

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## LIFE'S PURPOSE, PLAN AND PRIZE

When we look around at the marvellous creative powers of God, at the strange creatures the world contains and the natural phenomena it exhibits, we can but come to the conclusion that the next world (the new heavens and the new earth) will be even more wonderful. It is incredible that multitudes live and die without ever noticing the handiwork of God, or recognising it as such. To what purpose were such lives we might ask? — to many life must appear purposeless. Firstly, I suggest that life is more solemn and serious than death because of the responsibilities of life — after all once we die we cannot change the things we did, or failed to do, in life. Every useful, true and happy life must, therefore have a **purpose** to it. Those who have no purpose in life languish and fritter their years away. Every successful life must also have a **plan** to it, otherwise opportunities are missed and years are wasted (nothing is more valuable in this world than time). Some don't formalise or materialise any plan until very late in life and it is too late then to do much. Every rationalised and satisfying life must have an incentive to it, or goal, or prize. If our lives should lack any of those three ingredients we shall be as ships upon a stormy sea, tossed to and fro, heading for no destination in particular; or as birds flying around looking for somewhere to land but finding none.

It is astonishing to consider the number of men and women who live and die what appear to be happy lives who never seem to have considered from where they came, why they are here, or where they will go when they die. Surely they must see no purpose to life; consequently they must have no plan for living and must know of no prize for which they should strive. The Psalmist says that, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament declareth His handiwork . . ." but many can go out on a beautifully starry night and never even notice the stars far less acknowledge them as God's handiwork. Some can watch the reapers cutting and stacking the golden grain each year but never link the scene with the providence of God. When springtime comes (like now) after the long winter and the miracle of nature is demonstrated again before our eyes, and life bursts forth again in bud and blade, how many of the earth's population will give a fleeting thought to the wonder of it all, far less associate it with God. Yet God promised centuries ago that, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. 8:22). Even when one of the greatest miracles of nature takes place, an everyday event, and a child is born, with the perfection of little fingers and toes, ears and eyes, tiny lungs, heart, kidneys and stomach; all functioning so wonderfully, yet even then many never look upon it as a marvel of God's creative power, and are usually more than pre-occupied with lengthy discussions on finding a trendy name. How blind we are to the things that matter. Truly as Jesus said, we have eyes but blind and have ears but are very hard of hearing. The story is told of Dr. Halley, a friend of Sir Isaac Newton, who admired Newton as a scientist but did not share Newton's faith in God. He considered that the universe 'just happened.' Newton made a large, beautiful,

mathematically precise model of the universe consisting of two globes (Terrestrial and Celestial), each with all the various planets. By turning a handle the globes, planets and satellites all revolved at their differing speeds, just missing one another, just like the real universe. When Halley saw the model in Newton's laboratory he rushed over to it and was flabbergasted with wonder and amazement, especially as he turned the handle. When he recovered from his astonishment he wanted to know who had made this ingenious and clever contraption. Sir Isaac Newton said, "Why should you think anybody made it. It 'just happened'." Doubtless a good point — if nobody was required to make the real universe, why should it need someone to make a model? And so, like Halley, we must all recognise that God has a purpose and design in all that he does, and we must discover God's purpose in putting us on this earth. Man has a duty summed up for us by the very wise Solomon in Ecc. 12:13 "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

The apostle Paul expressed his purpose, plan and prize in living, in Phil. 3:13-14 thus, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus."

(1) **The Purpose.** From this short statement we learn of Paul's purpose in life. "This one thing I do." He tried to forget the things he had left behind (which were considerable) and reach forth to the things which were before. "I press towards the mark." Paul here is speaking to men who gathered in their thousands to watch their countrymen engage in all forms of sporting activities, gymnastics and athletics and introduces that common parlance into his remarks. He was speaking to those who had their own 'Olympics'. Thus he says he was like an athlete pressing towards the mark (or winning post) for the prize. "I count not myself to have apprehended" — i.e. he had not yet secured the prize, but this one thing he did was to press towards the mark so that he might perchance gain the prize. This was his serious single-minded purpose in life — it took pre-eminence over all others — "This one thing I do". Different men have different purposes in life — some aim high, some low. Napoleon wanted to conquer the world. Some are more modest and would be satisfied to be Chief Clerk in the office or breed the best canary in the country. I had a bachelor uncle who strained every sinew in his body to get first prize each year in the Flower Show for his chrysanthemums. Some would like to 'win the pools' or own a vast fortune. What did God say to such a man — the rich farmer who had to build new barns to house his wealth? "Thou Fool". "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, drink and be merry. But God said to him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided." Similarly if our purpose in life is to reach heights of social fame or intellectual distinction and the plaudits of men. Paul turned his back on all that. He said, "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law a Pharisee, concerning zeal I persecuted the church, touching righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me I counted as loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." Surely that must be the attitude of mind to cultivate, that singleness of purpose that whatever we may be losing of an earthly nature, whether a great career of even just friends and relations we willingly count that not loss, but actual gain, for Christ. "brethren, *this one thing* I do, forgetting those things left behind, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God."

(2) **The Plan.** Using the terminology of the athletes again, Paul discloses his Life's strategy in Heb. 12:1-2. He says, "Wherefore, seeing we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God." Paul here tells us that Jesus Himself in

order to gain the prize set before Him had to endure the cross and the shame before being exalted to the right hand of God. And Paul saw no good reason why he (Paul) would be any exception. As the hymnwriter says, "Only he who bears the cross, can rightfully hope to wear the crown." Just as no athlete would dream of running a race in wellington boots and an overcoat, so, says Paul, prospective runners must lay aside every weight and encumbrance. Paul had left behind much — his Jewish teachers and friends; his love of Judaism; his promising career, his home and family. He had exchanged it for physical beatings, stripes, being stoned; journeyings often, shipwreck, perils in the deep, perils of robbers, perils in the city and in the wilderness, in captivity and prison in the final years of life, and apart from fairly constant physical hunger and thirst, martyrdom itself. Paul's plan was to forget the things he had left behind, and even regard them as dung, that he might gain Christ. He certainly run the race with patience, even with cheerfulness, ever looking (as he advocated) to Jesus, for strength and inspiration.

(3) **The Prize.** and what was that prize Paul sought? What was the secret behind Paul's ability to leave all behind and accept the privations and dangers of his new mode of life? It must have been some prize indeed. To continue our previous quotation from Phil. 3:8 Paul explains, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." Paul's conception of the prize was that he might win Christ; and be found in Him; that he might have Christ's righteousness; that he might know Jesus and the power of His resurrection: that he might have fellowship with Christ in their mutual sufferings and die a similarly violent death, and that he might attain to the resurrection of the dead to glory. At the very end of Paul's life he had certainly no regrets upon which to reflect as he awaited death in prison. He did not regret the path he had followed. He had no recriminations about his purpose, plan and prize in life for he could say, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is now at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing." (II Tim. 4:7). His plan in life had been to fight the good fight; to finish the course set for him, and to keep the faith. Henceforth there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness — the prize of the high calling of God. Paul reverting again to the imagery of the games, says, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all but one receiveth a prize. So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." And so the crown is an incorruptible crown, or as Peter describes it — an inheritance. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (1st Peter 1:3).

Considering our present life-style what are the chances that we shall at the end be able to say with Paul, "I have fought a good, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me . . .?"

EDITOR

## GLEANINGS

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

### OUR THEME — THE POTTER AND CLAY

Our text: "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." — Jeremiah 18:4

T. H. MILNER: "Many religious inquirers experience the greatest possible perplexity in

regard to the divine procedure in operating on man. The reason of their perplexity is obvious. They look upon God as operating by mere caprice. They forget that he conducts his moral as well as his physical empire on fixed principles — they make no attempt to discover what these principles are — they seek for no rule by which to interpret the divine proceeding — they overlook the Bible declarations of the character of God, as a Being infinite in wisdom, justice, love and truth — they fail to distinguish between things that differ — they do not give passages of Scripture their proper reference, nor draw from them their true meaning — they never think of explaining obscure doctrinal allusions by the facts of the case to which they refer — they do not keep in view that God operates by agents and instrumentalities, nor do they think of inquiring how the agent employed has obeyed the divine will, or what may have been the nature of the means adopted — they do not remember that such is the idiom of human language, that things are ascribed to the chief operator, when they are actually the doings of inferior agents and done by him against the wish of him under whose control they are.

It is no wonder, then, that serious difficulties are experienced on such topics as are alluded to in the following passages of Scripture. Give us your attention, dear reader, while we endeavour to shew you, that these portions of Scripture, confessedly the most perplexing, fully accord with Scripture in general in shewing that God is infinitely wise, and just, and kind; and that the design of all his operations toward man is, that he may be saved.

Rom. 9.19-23 is a vindication of God's sovereign prerogative in the work of creation, as well as in providence and grace. God had a right to create, and to give to the creature his position in the universe, while the creature has no right to say — 'Why hast thou made me thus?' The potter has full power over the clay to make vessels both to honour and dishonour. But be it observed, that while God had this power, we are distantly told, both in this passage and in Jer. 18 1-10, from which Paul quotes, that it was not God's wish to make any vessel to dishonour.

Jeremiah says that the vessel was 'marred in the hands of the potter' — *not that the potter intended to mar it, but the very reverse*. He is speaking of the highly privileged house of Israel as the vessel, and its evil doing as the marring, and the cause of its being fitted for destruction. And Paul, alluding to God's unparalleled forbearance with the Jews, says, *that though willing to show his wrath and power, yet he 'endured them with much long-suffering.'*

There is no such doctrine here as that God has created any being for dishonour or destruction. The manifest doctrine of the passage, as borne out both by the words of Jeremiah and the history of the people referred to, is, that God finding his purposes of mercy frustrated by the wickedness of those on whose behalf they were manifest, and that all his long-suffering was unavailable to their salvation, there was no course left but to visit them with merited vengeance.

Such, dear reader, is God's mode of working both with nations and individuals.

We should think that potter a fool who made vessels simply to destroy them. We know that potters have sufficient power over the clay to make vessels for no other end than to dash them in pieces; but we know also that if so acting they would secure not respect but dishonour. So God, we know, has all power over nature to make of it what seems to him good. But that it has seemed good to him to create only to destroy, is utterly false. The Bible affirms the very opposite. Rom. 9 22 intimates that, so far from at once assigning to destruction those vessels — the obdurate Jews — fit for destruction — he endured them with much long-suffering.

Of this the history of the nation is proof; and the Scriptures give abundant assurance that it was only when, by their own continued intractable obduracy that nothing else could be done with them, destruction overtook the nation. It must not be forgotten, that it is to the Jews the Apostle refers in using the illustration of the potter and clay, and that he employed the figure to disabuse them of their conceits that they were the eternal favourites of heaven — that God would never cast them off, and that the Gospel Paul preached must be erroneous in calling not the Jews only, but Gentiles also.

This kept in mind, the Apostle's meaning is clear, and manifestly consistent with the Saviour's gracious farewell appeal when he cried, 'O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not'. The character of God is thus vindicated against any suspicion of capricious, tyrannical, ungenerous action. It is seen in beautiful consistency with every attribute of justice, holiness, truth, and mercy.

As with the nation of the Jews, so with individuals: what happened to them occurred as examples to us. Their intractableness rendered them vessels fit only for destruction — proper subjects of divine vengeance. So with every impenitent, obdurate neglecter of the Gospel. It depends on us whether we be found vessels of honour, or vessels of dishonour. 'In a great house,' says Paul to Timothy, 'there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. *If a man therefore purge himself he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work.*' Reader, see that you purify your soul in obeying the truth, and doubtless this honour shall be yours. This honour have all his saints."

*Selected by Leonard Morgan.*

## THE MEAL OFFERING

### PART I

(Read Lev. 2 & 6 vs. 14-23)

We see that the offering of Lev. Ch. 2 is not meat as is wrongly translated in A.V. but Meal and is offered in its various stages as corn, flour and bread, yet not in that particular order but rather as flour, bread and corn, to convey to us some very special truths relating to our Lord Jesus Christ, as we shall see. Again let us remind ourselves that this offering was never offered by itself but always with an animal sacrifice and for a very good reason as we saw in the introduction. As the meal offering speaks so clearly of the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus, we know that this alone could not save us, He had to die! So we have this beautiful combination represented in the meal offering together with an animal sacrifice of the perfect life and atoning death of the Saviour, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. So the meal offering then, is Christ, the perfect Man with all His human experiences that prepared and fitted Him for the great work of redemption.

This offering is divided into three sections and each section speaks of three things. The figure 3 has a special place among the Bible numerals; it speaks of Divine testimony and has its very origin in the Godhead, the Holy Trinity. So each of these sections tell their own story. Section 1 is in verses 1 to 3 where we have the Lord's earthly human life, His perfect Manhood. In Section 2, verses 4 to 11, His sufferings as the Man of Calvary and in Section 3, verses 12 to 16, His resurrection as represented by the First-fruits. So you see why they are not in their natural order of corn, flour and bread, for naturally the corn comes first, from which is made the flour, from which is made the bread; but rather in their spiritual order, representing the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in that wonderful sequence, flour, bread and corn.

But some might ask, "How do you know that these things represent the truths of which you speak?" Well, no statement of truth in the Bible is isolated but is always confirmed elsewhere in the Word of God. To the scriptures, then, and as usual we find the answer in the New Testament. Jesus compares Himself to the corn and the bread, so we assume that the intermediate state, the flour, must also speak of Him. Remember He said "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit?" referring to the wonderful results of His death and resurrection. So in figure He was the corn. In John 6 He also calls Himself the True Bread; what better confirmation could we have and on the night of His betrayal, He took bread and broke it and said "This is MY BODY which is broken for you" using it as a figure of Himself. In 1 Cor. 15 we have Christ's risen body spoken of as the first fruits and as the resurrection of the believer's body is questioned "with what body do they come?" the inference is drawn from nature, God giveth it a body. So here we have natural elements representing spiritual things.

Now for Section 1 and here we have the three things mentioned, the fine flour, the oil and the frankincense. The fine flour, I suggest, would represent the fineness of the character of the Lord Jesus in His human perfection as the Sinless Man. There was nothing rough or coarse about Him, nothing gritty or lumpy, in a sense of speaking. We sometimes see the advert about 'graded grains making finer flour' and the Lord Jesus was of the highest grade in the fine flour of His perfect humanity. There was nothing objectionable in what He did or said; the only ones who took exception to Him was when He exposed their sham and hypocrisy. He was full of grace and truth and the poor people heard Him gladly and wondered at the gracious words'

proceeded out His mouth. There was nothing repulsive about Him. On the contrary, He attracted all kinds to Him, even the little children. Such was the fine flour of His perfectly human character. The sinlessness of our Blessed Lord is taught in the New Testament as 2 Cor. 5 v 21 says 'He knew no sin', 1 Pet. 2 tells us 'He did no sin'. Heb. 4 v 15 says 'He was without sin' and in 1 John 3 we are told 'in Him is no sin' God saw in Jesus everything He desired to see in man, the law fulfilled in its entirety and so glorifying Him. So much for the fine flour.

The OIL is a type of the Holy Spirit. There are many figures used in the Bible of the Spirit of God in all His various functions and this is one of them. We take this from the vision given in Zech. 4 where we have the olive trees feeding the seven lamps of the candlestick and the Word of the Lord in verse 6 "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" saith the Lord. But notice verse 12 which speaks of the two golden pipes emptying the golden oil out of themselves. God symbolizes Diety and the golden oil undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit, that which keeps the light of testimony burning in the world through the churches according to Rev. 1, the Lord in the midst of the churches, the seven golden candlesticks. Let me suggest that the two golden pipes speak of the Father and Son for the sending of the Holy Spirit is attributed to both. In John 14 the Lord Jesus speaks of the Father sending the Holy Spirit, "Whom the Father will send in My Name" and in John 15 of Himself sending the Holy Spirit, in the words "The Comforter Whom I will send from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth." The two golden pipes emptying the golden oil out of themselves, sending to us the Holy Spirit to lighten us in the sanctuary and to make us shine in the world. Let us now look at the parable of the ten virgins. Five were wise and five were foolish. Wherein lay the difference? They all looked the same with their lamps but one vital thing was missing with those who were designated as foolish. They had no oil! And if there is no oil, there is no light! Romans 8 says 'if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His'. How typical of those who have only an empty outward profession and do not possess the Spirit of God. They have never been born again and when Jesus comes they will be left outside. A solemn warning yet a simple story that reminds us of the oil of the Holy Spirit.

Also in the meal offering we have the oil spoken of in three ways, a mingling, an anointing and a pouring thereupon and these fit so beautifully into the birth and life of the Lord Jesus. It was the mingling of the Holy Spirit that started off that human body as a baby in the womb of the virgin. Said the angel "the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee and that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God!" He was conceived miraculously by the mingling of the Holy Spirit with Mary. At His baptism He was anointed with the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove and in the synagogue at Nazareth He read from Isaiah "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; He hath anointed Me to preach, etc." And being full of the Holy Spirit, He returned in the power of the Spirit for He knew Him in His absolute fullness and the Spirit was the activating force in His life and ministry. The mingling, the anointing and the pouring thereupon.

When the meal offering was brought, a portion of the meal and oil was burned as a memorial upon the altar and the remainder became food for the priests. But NOT the frankincense! ALL the frankincense was for God! to be wholly burned on the altar. It seemed to be an unknown entity for we are never told what it is. It is one of the four ingredients that were mixed together according to the art of the apothecary, that made the incense that was burnt in the Holy Place, as we find in Exodus 30. Being then, as it was, ALL for God and something we are not sure about, perhaps it speaks of that which is beyond our comprehension, that which only God Himself can see in Jesus ineffable! That's why it was ALL for Him. The priest could not share it. It's the incomprehensible Christ! In Jesus prayer to His Father in Matt. 11 He could say, "No man knoweth the Son save the Father" and there is that depth in His personality, that mystery of godliness, which is beyond us, for it baffles human imagination. True it is, of course, that we know Him as our Saviour and Lord and in so many ways appreciate His Person and work but there is that in Christ which only the Father can enter into. We sometimes sing 'But the high mysteries of His Name; An angel's grasp transcend; The Father only (glorious claim!) The Son can comprehend!' Rev. 19 tells us He has a name written which no man knows but He Himself. The inscrutable, the incomparable Christ! The frankincense! The fragrance

of Christ in our worship which is only and all for God.

To be continued

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

July 1	Isaiah 53
8	I Samuel 16, 1-13
15	II Kings 4, 8-37
22	Leviticus 11, 1-24
29	Isaiah 49, 1-13
	Acts 8, 26-40
	Acts 9, 1-22
	Acts 9, 23-43
	Acts 10, 1-23
	Acts 10, 24-46

### VITAL NEWS

Our readings this month present three very important pictures of New Testament conversions. Shall we ever realise the full value of Luke's inspired history of the beginnings of the work of the apostles? They are just full of instruction for all time. In the space we have only partial glimpses are possible.

#### PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH

Philip was appointed by church, and apostles — by God in fact — to “serve tables,” but the work of love brought out in him powers far beyond this immediate need. What he learnt in christlike service took him into the evangelistic field when persecution drove out the Christians into surrounding districts. His work in Samaria was an astounding success but God had other work for him. The Treasurer of Queen Candace had become a proselyte to the law of Moses, probably through contact with Jews in Egypt. He was a man of culture and prosperity, the proud and fortunate possessor of a scroll of the prophecy of Isaiah. He must have been heart-whole in his religion, coming so far to observe Mosaic ritual at much cost. He was certainly a repentant believer in Jehovah. The warnings and promises of the prophets and the law occupied his mind as he journeyed, and they must have puzzled him as well as instructed him. We can perhaps put ourselves in his place and view a nation apparently deserted by their God and yet awaiting their messiah. We do not know to what extent he had heard of Jesus and His work — but he would only hear the false side of the story. The very words he was reading prepared him for

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Philip's message of love, sacrifice and forgiveness. We can imagine Philip's burning longing to tell the story, confirmed as it was by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and by the effect he had witnessed upon those who accepted the gospel, and became a community of transformed if not transfigured people — “all of us then reflect the glory of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3, 18 T.E.V.). His message went to the eunuch's heart, and brought him to the point of obedience. How readily will an honest heart ask “what doth hinder me to be baptised?” Verse 37 is omitted from later versions than A.V., not having sufficient manuscript authority but what is written took place or something very like it. The eminent minister of state surrendered to the Lord, doubtless in front of his retinue, and humbled himself in the water with the minister of the Lord. Happiness follows obedience and we do know that christianity spread into northern Africa very early. The account of the baptism allows for nothing but dipping.

#### THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

What a very different person we see here! One thing he had in common with the eunuch. He took his religion very seriously. We find it difficult to understand that Saul honestly believed the Sanhedrin's estimate of Jesus. Yet it was so. “I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26, 9). Spiritual blindness was treated with physical blindness before the truth struck home. Nevertheless he had to hear “It is hard for thee to kick against the goad” (v. 14). There was culpable blindness humbly confessed later (1 Cor. 15, 9). We can hardly think he was happy in “haling men and women,” voting against them, consenting to their death, holding the clothes of those who stoned Stephen and hearing his prayer, without some twinge of conscience.

But he was chosen of God while in the womb (Gal. 1, 15) to be a preacher of the gospel among the Gentiles. This Hebrew of Hebrews was brought to confession and repentance by a divine revelation. Obstinate-ly set upon a course of war against the truth he became its most effective proponent and

humblest devotee. No wonder is it that he wrote later "it is the power of God unto salvation." We observe that the initial steps in this 'volte face' were taken through human instruction. His revelations direct from heaven were granted later (2 Cor. 12). The way of salvation was given through Ananias. Saul's request for guidance was "Go into the city; and it shall be told thee . . ." A humble disciple was entrusted with the power and the message to heal and to instruct the once proud Pharisee. When baptism is not a humbling experience it may fail in its purpose. In Saul's case blindness involving helplessness and three days fasting in deep affliction of soul preceded the initial act of obedience. It would seem that Saul then went away into Arabia — a retreat in solitude preparing for his life's real work, in holy communion with the Lord (Gal. 1, 17). Possibly this is referred to in 2 Cor. 12. It was reasonable that he should make his first efforts in convincing his fellow Jews of the gospel, but when he went on from Damascus to Jerusalem he soon discovered that testimony there was futile (Acts 22, 18). Just where he thought his testimony would be most effective the Lord knew otherwise (22, 19-21). His appointed task was of greater importance and demanded the fuller and wider exercise of his special qualifications. A great crisis was facing the church which at that time had hardly shown itself — the unification of Jew and Gentile in one great brotherhood. His upbringing at the feet of Gamaliel, and his home training in a Gentile town as a Roman citizen surely fitted him for this.

### PETER AND CORNELIUS

God expected and required the Jews to be separate from their heathen neighbours. Their laws of ritual and cleanliness effectively prevented close companionship outside their nation. This had developed in them a contempt for all outside, and with it came mutual hatred. Jesus observed the appropriate laws and encouraged others to do so (Matt. 5, 18 and 19), UNTIL all be fulfilled. He rebuked all self-righteousness however, and finally bade His disciples to "Go into all the world." That the apostles, all Jews, failed to appreciate what this meant in practice is not surprising. It seemed thus necessary that there should be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Gentile believers in addition to

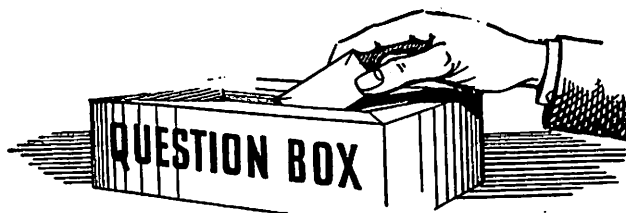
that at Pentecost. To Peter the keys were specifically promised — though he certainly shared the privilege with his fellow apostles. It was to him therefore that Cornelius was introduced. Who could have been more suitable than Cornelius to receive the outpouring? His character and his life were already in tune with the holiness of God. The natural reluctance Peter felt to this contact had to be removed miraculously by vision and commandment. How gracious was the Lord to Peter in meeting his objections! It was necessary that everything should fall into place to enable Peter to influence the church in Jerusalem and the other apostles. We read his able justification next month (11, 1-18). The response indicates surprise, and the fight for unification was begun, which Paul so energetically and ably continued — and we think in view of history, concluded. His letters and that to the Hebrews in particular settle the question, which quite naturally troubled the church in its early days when it was regarded as a Jewish institution — wrongly of course. Nevertheless "To the Jew first" (Rom. 1, 16). We note on this occasion, Peter asked "Can any man forbid the water?" Yet at the present time baptism is widely neglected, and even more widely perverted. Forgiveness is put before this simple act of obedience so often. It can of course be stressed too much and made an end in itself instead of a beginning! Obedience was required from those who were receiving divine approval miraculously. What can be more important?

### GLIMPSES INTO ROUTINE

How interesting is the comment, "So the church had peace" in Jewish and Samaritan districts. Her spiritual condition was good and real progress made. It indicates that the persecution in which Saul engaged had died down, and Peter was able to journey here and there giving help and encouragement. The other apostles doubtless were also busy. His visits to Lydda and Joppa must have stimulated the brethren and furthered the work of winning souls. This peace was not to last. For some reason Herod became incensed against Christians. No doubt the Jewish Authorities sought his aid in further endeavours to stop the multiplication of the membership but nothing could stop its spread to all parts of the world.

R. B. SCOTT






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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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"How would you argue with a convinced believer who says that the 'washing of feet' is a literal command to be observed ritually: "Wash ye one another's feet"?"

This question brings into focus once again the vexed discussion of how one should differentiate between custom and command. It is abundantly clear that many commands are given in the Bible which are binding on all Christians for all time; it is equally true that many instructions are given, which *seem* to be in the nature of commands, which are intended for *local* application. If we can differentiate between the two then we shall have performed a real service in the field of Bible study, and we shall, perhaps, rid ourselves of those conflicting ideas which waste so much time in discussion and argument. Probably the best way to deal with this question is to say something about commands and customs, and then to relate what we say to one or two scriptural examples.

### COMMANDS

Right at the beginning of his earthly ministry Jesus immediately differentiated between the written legal word, and the spiritual realisation of that written legal word when applied to conduct and behaviour in the New Dispensation. He did this in the so-called Sermon on the Mount. After stating that he had come to fulfil the law and the prophets, he went on, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (MATT. 5:19, 20). Jesus seems to be teaching the superiority of the new spiritual law over the old law, and also the superiority of the righteousness springing from it. The question we have to ask ourselves is this: does the teaching of Jesus constitute the nature of a commandment?

It seems to me that the teaching of Jesus for the Christian demands a much higher degree of righteousness than did the Commandments of the Old Testament. I am coming to the view that *the whole* of the teaching of Jesus constitutes a command for the successful living of the Christian life, but with certain modifications which I shall mention later. I say this because of the Great Commission which the Lord gave to His disciples; let us just restate it: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . .*" (MATT. 28:19, 20). What we learn from this statement is that the Lord commanded his apostles to observe all the things which he had taught them; the apostles in turn were to teach those who had been baptised to observe all the things which they (the apostles) had been commanded to observe by the Lord. When the Lord sent out the twelve (see MATT. 10) he gave them certain instructions which presumably they had to observe. When he had finished, Matthew records, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in their cities" (MATT. 11:1). So the instructions the Lord gave were in the nature of commands, and we would expect this to be so because Jesus himself taught, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (JOHN 12:48-50). I have quoted this at length because it illustrates to me the hierarchy regarding the commandment; God to Christ; Christ to the apostles; the apostles to those who should believe their w

(which was and is in reality, God's and Christ's word). In this connection the teaching of Christ, and the teaching of the apostles, assume a unique importance in terms of obedience to those teachings.

### CUSTOMS

It is true to say that custom and practice vary from locality to locality; hence, many customs are by their nature, local customs. We know that the Common Law of England has been built on the foundation of custom and practice over a very long period of time, and even though some customs seem to be exceptions to the general law, they are nevertheless important to the localities which observe them. A local custom, then, seems to be a rule which has gathered the force of law and is binding within a defined area upon the persons affected thereby. Even Pilate, the representative of a mighty empire, recognised the right and effectiveness of custom when he reminded the people that he should release unto them a prisoner at a certain time, and so he released Barrabas to them instead of Jesus. It also seems quite evident to me that Jesus *expected* water with which to wash his feet when he entered the house of Simon the Pharisee; incidentally, he also expected a kiss, and also oil with which to anoint his head (LUKE 7:44-46). This indicates that all of these must have been customs in those localities; the fact that Jesus rebuked Simon for not observing these customs seems to indicate that he considered their observance to be important. So we can perhaps summate this by saying that a custom is something which has existed in a locality for so long that it has achieved the force of law *for that locality*.

### IS FEET-WASHING BINDING ON THE CHURCH?

We are now, I think, in a better position to answer our question, and first of all we have to notice that the church was not yet established when Jesus washed the disciples feet. Secondly, after Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, we never find the practice mentioned as an ordinance of the church after the church was established at Pentecost. It is mentioned once afterwards, not as a church ordinance, but as a 'good work'. In Paul's first letter to Timothy we read, "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work" (1 TIM.5:10). This, of course, applies to good works as practiced by widows, but in any case, they are 'good works' and not ordinances which are bound on the church.

In view of what I have said previously, when the Lord said, "Ye ought also to wash one another's feet" (JOHN 13:14, 15) he was not issuing a literal command of universal application such as "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel," but rather he was indicating something which *ought to be done* according to his example and teaching in the localities where such a custom was applicable and had been practiced over a long period of time. So what I am saying is this; if I lived in the Middle East where this practice was prevalent, then I would wash the saints feet if so desired because the Lord had taught me that this would be one way of implementing the main lesson of humility which he taught on that occasion. The stand-point of my argument is this: if the Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into *all* truth, and if the words which they spoke are spirit-inspired, then those words which they spoke, and which by statement are truth, are *all* of application by *someone* at any given time and under various circumstances. For example, we do not come under the same stricture from Paul as did the Corinthians for holding feasts prior to the Lord's Supper, which feasts the apostle condemned as not worthy of commendation, *but we would come under the same strictures* if we engaged ourselves in such practices.

Similarly, the holy kiss was carried on by early Christians and was a custom of some antiquity especially in the synagogues, where men kissed men and women kissed women when greeting each other.

### CONCLUSION

After studying this question for quite a long time my conclusion is this: Feet-washing is not a literal command which was ever bound on the church as a ritualistic ordinance to be carried out by every community of Christians, and it should not be so bound now. It was, however, a local custom which even the Lord expected should be afforded in those localities where it was prac-

ticed and where it was needed, and I tend to the view that it should still be practiced in those localities where it is needed. Similarly, the holy kiss and any other local custom which is normally practiced should be continued in those localities where they have been practiced over a long period of time. If our custom is to shake the hand in greeting, then let us continue to do that in our localities, but never let us be guilty of binding something on the church which neither the Lord nor His apostles have bound on the church.

## Prayer — A Bible study

Have you your Bible handy? Well, take a little time off from your busy day and let's think of our line of communication with our Heavenly Father:—

### 1. Why pray?

*James 5, 16* says — “Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects”.

*Matthew 26, 41*: “Watch and pray that ye may not enter into temptation”.

*Luke 18, 1*: “And He told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart”.

### 2. When to pray

*Luke 6, 12*: “In these days He went out into the hills to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God”.

The Lord prayed all night.

*Psalms 55, 17*: “Evening and morning and at noon, I utter my complaint and moan and He will hear my voice”.

*Romans 12, 12*: “Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer”.

*1 Thess. 5, 17*: “Pray constantly”.

*James 5, 13*: “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray”.

*James 5, 14*: “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him . . .”.

### 3. How to pray

*Ephes. 6, 18*: “Pray at all times in the Spirit”.

*Jude 20*: “But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith: pray in the Holy Spirit”.

*Coloss. 4, 2*: “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving”.

*1 Corinth. 14, 15*: “I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also”.

*1 Timothy 2, 8*: “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling”.

*James 1, 6*: “But let him ask (God) in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind”.

### 4. What to pray for

*Matthew 9, 37 & 38*: “Then He said to the disciples, the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few, pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest”.

*1 Tim. 2, 1 & 2*: “First of all then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way”.

*Coloss. 1, 9*: “. . . we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding”.

*Matthew 5, 44*: “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”.

*Philippians 4, 6:* "Have no anxiety about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God".

**Lord teach us how to pray. Luke 11, 1.**

Sister Moncrieff,  
Haddington.

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Manchester: Through the Faith and example of Lise Frank, Paul Ashurst and the helpful guidance of other brethren, Paul's friend Bertram D'Sihte was led to seriously consider the Gospel of Jesus as revealed in the New Testament.

The faith of Bertram, who is from a strong Catholic background, developed to the extent that he decided to follow Jesus in immersion. This was no easy decision because he knew it would distress his parents and family to whom he is deeply devoted. However, he decided that Jesus must come foremost in his life and was baptised into Christ at Longshoot, Wigan on Monday the 16th April. We thank God for this demonstration of the power of the gospel.

We pray that his deepening faith in our Saviour will sustain him with patience and perseverance in the trials that lie ahead. We

pray that through their tears his parents will see the love of God at work in their son's life.

We are very grateful to the brethren at Scholes for providing the facilities for this baptism, for the light refreshments and for the transport to and from Manchester. We are also grateful to the many brethren who came to witness the baptism at very short notice.

We would like you to bring to the notice of churches through the pages of the Scripture Standard that the church meeting at 60 Kenwood Road has hired a hall seating 100 persons for Saturday evening the 23rd June in the Civic Theatre, Stretford, Manchester. Entrance from the side of the building.

Brother Bob Whittaker has undertaken to speak to us.

We welcome support from brethren in the locality. The meeting is timed for 7.0 p.m.

Please pray that God's word will reach receptive hearts and bear much fruit.

ALLAN ASHURST

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