

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

BE INSPIRED...

Identity has been high on the political agenda recently with the government planning to introduce a Bill to Parliament requiring us all to carry Identity Cards in the future. Frankly as the majority of us already have a National Insurance card, a Driving Licence, Passport (and, no doubt, several other cards) it's difficult to see what all the fuss is about and the thought of carrying one more card to reveal who I am holds no terrors.

In some respects, who am I seems set to become less obvious in the current Western environment of more diverse family backgrounds, if that question is to be partially answered by an understanding of our genetic family history and background. I count it a privilege to have been brought up in the closeness of a conventional nuclear family and as parents we believe it is a gift well worth passing on to our own children. However during discussions about personal identity I have heard people who have been brought up as adopted children in loving families say that they consider their parents by adoption to be their 'real' parents and the ones who provide them with their identity. Nevertheless for others (and indeed for some of those mentioned above) their remains a deep-seated need to find out about their genetic family.

Christians already have a new identify anyway because we are all adopted sons and daughters of God. We have a new and enduring family that God has given us the privilege of belonging to. We have a heavenly Father whose overwhelming care and love for us exceeds anything that our earthly family can offer. Our elder brother Jesus the Christ, offered himself up to 'buy us back' and give us the privilege of being fellow-citizens and joint-heirs. And we have the whole community of faithful brothers and sisters worldwide whom God has added to his family. "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying 'Abba, Father!' So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir."

Our eternal identity is with the Father and his Christ. Our Identity Card will be a means of confirming who we are so far as this world is concerned, but our identity as sons and daughters of God will, for now, have to be revealed through our love for God and each other, our manner of life, whilst we carry the stamp of our eternal identity in our hearts.

Contents: 1-Be Inspired; 2-What is Worship; 4-Word Study; 6-Question Box; 9-Road to Recovery 6; 12-Foundation of the Faith; 14-What do you think; 15-News & Info.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

What is worship? The definition is: reverent devotion and allegiance pledged to God; the ceremonies by which this reverence is expressed. The English word worship comes from the Old English word, *worþship*, a word that denotes the worthiness of the one receiving the special honour or devotion.

In Old Testament times, Abraham built altars to the Lord and called on his name. (Gen. 12:8; 13:18) The worship of God required no elaborate priesthood or ritual. After God's appearance to Moses and the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the foundations of Israelite worship were laid. This worship took place in the light of history, especially the Exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt. Through Moses, God established the form and principles of Israelite worship. (Exodus 25:31; 35:40)

After the occupation of the Promised Land, Israel's exposure to Canaanite worship affected the nation's own worship. The Old Testament reveals clearly that Israel adopted some of the practices of the pagan people around them. At various times God's people lapsed into idolatry. Some idols were placed on pedestals and sometimes they were adorned or fastened with silver chains (Isaiah 40:19) or fastened with pegs lest they totter and fall (Isaiah 41:7). Shrines and altars were sometimes erected to these pagan gods. But that kind of idolatry was condemned by God and his special spokesmen, the Prophets of the Old Testament.

WORSHIP PRACTICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

New Testament worship was characterised by a joy and thanksgiving because of God's gracious redemption in Christ. This early Christian worship focussed on God's saving work in Jesus the Christ. True worship was that which occurred under the inspiration of God's Spirit. John 4:23,24; Phil. 3:3

The Jewish Sabbath was quickly replaced by the first day of the week as the time for weekly public worship (Acts 20:7' 1 Cor. 16:2); it was called the Lord's Day. (Rev. 1:10) This was the occasion for celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, since he arose on the first day of the week. (Mark 16:2)

At first, worship services were conducted in private houses. The New Testament itself contains no references to any yearly Christian festivals. Although the New Testament does not instruct worshippers in a specific procedure to follow in their services, several elements appear regularly in the worship practices of the early Church.

- **PRAYER**, apparently had a leading place in Christian worship. The letters of Paul regularly open with references to prayer for fellow-Christians who are instructed to "pray without ceasing". (1 Thess. 5:17)
- **PRAISE**, hymns sung in common, reflects the frequent use of psalms. Also, possible fragments of Christian hymns appear scattered throughout the New Testament. (Acts 4:24 - 30; Eph. 5:14; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 4:8, 11; 5: 9,10 and 12,13)
- **SCRIPTURES** were read and studied as another part of the worship procedure. Emphasis was probably given to the messianic prophecies that had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. His teachings also received a primary place.
- **PREACHING**, by one filled with the Holy Spirit, helped build up the Church, the body of Christ. (Eph. 12:6)
- **CONTRIBUTIONS** were also collected on the first day of the week. (1 Cor. 16:2)

Other details about the worship procedures of the early Christians in the New Testament times are unclear, but these elements noted above must have been regularly included in the weekly worship service.

WORSHIP – WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU

Some Christians at times seem dissatisfied with worship because they do not understand the nature of Biblical worship. Worship, by its very nature, is God-centred. It is impossible to know which acts of worship may or may not be acceptable by simply judging the matter based on our own feelings. Rather than appealing to our emotions, the only true justification for any act of worship is whether or not it can be identified as acceptable by a Biblical example or precept.

When worship is not centred around God, it is not Biblical worship. Indeed it is not worship at all. The entire worship must be God-ward. It is the only acceptable course. It cannot be society-centred, nor family-centred and it certainly cannot be self-centred. This is the grave error of employing entertainment in the Church, an approach used by an increasing number of churches. God-centred worship requires that our personal inclinations must not prescribe how this worship should be offered. Rather, God-centred worship compels us to worship in a manner where God's will and pleasure are foremost.

There is no room for our own presumptions to determine what actions should compose worship. When we truly learn that worship is not worship unless it is God-centred, only then will be able to fully understand it. God-centred worship removes any attempt to please other individuals, society at large or even ourselves. This principle is stated in Isaiah 58, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day: and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words; then you shall delight yourself in the Lord." (Isaiah 58:13,14)

**Do we presume to
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TRUE WORSHIP

True worship is not designed for our own pleasure. It is pleasurable. It is emotional. It is a sweet and pleasant experience. But it is not designed for this end. These good things are the natural out-growth of a sincere experience before the throne of God. The sort of worship recorded in God's word was never planned or designed for the purpose of exciting or exploiting our emotions.

Nevertheless the emotions are naturally awakened when our worship is faithfully fixed on God. When we meet for worship our desire should be to please God and not be there to be entertained. We should ask ourselves the following questions:

***Did we worship as God wished us to?
Was he pleased with our worship?
Did we give Him our best?***

This is what matters. Many Churches are now treating worship as an entertaining assembly. This is a desecration of worship; a miscarriage. Biblically, the worship of God was never allowed to deteriorate to the level of entertainment.

Have we, as 21st century Christians, forgotten who God is, His holy character, His sovereign rank as God? Do we presume to entertain ourselves while God sits before us on His throne, expecting our worship?

Let us understand what it means to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness and in spirit and in truth.

**Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness
Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim
Gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness
These are the offerings to bring to His name.**

Word Study BAPTIZE

(Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell)

Baptize" is a transliteration of the Greek verb *baptizo*, which is "primarily a frequentative form of *bapto*, to dip..." (Vine) Interestingly, Vine also says that baptism consists of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence. To baptize, therefore, is to dip, to plunge, to immerse, to sink and to overwhelm. To pour and to sprinkle are not equivalent actions. In fact, there are other Greek words for these actions – *ballo* and *rhantizo*.

HOW TO ESTABLISH THE EXACT MEANING

Alexander Campbell has written: "The primary means by which the meaning of the word is ascertained are the following:

- 1) The ancient lexicons and dictionaries;
- 2) The ancient and modern translations of the New Testament;
- 3) The ancient customs of the Church;
- 4) The place and circumstances of baptizing, as mentioned in the New Testament; and
- 5) The allusions to this ordinance and the expositions of it in the apostolic epistles.

His studies reveal:

- 1) All the ancient lexicons and dictionaries affirm that the action for baptism is immersion and not sprinkling or pouring.
- 2) The versions translate baptism and its derivatives as immersion and on no occasion ever translate them by sprinkling or pouring, or any word equivalent to these terms. "Now, if an English reader will try *sprinkling* or *pouring* in those places where he finds the word *baptism*, he will soon discover that neither of these words can possibly represent it... For instance, we are told, that all Judea and Jerusalem went out to John and were *baptized* of him in the Jordan. Sprinkled them *in* the Jordan! Poured them *in* the Jordan! Immersed them *in* the Jordan! Can any one doubt which of these truly represents the original in such passages? I may sprinkle or pour water upon a person; but to sprinkle or pour them into water is impossible. It is not said he baptized water upon them, but he baptized them in water, in the river".
- 3) The ancient Church, it is admitted on all hands, practised immersion.
- 4) The places where baptism was anciently administered, being rivers, pools, baths and places of much water, show that it was not sprinkling or pouring. They went down *into* the water and came up *out* of it, etc.
- 5) Baptism is also alluded to and explained under the figure of a burial and resurrection, as relating to death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, etc. (Romans chapter 6; Colossians chapter 2)

No Greek scholar worth his weight in salt could deny any of the above. Certainly, the famous Presbyterian scholar, Professor William Barclay of Glasgow University, could not. For example, he writes: "Commonly, baptism was by total immersion and that practice lent itself to a symbolism to which sprinkling does not so readily lend itself. When a man descended into the water and the water closed over his head, it was like being buried. When he emerged from the water, it was like rising from the grave.

Baptism was symbolically like dying and rising again. The man died to one kind of life and rose to another; he died to the old life of sin and rose to the new life of grace." I addressed a group of ladies the other day on this very subject. I pointed out to them that I had taken many funerals in my time and, usually, some soil was sprinkled over the coffin as I spoke the words: "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust..." Imagine our reaction if we returned to the grave a week later and it was still lying open. Imagine our reaction too if the gravediggers said in response to our complaints: "The deceased is buried. After all, earth has been sprinkled on his coffin and, to us, this constitutes a burial."

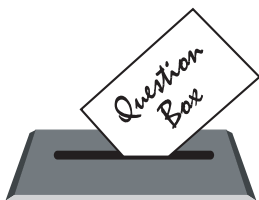
BATH OF REGENERATION

The apostle Paul referred to baptism as a "bath of regeneration". (Titus 3:5) The Authorised Version translates it as the "washing" of regeneration, but the Greek word is *loutron*, which is the word for a bath or a laver. Who would think that sprinkling water on their forehead constitutes a bath? Interestingly, the word *loutron* is found in but one other passage of Scripture – Ephesians 5:26. We read: "**...that He might sanctify and cleanse it [the Church] with the washing (*loutron*) of water by the word.**" I believe that Paul here is referring to actual water and thus to Christian baptism. His words tie in with Jesus' statement to Nicodemus: "**Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**" (John 3:5b). The "bath of regeneration" is the last act of regeneration, which completes the whole, and is therefore used to denote the new birth. "Being *born of water*, in the Saviour's style, and the *bath of regeneration*, in the Apostle's style, in the judgement of all writers and critics of eminence, refer to one and the same act – viz.: Christian baptism." (Campbell)

ORIGIN OF SPRINKLING

When was sprinkling first introduced as a substitute for baptism? Eusebius, the great church historian, writes about one Novatus. "Novatus, being relieved thereof by the exorcists, fell into a grievous distemper; and it being supposed that he would die immediately, he received baptism, being besprinkled with water: on the bed whereon he lay, (if that can be termed baptism). Neither when he had escaped that sickness, did he afterwards receive the other things which the canon of the church enjoined should be received: nor was he sealed by the Bishop's imposition of hands: which, if he never received, how did he receive the Holy Ghost?" This incident in Novatus' bed happened not earlier than A.D. 251, and probably 253. Eighty years later a decree was issued, called "the twelfth canon of the Council of Neocaesarea", against such pourings. So in the history of Christianity, the whole world, Eastern and Western Christendom, with the exception of a few sick and dying persons, practised immersion during the long space of thirteen hundred years. Thereafter, sprinkling or pouring came into use by slow degrees, and only in some of the more western parts of the western Latin Church. (Books have been written in the subject and they make fascinating reading)

Satan is into confusion in a big way. He likes to take words and destroy their original meaning. For example, we can think of priest, minister, pastor, bishop, church, etc. Baptize is no exception. To many, the word is now synonymous with *christen* – a word that literally means to make Christian. To sprinkle and to pour are no substitutes for to baptize. To baptize is to immerse a believer in water unto his or her remission of sins. The action identifies the believer in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6: 3, 4) It is simple. What Christ did for us, we must do for Him. He died; we must die. He was buried; we must be buried. He rose from the dead; we must rise from the dead - to newness of life in Him.



"Is it scriptural for a congregation to support a full-time worker?"

I have no doubt that questions similar to this, have been asked time and time again in the course of the history of British Churches of Christ. I certainly know that the subject was being discussed over sixty years ago, when the Elders of the church in Hindley suggested to me that I should consider doing what they described as 'full-time evangelistic work'.

Evidently, there are those among us for whom the issue has not yet been resolved; hence this month's question.

The Principle

So, let us lay down an irrefutable and undeniable principle; namely, that no question concerning the doctrine or practice of the Church can be considered to have been resolved, until it is resolved *scripturally*. Indeed, we see that this fact is recognized in the question "Is it *scriptural*?"

I believe that the answer must be an emphatic 'Yes!' and the proof is found in the ninth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, verses 4 to 14.

The circumstances in which Paul introduces the subject.

In the previous chapter, ch. 8, he has dealt at some length with the matter of Christian liberty and has shown that Christians must be prepared to forego perfectly legitimate rights, if to insist on the exercising of such rights endangers or harms the soul of a weaker brother.

That chapter closes at v. 13, which begins with the word '*Therefore*', and contains the statement with which Paul concludes his argument. Then, in chapter 9, he points out that he, also, has rights; rights that, for the good of both the Church and the Lord's work in general, he has not exercised, and he proceeds to mention two of them.

- First, he asserts his right to receive material support from his brethren, whilst he is engaged in preaching the Gospel. He specifically mentions '*the right to eat and drink*' (v.4).
- He then extends this right to cover the material needs of a wife also, should he choose to be accompanied and supported in his labours by a wife, just as other brethren, some of whom he names.

Two Rights Asserted.

The first argument says, in effect: -

" I have the right to receive support from the people of God, whilst I do this work; the right to receive whatever assistance I need, either financial or material".

The second argument says: -

"And not only for myself, but also for a wife, if I choose to take a wife. After all, other apostles do this! The rest of them do it, including Peter! And the Lord's own brothers do it also! Among all those who spend their lives in the work of the Gospel, are Barnabas and I to be the only ones who are denied this right?"

Four Arguments put forward

Having made these claims, in v.7, he then proceeds to establish them by presenting four very clear arguments which demonstrate the principle in action, and which he feels sure, his readers will readily recognize and acknowledge.

1st: **The Argument Based On Equity – On Fairness.** (v.7)

He declares that it is just and fair, and, in evidence, presents the following examples from everyday life.

- i) The Soldier's needs are provided for.
 "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?" The soldier is not required to provide his own equipment or his own rations. Such items are provided for him.
 The word 'expense' is significant. It is the word 'opsonion', which, in 2nd Cor. 11: 8, is rendered 'support'. On the four occasions when this word occurs in the New Testament scriptures it means 'wages, expense, charges, support'.
- ii) The Planter of a Vineyard, expects to eat some of the fruit that the vineyard produces.
- iii) The Shepherd who cares for the flock, has the right to expect the flock to take care of him.

Paul is insisting that, by the same token, those whose lives are spent in the work of the Lord have the clearly established right to have their material needs met, and it should not be necessary for them to beg or to depend on the charity of their brethren.

2nd **The Argument Based On God's Law**, v.8.

In v. 8, he asks, **"Are you now telling me that this is merely a human viewpoint?"** In other words, "Are you saying that, even if this is the way the world conducts its affair, what the world does has no bearing on the Church of God? Then, let me show you that the Law (of God) lays down the same principle. It is written in the Law of Moses. **'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.'**" (Deut. 25:4)

Incidentally, let me point out that, in 1st Tim. 5:18, this principle is also applied to Elders. Elders who are "full-time Elders" and who may need support are as entitled to receive it from the Church, as is the shepherd who cares for the flock.

In v.9, Paul injects a slightly humorous note as he thinks about the verse in Deut. 25, when he asks, **"Did God issue this command because He is especially concerned about oxen? Do you not see that this is an illustration used for our sakes?"**

In v. 10, he says that a man 'works in hope' and mentions, as examples, the ploughman and the reaper. They expect to share the results of their work. Even in our modern society the validity of this principle is recognized. Farm-workers, coal-miners, fishermen, factory-workers, all expect to enjoy benefits from that which their work produces.

3rd **The Argument Based On Simple Gratitude**, v.12.

"If we have sown spiritual good among you, why should it be regarded as 'too much', amazing, or surprising, if we expect to reap your material blessings?" Some of the churches Paul had served were quick to acknowledge their indebtedness to him and had spontaneously sent help to meet his material needs, thus making it unnecessary for him to 'work with his own hands', to support himself as he preached the Gospel. Phil. 4:16. **"You sent me help once and again".**

Whilst we should never regard full-time work for the Lord as a profession or a job, we surely realize that those who have the desire and the ability – (and therefore the responsibility) – to undertake such work, will be much more effective and useful, if their minds are freed from concerns about the need to earn a living.

Thankfully, there are brethren, who whilst recognizing that they, personally, are unable for whatever reason, whether disposition or ability, or even because of circumstance, to spend their lives in the Lord's work, nevertheless understand that they are able to help in their own special way, because they are able to earn money which may be turned back into the support of those who are able to undertake the work of the Kingdom. The 'prophet's hands' still need to be held up, even today!

I recall a certain brother who gave generously to meet a particular need, and who said, "Perhaps this is my talent. Perhaps it is the only thing I can do!" He was too modest! I later heard him preach the Word very effectively!

4th, **The Principle Illustrated In The Scriptures.** vv.13-14.

“Those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple... in the same way the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” See again, 1st Tim. 5: 17-18.

Here Paul is alluding to the fact that any priest, Jewish or Pagan, enjoyed certain privileges. For instance, the priest received a share of the offerings brought to the altar (v.13). Indeed, if we examine the Jewish priestly system, it comes as something of a surprise when we discover just how much material support the priests received. The fact is that they were well provided for and enjoyed a fairly high degree of comfort.

Priestly Provision.

There were numerous regular sacrifices from which the priest received his portion.

- i) From ‘the Whole Burnt Offering’, he received only the hides and skins, but these he was able to sell. (Lev. 5;8)
- ii) From the ‘Sin Offering’, only the fatty portions were offered in sacrifice, and the priest received all the flesh.
- iii) This was also true of the ‘Trespass Offering’.
- iv) The ‘Meal Offering’, which consisted of flour, oil and wine, was also given to the priests for their personal use. Again, only a token amount was offered on the altar (Lev.2:, and 7:9-10).
- v) The ‘Peace Offering’ was shared between the altar, the priests and the worshipper.
- vi) The priest also received for his own use, the ‘first fruits’ of the barley, wheat, honey, olives, vine fig trees and pomegranates’ (Deut.18:3-4).
- vii) He also had the right to ‘1/50th of the crop’, since he had no land of his own.
- viii) Even ‘the tithe’- the tenth of everything that grew in the earth, which could be used for food, was shared between the priests and the Levites.
- ix) The priests also received a 24th part of the ‘dough’, made of wheat, barley, oats or rye.
- x) And what is surely remarkable is the fact that, when the nation was at war, the priests received a share of any spoil that was captured in battle. The spoil was usually divided equally between the army and the people, and the priests received a 1/500th of the half given to the army, and a 1/50th part of the half given to the people. (Num.31:25-47)

Having been brought up under this system, the Jewish Christians had no difficulty in understanding the principle which Paul is explaining to the Corinthians; namely, that the man whose life is spent in the service of God has both the privilege and the right to receive the support of God’s people.

Conclusion

It is regrettable that, as plain as is the teaching presented in 1st Cor. 9, we, as Churches of Christ, claiming to appeal for a ‘return to New Testament Christianity’, appear to have been loathe to put it into practice.

In the year 1840, the very first full-time evangelist to work among the churches, George C. Reid, wrote to James Wallis, the editor of the early “Christian Messenger” expressing the conviction that if capable men were to be encouraged to devote their lives to the preaching of the Gospel, provision should be made for their adequate support.

But, I repeat, the principle is there for all to see and will only be ignored by those spiritually immature or scripturally untaught. The unpalatable truth is that, if we were passionate about preaching the Gospel and were willing to increase our giving, it would be possible to support more dedicated and capable workers in the Lord’s Field, and our congregations generally, would be in a healthier condition than they are today.

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Practical Christianity

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

LESSON 6 - REPAIRING RELATIONSHIPS

(David Yasko, USA)

This month it's the letter E in Recovery and step 6 is this:

EVALUATE ALL MY RELATIONSHIPS. OFFER FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO HURT ME AND MAKE AMENDS FOR HARM I'VE DONE TO OTHERS EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD HARM THEM OR OTHERS.

This step is brought to you by *Ephesians 4:31-32*, "**Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, ... along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**" This step is in two parts.

- The first part is to forgive those who hurt me.
- The second part is to make amends to those I've hurt.

We are going to focus on "why" and "how." As in, "why should I do this step?" And "how should I do it?"

PART 1: FORGIVE THOSE WHO'VE HURT ME. WHY?

Why should I forgive those who've hurt me? They're the ones with the problem, not me. We need to be forgivers for three reasons:

1: BECAUSE GOD HAS FORGIVEN ME.

And if God was willing to forgive me, I should be willing to forgive other people. *Colossians 3:13*, "**Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**"

2: RESENTMENT DOESN'T WORK.

Resentment is unreasonable, it's unhelpful, it's unhealthy. *Job 5:2*, "**Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple.**" Why? Because you always hurt yourself more than anyone else. Resentment doesn't change the past and cannot correct the problem. I've never talked to anybody who's told me, "I feel so much better now that I'm resentful." *Job 21:23-25*, "**One man dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease, his body well nourished, his bones rich with marrow. Another man dies in bitterness of soul, never having enjoyed anything good.**" Resentment affects us because nothing drains us emotionally like bitterness.

3: BECAUSE I'LL NEED FORGIVENESS IN THE FUTURE.

Mark 11:25, "**And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him first, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.**" Resentment blocks feeling God's forgiveness in our lives. We cannot receive what we are unwilling to give. A prayer in the Bible says, "Lord forgive me based on my ability to forgive everybody else who has hurt me." By the way, Jesus said that prayer. It's called the Lord's Prayer. We need to forgive other people because God has forgiven us, because resentment doesn't work, and because we're going to need God's forgiveness in the future. Forgiveness is a two way street. In order to get it we have to be willing to extend it. If you're

not willing to forgive, I pray to God you never sin.

HOW DO WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE HURT US?

1. **REVEAL MY HURT.** We can't get over hurt until we admit that, "it hurts". We have this misunderstanding that we can't love somebody and be angry with them at the same time. We can. Part of our problem is we don't like to admit that the best we can do, sometimes comes up short. Could we have done better? How do we handle it? Admit the hurt, don't deny it. We can't forgive what we won't own up to. So we have to reveal our hurts and admit them. We can either repress our hurts, suppress our hurts, or we can confess our hurts. One leads to sweetness, the rest leads to bitterness. You want closure? Well there is no closure without disclosure. So what do we do? *Make a list of those who've harmed me and what they said... thought... did.* Take it out of the generic realm and put it into the specific realm. Then...
2. **RELEASE THE OFFENDER.** Let them go. Stop holding on to the hurt. How do you do that? Forgive them. It's the only way to release them. You don't wait for them to come and ask, you just go ahead and do. And if they come to you and ask you to forgive them, you can say, "I already did." Not for their sake, but your sake. Why do we release and forgive? Because God's forgiven you, because you're going to need forgiveness in the future and resentment doesn't work anyway. *Matthew 18:21-22 "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.'"* Jesus is saying our forgiveness patterns must be continual. That means every time those who have hurt you come to mind, we make it an act of our will to release them again. You know they are finally released when you can think about them and it doesn't hurt you anymore. You know they are released when you can ask God's blessings on their life. You know they are released when you look at them and see their hurt, not just yours. We can't forget it, but we don't have to hurt.
3. **RELEASE MY HURT WITH GOD'S PEACE.** *Colossians 3:15, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."* Now you may be thinking, "This isn't fair; I release them and they get away scot free." No they won't. I'm not saying that. I am saying let God settle the score. He can do a better job than we can. God will have the last word, so let him. He's the judge. He is just. That's why I believe in hell. Jesus talks more about hell than he does about heaven. There will be judgment and in the mean time you release them and focus on God's peace instead of trying to get even. And let peace break out in your heart. Relationships can break out hearts into little pieces but God can put them back together and surround them with his peace.

PART 2: MAKE AMENDS TO THOSE I'VE HURT. WHY?

Is this really necessary? Absolutely. Why? Because unresolved relationships are the root of our problem and they prevent recovery from happening. Hebrews 12:15, **"Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives."** The reason we can't get over that habit, hurt or hang-up is because we are holding on to some unresolved relationship. If we are going to get on with being what God wants us to be and enjoying what God wants us to enjoy, we've got to deal with that. So, **HOW DO I DO IT?**

1. **MAKE A LIST OF THOSE PEOPLE I'VE HARMED AND WHAT I DID TO THEM.** "Well, I can't think of anybody." Let's put a few possibilities down. Is there anybody I owe a debt to? Have I broken any promises to anybody? Is there anyone I am over-controlling? Am I overly possessive, hypercritical, abusive (verbally, emotionally, physically)? Am I forgetful or unfaithful or unappreciative? Have I lied to anybody? Make a list.
2. **THINK HOW I'D WANT OTHERS TO MAKE AMENDS TO ME.** *Luke 6:31, "Do to others as you would have them do to you."* If someone who had hurt you came and apologized, how would you want them to do it? There are two key issues we need to look at when we make amends to others.
 - ***THE RIGHT TIME.*** *Ecclesiastes 8:6, "For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter."* You don't just drop a bomb on somebody. Don't ambush anybody. Have you ever been ambushed? As a minister you'd be surprised how often somebody comes up to me and says, "I need to talk to you for a few minutes, it's pretty important." I have no idea what the problem is. I have no idea if they are mad at me or if there is another problem they want my counsel on. I need to be ready. If God's in my heart and God's in your heart we won't fight because God doesn't fight with God. When it comes to amends, you don't make amends when it's best for you, you make amends when it's best for them.
 - ***THE RIGHT ATTITUDE.*** *Ephesians 4:15, "Speak the truth in a spirit of love."* How would you like somebody to apologize to you? Would you like them to come with humility, sincerity, to not make any justifications or excuses? Remember, their part in the problem isn't the focus. Our part of the problem is. Our actions are the issue. Don't walk away and think, "well, they could have been a little more... whatever." If restitution is needed, make it. If you borrowed something, give it back.

Now, there are some things we have taken from people that we can't restore. I know a man who was driving down the street and a child fell off his bike in front of the car he was driving. He hit the child and killed him. He cannot restore that child to his parents, but he can and did apologize sincerely at the right time and with the right attitude. He offered to do whatever he could do to make amends.

3. **REFOCUS MY LIFE.** This time do God's will, not Satan's in our relationships. Relationships are what God's will is all about. As long as we focus on somebody we resent, we are allowing them to control us. There are people who are letting people from their past, control their present, because as long as we resent them, they control us.

Now, here is some good news. God wants to help us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He took a layer off when you became a Christian. As time goes on, God wants to keep dealing and working to release us from the hurts, habits and hang-up's in our life. How does that happen? *Job 11:13-16, "Put your heart right, reach out to God... then face the world again. Be firm and courageous so all your troubles will fade from your memory, like floods that are past and remembered no more."* In this passage are the three steps to refocusing our lives:

1. ***PUT YOUR HEART RIGHT.*** Release and forgive.
2. ***REACH OUT TO GOD.*** We do that when we ask Christ in.
3. ***FACE THE WORLD AGAIN.*** Stop being a victim and start being a survivor.

Here's what will happen: ***All your troubles will fade from your memory.***

(Please see the What Do You Think page for an opportunity to comment – Editor)



Foundations of the Faith

*A series of studies into the foundational truths
of the Christian Faith*

THE CHRISTIAN AND ETERNAL LIFE

(Robert Marsden, Wigan)

Of all the foundational truths that we might consider, none speaks more eloquently of the true nature of God than the reality that 'life without end' that has been restored to mankind. It is a fundamental belief of Christianity that life does not end with our inevitable physical death, but that life is a continuum, and that our essential self, our soul, continues to exist after physical death. When Paul wrote the second of his epistles to Timothy he reminded him that from the beginning of time God had purposed, through grace, to achieve salvation through Christ. Now, through the appearing of Christ in the flesh and his atoning work, that eternal purpose had been fulfilled and that Christ had **"abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"**. For the faithful, believing Christian, death (by which we mean separation from God) has been abolished, and has been **"swallowed up of life"**. (2 Cor. 5:4)

THE ETERNAL GOD

There is strong theological and evidential support for the Christian belief in life after death. The fundamental building block of that belief is an acceptance of the true nature of God. Shortly before his death Moses told the children of Israel, **"The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms."** Psalm 92, a Psalm of Moses, offers the same conviction, **"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God."** It is the eternal nature of God that provides us with the basis of our eternal life.

THE SONSHIP OF JESUS

Our eternal life is equally dependent upon the Sonship of Jesus, because it is through the eternal relationship of God the Father and God the Son that eternal life is transmitted to us. Jesus shares the same life that God himself has. **"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of Man."** This truth was a central theme of the message that Jesus gave to his disciples as he prepared them for the fact that he would shortly leave them. Jesus said, **"Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee, since thou hast given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him. And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."** The faithful Christian is lovingly bound into this unique spiritual and eternal fellowship.

John's Gospel record places a strong emphasis on Jesus' attempts to convince the Jews of his own true nature and in doing this he constantly identifies himself with the Father. When Jesus cleansed the temple, one of the earliest events recorded by John of the public years of Jesus' life, he berates the money-changers and sellers (with

particular reference to those selling pigeons): **“Takes these things away; you shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”** In this and in many other statements, Jesus claims Sonship with the Father. These are important statements because if they were true (which of course the Jews largely refused to accept) then Jesus could equally claim the characteristics and attributes of God. So when, in another confrontation with the Jews, Jesus made his claims about being the ‘bread of life’, he reinforced not only his Sonship, but also his own eternal nature and authority to gift that same eternal nature to those who believe in him. **“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.”** And again, confirming all of these claims, **“As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.”** Previously, in his dialogue at the well with the woman of Samaria, Jesus had used a similarly relevant analogy to give his own testimony about his nature and authority, **“..but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”**

DIVINE POWER OVER DEATH

If the theology that supports belief in eternal life is compelling, then the experience and practice of the outworking of that divine power is just as important a source of conviction. Jesus said of his own life that he had the power to lay it down and the power to take it up again. He gave demonstrations of his power over physical death by raising Jairus’s daughter and the dead man in the city of Nain. And in the raising of his friend Lazarus from the dead both his authority over physical death and the spiritual expression of his divine power come together in a glorious affirmation of his true nature, **“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever believes in me shall never die.”** As Lazarus came forth out of the tomb Jesus was giving a public and deliberate demonstration of his divine nature and authority over life and death not least to the Jews who mourned Lazarus (some of whom then believed).

The evidence is completed by Christ’s own resurrection, the wondrous fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation for mankind. Jesus is the first fruits. **“BUT IN FACT CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THE FIRST FRUITS OF THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP.”** Those who have accepted Jesus in faith and been baptized into his name, being cleansed from sin, have this promise of sharing in his resurrection – **“Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

ETERNAL LIFE - A PRESENT POSSESSION

Christians can speak confidently about their eternal future because of this one blinding fact – through our relationship with Jesus, we share the life of God, and that life of God is “from everlasting to everlasting”. There is no need to believe that some far-fetched claim is being made when the Christian’s eternal future is spoken of. Eternal life is the natural outcome of our relationship, through Jesus, with the eternal God. And just as those relationships are a present reality, so eternal life is a present possession of the Christian, because in Christ, the Christian has already “passed from death to life”. It must also be recognised however that these promises are dependent upon the restored relationship with God that Christ has won for us and that if we are foolish enough to sever that relationship again, our eternal inheritance will be lost.



What do you think?

FORGIVENESS AND REPENTANCE

Bro. David Yasko's series of articles on "The Road to Recovery" have provided some real practical guidance, from a Christian perspective, on how we might go about dealing with personal issues in our lives. In the real world that we all inhabit, people, Christians included, do suffer from depression, do have inter-personal problems and there is often bitterness and strife. David's articles, based on his own professional expertise and experience in the field, may in some senses be uncomfortable reading, but that is because they deal with 'practice' rather than 'theory' in confronting issues.

In this month's article, lesson 6 of eight, the topic is 'Repairing Relationships' and is essentially about forgiveness as a means of releasing ourselves from the long-term hurt and bitterness that 'bearing grudges' can cause. I well recall several years ago after the horrific IRA bomb at a Remembrance Day ceremony in the town of Eniskillen, Northern Ireland, the father of one of the victims creating quite a stir when he publicly offered his forgiveness to the bombers in the days immediately after the outrage.

There are many other examples of the same kind of thing happening. The "Truth and Reconciliation" meetings that were held in South Africa after the end of the apartheid regime, when people tried to deal with the deep hurt, anger and pain that the regime had caused by bringing together offender and offended (including the victims and perpetrators of some extremely violent events), were considered to be a vital part of the healing process.

All Christians must accept that before we can expect forgiveness from God we must confess our sins and repent. The Scripture is clear – there is no forgiveness without repentance. Luke records some of the final words of Jesus after his resurrection, **"Thus it is written... and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."**

Remember though that David is dealing with our inter-personal relationships (and not necessarily just with other Christians). In David's article (and there is a fuller version of the early part of the article in the January 2003 edition of SS) he seems to suggest that we can deal with our own hurts by forgiving those who have hurt us whether or not they have repented of the wrong they have done to us on the basis that we have to deal with our own hurts irrespective of the other parties attitude. Read again some of the scriptural references that he uses.

What Do You Think?

- **Can you forgive a person who hasn't repented**
- **If not, how do you ever deal with your hurt and bitterness if they never repent**
- **Are you free from guilt if you repent to someone and they refuse to accept your repentance (admittedly a very unchristian attitude)**
- **If you have to forgive repeatedly (after repentance, according to Luke 17) at what point do you consider the repentance not genuine.**
- **What was Jesus asking for on the cross, "Father forgive them...". Is this Father 'forgive them if they repent'. (also Stephen Acts 7:59)**
- **Do you have personal experience of the debilitating effect of unresolved personal conflict or the resolution of conflict.**
- **Does 'Bless those who persecute you', constitute forgiveness of the unrepentant.**

The above are just some of my questions – you may well have your own. Do you have personal experience that can help other Christians? I invite your contributions on the **subject matter**.

News and Information

Ghana Appeal

Amongst our recent correspondence we continue to receive letters of appreciation and thanks from our Ghanaian brethren for your assistance in helping them to evangelise and also to receive urgent medical attention. It is encouraging for them to know that brethren so far away care for them.

They are keen to explain God's saving grace to those that they come into contact with and this largely contributes to the Church's growth. As well as converts such as a schoolteacher, a seventy year old fetish priest has accepted Christ and burned all of his idols – all through personal contact with our brethren.

A brother has obtained a plot of land on which he proceeded to build a school in order to teach young children in his village. Having also made desks and seats he now appeals for teaching aids to promote Christian values and understanding to his young pupils.

The Lord's Church in Ghana grows through the drive and enthusiasm of our brethren there. Your help has enabled them to outreach further afield. A brother who has been very important in this field for many years is now handicapped by failing eyesight and needs medical help to alleviate this. It seems impossible to even estimate the number of converts he has personally made throughout Ghana.

An eighteen-year old sister who is both lame and unable to speak needs medical help – without your help her circumstances would be dire indeed. And so the Lord's work lovingly continues – saving people from spiritual death through the Word and from physical death through medical treatment. Please let it continue.

Those wishing to help please make cheques payable to: **Dennyloanhead Church of Christ Ghana Fund** and send to the treasurer,
Mrs Janet McDonald,
12 Charles Drive, Larbert, Falkirk,
Stirlingshire. FK5 3HB.
Tel: 01324 562480

Carole Ashurst - Report 2004

This year Carole spent several months in remote areas of West China including Tibet, where the officials were very helpful when presented with a project for primary health care and midwifery. In Tibet she stayed with families of Yak herdsman high in the Himalayas. This gave her the opportunity to assess their needs. They have little food, no transport, roads, schools or medical care and live in Yak-skin tents. Most of the year it is bitterly cold. They are brave and loving people.

Carole also spent a few weeks in India and was able to visit brethren in Madras, Bangalore, Delhi and Khatmandu. We thank God that all the children she has cared for with your help are safe and well. The Churches of Christ in Khatmandu are still strong despite the activities of the terrorists. Travel is restricted. There are desperate shortages due to sporadic blockades. So the eye hospital has been unable to conduct eye camps in some remote areas. Travel involves running the gauntlet of both Maoist and Government checkpoints.

Derby Hospital has given an extremely valuable piece of eye equipment for the Khatmandu eye hospital where it is sorely needed. Sending by road is too risky so we are negotiating for a price by air.

The new Church in remote Shabrubasi is growing. Shabrubasi is on the route of the new trunk road the Chinese are building into Nepal, which will make it readily accessible to visitors. The area has now settled down since the devas-

tating attack by the Maoists.

After further medical treatment Carole has returned to India. In Dharamsala refugee camp she has been able to see children that she previously helped. There are about 2000 refugees living in absolutely atrocious conditions and there are no medical facilities. Carole has arranged for two first aid training sessions of camp personnel to be held in March and October/November next year. On Friday, 17th December, DV, she flies to Khatmandu. She needs to return home in mid-January.

Please pray for the safety of our brothers and sisters in Christ in Nepal, and for Carole.

We thank all who have contributed to and prayed for Carole's work. If you want to support Carole in her work please make cheques payable to 'Carole Ashurst' and send to 60, Kenwood Road, Stretford, Manchester. M32 8PT

Allan and Gretchen Ashurst

What kind of person are you?

What kind of person are you to live with? When you close the door behind you in

the morning do you leave behind an agreeable atmosphere? When you return from your daily work, do you bring home some laughter or a touch of honey?

Many natural laws govern our personal lives. One of the least remembered is 'like attracts like'. A frown provokes a frown, but a crinkle at the corners begets latent good humour. Blessed are they who are pleasant to live with. If we give in good measure, well pressed down and flowing over, others will gradually do the same for us.

Are you faced with change? Let us remember that the old and familiar were once new. Look forward with confidence, not apprehension, to an expression of our dormant powers and abilities. Have you learned to welcome new circumstances as they occur? When a door opens we need to keep our attitudes positive. We will expect to be well. Nothing helps as much as saturating the mind with positive thoughts. Your life may be quite different a few weeks from now.

Look your best. Feel your best. Cheerful people resist disease better than gloomy ones, a medical survey reports. (In other words it's the surly bird that catches the germ).

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