

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THE REASON WHY

I received a letter the other day, quite 'out of the blue', from a member of The Churches Of God. The letter, although a surprise, was very welcome never-the-less. The writer sought to show that I was in error in teaching that baptism was 'unto the remission of sins' and asserted that salvation of the individual is **exclusively** due to their faith in Jesus Christ. We are now exchanging letters on the subject and if anything worthy of note emerges from the discussion I shall be happy to pass it on to readers.

Churches Of God were formerly associated with the 'Open Brethren' (1827 onwards) but were 're-established' around 1894. They share a great number of similarities with ourselves (Churches Of Christ) but clearly differ on several important issues. They teach (correctly) that baptism should be by immersion (as employed in N.T. times); that it should be applied only to those having reached the age of understanding (no infants) and that it is very necessary. Although they claim (correctly) that baptism is necessary they also teach that it is **not necessary** towards the salvation of any person. My correspondent from The Churches Of God enclosed two booklets in his initial letter calculated to throw some light on the matter, and although space does not allow me to quote freely from them, the following excerpt may give some idea of the problem. The Booklet is called 'Present Truth'; the chapter is entitled "The Necessity Of Baptism" and near the end we read "... lest any should misunderstand what we have written as to the absolute necessity of baptism, we would make it clear **the Scriptures do not present baptism as a means of salvation from sin and its penalty**; the word is very plain, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life'." (John 3:36) Thus baptism is presented, not as essential for the sinner's salvation, but necessary for the saint as one of those things 'which accompany salvation' (Heb. 6:9)"

From the above quotation we can see that Churches Of God see baptism as very essential, but nothing to do with salvation; solely something those who are already saved should do as one of 'those things which accompany salvation'. Hebrews (6:9) gives no indication whatever, of course, that baptism is something which accompanies salvation, but later we shall hear what other scriptures say on the subject. In another booklet, on "Baptism" from Churches Of God we are given the reasons why we should be baptised. I quote from page 3 - "Why, then, should we be baptised? Is it necessary to salvation from eternal judgement? No. Does it make this salvation more secure? No. Why then be baptised? (1) We should be baptised because it is a command of our Lord to whom all authority is given. (2) We should be baptised because if we really love the Lord we will keep His commandments. (3) We should be baptised because the requirements of the teaching of baptism is necessary to true spiritual

development. (4) We should be baptised because when believers meet their Lord they will meet a man who Himself was baptised." Let us see if the N.T. does not say a little more than The Churches Of God on the matter, as to why men and women should be baptised (immersed).

### OURS IS TO REASON WHY?

Most readers are exceptionally well versed in this subject and could adequately deal with it, but I bring it up mainly for the benefit of those, younger in the faith, who may not be so well informed. This magazine goes to many countries throughout the world, and ends up in many unexpected places. It goes to fairly affluent countries and also to the poorer Third World countries and is, therefore, read by men and women of different educational backgrounds and opportunities. Consequently, I hope that those who are experts on this issue will bear with my humble efforts to be helpful to those who may not be.

Firstly we note that the 4 'reasons' for baptism, quoted from the Booklet, were not substantiated by scriptural references. Obviously we agree with reason No. 1 i.e. that baptism was commanded by Jesus and thus we should obey such a command. We can also agree with reason No. 2 i.e. that those who really love Jesus will keep His commands. Reason No. 3 "the requirements of baptismal teaching being necessary to true spiritual development" is much too vague for fair comment. Reason No. 4 is, once again, merely a statement of the obvious. Certainly we do well to follow the example of Jesus (who walked about 70 miles to be baptised of John). But why, we might ask, do the Churches Of God not give the reasons **mentioned in the N.T.** i.e. (1) that baptism together with faith will bring about our ultimate salvation (Mark 16:15) (Acts 22:16). (2) That baptism is the means of 'putting on' Christ (Gal. 3:27). (3) That baptism saves us (I Peter 3:21). There are other reasons, of course, but these are enough to be going on with, and are obviously diametrically opposed to the teaching of the Churches of God.

Certainly the Churches Of God are correct in saying that if Jesus commanded something we ought to obey it. Indeed I believe we ought to obey the Lord's instructions whether we know **WHY** or not. After all, our's is not to reason, Why. If, however, the scriptures tell us why we are to do a thing, then that is quite a different matter, and we should take pains to know, **WHY**. The other Holy Ordinance of God in the church, **the Breaking Of Bread**, is also held on the instructions of Jesus, and we would surely keep it whether or not we knew why. But Jesus **tells us why**. "This Do", He said, "in memory of Me". The reason is, therefore, one of remembrance. Does the N.T. likewise tell us why we must be baptised.? Churches Of God say (rightly) that Jesus commanded baptism, and **where** did He command it, we might ask? In Mark 16:15, while giving His final instructions to His apostles, Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Surely Jesus, in giving the command is also **giving us the reason**. The gospel is to be preached. Some will believe it and some will not believe it. Those who believe are to be baptised and will be saved. Those who disbelieve will be damned. In our quotation from the first booklet the Churches Of God said, "Thus baptism is presented, not as essential for the sinner's salvation but necessary for the saint, as one of those things which accompany salvation". Jesus did not say that He who believes becomes 'a saint' and should be baptised to provide the saint with something to accompany salvation, but said that **he who believed and was baptised would be saved**. It is a Bible-study rule, often emphasised by the late David King, that "whenever two or more acts are conjoined in order to a given end, that each of those acts is for the end, or purpose, for which they are all conjoined." Thus when Jesus conjoined faith and baptism as being necessary to salvation; then

each are equally necessary to that end. Likewise, when the apostle Peter (in Acts 2:38) conjoined repentance and baptism as being unto the remission of sins: then each of those constituents (repentance and baptism) are each necessary to that end – what end? – remission of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Peter’s inspired words were (to those who asked what they should do) “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.” Repentance and baptism together were for the removal of our sins. The remission (or removal) of sins is not some new mystery, for even John’s Baptism was for the remission of sins (Luke 3:3) and Christ’s baptism is not inferior to John’s but superior (see Acts 19: 1-5). In view of our Lord’s categorical statement that he that believes and is baptised will be saved, how can any rational bible student say that baptism is ‘not essential for the sinner’s salvation.’ In view of Peter’s utterance that Repentance and baptism will give remission of sins, how can any man say that baptism plays no part in salvation.? Has ‘remission of sins’ nothing to do with the salvation process.? (And if believers are saved by faith only what about the demons who believe but tremble, and what about Chief Rulers who believed on Jesus but would not confess Him lest they should be put out of the Synagogue. John 12:42).

#### ‘SAINT’ OR SINNER PRIOR TO BAPTISM?

In the case of the apostle Paul’s own conversation we read that notwithstanding the fact that he had had a conversation with Jesus on the way (to Damascus) he had still to go into the city where it would be told him what he must do (not what he must believe, but what he must DO). Notwithstanding the fact that he spent three days and nights in his blindness, in prayer and abject repentance, without eating or drinking, he was still in his sins, and indeed remained so until he received the visitor sent by God. Ananias, the visitor, said, “And now why tarriest thou, Arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Ananias (Acts 22:16) did not say “pray a little harder” or “believe a little stronger” or “Repent a little deeper” but said, “arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord.” Paul was still in his sins but was to wash them away in the waters of baptism (not praying them away but washing them away). Thus prior to his baptism Paul was yet in his sins. Was he in a saved condition if he was yet in his sins.? Was he numbered among ‘the saints’ while he was yet in his sins.? Was Paul a Christian while he was yet in his sins?

Paul did not argue with Ananias and say, “You are mistaken Ananias, don’t you know that baptism is not for the remission of sins, and plays no part in a man’s salvation.”? No, Paul did not say anything of the kind, but responded willingly and was baptised immediately. In view of this how can Churches Of God, or anyone else for that matter, contradict such clear and unequivocal statements in God’s word.?

#### CONCLUSION

If baptism is to be respected at all, it is simply and only because the Saviour has ordained it; and if remission of sins is to be received at all, it is simply and only because it pleaseth the Father to grant it: and if there be any definite and determinate way in which it is granted, or formal conditions preliminary to conferring it, it is simply and solely because the Great Head of the church has so prescribed and established it. The reason for selecting and ordaining baptism is God’s reason, not man’s. Man, therefore, cannot change or modify the one or the other. The reasons for baptism, and the blessings it confers, are described in scripture, and to that we cannot add or take away. As we have seen, the N.T. teaches that faith followed by baptism leads to salvation (Mark 16:15) and repentance followed by baptism confers remission of sins (Acts 2:38) or, in other words, washes sins away (Acts 22:16). In I Peter 3:21, the apostle Peter, while talking of the destruction of the world in Noah’s day, says

that 8 (only 8) souls were saved by water, the like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us." Apparently the apostle did not share the view now being advanced by the Churches Of God. Peter said that just as water saved those eight souls in Noah's day (by saving the few and destroying the many) so baptism doth also now save us. Man's salvation results from a sequence of events and we must not interfere with that sequence or presume to rearrange it to our personal satisfaction. The CAUSES of Salvation could be described thus:— (1) THE MOVING CAUSE — the love and grace of God (2) THE PROCURING CAUSE — the Blood of Jesus (3) THE QUALIFYING CAUSE — Faith and Repentance (4) THE RECEIVING CAUSE — Baptism and obedient service.

It is extremely foolish for Churches Of God, or anyone else, to assert that man is saved by Faith exclusively, and in the next breath to say that man is saved by Grace exclusively. One is a contradiction of the other. The truth is that man is saved by Faith (Acts 16:32) but not by faith only (James 2:24). Man is also saved by Grace (Eph. 2:8) but not by Grace only. Man is also saved by the gospel (Acts 11:14) and by Confessing Christ (Rom. 10:10); and by Calling on His Name (Rom.10:13); by Hope (Rom. 8:24); by continual Perseverance through life. (Matt. 10:22) and by Baptism (I Peter 3:21). We must also save ourselves by our OWN EFFORTS (Acts 2:40) Peter said, "Save yourselves from this evil generation." The Grace of God; the Love of God; The Blood of Christ; the Death of Christ are all of little or no avail unless WE OURSELVES accept them thankfully and willingly. And how do we SAVE OURSELVES.? By believing in Jesus, by repenting of our sins and being baptised into Christ's death that we might arise to walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6). I am convinced that a fairly small child could understand these things and that they are not embedded in any great theological mysticism. Thus unless the Churches of God can produce good reasons to the contrary I shall continue to believe, and teach, those inspired statements of the apostle Peter that "Baptism doth also now save us", and that it is unto (eis) the remission of sins. If any thing of interest emerges from subsequent correspondence I shall be happy to share it with readers.

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

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

### MAN'S DEEPEST NEED IS FORGIVENESS

"That ye may know the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy). Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Matthew 9:6

"Man's deepest need is forgiveness. How strangely irrelevant and wide of the mark seems Christ's response to the eager zeal of the bearers and the pleading silence of the sufferer! "Son," — or as the original might more accurately and tenderly be rendered, "Child," — "be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." That sounded far away from their want. It was far away from their wish; but it was the direct answer to the man's true need. Possibly in this case the disease was the result of early profligacy — "A sin of flesh avenged in kind."

Probably, too, the paralytic felt, whatever his four kindly neighbours may have done, that what he needed most was pardon; for Christ casts not His pearls before eyes that cannot see their lustre, nor offers His gift of pardon to hearts unwounded by the consciousness of sin. The long hours of compelled inactivity may have been not unvisited by remorseful memories, and the conscience may have stirred in proportion as the limbs stiffened. Be that as it may, it is to be observed that our Lord points to the miracle as a proof of His power to pardon, given not to the palsied

man, but to the cavillers standing by, as if the former needed no proof, but had grasped the assurance while it was yet unverified. Thus both Christ's declaration and the swift acceptance of it seem to imply that in that motionless form stretched on its pallet an inward tempest of penitence and longing raged, which could only be stilled by something far deeper than any bodily healing. At all events, the plain lesson from Christ's treatment of the case is that our deepest need is pardon."

Alexander Maclaren.

### THE CHARACTER OF MAN

"The Bible declares that "in the last days perilous (or difficult) times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, lovers of money, vaunting, proud, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, untruthful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, inconsistent, savage, not lovers of good, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety, but denying the power of it" (2 Timothy 3. 1-5, Gr). Such is the character of man, and such is the result, as Scripture foretells it, of all his schemes of betterment, education, development, self-culture, civilisation, and character building. And because of this the Bible is heartily detested. Men have sought nothing more earnestly than they have sought to destroy this appallingly accurate portrait of themselves and their doings. How astonishing it is that any intelligent person should suppose that man drew this picture of himself, and predicted this as the outcome of all his own efforts! No wonder the Bible is hated, and for the simple and sufficient reason that it declares the truth about man and his world. The Lord Jesus set forth clearly both the fact and its explanation when He said to His unbelieving brethren, "The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil" (John 7.7)."

Philip Mauro.

### THE BEST BOOK

"The Bible is the best Book, The Book we hold so dear,  
A Story Book, a Picture Book, A Book of Songs to cheer.  
The Bible tells of Jesus, Now in His home above,  
The Bible brings the message sweet, That God is love. —"

J. W. Wood.

### WORDS CONCERNING DEEDS

Dan Crawford, of Central Africa, said the Bantu picturesque title for Acts is "Words concerning Deeds."

### THE BIBLE BANK NOTE

"The Bible Bank Note (Philippians 4. 19). (1) Banker's Name, "My God." (2) Promise, "shall supply." (3) Amount, "all your need." (4) Method, "according to." (5) Capital, "His riches." (6) Head Office, "in glory." (7) Cashier, "by Christ Jesus."

H. Pickering.

### AMUSEMENT

"Amusement is not an end, but means — a means of refreshing the mind and replenishing the strength of the body. When it begins to be the principal thing for which one lives, or when in pursuing it, the mental powers are enfeebled, and the bodily health impaired, it falls under just condemnation.

Amusements that consume the hours which ought to be sacred to sleep are, therefore censurable.

Amusements that call us away from work which we are bound to do are pernicious, just to the extent to which they cause us to be neglectful or unfaithful.

Amusements that arouse or stimulate morbid appetites, or that cause us to be restless or discontented, are always to be avoided.

Any indulgence in amusement which has a tendency to weaken our respect for

the great interests of character, or to loosen our hold on the external verities of the spiritual realm, is so far an injury to us." — Ex. The Bible Advocate, December 1, 1890.

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

## WHAT MAKES A CHURCH GROW?

Our travels over the country (U.S.A.) have led us to believe that the average church is not growing. There are areas in which dynamic churches are doing great works, but even these are becoming great mostly by move-ins. Most small town and rural churches are not growing. Many are simply disappearing.

What can be done about it? Nothing, without a lot of hard work. If we are willing to put out the work it takes to make a church grow, we are convinced that any church in the brotherhood can be made into a growing church. Take the one you are in, for instance: Is it growing? Or does your community have 400 Christians in it with only 200 of them interested enough even to attend worship? We deplore the drop-out record, but that record is evidence of a condition in the average congregation that must be changed if the church is to survive — much less grow.

Someone recently said that four out of five congregations are not growing. If that is anywhere near correct, what of the future?

There are some elements that must be present in a congregation before it can grow. In the first place, a group must decide that it *can* grow. A defeatist syndrome will never build a church. If we think all in a community who can be converted have already been converted, the church won't grow. Believing we can grow is the very first essential to being able to grow. Enthusiasm generates growth.

There must be a positive, definite programme in the congregation designed to produce growth. Does the congregation where you worship have such a programme? If not, why not? Churches do not grow by accident; they grow by design. Church leaders who do not plan for growth are not leaders. A congregation can't go far without leaders. If leaders won't lead, then they need to get out of the way and let someone who will lead, lead. Most of the churches we know do not have any plans to grow.

In fact, the average community hasn't even been surveyed. The average congregation doesn't know whom it is reaching and whom it is making no effort to reach. A good long business meeting spent in surveying the community and determining the areas that are completely unevangelized by the congregation would be profitable in four out of five churches. If generals went to battle without any battle plans they would not last long; neither will congregations and leaders who fight like one beating the air.

When any worthwhile movement is started, the first thing necessary is to organize its efforts to obtain the best ratio between effort expended and results obtained. We are of the opinion that in four out of five congregations there is really no planning at all. No goals are set. No thought is given as to how to attain goals. Very little work is done to reach any goal at all. The church just floats from Sunday to Sunday. In any congregation, urban or rural, the church will start growing when plans are made, goals are set, and effort is organized to make it grow. Where these elements are absent, the church is not growing.

In congregations where the members or the leaders know little about what is going on outside their community, and care less, there is not any growth. We would venture to say that there is not a church in the whole brotherhood that is growing whose members and leaders are not knowledgeable of how things are going outside their own congregation. This is why we think it is a shame the way leaders in the average congregation discourage rather than encourage the families of the church to subscribe

to a gospel paper, or to attend a seminar in an adjoining town. Churches whose members don't know, don't grow.

We are appalled at the lack of personal involvement in the average congregation. If a church is going to grow it must develop personal commitment among its members. We have seen too many churches depend upon one-shot, high-powered promotions to set the church afire. There was usually a flare-up of enthusiasm that died just as quickly. If church growth is to be sustained, then Christians have to be convinced that they are in this battle for keeps. A persistent, patient continuance in well-doing is necessary. The life of the church must become a way of life for every member.

And we have never seen a praying church that was not a growing church. On the other hand, we have never seen a church grow that didn't pray. Individuals who don't pray, don't grow. There's power in prayer. God can do what we can't do. We have no right, however, to call upon God to do what we can do. If we do all we can, and then ask God to extend our efforts, he will. There is a direct ratio between the prayers of a church and the growth of the church. It's hard to pray for something and then not work for it.

Churches have to want to grow. If they do not want to grow they won't grow. And four out of five are not growing because four out of five really do not want to grow. Take your own congregation: does it *really* want to grow? It is only after we have dreamed of things as they ought to be that we are willing to exert effort to make them what they should be. Those who sow sparingly reap sparingly. Those who sow bountifully, reap bountifully. And God helps only those who help themselves.

(From: 'Firm Foundation'.)

## ATTITUDES OF A SOUL-WINNER

"There were added that day about 3,000 souls." "Many believed and the number of men came to about 5,000." "Men who have turned the world upside down." "The gospel has been preached to every creature under the heavens." Acts 2:41; 4:4; 17:6; Colossians 1:23.

WOW! That must have been exciting! How could they do it back then without our rapid transportation and mass communications? Why can't we see results like that today?

We can! If we will learn to think like New Testament Christians thought, we'll begin to see results like they saw. It's all a matter of our ATTITUDES.

### ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GOSPEL

Early Christians believed the gospel was the only hope of salvation. Act 11:14.

If we entertain one tiny thought that a person can somehow be saved in ignorance or by moral sincerity, we will never become soul-winners. When we decide that God would not have allowed Christ to die if there were any other way, we will try to tell everyone about the Saviour – even when we think they are not interested.

Besides, the gospel is good news; everyone likes to share good news. Our message is not that every man is a sinner and condemned to hell; our message is that through Christ the condemned sinner doesn't have to go there. No wonder Paul was eager to preach the gospel, even to the terrible city of Rome. Rom. 1:15.

Paul went on to say that the gospel is powerful. Romans 1:16. In fact, our word "dynamite" comes from the word he used. Too many fear that the gospel is too weak to convert the rich or the poor, the religious or the infidel, the good or the bad. No wonder few try. Early Christians didn't know any better and converted procounsuls and beggars, men like Cornelius and some like Simon the sorcerer.

Do you suppose some of us might even be ashamed of the gospel? Would we feel embarrassed if someone identified us as those people who think there's only one



way to go to Heaven? First century disciples were not ashamed even when it cost them their jobs, their homes, and often their lives.

Just what is your attitude toward the gospel?

### ATTITUDE TOWARD PEOPLE

Another important part of the early Christian's philosophy of soul-winning was his attitude toward people. He believed that every person was lost, "since all have sinned." Romans 3:23. When a normal human believes another is lost in the wilderness he will do something to try to help even if he has no previous experience. So it is with one who realizes that his fellow-man is lost spiritually.

Although they saw every sinner as lost, they were convinced that each was worth saving. Christ had died for the sins of the whole world. I John 2:2. Alcoholics, adulterers, sex perverts, thieves – it didn't matter: They offered the gospel to each and many became disciples. I Corinthians 6:9-11.

When modern Christians decide that immoral people can be cleansed and sit beside us in worship, more sin-sick souls will be healed.

Such thinking creates optimism. Jesus talked to the Samaritans and the divorcee at the well and saw "fields white for harvest." John 4:35.

Many people are interested; Christ said: "The harvest is plentiful." It is only the labourers who are few. Matthew 9:37.

Which are you, a grain inspector or a reaper.

### ATTITUDE TOWARD SELF

The view one has of himself obviously influences greatly what he accomplishes in life. Early Christians were humble for they realized that they were sinners too, sinners saved by grace with no merit of their own. Ephesians 2:8. They did not feel that they were "already perfect" (Philippians 3:12), and approached others free from any holier-than-thou attitude.

Disciples saw themselves only as "servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each." I Cor. 3:5. In Romans 8:28-30, Paul teaches that the Lord foreknows those that will love Him and uses His willing saints to call them with the gospel. Cornelius, the Ethiopian and the Corinthians (Acts 10:8; 18:10) are illustrations of this thrilling truth. As His messengers, we can trust in Him to work things out for the best for those who want the truth. Since we cannot foreknow who the prospects are, it is simply our job to call everyone and God's responsibility to see that we talk to the right ones along the line.

If the Lord has enough confidence in us to assign us the task of carrying the only message of salvation to men, then we ought to have confidence also. First century believers trusted the Lord's promise to be with them "always" (Matthew 28:20), and felt confident they could "do all things through Christ." 2 Corinthians 3:4, 5; Philippians 4:13.

"Christ did not send me to see how many I could baptize, but to proclaim the gospel." I Cor. 1:17, Phillips. Paul could not list exactly who or how many he converted at Corinth, but he was a success – he preached the message. A Christian's job is to plant or water; it is God who makes it grow. I Cor. 3:6,7.

Oh, if we could only understand the parable of the soils!

Converts are made by the interaction of the "seed" and the "soil" (Luke 8:5-15). Jesus sent us to sow the seed, not evaluate the soil. If a bumper harvest is produced, to God goes the glory. If some wither and die, it is sad but not reason for the sower to give up planting. Remember, the difference in the soil makes the difference in the harvest.

When we do what the Lord gave us to do we are a success. He will judge the results and provide the increase.



## SUMMARY

The proper Christian attitude toward evangelism may be summed up in the story of two shoe salesmen. Unknown to one another, each had flown to the same African city to help their company decide whether the people would be prospects for their products. After observing the thousands of barefoot natives, one wrote home, "Situation hopeless, no one wears shoes." The other wired the excited report, "Possibilities unlimited; everyone needs our shoes!"

Do we believe we have the gospel product for which all men have need? Are we optimistic that the Lord will help us if we do what He commissioned? Then, let these New Testament attitudes produce a New Testament approach. Believing the gospel is man's only hope and that sinners do want to hear it, let us optimistically speak to them in a straightforward manner concerning their Saviour who shed His blood for them. We will begin to see results like New Testament Christians had. We may even be able to say with Paul:

"So, naturally, we proclaim Christ! We warn everyone we meet, and we teach everyone we can, all that we know about Him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ Jesus. This is what I am working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me." Colossians 1-28, 29, Phillips.

Are you ready to trust the Lord and give Him a chance to use you to teach someone? – "The Sword and Staff"

## CORNERSTONE

(Helping the needy in St. Louis)

I was working at the Cornerstone recently. It was early in the morning. I heard a knock at the door. When I opened it there stood a woman crying. I knew her quite well, I had persuaded her to come in for clothes. Nell had given her a blanket. I also knew her son. He was almost always drunk. He beat up on his mother frequently. But he liked me and would do anything to help me.

The old woman, in her late seventies, was a pitiable object as she stood before me. She had two teeth, one upper, the other lower. The gums had receded from them, leaving them like snags. They did not meet. She was unkempt, wearing an old coat held together with a large safety pin. When she gained control of herself she said she had come to me because I was the only one she knew who would care.

She told me that when she arose that morning she looked out of the window. She saw a man lying on the gravel drive. She went out to see if he was drunk, or sleeping one off. When she got near enough she saw his throat was cut from ear to ear. He had been hit in the head and his brains were on her driveway. When she could gain control of herself she called the police. When they came, they knew the man, who was about twenty-five. They told her he was a no-good. One officer reached out with his foot, turned the man over and said, "They did a good job on him."

I took the old woman by the hand and prayed for her. She crossed herself when I finished. She told me she felt better and went down the street. That is the seventh murder within three blocks of the Cornerstone since we have been there.

Recently a man who is an alcoholic, but who is a great defender of mine, came in to tell me he had gotten permission to sleep in the back of a truck. I asked him what he would sleep on. He said he would find something. I mentioned to him that we had received a van load of clothes from Moberly, Missouri. In them was a sleeping bag. I thought he would go berserk, he wanted it so much. I gave it to him and cautioned him to take care of it.

Four days later he came to the Cornerstone to ask me if I would take him to the hospital. He had spent six years with the Navy so I took him to the John Cochran

Veterans Hospital. During the miles we were driving I talked to him about the Lord. He told me he had four sons. He wanted to borrow a sheet of paper and write out his will and make me the executor. He said I was the only man he could trust. I asked him about the thirty-thousand dollars he said he had. He told me the government was holding it in trust. His drinking had wrecked his life. It drove out his wife. It isolated him from his sons. And now he was on the way out. I have not seen him since. I was talking with a "wino" who knows about such things. He told me they were "drying him out." He said they would keep him three months. He told me it would take him at least two weeks to get back on the "suds" again.

We had a pornographic raid in the block recently. They uncovered a pile of the trash. It was being maintained by the two homosexuals who live together. Since all of us were acquainted with a man who is clean, they trusted me and talked with me. I tried to persuade them to go straight. They laughed in my face. When they were taken to jail, one cut his wrists and died the first night. I feel that I did my best — or did I?

I fervently pray that the Lord will bless all of you and keep you safe from these terrible tragedies.

Carl Ketcherside.




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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**"I get so confused when different preachers tell me what I should or should not be doing. Could you please tell me, "what does God require of me ?"**

Some degree of confusion is bound to arise when there is a system, as in the Church of Christ, of so-called 'mutual ministry'. Over the years this system has come to mean, in the words of one esteemed brother now no longer with us, 'mutual mouth'. Consequently, the preaching and teaching ministry has embraced the new, spiritually immature convert, and the older and ostensibly more mature Christian. We can well understand the almost insurmountable problems of interpretation across this age and maturity range. The correct rules and guidelines of interpretation often are not applied, and consequently we enter the very dubious realm of personal opinion relative to the scripture. The trouble is, of course, that such personal opinions on the meaning of the scriptures may be much influenced by the **personal experiences** in the life of the preacher or teacher, or in the lives of those close to him.

I say this not to advance the quite erroneous idea of a one-man ministry, but so that a little more discretion and selectivity might be practiced by those responsible for seeing that the Church is taught as consistently doctrinally as it can be.

#### **What Does the Bible Say?**

The Book of Deuteronomy records that Moses put the very question we are discussing to the nation of Israel after he had been in the mount the second time to receive the tables of stone containing the Commandments; he also gave the answer. "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep your commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I command you this day for your good" (Deut. 10:12,13).

Israel, as we know, were the chosen people of God. Christians under the New Dispensation are the people of God because of their obedience to the Gospel. God Himself is unchanging; the immutability of His counsel is the main bastion for the believer. It follows, then, that the just requirements of God, in the main, would be the same for us as for the nation of Israel in those far-off days. This being so, we need to examine them in brief detail.

#### **To Fear Him**

There are three Greek words used in the N.T. to indicate fear; the words are PHOBOS, PHOBEO, and PHOBEROS. At the root of these words is the seemingly paradoxical idea of dread and reverence. A brief examination of the N.T. text will illustrate the meaning as the scriptures wish to convey it.

After castigating the Gentiles in the early part of his Roman letter, Paul turns his attention to the self-righteous Jews. Among other condemnations he says, "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). The word used is PHOBOS and means 'terror'. These Jews, emulating their fore-fathers, were no longer terrified at the wrath of the Almighty.

Isn't this, in part, the trouble with the world today? Isn't this the sort of thinking which can afflict we Christians if we are not very careful? Paul exhorted the Christians at Philippi, "Work out (at) your own salvation with fear and trembling". Isn't it true to say that we normally fear to incur the displeasure of someone who has the power of life and death over us? Isn't it also true to say that the Holiness of God, apart from His power, makes us dread our own lack of holiness when we put it alongside His? But do not despair; we can get out of the entanglements of the world and guarantee our sonship with Him. Paul, in his second letter to Corinth says, "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Paul is speaking here of not merely negative goodness (cleansing) but of a progressive holiness which springs from a continuous process of Christian living. The 'terror' of the Christian in this respect is that in the eyes of God he may not achieve this standard of holiness.

Yes, we can have a healthy and sensible fear of God. It is the type of fear which recognises His awesome power and which makes us dread not being able to reverence His Holy name.

#### **To walk in His ways**

This is a requirement of God which is of paramount importance. The exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah is as pertinent today as it ever was "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16).

The rebellious nature of man has always characterised his dealings with God. God has clearly demonstrated His Way in His Word. His so-called children, down through the ages, have said, "No; our way is best", and so where unity ought to exist, and when the Way ought to be clearly seen, we find a confusing babel of voices and a bewildering proliferation of signposts pointing us in various directions. The clarion call of those brethren who sought to restore N.T. Christianity was, "We will speak where the Bible speaks, and we will remain silent where It is silent". Sad to relate that even in the Church of Christ of today there are those who say that this plea should be abandoned because it is no longer applicable. Well, I ask, with what should it be replaced? Should we say, "We will correct the Bible where it needs to be corrected, and we will include those things which we think it should say, but doesn't"? God forbid. The writer of the Hebrew letter says we have boldness to "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath

consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Heb. 10:19,20). God requires of us that we walk in 'That Way'.

#### **To Love and Serve Him**

The fear of God, as we have expressed it, encourages us to walk in His Ways. When we do, we tread the paths of love and service. As love flourishes, so fear departs; as John says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:18,19).

Isn't it amazing that when we walk in His Ways we learn about His great love, and the more we appreciate that love the more it engulfs us. Dread is replaced by reverence. Dutiful obedience is replaced by loving obedience. As the Way leads us ever upward so the benign breezes of those pleasant uplands whisper to us, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me", and the deep sighing of the Spirit within us seems to say, "Whom shall we send, and who will go for us"? It is then that the involuntary cry escapes our lips, as with the prophet of old, "Here am I; send me". It is true that the majesty and awesome power of God still influences our minds, but the stunning revelation that He stooped from Heaven in Jesus and endured the pain and ignominy of the Cross fills us with wonder and amazement.

O, the Cross of love and mercy,  
Lit by sacrifice Divine;  
How its message thrills my being,  
I am His, and He is mine.

God wants our love and service, not as someone who has been **pressed** into service, but given as of a loving and willing slave.

#### **To Keep His Commandments**

Why do you think this is placed last in order of God's requirements of us? It seems to me that when we have a holy, reverential fear of God, when we walk in His Ways, and when love and serve Him, that carrying out His commandments is not an onerous duty but a loving and dedicated response. How many times over the years have we heard people say, after they have listened to the Gospel, "Yes, I know what I ought to do, but I haven't got the strength to do what God would expect of me". We cannot know love until we have experienced it. We cannot exhibit strength until we let His strength work through us. Some have thought that these will come by applying ourselves assiduously to the text of the Bible; others have thought that they can rely upon themselves. Both of these have neglected to hear Jesus, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me".

It is John who puts this into perspective when he says, "By this law we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5: 2,3).

This is the whole crux of the matter, isn't it? When we do God's Will, and meet His requirements, then our Christian lives are enriched beyond measure. Let us leave it at that.

(All questions, please to  
Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan WN3 6ES.)

#### **THE TRUTH**

One should never be ashamed to own he has been wrong, which is but saying in other words, that he is wiser today than he was yesterday.

"Faith on a full stomach may be simple contentment, but if you have it when you're hungry, then it is genuine."

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

March 1	Gen. 37.12-36	Acts 23,12-35
March 8	Jer. 37.12:11-21	Acts 24
March 15	Gen. 39	Acts 25
March 22	Gen. 40	Acts 26
March 29	Gen. 41, 1-16	Acts 27, 1-26

### CRIME DRESSED UP BUT EXPOSED

To what depths of infamy and shame the chief priests of a holy religion descend that they collaborated in this plot against Paul's life! From history we understand that the crime of crucifying the Son of God only multiplied conditions of shameful moral failure. Note the subtle approach to Claudius Lysias, more consideration! Forty men with the same determination as had Paul himself on the Damascus road (26, 8-11) had taken a most solemn vow. Had this not been known to Claudius! How thankful we are for the family relationship. Doubtless womanly wisdom, exercised in love, directed the exposure, and the nephew at personal risk made the approach. Claudius made his case good over the Roman citizenship, but it was right, and good. He took no risks and used his authority with promptitude and discretion. We may think "How many of the forty died of starvation?"

### MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR WITNESS TO JESUS

Opposition and false accusation brought Paul into useful contact with Authority. His Jewish enemies made him a liability to the Roman authorities as a cause of violence, and therefore he was arrested rather than rescued. His Roman citizenship saved him from torture but could not give understanding of the hostility of the Jews. Felix had married a Jewess. Did that open mind and conscience? — not, apparently, to any effect! Paul's reasonings were not "mixed with faith" in Felix, in heart and mind, but rather with love of money. Apparently though kept in safety from

enemies, his case was delayed for two years without excuse unless it was liberty for visitors, a period we have connected (perhaps unjustifiably) with opportunity of Luke for much work with witnesses relating to his gospel. Perhaps we may excuse Festus for forgetting Paul's peril in suggesting Jerusalem for further consideration, which resulted in Paul's insistence on trial by Caesar. Festus at least acted wisely and quickly especially in seeking Jewish help.

### PAUL'S DEFENCES

Luke's records of these include that from the stairs; that before the Jewish Council; that before Felix, this before Festus and, finally, before the State Council (including particularly King Agrippa and Bernice). The conclusion of all is his personal acquittal by the King as having done nothing against law. Having been compelled to appeal to Caesar "to Caesar he must go". We have already considered the first two appeals: let us now consider his defence before Felix at Caesarea, where obviously the Jews expected to need professional help — and obtained it without any success. Paul's own statement of facts was already confirmed by the Officer's report. Christianity was now sufficiently known as a "WAY", or section of Jewish thought, or sectarianism. We are surprised that a Roman Official should have thought of bribery but it seems likely the extent of the collection for Jewish poor in Judea was known to the authorities. The unsavoury hope of Felix was not encouraged by Paul and it seems the new Proconsul felt obliged to give proper attention to the case left incomplete. His offer of what meant death to Paul left him with the duty of sending details of the matter to the Emperor. We do understand that Felix trembled, and we still hope his connection with the Jewish race was of more than merely sexual relationship. However the scripture does not indicate that, and Paul was left unjudged, a prisoner. The Jews were

demanding capital punishment for what was not a crime against Roman law. Festus had no sympathy with what he regarded as superstition but seemed, like Felix, to weaken in this anxiety to please the Jews, which had been the same failure. It would be a relief for Paul to face a nominally Jewish judge.

His defence before Felix undoubtedly left Felix persuaded of his not being guilty and left no satisfaction to the Jews, and we are assured that all that was honest in Felix's heart responded to the reasonings of a faithful christian. Injustice remained without a verdict. At least Festus brought upon himself a case to present before highest authority without "a case" against the prisoner. Trying to please the Jews — what an impossible task! Here was a case for Paul to speak for Jesus in fact. With what complete honesty and truthfulness he did so. What a wonderful evidence we have for the truth of the gospel today in the life and behaviour of Paul, but there in that very town (Caesarea) and at Jerusalem the growth of a new society was developing. Everywhere that the gospel was being accepted new attitudes of ordinary men and women were developing. The love and life of Jesus of Nazareth was a growing influence for peace. How much Agrippa had felt of this we cannot tell. Paul's words could then affect the listeners, their Jewish back-ground of visions and prophets forbade the unbelief of Festus. Likely some Pharisees would still hold "if a spirit hath spoken to him, who are we to fight against God". Without thinking necessarily that the King was "almost persuaded" he was at least honestly persuaded that obedience to a heavenly vision qualified a man for being given a hearing. Certainly not to be guilty of a crime against law. One Roman Proconsul had already given much attention to Paul's reasoning, the second had arranged to give him a hearing, although thinking him mentally deranged, while being learned, and a King had acquitted him quite firmly of wrong-doing. We

must leave Festus with his puzzle with the thought that the Jews will support their false charges, somehow or other, false though they were.

### THE VOYAGE BEGUN

Festus put Paul and the other prisoners, passengers and crew into the charge of a Centurion. There were 276 people and it was a small vessel. At first they had much difficulty because the time for sailing normally was earlier than September or October, when sailing became dangerous on account of wintry conditions. So a change was made into an Alexandrian corn ship due to sail to Italy. Sailing westwards became difficult and when they reached a small port in Crete Paul advised that they should stay and winter there. However, wanting a larger port for the purpose the master and owner (against Paul's advice) took the risk of the weather and set sail. Being driven by a tempestuous wind, so fierce that they could not direct their course, they were helpless. Many days of terror, darkness, undergirding the ship, casting out heavy gear, some cargo. In this condition Paul stood forth among them, assured them of survival by reason of God's assurance to him and that they must take heart.

We can hardly imagine the conditions while driven hopelessly hither and thither. The seamen thought they were approaching land. Paul's assurance was the one sustaining hope that everyone would survive the storm. Next month the safe arrival on land. Luke was there and there also was Aristarchus a christian from Thessalonica, and the Centurion Julius, a Roman soldier of a friendly attitude with respect and courtesy to PAUL, THE PRISONER.

R. B. Scott.

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### THE LONELY CRITIC

Jesus made it painfully clear the judgmentalism always boom-a-rangs. The Bible says in Matt.7. "Judge not that you be not judged, for with the judg-

ment you pronounce, you will be judged. And the measure you give will be the measure you get." Judgmental people are lonely people. Not only do others avoid a self-appointed critic, but they are also motivated to return judgment for judgment. It was Charles Kingsley, the 19th century English preacher and writer who said, "If you wish to be miserable you must think about yourself, about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you. Then, to you, nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch, you will make sin and misery out of everything God sends you. You can be as wretched as you choose." And I think of those words, "*as wretched as I choose*"?! Why absolutely yes! Judgmentalism is the sure path to wretchedness! The loneliness of the self appointed efficiency expert who tries to check everyone's productivity according to his own standards is obviously self-imposed. — Submitted

#### REVERENCE AT THE WORSHIP HOUR

Today, I went to worship. I took time to go early, I so badly needed to meditate and concentrate upon our Lord's goodness and love. The Table was set in anticipation of the service, and how sweet and sublime were my thoughts of Him as I viewed that holy reminder. The quietness of being alone before the service uplifted me, and the sober meditation quietened my anxiousness.

But the sweetness of that moment was broken, for others were coming to worship. Blithely they entered; happy and carefree they appeared; nonchalantly they spoke of the events of the past week, and glibly of the anticipation of the morrow. I gazed at the Table on which lay the emblems of the Lord's blood and body. Never had it been so apparent that lightness and frivolity only desecrate that holy memorial. How could it be possible that the God of Heavens would accept such nonchalance as worship?

— Adapted

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

### Manchester. (Stretford).

The church here would like to make the glad announcement that the Lord had added another faithful soul to His church. On Saturday December 6th we had the privilege of baptizing Jimmy Tan into Christ. Jimmy and his wife Patty have been attending one of our mid-week Bible studies for about two months and were attending a Presbyterian church on Sundays. They now join us for breaking of bread with their little girl Valerie and, as of December 15th their newborn son, as yet un-named. Jimmy is a student at Manchester University and is from Singapore. We are also very happy to have been joined by James and Soon Jong who are members of the church from Singapore also studying at Manchester. James is already teaching a Bible study in one of our members' homes bringing to three the number of on-going studies. Perhaps we should worry that the balance of international representation is being upset by these zealous Singaporeans who have a complement of three families as compared to two families for England and one each for Scotland, Ghana, Pakistan and the U.S. Rather we should praise God for making us "one in Christ."

Arthur Barry (Evangelist).

## OBITUARY

### Newtongrange, Midlothian

It is with saddened hearts that we report the death of our beloved sister, Mary Dudgeon. As the result of a severe stroke, our sister was admitted to the Eastern General Hospital, Edinburgh. She was comfortably cared for there. Sister Mary passed away in the early hours of Monday, 29th December, 1986. Sister Dudgeon was in her eighties. Her passing was a peaceful one: her daughter, Sister Hunter was at her side throughout.



Sister Dudgeon has had a long and fruitful life, and was a blessing to all who knew her. A quiet, faithful christian interested in the care and well-being of everyone, she loved the Lord dearly and was always found to be in her place at assembly. At socials, gatherings, and women's meetings, she was active in her own quiet way. In her former years her home was a centre of hospitality to evangelists and visitor alike. She was a friend to all and the church here will surely miss her. Our sister has certainly fought the good fight, and finished the course: she will be remembered for a long time. Her kindness was shared by all. We commend her loved ones and all who mourn her passing to our heavenly Father's care.

"Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord: that walketh in His ways." (Psalm 128:1).

The funeral took place at Seafield Crematorium with Bro. Currie conducting the service.

Andrew Sharp (Secretary).

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#### EVANGELIST WANTED

The Newcastle Church of Christ is a very young church, only a year old and has three members. We are anxiously seeking for an evangelist to work in this

area, preferably on a full-time basis. Alternatively, we would greatly appreciate if the churches in Scotland or the Midlands could send "faithful man (or men) who could teach others also" to teach/preach in Newcastle on a monthly, or fortnightly basis for the week-ends. This, hopefully, will help us to grow stronger in the faith and lead to an increase in numbers.

We feel something must be done now, as we do not want the Lord's church to die away, with its members, or lambs, going astray without someone to feed and lead. This, was, in actual fact, what happened quite a few years back when the Lord's church was once established here.

We are anxiously looking forward to hearing from you. We believe that if the Lord wants to send you here to serve Him, He will make straight your path.

Contact Kenneth Gong, 29 Grosvenor Place, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. NE2 2RD.

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#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

**Tranent:** The new address of John Colgan, Secretary of the Tranent Church, will now be: 34 Fa'side Crescent, Tranent, East Lothian. EH33 2BX. His 'phone number will remain unaltered.

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