

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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ESTIMATES OF VALUE

Two or three days ago newspapers told us that a ten-year-old boy, Faisal Luhar, of Birmingham, had been awarded over £5M damages for horrendous injuries suffered in a road accident, when he was only four years old. His parents have had to fight for six years for compensation, and here, at last, their efforts have been rewarded with the highest damages ever paid in the case of a child. In this morning's newspaper, another report tells of a young man, Michael Taylor, of Huddersfield, who has won £4M in the National Lottery. However, Mr. Taylor suffers from a kidney disease and has, for years, had to undergo regular dialysis treatment, and says he would gladly give all of his vast fortune for a new kidney. We have no reason to disbelieve Mr. Taylor's statement and so we can assume that a healthy human kidney is worth about £4M. If this young man would gladly pay this sum for a kidney, how grateful should we be, if we have healthy kidneys? What value would a blind man place upon good eyesight? Imagine, if you can, what a person *blind from birth* would give to be able to see: to see colours, to see the sky and countryside and to see friends and family. And yet we take good health, healthy kidneys and good eyesight all for granted: and don't truly appreciate them until we lose them.

To most of us, such considerations are academic, but not to everybody. Judges and Juries have quite often got to place a value upon those things and come to a decision (often an inconsistent decision) as to what compensation should be paid to the loser of such physical faculties. In granting compensation, a Judge has often got to say exactly how much a person should receive for the loss of a finger, arm or leg, or both legs, or an eye, and estimate the amount due for brain damage, pneumoconiosis, etc. etc. and indeed, for the loss of life itself. In the case of a fatality the Judge has the onerous task of telling a widow exactly how much her husband was worth in monetary terms, when alive. This responsibility upon Judges is called for, more and more these days, now that we have followed the practice in the USA: of everybody suing everybody, for compensation. A newspaper cartoon, the other day, depicted a doctor, at the bedside of a highly bandaged patient, in an Accident Ward, saying "Don't worry, you'll soon be up and doing"; shortly followed by his lawyer who said, "Don't worry, you'll soon be up and suing" - which just about sums up the situation.

Many of us might find it most unflattering to learn of the figure, in cold sterling, some Judge might estimate as being the sum-total, in value, of our lives.

In wars, and in some foreign lands, life is cheap and people die needlessly, but surely everybody regards their own life as *priceless*, and non-negotiable as far as fixing

a sum of money is concerned. If Michael Taylor would be happy to give £4M for a kidney, what would he give for his whole body: for his life? It's true that the likes of Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, Jesse James and a great many others have had a "price on their head" but this, of course, was just a guide to the "bounty hunters" and not a serious valuation of their life's worth. Indeed, nobody whomsoever, criminal or otherwise, would ever agree to a monetary figure ever being suggested as the value of their life: *their life is priceless*. Yes, some have forfeited their lives for reasons of love, or patriotism, but this does not nullify the fact that they would regard their lives as priceless as anyone else's. Self-preservation is a most powerful force, and most of the population would spend every penny they have to stay alive. Life is priceless.

PRICELESS

"Priceless" could be understood to mean more than one thing. It could mean (1) something with no price attached to it: i.e. something free of charge, or (2) something with no price attachable to it (i.e. no price capable of being computed - invaluable). Perhaps we have an example of both meanings in Isaiah 55:1, where the prophet cries, **"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: Come ye and buy, and eat, yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And you labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto Me, hear and your souls shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."**

God's blessings are free: i.e. no price asked for. God's sun and rain are available equally to the righteous and unrighteous. They can be received by all, **"Without money and without price"**. **"Why spend money on that which is not bread and labour for things which give no satisfaction"?** The only "price" God asks for His mercies is a complete self-surrender from His children, and a grateful acknowledgement that **"God is the giver of every good gift"** While no price is asked ("without price") yet God's gifts are, themselves, quite "priceless" (incapable of having a value placed upon them). Usually, in this materialistic world, "money talks" and the rich get the best of everything, and can buy an entrance into all forms of society. Poverty, however, in no way prevents the poor from sharing the rich blessings of heaven, and God treats all on an equal basis, rich or poor, and charges no financial consideration for His favours. Who can calculate the sum, or place a value upon **"the sure mercies of David"?** They are "priceless" in every sense: uniquely precious but yet free of charge.

AN ATONEMENT FOR SOULS

Israel had an early introduction to the concept of "ransom" and the price of redemption. In Ex. 30:12 God instructed Moses that when making his formal survey of Israel, and numbering the men of twenty years and over, he was, at the same time to collect, from each, a half-shekel as **"a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, that there be no plague amongst them when thou numberest them . . . An half-shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel when they give an offering to the Lord and an atonement for their souls"** On being formally enrolled amongst the people of God, the young men would feel the honour, and perhaps also feel their unworthiness. Their souls were in God's domain, held in trust of God, and the "ransom" money in respect of their soul's wellbeing was as small as could be afforded by the very poor. Coins were unknown in Moses' day and half a shekel was a small lump (10 gerahs). Payment was equal for rich

and poor and showed that God considered all souls of equal value, and that unworthiness, whatever its degree, required the same expiation. The "atonement money" (v.16) was to be used in the tabernacle to make "atonement for your souls".

This same "ransom price" is doubtless the "tribute" money mentioned in Matt. 17:24-27, where Peter, in Capernaum, when confronted by the tribute collector, was asked, "**Doth your Master pay tribute money**"? Peter replied in the affirmative, but Jesus, anticipating the request for the half-shekel, asked if it was the custom for kings of the earth to take tribute from their own children, or from strangers. "**From strangers**" was Peter's reply. "**Then the children are free**" said Jesus, meaning, no doubt, the He (Son of God) could not be expected to give money to His own Father (God). However, to save giving any offence to anyone, Jesus suggested that they pay the tribute, and that Peter could use the coin he would find in the mouth of the first fish he would catch, if he were to go and cast a hook into the sea. And so Israel had had a long association with "ransom money", (going back as far as the Exodus), and with the redemptive process. Jesus knew of course, that although He was "King of Kings" He would shortly have to pay much more than a half-shekel for the redemption of sons and strangers. He would have to pay "a king's ransom" in more ways than one.

REDEEMING THE PLEDGE

Some of us are old enough to remember the days when there was a pawnshop in each locality, but especially in poorer parts of towns and cities. Those who were desperate for the loan of even very small amounts of money could give to the pawnbroker personal items, such as clocks, watches, overcoats, medals, cameras, etc. etc. as a pledge that the borrower would soon return to redeem their pledges by repaying the loan. Perhaps this helps us to understand the principle of "buying back" things held to ransom. On a much larger scale, prisoners taken during times of war were rarely released unless a ransom price of some kind was paid. Jesus, trying to instil humility into His disciples said, "**Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister (and not only that) but to give His life a ransom for many.**" (Matt. 20:28). The Lord's overriding purpose in coming to the world was, of course, that HE might pay, with His life, the ransom price for the release of a captive world: i.e. "**. . . to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound**". (Isa. 61:1).

Man was, and is, in a state of spiritual captivity, in the firm grasp of the devil. Whomsoever we obey, his servants we are: and this makes us the servants of Satan, for we have all obeyed the devil. There is none righteous, no, not one. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and the soul that sinneth it shall die. If justice were to be done, we would all die. But God is a God of mercy as well as of justice. Man, of course, could not save himself, and help had to come from a source outwith himself. God is a God of love as well as of mercy and, in fact, "**God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son.**" "**Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that HE loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.**" (1 John 4:10). Sadly there are many in the world who are not only completely unaware of their captive state and great danger, but who would, like the Jews of old, hotly deny that they were in any kind of bondage. When the Jews claimed an Abrahamic parentage, and to never having been in bondage to any man, Jesus assured them that their bondage was not political, tribal or racial *but spiritual*. He said, "**Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (or slave) of sin,**" and thus a prisoner requiring to be rescued. As Paul says, God sent the means that men "**may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will**" (2 Tim. 2:26).

THE PRICE

Is man worth dying for? Paul argues that even for a good man some might scarcely die, but who would be prepared to die for selfish, wicked and stupid people? Paul feels that this merely emphasises the strength and quality of God's love for man, for **"God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** Peter echoes this thought when he refers to the actual cost that God had to pay - the ransom price - and says, **"For ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot."**

Usually a ransom price would consist of hard cash, silver and gold, but in this case there was just not enough of it, in the entire planet, to rescue even one soul from thralldom. Heaven's estimates of the value of one soul puts it far in excess of the entire financial resources of the world. Jesus said that if a man should, in fact, gain the entire world, and in the process sell his soul, he had made a very bad bargain. Thus, one soul is worth more than our planet. Obviously all the billions of souls which have entered the world could never have been redeemed by money, and it took something much more valuable to atone for the mountains of sins. What value does this place upon the blood of Christ, we wonder? And yet, while talking in these astronomical figures of value, it seems incredible that Christ's valuation by the Jews was just 30 pieces of silver. This paltry sum (say £30) was the price of a slave (Ex. 21:32). [It boggles the mind to think that five centuries previously, Zechariah accurately predicted the events and the amount: viz. **"And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price 30 pieces of silver"** (11:12). The prophet went on to describe how money would later be cast down on the temple floor and given to the potter - which it was and bought the potter's field.]

Plainly the calculations of men are far from impeccable, and even the Jews, arguably the cleverest people in the world, have a long and chequered O.T. history of bad decisions and faulty estimates, culminating in their treatment of Christ. Human valuations can be flawed by greed, malice, ignorance, prejudice and even stupidity; and it is quite possible for us to know the price of everything and the value of nothing. One man would gladly give £4M for a kidney and who would blame him? This thought stimulates our consideration of other values: and ultimately the value of life itself. And what value would we place on our souls? Life, at best, is precarious, transient and uncertain and yet is considered to be quite priceless. If this present life is priceless, what value should we put on life everlasting? And not just everlasting life, here, but in heaven. And, more to the point, what would it be worth to escape from spending eternity in hell? What value would we place on that? These are the questions worthy of intense consideration and the ones that really matter. And the really good news is, that the certainty of heaven, and the avoidance of hell, are ours for the asking and come entirely free of charge - "priceless" in every sense of the word. We just have to ask.

EDITOR.

CONTINUING IN FAITH

We stand amazed at the abundance of references in the New Covenant writings to "faith". There are over five hundred instances of "faith", "believe", "belief", and "trust". It is, we observe, the basis of a God/man relationship. Yet, as we delve more deeply, we notice a wide variety of meanings attached to the basic concept. Please notice some of these distinct thoughts:

1. Present and continuing trust, as in John 3:16.
 2. The means of reaching God. See Hebrews 11:6.
 3. As the whole body of teaching, for example Jude 3.
 4. The Church, as seen in Galatians 6:10.
 5. The new order of things, Galatians 3:23-27.
- When one reads this last set of verses he is struck by these truths:
1. There was a time considered as **"before faith came"**.
 2. Then **"faith came"**
 3. Now we are God's children **"by faith in Christ Jesus"**.

We get to share in His family by faith and as His children we must continue to live by this standard. We live in the realm where that which is *invisible* is important. Jesus visited us once. It was He **"who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"** (2 Timothy 1:10).

He will come again, this time with other purposes in mind. In the interim we are to be **"looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ"**, as we continue on in faith, **"denying ungodliness and worldly desires"** and living **"righteously and godly in this present age"** (Titus 2:11-14).

PRESENT FAITH IS POINTED

Our faith must have direction. It is directed toward God through Jesus. Our earliest faith may involve only commitment to a person. Plans and programmes sometimes follow after. This first faith is like entering a tunnel with God. We can't see any light at the end, in fact we cannot see light at all. We do not know where the end is or when it shall be, but since **"faith is . . . the conviction of things not seen"** we travel on.

It may be that all we know is **"Christ crucified"**, but that is all we need to know. There is **"no other name under heaven . . . in which to be saved"**, so that is sufficient. While we do not repudiate the learning and even memorizing of Bible verses, one can "go to hell with a head full of scriptures" if his faith is not directed toward the cross. This is well illustrated by the expert quoting of God's Word by the very one for whom eternal fire is prepared (Matt. 4:6; 25:41).

Because the Gospel is God's power to save from sin, we are not surprised to read that **"faith comes by hearing the word of God"**. This gospel-message is so simple to understand it can be summarized in a few words: **"Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, and He was buried and He was raised on the third day"** (1 Cor. 15:1-4). This is the essence of the marching orders given to the eleven by the risen Lord. In response to the "cross-event", those who heard were instructed to act in faith. They were to **"believe and be baptized"** in order to be saved from sin.

The apostles did their job well, as did those who first became part of the household of faith. As they **"went into all the world"**, their actions are described by the Holy Spirit as **"preaching the word"** (Acts 8:4), **"proclaiming Christ"** (Acts 8:5) and simply the preaching of **"Jesus"** (Acts 8:35). The only motivating force behind all this sharing was the enlargement of the family of God, for **"we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"**.

It has been said that "faith is the eye of the soul". Just as our eyes cannot see themselves, faith allows us to look outward and upward, **"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith."** Although it is rooted in the heart, faith rests on something outside that realm. It is **"toward God"** or **"in Jesus Christ"**.

FEELING IS BELIEVING?

We are always saddened to see a sincere individual overcome by so-called

subjectivism, that 'feeling-is-believing' heresy. When the pressure is on, one must conclude (as a man told me), "I don't care what the Bible says, I believe . . ." That is not living by Bible faith but by one's own feelings.

Karl Barth was once asked what was the most profound thought he had discovered in a lifetime of in-depth Bible study. "Jesus loves me, this I know," he replied without hesitation, "for the Bible tells me so."

There are times when our speaking and our singing indicate we do not agree with Mr. Barth. Remember the beautiful song, "I serve a risen Saviour, He's everything to me . . . You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart." Instead of living by the standard, "I know because of what I feel," we ought to say, "I feel because of what I know."

It is only *by faith* we know, for example, that we have been redeemed and forgiven. The Bible tells us so in Ephesians 1:7. The sense of surroundings may seem to deny these facts. Sometimes we feel quite inadequate, don't we? Still, the Bible assures us that we are "**complete in Him**" (Colosians 2:10). Faith and feeling are not always one and the same.

A GROWING FAITH TAKES ON NEW MEANING AS IT IS LIVED

It is not as if the original definition is gone, but rather a faith lived in life's jungles and deserts takes on new shape, new colour and new meaning.

This "newness" is as seen in Hebrews 6:1. "**Leaving the elementary principles (including faith toward God) let us press on . . .**" The Jewish Christians here addressed would be no more correct in interpreting this *leaving* as an abandonment than we would be discarding our alphabet to keep step with someone who encouraged us to "leave the A, B, C's and go forward." Both are foundational and must remain to build upon.

The longer we live the stronger is our faith; the stronger our faith the more we grow; the more we grow the deeper our appreciation of God's grace, and then we are back to square one. One of the greatest and most important men who ever lived recognized this truth. He wrote, "**I am least of all the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am . . .**" (1 Corinthians 15:9:10). A living faith knows by experience, "I need Thee every hour."

A reading of 1 Peter 1:5-7 will shed light on another angle of newness of meaning to our continuing faith. No matter what translation you choose, whether it reads, "in your faith", or "out of your faith", or "add to your faith", the foundation remains. All the growth spoken of here is a growth in faith as we observe a horizontal arm being extended from the vertical stance of primary trust in God; an arm that reaches out to others.

What a day it will be when we can say, "These qualities are mine; they are now part of my make-up, therefore I am neither useless nor unfruitful."

Sometimes life's challenges bring out of us a "newness" of faith we didn't know existed. As we continue our life of faith it becomes evident while "there is nothing new under the sun", yet the joys and sorrows I face are particularly mine.

While your level of faith may not be mine and my maturing process might be affected by different stimuli than yours, we know that "faith, resting in God's good and acceptable will, accepts dis-appointments as His-appointments."

Between the first and second advents we are creatures who must "live by faith." We don't say, "Since I can see my way clearly and since I have it all figured out, I'll proceed." Instead, what we say is, "Since He has it all planned, I'll gladly go ahead with

the plan." Wars and rumours of war do not over-alarm us. We are not anxious for the things of this life, believing we are in good hands with God.

G. MANSFIELD.

JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE GOOD LIFE

Philosophers, even atheistic ones, have said that Christianity is a moral religion. Immanuel Kant said it is the only moral religion. Many present-day writers have affirmed, and it is obvious, that the modern world is in a period of moral decline and pagan license. Will and Ariel Durant, authors of *The Story of Civilization*, recently pointed out the similarity to ancient Greece and Rome in which morals floundered until Christianity furnished a new moral code.

Christianity is the religion of the good life. Jesus' primary teaching was about the kingdom, but he also gave considerable emphasis to the idea of a life of righteousness, to standards for our thinking, feeling, and acting. Therefore, realizing that our world so greatly needs the ethical values of Christianity, we who call ourselves Christians need to renew our knowledge of Christ's teachings about this Good Life and to practise and teach this way of living.

The term "good life" is used to mean not a life of pleasure but a life of righteousness. Every person makes choices and shapes his manner of life. When he chooses the Christian way he chooses the good life. This life is best shown in Jesus' perfect obedience to his Father's will in life and in death.

Jesus taught that the goal of man should be to live righteously, He said "**But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness.**" He recognized his Father as the source of righteousness and prayed to Him as righteous Father. And He admonished His disciples to "**be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.**"

A HIGHER RIGHTEOUSNESS

The righteousness which Jesus taught was a higher form than had been known by the Jews of His time. God required righteousness of the Jews in that He asked them to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. The Jews tried to exceed their pagan neighbours who relied upon sacrifices, and had a group of experts, the scribes, who gave themselves wholly to the study and teaching of what was demanded by way of righteousness. But Jesus raised the idea of righteousness to a higher level and said "**Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven.**"

The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is this inner righteousness taught by Jesus in contrast to the outward righteousness taught by the scribes. He taught that the law said not to kill, but that one should not have even a spirit of contempt and anger. And He said that the law prohibits adultery, but that one should not have a lustful look or impure desire. These and other examples show that Jesus' idea of righteousness was not to be based on rules of conduct which may control a man outwardly but on the development of the inner spirit of man, or a character with the same qualities as those of God.

This is seen in Jesus' doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Obedience results from love of God and leads to service to God and man. Jesus taught that those who profess discipleship only shall not enter the kingdom of heaven but "**he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven.**" And He taught that obedience is to be continued throughout life even in the face of persecution. Jesus taught obedience by His own example. When He was tempted by Satan He said that man shall live "by

every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In Samaria His disciples asked Him to eat and Jesus said "my meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to accomplish His work." And, on the cross He said to His Father: "Not what I will but what Thou will."

A LOVE LIKE GOD'S

To love is to be like God. Therefore love is the basic principle of the good life. It leads to being perfect as God is perfect. Jesus shows how righteousness forbids impurity, anger, and hate, requiring self-control, generosity, and benevolence. When He was asked what to do to inherit eternal life He said to love God and neighbour. Therefore love is righteousness.

But what is the meaning of the word "love" as it is used by Jesus? We know from reading C. S. Lewis that there are four words translated "love" which have different meanings. Jesus gives us no dictionary-like definition, and He actually used the word only a few times; but He shows what He means by illustrating its nature. Love is not thought of by Him as just as emotion, a shallow feeling based on physical attraction, or even a feeling of respect for others. It is a character trait based on Godlikeness, for God is love. It is an attitude of the will resulting in a deliberate choice. Love leads to good deeds, services, to self-control, kindness and a forgiving spirit, to abstaining from retaliation, to trust in God's providence. Love is the principle of concern for others even though despised, as was the Samaritan. Actually love of God and of brothers was taught in the Old Testament. But it is *unique* with Jesus when he said: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." "Doing good to," "blessing," and "praying for" is love in action. Many other passages could be cited to show that love is the central idea in Jesus' teaching about the good life.

While the term "good life" does not mean a life of simple pleasure, it does mean a life of joy and happiness. The Christian's life on earth is characterized by joyfulness. Because of his faith he lives a life of happiness, no matter what is his economic or social condition. Jesus said, in John 15:10,11, that if we keep His commandments we will abide in His love, and in so doing our joy will be made full.

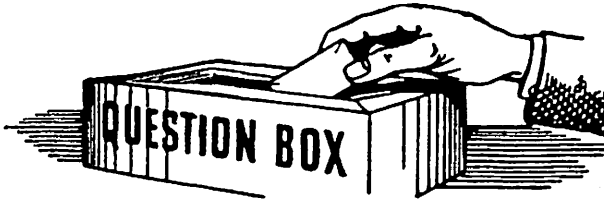
Jesus taught that real happiness in this life results from the development of certain traits of character. In the beatitudes He listed *poor in spirit, meekness, hungering for righteousness, mercifulness, purity of heart, and peaceableness*. He said those possessing these traits are blessed. He went on to say that those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness can rejoice because of their reward in heaven.

REWARDS TO COME

Jesus promised rewards for those who serve Him. In Mark 10:28-30 He told Peter that anyone who left the riches of this world for His sake and for the gospel's sake would be rewarded in this life and **in the world to come** eternal life. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus made statements describing the good life of those who put the kingdom first. He spoke of the birds and the lilies of the field and then said the Father provides them with food, drink, and clothing and would provide these things for those who seek His kingdom and His righteousness. The seeker after righteousness, then, has no need for worry. While he will be blessed, primarily with spiritual blessings, his physical needs will not be neglected. A fundamental fact of the good life, which should create much joy, is to know that God is our Father and that He loves His children. Jesus said in Matthew 7:11 that if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, "how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him."

These are some of the teachings of Jesus about the good life. He taught His followers to seek the goodness of God and to live a life of joy. Too often we think of the life here on earth as a life of woe, and just a preparation for the life after death. A more accurate and biblical view is that the sincere Christian who actively seeks righteousness in his earthly existence will have a life of happiness, a good life, here on earth and will have this Good Life continue on throughout eternity.

D. KELLEY.



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

"Does God care how we dress?"

This month I think I should commence with an apology! The question with which I hope to deal reached me some time ago, but, unfortunately, became lost in one of several stacks of paper in my little study and only 'surfaced' the other day when I was attempting a 'Spring-clean'! I am sorry for the delay.

The question is a simple one - or so it appears at first glance! In fact, it raises a number of issues, which need to be considered.

"Does God care how we dress?" There is the question! Well, *does*, He? I suggest we should allow His Word to tell us!

1. *The Old Testament Law*

Duet. 22:5 states: *"A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God"*.

I believe that the meaning of these words is perfectly plain. God *does* care how we dress, and the revulsion with which He regards those who are guilty of breaking this rule is equally obvious. Women should not wear men's clothing, nor should men wear women's clothing. Let me spell this out in case anyone is in any doubt.

Any item of clothing that is obviously *masculine* should not be worn by a woman, and any item of clothing obviously *feminine* should not be worn by a man.

We are all aware that, in Bible times, men wore a form of dress which would certainly create a stir if seen on our streets today. Indeed, when, occasionally, it *is* seen, we recognize that the wearer is not native to this country, although we know that the same sort of dress is still worn in the Middle East.

Obviously, then, proper dress is that which is recognized as being appropriate to a particular country or culture.

And yet, I can almost hear someone saying, *"That verse in Deut. 22 belongs to Law of Moses, and we are not under the Law!"* Well, both assertions are correct. What we need to consider, therefore, is *the reason* for this prohibition; and here again, the reason seems obvious. God issued this command in order to establish and maintain a distinction between the sexes. That being the case, the fact that we are not under the Mosaic Law has nothing to do with it, because the principle, which endorses the distinction between men and women, goes a lot farther back than the time of Moses.

In the beginning God did *not* make them '*male and male*', or '*female and female*'. He did not create '*Unisex*'. He did not create another man to be a companion for Adam,

nor another woman to be a companion for Eve. **Gen. 2:27** tells us that, "*male and female created He them*". Thus, although today, in an age which is as morally bankrupt as any age the world has ever seen, 'Unisex' fashions in dress and hair-styles may be acceptable in a certain section of our society, and we see women trying to look like men and - (though, *thankfully, not very frequently!*) - men trying to look like women, this is against both Nature and the law of God.

The Lord Jesus Himself, when, in **Matt. 19:4**, speaking about marriage emphasized God's intention and endorsed the principle of the distinction between male and female.

"Have you not read that HE who made them from the beginning made them male and female?"

He went on to say, *"For this reason a MAN shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his WIFE . . ."*

Incidentally, I might add that it is surely an indication of how far modern Judaism has strayed from the scriptures in which it is supposed to believe, when, within the last few days, newspapers carried the news that Jewish Rabbis are now willing to recognize 'unisex' marriages. Jesus certainly did not.

'Cross-dressing' - (I *think* this the term used to describe the behaviour of those who take to wearing the clothing of the opposite sex) - remains an abomination to God, and those who practise it should be regarded as either very sick and in need of special attention, or destitute of moral sense.

Fairly recently, the fashion world paraded a few men wearing skirts. They probably did not realize how embarrassingly ridiculous they appeared to the overwhelming majority in Western society, although one suspects that the newspapers, which published the pictures, were aware how bizarre they looked. The principle is basic and simple; in any society the accepted norm should be followed, with men dressing in a manly way and women wearing clothing appropriate to women.

This was intended by God to maintain social morality, and, as Christians, we should never countenance any fashion or style, which violates that law.

2. *New Testament Worship*

But perhaps the questioner has something else in mind; something less odd but certainly more important.

It is possible that what we are considering is a question relating to the way Christians should dress when they attend service and, particularly when the Church comes together to worship God on the Lord's Day.

I know, from my own observation, that this is something, which concerns young people in the Church, and especially, though not exclusively, young men in the Church.

In these days, what might be described as '*formal*' dress - (for example, suit, shirt and tie) - is not in favour. Everything has to be '*casual*'. Even the days of '*mix and match*' seem to have passed and we see people coming to worship dressed '*casually*'.

Well, I know of no chapter and verse which decrees that those coming to worship should be formally dressed, or wear collar and tie. This also applies to those men, young and old alike, who assist in the actual conduct of the service - those who assist at the Lord's Table, for example. But I think I could put up a pretty powerful argument for coming to services dressed *neatly and tidily!* And I think I could give sound reasons why a young man who knows that he has a duty to fulfil in the service, should not stand in front of the congregation wearing jeans that have been '*customized*' by being deliberately torn; nor should he look as though he has just tumbled out of bed! (I write of what I have witnessed!)

I am not suggesting that when we attend the worship of the Lord we should turn out

as the 'dedicated followers of fashion', or that it is necessary for us to be smartly dressed. *Casualness* is one thing, but *scruffiness* is something else!

In one who expects to assist in a time of worship, to be untidily dressed proclaims that he does not realize the sacredness of the occasion or the importance of the service he is about to perform.

Remember the principle given by Paul to the church in Corinth, **1 Cor. 14:40**. "*All things should be done decently and in order*". We have no reason to suppose that God has changed this rule.

Something else to consider: It has often been observed that no intelligent, sensitive person would present himself at a job interview dressed untidily and still expect to be successful. Furthermore, I am quite sure, that none of those people who, in recent weeks, went to Buckingham Palace to receive the honours that have been awarded to them, turned up without having taken care about their appearance.

How much more concerned should Christians be to present themselves in worship before God and at the memorial table of His Son, in a manner that befits the occasion?

I suggest, therefore, that the answer to the question is: "*Yes, God does care how we dress, especially when we come before Him in worship, because how we dress reveals how important we consider the occasion to be*".

On reflection, perhaps the question ought to be, "*Do WE care how we present ourselves before God?*"

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

WHAT IS THAT TO US?

Matt. 27:4

"**What is that to us?**" These words were spoken by the enemies of Jesus to Judas, the betrayer of our Lord. The traitorous disciple had betrayed his Lord, but, "**when he saw he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.**" Surely the chief priests and elders would be willing to release Jesus when they would hear the confession of sin on the part of the traitor! They were the religious leaders of the Jews. They were religious but they were not righteous. What did they care if Jesus was innocent? What did they care for the penitent traitor? What did they care for Jesus the Saviour or for Judas the sinner? "**What is that to us? See thou to that.**" Their indifference to the plea of the penitent Judas was as heartless and cruel as their determination to destroy Jesus.

The same spirit of indifference that was manifested by the enemies of Jesus is being manifested by the world and by many members of the Church. Many members of the Body of Christ are indifferent and negligent, and seem to have but little interest in the Lord's work. "**What is that to us?**" This seems to be the attitude that many members manifest in regard to the work and to the welfare of the Church. Many "**are at ease in Zion**" and are not concerned about their own salvation or the salvation of others. What is that to us whether the Church prospers or perishes? If souls are saved or lost, what is that to us? If wicked men would try to destroy the Church, what is that to us? Many members are so indifferent that they would not utter a protest against the introduction of innovations and unscriptural practices that would corrupt the Church. The same spirit of indifference that crucified Christ would crucify the Church, if it were not for the faithful few in every congregation that bear the burdens and shoulder the

responsibilities that every Christian should share.

Many members of the body of Christ are sleeping the sleep of indifference. It is **"high time to wake out of sleep"** (Rom. 13:11). The condemnation of the negligent and indifferent is certain and could be nearer than we suppose. Too many are at ease in Zion and have put far away the evil day. Such unconcern may cause the sear of violence to come near. (Amos 6:1-3). Our indifference is the devil's delight. We serve Satan best when we think or say, **"What is that to us?"**

Cain was of that wicked one and slew his brother. He seemed unconcerned about his crime. God said, **"Where is Abel thy brother?"** Cain's reply was of one indifference: **"Am I my brother's keeper?"** His attitude toward the righteous son of Adam was the same as that of the chief priests and elders toward the righteous Son of God. Both he and they shed innocent blood and said, **"What is that to us?"** Cain could not free himself of the responsibility for the safety of his brother by manifesting a spirit of indifference. The unconcern of the chief priests did not diminish the guilt of the men that clamoured for the life's blood of the Son of God. Many of the followers of the Christ have become imitators of the murderer Cain by their indifference to the welfare of their brethren in Christ **"Am I my brother's keeper?"** "What is that to us?" "Why should I care?" These are the answers of the indifferent and unconcerned when faced with the responsibilities and duties of Christian life. Many members are honourable enough not to offer excuses for their indifference. Indifference on the part of a Christian is inexcusable.

The Church at Laodicea was condemned for its lukewarm condition. The Church did not care enough to realise its own wretched condition. It was indifferent, ignorant and independent. Its indifference was a disgrace. There are many congregations of the Church that are no better than Laodicea. The Lord will not hold the negligent guiltless. The Lord has no use for a lifeless congregation or a luke-warm Christian.

Some day we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. There we shall be judged for what we have done and for **What we have failed to do.**

GEO. W. BUTTERFIELD.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

June 4	Proverbs 3:13-35	James 4
June 11	Job 42	James 5
June 18	Habakkuk 2	Romans 1:1-17
June 25	Dueteronomy 27:9-26	Romans 1:18-32

SUBMIT YOURSELF TO GOD

To covet, to quarrel, to fight, to envy, to slander - these are all works of the flesh. But we, in Christ, are not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. Consequently, we must humble ourselves in the sight of God and submit totally to His will (4:6,10). He will then draw near to us and lift us up (4:8,10).

James mentions *"the world"* (4:4). What is the world? It is the present con-

dition of human affairs, in alienation from God and in opposition to God. It is "human society insofar as it is organised on wrong principles and characterised by base desires, false values and egoism" (C. H. Dodd). It "includes those people, pursuits, pleasures, purposes and places where God is not wanted" (Kenneth Wuest). It is "pagan society with its false values, false standards and false gods" (William Barclay). John later wrote: **"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him"** (1 John 2:15).

James wrote: **"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"** (4:7). (To him, Satan was a very real personality.) We cannot resist the devil in our strength, but we can fight him in the strength of

the Holy Spirit. ". . . greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

The Bible talks a lot about patience. It is interesting to note that James used two different Greek words in 5:10 and 5:11. The first Greek word he used is *makrothumia*. This is patience in respect of persons. The second word he used is *hupomone* and is patience in respect of things. Job possessed great patience (*hupomone*). He is an example to us all. A study of this great man's life could prove inspirational. I found that to be the case when I studied the book of Job last year.

Elijah is also mentioned by James (5:17) in the context of prayer. He is another great character of the Old Testament and an outstanding prophet of God. From the contents of chapter 5, we see that things were rather different in New Testament times. Healings were miraculous and prayer proved to be powerful and effective (5:16). Is it equally powerful today?

THE ROMAN LETTER

Author: the apostle Paul.

Place: Corinth.

Date: A.D. 56-58

Purpose: "The letter is best understood as a character of Gentile freedom over against the Judaizers, though its immediate occasion was to prepare the way for Paul's visit to Rome from where the next phase of the Gentile mission westwards would be launched" (F. Davidson & Ralph R. Martin).

Rome: a great city with a fascinating history. "Imperial Rome has seemed, to the people of many later centuries, a peculiarly enthralling and moving theme; and that is what it remains - unique, terrible, and rich in allurements and astonishments" (Michael Grant). "Rome, goddess of the earth and of its people, without a peer or a second, amazed the ancient world. Its astonishing history was the story of the growth of a small collection of village huts of

the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. into the vast metropolis of the first century and onwards, which in some of its aspects was more splendid than anything that had been on earth before or since been seen" (F.R. Cowell).

Church at Rome: "As to the origin of the church to which Paul wrote, we have no data . . . Possibly pilgrims, converted at the ever memorable Pentecost, carries the gospel back with them and sowed the first seed (Acts 2:10)" (J. W. McGarvey).

"No one knows how the church at Rome was founded, though it is perfectly possible that some Romans present on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem carried back with them the Christian faith. The Roman Catholic tradition that Peter founded the church in Rome is without reliable evidence" (J. B. Phillips).

Themes: the gospel according to Paul (1:16 - 11:36) and the Christian way of life (12:1 - 15:13). "Those who are righteous through faith will be those who truly live" (F. LaGard Smith).

Comments: "No man verily can read it too oft or study it to well; for the more it is studied the easier it is, the more it is chewed the pleasanter it is, and the more groundly it is searched the precious things are found in it, so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein" (William Tyndale). "Romans is not polemical: Paul writes to gain the good-will and co-operation of a flourishing church not personally known to him. The Roman church comprised a variety of groups, some more liberal and some more conservative, and Paul deals with both tendencies in conciliatory and understanding terms" (F. F. Bruce). "Of these words - Law, Sin, Grace, Faith, Righteousness, Flesh, Spirit - two of the most important are the opposed terms *flesh and spirit*" (F. F. Bruce). "The letter was written to all Christians living in Rome at the time. But it was written to them as individuals and not as a body or church . . . So numerous were the disci-

ples, that there were several churches" (Moses E. Lard). "Romans is the chief part of the New Testament" (Martin Luther).

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Paul begins his letter with a salutation. He follows ancient practice. He describes himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ" and "an apostle" (1:1). The word "servant" is *doulos*, which is the Greek word for a slave. Paul thought of himself as the slave of Jesus Christ, His Master and His Lord. The word "apostle" is *apostolos* in the Greek and literally means one sent forth i.e. on a mission. Paul's mission was to preach the gospel, which he mentions four times in the first chapter (1,9,15,16). Apostleship (5) is a very important subject for all New Testament students. The apostles were God's ambassadors in the world and they were unique. Paul, for example, had the power to impart spiritual gifts. He wrote: "For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gifts, to the end you may be established" (11). The church in Corinth was different from the church in Rome because the former came behind in no gift (1 Corinthians 1:7).

Paul wrote: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (16). "Power" is *dunamis*, hence our English word dynamite. "Salvation" is *soteria* and has to do with remission of sins. "The doctrine of remission is the doctrine of salvation; for to talk of salvation without the knowledge of the remission of sins is to talk without meaning" (Alexander Campbell). Belief or faith is the response to the gospel. Faith implies reliance upon God and obedience to God. Indeed, in this chapter, Paul speaks of the "obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name . . ." (5). In the last chapter of the letter, he refers to the "revelation of the mystery" (16.25) and how it has been "made known to

all nations for the obedience of faith" (16:26). "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

THE PAGAN WORLD

I have been studying Galatians chapter 5 recently, where we find a comparison between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The works of the flesh are also found in this first chapter. It is a terrible catalogue of wickedness and depravity. Homosexuality and lesbianism are in there (26,27). I read F. LaGard Smith's book "*Sodom's Second Coming*" last summer and found it most helpful in the light of all the propaganda in the media for these "alternative lifestyles". "Instead of these being regarded as exhibitions of liberty of personality they are branded as disgraceful passions, abnormal, unnatural, shameful horrors and sexual perversity" (W. Carl Ketcherside). Three times Paul declares that God gave man up (24, 26, 28). He tells us why. I leave it to you, dear reader, to find the answers for yourself.

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. What price did Joseph fetch when he was sold into Egypt?
2. Which of David's sons rebelled against him?
3. What metal did Elisha cause to float?
4. He was imprisoned in a miry dungeon.
5. He was killed in battle at Megiddo.
6. He was Abraham's steward.
7. Where did Jesus and his parents find refuge from Herod?
8. He was the actual writer of the Roman letter.
9. Jesus met a funeral at the gate of

this city.

10. He was the son of Alphaeus.

BE STILL

(Psalm 46)

The tendency of many today is hurry, hurry, hurry. It would seem that we have lost something of the past when times moved at a more leisurely pace. Patience, calmness and unhurriedness are things of the past. The Bible does not say much about hurrying, but it certainly mentions the theme of being calm, being still.

"Be still and know that I am God"

(Psalm 46:10).

In Psalm 46, there is much we might be taught! **"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"**. We have to believe and realise that these words of scripture must be continually words of our own. In this, we can look squarely at the world and know we have safety in the Lord. In his writing the Psalmist obviously realised the overwhelming presence and power of God. Having God is of the ultimate importance. To know Him and to be with Him requires patience and calmness. **"Be still and know that I am God"**. It is only when we are quiet that we hear God speak to us.

Sometimes we hear so many other voices telling us what to do that we can not hear God. If we are to succeed in life, we certainly need to hear God's voice and signals, giving direction and guidance. Be still, keep quiet, be calm, in soul and mind. Let it happen: be overcome with the spirit. Be fully absorbed in Him. We need in these times to be drinking more often at the spiritual rivers. Too often we merely gargle and rush on. Brethren it takes time, to take time, so take it! Psalm 4:4 **"Stand in awe and sin not. Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still"**. In other words take time to be holy. Practice the art of being still and paradoxically lead a more active life in Christ Jesus. We must unwind and be at

peace with self and God. If we are too busy to pray, then indeed we are too busy. If you want to be busy though, be busy for the Lord. **Make the time, and take the time**, to be with the Lord, and live a full life in His blessings.

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;

Abide in Him always, and feed on His word;

Make friends of God's children; help those who are weak;

Forgetting, in nothing, His blessing to seek.

A. P. SHARP.

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD

Gospel Campaign assisted by
Harding Students

Dates: 18th to 25th June

(Inclus., but no meeting on Friday 23rd)

Times: Sunday 18th - 6 pm

Weekdays - 7pm

Sunday 25th - 6pm

Speaker: Bert Richie (Coleraine) D.V.

BUCKIE

Gospel Campaign with
Harding Students

Tuesday, 26th May to Sunday 8th June

First Week:

Children's Meetings -

Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri, at 7 pm

Second Week:

Gospel Preaching -

Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs, with
Harding Chorus at 7 pm

Sunday Gospel at 6 pm

Speaker at these meetings,
Bro. J. Nisbet.

VISIT THE HOLY LAND

17-27th MAY, 2001

For a brochure giving details of the
11 day trip - Contact:

David Walker

22 Palmer Square, Great Billing,
Northampton NN3 9NP.

or Tel: 01604 412509

E-mail: davidzwalker@compuserve.com

*Also Summer Holidays for Children,
Teens and Young Adults.*

GHANA APPEAL

The Church continues to grow in Ghana. All of the parcels sent in November, the glasses, clothes, books and Twi Hymn Books have arrived. This month I would like to remind readers of the work going on in Bolga, the villages which lost their crops because of the flood waters. They will soon be needing seed to plant for this year. Loraine and I witnessed these floods. We have sent money to assist them.

The area of Kete-Krachi, an area of Ghana where there are no roads to the villages. In this area there are villages where young churches are growing, Dambai, Akwebae, Kotokugyani, Osamani, Tokorano and Yarigah. The leaders in these congregations have appealed to me to request in the *Scripture Standard* for some money for meeting places as these congregations are rapidly growing. Money has been sent to them in the past week.

We have just heard of yet another church formed in the Ashanti region, details are sparse but I believe there is a membership of 12 saints.

We have been greatly encouraged with the continued gifts for this long

running appeal (we exceeded £130,000 collected so far last month) and once again we thank everyone who is helping our brethren in Ghana. For those who wish to continue helping in this work please make cheques payable to "Graeme Pearson (Ghana Appeal)" and send to Graeme Pearson, 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife, KY12 0DU. Tel: (01383) 728624.

PS Thank you to the following for gifts received without addresses to send a receipt to:-

Anon £100 received 28th March, receipt No. 1313.

A sister in Christ £50 3rd April, receipt No. 1314.

IMB received 8th April for £100, receipt No. 1323.

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1. Twenty pieces of silver (Genesis 37:28).
 2. Absalom (2 Samuel 15:1-6).
 3. Iron (2 Kings 6:6).
 4. Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38:6).
 5. Josiah (2 Kings 23:29).
 6. Eliezer of Damascus (Genesis 15:2).
 7. Egypt (Matthew 2:13).
 8. Tertius (Romans 16:22).
 9. Nain (Luke 7:11)
 10. James (Mark 3:18)

ANSWERS

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