

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

Vol. 70 No. 10

OCTOBER, 2003

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

Editorial **The exploitation of human sexuality**

SEX IN SOCIETY

I've been pondering about this article for some time but until now have not had the guts to write it. I have now decided to take the plunge. I was born in 1952 and probably have that in common with a lot of readers. It is easy to forget that the Second World War had finished only 7 years earlier and that the fear and austerity of the war would still be fresh in the minds of people at large. My teenage years were therefore the 1960's, the era of flower

power, 'free love' and the beginnings of the sexual revolution. The juxtaposition of the austerity of the war years and the 'freedom' of the 1960's, commonly held to be a reaction to the destruction and hatred of the war years, is a common one. And maybe it is even understandable that there should be an almost equal and opposite reaction: for hatred read love; for fear and deprivation read freedom of expression; for soldiers read hippies; for bombs read flowers etc. In many people's judgment, the release from that austerity and the greater availability of more reliable forms of contraception, were key elements of what was frequently termed the sexual revolution.

I don't know whether it has been a seamless and consistent progression since then, but certainly the sexual revolution of the 1960's (if that indeed is what it was) has most certainly, and sadly, now become the commercialization and exploitation of sex. There are so many facets to this commercialization that it is impossible to refer to them all but I think my blood finally boiled when I heard

**Contents: 1-Editorial; 5-Word Study; 7-Question Box;
9-The Priestly Penitential Paean; 13-News & Information.**

that the most recent exploitative 'reality TV' show in the United States now required the participants, who are sent to a paradise island, to have sex with a previously unknown fellow participant, within one hour of arriving at the island or be banished from the island and the 'show'. If this is true, and I have no reason to doubt it, it represents the most grotesque exploitation of sex for entertainment and voyeurism yet. It has long been an advertising mantra that 'sex sells' but it seems that new depths are being plumbed.

HUMAN SEXUALITY IS GOD'S DESIGN

Let's remind ourselves about one thing. Human sexuality is not an invention of the modern era. In fact it is as old as mankind itself. Christians have no need to be embarrassed about their sexuality – after all it was God who created men and women the way that we are; yes God created human sexuality. But he also progressively defined the parameters within which our human sexuality should be expressed and surely it should be without question that the Creator is best placed to know what is right and proper and healthy for His creation. For example, God must have allowed what we would now call incest to occur in the early days of mankind otherwise procreation would never have happened (I suppose in one sense if we all trace our ancestry back to Adam and Eve then every relationship is inherently incestuous). However God later clearly defined the types of sexual relationship that he no longer considered acceptable, describing many of them as an abomination. That's the Creator's prerogative. Although there is no single, all-embracing definition of sexual morality in the New Testament it is fairly easy to glean an accurate knowledge of God's moral code. There is nothing inherently wrong with human sexuality though it is interesting to note that just about the first thing that Adam and Eve are recorded as doing after they had disobeyed God in the garden and their 'eyes were opened' was to cover themselves because they became aware that they were naked.

EXPLOITATION OF SEX

No what is worrying is the relentless way in which sex is exploited, particularly in the media, for commercial gain. I'm not a great 'soap' fan but as a northern lad have, over the years, developed something of a soft spot for Coronation Street mainly because there has always been an underlying warmth and humour in the characters and the show seemed not to take itself too seriously (sorry if that sends me down several notches in your estimation). However even a brief résumé of some of the recent storylines show how much that has changed. We now have a 16-year-old girl who has a 2 or 3-year-old child from a previous relationship living in with her 18-year-old 'partner' who has now realized that he has strong feelings for the girl's 20-year-old brother. Then there is the 37-year-old man (the father of the aforementioned teenage mother) who is having an affair with a 17-year-old neighbour. Cut to the bigamist bookmaker who is the brother of the sexually predatory young woman who allegedly drug raped, and is pregnant by, the local café proprietor who himself is "married" to the resident transsexual. I can't quite remember if this was before or after her seduction of the owner of the taxi firm who had a fling with another woman whilst his wife was away at a conference, which

ultimately led to his wife having an affair with the manager of the underwear factory... Even Sally Webster couldn't manage to have her lounge decorated without having a relationship with the decorator. That's the ratings war for you. We have come a long way since my dear mother would fall out with, and refuse to watch, any programme in which any of the characters was divorced.

Now of course the TV programme makers and indeed the magazine producers (and many magazines, even those targeted at young teenage girls, have an obsession with sex, so it was interesting to read of Sir Bob Geldof's criticism of these magazines recently now that he has teenage girls) have a ready answer for any criticism that is levelled at them and it generally runs along the lines that they are merely reflecting society as it is and are dealing sensitively and within agreed codes of practice with the issues raised. Whilst I want this article to be reasonably frank I don't want to offend sensibilities so suffice to say for now that the magazines targeted at teenage girls (in particular) leave very little to the imagination in terms of the scope of sexual activity that they explore and offer advice on. That advice tends to be – don't feel pressured into anything; only engage in sexual activity that you feel comfortable with; remember always to take precautions; and remember that the legal age of consent is 16. (As if to emphasize the point my daily newspaper today carries a piece headlined "Soap ratings war 'exposes children to TV violence.'" The piece starts by saying that a study concludes that children are being exposed to increasingly explicit sex and violence in television soap operas amid an intense ratings war. The piece concludes by reporting that the ITC (Independent Television Commission) said that a successful soap needed to incorporate important social issues and that a recent Coronation Street storyline depicting the rape of a young woman was sensitive.

A RELENTLESS TIDE

Most of the TV soaps, and the above comments would be equally applicable to some other programmes, all occur before the 9 pm 'watershed'. Of course explicit scenes are not allowed in these programmes but the viewer is left in no doubt at all about what is going on. After that, of course, the depiction of sex (and for me even more worryingly, violence) is allowed to be much more explicit and graphic. And it isn't confined to the media. I read a few months ago about a live stage show that was to be put on in the United Kingdom (it had a European origin I think). I don't have the details any more but the content of that show, if it was accurately described in the article I read, could only be described as debauchery. And the amount of pornography that is freely available on the internet almost defies belief (according to a recent NSPCC report, 20,000 images a week of child pornography are posted on the internet). Even many 'pop' videos would have been classed as offensive not many years ago.

But it's not just the more explicit programmes and scenes that are a concern. It's the more subliminal messages that are given that are equally concerning. It seems that increasingly TV adverts have a sexual connotation; there has been a spate recently of nudity on a number of TV advertisements; advertisements on roadside hoardings for all kinds of everyday products have models with intentionally provocative

expressions or stances. Even ice cream has been given the 'eat this and your life will be filled with passion' treatment.

I honestly don't know whether life mirrors the media or the media mirrors life. I am however unconvinced by the protestations that claim that behaviour is not influenced by what is shown. What I do know is that there is a tide running that is almost impossible to turn back. I'm a governor at our local school and recently attended an excellent production for parents, which is to form a part of the school's sex education programme. It will be delivered to Year 9 (13, 14 year olds) pupils. The frightening thing is that it is far too late for that production to deal with whether or not it is appropriate for teenagers to have sex; the message has to be about how to prevent pregnancy, the consequences of pregnancy, the implications for future relationships, decisions about whether to abort/foster/keep the child. Perhaps it says something that only 1 parent attended.

THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

Sex is one of the most natural of human acts. God designed it. Maybe some Christians will differ about whether or not God intended that it should be essentially a means of procreation only or that its enjoyment should also be an expression of a loving relationship between man and wife. I don't have any desire for human sexuality to be the great unmentionable that it once was. Maybe in the past this article couldn't have been written (maybe for some it still shouldn't be). But what we all, young and not so young, are being bombarded with, both overtly and subliminally, is that in the modern era all kinds of sexual relationships are OK and common place. Pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, teenage sex, under age sex, same-sex sex etc. etc – the message is that all of these are OK. And sadly, many of the individuals and organizations that promote such ideas are not even making a statement about alternative social ethics (which would at least have some integrity), but are undoubtedly in it for commercial gain whether that is to increase readership of publications or viewing numbers or sell products.

As Christians we must be alive to and aware of the dangers. I am probably less easily offended than my parents were; and maybe my children are less easily offended than I am. The reality is that we do become more accepting of what we see around us – we become desensitized and what shocked us previously, no longer does. What we must not do is allow the world-view of what is and is not acceptable cloud the sober, Christian judgment. There is a moral law, though it finds little if any expression in the agenda set by media opinion. We are not going to stop the inexorable tide of sex as a commodity in society (though it needn't stop us complaining to the relevant authorities if we feel so moved). What we must do is continue to teach, particularly to our young people who are forming relationships in the environment that has been described, that human sexuality finds its noblest expression as God ordained in the loving union of man and wife. That in that relationship is the comfort, stability and security in which love can grow, children can be born and nurtured and where all of the gifts of God can find their purest expression.

THE GREEK PREPOSITION “EIS”

Ian Davidson (Motherwell)

What is a preposition? A preposition shows the relationship between a noun or a pronoun and some other word in the sentence. I am interested for the purposes of this article in the Greek preposition *eis*, especially with reference to Christian baptism.

The Greek lexicons clearly point out that the Greek *eis* signifies action from without to within. Please note the use of the preposition in the following passages: **“Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptising them *in* the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”** (Matthew 28:19); **“For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptised *in* the name of the Lord Jesus.”** (Acts 8:16); **“And he said unto them, *Unto* what then were you baptised? And they said, *Unto* John’s baptism.”** (Acts 19:3); **“Know you not, that so many of us as were baptised *into* Jesus Christ were baptised *into* His death?”** (Romans 6:3); **“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised *in* the name of Paul?”** (1 Corinthians 1:13); **“And were all baptised *unto* Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”** (1 Corinthians 10:2); **“For by one Spirit are we all baptised *into* one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink *into* one Spirit.”** (1 Corinthians 12:13); **“For as many of you as have been baptised *into* Christ have put on Christ.”** (Galatians 3:27).

When “in” should be “into”

The passages quoted are from the Authorised Version. Clearly, the translators have not been consistent in their translation of *eis*. Matthew 28:19 and Acts 8:16 are good examples. In both, we have “in” instead of “into”. I believe the translations are inaccurate. The Greek preposition for “in” is *en* and, therefore, Matthew 28:19 should read: “...*into* the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” and Acts 8:16 should read “...baptised *into* the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” You see, before you are in Christ, you have to come into Christ; before you are in the house, you have to come into the house; before you are in the field, you have to get into the field. Actually, “in the name” is equivalent to “by the authority of.” The authority by which any action is done is one thing, and the object for which it is done is another.

The impact of “Eis” concerning baptism

But what does it mean to be baptised “into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” or “into Christ”? Alexander Campbell has written: “Persons are said to enter into matrimony, to enter into an alliance, to get into debt, to run into danger. Now, to be into the name of the Lord Jesus was a form of speech in ancient usage, as familiar and significant as any of the preceding. And when we analyse these expressions, we find they all import that the persons are either under the obligations or influence of those things into which they are said to enter, or into which they are introduced. Hence, those immersed into one body were under the influences and obligations of that body. Those immersed into Moses assumed Moses as their lawgiver, guide and protector, and risked everything upon his authority, wisdom, power and goodness. Those who were immersed into Christ put Him on, and acknowledged His authority and laws; and those who were immersed into the

name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, regarded the Father as the fountain of all authority – the Son as the only Saviour – and the Holy Spirit as the only advocate of the truth, and teacher of Christianity. Hence, such persons as were immersed into the name of the Father, acknowledged Him as the only living and true God – Jesus Christ as His only begotten Son, the Saviour of the world – and the Holy Spirit as the only successful Advocate of the truth of Christianity upon earth.”

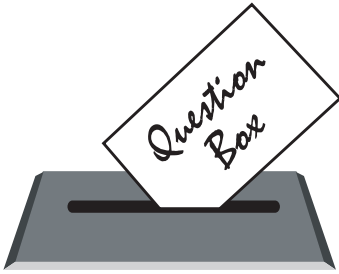
Immersed “into Christ”

So we see that the phrase “into Christ” is always connected with conversion, regeneration, immersion or putting on Christ. “In Christ” speaks of a state of rest or privilege. “Into” expresses motion towards; “in” implies rest or motion in. But why does Matthew 28:19 speak of being baptised *into the name* of the Father, Son and of the Holy Spirit? One commentator has written: “The word *name* means more than a mere designation or title. It relates to the character and attributes of those under consideration, and it here implies that we are immersed into a state where we share the Divine nature, that is, eternal life, the life of God.”

In the Worgan-Kingdon Debate held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1967, brother Worgan spoke of the significance of this preposition. He said: ‘Now notice the word *into*. In both the English and the Greek text it is a preposition of movement, of motion. It indicates a change of position. The Lord didn’t say baptise them *in* the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but *into* the name. When one is baptised, you see, he changes his position, his relationship with regards to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And mark this, of nothing else but baptism is it said that it effects this change for the penitent believer. Professor James Madison Stiffler, the Baptist professor of New Testament Exegesis, at Crozier Theological Seminary says, ‘The *in* should certainly be *into*.’ Believers are not to be immersed by the authority of the three Divine persons, but into fellowship with them. Baptism, rightly administered, unites with Christ. The soldier in the act of donning his uniform declares his allegiance and fellowship. He comes into something and so baptism brings man into all that the Divine names imply.’ I notice that brother Worgan went on to quote from G.R. Beasley-Murray’s book *Baptism in the New Testament*, which I found a most interesting read.

Baptism is still a controversial subject for many. I personally have found that a lot of writers are somewhat confused by it. I cannot think why. There are, at least, nine designs of baptism. They are: to fulfil all righteousness; to secure the answer of a good conscience; to bring us into a relationship with the Godhead; to enable us to receive the Holy Spirit; to enable us to share in the likeness of the death of Christ; to enable us to put on Christ as a garment; to bring us into a state of wholeness, that is of salvation; and to remit or forgive sins.

Jesus’ ministry began with baptism and ended with baptism. This fact should show unto all the importance of the ordinance. The Baptist, Beasley-Murray, at the conclusion of his book on baptism, pleaded that, first, there ought to be a greater endeavour to make baptism integral to *the Gospel*; second, there should be a serious endeavour to make baptism integral to *conversion*; and, third, there should be an endeavour to make baptism integral to *Church membership*. Churches of Christ in the past have been accused of saying too much about baptism. James Anderson, the well-known Scottish evangelist, in debate once acknowledged this fact, but pointed out to his opponent that he had to mention it so often because others were not preaching enough about it, if at all. In any event, the words of the Master are clear: disciples are made among the nations by **“baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”** (Matthew 28:19).



THE QUESTION.

"Could you please explain Jesus' statement, that, **"No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him"**, John 6:44, and the corresponding statement in verse 65, **"No-one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."** (The quotations are taken from the 'Revised Standard Version, which you may find a little clearer than the 'Authorized Version').

A MISAPPLICATION OF THE STATEMENTS

First, I would point out that these two verses are of particular interest and importance, not only because they are the words of the Lord himself, but also because they have frequently been used by certain religious groups as they have attempted to prove that only the '*predestined*' will be saved, since only they are 'drawn' by the Father and granted, by Him, the privilege of 'coming' to Christ.

This is what Augustine and later, John Calvin, taught as they emphasized 'the Divine initiative' in salvation. By this they meant that because man is, (according to their view), born in a state of '*inherited total depravity*', he is unable even to believe the Gospel unless '*the direct operation of the Holy Spirit*' makes faith possible. Therefore, they argue, God Himself chooses those who are to be saved. These are the ones whom He '*calls*', and once they are '*called*', because of '*irresistible grace*' they *must* be saved. Apostasy is impossible. They have '*eternal security*' and nothing they may ever do can cause them to be lost.

In simple terms, this doctrine amounts to what is usually described as '*Once in grace – always in grace; once saved – always saved*'. Presumably, the theory was meant to honour and stress the role of the sovereign grace of God in effecting Man's salvation, but in fact, it is demeaning to both God and Man, and to use the two verses referred to in our question in this way, is to fail completely to understand what the Lord was saying.

THE ORIGINAL SETTING

To reach a proper understanding of the verses we must first consider them in their proper context. This 6th chapter in the Gospel according to John records the conversation held between Jesus and the Jews which resulted from the feeding of the 5000. Mark's account in Mk. 6:30, tells us that earlier the Lord had proposed to his disciples, that they should withdraw '*and rest awhile*', because they had been so busy that they had not found time even to eat. But the plan was frustrated when the crowd discovered their intended destination and flocked to hear him. There then followed the miraculous feeding of the multitude.

When it became clear that, because of this miracle, there was a popular move to take Jesus by force to make him their King, he first sent away his disciples, and then left to spend time alone in prayer. The crowd, however, searched for him and eventually found him, and, with their thoughts still full of the loaves and fishes and probably thinking of the possibilities that the miracle had opened up, they reminded him that, during the Wilderness Journey, God had fed their fore-fathers for forty years with Manna -'*bread from Heaven*' – an expression which occurs four times in the narrative.

When they asked him, "*What sign do you show?*" they were really asking, '*Can you do anything like that?*' There then followed his discourse on the Bread of Life, a discourse which, incidentally, I may point out, includes the first of the 'I Ams', but when he claimed to be "**the bread which came down from heaven**" (v.40), this proved too much for them and they grumbled at him. After all, they were quite sure they knew where he came from! "**Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'**"

This was not an enquiry, not a question. It was an assertion that they believed was incontrovertible. Now, we should notice that they obviously understood what he was claiming, and they were disturbed, even shocked by it. This was a claim which they felt came very close to blasphemy, and, indeed, if they were right in what they believed about his origin, they were also right in rejecting his claim to have '*come down from heaven*'. However, their initial assumption was inaccurate, and, consequently, their conclusion was also inaccurate.

JESUS REVEALS THE REASON FOR THEIR IGNORANCE.

Notice that the Lord did not offer a solution to their problem. He did not attempt to prove his heavenly origin. Instead he revealed the reason for their inability to believe in him and to come to him. He did this in the statement with which our question begins, by pointing out that only those '*drawn*' by the Father are able to come to the Son, and by reminding them that their own prophets had declared, "**And they shall all be taught by God.**" (verse 45). I consider this to be the pivotal verse in this chapter, and the key to a correct understanding of the two verses that form our question, because the quotation reveals the vital difference between the Old and New Covenants. It is the vital difference between Law and Faith.

'DRAWN BY GOD' – WHO? AND HOW?

The quotation used by the Lord, comes from Isaiah 54:13 and is amplified and explained by the familiar passage in Jer.31: 31-34. In those verses God, through the prophet Jeremiah, revealed that when the New Covenant was enacted, his Law would not be engraved on stone tablets, for He would put His law *within* men, and write it on their hearts. You will remember that the old Mosaic Covenant was entered by *the right of physical birth*. One must be born a descendant of Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, and children born of Israel's race must then be taught to understand what it meant to be a descendant of Abraham. The must be taught to '*know the Lord*'.

But, the prophecy declares that with the New Covenant it would be very different. Those who came into a New Covenant relationship with God would be those who had been first '*taught by God*', and who, having been taught, had been '*drawn*' to Him. In other words no longer 'born into Abraham's family, and then taught', but 'first taught, and then born into God's family'.

The Lord was pointing out to these Jews, that the reason why they did not believe him was because they were rejecting the teaching – God's message, brought by His Son - which would have led them to believe. Remember that the Lord spoke of men being *drawn* - not *compelled* - to come to him.

The opportunity to be taught by God already existed for the people to whom Jesus was speaking, because the Son's first ministry was to them. He stated that he had been sent to "**the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (Matt.15: 24), and he even instructed his disciples not to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, but "**go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" (Matt. 10:5-6). But, as we know, they rejected him.

On a later occasion, as John 12:21 records, when certain Greeks wished to meet Jesus, he indicated that this was not the time for such a meeting, but that time would soon come when not only Jews, but men of all races and nations, would be drawn to him. His opening words in response to this enquiry reveal what was uppermost in his mind at that moment: "**The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified**" (John 12; 23). His closing words reveal the manner of his glorification, and its universal effect: "**I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.**" (v. 33). Verse 33 also explains *where* the drawing-power lies: "**He said this to show by what death he was to die**".

The message of the love of God, revealed in the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ, is the divine magnet by which all men may be drawn back to God.

(Questions please to: Frank Worgan, 11 Stanier Road, Corby, Northants. NN17 1XP)

A
PRIESTLY
PENITENTIAL
PAEAN
OF
PENITENTIAL
PAEAN
PRAISE 2



Ernest Makin (Wigan)

The post exilic return of the Jews led by Zerubbabel, Ezra and then Nehemiah to Jerusalem illustrates all the elements of the relationship between a righteous and just God and sinful humanity. The lessons to be learned from this dramatic incident are ageless and just as relevant in 2003A.D. as they were in 538B.C.

In Nehemiah 9 the reader will rapidly become aware of the Jews increasing realisation of the almighty awesomeness of God. The God of the Old Testament, the God of creation, is the God of the New Testament. The God of Abraham is also the God of Saul of Tarsus and the 'Abba' of the disciples of Jesus of any age. It therefore follows that our God is timeless, consistently faithful, just, righteous and a lover of His children and He delights in their worship and adoration. This principle, outlined in Nehemiah 9, is:

"You (God) are righteous; we (the people) are wicked."

Such a principle is timeless until Jesus appears and it adumbrates such New Testament revelations as "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

GOD'S GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Like Abraham, whose faith was reckoned to him as righteousness, the priests, Levites, leaders and the people described in Nehemiah 9, motivated by a reawakened faith in their God, acted on that belief and rebuilt the temple, the walls of the city and the city itself and finally, in a great act of commitment they followed their priests in sealing the Covenant. Believers today have no righteousness of their own, it is a free gift enshrined in the grace of God. That 'holiness' which we wear is a spectacularly free gift from a loving Father and is apart from the law; remember that Abraham's faith was reckoned as righteousness over four hundred years before the law was given. We are justified, sanctified today (made right) through an obedient faith in Jesus the Christ; all the riches of the redemption of God flow through His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, as evidenced in scripture:

"You search the scriptures because you believe they give you eternal life. BUT THE SCRIPTURES POINT TO ME."

"Lord to whom will we go? You alone have the words that give eternal life."

and that awe inspiring, monumentally significant statement to all who would seek an eternity in glory;

"I (Jesus) am the Resurrection and the Life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again."

CHRIST FORESHADOWED

Nehemiah 9 is a catalogue of:

1. The revealed and awesome nature of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;

2. A chronological and historical statement of the national development of the plan of God for His people; this was often disrupted by the disobedience of the very people God was protecting. In this respect it is most revealing to read how God controlled and used the very rulers of the nations who held His people captive. Read all about it in the book of Ezra. God is always in control even when His people seem to have deserted Him.
3. How the care of God for His people was accomplished by what the New Testament describes as "signs and wonders."

The events and attitudes described in Nehemiah 9 foreshadowed the relationship of Jesus, who is God, with His people (disciples) as described in the New Testament.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Christ, who has blessed us in the Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, even AS HE CHOSE (elected) US IN HIM before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy and blameless before Him. He destined us in love to be HIS SONS through Jesus the Christ according to the purpose of His will to the praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

GOD'S ELECTIVE CHOICE

I would personally (as a matter of opinion only) place the above revelatory statement as one of the most influential spiritual promises contained in the Word of God. This choice is a sovereign choice by a just and righteous God using His power to effectively complete what pleases Him according to His consistently thrice holy and righteous will. The chequered history of the Jews is punctuated with bouts of proud disobedience as they exercised their God given free will. Perhaps this is a commentary and a warning on our own lives. Disobedience resulted in captivity, in punishment; another warning to present day believers. God used Cyrus the Great to have His people released (see Isaiah 44:24 to 45:13). The revival described in Nehemiah 9 et.al. illustrates the action of a nation wishing once again to be an obedient and pleasing people of God. To achieve this under the aegis of the New Covenant the people of God, believers, have been elected/chosen:

- to be conformed to the image of the Christ;

"whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."
- to adoption as sons/daughters

"He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus the Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the beloved."
- to good works

"For we are His workmanship (masterpiece), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

- to eternal glory

“He made known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory even us whom He called, not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles.”

Nowhere in scripture is it explicitly stated how the foreknowledge of God determines His elective choice. The Bible explicitly teaches that men are free agents with moral responsibility to make faithful choices which please God, or not, and face the consequences. To help with our ‘decision’ “God WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH” and as Jesus of Nazareth, he illustrated His identity and glory by signs and wonders; read John 2:1-11 and note, **“this the first of His signs Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him,”** and **“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”**

- Our faith is the faith of the penitents described in Nehemiah and that faith is the faith of Abraham.

“This Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.....So you see that it is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, PREACHED THE GOSPEL BEFOREHAND TO ABRAHAM, saying, ‘in you shall all the nations be blessed’; so then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.”

- Abraham obeyed God and left Ur of the Chaldees; Nehemiah’s contemporaries by faith embraced the Law of the Lord. However:-

“all who rely on works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written ‘cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”

- The Law is good and holy and spiritual but it cannot save.

“by the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for the Law is the knowledge of sin.” “the Law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is holy become death to me? Certainly not. But sin that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. For we know that the Law is spiritual, I am carnal, sold under sin.” (Read Romans chapters 3 and 7).

- The Law enlightens but it does not empower, however:

“these (faithful ones) all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers (sojourners) and exiles on the earth. For a people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland; they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. For therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

FAITH IN ACTION

Abraham and the former giants of faith lived and died before the incarnation, the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Believers, today, enjoy a salvation, 'the salvation of our souls'. Of this salvation **"the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, they prophesied of the grace that was to come."** Now **"we have redemption through the blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."** Habbakuk makes a timeless statement, **"behold he whose soul is not upright will fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith."**

Through His relationship with His chosen people God demands a faith that is the dynamic of men's actions. Believers in the Christ have been given "great and precious promises" and because of these they have been empowered to share in the divine nature and have also escaped the lustful corruption that is in the world.

"This is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world? But he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." (1 John 5: 4,5).

Believers are exhorted to build diligently on their faith. Then they are told in detail what the building blocks are:- virtue, knowledge, self control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love - Jesus was the personification of these divine qualities and they majestically attested to His divinity. **"You who fear (are in awe of) God praise him all ye descendants of Jacob honour him, revere him all you descendants of Israel."** This is exactly what NEHEMIAH 9 is describing in an isolated pocket of Jewish history some five centuries before the Incarnation. Note that in these latter days, and until Jesus reappears, **"You (believers) were bought with a price therefore honour God with your body."**

We are given a fourfold reason why sanctified lives should praise, honour and glorify God:- **"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."** (1 Peter 2:9)

Finally, and of some major significance, Paul addresses the Ephesian Christians and goes to the very heart of the sanctified life, **"For by grace you have been saved through faith (cp James 2:14 - 28) and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast for we are his workmanship (His masterpiece) created in the Christ, Jesus, for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should live in them."** (Eph. 2:8-10) Why not read the whole of this most remarkable letter to the Ephesian colony of God, it will edify, encourage and build up your knowledge.

Reader, if you do not yet believe, I pray that you might experience the conviction of NEHEMIAH; the faith of Abraham and the obedience of a disciple of Jesus, your Lord; finding it in your heart to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and your SAVIOUR in obedience to the commands of His Gospel. Fellow believers, I pray that you may find the perseverance and commitment to build a continuing sanctified life, knowing that the blood of Jesus is continuously cleansing you because of your faith in Him whom God sent because He first loved you, even while you were in your sins.

THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS IN ALL HIS WAYS AND LOVING TO ALL THAT HE MADE.

News and Information

Ghana Appeal

Amongst our mail we continue to receive letters of appreciation for donations to the Lord's work in Ghana.

Our brethren are zealously proclaiming the Word and amongst recent letters a church reports ten baptisms following Gospel outreach, another church 6 baptisms and another 4.

We have to report yet another case of a new Christian being put out of the family home for his faith and being ostracized by his relatives. He is a second year pupil in a secondary school so his education will now cease. Can we imagine the trauma this is for a young person and can we help our brethren to support him?

Your donations have partially relieved the consequences of the bush fires we reported in June. They have also been used to take advantage of the government's scheme to provide water by means of boreholes at 10% of the cost as also described in the June edition. This is of tremendous importance in rural areas.

We hear more cases of severe illness including two church leaders and we ask your help in providing medical attention including hospital treatment. There are also destitute widows and one orphan in great need. In addition money is also needed to complete the building of meeting houses, to provide benches for seating and a gas lamp for evening worship.

Those wishing to contribute, please make cheques payable to:

Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer, **Mrs. Janet Macdonald, 12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB. Tel: 01324 562480**

Obituaries

Sister Hilda Bell, Australia

Those who knew Sister Hilda Bell (from Sydney, Australia) when she visited this country with her late husband, Sydney, some years ago, will be sorry to hear that she died on 5th August 2003 at the age of 92. Hilda and Sydney were a very fine Christian couple and are still remembered here with great affection. We share the loss of Hilda with those in Merrylands.

James R Gardiner.

Sister Pearl Hunter

Sis. Pearl Innes Hunter, widow of the late Bro. Sammy Hunter, was born on 27th June 1918 in Clochan, a small village close to Buckie in the North East of Scotland. She was baptised into Christ at the age of eleven at the church in Buckie. She moved to Northern Ireland with her adoptive parents when she was thirteen years of age and the family were members of the Berlin Street Church in Belfast.

It was in Belfast that Pearl met Sammy and they were married on September 27th, 1937 at the Berlin Street Church building and had three daughters born in Ireland, Eleanor, Anne and Margaret. The fourth daughter, Rae, was born in Buckie in 1952 after Sammy and Pearl moved back to the North-east of Scotland, where they set up an electrical business. Initially they worshipped with the then church in Portknockie then later with the church in Buckie.

Sammy and Pearl worked tirelessly for the Lord and were renowned for their generosity and hospitality to all (particularly those of the household of faith). Sammy for a number of years served as an elder in the Buckie church and was very capably supported by Pearl in this role. Their homes in Belfast, Cullen and latterly Buckie always had an open door.

Granny Pearl, as she was known to so many (and not just her own natural grandchildren, great and great, great grandchildren) died peacefully on Tuesday 2nd September at Lythe Nursing Home at Cullen where she had been a resident since April of this year.

Probably Pearl will be remembered, more than anything else, by everyone who knew her, for her God given gift for genuine love and warmth. So many people have commented how she always made them feel special. She will be sadly missed by her family and brethren but we know that to be with the Lord is far better.

David Murray

Thanks

Bro. Peter and Sis. May Wilson take this opportunity to thank all of you for the heartwarming support they received during Peter's illness and operation. The many cards, phone calls and above all prayers that were offered were all an important part in the healing process.

Bro Peter is at home now and on the road to recovery. Your care and concern are much appreciated. May God bless each one.

**Grace Snedden (Secretary,
Slammanan)**

Change of Address

**John & Betty Dodsley,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield.**

Change of address:

"Comrie"

7B, Forest Close
Annesley Woodhouse
Notts.
NG17 9HF

News and Information

***Church of Christ,
Afikpo Town, Nigeria.***

I have recently received correspondence from Dickson Emmanuel Eni, who is the evangelist at the above Church in Nigeria. He informs that through the SS he has learned that there are Churches of Christ in the United Kingdom, having previously only had contact with Churches in USA. Our brother has been an evangelist for 17 years and now works with congregation a fairly new congregatio which is unable to support him in his work. He appeals for financial help to support his work and his family and states that the work in Nigeria is suffering because of lack of funds.

I have no personal knowledge of our brother or the Church in Nigeria. However he has authorized me to print his address and assures me that references are available for anyone who may be willing to offer support. Does anyone have any information on the work in Nigeria that can be passed on to readers?

Our brothers contact details are:
Dickson Emmanuel Eni, Evangelist
Church of Christ Afikpo Town
PO Box 365
Afikpo North L.G.A.
Ebonyi State
Nigeria.

Simply Christians

As you know Allan & Gretchen Ashurst from the Stretford Church send a tremendous amount of literature out to Christians and individuals interested in the Gospel in many parts of the world. They have recently sent me a copy of a letter received from a Bro. U Jacob from a congregation in Uppumaguluru in the Prakasam district of Southern India, thanking them for some back issues of the SS (probably from the early nineties), which they have greatly appreciated. If any readers or congregations do have any unwanted back issues, maybe you could contact Allan & Gretchen on 0161 865 4242 to see if they could be used in other parts of the world. You may also give consideration, if possible, to a small donation to help with onward postage of such items.

The latest details of the **Simply Christians** work are in the August issue of SS.

Robert

Coming Events

Stretford, Manchester
Gospel Meetings

Saturday, 25th October 2003 at
7.00 pm

Speaker: John Morgan, Hindley

Saturday, 22nd November 2003 at
7.00 pm

Speaker: Vince O'Donovan, Brandon

There will be refreshments and discussion at 8.00 pm on each of the above occasions.

Ernest Makin and Vince O'Donovan will also speak on following Lord's Days, 21st September and 23rd November respectively at 11.00 am.

A warm welcome is extended to all

Longshoot, Wigan
May 2004

Bi-ennial Fellowship Weekend is to be held over weekend of Friday, April 30th to Monday, May 3rd 2004. A full programme of events will be announced in due course. But you can be assured of a weekend of excellent teaching and fellowship.

Cold Harbour Road
Lectureship, USA

October 30th – November 2nd
2003

We have received notice of the above lectureship which is to be held in (I think) Virginia, USA. The lectureship will cover some of the problematical experiences in life such as pain and suffering, chronic illness, God's promises to the hurting, divorce, death, when bad things happen etc. There are also studies in 1 Peter and Habakkuk. A hardcover lectureship book will be available at \$12 each (including postage). Contacts:

Email: CHRCOC@AOL.COM

Web: WWW.COLD-HARBOR-ROAD.ORG

Tel: (804)746-8224

On the Jericho Road

The Jericho road extended from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of about twenty miles. It was a steep road, rugged in places, smooth in places. The Jericho road represents the common road of humanity - your road, my road, the road of all men. On the Jericho road, a number of personalities appear. Not all of them are alike. Let us note them.

1. The lone traveller: "A certain man who going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." - Jerusalem is about 1500 feet above Jericho. He had every right to travel this road without fear. Every man has the right to travel the road of life unhindered, unmolested - to live his own life under God. The lone traveller is a representative man.

2. The cruel men: The Jericho road is infested with robbers - men who know no God but their own base desires. They are motivated by the satanic principle that "might makes right - what is thine is mine, if I can get it." They add nothing of value to the life of a fellowman. They take a lot from the life of their fellowman. They wound. They bruise. They rob men of money, of character, of a good time. For this reason we shall call them *minus* men!

3. The selfish men: The priest and the Levite, representatives of a degenerate religion. They live for themselves and themselves alone. They say: "What we have, we will keep." They inflict no injury; they take nothing from life; yet they add nothing of value to the lives of unfortunate people. To suffering humanity, they are a disappointment (James 4:17; Matt. 25:41-45). For this reason we shall call them *naught* men.

4. The compassionate man - a man of another race, another religion. He is not a disappointment, but a delightful surprise. He has another philosophy: "What is mine is thine, and, in your misfortune, I will share it." He takes nothing from the life of a fellow man; he adds a lot to the life of his fellowman. He is a man sent of God. For this reason we shall call him the *plus* man!

Let us not accept the philosophy of the cruel men, of the selfish men; but of the compassionate man. Let us not be *minus* men, or *naught* men, but the *plus* man. We are not here to inflict wounds, to pass by unfortunate people; but to heal, to lift, to encourage - to contribute to the well being of our fellowman, especially the unfortunate. Remember this: **"It is more blessed to give than to receive"** (Gal. 6:10).

F. Cox

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICE PER COPY - POST PAID FOR ONE YEAR

UNITED KINGDOM. £10.00

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

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

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO "SCRIPTURE STANDARD"

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

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

E-mail: john@kkneller.freemove.co.uk

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

EDITOR: ROBERT MARSDEN, 4 The Copse, Orrell Road, Orrell, Wigan, England, WN5 8HL. Tel: 01942 212320 E-mail: bob.rock@virgin.net