

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

VOL.51 No.4

APRIL 1983

IF, AT FIRST...

IN 1306 the legend says, Robert Bruce, King of Scotland, after watching a spider succeed at its seventh attempt, coined the 'phrase', "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

I'm sure it must be true that we don't try hard enough. Many of us are good at our jobs, and give good service to our earthly masters, but are perhaps very lax and casual in our efforts for God. Indeed many of us may be so engrossed in our daily jobs that we have little or no time to attend to the Lord's work. In short, the standard we afford to our earthly masters is of a much higher standard than that we offer to God. This situation is as old as the hills and was the state of the Jews described in the book of Malachi. It brought scathing replies from God. God challenged them to offer the same dismal service to their employers and governors and see if they "will be pleased with thee, or accept thy person". Thus the kind of service we give to God does not go unnoticed by Him. Perhaps if we gave to *our employer* the same standard of initiative and efficiency that we give to God we would receive 'The Order of the Boot'. Surely we could try harder - surely we could do better.

There are virtually four million men currently unemployed in this small island of ours, and being one of them, I know how difficult it is to find a job, especially for the older age-groups. Some have been unemployed for several years now and have perhaps given up trying to find work. It was, therefore, refreshing to read in the papers the other day about the unemployed young man who was so fed-up with inactivity that he offered his services to a car-sales firm free of charge. The car firm bosses were impressed with the young man's attitude in such a cynical world that they agreed to let him work for them (albeit for no wages). The young man became such a good salesman, and sold so many cars, that his bosses were embarrassed into giving him wages and indeed he is now the most highly paid member of staff. Whether the end result was the calculated strategy of the young man, or whether it was just an instance of innocent opportunism we shall never know but surely the young man should get full marks for initiative. This is the kind of initiative and drive that would be useful amongst church members. We often lament about 'lost opportunities' whereas ought we not to be making opportunities? The young man could have agreed with the thousands of others 'that there are no opportunities' but he went out on his own and MADE an opportunity. Perhaps we are not aggressive enough in seeking to extend God's

kingdom; perhaps we are not persistent enough or lack imagination. Jesus quickly responded to those who showed a little initiative but, at the same time, He had to admit (as per the parable in Luke 16) that the children of the world are, in their generation, "wiser than the children of light."

Think, however, of the initiative shown by the diminutive personage of Zaccheus. He was chief amongst the publicans and he was very rich. He was also extremely keen to see Jesus but he was also very small. The crowds lining the roadway were so dense that he had no chance of seeing anything. Zaccheus was not, however, to be denied and he climbed up into the boughs of a nearby sycamore tree. When Jesus passed by He looked up and saw Zaccheus. Jesus called him down and after some conversation went to dine with him. Truly that day (as Jesus said) "Salvation came to the house of Zaccheus". Climbing a tree was not really a very spectacular thing to do but it did denote initiative (and some determination) and Jesus warmly responded to it. After all, Zaccheus *could have said*, "Look at the crowds, it's going to be quite impossible to see Him".

Then there was the case of the lady who merely touched the hem of Jesus' garment. She had spent a fortune on physicians in an unsuccessful attempt to have a serious hemorrhage cured. For twelve years she had suffered much but in spite of all fees paid to the doctors, she was getting worse. She believed that if only she could have an interview with Jesus, He would be able to cure her. Once again however the crowds which thronged Him were much too dense. Hundreds of sick people were jostling to reach Jesus and get His undivided attention. The woman struggled through the swarms of noisy people until she could just stretch her arm near enough to reach the hem of His garment, and immediately she was healed. But Jesus wanted to know, "Who touched Me"? The disciples looked askance at such a seemingly ridiculous question. They had just been pommelled and almost trampled to death by the excited hordes. "Master", they said, "The multitude press Thee and throng Thee and Thou sayest, "Who touched Me"? When the trembling woman confessed to being the one who had touched Him, Jesus said, "Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole." Thus of all the hundreds who thronged Him, Jesus was arrested by the one who had simply touched His garment. Again, in itself not a spectacular deed but one expressing great faith and a certain initiative.

And how about blind Bartimeus? As Jesus left Jericho a vast multitude of people followed Him. Bartimeus and another blind man sat as usual by the wayside begging but heard the commotion of the passing crowds. On being told that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by he called out "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David". Many of the multitude rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they cried out more and more and louder and louder. Jesus halted the procession; conversed with Bartimeus and his friend and cured them of their blindness. Can we possibly imagine the excitement of such a moment? "And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God". This is a truly remarkable example of persistence bringing, in the end, great success. Nothing could have been more vulnerable or more ineffectual than two blind beggars at the road-side, being passed by a very large and noisy multitude of chattering men. Surely this shows that Jesus was impressed by persistence as well as initiative.

Indeed did not Jesus directly teach the effective value of persistence in the situation He postulates in Luke 11. A man's friend calls at midnight to ask for three loaves (due to the arrival of unexpected guests). The man is extremely reluctant to oblige his friend, reminds him of the late hour, and explains that all the household are in bed and the house is all closed up. The friendship between,

them is obviously not strong enough to produce the bread. But if the friend refuses to go away and keeps banging on the door then the man will soon produce the bread. And so the bread eventually passes hands not, however, on account of the friendship but because of persistence (bordering on nuisance value). "Therefore", says Jesus, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye will find; Knock and it shall be opened unto you". These are well known words but it is not always appreciated that they were spoken by Jesus as a recommendation of persistence (importunity). In addition to this, Jesus also spake a parable (Luke 18) along the same lines. There was a judge that neither feared God nor had much regard for man (a real hard nut). There was also a poor widow who wanted the judge to avenge her on an adversary, but for a while the judge was quite disinterested. However the perseverance of the widow convinced the judge that she was not going to be ignored and neither was she going to go away, and so he eventually granted her request. We can all doubtless see the force of the parable - we have all seen the principle work when we have had the 'brush off' from the Income Tax people or other bureaucratic departments. God says that He too is impressed by persistence.

Then there is the case of that wonderful Syrophenician woman who doggedly stood her ground in a tussle of words with Jesus. Although a Gentile she still thought she had a chance of getting Jesus to cast a demon out of her young daughter, and she fell at His feet imploring Him. His cold reply would have been a rebuff to silence most of us - "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." The woman answered "True, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Jesus said unto her, "For this saying go thy way: The demon is gone out of thy daughter." Clearly Jesus responded to such inspired initiative, and such spirited persistence.

As a final example (and my favourite) I refer to the incident recorded (in Luke 5) of the four men who carried their friend, sick of the palsy, on a stretcher. It was their intention to place him before Jesus and have him cured, but, again, because of the vast crowds, they could not even get into the building where Jesus was. Evidently hundreds of others had the same idea i.e. of bringing their sick friends to Jesus in the hope of a cure. To many of us that would have been the end of the matter but not to these resourceful fellows. "And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst, before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee," What wonderful friends this sick man had. They were not easily deterred and their resourcefulness was duly well rewarded. Jesus obviously marvelled when He saw the tiles of the roof being brushed aside and the man in the couch before lowered in front of Him. He did not chide the men for taking undue advantage over the others, but rather looked upon it as the kind of determination true faith engenders.

The Point?

What is the point of all this you may be asking? Simply that Jesus clearly welcomed a little bit of resourcefulness *in mankind* and I am sure He even looks for it in *His own servants*. Perhaps also He would like to see His servants show great enthusiasm in the Lord's work; a little zeal: even a little daring and adventure. Nothing ventured for Jesus certainly means nothing gained. Are we eager, earnest or lethargic? Are we known in the church for the energy we consume in promoting the gospel, or the gloom we manage to create? Some of us show great energy and resource in the matter of our jobs, pastimes and hobbies,

but don't show up too well in the work of the church. If we gave to our *employers* the standard of service we give to *God* would we get our 'jotters'? Do we thus rate God as less important than our employers? If entrepreneurs run their businesses as enthusiastically as we run the church how long would they remain in business? Does it always have to be true that "the children of the world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light?" Surely not. Let's try a little harder for the Lord, and do a little bit more. Let's be really persistent and apply a little of that initiative that Jesus likes so well. If, at first, we don't succeed, do we give up?

EDITOR

EXCEPT

ONE word can have tremendous significance. This is true of the word 'Except'. Shall we observe some of the great truths suggested by it in the New Testament.

Be converted

Jesus said, "*Except* ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3). To convert is to 'turn around'. It implies a turning from one direction to another. There is a great need today for changing from destructive ways to ways that will lead to joy and happiness. This can only be achieved by turning to Jesus. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh to the Father but by Me." (John 14:6). The Christian life is a busy life yet it is a life of usefulness and service, with great rewards both in this life and in the life which is to come. 'Conversion' is illustrated by the apostle Paul's words to the Christians at Thessalonica, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God." (1 Thess. 1:9-10). To be a member of Christ's kingdom there must be a change of life-style, i.e. from serving Satan and his ways, old habits, old associations, and sins must finish, and we must look to Jesus who died for our salvation. *Except* ye be converted.

A New Creation

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee Except a man be born again, of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God". (John 3:5). This kingdom is the kingdom prophesied by Daniel (2:44) that "God would set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed". Other kingdoms have come and gone but the kingdom of Jesus Christ is still in existence. To be citizens of this kingdom we must listen to, and obey, Jesus. We must also be "born again" — of water and the Spirit. After Jesus had been crucified and risen again His apostles began preaching the words given to them by Jesus when He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:19). Luke, who wrote the 'Acts of the Apostles' confirms that they faithfully carried out the Lord's instructions and preached, "Repent and be immersed every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38). The people responded and we read that "They that gladly received" their words were immediately immersed (Acts 2:41). It was a question of being buried with Christ, and rising to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). *Except* a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Fellowship

Jesus also said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53). Having turned to God, and having been born again of water and the Spirit we need to meet with the Assembly of Christ.

This is a fellowship shared, with fellow-Christians and with the Lord. Jesus recognised our need for Spiritual food and instituted the 'Lord's Supper' saying, "This do in remembrance of me". (1 Cor. 11:24). Faithful Christians today do this, and endeavour to do just exactly what the early Christians did - meeting on the first day of the week to 'Break Bread' (Acts 20:7). Christians must remember their blessed Lord in this way and thereby feed on Jesus and gain great strength. This wonderful privilege is just one of the many blessings to be enjoyed in the kingdom of God. If we 'have no life in us' it is because we eat not of the flesh of the Son of man, or drink not of His blood. *Except ye eat.....*

Dear reader, do you truly believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, the Lord that died for you, that He rose from the dead to give Life and Hope? Then repent of your past way of life and be converted; be immersed in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and your name will be added to the Lamb's Book of Life. Continue faithful to Him, and in fellowship with men of like faith, and at the end you will receive those gladdening words from the lips of the Saviour, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34).

J. E. BREAKELL, Wigan

GLEANINGS

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

MAN OVERBOARD

"THERE is plenty of hypocrisy in the church, but there is a good deal more outside of it; and many an infidel when denouncing the hypocrisy of his neighbours, is himself the biggest hypocrite of the whole. Many a man curses God in health and prays to him in sickness; swears like a pirate in fair weather, and bellows like a calf in a storm. There is plenty of sham religion in the world, and a good deal of sham infidelity too.

One evening, after the writer had spoken to some sailors about this matter, Captain Nickerson arose and told a little of his experience, as follows: "About the year 1861, I was a sailor on board the *Heroine*, of Darien, Georgia, bound for Montevideo, South America. We were east of the Bermudas, running under single-reefed topsails. It was the dog-watch, in the evening, and a sailor named George, and myself were on the watch on the topgallant forecabin, in the forward part of the ship. I was talking with him of my early life, and of the lessons of piety which I had learned at home. He ridiculed the whole, and declared that there was no God, and that all this talk was mere moonshine. Eight bells rang, and the watch was changed, and the men were called away to pump ship. George took a bucket to get some water to fetch the pump. As he flung it over the side of the vessel it caught in the water, and as we were going quite fast, George was drawn overboard. Instantly the cry was heard, 'Man overboard!' We were on the larboard tack; the mate shouted, 'Hard-a-starboard the wheel!' and the vessel came around, and stood on the starboard tack, and we could hear George crying in the darkness, 'Save me! Save me! Save me! Save me! We immediately launched a boat, but it stove in launching, and began to fill with water. The steward came to our assistance with some blankets, which we stuffed in the hole to stop the water, and we hastened to the rescue. The night was dark, and the sea was rough. We pulled out into darkness, and followed the sound as well as we could, until we came to the place where poor George was struggling with the waves. Being a good

swimmer he had kept himself from sinking, and we found him about a quarter of a mile from the vessel, drew him on board, and pulled back to the ship with our boat half full of water. In thirty minutes from the time he fell overboard, we had him safe in his bunk in the forecabin, and as comfortable as we could make him."

"The next morning I said to George, 'Did you think that the ship was going to leave you, and that you were lost?'

'Yes, I did,' said he.

'Now, George, be honest; what did you do then?'

'I Prayed to God.'

'But I thought you did not believe there was a God,' said I.

George replied, 'When a man is *overboard*, in a dark night, and the ship going away from him, and he expects to *die*, a man *thinks* different, and *feels* different, and *talks* different from what he does when he is on the top-gallant forecabin *spinning yarns* in safety.' "

"We heard no more infidelity or blasphemy from poor George, but he did not recover from his terrible experience in the water. We left him at the hospital at Montevideo, where he afterward died".

Multitudes of infidels have found that their unbelief has failed them in the trying hour. "Hold on", said some infidels who had gathered around the sick-bed of one of their comrades. "But will you tell me what to hold on to?" was his question, which they could not answer." H. L. HASTINGS

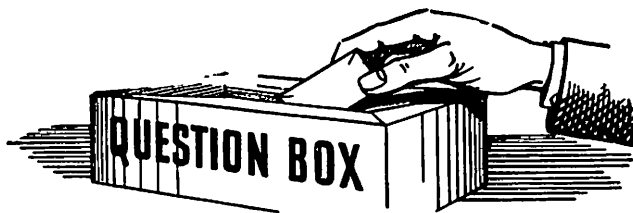
"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid Rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

THE RECKLESS PENKNIFE

"Infidels.....strike their penknife through this Bible because it is so full of unexplained mysteries. What! will you not believe anything you cannot explain? Have you finger-nails? You say "Yes". Explain why, on the tip of your finger, there comes a nail. You cannot tell me. You believe in the law of gravitation; explain it, if you can. I can ask you a hundred questions about your eyes, about your ears, about your face, about your feet, that you cannot answer, and yet you find fault that I cannot answer all the questions you may ask about this Bible. I would not give a farthing for the Bible if I could understand everything in it. I would know that the heights and depths of God's truth were not very great if, with my poor finite mind, I could reach everything... A plain farmer said to a sceptic, "The mysteries of the Bible do not bother me. I read the Bible as I eat fish. In eating fish, when I come across a bone, I do not try to swallow it, but I lay it on one side. When, in reading the prophecies, I come across that which is inexplicable, I say, 'There is a bone,' and I lay it on one side. When I find something in a doctrine that staggers my reason, I say 'That is a bone,' and I lay it on one side." Alas! my friends, that men should choke themselves to death with bones of mystery, when there is so much meat in this Bible on which the soul may get strong for eternity."

T. DE WITT TALMAGE

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Within its context, please explain John 3:8.”

THIS passage of scripture reads, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit”. It is part of a profound discourse that Jesus had with one Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews, and the context is to be found in the verses 1-21 of the third chapter of John’s Gospel.

The whole passage is concerned with the new birth and the impartation of spiritual life, made possible by the sacrificial death of Christ, and effected by the operation of the Holy Spirit. In short, it is talking about a regenerative process; the replacement of spiritual death by the communication of spiritual life. But let us examine the text of this very important passage of scripture, so that the faith of the saints might be strengthened, and so that any reader who has *not* responded to Christ might be led to faith, obedience, and participation in that new life through Christ Jesus and the Word.

The Context

In verse three John records that Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God”. To ‘see’, or to enjoy by discernment, is a condition which is made possible by a new birth. To see the Kingdom of God implies that the discernment is spiritual, because the Kingdom is spiritual. On one occasion Jesus said, to the Pharisees, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21). It is quite evident that Jesus did *not* mean that the Kingdom of God was in the hearts of the Pharisees as a governing principle, but what He *was* stating as an uncompromising truth was that except one be born again, that one could not experience the reign of God over his heart and life. Yes, the Kingdom of God *is* spiritual, and one can only enjoy the blessings and privileges if one is spiritual; “Spiritual things”, said Paul, “are spiritually discerned”.

The New Man.

The dilemma of Nicodemus is both real and astonishing to Jesus, “Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things”? Nicodemus said to the Lord, “How can a man be born when he is old?” The trouble was, of course, that he was thinking about the *wrong man*, the man of the flesh. The student will no doubt recall that Paul taught, “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). Jesus Himself made it clear to Nicodemus what He was referring to, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit”. It is the *spirit* of man, not the *flesh*, which is regenerated, and surely this is the reason why unregenerate flesh will always war against the regenerated spirit until the flesh is brought into subjection, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary one to the other” (Gal. 5:17). We must note here that the verb ‘lusteth’ is not used with respect to the Holy Spirit. The word ‘lust’ in English is always used

in a bad sense, so it is not a word we can use as indicating the nature of the Holy Spirit. The same Greek word EPITHUMEO is used by Jesus, "With *desire* I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15), so it would perhaps be better to paraphrase the Galatian passage and say, "The *desire* of the Spirit is against the flesh".

What is Regeneration?

The Greek word for regeneration is PALINGENESIA (palin, again; genesis, birth), so it literally means 'born again' or 'new birth'. When we think about 'birth' we think of the physical aspect of it and this is precisely what Nicodemus did; he didn't understand that the Lord was using a physical *figure* for a spiritual *fact*. Baptism, of course, is conterminous with regeneration. Paul wrote to Titus, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:4-7). Paul explains to the Ephesian saints that the Word of God is the *instrument* of spiritual cleansing, "That he might sanctify it (the Church) with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26). It follows, then, that if the Word is the instrument of cleansing, and the same Word is given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, then *obedience* to the Word in all details is absolutely essential for salvation, hence Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God". Also, the call of Peter on Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

God always has an objective in what He does and we must see regeneration as the objective expression of the Divine will. It is the desire of God that none should perish, and in order to achieve this He asks us to be obedient to His revealed will as expressed in Christ and in the Word. Why does He do this? Because all are 'dead' in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Paul goes on, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4,5). So we see, the human spirit may be regarded as dead, even though it exists, if it has ceased to be the organ of the Divine Spirit. We must understand, of course, that the agent in regeneration is the Holy Spirit, but having said that, it is equally important to understand that He, the Holy Spirit, operates *through* the Word of God in salvation. Jesus made it perfectly clear to the people of His day, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not" (John 6:63-64). Indeed, and isn't that true today? We see and hear so-called Christian commentators on the media who are tearing the heart out of the Christian Gospel by presenting the Christ of God as merely a 'good' man, and the Word of God as a meaningless irrelevance in the twentieth century. They will assuredly find their place in the 'lake that burns with fire', but how many others will they lead into perdition?

We must *all* understand, Christian and non-Christian alike, that a spiritual change as envisaged in regeneration is necessary if we are to live lives acceptable to God. The acid test is as Paul put it, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God *they* are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

And so to John 3:8

I think we are now in a better position to explain the fundamental facts of this particular verse. The word translated 'wind' in this verse is the Greek word PNEUMA and the literal meaning as Jesus would know it would be, "the Spirit breatheth", and in this context would mean "the breath of life". Paul illustrated this quite well as he spoke about God from Mar's hill, he said, "Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). There is an interesting passage in Acts 9:1, where it is recorded that Paul started out on the Damascus road 'breathing out threatenings and slaughter'; this seems to indicate that threatenings and slaughter were like the elements from which Paul drew and expelled his breath (See W.E. Vine). Therefore, following this reasoning, the elemental origin of the breathings of the Holy Spirit must be the Eternal Spirit Himself, God.

The phrase 'where it listeth' could be literally rendered 'where it (He) wills', and it implies volition and purpose. (See Matt. 17:12 for a further use of the word).

'Thou hearest the sound therof'. The word for sound is the word *phônè* and most frequently means 'a voice'. The operation of the wind as a physical force is likened by Jesus to the operation of the Holy Spirit as a spiritual force. He operates through the Word; He works mysteriously in the hearts and minds of men to bring them to repentance. He is the source of life, because He directs the seeker to the mainstream of Eternal Life through the Gospel.

Therefore, I believe we can paraphrase along these lines. "The Holy Spirit breathes the breath of life into those whomsoever He wills. He operates mysteriously but effectively in the hearts and minds of people to bring them into obedience to the Life-Source which is manifested in the Gospel of Christ. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit in this way".

I trust that these few words will be helpful to some who may be seeking the regeneration of their spirits. What Jesus is saying to Nicodemus is "hasn't it always been like this. Are you a master and yet you don't know?" God grant that we shall understand those fundamental truths which He so freely gives.

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

MAY 1983

- 1—Ecc. 7:1-20 Luke 12:1-21
 8—1 Kings 10:1-22 Luke 12:22-40
 15—Ecc. 11:1 to 12:8 Luke 12:41-59
 22—Isaiah 1:1-20 Luke 13:1-21
 29—Isaiah 63:7-19 Luke 13:22-14:6

THE MULTITUDES

THIS word meaning simply "a crowd" or "company of people" occurs over 90 times in the gospels alone (A.V.). It

represents two different Greek words, one of which emphasises number, represented sometimes by adding the adjective "great". Read Mark 3:7-8, Luke 5:6 & 23:1, John 5:3 for these. Our first verse this month presents to us an innumerable company by coupling "company" with another word, "thousands", which is in Jude 14 and Rev. 9:16. So we see here a VERY great crowd. Imagine a large park or open space in your town crammed tight with people. Jesus was used to crowds. His presence, His words and His actions brought together all sorts and conditions of folk hastening to see, hear and even touch Him. They came some-

times from long distances, perhaps even from Greece or Italy (John 12:20). We tend to limit His public life on account of His withdrawals from time to time, but the withdrawals emphasise His popularity. Does not Mark 1:45 give one instance out of three years of public life? Why on this present occasion was the crowd so large? Was it not the people becoming conscious of conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders? Whose side were they on? (13:17) Jesus had, so to speak, abused Pharisaic hospitality, openly exposing and rebuking their falsity, their emphasis on talk and formality. They preached but did not practise obedience to God. So coming away from the house and the meal, He continues to warn against the danger of sham righteousness. His disciples first (verses 1:4 and 32) would face temptation, and then the hatred and opposition of the same enemies who had pressed upon Jesus (Luke 11:53 & 54). Jesus faced them without fear. His disciples would need, and still need the same courage and reliance upon God. In behaviour they must fear God, and in preaching not fear men (12:4-5). Nor should they fear the multitudes, who were fickle. When the multitude saw Jesus taken by force, subjected to humiliation, and apparently powerless, His influence over them was lost. However His enemies feared the multitude which had heard Him gladly (Mark 12:12; Luke 20:19; 22:2). So they had reason to. Alas, how easily overcome.

"Jesus! Tis He Who once below
 Man's pathway trod 'mid pain and woe,
 And burdened ones where'er He came
 Brought out their sick, and deaf, and lame,
 The blind rejoiced to hear the cry,
 Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!"

Hymn 772 — 1928 Book.

No Part Time Servants (12:41)

Peter, and probably the other apostles evidently felt that Jesus was specially teaching them as His messengers. Verse 54 indicates this but

His reply to Peter widens the applications. They would need to pass on the application of the urgency of paying first attention to the kingdom of God. "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light" — the greatest that had ever come on earth (Matt. 4:13-16). They witnessed it but how much did they recognise what it meant to them, each one personally (Matt. 4:16)! Jesus had given warning of this before, and His messengers had in some cases shaken the dust off their feet (Luke 10:13-16). Jesus had already sent out first the TWELVE and then the SEVENTY with the news of His coming, and with miraculous powers. They went before Him into towns and villages He was planning to visit on this journey, which was to be the last opportunity. It terminated at the cross! The multitude was receiving final warnings as well as the disciples, thinking of many more than the apostles. While the "thousands" could not be following with Him there was certainly a great number of many very excited and expectant people. Jesus never mixed words with them. His attitude is plainly illustrated in chapter 9:57-62, and His teaching on this journey would be severely frank (13:22). Truth divides the willing from the unwilling, the hot from the lukewarm. The people said "a great prophet has arisen among us" and "God has visited His people" (7:16-17). They had seen God, and not died! What a responsibility it was - but unrecognised. Do we realise a similar responsibility with spiritual sight? It is never just attending meetings or preaching, but always every-day submission to God, minute to minute preparedness. Settle a quarrel before it can develop (12:58-59). The lesson of "accidental deaths" (13:1-5) is just that. Those who brought the question to Jesus, and those who talk or think like it today, remind us of the man born blind (John 9:2). He was curable, but nothing could be done about Pilate or

the tower. There may be lessons from accidents for future prevention, but only full-time godliness can provide consolation. The faithful servant will be always ready.

Sabbath Perversion Again

It seems that a beneficent law of God for the blessing and care of His people was made a means of blackening the character and reputation of Jesus throughout His ministry. He was able to ask "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" with the certainty that no one could do so, but His disregard for the petty restrictions and human traditions with which the elders had surrounded the Sabbath enabled them to find fault again and again, thinking to prove Jesus to be an imposter rather than a prophet, in fact to be disobedient to God in relation to observance of Moses' law. The two incidents in our readings relate to a synagogue meeting — a specially solemn occasion rightly regarded — and a private dinner. An officious "ruler" objected to the wonderful cure of an afflicted woman, and the Saviour's rebuke put him to shame before the people. This reminds us we need to watch that we do not allow formalities to interrupt or smother interruption when made necessary by unusual circumstances. Immediate NEEDS sometimes have precedent. Jesus faced the obvious effort to find fault with Him, and put the question to the experts in the law for the answer they would not give, so condemning themselves as being less thoughtful for an afflicted man than a beast in temporary trouble. Thinking over the two cures what kind of heart would not rejoice over their relief. Did both of them feel their affliction was deserved — a common feeling then, and sometimes now? What priceless, exquisite relief had come to them through those strong and tender hands, and the words of grace! "Glorious things that were done by Him" and His more than justified rebukes only increased the rage in some hearts

against Him. Shall mankind ever realise that all the gentler and kinder features of modern society of whatever kind are solely due to Jesus. His words relating to woman's long affliction put the responsibility at its ultimate.

Jerusalem

Jewish Tradition holds that the original city was SALEM (Gen. 14:18) and we refer to Hebrews 7. Melchizedek reigned there and held his Priesthood, as by divine appointment. The site has been built, destroyed and rebuilt so many times that experts differ about the age of the present walls, etc. It does not matter, but we are not surprised that the centuries have passed, and it is at the centre of the religious world. WHY? Because God's ancient people rejected their MESSIAH there, and had Him crucified. Their presence there today shows their continued defiance of the truth, but we do know that a number of them throughout the world are being won by the gospel from their unbelief. Meanwhile they remain a bone of contention among the nations, and real peace is impossible. Unless the "King of Righteousness and Prince of Peace" is there it cannot be the "New Jerusalem" (Rev. 21). We assume Jesus was in Perea (east of Jordan) when the warning about Hérod Antipas was given, which might have been a ruse to bring Him into the power of the Sanhedrin — Who did they think they were frightening? We have heard of Herod's desire before. Jesus is however on His way, and nothing will deflect Him, but is He not expressing the tender love and heartfelt grief of the Father in those graphic verses (13:34-35)?

Hymn 796 — 1928 Book

"Love for the rebel who submits
And all his way to Thee commits —
Thy mercy every sin remits,
For Thou hast love for all". G. Y. Tickle

R. B. SCOTT

BELIEF : (8)

IN our last article we considered how the Thessalonian Christians first began to believe the truth. We did this because we wanted to know how we might also become Christians *according to the word of God*. This, of course, is not what men often mean when they use the word "Christian".

A Warning

We need to understand that not all that passes as Christianity is in fact Christianity. Most of it is a form of will worship. By that we mean the worship of God *according to the will of man*. Such is *vain worship*. It is unacceptable to God, and must be anathema to him. Jesus said, "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy to you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But *in vain* do they worship me, teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:7-9).

The Apostles' Words

This danger existed in Paul's day, and he warned Christians against it: "Let no man deceive you by any means" and again, "Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-15). What a pity the religious world has not paid attention to these words of warning. Had it done so, and listened only to the words of the apostles, given in the New Testament, we would not have had the tragic disunity which exists in the religious world today. This disunity must merit the wrath of God in the day of judgment.

Reader, are you contributing to this disunity? How?—by failing to study the Word of God, to discover where you stand in relation to obedience to the Word of God. Are you listening to *men's word* and accepting that instead of God's Word in the New Testament? If so, God will hold you to account for it.

What is meant by "Sanctification of the Spirit?"

This question will not be answered by reference to our own opinions, only by the teaching of the Word of God, spoken through the apostles of Christ. The reason for this is obvious. This question involves the matter of the salvation of the soul, so we cannot afford to make any mistake. So there is no place for the doctrines of men in our consideration.

We want the reader to examine **all** our arguments according to the Scriptures of truth, for these contain the words of our Lord and his apostles. After all, that and that alone was what convinced the Thessalonians and enabled them to become Christians. Paul wrote to them, "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as of pleasing men, but God. . ." (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

We learned in a previous article what **the good news** is. "If we believe that **Jesus died and rose again. . .**" (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Notice the beautiful simplicity of the words—but then, truth is always beautiful and simple.

We also noted that 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 answered our question, "What is the salvation to which Paul refers, of which he describes God as the Giver?" (See 2 Thessalonians 2:13—the Scripture with which these studies began). Note how this was dependant upon the answers to our first two questions. Salvation comes through belief in the truth. We learned that **the truth which saves** is the glad tidings of a risen Lord. This is corroborated by Paul's own statement: ". . . salvation. . . whereunto he called you by our gospel. . ." (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

Before dealing with this third, important question (What is meant by

"sanctification of the Spirit?") let us look closely at what is meant by "salvation" as spoken of by the apostle in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope (non-Christians). For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again (the gospel), even so them also which sleep in Jesus (deceased Christians) will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ (deceased Christians) shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

What a wonderful salvation from "the wrath to come." What then is this important factor, the sanctification of the Spirit" by means of which such wonderful salvation was made possible? See our next article.

Exercises in belief

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2; 5:9-10, 23; John 7:16-17, 37-39; John 10:14-18, 27-28; 11:25-26, 42-44; 12:42-43; 14:23; 15:13-14; 17:14-26.

W. BROWN

(To be continued)

AID TO INDIA FUND

Since our last report of sending £100 to the poor brethren who lost their homes in Nellore, Andra Pradesh, by a Cyclone, we have received a letter of grateful thanks from the brethren involved.

The brethren here in Haddington, who are administering the fund, feel that since the fund is obviously limited

in its magnitude we should help as many good causes as possible rather than send all the money to just one cause — we trust that those who are kindly contributing to the fund, or intend shortly to do so, will agree. Brother Ashurst has been extremely helpful in highlighting to us cases within his own personal knowledge. Accordingly we have allocated some help to the following cases:-

- (1) Small CHILDRENS HOME for 15 destitute children £10
- (2) To help build small hospital for brethren with no medical facilities in 25 mile radius. £50
- (3) To help build rough building for those having to meet in open £15
- (4) Ditto £20
- (5) Ditto £25
- (6) Ditto £25
- (7) To help buy bibles for church with large bible school £20
- (8) Ditto £10
- (9) A little help to widow of former Preacher with 8 children to support £10
- (10) For bibles and tracts for preacher (formerly Lutheran Pastor) who gave up a luxurious mans and good pension, to preach the true and full gospel £35
- (11) A little financial help for Muslim convert thrown out of his home after becoming a Christian. £10

Total £230 We shall continue to be grateful for any donation, no matter how small, and for any comments on how the money should be used.

Miss Ruth Nisbet, 1F Station Court, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland.

THE BIBLE COLLEGE IN MILAN, ITALY

There is in Milan an excellent Bible College attached to the Church of Christ, which for many years has provided students, hungry for the word of the Gospel, with a high standard of scriptural knowledge.

The College was managed, with dedicated guidance, by the Director of Studies, Brother Fausto Salvoni. Sadly, Brother Salvoni passed away on September 11th, 1982.

Until this time, the College was generously supported by brethren from the United States. Since Brother Salvoni's death, however, the help has ceased, to the severe detriment of the work of the Lord.

It would be a great tragedy if this tender vine of truth and knowledge, so patiently nurtured by Brother Salvoni for over three decades, should wither and die. Perhaps some of the British Churches would feel able to help in some way, enabling the sap of learning to flow once again and the fresh green shoots of hope to emerge.

The Christians in Milan understand, however, the pressures which the recession and consequent unemployment have brought to our world. Yet now, as ever, the relevance of Christ's teaching, through the spirit of hope, light and reassurance found in the New Testament, should be kept alive, and the evils of darkness at bay.

Our demands and commitments are manifold, yet any contribution will help those endeavouring to carry out God's work in this small vineyard.

Brother Radaelli and Brother Benanti are tirelessly trying to fill the vacuum. Their teaching will continue to enhance scriptural enlightenment for the greater glory of God.

Their address for further information is:-

Brother A. Radaelli and Brother O. Benanti,
c/o Church of Christ,
Via del Bollo 5,
Milan, Italy.

LOST TALENT

A Great deal of talent is lost in the world for want of a little courage.

Every day sends to their graves obscure men whom timidity prevented from making a first effort; who, if they could have been encouraged to begin, would in all probability have gone great lengths in the service of the Church. The fact is, that to do anything in the world worth doing, we must not stand back shivering and thinking of the cold and danger, but jump in and scramble through as well as we can. It will not do to be perpetually calculating risks and adjusting nice chances; it did very well before the Flood, when a man would consult his friends upon an intended publication for a hundred and fifty years, and live to see his success afterwards; but at present, a man waits, and doubts, and consults his brother, and his particular friends, till one day he finds he is sixty years old and that he has lost so much time in consulting cousins and friends that he has no more time to follow their advice.

If you would raise your living to the plane of worth and accomplishment, begin today — now!! Consult your friends, your brethren, but do it "as you go." A large measure of your improvement will come from within — *while* you are working in His vineyard. Make your start...procrastination is not only a thief of time, but of souls as well!

Fear not that your life shall come to an end, rather that it shall never have a beginning. "TODAY, if you will hear his voice..." Adapted

WELCOME THE VISITOR

The speaker in the pulpit saw a man in a back pew with his hat on. He beckoned to a Deacon who hurried to the man to ask him if he was aware that he had his hat on. "Thank heaven", said the man. "I thought that would do it. I have been coming here for the last few weeks and you are the first person who has spoken to me.

Selected

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Longshoot, Wigan: We rejoice to report the addition of five souls to the Lord's Kingdom. On February 13th, Barbara Gee and Irena Gillette were baptised, and on February 22nd, Sarah Ladd, Julie Melling and Wendy Layland were baptised.

Barbara, Irena and Sarah are contacts made in the Lowton area by Bro. H. B. Frank. The brethren from Lowton have recently met with us at Longshoot because of difficulties in obtaining a Meeting-place in Lowton, and we have been greatly encouraged by their presence amongst us. Julie is the daughter of Gordon & Eileen Melling, and Wendy is the daughter of Joe & Norma Layland. We praise God for their faith, and pray that they may be the source of bringing others to Jesus.

D. Melling

Slamannan District: The Mutual Benefit Meeting took place at the Meeting-house of the church at Newton-grange, on Saturday, 12th March. A goodly crowd from many churches gathered to discuss the question "Should Churches of Christ have anything to do with Deeds of Covenant (in giving)". John Kneller was in the chair and the speakers were James Moncrieff, Haddington, and David Chalmers, Dalmellington. As usual, during the discussion period, the number of brethren wanting to contribute points of view exceeded the time available. A fair interpretation of the views of the speakers and other contributions would be that the church could not engage in Deeds Of Covenant for several reasons, the most important ones being (1) that giving *must be private and confidential* (between the giver and God): (2) giving into the

Lord's Treasury must be 'On the first day of the week': (3) The Lord's Treasury should not enlarge from money given by the 'world'.

God willing, the next Quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting will be at Dalmellington, in early May when the subject will be 'Does Matt. 24 refer to Destruction of Jerusalem or the end of the world'. Speakers John Kneller, Tranent, and William Black, Dalmellington. Chairman David Chalmers, Dalmellington

H. Davidson, Sec.

OBITUARY

Slamannan, Scotland: The church has again suffered the loss of a beloved member. Our Bro. John Wilson (Snr) passed away to be with his Lord on Wednesday 9th February 1983 aged 78. Our brother was the senior brother in the congregation, always to the fore right up to his death in the preaching of God's word and in the giving of advice and help to the younger members.

Bro. John had been a child of the Lord for some 62 years. All except for a short spell in England has been spent in Slamannan. He was also church treasurer for 15 years.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to his wife Grace, daughters May and Jean and their families who mourn his passing at this time. We join in their mourning but not as those without hope and earnestly pray for that day when with those who have gone before, we stand before Him, the Lord of Life and Glory and hear His "well done".

The funeral services were well attended and were carried out by Bro. A. Gardiner (Sighthill). The thanks of the family and the church here go to all who either attended those services or who have passed on messages of sympathy.

John B. Wilson, Sec.

CHANGE OF PREMISES

Owing to the Compulsory Acquisition of the Meeting-house of the church at Tranent, and its subsequent demolition, the congregation are awaiting the renovation of the new premises. In the meantime, and probably until the end of April, the church are meeting in the Tranent Council Chambers, 24 Bridge Street, Tranent.

J. Colgan, Sec.

ANNUAL SOCIAL

God Willing, the Annual Social of the church at Buckie, will take place in the Meeting-house on:

JUNE 4th at 3 p.m.

Chairman — W. Strachan

Speaker — A. Marsden (Wigan)

ALL WELCOME

ANNUAL SOCIAL

The Annual Social of the Slamannan church, will be held on 21st May, at 4 p.m.

Speakers to be notified later

J. B. Wilson, Sec.

KEEPERS OF THE LIGHT

The keeper of the lighthouse does not launch any ships, it is true, but he keeps many a good ship from going to wreck. The light shines farther than the keeper can see, and brightest when he cannot see at all. Two things he must remember — to keep the light burning, and never to get between the light and the darkness he is set to lighten.

So it is with a Christian. The light must be kept burning. However, this is not our greatest difficulty. It is our constant task to keep our own selfish ego in check lest as we magnify our abilities and goodness, we hide the light and the cross instead of hiding behind them.

ARE THESE YOUR EXCUSES?

I never go to the cinema nowadays because my mother and father made me go too often when I was a child.

I dislike the cinema because no-one ever speaks to me.

Every time I go someone asks me for money.

The manager never visits me at home even when I am sick.

People who go don't live up to the things the films teach them.

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	£5.00
CANADA & U.S.A.	...	....	....	....	....	....	....	\$10.00
AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates								

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian, EH32 0NY
Tel. No. Longniddry (0875) 53212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 87 Main Street, Pathhead Midlothian, Scotland. EH37 5PT Telephone Ford 320 527