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The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

I suppose we all have a mental picture of God, just as we probably all have, like Dante, our own ideas of heaven and hell. God is Spirit and so we may have difficulty in picturing the invisible, but then again man is made 'in the image of God' and God is represented in the 'bible as having hands, eyes, ears etc. and thus our concept of God may be an angelic version of 'Mr Universe'. Perhaps we still retain the picture of God we had as children. The most interesting art comes from little children, and if we ask them to draw a picture of God we can be sure of some fascinating results. Many parents, and grandparents, keep and cherish these little drawings as if they were Rembrandts. Is God some austere figure, white and ancient (like Father Time), thin and wizened, with scythe and hourglass, covered in cobwebs, perched on some lofty throne among the clouds and sunbeams, looking down on the world with a cold and unrelenting eagle eye.? Or is he more jovial, a jolly rotund figure (rather like Santa Claus) laughing away all our indiscretions and turning a blind eye to all our little foibles, a bit short-sighted and hard of hearing but easy to get along with.? Obviously everybody will have their own personal and unique mental picture of God and there are not two likely to be the same. We can only guess at the picture of God others have by the way they treat God and by the way they deal with His word. Clearly there are many who regard God as old-fashioned, out of touch with reality, pretty ignorant of the 'real world', certainly short-sighted and hard of hearing, fairly out-of-date in the realms of scientific progress and out of His depth when it comes to dealing with diseases like cancer (and very 'recent' diseases like AIDS). Indeed many of us treat God as if he was the village idiot, and we treat God's word as if it needed constant revision and as if God's ill-advised instructions required our timely intervention and alteration. This is not new and the Jews did it all the time. Nehemiah summed it up when he said that the people "rebelled against thee (God) and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them, and wrought great provocations." (9:26). Surely those 'great provocations' are nothing to the careless and casual way in which we treat God today. Do we regard Him as a rather incompetent fool: do we treat Him as if He suffered from senile dementia? before we deny such a heinous charge, we should think long and hard about it.

God's ways Versus Man's

It seems almost impossible for us to accept that God's ways, and God's thoughts are light-years away from, and superior to, man's ways and thoughts, Isaiah describes the disparity as being equal to the distance between heaven and earth (light-years, as I say). Man forgets that God is the potter and man is but the clay. When man dies,

in his frailty, he returns to that from which he was originally made — a fistful of dust. When we marvel at mans' great strides in scientific progress (and flights to the moon) we also remember that the collective efforts of all the world's scientists could not make a small blade of grass let alone the complex eye of a fly. Mans' ways, and mans' thoughts must take subservience to God's, and the human mentality which produced the Tower of Babel must be smothered. There are two or three examples in the O. T., commonly cited, to which we ought to give attention, as illustrative of God superimposing His way upon the presumptuous will of man.

- (1) **The First Case** is recorded in Lev. 10. When God called Moses into the mountain He delivered unto him the Law, commanded him to build the Tabernacle and to introduce the ceremonial worship. The Levite priests were required, inter alia, to offer incense at certain times and in a specific manner. In the process of time these priests seemed to become careless, casual or indifferent in their ministrations for Nadab and Abihu (sons of Aaron, no less) **"took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."** We don't know why they did it but they changed the divine order in only a slight degree (fire from an alternative source — it didn't seem important) and presumably they meant no harm. These were Aaron's own sons but Aaron remained silent when he heard the comments of Moses, i.e. **"This is that which the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh to me"**. Woe to those who tinker with God's arrangements. Think of all 'the strange fire' that is offered to the Lord, these days.
- (2) **The Second Case** involved King Saul himself. Saul, through the prophet Samuel, was instructed, clearly, to punish the enemies of Israel: the Amalekites. God said, **"I remember what Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass"**. (1 Sam. 15). Saul, with an army of 210,000 men, and God's support, waged war and inflicted a great victory upon the Amalekites. God, however, was displeased with Saul and said to Samuel, **"It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he hath turned back from following me and hath not performed my commandments"**. When Saul later met Samuel he was ebullient in victory and proudly declared to Samuel that he had **"performed God's commandment"**. **"If this is so"**, said Samuel, **"Why do I hear the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen"** (God had instructed that all the animals were to be destroyed). Saul admitted that he had preserved alive Agag the Amalekite king, and brought back the best of the animals **for a great sacrifice to God**. Notwithstanding the noble motive for preserving alive the animals, this was regarded by God as a serious lapse and Samuel never again conversed with Saul, and Saul's days as king were numbered. This incident drew from Samuel the divine maxim that God **prefers obedience to sacrifice, and 'to hearken' than the fat of rams**. Truly Saul's thoughts and ways, differed from God's.
- (3) **The Third Case** refers to the return to Jerusalem of the Ark of the Covenant. This ark, that God had commanded Moses to build was essentially portable, to be transported (rather like a sedan chair) by staves, but to be carried only by the Levite Priests. God had warned that if any others touched the ark they would surely die. At one point in the very chequered history of the ark, it was captured by the Philistines (to their regret) and when David became king he resolved to have it returned to Jerusalem. Although God had decreed that the ark should be transported only upon the shoulders of the Levites, David thought it a much better idea to transport it on a vehicle; and thus made a very splendid new cart

for the purpose. Uzzah and Ahio drove the cart, while David and the masses of Israelites followed playing and singing "with all their might". Notwithstanding the singing and enthusiasm of the occasion, when the cart wobbled and when Uzzah touched the ark to steady it he was struck dead. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God". (2 Sam. 6:7). This not only displeased David but frightened him so much that he left the ark there for three months before bringing the Levites to move it successfully. Uzzah meant well but died, nevertheless.

There are many other such incidents from the O.T. that could be cited as illustrative of the fact that man's ways and thoughts are no substitutes for God's, even although motivated by the best of intentions. Even Moses, himself, was not allowed to see the promised land because he smote the rock instead of speaking to it, as instructed.

Moses to Christ — A Drop In Standards?

These instances from the O.T., just quoted, conjure up a mental picture of God as being resolute and unbending; of requiring implicit obedience to His instructions — and surely this picture can not be considered inaccurate. Some would say, "Ah, yes, that is the God of the O.T. but the God of the N.T. is much more relaxed and easy-going". Is this so.? Some think that because gentle Jesus, meek and mild, changed "an eye for an eye" to "love your enemies" etc. that God underwent a personality change between the Old and New Testaments. Certainly the Law has gone and we now have a much better covenant but does God leave us to do very much as we think best.? Some say that the church is not really a completed entity, and God allows us to experiment with this and that, to see what suits us best and particularly to see what gets results.? Is this true.? Is it true that the N.T. is intentionally vague and that the church is merely a speculative experiment and not a firm and final reality.? The death of Ananias and Sapphira seems to have been just as sudden and punitive as the death of Uzza, Nadab and Abihu ever were. Indeed it seems that Paul reckoned that an even higher standard of obedience is required under the N.T. than was ever required under the O.T. Paul refers to the fact that in the O.T. God "was not well pleased" with many of the people "and overthrew them in the wilderness. Now all these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them ...; neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed and fell in one day 23,000; neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted and were destroyed of the serpents: neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:5-11). Do these words support the view that God has lowered the standards? In the letter to the Hebrews the writer constantly draws comparisons and analogy between the Old covenant and the New. He says that we should give earnest heed to the things we have heard, and not let them slip for just as each disobedience and every transgression received a just recompense of reward (in the O.T. economy) we shall likewise not escape if we neglect this great salvation. (Heb. 2:1-3). Again he warned, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not (and they didn't) who refused to hear him that spake on earth (Moses) much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven." (Heb. 12:25). I need hardly say that the writer's employment of the phrase "much more", in that quotation, suggests a much higher standard of obedience in N.T. times, than that required under the Old.

Obedience Still Better Than Sacrifice

If, therefore, our mental concept of God differs as between the Old and New Testaments perhaps we should think again. Truly the Law has been replaced by Grace but God remaineth the same, yesterday, today and for evermore. A lie is still a lie, idolatry is still idolatry; rebellion is still rebellion; murmuring is still murmuring, and disobedience is still disobedience. Jewish ingenuity is well known for circumscribing God's laws, and by substituting the Traditions Of The Elders for a "Thus sayeth the Lord", and it may well be that even in the church such traditions will arise (or already have arisen) which are the outcome of various experimentations of our clergy. Some day Jesus may again ask, "Why did you transgress the commandments of God with your (church) traditions."? Is it not a fact that all the issues which perplex and divide the church today: divorce and remarriage, the covering of the head, individual containers on the Lord's Table; silence of women in the church; clergy and laity syndrome, etc. etc. are of fairly recent origin and are symptomatic of a currently popular trend to get rid of anything in the church which is considered irksome, or has been found to be 'inconvenient'. Some are presently worried about the AIDS virus and see 'death in the cup', just as in the O.T. men accused Elisha of putting 'death in the pot'. Do we imply that Jesus was so backward that He did not know about microbes; or do we suggest (which is worse) that Jesus consciously exposed us to death and danger? Those of the early church who were really in danger were those who were stoned to death, slain, sawn asunder, tortured, scourged, afflicted and made destitute by a world quite unworthy to receive them. (Heb. 11). Can we really imagine these early disciples (running the gauntlet of torture and the gallows, and displaying a trust in Jesus that snarling lions could not diminish) fretting about the dangers of sharing a drinking vessel with their brethren.? Is it possible.? Whatever we do, let us steer clear of mans' ways, and mans' thoughts, no matter how attractive they might seem, and seek to know God's ways and God's thoughts. King Saul did not save the cattle and sheep through personal greed, but with the good intention of making sacrifice to God. Uzzah, likewise, tried to save the ark of God from damage. But, as Samuel said, "Obedience is better than any sacrifice." Who, amongst us, seeks the 'distinction' of promoting mans' ways and mans' thoughts in the church of the Living God ?

Editor.

GLEANINGS

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

GOD IS PURITY – GOD IS LOVE – GOD IS TRUTH – GOD IS INFINITE

"Let us look into this word Love. Love to man may mean several things. It may mean love to his person, which is very different from himself – or it may mean simply pity. Love to God can only mean one thing: God is a Character. To love God is to love His character. For instance – God is Purity. And to be pure in thought and look; to turn away from unhallowed books and conversation, to abhor the moments in which we have not been pure, is to love God. God is Love – and to love men till private attachments have expanded into a philanthropy which embraces all – at last even the evil and enemies, with compassion – that is to love God. God is Truth. To be true – to hate every form of falsehood – to live a brave – true – real life – that is to love God. God is Infinite – and to love the boundless, reaching on from grace to grace, adding charity to faith, and rising upwards ever to see the Ideal still above us, and to die with it unattained, aiming insatiably to be perfect even as the Father is perfect – that is love to God. This Love is manifested in obedience – Love is the life of which obedience is the form. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." Now

here can be no mistake. Nothing can be Love to God which does not shape itself into obedience.”

F. W. Robertson

REMEMBERING

“Let us think about that great faculty – remembrance. Don’t you young men and women sometimes feel almost staggered when you think of that immense power that God has put within you, that power that we call memory? It varies in degree; but what a wonderful instrumentality it is! Dr. Weymouth reads the text like this: ‘He will bring to your memories all that I have said to you.’ The Holy Spirit will be a memory aid! Now you often see advertisements about memory aids. There are wonderful people about who say they can make your memory so elastic and vital that it will never forget anything. What miracles they perform! Here God the Holy Spirit deals with our memory. What an almost startling power there is in memory! Our memories vary. Some people have much longer memories than others; some have much shorter memories; some have much dimmer memories, and others have more vivid memories than others. But everybody has memory in some degree. What is memory? It is the power by which we can recall experiences and impressions of the past. Is it not wonderful that we should have such a faculty!”

Dinsdale Young

I GIVE IT UP

“I spend almost all my leisure time in watching the birds, an occupation which is in itself a never-failing delight, and I puzzle myself with questions which no man can answer, but which are imperatively asked all the same. Who guides these flocks of tiny travellers, who have journeyed by trackless routes from distant lands hundreds of miles away, depending only on the strength of their own wings, and the mysterious vital power with which God has endowed them? How do they recognise the familiar haunts of a year ago? How do they know that the woods in these northern regions are ready for habitation? I give it up; but I love to see them approach from the distance like a swiftly-moving cloud, and disappear into the haze again after circling over the trees which surround the Hall; and I love to walk through the meadows and see how my feathered brothers and sisters are making the most of the sunshine and the softened soil.”

W. Riley

SIMPLICITY IN PREACHING

“To attain simplicity in preaching is by no means an easy matter. No greater mistake can be made than to suppose this. “To make hard things seem hard,” To use the substance of a saying of Archbishop Usher’s, “is within the reach of all, but to make hard things seem easy and intelligible is a height attained by very few speakers.” One of the wisest and best of the Puritans said two hundred years ago, “that the greater part of preachers shoot over the heads of the people.” This is true also in 1887! I fear a vast proportion of what we preach is not understood by our hearers any more than if it were Greek. When people hear a simple sermon, or read a simple tract, they are apt to say, “How true! How plain! How easy to understand!” and to suppose that any one can write in that style . . . In fact, to use very long words, to seem very learned, to make people go away after a sermon saying, “How fine! How clever! How grand!” all this is very easy work. But to write what will strike and stick, to speak or to write that which at once pleases and is understood, and becomes assimilated with a hearer’s mind and a thing never forgotten – that, we may depend upon it, is a very difficult thing and a very rare attainment.”

J. C. Ryle

A FATHER'S ADVICE

"My boy", said a father to his son, "treat everybody with politeness, even those who are rude to you; for remember that you show courtesy to others, not because they are gentlemen, but because you are one"

T. W. T

Selected by Leonard Morgan

LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD

MATTHEW 21 verses 28 to 32

Whilst this parable had a striking lesson for the people of Christ's own day, it also contains a valuable lesson for us to-day.

First of all, let us look at the lesson contained for the people who lived at the time of Jesus, and then take a lesson for ourselves.

The two sons in the parable represent the priests, elders and scribes on the one hand, and the publicans and sinners on the other. Both classes were bidden to work in the Lord's vineyard. The publicans and sinners had at first refused, but had repented at the preaching of John the Baptist. The other professed to obey but did not.

The design of the parable is to show that the publicans and harlots, whom they so much despised, were morally superior to the questioners of Jesus.

Let us now apply the lesson to ourselves. Verse 28, "SON, GO WORK TO-DAY IN MY VINEYARD."

As we examine this we see immediately that it divides itself into four parts.

1. SON A DIVINE RELATIONSHIP
2. GO WORK A DIVINE CALL
3. TO-DAY A DIVINE TIME
4. VINEYARD A DIVINE PLACE

A Divine Relationship

We are all aware that we have become the Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus and by submission to His divine commands. Hence we are no longer our own. We are a purchased possession. We were not redeemed by corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious Blood of Jesus. God is our Father. Through His Spirit we are able to say "Abba Father."

We occupy a high position. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the Children of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." It is to us therefore, as His children, that He addresses His command to "Go Work."

A Divine Call

We are not called to fool about and have a good time, to fritter away our abilities and talents. God's call is an urgent appeal for workers to go to work. The world is badly in need of Jesus, Go Work. The Gospel is still God's Power unto salvation, but it will not preach itself, Go Work. It requires everyone to pass on the message in order that men may know about Jesus and how to become Christians, Go Work.

Jesus, Himself has given us the example. Ever ready to help others, to teach to save some poor benighted soul from sin's darkness and despair. The apostles and later, Paul, all followed their leader's example, ever toiling to convert men and women to Christ Jesus their Lord. Let us joyfully take every opportunity that presents itself, nay more, let us make the opportunity to tell them of Jesus the Saviour who died.

When shall we work?

A Divine Time

That is TO-DAY. Throughout God's Word we are reminded of the great TO-DAY. We hear again the clarion call of Joshua "Choose ye THIS DAY whom ye will serve, as for Me and My house we will serve the Lord." The psalmist under inspiration cries "To-day if ye will hear His Voice." Jesus prolongs the strain, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is called to-day, the night cometh when no man can work." Paul reminds us that "To-day is the day of salvation."

To-day, my brother, my sister, let this word ring in your ears. Yesterday is dead. To-morrow may never be, ONLY TO-DAY IS OURS. Let us use our abilities and talents that the souls of men and women may be rescued from darkness to light; from the power of Satan to God. God is ever concerned with the day. Let us remember always that there is a day appointed when we shall give account of what we did to-day.

Where are we to work? There is

A Divine Place

It is in God's Vineyard. No longer is fleshy Israel the promised people of God. No longer Palestine the vineyard. These were but types and shadows to bring us to the substance. Believers in Christ, to-day are the true Israel, the Church is His vineyard in which His children are to work. A vineyard speaks of fruit, and God looks to it to produce an abundance of fruit. Shall we be like Israel of old? God provided all that could be desired for His people then. He looked for grapes and it brought forth wild grapes.

What will the answer be that we shall give to this call.

"GO WORK TO-DAY IN MY VINEYARD."

Tom Kemp, Hindley

CORNERSTONE

(Helping the Needy in St. Louis)

We had agreed not to open the Cornerstone the day following Christmas and New Year although it was the date of our regular clothing give-away. But the nearer the days came the more I felt impelled to go. It was a good thing I did. On both occasions there were people waiting at the door. Some could not read the signs I had posted. There were people coming all afternoon both days.

One was a woman with a 25 year-old-child who weighs only 35 pounds. The mother wheels the child in a little pushcart. The mother whose husband died five years ago is cheerful, but the child never speaks or alters her vacant expression. As we talked I asked the mother how she kept her sanity during the years when the little girl was banging her head almost continuously as her only activity. The mother said that she and the father adopted the attitude that the little child had been given them to test their love, faith and fortitude. They never allowed themselves to speak sharply to her.

Then there was the woman whose house had burned to the ground. I had seen her picture in the paper three weeks before, screaming and trying to rush back into the fiery dwelling with the firemen trying to restrain her. She is living with her grandmother in a tiny cubicle with the children sleeping on the floor. I was glad we could give her things she so desperately needed. We prayed together.

A man came in who was desperately in need of a pair of pants and a shirt. I found him two of each. He looked so utterly bedraggled and cold I asked him to sit down and warm. I talked to him about my faith in the Lord. I found out that he was sleeping in an unheated room in a large old barn of a tenement. It is rat infested and he said it was hard to sleep as the rats ran across his bed in the dark. He has no electric light and depends upon a kerosene lamp. A lot of time he just sits in the dark. A good Pentecostal woman, who loves Nell, had brought us a pan of cornbread and

some grape preserve. I gave the cornbread to our indigent friend and he left crying as he went.

The next caller was a well-built man I had met several times. He was always disappointed because he never could find trousers to fit him. This time he found three pairs and asked if he might take them. I told him to do so. He asked me if there was any way he could thank those who brought them. He confided in me that he could not get his wife to come to the Cornerstone. She felt deeply ashamed and called it begging. I told him about those of you who contributed clothing and other things and how you were thrilled we were there so you could share. He has been out of work almost a year and has tried everywhere without success. I told him I would pray for him and I have done so.

There were four shy little Cuban and Mexican children with their mothers who cannot speak English. They never take more than they can use and always with a "Gracias, Senor." As they prepared to leave I followed my custom of giving each child a lollipop. One after another they solemnly lined up to hug me. I gave each of them, a squeeze and said "I love you." They left with big smiles and black eyes sparkling. It was worth starting the Cornerstone for the experience of bringing joy to them. We had a family of young Venezuelans come in the following week.

A woman came in with a blackened eye and a dark circle under the other. She had such a forlorn look that I asked her what happened. She said her husband had threatened her while intoxicated and when she called him a "drunken idiot" he knocked her cold. She regained consciousness with the children screaming and crying. I asked her if I might talk to her husband and she agreed to make arrangements if at all possible. He had struck her often, one time breaking her arm.

I had intended to tell you how my life became entangled with Rich, who sleeps in the back of a truck, and of John who sleeps under a porch. Both are veterans of the Vietnam War and I was called upon to assist them both. It is great to talk to you. My number is 4420 Jamieson 1-C, St. Louis Missouri 63109. The telephone is 645-4158.

Carl Ketcherside



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

What would you say is the greatest hindrance to a full commitment of Christians to their God and Christ?"

I am well aware of the dangers inherent in generalisations, but my immediate answer to the above question could be summed up in one word — possessions. Matthew records that a rich young man came to Jesus and said to Him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life". Jesus replied that if the young man would 'enter into life' then he would need to keep the commandments, to which the young man replied, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet"? Obviously, the phrase 'enter into life' which Jesus used did not signify full attainment of God's blessings, nor did the keeping of the commandments signify full commitment on the part of the young man, because Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt be perfect (complete, lacking nothing), go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me". The same scripture records with great sadness, "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions". (See Matt. 19: 16-22).

When studying the subject of possessions it is not easy to be objective. There are those who say that to have possessions is wrong in God's sight, but God does not say that. Solomon was reputedly a very wise man and he said, "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth" (Prov. 10:4). It is not the acquisition of wealth by honest toil that God disapproves of, it is rather the unrighteous ways in which it is used, and the soul-destroying potential of it. These two ideas are expressed quite explicitly in Kingdom teaching. Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus, "Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28). On the other hand, Jesus said when explaining the Parable of the Sower, "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). As always, these statements are so simple and straightforward that no involved explanation is necessary by me.

I think at this point, and in order to get a true understanding of the teaching, we should look at the pervasive force that possessions can have on the lives of individuals.

Security?

Sometimes we sit back in the little corner of this planet that we have chiselled out for ourselves and say to ourselves, as we view our possessions, "I've done pretty well for myself", and then we bask in the pleasant feeling that washes over us as we contemplate our security. Perhaps we push the words of Jesus to the rich man out of our minds, but they are surely pertinent to everyone, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided"? A person with an earth-bound vision may say, "Ah, but when I die, these things will pass to my children". Would we want to perpetuate our own folly by passing on to our children the source of that folly in the attitude of mind which we would have undoubtedly displayed as we contemplated our so-called security? It is small wonder that we, living in an age when we have to install advanced security systems in order to protect whatever possessions we may have, should come to rely so much on those possessions. But perhaps we should rely more on what the Deuteronomists were taught, "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms". (Deut. 33:27). That is security indeed.

Surely, **contentment** is a state that the Christian should strive for. Paul wrote to Timothy warning him about those perverse people who would not consent to the wholesome doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ and he referred to them as, "destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content". (1 Tim. 6:1-8). We pride ourselves on our great knowledge and our skills in theological debate, but have we learned the right lessons? Can we say as the great Apostle did, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". (Phil. 4:11-13).

Confidence

We can place confidence in self, in men, or in God. If we place our confidence in self or in men then, according to the Bible, our confidence is **misplaced**. We are nearing the time of a General Election in this country and politicians will tell us that they can bring in a state of Utopia; a heaven on earth, so to speak, Many will believe, because their aspirations are earth-bound. Mark records that on one occasion, after he had looked round about Him, Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches

enter into the kingdom of God". His disciples were astonished, we are told, at these words. But Jesus went on, "Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God". Again, the scripture records, the disciples were greatly astonished and voiced the question, "Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible' (See Mark 10: 23-27). So there we have it. Why is it that men will follow the impossible dream when there is revealed to them a God so powerful that with Him everything is possible. Oh, that we could reach that pinnacle of confidence as expressed again by Paul, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Rom. 8: 38,39).

Covetousness

There can be little doubt that the pursuit of possessions leads to the state of covetousness, indeed, the Greek word PLEONEXIA is defined as 'the constant desire to have more'. Mark records that on another occasion when the disciples were asking for places of power and authority from Jesus that he turned to them and said, "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you" (Mark 11: Read from verse 36 to verse 45). The Lord knew that to covet power and authority would corrupt His Disciples, and it remains true today that the pursuit of possessions in order to gain power and influence is a corrupting influence, not only to the individual but also to others. It can be, and often is, very divisive to a community of people. In contrast to this, the attitude of Christians should be as Paul indicated when he wrote to Thessalonica, "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children". (1 Thess. 2:5-7).

Peter also warns us about the unwholesome side of covetousness in respect of false teachers. We can rest assured that they will always be with us, as we can be assured of their inevitable fate; he says, "through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgement now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not". (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

As regards gifts in the early Church, the Apostle says, "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way". (1 Cor. 12:31). Surely this 'more excellent way' is what William Cowper meant in one of his Olney Hymns;

Why should I shrink at Thy command,
 whose love forbids my fears?
 Or tremble at the gracious hand,
 That wipes away my tears?
 No, rather let me freely yield
 What most I prize to Thee;
 Who never hast a good withheld,
 Or wilt withhold from me.

Let us leave behind the discussions and arguments on the new theology and liberalisation of the Church, and let us return to our Christian 'grass roots'. Let this epitaph not be written on our tombs, 'He strove to possess all, and failed to possess Christ, in Whom is all'.

(All questions, please, to:

Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way, Winstanley, Wigan, Lancs. WN3 6ES.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Dec. 7	Isaiah 1	Acts 17:1-15
14	Isaiah 40:12-31	Acts 17:16-34
21	Jer. 4:1-18	Acts 18:1-18
28	Joshua 1	Acts 18:19 to 19:10

PAUL AT THESSALONICA

Thessalonica was a city and seaport of Macedonia (northern Greece). She was once called Therme because of her hot springs, but Cassander, one of the successors of Alexander the Great, took up residence there and called the place after his wife Thessalonike. She was a free city (**urbs libera**), which meant a number of things including self government and freedom from taxation. She was also a commercial city. The famous Via Egnatia, the main artery through which life flowed from Rome to the remote extremities of the Asian world, passed directly through her centre. The inhabitants consisted of Greeks, Jews and Romans. Many of them were retired soldiers.

Frank Charles Thompson in the Archaeological Supplement of his Chain-Reference Bible has something important to say about Thessalonica. "Luke tells us, in the original Greek version of Acts 17:6,8, that the magistrates or rulers of the city were called **politarchs**. For many years modern critical scholars pointed out that the term or title was not found in all Greek literature, and therefore, Luke had made a mistake in using it. Later, however, the title was found inscribed on various ruins in Thessalonica, the most prominent of which was the arch of Vardar Gate, which spanned the Ignation way, at the west entrance of the city ... Paul and Luke certainly passed through this gateway and noted the inscription with interest. Thus, Luke wrote quite correctly of the magistrates - calling them by the title which apparently was used only in that section of the country." The inscription of the arch is now housed in the British Museum in London. I should know. I have been photographed beside it.

There were Jews in Thessalonica, as

has been said. Paul entered their synagogue and for three sabbath days "reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Christ" (17:2-3). Some believed, and some believed not. The unbelievers, with the aid of a gang of idlers around city market place or **agora**, fermented a riot. They accused the believers of a serious charge: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (17:6). (The charge must be set in the context of widespread unrest in the Jewish communities throughout the Roman Empire.)

What were the **politarchs** to do in these circumstances? In the end they decided to make Jason and his companions go bail for the missionaries' good behaviour. Paul and Silas then reluctantly left the city by night for Berea. But a congregation had been established in Thessalonica. The two subsequent letters by Paul should be read with interest.

PAUL AT ATHENS

No city in the Hellenic world could match Athens. She was the capital city of literature and art. She was also the centre of philosophy, being the native city of Socrates and Plato and the adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno. Paul, when he came to Athens, encountered the followers of Epicurus and Zeno. What were their beliefs?

To the Epicureans, everything happened by chance; death was the end of all; the gods were remote from the world and did not care; and pleasure (not just fleshly pleasure) was the chief end of man. To the Stoics, everything was God; everything that happened was the will of God and, therefore, must be accepted without resentment; and the world disintegrated in a conflagration and started all over again on the same cycle of events. (Read the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius's **Meditations** for further insights into Stoicism.)

These philosophers called Paul a babbler (Greek **spermalogos**, a picker of

scraps) and a setter forth of strange gods – Jesus and Anastasis (the Greek word for resurrection). He gave his defence on Mar's Hill or Areopagus. There are ten important points from his address.

1. The universe is not by chance but design.
2. God is independent of man.
3. Man is wholly dependent upon God.
4. All men are related.
5. God is involved in history.
6. There is a purpose to human existence.
7. Ignorance of God is inexcusable.
8. Universal repentance is essential.
9. Universal judgment is inescapable.
10. The resurrection of Jesus is the greatest fact in history

What a message for ancient pagan Athens! What a message for the modern pagan world!

In response to Paul, some mocked of the resurrection and others said they would hear him again on the matter. Worldly philosophy had done its job. The wisdom of God was foolishness unto them.

Dear reader, little has changed. I think, for example, of the universities in our land today. It was Charles Habib Malik who, in his book *A Christian Critique of the University*, wrote: "The great universities of the Western World raise fundamental questions from the Christian Point of view. They are pretty thoroughly secularised. The prevailing atmosphere in them is not congenial to Christian spiritual values." Yet it should not be forgotten that all of them were originally founded for the glory of God and His Son Jesus Christ.

PAUL AT CORINTH

Corinth was, and is, a city of Greece at the western end of the Isthmus between central Greece and the Peloponnesus. The original city was destroyed in 146 B.C. but rebuilt in 44 B.C. by Julius Caesar. Augustus made it the capital of the new province of Achaia. Corinth was a flourishing centre for trade as well as industry. She was also distinguished for her refinement and learning. Every part

of literature was cultivated there. Cicero called her "The Light of Greece". In the neighbourhood of the city the Isthmian Games were celebrated, which attracted so much attention and which drew so many strangers from distant parts of the world. To these Games Paul not infrequently refers, when recommending Christian energy and activity.

But there was an infamous side to Corinth. It can be summed up in one word – immorality. The town was dominated by the Acrocorinthus, a steep, flat-topped rock surmounted by an Acropolis, which in ancient times contained, inter alia, a temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, whose service gave rise to the city's notoriety. In fact, to indulge in sexual licence in that day was known as "to Corinthianize." One writer put it this way: "She became the most gay, dissipated, corrupt and ultimately the most effeminate and feeble portion of Greece." F. F. Bruce has pointed out that "the temple of Aphrodite was staffed by a thousand female slaves, who are said to have made the place a tourist attraction This background helps to explain the frequency of the admonitions against unchastity in Paul's Corinthian correspondence."

In Corinth, Paul found employment with Aquila and Priscilla, husband and wife and saints of God. They were all tent-makers. Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth teaching the word of God (18:11). Again, he met opposition from the Jews. He declared unto them: "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean (blameless): from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (18:6). But how wonderful to read: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized" (18:8).

One Gallio, deputy (proconsul) of Achaia, is mentioned during the troubles in Corinth. He, in fact, was a brother of Seneca, an outstanding Roman, Stoic philosopher and, at this time, tutor to the future Emperor Nero. Knowledge of such things brings home forcibly to me the his-

toricity and veracity of Luke's record.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

I have just delivered a series of talks on the Holy Spirit. They were entitled: The Holy Spirit, The Gift of the Holy Spirit and The Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The early verses of Acts 19 gave me hours of study. There are many points which I cannot now mention. Suffice to say that Paul, as an apostle, had the power or authority to lay on hands and confer spiritual gifts — gifts of the Spirit he himself possessed. These included speaking with tongues (languages) and prophesying (forth-telling the Word and fore-telling events). Such gifts were necessary for the establishing of Christ's community on earth.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Newtongrange, Scotland: On Saturday 4th October last the Church at Newtongrange met for a time of fellowship and study. The occasion, our annual social. A number of 85 were in attendance. Due to our hall being vandalised by fire the meeting was held in another hall nearby.

At the hour of four, the meeting got off to a rumbustious start with some grand singing from the company gathered. This was led as usual by Br. J. McCallum.

After prayer and thanksgiving we all sat down to tea — a fine affair; ably served by the ladies: so it's a word of thanks to all of them. Before commencement of the social proper Br. J. Wilson, Chairman of the day, spoke a few words of welcome. As usual part of the evening was taken up by some fine singing. Sister Coventry of Newtongrange sang two solos. Bro. McCallum, likewise sang true to form. His melodic strains filled the hall, then in beautiful harmony Sisters F. Hughes and J. Mould sang of their love of Jesus. The Chairman then introduced the first speaker of the day, Bro. M. Plain from the Church that meets at Tranent. Bro. Plain's message was well received and gave much food for thought; after which, time was called for a short interval. At

the start of the second half of the evening, we were all once again favoured by some fine singing from the duet and the soloists. Bro. Allan of North Berwick, also sang. Soon it was time to introduce the second speaker Bro. Wilson welcomed Bro. Pearson and introduced him to the company. Bro. Pearson spoke on "Abraham", and again the company enjoyed another fine time of study.

All too soon, the end of the social drew nigh. After some more singing from the brethren Bro. Hughes closed the time of study and fellowship with a few words of prayer.

A good day was had by all. Our thanks go out to all who helped to make the day a success. To those unable to be with us — we missed you! We know work, illness and the like can hinder, nevertheless we hope to see you the next time. (D.V.)

A. P. Sharp, Secretary.

Woodhall meets Zambian Cabinet Minister: The Woodhall family travelled to Lusaka, Zambia's capital where Chester officiated as a Zambian Government registered marriage officer at the wedding of the daughter of a Zambian preacher, Effie Daks, who married a Zambian army captain. After the wedding the Zambian contingent did a sword salute. Attending the wedding were Zambia's minister of legal affairs and his wife, Mr. & Mrs. Chigaga. After the wedding ceremony, the Woodhall and Chigaga families were able to spend several hours together in discussion. The church was a prominent subject.

Chester Woodhall, P.O. Box 22297
Kitwe, Zambia.

Kentish-Town, London: Kentish-town Anniversary. We held this yearly meeting on Saturday, October 4th with a happy gathering of brethren and sisters from far and near. Aylesbury, Brighton, Bristol, Peterborough, Tunbridge Wells, Wembley, Old Street and others. We looked briefly at the past, reported on the present and sought and intended further service with the same object as did John Black when in 1839 he spread the Lord's Table in his home in Clerkenwell. The

cause grew into a meeting house in Somers Town, an area pulled down to allow the Midland Railway to come to St. Pancras. The same area is now being rebuilt to replace the Railway with other purposes. In 1871 Hope Chapel was built with the same purpose as the last place and has continued with that purpose and with help of such stalwarts as David King and R. K. Francis. The other London churches have gone U.R.C. or Baptist except Ilford in the new "Fellowship". Hope Chapel stands still for the "old paths" while at present somewhat reduced numbers. We had Brother John Hunt from Bristol speaking on Saturday on "True Happiness" in scriptural instruction and life. He also served the church on the Lord's Day, with the theme "What must I do?". Saturday afternoon provided time for social intercourse and refreshment. Thanks are expressed to and for all who came and provided encouragement and warm fellowship.

R. B. Scott.

Stretford, Manchester: The Church at Stretford, Manchester has decided that to accomplish our goals for this great city and also to develop the work amongst muslims everywhere, we must raise the support necessary for Allan Ashurst to be able to devote himself to the work on a full time basis. All congregations will be receiving a letter explaining our objectives and our needs. Please give your consideration to assisting us in a vital work. Any enquiries should be directed to the treasurer, Stretford Church of Christ, 60 Kenwood Road, Stretford M32 8PT.

Arthur Barry, Evangelist.

OBITUARY

Kirkcaldy: On 6th August, 1986, brother Bill Downie was called home after a short illness. Bill had been a member of the church here for 17 years and is survived by his wife, son, daughter and their families. Please pray for them. As a consequence of her father's death, his daughter Elizabeth, realising her relationship with God was not what it should be, has asked to be restored to the fellowship of the church. Robert Hughes, Secretary.

Correction is Needed in Every Home

Correction is a result of real love. The Bible teaches this in Proverbs 13:24; "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Correction or discipline is to be in every home. Self-discipline is needed by the father if he is to be the head of the house as God wants him to be. Fathers can't expect the children to obey and be good unless they correct themselves and bring themselves into subjection and obedience to Jesus too. Jesus says in Revelation 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." This teaches us that to chasten is to show forth love, in spite of what some say about whipping a child. The Bible teaches that we are to do it as parents because we love our children and want the best for them.

Let us look at some of the good results if we do. Proverbs 19:18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Proverbs 23:13,14, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell." Proverbs 29:15,17, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."

The humorous definition of child psychology is not true ... "The art of applying a soft pedal instead of a hard pedal."

One of the presidents said, "Lazy parents, baby-sitters and a shortage of switches have made the teacher's role a hard one." We as parents have to face up to our jobs of bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let us do our job instead of blaming everyone else. Let us take this matter of raising our children right as a matter of great importance. Let us follow the Good

Book and not just the books written by
man in his own wisdom.

Junior bit the meter man,
Junior kicked the cook,
Junior's anti-social now,
According to the book.

Junior smashed the clock and lamp,
Junior hacked the tree.

Destructive trends are treated
In chapters two and three.

Junior threw his milk at Mom.
Junior screamed for more.
Notes on self-assertiveness
Are found in chapter four.

Junior tossed his shoes and socks
Out into the rain.

Negation, that is normal—
Disregard the stain.

Junior got in Granpa's room,
Tore up his fishing line.
That's to gain attention—
See page eighty-nine.

Granpa seized a slipper and
Yanked Junior across his knee.
Granpa hasn't read a book
Since eighteen ninety-three!
— Selected from Sword and Staff

AID TO INDIA

During last week word was received of terrible floods in Andhra Pradesh and some brethren involved. I have sent £150 to their assistance.

Last month we mentioned the recent visit of bro. Paul Subhan, bro. Bhusanam and bro. Tony Tyson and bro. Subhan's talk on the work in his part of India. Bro. Tyson has kindly sent further information re this work, of which the following is an extract.

"Paul Subhan is one of the evangelists who works for the Lord in the district of Nellore which is in the state of Andhra Pradesh, South India. Within his area are some 45 congregations, of the Church of Christ, some are small some large, some meet in brick buildings, others in huts, basically most congregations are poor, but Paul tries to guide them into being self

supporting, nine are already self-supporting, Paul organises some 22 other preachers and evangelists to help within these congregations.

The Church in Nellore oversees the entire work within the district. In India the Church has to work both with Social needs and Spiritual needs of the people. The Church in Nellore has an on-going programme of medical care.

ANC Medical Clinic... was constructed from some old brick bungalows left by the British many years ago. Money was raised in India, Britain and USA, and now they have been converted into a Medical Clinic. A staff of 2 doctors, 3 nurses and other staff of 5 help run the clinic, there is also a travelling clinic for people in outer areas. Paul also helps organise this effort too.

More than 50 people a day come to the clinic for attention. People are given jabs, medicine, tablets and first aid. Lack of funds prevent more serious medical care from being carried out.

Orphanage ... has 15 children, but there is room for more funds permitting. It only costs £5 per month to keep one child at the orphanage.

Sewing School ... is provided to teach women and girls to sew and repair clothes, and to help them also make their own clothes."

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

NEW MAGAZINE

Brother Ken Chumbley, Evangelist: from Peterborough, writes to inform me that he intends to start a new magazine at the beginning of the year. He states that since returning to Britain he has been shocked to find that some, whom he had known and admired as 'Old Pathers' were not standing where they once stood. Also there were some who had, indeed, embraced false doctrine, and some who should be raising their voices against false teaching but were not doing so. He sees little point in converting people from denominationalism and introducing them

into 'Church Of Christ' denominationalism. He hopes he can, with his new magazine, help to stem the drift into apostasy and also put some sound Bible teaching into the hands of the brethren. Serious readers of the "Scripture Standard" will be aware that the editor has been highlighting the above sentiments in recent, and not so recent, editorials. Brother Chumbley's intentions seem very commendable, i.e. to put 'sound teaching' into the hands of all church members. **Nearly every brother in the country** claims to be giving 'sound teaching' and few would admit to giving 'unsound teaching'. There never can be enough 'sound teaching' however, and so we wish our brother every success with the endeavour. His aims are worthy and most commendable - Time will tell how successful. We wish him well.

Editor

NOTE FOR SECRETARIES

Will church secretaries, and those wishing to send material for inclusion in the "S.S." please note that items should reach me by the 14th (at latest) of any month, in order for their appearance in the following month's issue.

Thank you.
Editor.

BOOKS FOR SALE

Brother Paul Jones, lately one of our evangelists and previous treasurer of the "Scripture Standard" has written to intimate that he will require to dispose of some of his books. Our brother is moving into a smaller house and is having to dispose of some personal items, furniture and books. He hopes to reduce his library by about 300 (not all of them religious books but 100 say). Some of the books are unique, out of print and Paul would preferably dispose of them all en bloc and would accept £200 for them. If there are no 'takers' for the whole library, then brother Jones would sell them in smaller groups or individually. Paul should be contacted at his present address: 9 Bromford Hill, Handsworth Wood, BIRMINGHAM, B20 2TD. Tel. No. 021 356 1779.

THANKS

During my recent stay in hospital I often thought of the hymn and did indeed "count my many blessings, name them one by one." This is truly so, and I would like to thank all the brethren who enquired after me. I am grateful for all the cards and letters sent me. The visitors also helped time to pass so quickly. I thank the womens' meeting at Newtongrange, the brethren, and all the sister churches who have shown so much kindness, I am happy to say that I am now home again and I am able to meet with the church. Again thank you all.

Sister S. MOAR, Newtongrange.

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