorted neither to deviate to the right hand or the left, but surely it is not suggested that they should be insulated from the outside world or that spiritual blinkers should be worn, for the wearing of these leads to a further phenomenon i.e. a shyness to discuss the scriptures. Many of us will have had the common experience of unsuccessfully endeavouring to engage our friends (in other religious persuasions) to discuss the scriptures. Far from being delighted to talk about God's truth they look at their watch and hurry off to some urgent appointment. One has often a better chance of discussing the scriptures with an atheist than with those who claim to be guided by those same scriptures. Rather strange is it not. Some years ago I remember being unceremoniously 'shown the door' of a meeting place — just because of a desire to discuss the message the preacher had given.

To assure readers that 'spiritual blinkers' is not some novel fancy of my own making but something quite well known to the apostle Paul, I quote his words to the Corinthians in reference to Israel, past and present, "But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ" (II Cor 3:14). Paul had trouble with

the Judaizers in the church at Corinth and both of his epistles spent much time in assuring the Jews that the Mosaic law had gone completely for all time and had been replaced by a more glorious covenant. Few of us can remain unimpressed when beholding the majesty of the heavens on a clear starry evening when the heavens are declaring the glory of God, but come the morning that brilliant starry vault, with all its breathtaking radiance, must give way to a greater glory — the glory of the dawn and the coming of the sun. Once the sun has risen the night fades as if it never had been. Thus Paul's argument here (in this 3rd chap. of II Cor.) is that "If the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." and "If that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." It was while he was engaged in his theme of measures of glory that he mentions the glory which accompanied the coming of the law and how Moses face shone so much that he had to put a veil over it. When Moses communed with God (Ex. 34:30) his face became so irradiated that on his return to the camp of Israel he had to veil his face. This radiance did not last however and the fact that it faded is taken here by Paul to illustrate the ultimate passing of that legal ministration. When Moses was read, these Jews failed to see that the lustre had faded from his face — indeed in rejecting Christ in favour of Moses the veil was no more upon Moses' face but was upon their hearts. The anti-Christian Jews were dimly reading the words of Moses instead of rejoicing in the flooding light of the Lord Jesus Christ. "But", continues Paul, "we all with open face (no veils) beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." Moses glory faded after a while, but Paul gives this wonderful promise that those who contemplate the glory of Jesus (as one looking at himself in a mirror) will be changed into that same image by the spirit of the Lord, and will advance from glory to glory."

But, alas, says Paul the Jews who could not grasp this, and who would not accept Jesus, continued to read the scriptures blinded by their tradition, or other cause, and read with a veil over their eyes and hearts. So even in Paul's day we had students of the scriptures who were reading God's word, but were reading it with a veil over their eyes and hearts — 'spiritual blinkers.' If Paul was with us today he would see that that veil is still in front of the eyes of the Jews.

The Jews may read the scriptures with a veil before their eyes but what is the cause of the confusion amongst the Gentiles? How is it that the 'Christian world' of the Gentiles can all study the New Testament and find themselves divided so. Surely the Jews have not a monopoly where veils are concerned — surely the explanation is that we Gentiles also read God's word through veils of our own manufacture. Sometimes we read God's word with the *veil of ignorance* and don't fully understand what we read. Jesus said, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures," and certainly there is a good chance that we will err if we miss the meaning of the scriptures. Even Apollos who "was mighty in the scriptures" had to be taught "the way of the Lord more perfectly." (Acts 18:26). There is, however, hope for honest ignorance. Not so honest is the *veil of tradition* where the student reads the scriptures in the context of what his religious group already believes. In this case the student is digging for proof for what is already practised. There are many customs and traditions in the religious world today which are of only fairly recent origin, yet 'proof texts' have been dug up and men are prepared to defend in debate the scriptural antiquity of the practice. Even more sinister is the *veil of prejudice* which taints and colours all that we read in our bibles. One religious body boasts that once it has trained a child in its religion for six months that child will never leave that particular religion. Obviously if this boast is even partly true the child will be forever disadvantaged in ever coming to a knowledge of the truth. Each religious denomination has its own settled doctrine and will go to great lengths to protect and

perpetuate that doctrine. There were false teachers in Paul's day and there is little reason to believe that there are none around today. If there are clergymen around us today who are prepared to carry out a 'marriage ceremony' to marry two 'gay' men then anything can happen in the name of religion, and does.

There are of course many other veils, or forms of blinkers, which account for the sad state of religion, the misconceptions, erroneous doctrines, false teachings and perversions of the truth and perhaps the most sad of them all is *the veil of indifference* and reluctance to discuss God's word. Some doubtless have been brainwashed into the idea that it is 'un-Christian' to argue about religion, notwithstanding that Paul spent the bulk of his time in contending for the truth and disputing with the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. There are also those who say, "Well, what does it matter." Surely it does matter and surely God is not happy at the scene He looks down upon. God's letters to the seven churches in Asia (Rev.) would seem to indicate that He will not be very pleased with what He sees today.

None of us can be presumptuous enough to imagine that we are completely immune from this spiritual malady, or that we can be sure that we read the scriptures with eyes unimpaired by the blinkers of ignorance, pride, tradition, prejudice, indifference or even a veil of 'Church of Christism.' It would be dangerously smug to imagine that everyone is affected except ourselves, and so when we read God's word perhaps we should remember that there is just the possibility that we may have a particular bias, and thus we should ever remind ourselves that our true object is to find God's unvarnished truth. — Editor.

GETHESEMANE

Many years ago we agreed with the editor that the notes on the scripture readings must of necessity be varied in scope, and not just comments on say every word or every incident in the month's selection. It was arranged we should cover the whole New Testament through the years, and this we have done so that public reading of every verse has been covered. A few chapters each month sometimes involve a dozen incidents or teachings. We cannot do more than take what we think are the most important or striking points. We are conscious that we often miss very important points and emphasise minor ones. We trust our readers do pardon this as space must be limited, or else other features of the paper be crowded out. Over the years notes covering the whole N.T. have been made perhaps three times but old notes have never been repeated consciously. We hope in this way to keep a varied interest.

Our present subject was not touched upon in the notes and we feel it is so supremely important that we ought to give time and attention to it.

The fact that our Saviour was tempted in all points as we are is a recognised fact with all believers. In my own humble judgement it could not be wrong to say our Saviour was tempted in *more* points than we are because He had so much greater power. A blind man cannot be tempted to look. A lame man cannot be tempted to run. A deaf man cannot be tempted to listen. Jesus must have been a perfect man physically so He could have made a great display of strength. He was mentally perfect so He could have made a perfect philosopher. He could have attained great authority over His fellowmen. He could have charmed the womenfolk for His own personal satisfaction. He could have used His miraculous power to turn stones into bread. Satan knew all this and more. Hence the Holy Spirit of God coming into Him drove Him into the perils and trials of forty days in loneliness, and at the time of extremity of physical weakness Satan presented the three greatest temptations, and was rebuffed immediately with God's Word, which Jesus had learnt as a member of

the human family, and had taken to heart. May we also take this further and say that no other human-being could ever be entrusted with offering himself as a sacrifice for sin. Men have faced death in various ways for all kinds of causes, and quite often for love of one another, and sometimes they have been burdened with the sins of others, but never have they carried the sins of the world, so as to cry from the depths of the heart, the words and thoughts of Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (in those three hours of darkness!)

Jesus's words and thoughts expressed to His few, faithful selected apostles as recorded in John's gospel, chapters 14 to 16, reveal His deep concern for them, their predicament when He left them physically. It is summarised in words revealed by Luke, "Pray that ye enter not into trial!" (22, 40). He was facing His ultimate trial, His final conflict with world, flesh and devil. He knew the strength His apostles needed, and that they would fail Him (John 16, 32). Peter in this matter had a special place (Luke 22, 32).

The Evangelists seem to search for words to express the deepest grief laid upon the soul of Jesus, variously rendered by "sorrowful", "sore amazed", "very heavy", "greatly distressed". The disciples witnessing this had been "amazed" before but never like this. He took the three most intimate with him a space, and then went further to a place where He had to be alone to endure pain which none could share. The physical trial had still to come but here was the spiritual encounter. We have to have a spiritual decision for the obedience in baptism, and thus begin our conflict to "endure to the end" of life. Did not the Saviour's battle begin with His baptism (Luke, 3, 22) and the trial in the wilderness (Luke 4, 13)? The devil left Him for a season but surely is was a lifelong trial. Treading the winepress of the wrath of God, He went alone (Isa. 63, 3; Rev. 14, 19 and 20; 19, 15), bearing this incomprehensible burden of man's sin for man's sake. Kneeling and prostrating Himself in fervent prayer — an example for us when in temptation. His words were "exceeding sorrowful even UNTO DEATH", obviously meaning that He was in danger of dying from the sorrow of His soul, and this sorrow was FOR SINNERS, sin being so deeply and irrevocably harmful to man, bringing such awful penalty upon the race, and His voluntary acceptance of the "AGONY" (Luke 22, 44) was beyond the strength of the body to bear and so in that hour strength came from heaven — "an angel from heaven" (Luke 22, 43) as also in the wilderness on that earlier occasion when the flesh could not take any more; "angels came and ministered to Him" (Matt. 4, 11). With reverence and godly fear we view the threefold agonising prayer, and the blood-like sweat forced from the human body by the determined decision of the soul. When assuredly He would have appreciated their full sympathy, the disciples were too wearied and worried, and while dimly conscious that He was in great distress failed to realise His need of them, and indeed He did finally have to be alone in the struggle. That agonising effort in prayer provided by communion with the Father, enabled Him to face all His subsequent sufferings with absolute calm. His firm and bold confession of identity astonished and frightened for the moment those who came with weapons to seize Him. They must have had some comprehension of the power they knew to be His, and the religious members of the group might well find a significance in the words "I AM," and anticipate exercise of miraculous power. This and the healing of Malchus with the rebuke of Peter, enabled the disciples to run off in fear of arrest, and likewise the young man in scant attire, possibly Mark (Mark 14, 51 and 52).

From early, we suggest, on Wednesday morning Jesus had walked into the city with His disciples and shared a meal with them, during which He instituted what is

known as "the communion" or scripturally either "Breaking of Bread" or "the Lord's Supper." He must have talked earnestly with the disciples to encourage them, and prayed as recorded in John 17. The company must then have walked into the garden, where Jesus experienced the utmost exhaustion in fervent prayer. After this the walking or being dragged bound before His captors with mockery and brutality until finally led out to crucifixion at 9 a.m. Thursday. While we may over stress the relative mental, spiritual or physical suffering, we cannot exaggerate the tremendous strain on the whole man. The calm and dignity of our Saviour's bearing overawed His tormentors, and when the darkness descended many went away in terror (Luke 23, 48).

Crucifixion

This form of punishment invented in a wicked and cruel heathen world was intended to strike terror into all evil doers but was reserved mainly for the very worst criminals. While we may pride ourselves on having become more civilised, it is not one hundred years since flogging was removed from the British Navy and barbarous torments are in operation. Some of what may be called refined cruelty are used in some parts of the world. Our Russian brethren in some cases are tormented through cruelty to their wives and children, and through deliberate unemployment and consequent poverty. These however, are regarded with horror and contempt by the general consent of mankind under the leavening influence of the life and teaching of our Saviour. His own bearing of the brutal treatment of depraved, idolatrous and hypocritical men has alone brought about a change in general moral standards throughout the world. Man's inhumanity to man has indeed made countless thousands mourn, and still does so where the holy influence has not been allowed to penetrate. Sadism is not dead yet!

Contemplation of the details of crucifixion make all but criminal minds recoil in horror. When any one of us thinks solemnly and deeply of having a nail driven through the palms of the hand, we suffer with nausea like the prison chaplain in Charles Reade's book "Put yourself in his place" who was sick for days after witnessing the punishment called the "straitjacket" inflicted on refractory prisoners in the 19th century here in England, but to view in imagination a human form hung upon the wooden stake or cross is a revolting experience. There are surely times when we should mourn for the supreme agony which love for us entailed for Jesus. F. W. Faber's hymn expresses this thought — "O, come and mourn with me awhile" (Christian Hymnary 116: Hymns for Churches of Christ 1908, No. 133). I quote from Farrar — "a death from crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly — dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds."

Victims were known to have hung many hours in conscious agony. It remains to note those "seven words," the cry for forgiveness of His tormentors, of mercy for the dying robber, of pity and love for His mother, of questioning trust, of committal and of victory. The cry takes us to Psalm 22 where in verse 21 comes the answer, and in verse 22 the triumph.

There seems to have been only one act of pity upon the cry of thirst, and even that was questioned if not decried. We conclude "What He endured no tongue can tell to save our souls from death and hell," and the greatness of the suffering but increases the obligation of sinners to surrender to His claims, and "work out our salvation in fear and trembling" for even then "it is God Who worketh in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2, 13).

R. B. Scott.

GLEANINGS

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

An Important Truth

Burke says, "The shallowest understanding, the rudest hand, is more than equal to the task of pulling down and destroying. Folly and rage can dilapidate more in half-an-hour, than wisdom, deliberation, and forecast, can build up in many years."

John Locke

"The celebrated John Locke, for fourteen or fifteen years, applied himself closely to the study of the Holy Scriptures, and employed the last period of his life scarcely in anything else. He was never weary of admiring the grand views of that sacred book, and the just relations of all its parts. He every day made some discoveries in it, which gave him fresh cause of admiration. And so earnest was he for the comfort of his friends and the diffusion of sacred knowledge amongst them, that even the day before he died he particularly exhorted all about him to read the Holy Scriptures. His well-known recommendation to a person who asked him which was the shortest and surest way for a young gentleman to attain to the true knowledge of the Christian religion, in the full and just extent of it was, "Let him study the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It hath God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.""

Usefulness

"Barnes, in his practical sermons, which are full of truth and beauty, says, Usefulness is the rivulet that glides through the meadows, and that runs along day and night by the farm house, rather than the swollen flood or the noisy cataract. He describes the majesty and glory of Niagara; but one Niagara is enough for a continent or a world — while that same world needs thousands and tens of thousands of silvery fountains, and gently flowing rivulets, that shall water every farm, and meadow, and garden, and that shall flow on every night and day, with their gentle and quiet beauty. So we admire the great deeds of Howard's benevolence, and wish that all men were like him. We revere the names of the illustrious martyrs. We honour the man who will throw himself into the "imminent deadly breach," and save his country: and such men and such deeds we must have, when the occasion calls for them. But all men are not to be useful in this way, any more than all waters are to rush by us in swelling and angry floods. We are to be useful in more limited spheres. We are to cultivate the gentle characteristics of life. We are to benefit those around us — though like the gentle rivulet we may attract little attention, and may soon cease to be remembered on earth.

Such sentiments as these cannot be too much admired, nor such truths too deeply imbedded in the heart of the church. None are so humble that they may not be useful. And they who are faithful in the little are as carefully noted and richly rewarded as they who are entrusted with much."

Worldly Mindedness

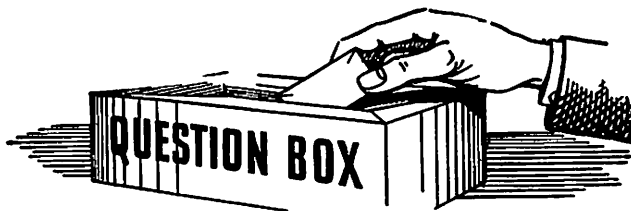
"It is our great unhappiness that the soul is always in the senses, and the senses are always upon the world; we converse with the world, we talk of the world, we think of the world, we project for the world: and what can this produce but a carnal and worldly frame of spirit? We must meditate heavenly things; we must have our conversation in heaven; we must accustom ourselves to inward and heavenly pleasures — if we will have heavenly minds. We must let no day pass wherein we

must not draw ourselves from the body, and sequester ourselves from the world that we may converse with God and our own souls. This will soon enable us to disdain the low and beggarly satisfaction of the outward man, and make us long to be set free from the weight of this corruptible body' — to breathe in purer air, and to take our fill of refined and spiritual pleasure."

Equality

"After all that can be said about the advantage one man has over another, there is still a wonderful equality in human fortunes. If the rich have wealth, the poor have health; if the heiress has booty for her dower, the penniless have beauty for theirs; if one man has cash, the other has credit; if one boasts of his income, the other can of his influence. No one is so miserable but that his neighbour wants something he possesses; and no one so mighty, but he wants another's aid. There is no fortune so good but it may be reversed; and none so bad but it may be bettered. The sun that rises in clouds may set in splendour; and that which rises in splendour may set in gloom."

Selected by Leonard Morgan. From the Christian Messenger and Family Magazine. 1845.



Conducted by
Aif Marsden

"Would you please comment on the 'once saved always saved' belief, held by the 'Brethren', or perhaps the 'falling away' belief, held by the Church of Christ?"

I am not normally given to commenting on other religious groups but I feel that in this case some background information is desirable so that we can understand the problem posed by the questioner, and perhaps say something meaningful relative to the question.

The "Brethren" originated in Dublin in 1825; the first congregation was established in England in Plymouth in 1831, hence the name 'Plymouth Brethren.' Religious history records that Edward Cronin and A. N. Groves in Dublin, and Benjamin Wills Newton and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles in Plymouth, were the founders. Later they were joined by John Nelson Darby (a former clergyman in the Church of Ireland).

Unfortunately, it appears that there was some sort of conflict between Darby and Newton, partly on doctrine, and partly on ecclesiastical policy, and the outcome was that the followers of Darby became known as the 'Exclusive Brethren' with a close central authority, and the followers of Newton became known as the 'Open Brethren' who were basically congregational.

The very laudable aim at the beginning was to recapture the simplicity of the apostolic church, consequently most Brethren practice believers baptism, although it is stated that some Exclusive Brethren favour Household Baptism. The doctrines are generally evangelical and more Calvinistic than Arminian.

The Calvinistic doctrine gives us a clue to the question because it states that a believer has assurance of salvation through the operation of the Holy Spirit, but this again rests on the divine choice of the person to salvation in God's eternal free

purpose, whereby He was predestined some to eternal life and some to eternal death. The former He effectually calls to salvation, and they are kept by Him in progressive faith and holiness unto the end. This is the implied meaning of grace and faith. (Book 3. "On the manner of Receiving the Grace of Christ").

The Church is presented as made up of "all the elect from the beginning of the world," fully known only to God, who "knows and has marked those who neither know Him nor themselves." The believer sets out on his course of the Christian life, a pilgrimage of faith, repentance, self-denial and prayer, the end of which is his reception into the heavenly glory. But this is a course on which he has not embarked arbitrarily. He has been called to it by God, yet before he was called it had been God's determination from all eternity that he should be His child in Christ Jesus. (Book iv).

The Arminian doctrine is embraced by the followers of Arminius, a 16th century Dutch theologian who, denying the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, asserted the free-will of man in the matter of personal salvation.

In view of the foregoing, it would seem that some would conclude that if God had predestined some to salvation then there would be no possibility of their falling away. We now have to ask ourselves the question, "is this, in fact, what the Bible teaches?"

Foreknowledge

There is no doubt that the foreknowledge of God is complete; He knows the end from the beginning. It is equally clear that with His absolute power He can foreordain what He wants to bring into being at any given time. Foreknowledge is one aspect of God's omniscience, and throughout the Bible we see this implicated in His warnings, promises, and predictions.

Paul, in his Roman letters, takes us a stage further; "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29, 30). This statement teaches us that the fore-knowledge of God is the basis for His fore-ordaining counsels and, these fore-ordaining counsels obviously include God's grace, call, election, justification, and ultimate glorification. We now need to examine these in order to understand how God has arranged His counsels consistent with His foreknowledge.

To Foreordain

To foreordain has the general meaning of determining beforehand what should be done. There are two Greek verbs which should be considered. One is the word *HORIZO* (from which we get our word 'horizon') which denotes 'to bound, to set a boundary, to mark out definitely.' It is used in Luke 22:22, "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined." It is also used in Acts 2:23 concerning Christ, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." The other word is *PROORIZO* (*PRO*-beforehand, and *ORIZO*-to mark out) hence to determine beforehand, to foreordain, to predestinate. The uses of this word are to be found in Romans 8:29, 30; and Eph. 1: 5, 11.

What are we now in a position to say? Well, we have said that God has a complete foreknowledge, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (Acts 15:18). We have also said that He has the power to foreordain what He decreed should be done, and what He has foreordained He has revealed according to His pre-determined counsels. We now need to consider what God, according to His forek-

knowledge and predetermined will, has purposed to reveal to man, what that purpose is, and how it affects our salvation.

His Purposes

In writing to Ephesus Paul says, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him" (Eph. 1:9, 10). So God decided that His predetermined counsels should be realised in Christ.

Similarly, Peter after Pentecost, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3: 22, 23). That prophet, of course, was Christ; and He said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16: 15, 16).

The foregoing teaches us that the electing grace of God was revealed in Christ Jesus, but we also see that this *does not* preclude human will. Anyone has the right to choose to accept the gospel or to refuse it. God also purposed that the free exercise of faith and obedience should bring salvation. Now if God allows us free choice in the *acceptance* of the gospel, then we can only conclude that He allows us free choice as to whether we *continue* in that state of grace to which the gospel has called us. If we choose *not* to continue, in obedience to God, then I can find no place in the Bible which teaches me that God has purposed to save us in spite of our disobedience, on the contrary, over in the Old Testament we find Azariah, speaking with the Spirit of God, saying, "The Lord is with you, while you be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (2 Chron. 15:1,2). And wasn't it Jesus who said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Furthermore, God purposed that Paul should preach the gospel to the heathen (Read Gal. 1: 15-17), but that same apostle had to write in his first letter to Corinth, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9: 27). Now Paul is speaking here about his personal *rejection* for salvation at the end of the race. He does not claim absolute perfection (Read Phil. 3: 7-21) nor is he afraid to say that some who have begun the walk have become the enemies of the cross of Christ because of their infidelity, and their end will consequently be destruction. He realises that so long as the race is being run that there is the possibility of falling away, because as Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1 Pet. 5: 8, 9).

The same Peter exhorts Christians in his second letter, "wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Pet. 1:10,11). Now why would Peter exhort us to make our calling and election sure if these were already fixed *in spite of* our Christian walk? There would be no reason at all unless he knew, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that it was *possible* to fall away. As a matter of fact, he makes a stinging attack on those who having once escaped the corruption that is in the world, have again succumbed to Satan, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginn-

ing. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Therefore, I think we must conclude that the Bible does not teach 'once saved, always saved', but rather that we should bend all of our energies, and with the help of the Holy Spirit try to realise in our lives what God has really purposed for us in Christ Jesus His Son. There are many other points which can be raised relative to this question but space does not permit in this issue. Perhaps we shall in the future be able to examine more facets of this important subject if any reader so desires.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FOR OCTOBER 1981

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 4 Daniel 9, 1-19 | II Thess. 1 |
| 11 Daniel 9, 20-27 | II Thess. 2 |
| 18 Nehemiah 2 | II Thess. 3 |
| 25 Psalms 132 & 133 | I Cor. 1, 1-25 |

GLORY

"He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord" (I Cor. 1, 31). Paul glories in the faithfulness of his Thessalonian brethren because they are bringing glory to the Lord by their living faith. All other christians who are made aware of their sufferings for the gospel's sake, rejoiced in their endurance of their persecutions. The glory was indeed God's because it was the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts that brought about their turning from idols to serve God. This was made visible by their astonishing change in behaviour, their acceptance of the illwill and harm without resentment. How far is our behaviour bringing glory to God? It is true the contrast in enlightened modern society is not so great as it was in those early days, because the leaven of the Saviour's teaching and life has made an impact on life of which we shall never know the extent. We know that the "welfare state" has its faults and failings but by whom were men and women made to recognise their obligation to help one another? Apart from blood ties and national solidarities such thoughts were unknown in the world of the

Caesars. But now here in Thessalonika men and women are loving and caring for one another unselfishly because of a common love for a Saviour, and the hope of eternal life where righteousness ever abides. Little wonder then that Paul's heart ached for contact and news from those so recently entering the new life. He does assure them that there is no question that there will be a just recompense in the final outcome. This is indeed a solemn warning to those who oppose or do not heed the gospel message. There is glory now in the suffering because it is for so wonderful a salvation. The final glory is much more wonderful, and the humblest saint will share that consummation (2, 14).

"Times and Seasons"

It is clear that Jesus is coming again and this assurance is particularly comforting when there are times of special stress, when it seems as though God is not near. Faith is being strongly tested. So it was an essential part of Paul's preaching as it should be ours today. Some had wrongly expected its almost immediate occurrence and supposed that therefore ordinary duties of life could be neglected. Perhaps this was inferred from the first letter (5, 2-7). It became necessary to clear away the misapprehension so the second letter puts the emphasis upon living a godly useful life filled with homely and honest labour. This in fact occupied a vital place in the first letter, and in the life style of the apostle and his companions. We cannot claim to have understood entirely, or correctly interpreted

chapter 2 verses 1-12. It does puzzle most of us. There are some plain lessons as is usual with such passages of scripture. We concluded our last month's comments with the most obvious one. The Boy Scouts have it as their motto "Be prepared," and whether it is to be the end of our lives here or that final day, it makes no difference. The lawless one has been personified by interpreters as Nero, Constantine, the Papal Hierarchy, Napoleon, Hitler or Mussolini without any certainty except that not one of them completely seems to fulfill the apostle's words. The same persons have also been suggested as being "he that withholdeth." My own private and humbly held view favours the Lutheran and Protestant interpretation that the Roman Catholic Hierarchy is the apostasy, of which so much is present though unrealised in every denomination by the issue of authoritative creeds and a highly professional ministry or constitution of some kind. We have to admit this if we are honest in our own movement, and be extremely humble in our presentation of points of difference. While it is true that the Saviour made the tithing of herbs obligatory, a very small matter, under the law, showing that God IS concerned in small things, that can so easily be allowed to cloud "weightier matters." While we remain human we are liable to think we "have arrived" forgetting that "error lurks in human lore." There are certainly principles "where the Bible speaks" but their outworkings are local and individual quite often. The attitude to others is important, love being the "essential ingredient" (with congratulations to Bro. Paul Jones — April "S.S.").

Bread for nought

There must be significance in the insistence upon withdrawal from idlers. We are reminded of the Athenians who spent their days hearing some new thing, and their city was full of idols. Does idolatry foster idleness? It would seem so for idol worship always involves

sexual vice, the relapse of the soul into sinful practices, and greed. The Gentiles were sunk in immortality and Satan finds mischief for idle hands. How much our present conditions impress the lesson, involving so many even willing workers into doing nothing for a living, but depending upon others represented by the government. The simple remedy for our bankruptcy is more work for less pay, yet we have on every hand the cry for less work for more pay. The general attitude for purchases is to get everything at as low a price as possible whereas it is a christian principle to give rather than to get. Therefore pay as much as we can for all that is provided or done for us. This for most of us cannot mean much in practical terms because we only have enough to live on. The apostle insists that his practice is to be followed by the Thessalonian Christians, and it was "to pay his way." The N.I.V. translates the instruction for those inclined to idle, "settle down and earn the bread you eat" (3, 12). Of course much more is involved in the "tradition." All instructions relating to the clean life and the "more and more" to please God (I Thess. 4, 1), your sanctification.

Corinth

Our readings now take us to later letters. It seems certain that at least three years passed (in busy labour) between the second to Thessalonica and the first to Corinth, and that this latter was written from Ephesus while the work there occupied Paul. He completed his second journey at Jerusalem but went immediately to Antioch (in Syria). There is no indication as to how long it was before he settled for at least two years at Ephesus. Read Acts 18, 21-23 and 19, 1. Disquieting news came from Corinth at that time and several questions from the members, and we may summarise briefly by mentioning divisions, fornication, marriage, offerings to idols, observance of the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, the practice of love, order in assembly, in particular speaking with

tongues, the resurrection and finally the "collection for the saints." This is a tremendous letter, filled with lessons, however, local and temporary yet bearing upon faith and practice today.

R. B. Scott.

NOTES FROM A SERMON BY THE LATE BROTHER BAINES, ON PSALM 27

Read Psalm 27.

TEXT — verse 4 of this Psalm:—

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple."

It is always good to analyse these Bible texts. It is what is done *medically*. If we wish to know what is contained in a substance, we send it to an Analyst. We will now proceed to analyse our text!

You will notice that David said he wished for only *ONE* thing. He could have had *anything* he desired because he was the King and was living in a palace! From this verse we see David's mind was set on higher things than mere material ones — worshipping the Lord, which was wonderful.

What did David ask (desire) of the Lord and then *seek* after? He had a noble ambition and sought the pearl of great price. We read that "he wished to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life". Now, this was not just some passing whim, but he wanted to serve God *continually* all his days, in order to:—

1. "*Behold the beauty of the Lord*" — to worship the Lord acceptably; to offer him his thanks for all his goodness, and to remember all his benefits towards him. (On another occasion you will recall that David said: "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10).

2. "*To enquire of his temple*". When anyone *enquires*, he always *does* something about it. (If one wishes to know how to get to a certain place, one asks

questions of those who know, and then carries out the directions).

Accordingly, we should all pray for guidance in the SPIRITUAL life that we may find it, and also pray that we may be kept faithful in His church all *our days*, in order to live lives pleasing to God. (It is interesting to note that when Jesus was young and went up to Jerusalem with his parents, he was found in the temple enquiring of the doctors: hearing them and asking them questions).

We are not asked to shut ourselves away in a convent or monastery, but to live always in the abiding presence of God. Suitable hymn:—

"Take *my life*, and let it be
consecrated Lord to Thee;
Take my moments & my days;

Let them flow in ceaseless praise."

MAY THIS BE THE AIM OF EACH
ONE PRESENT!

Sent in by
Sister E. C. Payne

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

"The greatest challenge to youth today is to dare to be different. It has become too fashionable to have an assembly-line personality in this country." The statement you have just read was made by Mrs. Katie Louchheim, Vice-chairman of the Democratic National Committee of 1958. It still needs to be applied.

Young man, you can look like something that just crawled out from under the floor if you want to, but it is indicative of your conforming to the fads and foolishness of the day. Young lady, you need not take any personal pride in your appearance and look like a washed out mop on the neighbour's back yard clothesline if you like, but you demonstrate that you are conforming to those around you in the world. Dress, appearance and actions are important

When you are invited to a prom or a dance — *dare to be different!* Tell the one who invites you that you belong to

Christ and are trying to uphold Christian principles. You never know, *you* just might influence someone to become a Christian.

When someone asks you to take just *one* drink — *dare to be different!* Young Daniel, in Babylonian captivity, could have filled every desire known to man, but the sacred record of his beautiful life tells us that “Daniel *purposed in his heart* that he would not defile himself. . .” (Dan. 1:8). Take a tip from Daniel and don’t defile your soul and hamper your future by engaging in sin.

When you are in a crowd of boys or girls who curse and tell filthy stories — *dare to be different!* Sit down right now and memorize Eph. 4:28 and then be ready to quote it to those who curse. Don’t comment on it or apply it — just quote it.

When others cheat in their studies — *dare to be different!* It would be better to fail a grade than cultivate the disgraceful evil of dishonesty.

Don’t be an assembly-line personality. *Dare to be different* — dare to be a Christian!

— Via *Gospel Visitor*
Dudley Spears

THOUGHTS ON TIME

Time, like an ever rolling stream,

Bears all its sons away;

They fly, forgotten, as a dream

Dies at the opening day.

Viewed broadly time has three dimensions — Past, Present, Future. “Distance (in time as well as in space) lends enchantment to the view.” A distorted vision of the past tends to draw our eyes from the realities of the present and to fill our minds with satisfaction, for it magnifies our achievements and minimizes our failures, eventually lulling us into self-satisfied complacency.

On the other hand, if we realise the error of dwelling upon the past — the time which has gone beyond recall — we draw our minds forward, we find it all too easy to swing into rosy visions of the

future. Very quickly we are lost in radiant views of those adventures we propose; of the deeds we intend to perform; of the sacrifices we mean to make. But, the time is not yet ripe for all these things.

We are so like the pendulum of a clock, swinging from one extreme to the opposite. We would like to stop the clock Oh that we might realise that the past has gone forever and the future never arrives: all we truly have is NOW! Paul writes, “Already it is time to awake out of sleep,” Or as J.B. Phillips translates, “wake up to reality!” God says, “NOW is the accepted time; NOW, is the day of salvation.

If we are to adventure for the Lord, it must be NOW; if we would do a gallant deed, it must be done TODAY; if we would sacrifice, be it treasure (sold to give to the poor); be it sinful desire (resigned unto the purifying of the soul 1 John 3:3); be it righteous freedom (not excused to avoid offending a weaker brother) it must have immediate implementation DO IT NOW!

Our prayer for today: “So teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of Wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

Paul Jones

Sanitation and the Communion

by J. W. McGarvey (1829-1911)

About two years ago, I think, I published an article under the head of “Microbes,” in which I ridiculed, in the manner which I thought it deserved, the pretense by which the use of individual cups in the Lord’s Supper is defended. The “sanitary feature,” as bro. Keeler styles it, is proven to be a pretense by the fact that though the use of cups in common has been practiced for nearly two thousand years, not a single instance has been produced for nearly two thousand years — not a single instance has been produced of persons contracting contagious diseases from it. And if there had been a few instances, or a few thousands among the multiplied mil-

lions, what is that compared with the strict observance of an ordinance appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ? Shall we dare to change or modify such an ordinance for fear that one of us may prove to change or modify such an ordinance for fear that one of us may prove to be the one out of millions who shall suffer? The "sanitary feature," as everybody knows, has been arrayed with great pertinacity against the ordinance of baptism as it was instituted by Christ, and it has been paraded as a justification of those who modify this ordinance. The shallowness of the reasoning in both instances forces the suspicion that want of faith, and not real fear of disease and death, lies at the bottom of it. If there is a danger of swallowing microbes by drinking from the same cup with consumptives, what about being baptized in the same pool of water? Shall we have the baptistry emptied, washed and chemically disinfected after every baptism? If not, shall we always resort to a running stream, in which a dead dog may be floating some distance above us? Or shall we abandon baptism altogether, for the sake of keeping our immaculate persons from coming in contact with the invisible bugs which exude from our neighbours? Some people are too nice for this world. They ought to carry a smelling-bottle all the days of their lives and pray the Lord to take them as soon as possible to a healthier country. It is my opinion that when the Lord instituted the Supper he knew as much about microbes as does any modern medical alarmist.

IGNORANCE AND ERROR

It is almost as difficult to make a man unlearn his errors as his knowledge. Mal information is more hopeless than non information; for error is always more busy than ignorance. Ignorance is a blank sheet on which we may write; but error is a scribbled one on which we must first erase. Ignorance is contented to stand still with her back to the truth, but error is more presumptuous, and

proceeds in the same direction. Ignorance has no light, but error follows a false one. The consequence is, that error, when she retraces her footsteps, has farther to go than ignorance before she can arrive at truth. Colton

THE DEPTH OF SIN

Thomas Ward Beecher could not bear deceit. Finding a clock in his church was habitually too fast or too slow, he hung a placard above it, reading "Don't blame my hands — the trouble lies deeper."

That is where the trouble lies with us when our hands or feet or lips or thoughts do wrong. The trouble lies so deep that only God's power can deal with it. Sin goes deep, but Christ goes deeper.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Peterhead, Scotland: On Lord's day July 12th we rejoiced, with the Heavenly host, when William (Bill) Stephen responded to the claims of Jesus, and gave his life to the King of Kings. He is a young man who has shown an interest in spiritual things, and has a desire to follow more closely in the footsteps of Jesus. We look forward to his growing up into Christ. Brethren pray for us.

M. Gaunt

Revival and Baptisms in Kitwe, Zambia: A couple who had fallen by the wayside. A young man returning from university training in Birmingham, England. An older man arriving by car who had been contacted by the U.S.A.-based World Bible School. These were some of the new faces at the Wusakile congregation. In addition there have been four baptisms.

Kamfinsa's church building is now bursting at the seams with 500 bodies squeezing inside the mud walls. This includes 300 kids. In addition, there are

two new congregations. Joseph Hamugande is preaching in this area. There have been about thirty baptisms.

Kandabwe, Race Course, Garneton and Chimwemwe congregations have had peak attendances in the past week or so. There have been visitors in the church buildings at every service. At Garneton and Kamatipa, there have been a half dozen baptisms. In addition, there is a new congregation at Kalulushi and a new preaching point at Kabalonda.

Problems hindering church growth continue to be alcoholism and interference by other Missions. Yet church growth still takes place. — Chester and Angela Woodhall.

OBITUARY

Peterhead, Scot: It is with a sense of loss that we write to inform you of two who have served the Lord and entered into their reward.

On Friday, June 26th, after a brief illness, Sister Rebbecca Buchan left this life. She had been a faithful member of the congregation here for many years, and in spite of her inability to meet with the saints, she was a soldier of the cross, who loved the Lord, and told of her faith.

On Saturday, July 4th, Bro. Gerry Fox was called home. He had been an active worker in the local church since his move to this area a few years ago.

Many of the congregations north and south of the border have benefitted by his ministry, and we thank God that we had an opportunity to learn to love him this side of heaven. His sudden death, at the age of 41 makes us all appreciate the littleness of time, and the greatness of eternity.

His funeral service was attended by many local residents and colleagues from the social work department who all attested to the fact that his life had been spent helping others.

We commend his wife, our sister

Agnes, and her two daughters to the loving care of our Heavenly Father, and we pray that this great loss might help us all to lean more upon the Lord.

We have been blessed by knowing Gerry, and we pray that his labours in the Lord may not have been in vain.

Thank God for His word and assurance on such occasions.

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” Those who live and believe, shall never die.”

We thank God for the Victory in Jesus.

Michael Gaunt

Kirkcaldy, Scotland: Sister (Gran) Howie went home to be with her Lord on 29th July. She was in her 94th year. Her maiden name was Smilie and her life was a mirror of her name, and she was a great example of Christian witness in the community in which she lived. She was, for most of her life, a member of the congregation which used to worship in Cardenden. We thank God for a sister such as this.

Robert Hughes

Dennyloanhead, Scotland: The church here is sad to report the passing of our beloved sister Jessie Limb, at Bellsdyke Hospital, Larbert, on May 21st. She was aged 82 years, and was the wife of the late Charles Limb of Eastwood, Notts. She was a faithful member of the Lord's church for 64 years and much of her love and devotion to her Lord was spent in her home town of Eastwood. Although she is sadly missed, we do not mourn as those who have no hope. She, like many before her, has entered into that “rest that remaineth to the children of God” awaiting the coming of our Lord and Saviour.

The family would like to thank the brethren for their letters of sympathy and encouragement, and also bro. Alex. Brown for conducting the funeral service at the church meeting place and crematorium.

Joseph M. Malcolm

WEEKEND MISSION

The church at Tranent intend, God willing, to hold a weekend gospel mission on 26th, 27th September, when brother Ian Davidson, Motherwell, will be the speaker. Meeting times will be 6 p.m. on the Saturday 26th and 7.30 p.m. on Sunday 27th. All welcome.

J. Colgan.

WORK AND PRAY

Success comes to the one who will work and pray. Perhaps it will not be the immediate success for which we reach, but then God's measure of success is not the same as man's.

Paul prayed for Israel's salvation (Rom. 10: 1-3), spent his life to accomplish such, and thanked God for what He "had done with them" (Acts 14:27).

We need to pray as if God were going to do it all, and work as if we worked alone! All too often we pray as if we were going to do it all, and work as if God must do it all.

William V Beasley

WORK IN INDIA

I have been amazed at the kindness and Christian love shown to me since deciding to work in India. It has greatly strengthened my love for Jesus and for my brothers and sisters in Christ. I am

presently helping out in a hospital for the subnormal outside Blackburn in the Deaf Unit and really enjoying it. Mum and Dad are going to India in January to school some young men in different villages and towns to teach the things concerning Jesus. God willing I will be going back with them. We would like to thank all for their help and kind interest.

Carole Ashurst,

60 Kenwood Road,
Stretford,
Manchester.

If there is righteousness in the heart there will be beauty in the character. If there be beauty in the character there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation there will be peace in the world.

Chinese proverb

In darkness there is no choice. It is light that enables us to see the difference between things, and it is Christ who gives us light.

The man who is interested in blowing his own horn is seldom interested in harmony.

R. L. Smith

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