

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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ANXIETY

The Church of Scotland is shortly to hold a conference, with other interested parties, to consider the serious effect the pace of modern living, with all its tension and uncertainty, is having on the human mind. Certainly doctors' surgeries are, more and more, being frequented by those suffering from general anxiety rather than physical ill health.

Nothing is worse than uncertainty. The hospital patient closely watches every expression on the face of the examining doctor to see if the news is likely to be good or bad. The motorist watches anxiously as the mechanic pokes about under the bonnet of the car, to see if the repair is going to be minor or a 'big-end'. The candidate for the recently advertised job spends a nail-biting few weeks after the interview awaiting the reply which very often, nowadays, never comes. And these little domestic anxieties, real though they are, pale into complete insignificance when compared to the uncertain futures of some of the world's political prisoners, (e.g. in Iran just now where the likelihood of being shot in the morning is almost a certainty) or to the uncertain future of the many thousands of 'Boat-people' adrift in the open sea in a leaky boat and surrounded by hostile coastlines. Man is no stranger to the uncertainty of life. The word 'certain' comes from the Latin *Certus* and means 'Sure'. But we cannot be sure of anything these days can we? We can't even be sure if our morning 'bus will arrive. Some of our church members who travel on a Sunday from Edinburgh often arrive late because the 'bus just does not turn up — enquiries reveal that if a driver feels like a long lie in bed on the Sunday morning the 'bus doesn't run. This was unheard of at one time, but nowadays we are having to come to terms with a whole lot of things unheard of a few years ago. A young schoolboy was saying on T.V. the other evening that a very large proportion of children at school have parent problems. Some parents are on to their second, third and even fourth marriages. The old joke about the Hollywood actress who said to her husband, "Your children and my children are fighting with our children" is not a joke any more, more of a reality. The sociologists say that the fabric of society is crumbling and they may well be right — there certainly has been a dramatic fall in stan-

dards of all kinds. Man is confused and doesn't know which way to turn. Is there any firm ground — is there a constant in all the change we see?

It is doubtful if man is any more wayward now than he was before or that he has changed very much since creation. A good rule of thumb, I would suggest, is to regard all uncertainty to be attributable to man and to ascribe all things that are certain to God. Man is unreliable, a creature subject to whim, but God is constant and unmovable in the changing world. Anyone with a slight knowledge of the Bible is not surprised by world events and by the deteriorating standards. The word 'uncertain' is only used twice in the scriptures, both times by the apostle Paul; once in connection with the uncertainty of riches and the other in reference to the trumpet giving an uncertain sound. The uncertainty of riches is manifest to all, especially to those who have amassed them, and the incapability of man to blow a proper sound on the trumpet is also self evident. Think of, or even listen to, all the loud but discordant notes being blown in the pulpits of the world today. Man can not be trusted to carry God's message a dozen yards. The Bible also tells us that man's promises are uncertain and unreliable — "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." (Ps. 146:3) Classic examples of this must be the promises made by politicians — how worthless they very often are. Man is always searching and striving for the things which don't really matter and the wise Solomon asks, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not; for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." The friendship of man is also a fragile thing and friends today are often enemies tomorrow. No man stood with Paul in Rome when he needed support and Jesus predicted that even His close disciples would desert Him in the trial hour (John 16:32) Nothing is sure — everything is uncertain; especially the future — "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." A drab but indeed a fairly accurate picture of mankind and small wonder that God's ways are not man's ways, and that it is not within man to direct his own steps.

The only time we can talk in terms of certainty in this world, is, therefore, when we are talking about God and the things of God and in this there is great scope for confidence. Truly man proposes but God disposes. First of all what God has promised he is able also to perform. At the dedication of the temple Solomon spoke of the reliability of God in glowing terms and said, "Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto His people Israel, according to all that He promised; there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant." Nowhere will we find anyone who would claim to have had any experience to the contrary. Whilst death is one of life's few certainties so is also the resurrection from the dead. Paul could say, "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. 5:1). If by virtue of Adam we all die so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22). This is a certainty the strength of which had a great influence on the courage of the early martyrs for Christ. In a world where friendships are often tenuous it is wonderful to read of the certainty of God's love, inviolate almost even from our own careless attitudes to friends, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38). Anyone would be hard pressed to find some power or force omitted by Paul in that statement, and obviously he was supremely certain that nothing (except ourselves) could separate us from God's love. This then is another happy certainty in a world of,

changing insecurity. *Reward for service to God* is also a well documented certainty in the scriptures. Mark records for us the Lord's gracious words in response to Peter's remark that he had left all to follow Jesus, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." The apostle Paul says, "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58). There are many vain and pointless pursuits in this life but, according to Paul, the work of the Lord is not one of them. And so we could continue to draw the contrast between the changing sands of man's world and certainty of the things which shall obtain in the world to come. In a world beset by human weakness we marvel at the infinite strength of God. In a world of suspicion and distrust we consider the God of truth, the God who cannot lie. In a world of evil we can rejoice in the goodness of God. In a world of change we can rely upon a God who changes not and is the same yesterday, today and forever more. In a world of despair we can have hope as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast. In a world of adversity but can have confidence in the promise that all tears shall be wiped away and there shall be no more pain.

Man's strategy for survival in this ever changing world is to have his feet firmly planted in the kingdom of Heaven and his simple trust placed in the word of God. In this way he can then be impervious, if not oblivious, to the changing scene. This kind of advice was given thousands of years ago. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him . . ." said the Psalmist (115:1). "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man," said Solomon (Pr. 118:8). "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: and lean not unto thine own understanding." As the world lurches on, at dizzy speed, let us not be too bewildered by it and if we should be left behind in its ever widening wake perhaps we should be glad, for it races to destruction. Therefore, in this world of rush and anxiety, often correctly described as a 'rat race' let us calm down and ponder the words of Jesus, recorded in Luke 12, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." Or consider His words in Matt. 11 — "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Editor

GLEANINGS

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

OUR THEME: WHAT IS SPIRITUAL LIFE, AND HOW TO DEEPEN IT?

In the third place, Christ not only gives the life, but those to whom He gives it may have it in abundance. They may sound its deeps and scale its heights. Christ is no niggard giver. He wants that our living in Him may be a fellowship in which there is fulness of joy. He desires for us that the life — the "spiritual life" we have in Him, may flow deep and full and strong; bubbling up and running over, so that its streams may bless our neighbours and our fellows. He wants to make our life worth living. It is torpid and foul. Life, such as many professing Christians live on the edge of death, is scarcely worth living. The lives of the drunkard, the impure person, the blasphemous, the gambler, the rogue, the liar, are not worth living. They are

worthless — worse than wasted lives. But our life is hid with Christ in God; who nourishes and cherishes it, and keeps it for revelation on the dawning of the glory morning, when He comes to be admired in His saints. Jesus says to His disciples, “you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” — “Abide in Me, and I in you, and you shall bear much fruit for without Me ye can do nothing.”

“If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” “ABIDE IN ME!” That is the law that lies at the bottom of deep, full, strong fruit-bearing “spiritual life.” It is not developed nor deepened by spasms of agonized remorse, followed by paroxysms of wrought up feelings, ebbing and flowing by fits and starts. It is not deepened by conventions arranged annually, bi-annually, or at more or less frequent periods for the express purpose; nor by special prayer meetings got up in business-like form and duly advertised and provided for. The deepening of “spiritual life” is not the product of any sort of machinery of human contrivance. It cannot be manufactured to order, nor to a given pattern. The process must follow a course at once rational, regular, and continuous: as well as being according to rule. Natural and spiritual life resemble each other in this — that they must each be sustained by suitable nourishment. The great Giver of all life has in His wisdom and goodness provided in both the natural and supernatural kingdom, food for the mind as well as the body. Man being a dual being, and related to both the celestial and the terrestrial spheres, seeks his sustenance from both. The reply of Christ to Satan may supply all that is needed at this point. “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Nature and revelation together sustain the dual life of regenerate man. ‘As in not work neither shall he eat,’ so in the sphere of the spiritual life, the moral energies must be called into active exercise in holy service. Work in the new life will render coming to the word of life a constant necessity. The lazy Christian never gets hungry, and he lives on the borders of death in semi-starvation. The working Christian wants the spiritual tissues renewed continually, and he has recourse to the word of God. “He feeds thereon and grows.” He realises that,

“It is the golden casket,
Where gems of truth are stored;
It is the heaven-drawn picture
Of Christ, the Living Word.”

That,
“Tis a broad land of wealth unknown,
Where springs of life arise,
Seeds of immortal bliss are sown,
And hidden glory lies.”

In addition to the Word of God, there is another tangible and gracious means of refreshing for spiritual life. The weekly memorial feast, appointed by our Lord to keep Him in our minds and hearts until He comes again, to receive us to Himself, to abide with Him for ever.

Yes, my brethren, abiding, growing, spiritual life, is in abiding communion with Christ, and walking in the precepts of His word, “If ye keep my commandments (Jesus says) ye shall abide in my love.” “Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” The grand apostle to the circumcision lays down with beauty and clearness the stages of spiritual progress, 2 Peter 2.2, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are

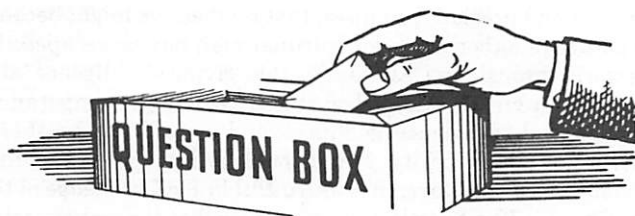
given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might become partakers of the divine nature (another name for spiritual life), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence; add to your faith, virtue; and to your virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." The Apostle goes on to show that the end of such a course of practical life is an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Throughout the Epistles the conditions of growth "Hold fast the form of sound words." "Holding forth the word of life." "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned." "Walk in love." "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life." "For-sake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is." "Pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord, and whatsoever good you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, think on these things." "Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you." "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize in the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ hath also loved us." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law, and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." "If we live in the Spirit — ('Spiritual Life') — let us also walk in the Spirit." Added to all the precepts of the Lord and His Apostles, we have their splendid lives and human achievements as examples of what a deep down, and high up spiritual life really is. If we avoid the fantastic conventionalities of modern revivalists, and dreamy mystics, and pursue the pathway of devout reverence for the precepts of Christ and the doctrine of the Apostles; translating these into every day life, we will not need to be enquiring how to deepen spiritual "life." We shall know that it deepens and widens as it flows on; and draws its abundant supplies from the gathering grounds on the hills of God, and from the living heart of the risen Christ, as we dwell in the heavenlies with Him.

To be concluded (DV) next month.

The GLEANINGS this month are taken from a Conference paper by GEORGE COLLIN at Bristol in the year 1894. Selected by Leonard Morgan.

TRUE WISDOM

But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy.—James.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“2 Timothy 4:2 says, ‘Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke; exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.’ What is meant by preaching out of season?”

In a world wherein true Christian doctrine is a rarity and many Christians suffer from chronic apathy, this instruction by Paul to Timothy comes as an urgent imperative to everyone who professes the Christian faith. It is so demanding and intense as to be almost frightening, and the questioner does us a real service by inviting us to take another look at this scripture so that we might re-appraise our own involvement in this instruction which is undoubtedly a progressive one. We have been asked to comment on one particular phrase but I am persuaded that it would be beneficial for us to say something about the context in which the phrase occurs.

Preach the word

There seems to be little doubt that this instruction was given primarily to Timothy as an individual. It is an active imperative. It calls Timothy to that sphere of action which in his second letter Paul explains like this, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 TIM. 1:7, 8). The testimony of the Lord of which Paul speaks is explained by Peter, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 PET. 3:15). If we were to paraphrase Paul he would seem to be saying “Yes, Timothy; you have been saved by Christ Jesus, our Lord. Don’t be ashamed to testify to his saving power and grace. Speak out boldly your hope. Tell people the reason for your faith. Preach the word that was taught to you; it is imperative that you do so.”

By extension, the same active imperative comes to every Christian. Preach the word. But how can we preach that which we do not know? I am appalled at the number of Christians who do not avail themselves of periods of Bible study. How can we be ready always to give an answer to people concerning our hope when we so blatantly neglect the source of our hope, the word of God. Not only should we be sharing our hope in the gospel with others, but we should be assisting in every way we can those who preach and teach the word. Listen to Paul again, “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (GAL. 6:6). Do the elders need your support? Does the preacher need your support? Well, go out and support them to the hilt. The Church is in desperate need of Christians who are committed to Christ and His word.

Be instant

W. E. Vine states that this phrase means, ‘to stand by, be present, be at hand, come on or upon’. It signifies a state of readiness. It could even have the idea of such a state of preparedness that one could go over to the assault. It brings to mind the words of Paul to the Ephesian Christians, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt

about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (EPH. 6:14-17). The same apostle teaches us, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 COR. 10:4).

Let's have no illusions. The strong holds of Satan are binding countless millions to Christ-less graves. How many of us are prepared to stand ready in the trenches of God, prepared and armoured to assault the citadel of sin? We should not delude ourselves by grandiose thoughts of our strength. In the days of the so-called pristine purity of the Church, when Paul was experiencing the punitive measures brought against him by the power of the Roman authority, he was constrained to write, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear." (2 TIM. 4:16, 17).

What a tragedy if Christ has to say to us, "You did not stand by me. I shed my blood to bring you the word of God. Why were you not ready?" Be instant!

In season, out of season

I well remember my grandmother saying, "You must never eat pork unless there is an 'R' in the month." (This, of course, excluded the months of May, June, July and August). The pork, in her estimation, was then 'out of season,' and one could presumably expect dire gastronomical effects if one ate it. This is a crude example but you will get the idea. We live our lives according to the premise that there is a time or a season for doing some things, and that such things must not be attempted if the time or season is not right.

According to the teaching of Paul, the above is not the case relative to the preaching of the gospel. We know and understand that some seasons are 'convenient', others are 'difficult'. When Paul commented to the Corinthians on the absence of Apollos, he said, "As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not to come at this time: but he will come when he shall have convenient time." (1 COR. 16:12). Apollos, evidently, would choose the convenient time. In contrast, Paul reminds us about the difficult times, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." (2 TIM. 3:1). In the very next verse to the one we are considering, Paul indicates a time which some would consider to be an 'out of season' time, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . . they shall turn away their ears from the truth." (2 TIM. 4:3, 4). What are we to do at such times? Stop preaching the word? Paul doesn't think so, because he says to Timothy, "make full proof of thy ministry." (v5). This undoubtedly would include ministering the word.

What then is Paul saying? I believe him to be saying, "Assault Satan with the word whether or not the season be easy, convenient, difficult, or even perilous." In Paul's mind there is never the conception of a time when the word should not be preached, and his message resounds down the corridors of time until it strikes *our* ears like the sound of a trumpet with a certain sound, "Preach the word be instant in season, out of season." I pray to God that every Christian, with God's help, will find it possible to do just that.

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

GIVING OURSELVES TO JESUS

There are times when I read a book and am suddenly arrested by a word / a phrase / a paragraph. Recently my imagination was gripped by the implications of a statement Jesus made whilst he was teaching his disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me."

Certainly I have heard many sermons based on this particular passage of scripture. However, it was only in the silence of my own home, book in hand that this statement really came alive. I would like to share with you the meaningful insight which I gleaned.

Hopefully, your heart will be thrilled when you appreciate the pregnant potency of these few words. Insofar as you may be encouraged to read the verse for yourself my purpose will be accomplished.

It was at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus confronted his disciples with two questions: "Who do men say that I am?" and, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter responded, the divine insight was his; "You are the Messiah." After this marvellous declaration, Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem and taught the inner circle of beloved followers that he must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

The sayings are hard and cause much sorrow to the ears of Peter who assumes the initiative and rebukes Jesus. Oh Peter, impetuous Peter, you have a lot to learn! Listen to Jesus: "If any man will come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me."

Time and time again the church is exhorted to deny itself. Deny yourself money and give more to the 'Lord's Treasury.' (Please forgive me for digressing for a moment — Let us all pledge to cease equating the Lord's Treasury with a bag of silver!) Deny yourself leisure time and spend more in the work of the gospel. The platform pleas are well worn cries and obviously contain much food for thought. But beware of the danger; when Jesus teaches a man to deny himself he is talking of something far more fundamental than the denial of material wealth and physical exercise or relaxation. Let me develop this line of thought. Denial, true denial, is the denial of oneself, it is total and it is continual.

Consider the denial of wealth. Yes, I may deny myself £X and give it to the church. However, this is a calculated decision. I have made a rational decision that I can give £X more without inflicting too much financial embarrassment. After all, I will be retaining £Y to care for my physical well being. Such denial is partial and incomplete. It is not self denial, since the giving may have been prompted by the need to ease my conscience or pamper my pride. Indeed, the very gesture may be self-centred.

Jesus says let a man deny himself. Whilst the partial denial of things which mean so much to me may be an invaluable and intrinsic part of the learning process which leads to a state of mind when I can truly deny self, nevertheless, I must not equate self denial with a restricted material life. Remember what Jesus says, let a man deny himself. Before I become immersed in exhortations encouraging Christians to deny self, let me not forget that the denial Jesus is speaking about is a man's denial of himself. I must not emphasise the word "denial" and ignore the word "himself." Self denial is not the toil of life, it is life itself. Quantatively, there is nothing I can give God except my life. If I accept that it is more blessed to give than to receive, then the possibility of giving my very self to God is cause for rejoicing and not sorrow. I recall a story one of my Theology class mates told me at university. During

the period immediately prior to him coming to university, he searched diligently for work and was interviewed by a leading supplier of fruit produce for a trainee management position within the organisation — “Tell me young man, what can you offer this company?” My friend replied with the stock cliches and in a half-hearted manner, “I can give you time, effort and honest endeavour.” The representative retorted brusquely, “Ah, is that all? This company needs dedicated young men, young men who are willing to give their lives to bananas.” (You Christians living in Fife ought to know which company I refer to). When the young man offered the story to me, he was training to become a minister of religion. I wonder if the fact that he was confronted with a decision of whether or not to donate his life to bananas, was the trigger mechanism for his decision to serve God in the particular way he had chosen. And Jesus said “if any man will come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me.”

“Take up his cross.” In the vernacular it is common to hear people refer to the cross as the burdens of life. For example, physical illness is referred to as a cross which I must bear. Similarly, the passing of a loved one is referred to as a cross which I must bear. Undoubtedly, such experiences are weights upon my shoulders. However, when I consider the statement of Jesus, I appreciate that Jesus is not referring to the cross as a superimposed burden. Yet the implications are far reaching.

I am suggesting that a burden which I must endure *fait accompli* is not a cross which I take up. The weight has been placed on me whether or not I like it. It is also interesting to note that in Luke's record of this incident, he adds the word *daily*.

The implication is that taking up the cross is a continual exercise which we do every day of our life. When we refer to cross carrying today, it is common to think of the cross as a once and for all event. We pick up the cross and bear it. There is a marked difference here, because if my reasoning is correct, then Jesus is saying to me that I must take up the cross on my own initiative rather than have it forced on me. Jesus is saying to me that I must carry many crosses, not one. Jesus is saying to me that I must take up the cross every day of my life — it is not a cross which is only lifted once.

“Follow me” said Jesus. Probably no two words summarise the life of a Christian more than these two words. “Follow me” designates the Christian walk through life. Jesus leads me all the way — I follow; where Jesus goes, I go. Conversely, where Jesus does not go, I must also refrain from going. Jesus is the way. The early Christian witness was referred to as “the way.” Similarly, my life is the way. It is the route I tread during this heavenly pilgrimage. It is the venue for men and women to rest and meet Jesus. If only I followed the footsteps of Jesus!

Let us recapitulate on the statement we have been considering: “If any man will come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me.”

If we analyse this statement, we may grasp the progression which is an essential part of my Christian witness. First of all I must learn to deny myself. Secondly I must be willing to take up my cross. Finally I must follow Jesus. On many occasions the Christian life has been referred to as a race. Based on this comparison we may observe the preparation of an athlete. The athlete denies himself, he trains body and mind and finally he runs the race. Denial is negative, it is something I do without, rather than something which I do in a positive manner. Cross bearing suggests a state of equilibrium, it is a balance situation in which I manage to bear the load without staggering forwards or tottering backwards. Following indicates a positive move; it is progressive since there is advancement.

This logic may be useful as a basis for us to analyse ourselves. For example, am I trying to go forward with Jesus and maintain all that is precious to me as a "man in the world"? Am I attempting to go forward with Jesus and ignore the many and varied crosses which litter life's highway?

If I am then there exists a possibility / probability that I am wasting life. Christianity cannot be divorced from living. The foundation stone of the church is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the edifice is constructed from living stones. Now if this is true, then I must learn to appreciate that worship is not a church service, it is my whole service and response to God. Likewise, I must learn to appreciate that Sunday is not the only day of the week which is the Lord's Day. Certainly, I must learn to appreciate that the furtherance of the gospel is to be associated with the changed character of Christian lives rather than a planned programme of evangelical campaigns. There is little point in me encouraging people to give their lives utterly and completely to Jesus when my life testifies to the fact that I haven't fully given of myself.

Oh it is difficult. I ask that you place your magazine on your lap and pray to the Father that he will enable me to practise that which I have written and that which I believe. Please be assured that you and all of God's saints have my prayers. Let us all listen to the voice of Jesus.

Ian K. Parker, Wigan.

WHERE IS HAPPINESS?

Not in Unbelief—

Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote "I wish I had never been born."

Not in Pleasure—

Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure and ease. He wrote "The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone."

Not in Money—

Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had an enormous fortune. When dying he said "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Not in Position and Fame—

Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote "Youth is a mistake, manhood a struggle, old age a regret."

Not in Military Glory—

Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Then he wept because "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Not in Earthly Achievement—

Solomon had almost all this world has to offer, but he said "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Where, Then, Is Happiness Found?

The answer is simple. In Christ alone. He said "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Selected.

Beauty is more the result of how you make up your mind than how you make up your face.

The main goal of life is not how to make a living but how to live.

A gossip is a person who will never tell a lie if the truth will do as much damage.

UNITY IN FELLOWSHIP

This article is not intended for the condemnation of any particular church or congregation. Rather it is meant for every person who 'names the name of the Lord' to consider himself or herself in the light of His Word. In fact it is meant for us all to delve into the Bible to find out why Christianity is in disrepute in our modern world.

I have no intention to offend any particular congregation, rather I do believe that it will serve a good purpose in a world where Christianity is giving way to the development of various cults.

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 2:42.

A study of the first century Christianity in comparison with Christianity today reveals many interesting differences. In this article I am mainly concerned with 'unity in fellowship.' I am confident that all my readers will consider this article with much sincerity to help resolve this problem which I consider as one of the major cancers plaguing the church in the world today.

In Christ's solemn prayer in John 17, we find that much emphasis was laid on unity. verses 20-23. Prior to and during the time of Christ, history teaches us that the world knew no unity. The nation of Israel was divided; there was a great partition between the Jews and the Gentiles. The scripture tell us that, "It was not lawful for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation"; Acts 10:28.

If one considers these facts one will realise that the coming of Christ was of a unique significance to the world. In effect the establishment of the New Testament marked the greatest revolution in the history of mankind. Through Jesus Christ we who were "at that time . . . without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God, in the world . . . were brought nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph. 2:12-13. Paul goes on to say that, "For he (Christ) is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." verse 14.

The establishment of the Church Acts 2, and the addition of the Gentiles to the Church, Acts 10, fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, Isa. 11:6, and also the promise of Christ in John 10:16-17. Sincere believers were added to the church Acts 2:47, and became members 'of the household of faith' Gal. 6:10 as they were all the children of God. Rom. 8:16-17. The church could only be described properly in the words of Paul. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.' Gal. 3:28. John Bunyan described Christians in these words:

Christians are like different flowers in a garden that have upon each of them the dew of Heaven, which being shaken with the wind, they let fall their dew at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished and become nourishers of each other.

Indeed, Christians were and should always be like that. They were and should always be a fraternity of believers in an alien culture.

Churches were made up of people from all races. So believers knew one another as brothers in the faith not as people of differences. The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians tells us that there was an attempt to create racial difference, i.e. between Jews and Gentiles. Gal. 2. Here we find that Paul rebuked Peter for such action verses 11-14. It is sad to say, though believers are aware of this situation which was firmly rebuked, in some congregations in certain parts of the world, there exist in such areas churches for the blacks and churches for the whites. I do blame both black and white brethren for this separation which renders the sacrificial work of the Lord a joke.

But some will say, "Ah! But we have to obey the law of the nation. 1 Peter 2:13-14. Yes I do agree with that but let us find out from Peter himself when he was confronted with matters contrary to the teachings of the Lord. In the Book of Acts we find Peter and other apostles answering the High Priests when they were told to be silent about the Gospel. Here are their words, ". . . Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:19-20; 5:29.

Paul had to suffer because he chose to obey the lord and to break down the barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles. Acts 22-26. In his letter to Timothy, he stated, "... I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.' 2 Tim. 2:10. If the early brethren were prepared to suffer for the sake of 'unity in fellowship,' what is hindering us from doing so in all Christian congregations today? The most common reason I have in culture." Do we have cultural differences in the church? If there are cultural differences, then we have not the knowledge of our Lord. Do the scriptures not tell us that in accepting the truth 'we put off the old man' Rom. 6:6 and become 'new creatures' 2 Cor. 2:15-17. If our reason is the fear of being labelled as communing with the socially unacceptable, then let us all remember that the Lord abode in the house of sinful, rejected Zaccheaus. Luke 19.

Brethren, it is time we ignore racial differences, so as to be able to restore that old statement known about the Church, 'See how they love one another.' We must also remember that if we cannot live with one another on this earth, it will be impossible to share the joy in heaven Rev. 7:9-10. Let us all pray to the Lord to give us wisdom to resolve this problem which brings shame to the church of the Lord. Our failure to do so will mean trying to re-build the barrier which Christ has broken down.

D. ARKU-MENSAH

14 Kingsthorpe Close,
Kildare Road, Nottingham.

QUOTES — on Blessedness

Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many: not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.	Wherefore Christian men be sure, Wealth or rank possessing Ye who now do bless the poor Shall yourselves, find blessing.
--	---

Charles Dickens John M. Neale 'Good King Wenceslas'

Never undertake anything for which you wouldn't have the courage to ask the blessing of heaven.	It is generally true that all that is re- quired to make men unmindful of what they owe to God for any blessing, is, that they should receive that blessing often and regularly.
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Georg C. Lichtenberg

There is in man a higher than love of happiness; he can do without happiness, and instead thereof seek blessedness.	Richard Whately
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Thomas Carlyle

HYPOCRITES AIN'T BOUND FOR GLORY

"Ain't got no use for churches,
'Cause a preacher I once knew
Was a lyin', sneakin' hypocrite.
What he preached, he didn't do."

"Ain't claimin' no religion,
'Cause a neighbor I once had
Claimed to be a Christian,
And, brother, he was bad."

If you can't stand a hypocrite,
A Christian you'd better be,
Or you'll be his companion
Throughout eternity!

HOW TO KILL A CHURCH

- 1 Don't come. If you do, come late.
- 2 Do not come to Bible study.
- 3 Do not attend Sunday evening meeting or week-day evening meeting.
- 4 Stay at home if you have company.
- 5 Do not sing during the praise.
- 6 Give the smallest coin in your purse.
- 7 Criticise and find fault with the leaders. Object to every proposal.
- 8 Don't do anything that would further the church's interest.
- 9 When others get their coats off and do things tell them the church is run by a clique.
- 10 Never invite anybody to the meetings.
- 11 Be a pessimist.

These eleven suggestions are all very easy, but they are very effective.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

OCTOBER 1979

- 7 Sam. 28,3-20 Acts 16,16-40
 14 Isaiah 1,10-31 Acts 17,1-10
 21 Isaiah 40,12-31 Acts 17,18-24
 28 Jeremiah 6,1-19 Acts 18,1-23

PHILIPPI

This important town became Paul's first work in Europe. He doubtless chose it for its central position. It stood on the route from east to west in the Empire and was of military value, and therefore a Roman "colony" — a miniature Rome. Lydia the business woman marketed her goods there and was we assume a Jewess. The gathering for prayer by the riverside made a good point of contact and she proved to be open to the gospel message. In contrast a woman under Satan's dominion gave publicity and testimony to the preachers. Jesus himself received such testimony, and like Paul did not accept it willingly — "the devils believe and shudder". There must be some help which compromises the message and the messenger "Divination" and "soothsaying" are displeasing to God as

they indicate distrust. Rather we should say "The future is Thy gift, I would not lift the veil which hangs twixt it and me." Paul's power relieved the young woman of her bondage, and took away the power of her masters. That they should have the influence to arouse popular resentment seems totally wrong in a Roman community, and magistrates either committing or ordering violence justly needed Paul's subsequent rebuke. Perhaps Jews were unpopular, and it was easy to rouse the mob. This was one of the three occasions when Paul was beaten with rods — a Roman punishment. Paul and Silas were thus brutally put into stocks in the inner prison. We can hardly realise what suffering was involved. Yet they sang and praised God. We sometimes grumble at indifference. What would be our reaction to punishment? But what rewards the preachers received! We read the letter written from Rome to those who formed the church at this place, and find a fund of love and responsive action. The Spirit who filled the prison with song, stayed to fill the assembly at Philippi with love and praise in later years. Read Mark 1,25; Luke 4,41; Phil. 1,1-11: 4,10-19.

THESSALONICA

Here is another very important town — the administrative centre of

Macedonia, not a Roman "colony" like Philippi but a "free city" of the Empire with special rights and privileges. We understand the inhabitants of Macedonia and more particularly this area were Thracians by race, and said to be "the most honest, the most serious, the most pious of the ancient world." Salonika stands today in the same locality, a very big and important place. Here the Jews had established themselves in commerce and society. They had their synagogue with proselytes and eminent women, and into this came Paul with his gospel, Jesus, the crucifixion and the resurrection all as prophesied so plainly in the Scriptures greatly venerated. He was allowed to present Christ as Messiah for three sabbaths. The result was of course division. Some of the most prominent Jews were open-minded, but the majority remained unbelieving. To the "devout Greeks" the gospel had a natural appeal, and their acceptance, and that of the "chief women" aroused the bitterest envy of the unbelieving Jews. The reasoning and the preaching of Paul was most successful but the privileges of the synagogue could not be continued and we suppose a considerable period was spent before opposition became too serious. The rabble of the city streets was stirred into violence and while the authorities could not find Paul guilty of the accusations made, they could not allow the disturbances to continue. The flight of Paul and Silas took them to some more reasonable Jews at Berea, but envy followed them up and Paul was escorted to Athens by the Berean brethren, a distance of nearly three hundred miles, possibly by sea. Probably this was by his own request and design.

ATHENS

Here the seat of learning and philosophy was established. This is where the truth should find considera-

tion — and acceptance. The world's wisest thinkers gathered here, and discussed matters of mental, moral and physical importance. The best moral standards had been advocated here. There was a synagogue in Athens but otherwise idol-worship was the order of the day and images representing the gods abounded. Paul saw these with indignation but first went to the Jews and reasoned with them. We are not told of any result and assume they would be with him against idolatry as would the god-fearing gentiles worshipping with them, but discussion daily in the market-place brought notice from the teachers of the two main philosophies of the time, whose ideas come to us in our words "stoic" and "epicure". The Areopagus would provide opportunity for fuller and more satisfactory discussion, whether the court were "sitting" or not. Paul's education was such that he could meet such people with confidence and competence. While we might think the effort worthless in such an atmosphere of idle curiosity, the addition to the church of a prominent member of the Council, and Damaris surely represents a victory for truth.

CORINTH

We think Paul's destination must have been Corinth rather than Athens for Silas and Timothy came there to find him. This was a very important, busy, prosperous and wicked city — certainly a place for "crossroads evangelism." We need first to consider Paul's own condition of mind and body. He had been subjected to a most painful punishment at Philippi, one from which it might take months to recover fully. He had been chased out of Thessalonica, probably escaped from Berea at the risk of his life, needing the kindness and care of those from Berea who escorted him to Athens. Here he must have felt his loneliness, and we do not know what

anxiety he experienced while waiting for his companions who did not come there. Note the urgency of his commandment "to come to him with all speed." If he travelled by ship from Berea to Athens what hardships he suffered, or if by road what effort with always the "thorn in the flesh" to buffet him! So coming to Corinth, the big city, he found Aquila and Priscilla and worked with them for his keep. Did they then accept the gospel or were they already Christians? We do not know, but we do know they were a wonderful encouragement to him (Rom. 16,4). Through all this he continued to proclaim Jesus with unflagging zeal. He expresses his feelings somewhat in I Cor. 2,1-5. Taking advantage of the meetings every sabbath the Jews and gentile worshippers had the first opportunity of receiving the gospel. We must suppose there was division among his hearers, and by the time Silas and Timothy arrived it seemed that a very decided move had to be made. Opposition hardened and the break came with good support in the person of Justus a gentile and Crispus a prominent Jew. At this point Paul received special encouragement from the Lord in a vision. He had experienced so much bitter opposition that he might have expected to be forced to move on again before consolidating his successes in Corinth. He was personally assured of safety, and this was more than confirmed when Gallio refused to act against him. This allowed for a further stay with the church.

EPHESUS

This is the fifth great town in our readings this month. Paul's aim to spread the gospel took him thus where the influence would flow outwards into other districts and lands. The circumstances of this first and very brief visit are peculiar. Paul must have taken a vow in accordance with Mosaic custom, the period of which expired at

Cenchrea — the port for Corinth. He would then keep the hair shaved there for an offering at the Temple (Num. 6,1-21) as soon as possible. The reference to a feast in verse 21 is not found in the best manuscripts, which removes a difficulty in understanding the journey with delay at Ephesus. Sailing was not by timetable and the haste would be merely for completion of the vow. We feel pleased that the Ephesian Jews were tolerant on account of the extreme of idolatry in that town as perhaps at Athens. At least they were ready to listen. We note that apparently Luke stayed at Philippi where he meets us again in ch. 20 verses 5 and 6. His account of the visit to Jerusalem is very brief, being concerned mainly with the work of spreading the gospel among the heathen.

R. B. Scott

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Peterhead, Scotland.

John Ritchie obeyed the gospel on the 13 of May. John is the son of bro and sis John Ritchie who have been members of the church for many years. Pray and rejoice with us for our new brother.

We have just finished a mission with bro Perry Cotham from Texas.

He was assisted by a group of college students who went round Peterhead inviting people to listen to the gospel. We had as many as forty visitors. We were also uplifted by the student's singing each night. The brethren here got a great spiritual boost by having them over. On the second night of the mission, the 9th of July the Lord added a young sister to His Kingdom. She is Margaret Ann Cowie, daughter of bro and sis Alec Cowie, who have been Christians for a long time. We would also ask for your prayers for this young sister.

W. M. Strachan, Sec.

COMING EVENTS**KENTISH TOWN**

We plan to hold our Anniversary Meeting on Saturday, 29th September, 1979, with meetings in the afternoon and evening as usual. All visitors very warmly welcomed. This will be our 108th Anniversary.

R. B. Scott.

Church of Christ,
Burns Street,
Ilkeston,
Derbys.

We are holding a special Gospel weekend on October 6th & 7th and our speaker at these meetings will be Bro. Alan Ashurst of Manchester.

Refreshments will be available after the Saturday night meeting and a warm welcome is extended to all.

The meetings are as follows:—

- October 6th — Gospel Meeting — 6.15 p.m.
October 7th — Breaking of Bread — 10.45 a.m.
October 7th — Gospel Meeting — 6.0 p.m.

COMING EVENT

Newtongrange, Scotland. Annual Social to be held (D.V.) on the 27th October, 1979, at 4 p.m.

The speakers arranged are Bro. T. Nisbet (Tranent) and Bro. John Morgan (Hindley). Brother Sharp is the proposed chairman. We look forward to a grand time of fellowship — please make a note of the date.

A. P. Sharp Sec.

EVANGELIST WANTED

Peterhead, Scotland: The brethren here at Peterhead think that the time is now right for us to have a full time evangelist working with us.

If there are any who are interested please contact the following address: W. Strachan, 38 Petergrange Road, Peterhead, Ph. 3121.

EVANGELIST WANTED

The Slamannan District Churches of Christ require an evangelist and all interested brethren should apply in writing to the District Secretary, Hugh Davidson, 21 Glen Lyon, St. Leonard's, East Kilbride, G74 2JJ.

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EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.