

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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WHAT SHALL I RENDER?

Probably nothing is more irksome than the apparent ingratitude of others. How often have we been completely disenchanted and disgusted with the ungrateful attitude we perceive in others? When we have gone out of our way to help someone and have scarcely received any acknowledgement of the fact, human nature being what it is, we have been inclined to say, "Well, that's the last time I do anything for him." If God took that attitude with us, I suppose He would do nothing for us, ever again. It is also tragically true that the victims of our ingratitude are often those who least deserve it, and who do most for us: best exemplified perhaps in the average mother tirelessly working her fingers to the bone for a thoughtless and ungrateful family; blind to what is done for them. Man is the 'offspring of God' and as a member of God's wide family is often completely ungrateful, and even oblivious, to all that God (the heavenly parent) does for him. All of us have good reason to be grateful for all the countless blessings which come down to us through the windows of heaven: for God sends the sun and the rain upon the just and the unjust, alike. In general terms, we are all inclined to be economical in our gratitude to our fellow-man, and certainly very sparing in our expressions of thanks to God, for all His many gifts.

THE UNGRATEFUL LEPERS

Jesus found a similar lack of gratitude towards God even in His day, and, surprisingly, seemed to find it in a greater degree amongst 'the people of God': the Jews. Take for instance, the occasion when Christ cleansed the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-18). "And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' And when He saw them, He said unto them, 'Go show yourselves to the priests.' And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice, glorified God. And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, 'Were there not ten cleansed?' But where are the nine?"

Some have speculated that this incident gives a fairly representative ratio of gratitude versus ingratitude (i.e. ninety per cent of us are ingrates) but surely the picture is not as rosy as all that. Obviously Jesus was not soliciting thanks for Himself, personally, but had expected that all ten lepers would have wanted to give thanks, praise and glory to God for their instantaneous escape from leprosy's grip. And so, of

the ten lepers cured, only one showed any gratitude or any desire to thank God, and *he was not a Jew* (of the people of God) as were the others, but a Samaritan. And Samaritans were, as we know, regarded by Jews, as 'beyond the pale,' dogs and worse than heathen. Is ingratitude a sin, or just an oversight of the thoughtless? Clearly Jesus had imagined that all ten lepers would have expressed thanks.

IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS

It seems incredible that not even one of the nine Jews felt any promptings to express thanks to their God for their wonderful release from leprosy. How could they have returned to their homes, cured, without showing any signs of gratitude? Surprising though it is: it seemed 'par for the course' at that time, and reflected a general spiritual malaise of indifference and ingratitude amongst Israelites: not entirely new. Indeed, on one occasion, when Jesus had returned to His 'home town' (Nazareth) He was so stifled by the studied indifference and evident ingratitude of God's people that He could do no mighty works there, but healed only a few sick folk (Matt 6:5). They did not regard Jesus even as a prophet but merely as 'the carpenter's son', and this prompted Jesus to say, "Verily I say unto you. No prophet is accepted in His own country. But I will tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias (when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land): but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed save Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city . . ." (Luke 4:24-29). The truth often hurts and we can see again, here, that the Jewish reaction to these 'home truths' from Jesus was rage and anger (even while at worship in the synagogue). Yes, there were many widows in Israel during the famine in the days of Elijah; and many lepers in Israel in the days of the prophet Elisha, but these prophets had so little honour in their own country that they bestowed their blessings elsewhere: on people apparently more worthy: on Gentiles of Sidon and Syria. What an indictment of the Jews by Elijah and Elisha for their hardness of heart, indifference and ingratitude. Whereas Elisha had ignored the many lepers in Israel, Jesus had cured nine at one and the same time, and had received thanks from none of them. Was their ingratitude a sin, or just a thoughtless oversight?

It is possible that the spiritual Israel of today, the Church, can fall into similar ways, and be just as ungrateful; and by careless indifference fail to give glory to God; and be sparse in its thanks and praise?

The apostle Paul exhorts us (in 1 Thess. 5:18) "**Pray without ceasing, IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS, for this is the will of God concerning you.**" Evidently it is God's wish or will that we should pray always, and in all things never omit to give thanks for all God's benefits. The psalmist urged that we should "**Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him and bless His name**" (100:40). And we notice that the leprous Samaritan not only prostrated himself in thanks to Jesus, but **with a loud voice gave glory to God.**

WHAT SHALL I RENDER?

The ever recurring theme of the Psalms is, of course, to praise God in **thanksgiving**. Almost all the 150 Psalms contain phrases like "**O Praise the Lord, ye nations,**" or "**O Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good and His mercy endures for ever,**" or "**O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His name, make His deeds known among the people, talk of all His wondrous works.**" These random examples

could easily be multiplied a hundred-fold, and one wonders what David would think of the rather muted and reserved response, today, of the world and the Church, to the goodness of God. David was not one of those thoughtless and indifferent men who pass through life receiving all, enjoying all and expecting all without ever bestowing a single thought upon the bountiful Giver, and in consequence we find him wondering what he can give God in return, viz. **"What shall I render unto the Lord, for all His benefits toward me?"** (Psalm 116). Most of us take everything for granted, and, as a matter of course receive the necessities of life without much effort; are rarely without them, don't envisage a time when we won't have them, and don't see any great reason for commenting on them, let alone seeking to thank any great Benefactor for them. But David lived in a society and environment much more tenuous than ours and was much more conscious of God's help and intervention. In this Psalm (116) he recounts how (as on other occasions) he was **"encompassed by sorrows of death"** and how the **"pains of hell got hold upon me"** and how he was in the straits of **"trouble and sorrow."** **"Then called I upon the Lord"** says David, and **"He helped me; He delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears and my feet from falling."** Perhaps it is not surprising that, in view of all this, David's natural reaction is expressed in his challenging question, previously mentioned, **"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?"** I say that this was a challenging question and so it was: **indeed it challenges all of us.** What shall we render to the Lord, for all His many benefits?

DAVID'S RESOLVE

Human nature is not, by any means, all bad, and there is in most normal people a desire to respond, in kind, when they have been on the receiving end of some good deed. If someone goes out of their way to do us a favour we don't readily forget it, and indeed we often seek some form of acknowledging our appreciation in some tangible way: by doing something in return. However, when men reflect upon the **blessings of God** they seem not so much as a favour but as an indebtedness: i.e. it is God's duty to look after us. We see it as God's job to provide for the world, to give the sun and the rain, heat and cold, seedtime and harvest, clothing, shelter and food. It's God's main function and that is why He is there. This common but mistaken view was not shared by David and he understood that man would not live by bread alone, that God's interest in man extended far beyond drinking-water and daily bread and that all God's blessings (material and spiritual) were to be recognised as acts of love, grace and benevolence from a fatherly Benefactor. Even ordinary human parents do not provide for their children simply out of a sense of duty: there is much more to it than that. As Jesus said, if a child asks for bread will a **human** father give him a stone: or if he asks for a fish will he be given a serpent; or if he asks for an egg will he be given a scorpion: **much more** then will our **heavenly** Father know how to give good gifts to them that ask Him. And so David muses upon his question **"What shall I give the Lord for all His benefits towards me?"**

Depending upon the magnitude of the good deed done to us a word of "Thanks" is often enough, but as in David's case, sometimes our thanks must take a more tangible form. Many of those cured and restored by the miracles of Jesus were likewise not content just to say "thanks" but wanted to follow Jesus and become His servants: the ten lepers notwithstanding. The Psalmist was also quite aware that he could not pay for God's blessings, even if he had been materially very rich, for God owns everything we see around us, and when we leave here we can take nothing with us. David did not intend to throw money at his responsibility (by writing a cheque) but resolved to give

himself (lock, stock and barrel); by giving God his thanks, praise, love and obedience - a life consecrated to the Lord.

In the latter part of the Psalm David describes how he would render his life to God. He would **"take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."** He would also **"pay his vows unto the Lord"** and we know that God has no pleasure in those who make vows and do not pay them (Ecc.5:4). He would regard himself **"as God's servant"** holding himself ever at God's disposal and would offer God **"his sacrifices."** Thus David's fixed resolve to demonstrate his gratitude to God by consecrating his wealth and energies, his interest and intellect, his affections and obedience to the service and glory of God. The apostle Paul brought this attitude over into the Christian era when he said, **"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto His name"** (Heb. 13:15).

CONCLUSION

Ingratitude is not endemic but fairly widespread. We can all be accused from time to time, of seeming to be ungrateful to family and friends. And certainly we can all be accused of being less than enthusiastic in our thankfulness to God for all our many blessings. We have much for which we ought to be thankful, and surely this is borne in upon us when we see, on our TV screens, the appalling conditions in the Third World. As the hymn-writer says, if we count our many blessings we shall certainly be surprised at what the Lord has done. We may also agree with the Psalmist that a brief "Thank you" is not enough and that we should exercise our minds upon his question, "What shall I render to God, for all His benefits towards me?" What will we be prepared to do for God, in return for all His constant goodness to us? David's answer involved nothing less than his total commitment: his whole life dedicated to the praise and glory of God. He was not forced into it; he wanted to do it, and would have been satisfied with nothing less. Can we offer less?

Quite often we may actually be grateful although we do not show it. Perhaps the nine lepers were grateful for their cure albeit they did not return to say "Thank you." The omission, however, did not pass unnoticed or without comment and evidently Jesus was quite disappointed when He said, **"were there not ten cleansed, There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."** Let us not be numbered amongst the nine. Let us not sadden God by our ingratitude, or regard His gifts as a right, but rather join with David and ask ourselves the question that he posed, **"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?"** What shall we render?

EDITOR.

POWER FOR TODAY

Ours is a power-conscious age. Nearly everyone is looking for some kind of power. Christians, too, seek power. We want power over ourselves. We have learned that in spite of guilt pangs, good intentions and resolutions, we keep repeating the same old sins. We often feel defeated.

"I believe the gospel is 'the power of God,' but how can I apply it to me?" is our painfully legitimate question.

Shallow answers are often destructive. Think about some of them.

HEAD POWER

The first we will call "Head Power." The thesis is simple: Know right and you'll do right!

It doesn't happen that way. Not because we don't need to know. We do! Knowledge does not necessarily generate spiritual power. In fact, reciting information can become an end in itself. It can become a "pride-trap."

Besides, to know what is right is not always to do what is right. Peter Marshall once prayed, "Lord, give us help when we don't know what we ought to do. But give us a lot more help when we know very well what we ought to do, *but we just don't want to do it.*"

Paul saw that too. "**For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not**" (Rom. 7:18).

Head-Power alone is not enough.

HEART POWER

Others urge "Heart-Power." "Experience an emotional high, and you will find God-power." But the theory doesn't fit the facts.

Yes, we need to feel things emotionally. Possibly, one of the reasons for the recent craving after the excesses of the charismatic movement could be the emotional sterility of our assemblies.

But, when too much weight rests on emotional experiences, the result will be the loss of genuine spiritual power. When one feels that he has a new relationship with God because of his mountain peak experience, he may tend to consider himself spiritually superior to his fellows. What feels like 'spirituality' may cause him to be judgmental and unloving toward many of his brothers whose faith (though relatively unemotional) has stood years of trial and has produced the "fruit of the Spirit."

Heart-power is also deceiving. What feels like spiritual power on an exciting Sunday will often crash and burn on blue Monday.

Emotion is too shallow to be the power over ourselves.

WILL POWER

We've all tried will-power. The point is obvious. If you are not what you ought to be - change! Make some resolutions and stick to them.

Now, will-power is to be admired. But it is not God-power.

Let us suppose that head-power, heart-power, or will-power *could* control our sinful natures (which, of course, they never will). What would this mean? Simply that God would be toppled from His place and our purely human resources allowed to mount His throne.

How then do we find Power for Today?

APPROPRIATING THE POWER

First we must admit that we cannot manage our own lives. Like Paul we must say, "**Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me . . .**" (Rom. 7:24).

Second, we need power beyond ourselves. We put on a new man "**which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness**" (Eph. 4:23,24). "**We are His workmanship**" (Eph. 2:10). Jesus is "our life" (Col. 3:4).

But how can I see Jesus? Ah, there is a way. Watch Him stride from the pages of the New Testament. The Bible is not vague about Him.

No! The scriptures will not show us the Christ if they are persistently used as tools of argument. If I batter people's brains with Biblical brickbats, I might sharpen my wits, but I will never deepen my spiritual power. The issue must be personal, "Lord, what are You saying to *me*?"

I must trace out His purposes for me. My psyche must be programmed His way. My frame-of-reference must be the Biblically presented Lord.

LIVING UNDER THE FORCE OF THE POWER

How then do I live daily under the force of God's power? Having been **"united with Him in the likeness of His death"** through baptism we have **"newness of life"** (Rom. 6). This new life, patterned after Jesus, is directed by the word, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, **"which is in you which you have from God"** (1 Cor. 6:19).

If your automobile has power-steering, you do not redirect those wheels by your own strength. There is a gadget under the hood which does that for you. But it does so in response to your touch on the steering wheel. God will not seize control of my life. I can **"quench the Spirit,"** but He will make available His power resource in response to my input of request. Ours is the request: His the power.

Of course, this impulse of request demands discipline. Not so much the manhandling of our own sins into subjection through intellect, emotions, or will; but the discipline of exposing ourselves consistently to the source of His power through prayer and meditation on the scriptures and obedience. This is a promise of God: **"the word of His grace . . . is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified"** (Acts 20:32).

To change the figure: We cannot make apples. But we can plant apple trees, fertilise and irrigate. Then God will make apples! Nor can I produce the fruit of the Spirit. But I can fertilise and irrigate the roots. ". . . on His law . . . mediate day and night . . . like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (Ps. 1:2,3). Then God will produce the fruit!

How can we expect the *fruit* without the *roots*?

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

Frail human intellect is not the wisdom of God. James said, **"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God . . . and it shall be given . . ."** (1:5). That is a promise. He may subject me to painful experiences to develop that wisdom or He may reveal it to me through His word, or He may give it to me.

Contrast that with human intellect, puny but proud, which abuses 'proof texts' and 'argues religion.'

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, . . . This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."

Human wisdom can so easily use truth as a damaging weapon. Divine wisdom is gentle:

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits . . . the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:13-18).

Real wisdom is not shown in arrogance by them that build syllogisms.

GOD-GIVEN LOVE

What happens to heart-power? It fades to a pallor beside the **"love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts . . ."** (Rom. 5:5).

Have you ever said, "I know God has commanded me to love everyone, but this one person I just can't stand. Did God command the impossible?"

Real love is not a feeling. It is always a pattern of behaviour, a plan of action.

Jesus said, **"Love your enemies . . . do good to them that hate you . . . For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"** (Matt. 5:43-48).

We can "do" love, whether we "feel" it or not! This kind of loving is indispensable to spiritual fruitfulness. But it comes by the power of God (Rom. 5:5). He will give us the strength to love His way. This is infinitely greater than being at the mercy of our emotions.

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

Then there was will-power. It is a broken reed at best. But our will-power can be far surpassed when we are **"Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man"** (Eph. 3:16). What promises!

". . . able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:13-21).

Our capacity for good will be reinforced by the Lord. He will give us victory over ourselves.

A pre-school boy was watching his father tinker with an electric typewriter. It wouldn't function. First, his father fumbled with the switch. No power. Then the drive engine. Still nothing. Finally his son solved the problem. "Daddy," he said, "I think before it can get turned on, it's got to be plugged in."

That is it! We spend a lot of time fumbling with externals, making resolutions, anguishing, struggling . . . but failing, because we can't get 'turned on' until we are 'plugged in' to God's resources.

Intellect won't do it, emotional stimulation will spin out, will-power is too weak. Only when we are exposed to the power that God gives, will our restless selves be managed.

L. ANDERSON.

SIN - WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH IT?

Any problem arising in the life of an individual demands to be dealt with in some way. This is true of the little problems and it is true of man's greatest problem - sin. The fact that man has been given a conscience and has also been exposed to divine truth means that he cannot escape an inward compulsion to do something with his sin.

When boiled down to its essence, history is a long record of what men do with their sins. Entire nations have been affected by what leaders have done with their sins. Whether one has national influence or not, the fact remains that the disposition he makes of his sins will affect others. History will also reflect that man has not changed over the centuries in that he still attempts to deal with sin in much the same ways he did milleniums ago. Each man needs to look at his own attempts to deal with sin.

1. *Man's first reaction to sin is to hide it.* This is seen in the first instance of sin recorded in the Bible. **"But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, Where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself"** (Gen. 3:9,10). Confronted with the awareness of sin and the prospect of facing God, Adam first thought of hiding. Of course, his attempt to hide his sin actually revealed it, but he was no more aware of that than man is today.

Frequently, an indication of our attempt to hide sin from God is our failure to pray as often as we once did, or the abandoning of prayer altogether. Just like Adam, we are embarrassed and feel uncomfortable in the presence of God. We would rather just not talk to Him. Of course, we know that He knows anyway, but we would just rather not strike up a conversation with Him. Why would a reasonable adult do such a childish thing?

Shame brings a natural reaction in man. That reaction is to hide. Man knows that he has sinned and he is ashamed, and his initial reaction is exactly the same as was Adam's in the same situation - hide!

Feeling exposed, man seeks to cover his exposure. Adam said, **"Because I was**

naked . . . I hid myself." Nothing is more frightening than the threat of some mistake, some sin in our life being exposed, so we desperately try to hide it.

2. *Some men boast of their sin.* "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves" (Isa. 3:9). There is a growing tendency in our land for men to be proud of sin. Terrible deeds that would have brought shame to a man a generation ago may well bring the approval of the crowd in our day. This brazen, crude use of sin is motivated by at least two things.

Sometimes, boasting about sin is a method of defence on the part of the boaster. He is aware of his sin and the fact that it is well-known, so there is no need to try to hide it. Such a person feels a need to defend his wrong or he would not make such an issue about that particular wrong in his life, but since no real defence can be made he attempts to pass it off as something of which he is proud.

Probably the most common cause for boasting of sin is to attract attention. Many are poor, emotionally starved people who grasp at straws to attract attention. Such a person must do something that will attract attention and then having done it, must publicise it. Children often misbehave for this reason, and adults are just big children. This method of dealing with sin is repulsive to most and certainly it is pathetic, but it continues to be one of the ways in which men deal with sin.

3. *Some men deny their sin.* "Then Sarah denied, saying I laughed not; for she was afraid. And He said, Nay, but thou didst laugh" (Gen. 18:15). Again, man demonstrates a childish characteristic. Not knowing what to say or how to cope with being caught in sin, it seems easy simply to deny it against all the evidence to the contrary. Of course, the adult who does this is a bit more sophisticated than the child.

Denial of specific sin sometimes comes through a general denial of sin. Through a process of rationalisation some have convinced themselves they live in "sinless perfection." Some will claim flatly that they do not sin, or have not sinned in X number of years. John destroys this claim when he writes, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

Other men deny their sin by saying that certain things are not sin. This method might be called "label changing." By this process "sin" is changed to a "mistake" or a "weakness" or a "misunderstanding." Such reasoning concludes that "socially acceptable" actions just could not be sin. Nevertheless, this process is simply the denial of sin.

4. *Man likes to share his sins.* "My Son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause" (Prov. 1:10,11). Some, realising they are entangled in sin, seem compelled to draw others into the net with them.

Miserable in sin, this individual somehow feels he will be more comfortable if others are brought in to share his sin. The old "everybody is doing it" argument is especially effective in this manoeuvre. A poor method of dealing with sin, for sure, but effective in luring others into the mire.

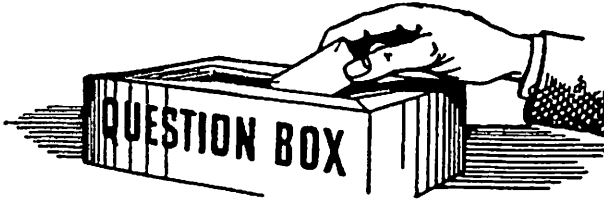
5. *The only effective solution to sin is to wash it away in the blood of the Lamb.* "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Salvation from sin which is in Christ is the only acceptable solution to the problem. Hiding, denying, boasting or sharing of sin only compounds its power.

Honesty demands that man face the fact that he is a sinner. Paul tells the Romans that God gave the Law to make man aware of sin and to bring him to a realisation that

he cannot conquer sin himself. When man comes to realise and openly admit that he is overwhelmed by sin, he is then ready to receive the cleansing from sin that comes in Christ.

This is demonstrated on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. When the great number of people present to hear Peter's sermon had reached this point and sought help they were told: "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" *Remission of sins!* That is the only answer for man and remission is only *in Christ*.

G. COOK.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

Romans 8:22. "Paul says that, '*the whole creation has been groaning together in travail until now.*' What does he mean?" (Revised Standard Version)

This month we return to the question with which I began in the last issue, but to which, for lack of space, I was unable to give adequate attention.

It is wise, when encountering a difficult verse of scripture, to put it in its proper context; read what goes before it and what follows. When we do this with this verse in **Romans 8**, we find that the chapter proclaims the believer's confident hope, in a manner that stands in glorious contrast with the bleak hopelessness which runs through **chapter 7**, especially in verses 7 to 24.

Romans 7 - A chapter of Law and Death.

This chapter deals with Law - all *kinds* of law. But Paul is particularly concerned with the law of sin, and he describes the despair of the man whom, he describes as '*captive to the law of sin*' (v.23).

The despair of the man is clearly heard in the cry in verse 24; '*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*'

The word, 'wretched' - '*talaipores*'- describes one who has been reduced to weariness by hard-labour. In fact, the latter part of the word - '*poros*' - is the word for 'callus,' bringing to mind hands roughened with exhausting toil, and we find it again in the word '*porosis*,' for 'hardness,' or 'callousness,' in **Mark 3:5**.

The man's wails of agony strikes us with even greater force when Philip Dodderidge, quite accurately, uses the phrase, '*this dead body*,' because it suggests that Paul is very probably alluding to an extremely gruesome form of punishment which, in ancient times, was known to have been inflicted on those guilty of murder.

There is a great deal of evidence to show that the murderer was sometimes bound to the corpse of his victim; hence the question in that verse.

In the following lines, Virgil, the Greek poet, describes this punishment as it was imposed by one particularly cruel Greek King.

*"The living and the dead at his command
Were coupled, face to face and hand to hand;
Till, choked with stench, in loathed embrace,
The lingering wretches pined away and died."*

If you think that this was horrid and uncivilized behaviour, let me remind you that,

in the reign of Richard 1st, the famous 'Richard the Lion-heart' beloved of film-producers, a law was passed relating to the Crusades, which governed those who sailed to the Holy Land. It stated that. *"He who kills a man on shipboard shall be bound to the dead body and thrown into the sea; if a man is killed on shore, the slayer shall be bound to the dead body and buried with it".*

So, no matter how we look at them, the words of Paul vividly depict the hopelessness and misery of the sinner, who finds himself bound to a burden from which he sees no release.

Romans 8 - A chapter of Grace and Life!

But then, in total contrast, **Romans 8** declares the liberty which the Christian has in Christ. *'There is no sentence to be served!'* literally, *'No penal servitude'* for those in Jesus Christ! (vv. 1-2). We have received the Spirit who adopts us and Who bears witness with our own spirit that we are the children of God. This means that we have become joint-heirs with Christ, providing we are prepared to suffer with Him in order to share His glory. (vv. 15-17).

This thought of suffering then leads Paul to acknowledge that, at this present time, suffering is the common experience in life (v. 18). But he quickly tells us it is nothing - not worth mentioning! - in view of the glory which is to come.

At the present time, we, who already possess *spiritual life* in Christ, are waiting for what he describes as *'the redemption of our bodies'* (v. 23).

A Complete Redemption!

It is about this consummation of the divine plan of redemption that he writes in vv. 19 to 23 of the 8th chapter. At the present time, *'the creation waits with eager longing.'* I use this rendering of v. 19 because I believe it is easier to understand than the one we find in the 'A.V.'

The word *'creation'* is defined by Thayer, as *'the sum and aggregate of all created things.'* It refers to the whole of nature; everything we see around us, and all that lives. The world of creation is waiting for something to happen *'with eager longing.'* This last phrase is the translation of just *one* word, and it is a word which presents a very vivid picture. Its meaning becomes clear when we break it up into its three constituent parts, which are; *'apo, kara, dokia.'* That is *'apokaradokia.'*

The word *'apo'* means *'away,'* *'kara'* means *'head'* and *'dokia'* means to *'watch.'*

Put the three parts together and we have a picture of someone, stretching out his head - straining his neck - to watch, in eager expectation of some great event.

Now, we know that when God made everything, it was *'very good,'* and perfect Man lived in a perfect environment (**Gen. 1:31**). But says Paul, creation is *'groaning'* up to this present time (v. 23). That word reveals that *this* is not the world as God meant it to be, and is waiting for a change, and *'agonizing'* as it waits.

But it is a hopeful agony, similar to that of a woman who is expecting the birth of her child. She endures suffering in anticipation of the joy that is to come.

We see this from Paul's use of the word *'travail'* in verse 22.

For What are we Waiting?

What is it for which creation is waiting so eagerly? Look again at verses 19 and 21. All creation is *'longing for the revealing'* - (*'apokalosis'* - *'revelation'*) - *'of the sons of God,'* which means the Lord's Return.

And what does the creation expect? To *'obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God'* which will complete the redemption of believers at His Coming.

I use the phrase *'complete the redemption,'* because we already enjoy a partial redemption as forgiven children of God. But there is a *'salvation'* yet to come (**Rom.**

13:11), and we are now awaiting *'the redemption of our bodies'* (v. 23).

The Comprehensive effects of Sin.

According to **Gen. 3**, when God imposed punishment on all three involved in that first sin, Adam, Eve and the Serpent, He made it clear that the consequences of their disobedience were not limited to themselves alone. The earth itself was affected.

Because of them the ground itself was cursed and would no longer produce freely, as it had previously done. Furthermore, what had been a pleasant occupation would now become *'toil,'* and Adam was told *'By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread . . .'*

Yet, there was a glimmer of hope. The message of the Bible is one of *'Generation, Degeneration and Regeneration'* and it records that God spoke of a time when the effects of sin would be cancelled forever. The destruction of sin and Satan himself, would come through *'the seed of the woman'* (**Gen. 3:15**), who would make possible mankind's redemption.

God had warned Adam that disobedience would affect him in two ways (**Gen. 2:17**). The penalty imposed on disobedience would be death, both spiritual and physical. The Hebrew text reads, *'dying, thou shalt die.'*

The first and immediate consequence of their sin was that they died *spiritually*. The root meaning of the word *'death'* is *'separation.'* Spiritually, Adam and Eve died instantly. They were separated from God by their sin, and banished from the Garden, we understand that they no longer had fellowship with Him, or free access to Him.

Furthermore, the process of *physical* death commenced. Sickness and suffering, which they had never experienced before, affected their physical bodies.

They began to age, until, as God had warned them, they died and their bodies returned to the ground out of which they had been formed.

But, thanks to the grace of God, His plan of Redemption includes salvation on two levels, so to speak.

First; it embraces the instant restoration of Man's spiritual relationship with God, because it makes possible a new, vibrant life, which brings him back into fellowship with God.

Second; it promises the cancellation of the effects of sin on Man's physical body, when, at the resurrection, *'this mortal shall put on immortality,'* as Paul writes to the Christians at Corinth, in that glorious **1st Corinthians 15**.

Our Glorious Hope

It is for this that both believers in Christ - and Creation itself - is waiting.

At the Second Coming, the redeemed soul of the believer will be united with his raised and renewed body, we *'according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells'* (**1st Peter 3:13**).

It is for this glorious day - which is surely coming! - that even *'creation groans'* stretching out in eager anticipation!

Questions to : Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston,
Renfrewshire. PA6 7NZ, Scotland.

A CHURCH IS A HOSPITAL FOR SINNERS, NOT A MUSEUM FOR SAINTS

Things that can cause brethren to fall from Grace and turn students and visitors back from the church.

1. Lack of studies: 1 Peter 2 v 2; 2 Timothy 2 v 15.
2. Half repented (failure to surrender all sins to Christ): Luke 13: 1-5; Matt. 21:28-30.

3. Lust: James 1:14 & 15; 1 John 2:16; 2 Peter 1:4.
4. Temptation: 1 Cor. 10:13; James 1:12.
5. Divisions: 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Romans 16:17; 1 Cor. 11:18.
6. Rebuke (The way one does it): Luke 17:3; 1 Timothy 5:20.
7. Fail to help when in need: Ephesians 4:28; Acts 20:35.
8. Failure to know one's problem and help to solve it: Gal. 6: 1 & 2.
9. Visitation for encouragement: Acts 7:23; 15:36; James 1:27.
10. Time of meeting and closing: 1 Cor. 14:40; Acts 3:1.
11. Long sermons: Acts 20:9; 1 Cor. 14:40.
12. The way we study (long arguments without conclusion).
13. Response to a prayer: 1 Cor. 14: 16 & 17.
14. Outward dress: 1 Peter 3:3 & 4; 1 Timothy 2:9.
15. Failure to admit one's fault: Matt. 18:15-17; James 5:16.
16. Failure to do what we teach: 1 Cor. 11:1; Romans 2:21.
17. One man show (authority): 3 John 9-10.
18. Failure to allow everybody to bring his view during discussions.
19. Individual conduct (both inside and outside the Church).
20. **Harshly** refusing an individual who is not a member of the Church to partake the Lord's Supper.
21. To assign anyone to lead service: 1 Cor. 14:40; 2 Timothy 2:2.
22. Putting our trust in a brother in the Church (you will fall when he falls): Psalm 118:8.
23. Desire to be rich overnight: Matt. 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:10.
24. To discuss Church problems in presence of visitors.

Bad men excuse their faults, good men abandon them.

EMMANUEL ADDO,
Yorogo, Northern Ghana.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 2	2 Chronicles 24:15-25	Luke 11:27-54
May 9	Deuteronomy 8:1-14	Luke 12:1-21
May 16	1 Kings 10:14-29	Luke 12:22-40
May 23	1 Samuel 15:10-26	Luke 12:41-59
May 30	Psalm 8	Luke 13:1-21

JONAH AND SOLOMON

The Master regarded Jonah and Solomon as historical figures. That is good enough for me. The story of Jonah is a fascinating one because he was sent to the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, to preach repentance to them. At first, he did not want to go, but he made it in the end. The facts are familiar to all, I am sure. Personally, I have much enjoyed studying Assyrian history over the years,

and the work of D.J. Wiseman, Emeritus Professor of Assyriology, University of London, is much to be admired. So also are the efforts in the past of Sir Austen Henry Layard, who excavated at the sites of a number of the ancient Assyrian cities, including Nineveh. The fruits of his labours can be seen today in the British Museum in London. I much enjoyed his book *Nineveh and its Remains*, first published in 1849. The point is this: Solomon, the Queen of the South, Jonah and the Ninevites were all real people in the real world. And because they were real, they left their mark on the globe. But so did Jesus! He was greater than Jonah and Solomon, as He declared.

No wonder the people in Jesus' generation stood condemned because, on the whole, they did not repent at the

Master's preaching. They were so unlike the Queen of Sheba and the people of Nineveh. The former was anxious to hear God's wisdom through Solomon and the latter were anxious to change according to the teaching of God's true prophet, Jonah. There are clear lessons here for the "now" generation.

SIX WOES

John Stott once wrote a book entitled *Christ the Controversialist*. How right he was with this title! Personally, I do not think the Master went about specifically looking for controversy, but He certainly did not "beat about the bush" when certain occasions arose. Jesus always told it as it was. He spoke the truth. He is the Truth.

Jesus, in this portion of Scripture (11:37-54), is seen to condemn the scribes and the Pharisees. But who exactly were they? The scribes were the experts in the study of the Law of Moses. They worked to preserve the Law; they gave instructions on the Law; and they were entrusted with the administration of the Law as judges in the Sanhedrin. So the term "lawyer" and "scribe" are synonymous. The Pharisees or the "separated ones" were first mentioned as a distinct group under the high priest Jonathan (160-143 B.C.). They were a group, primarily of scribes, who interpreted the Scriptures according to the oral law, which they held as as ancient as the written Law. "Their concern in interpreting the Law (the Torah) was first of all to apply the eternal Law to the changing circumstances of their day, by means of elaborate arguments. Secondly, they sought to 'make a hedge about the Law', that is, to take added precautions to prevent the breaking of the Law". . . It was their punctilious zeal for the letter of the Law which was condemned by Jesus as hypocrisy" (Edwin Yamauchi).

The scribes and Pharisees thought they were right about everything, but Jesus clearly showed where they had got

it wrong. They did not like what they heard. "When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose Him fiercely and to besiege Him with questions, waiting to catch Him in something He might say" (11:53-54, N.I.V.). It was a conflict they were never going to win.

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

It is interesting to note that someone can be rich and foolish at the same time. There is a clear warning in this parable for all wealthy people. Jesus' words are as appropriate today as they were then. The great thing about Jesus' teaching is that it is so up to date.

Actually, Jesus was responding here to a request. "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" (12:13). (The dividing of an inheritance can often cause division within a family. I have seen this happen more than once in my thirty-two years as a banker.) Jesus was unwilling to act as a judge on the matter. He went on to give a warning: "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses" (12:15). Covetousness has always been condemned by God. "You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17). The Greek word for covetousness is *pleonexia*. "*Pleonexia* is the sin of the man who has allowed full play to the desire to have what he should not have, who thinks that his desires and appetites and lusts are the most important thing in the world, who sees others as things to be exploited, who has no god except himself and his desires" (William Barclay).

Many people are obsessed with earthly riches, but few with heavenly riches. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up

for yourselves treasures in heaven . . ." (Matthew 6:19-20). Everyone who is desperate to win the lottery should carefully read Jesus' words and learn from them. The parable of the rich fool sounds a warning to all those who trust in worldly wealth and want to take life easy by eating and drinking and being merry. The good Master also said: "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13).

WORRY AND WATCHFULNESS

Jesus exhorted His disciples not to worry about their life and to be continuously watchful. God will provide. We can take great comfort from this fact. The providence of God is evident everywhere. In this world there is always enough for man's need, but not enough for man's greed. But we must remember the society in which Jesus spoke His eternal truths. It was a world of rich and poor, including slaves, with no real middle class. Life for the masses was tough, hard and often painful. F.W. Far-ner gives us a taste of the then Roman world in his book *The Early Days of Christianity*. "Only a little above the slaves stood the lower classes, who formed the vast majority of the freeborn inhabitants of the Roman Empire. They were, for the most part, beggars and idlers, familiar with the grossest indignities of an unscrupulous dependence . . . Their life, as it is described for us by their contemporaries, was largely made up of squalor, misery and vice". Such was the broader picture. The application of Jesus' teaching was to produce a revolutionary change in the world - a change, of course, for the better. 12:31 is a key verse: "**But rather seek you the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you**".

NOT PEACE BUT DIVISION

The family unit is important to God. After all, He created it. I see each family in our nation as a cell of the body. Slowly destroy the cells and you will eventually kill the body. However, Jesus

did not conceal the impact He would have on certain families - division. Jesus declared: "**He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me**" (Matthew 10:37). Edwin Rice has written: "Jesus came to cast a sword, the sword of truth, into a world of falsehood. It was Christ against the devil. Strife, contention, wars, must be the natural result; for the devil and the wicked will fight against the truth. To show how general and how furious the contest would be, he gives a specimen of the effect of the gospel in a single household . . ." Yes, love for God may rend families, because some in the family hate God; but love to Christ is higher than love to friends or parents. We must love Christ supremely.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus likens the kingdom to a mustard seed and yeast (13:18-21). The first speaks of the great outward enlargement of the Church; the second, the inner workings and assimilating power of the gospel. A group of us recently studied the subject of the kingdom of God. We were encouraged by the fact that Daniel spoke of its beginning and its indestructibility (Daniel 2:44). Herein lies my hope, because I am a citizen of it.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who was the father of Adonijah and Absalom?
2. To whom was Michal married before David?
3. At the beginning of his book, how old was Ezekiel?
4. Who had twin boys called Perez and Zerah?
5. Who was the mother of Ishmael?
6. Whose ten children were all killed at the same time by a storm?

7. Who foretold a famine which would spread throughout the entire Roman world?
8. In which country was Paul converted?
9. Who is the dragon in John's vision?
10. Who was the first martyr among the apostles?

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Slamannan District: On Saturday, 6th March the Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting took place at Dennyloanhead Meetinghouse when the subject discussed was "What is the Kingdom of God and when did it come"? Our speakers were Bro. Mark Plain, Tranent, and Bro. Niall Scobbie, Dennyloanhead. The chairman was Bro. Bill Cook, Dunfermline. The speakers made a very comprehensive job of dealing with the subject and this led to many increased avenues of discussion during the hour-long period devoted to questions and comments from the audience. As usual, much more emerged from the subject than was generally anticipated and a very interesting and enjoyable time was had by all. Our next meeting will, God willing, be held at Haddington on June 5th when the subject will be "Who were the Pharisees and the Sadducees and why did Jesus attack their teaching"? The speakers will be Bro. Alistair Scobbie, Dennyloanhead, and Bro. James R. Gardiner, Haddington. The Chairman will be Bro. Graeme Scobbie, Dennyloanhead. Once again we thank the sisters at Dennyloanhead for their generous hospitality.

JRG.

OBITUARY

Motherwell, Scotland: The church at Motherwell chronicles the death of brother William Davidson, who passed

away in Southhampton on the 26th of January, 1999 aged 80. William was the brother of our late and highly esteemed brother Hugh Davidson, who died in July, 1989. William was the father of four children and seven grandchildren and we extend our sincere sympathies to them all. Brother Ian S. Davidson officiated at the crematorium near Southampton and was accompanied by sister Nettie Marshall, sole sister of the deceased. We thank God for the life of our brother William and especially for his patience during ill-health in the latter days. He is now at rest in Jesus.

WILLIAM PURCELL,
Secretary.

Dennyloanhead: It is with sadness that we record the death of our sister Helen Brown at the age of 81 years. She died on Tuesday 2nd of February and Bro. Peter Sneddon officiated at the funeral. Our sympathies and prayers go out to her son Richard at this sad time.

G. SCOBBIE.

COMING EVENTS

BUCKIE SOCIAL

SATURDAY, 1st MAY, 1999

Details later

KIRKCALDY SOCIAL

SATURDAY, 17th APRIL, 1999

3.30 p.m.

Speaker: Mike Heinemeir

ALL WELCOME

ARGLYE STREET,

HINDLEY

SATURDAY, 5th JUNE, 1999

7.30 p.m.

SUNDAY, 6th JUNE, 1999

10.30 a.m. and 6.00 p.m.

Speaker: Frank Worgan (Renfrew)

GHANA APPEAL

In the past month work has begun on the Patriensa meeting place roof in the Ashanto region. This building came to a standstill in 1995 through lack of funds and higher priorities. It is good to hear that this has begun as it will encourage the church who have been very patient for the next phase.

I have received letters of intended out-reach work in the next month. This is not confined to one area of Ghana, this is in the far north, the western areas, central and eastern sections. The work is tireless and the enthusiasm appears to be exhaustless. The income for the Ghana appeal is fairly consistent but last month the income did drop significantly and I was dependent on a special appeal to meet the current needs. I write this not to complain, but many brethren have requested that I should inform the readership of the real situation. Some think if I do not appeal then everything is alright. I am generally happy to accept what I receive and to process and report on the work monthly. The readership has been very generous over the past ten years and I would hope we could keep this appeal going for a few more years while we have the opportunity before us. I have targets and programmes which

admittedly are self imposed but they have been met for a long time now but I forecast I will be about £900 short by the end of this month. I would appreciate if those who have stopped supporting this work would reconsider their decision.

The Church continues to grow in Ghana. All the glasses, clothes, books and children's toys received in the past month have been sent out to Ghana to villages where we thought they could make the best use of them. Thank you for your continued support.

Please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and sent to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU. Tel. (01383) 728624.

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- 10. James (Acts 12:2).
 - 9. Satan (Revelation 20:2).
 - 8. Syria (Acts 22:10).
 - 7. Agabus (Acts 11:28).
 - 6. Job (1:2 & 18-19).
 - 5. Hagar (Genesis 16:15).
 - 4. Tamar (Genesis 38:24-30).
 - 3. Thirty (1:1).
 - 2. Patiel (2 Samuel 3:15).
 - 1. David (1 Kings 1:6 & 11).

ANSWERS

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