

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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BAPTISM DOETH ALSO NOW SAVE US

At a recent series of lectures in Glasgow, Ken Ham (the well-known "Creationist" scientist and author) dealt very interestingly with the Flood and Noah's Ark. Noah's Ark is, even amongst many of the clergy, not firmly understood or widely believed, and, as Mr. Ham pointed out, even on the posters on school classroom walls, the Ark is depicted as a bizzarely comical little craft, sometimes with a giraffe's neck sticking out of the window and a monkey hanging from a mast. Small wonder the matter is not taken seriously. However, notwithstanding any reluctance on the part of theologians to believe in Noah, we have (quite apart from well-documented geological and other scientific evidence of a great flood) references to the subject outwith Genesis, and I give a few examples. **Isaiah**, for instance, (54:9) records God's reiteration of His promise that **"As I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I should not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee."**

Ezekiel also mentions Noah and warns that when God decides to wreak destruction on Israel and Jerusalem, nothing, and nobody, will be able to influence the matter, and adds, **"Though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter, they shall deliver but their own souls by their righteousness."** (14:20).

Jesus believed in Noah and the flood. Indeed He makes reference to the suddenness with which the wicked antediluvians perished in the waters, and says, **"But as the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark. And knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."** (Matt. 24:37).

The apostle **Paul** also not only believed in Noah: but placed him with the other O.T. worthies in 'Faith's Hall of Fame' in Heb. 11. He says, **"By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."**

The apostle **Peter** also believed in Noah and, referring to the gross disobedience of the antediluvian population, says, **"... when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doeth also now save**

us (Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:20).

I draw attention to these quotations to emphasise the fact that those theologians (eminent or otherwise) who cannot accept the account of Noah and his ark, not only reject the veracity of Moses who wrote the Genesis, but also cast doubt upon the enlightenment and discernment of Christ and His inspired apostles. In such circumstances their 'theology' would seem of doubtful value.

THEM AND US

My purpose in this article is to look more closely at the last of the above quotations: i.e. 1 Peter 3:20 where the apostle draws *a remarkable link between the saving of Noah and baptism.*

Peter's statement is in the context of an exhortation to his brethren to remain faithful regardless of what may befall them, and irrespective of how small in number and insignificant they may seem to be. He says, (and I paraphrase to save space) "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers." He asks "Who is he that will harm you if ye follow that which is good" and adds that they should be happy if they suffer for righteousness sake. He urges them that they should live righteously and so put to shame their critics, and points out that even Christ suffered unfairly, the Just for the unjust, put to death in the flesh but quickened by the Spirit. And, says Peter, it was through (or by) that same Spirit that Jesus preached to the disobedient in Noah's day (the spirits in prison) while God waited patiently for their repentance and while the ark was, nevertheless, being made in preparation for the flood, Noah's preaching was largely ignored and when the flood came **"only eight souls were saved, by water, The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us . . ."** Peter draws a certain link between THEM (the antediluvians) and US (those who have obeyed the gospel and have been baptised). The link is WATER (Peter could have mentioned other links for there are some other links), but the link he chose was that of water. Water saved Noah and his family: likewise baptism (immersion in water in the name of Christ) will save those who call upon His name. Peter comments not so much upon the many thousands who perished in the flood but rather refers to the only positive outcome: that eight souls were saved. This was doubtless intended to show Peter's brethren that as God went to great lengths to save only eight souls He was obviously *interested in small numbers*, even in the twos and threes. Some brethren are leaving small congregations and joining the huge ones so that they might enjoy the benefits of scale, but God, it seems, does not overlook the little groups and the faithful minorities. (In passing, on the question of Christ preaching to "the spirits in prison," some believe that Christ, between the time of His burial and resurrection, preached to the lost in Hades, indeed the R.C. church bases its doctrine of purgatory on this verse. If this was so, why should Christ **confine** His preaching only to the wicked who died in Noah's day. It seems clear that Christ preached to the "spirits in prison" in Noah's day through the Spirit and, as the Spirit never preaches in person, He preached through God's servant, Noah. Likewise in N.T. times, the Spirit preached through the apostles.) People are bodily free to move, but their spirits are "in prison." Indeed Jesus came to give liberty to the captives and to set the prisoners free. Isaiah describes (figuratively) how kings and other eminent **"shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in a pit, and shall be shut up in prison"** (24:22).

SAVED BY WATER. HOW?

As mentioned earlier, when Peter recalled the circumstances involved in the saving of Noah, he could have attributed Noah's salvation to *several factors*. First and foremost Noah was saved by the ark for without the ark he would, like the masses, have perished in the waters. Originally God decided to destroy the whole creation "**But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.**" Thus we could say that Noah was saved by **his own good character**; or by his own stability and perseverance for he was six hundred years old when the flood came. Again Paul, in Heb. 11 eulogises on the **faith** of Noah and says that it was "By faith" that Noah made an ark, condemned the world and became an heir of righteousness. Noah was also saved by the **grace and mercy of God**. However, notwithstanding the complete relevance of all these factors, Peter selected, for his present purpose, the saving factor of the WATER. His purpose was clearly to highlight type and antitype. Water saved Noah and water saves us. And how does water save us? When it is employed in the form of scriptural baptism. Those who dismiss and denigrate the purpose, and value, of N.T. baptism should ponder well these words of the inspired apostle. Peter links the two words "Water" and "Saved" and indicates that just as water saved Noah, just as certainly does baptism save men today: "**The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us.**" We all encounter, from time to time, those who, with a Bible in their hands, are quite prepared to assert that baptism "is not necessary for salvation" and to declare that baptism is simply an option to be taken up or left alone. *The apostle Peter shared no such dangerous and erroneous notion.*

While there may be many 'theologians' who cannot accept the Biblical account of the flood, there are very few, if any, *Bible Commentators* who do not accept the fact, and who also accept Peter's teaching on baptism? I could fill this magazine with examples of the same, but, in the interests of space, will give two at random. The first is from **James Mcknight**, in his *Apostolic Epistles* and he says, "building the ark, and entering into it, Noah shewed a strong faith in the promise of God, concerning his preservation by the very water which was to destroy the antediluvians for their sins, so, by giving ourselves to be buried in the waters of baptism, we show a like faith in God's promise, that though we die and are buried (Rom. 6) he will save us from death, the punishment of sin, by raising us from the dead on the last day."

The second quotation is from **Calvin**. He said, ". . . the design of this case is to shew that we ought not to be led away, by wicked examples, from the fear of God, and the right way of salvation, and to mix with the world. This is made evident in baptism, in which we are buried with Christ, so that being dead to the world, and to the flesh, we may live to God. On this account he (Peter) says that our baptism is an antitype (**Antitupon**) to the baptism of Noah . . . As Noah there obtained life through death, when in the ark, he was enclosed not otherwise than as it were in the grave, and when the whole world perished, he was preserved together with his small family; so at this day the death which it sets forth in baptism, is to us an entrance into life, nor can salvation be hoped for, except we be separated from the world. (From Calvin's Commentary on 1 Peter 3:21).

A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

Before moving on to the final (summing up) paragraph, mention should be made of Peter's explanatory words on the baptism he had in mind. He said that the purpose of

baptism was not the "putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God," or as it is rendered in the R.S.V. "not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience . . ." Peter is writing to Jews who knew that immersions under the law were always for the ceremonial cleansing of the body, and from defilement. The Jews were constantly engaged in ceremonial washings because of defilement from dead bodies, brushing against certain buildings or classes of people, and Peter has to make plain that Christ's baptism is not just another addition to these regular washings. Peter also means that there is no inherent value in the actual water in baptism: rather it is the **obedience to God** that counts. When Naaman the leper was told to dip seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings 5) his leprosy left him only **after** he had **obeyed**: i.e. there was no special mineral in the water. Once God had instructed Naaman to dip *seven* times in the *Jordan* Naaman could have been cured in no other way; and in no other river and under no other circumstances. Similarly, strict obedience is the important element in baptism. With regard to "**the appeal for a clear conscience**" it is evident that those, in N.T. times having all their sins washed away in baptism, had every reason to enjoy a clear conscience, and many "**went on their way rejoicing**." Indeed, when a sinner is convicted of sin, and learns that Jesus requires him to be immersed, he will certainly have no easy conscience until he has obeyed. [It should appear obvious to most Bible students that if Peter was afraid that baptism might be confused with a bath in water to remove dirt from the body; he could not have equated baptism with 'sprinkling.' Clearly sprinkling of a few droplets of water on the head could never be regarded as the means of washing dirt from the body, and so, the baptism to which Peter refers *could never involve 'sprinkling'*].

CONCLUSION

Noah's Ark has sometimes been likened to the Church, and certainly there may be some similarities. **One builder**: Noah. Likewise Jesus, who said, "I will build My Church." **One material**: gopher wood. The Church is made of "Living stones." The ark contained **one family**. The Church is the family of God; children of one Heavenly Father and thus brothers and sisters. The ark had **one source of light**: one window. The Church has the Bible: the entrance of Thy words giveth light. The ark had **one entrance door** and so has the Church. Jesus said, "I am the way: I am the door: no man cometh unto the Father but through Me." There may be other similarities. Certainly this analogy that Peter draws (between the water of the flood and baptism) would seem to be another. "The like figure" whereunto baptism doth also now save us. This was not some fanciful product of Peter's imagination, of course, but was an *inspired utterance of the Holy Spirit*, and one borne out by many other scriptures. Jesus Himself, before ascending into heaven, charged His apostles that they should, "**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised will be saved.**" As has already been mentioned, Noah was not saved by water only, but by God's grace and mercy; by the ark; by his faith and by his own righteousness. This however, does not weaken in the slightest degree that he was also most certainly saved by water. Likewise, Christians are saved by God's grace; by His mercy; by their own faith and by their own works, but again, this does not weaken in the slightest degree the fact that they are also saved by baptism. Jesus, in the quotations above, also linked baptism with salvation. He said, "**He that believeth AND IS BAPTISED shall be**

SAVED." Do we hear Him?

In the flood, **the same water** separated those destroyed from those saved. Indeed **the same water** of the Red Sea saved the Israelites but destroyed the Egyptians. Similarly the waters of baptism will **separate** mankind into two groups. Those who balk at the bath of immersion will ever be separated from those who, in faith, have welcomed it. The baptismal bath separates those **'born of water'** from those still unborn; it separates those who have **'translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son'** from those not so translated; it separates those who have **'risen to walk in newness of life'** from those who have not yet agreed to be buried; it separates those **'who have washed away their sins'** from those who have not, as yet, had their sins washed away; it separates those who have **the interrogation of a good conscience towards God** from those who cannot have a good conscience on the matter. Even Saul, who was later to become the apostle Paul, was instructed to **". . . arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"** (Acts 22:16). If baptism does not save us, then Noah and family were not saved in the ark.

I do hope that any reading this article, who may presently be of the view that baptism is some unimportant religious appendage, or even a frivolity, will think seriously again, and study deeply and humbly the words of the apostle Peter. May they be like Naaman, who, with the encouragement of some true friends, overcame natural antagonism to the words of God's prophet, and eventually went willingly and dipped himself in conformity to God's word, emerged pure and clean. May they not, like the Pharisees and lawyers, **'reject the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of Him'** (If this was said of those who refused John's baptism, what shall befall those who reject the baptism of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ). Another baptism is yet to come - the baptism of fire. We may deride the baptism in water but we shall not sidestep the baptism of fire. Let us urgently embrace the baptism in water so that we may surely escape the baptism of fire. Let us be born of water as well as the Spirit. Let us be washed in the bath of regeneration that we might truly rise to walk in newness of life. **"Noah was saved by water"** says Peter: and this is a true likeness of how baptism doth also now save us.

EDITOR.

THE BIBLE (Part 7)

The Bible is God's revelation to mankind. It is perfect. However, it has to be interpreted. Revelation is what God has said; interpretation is what we think God meant by what He said. Interpretation, being human, is imperfect in its approach to revelation. W. Carl Ketcherside has written: **"Our ability to correctly interpret or understand the will of God, or anything else, is dependent upon many factors. All that which has previously been unknown can be understood only in the light of the known, and this is contingent upon background, culture, education, early training, and other circumstances. So God's revelation is infallible, but our interpretation is not. It is for this reason that God has finished His revelation, but man does not finish his attempt at interpretation, the striving for correct understanding."**

I hold the view that God wrote to reveal what was previously unknown. In other words, He took a mystery (that which was hidden) and made a revelation out of it.

Sadly, I know too many so-called theologians who have taken God's revelation and made a mystery out of it. Paul wrote: "But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ears heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9,10). This passage teaches us that man can learn by seeing, hearing or using rational powers. But whatever he needs to know for his wellbeing, above and beyond his ability to discover, God must reveal to him.

A BOOK TO BE STUDIED

Here is a simple statement: a book presupposed a reader. The Bible, therefore, has to be read and studied like all other books. I would go further: it has to be read and studied above all other books because it is the word of God. No other book in the world compares with the Bible. Someone once wrote: "The Bible is a book not fearful of examination; it fears not the criticism of its contents, nor investigation into its sources because it is of God and of God thus eternal." I also copied out these words in one of my notebooks: "The Bible is a book which will not yield up its riches and sweetness except to him who is a diligent and faithful and earnest student. It is rightfully said that all great works demand long and patient and persevering study."

I read books all the time. As I read, I try to interpret the writer's thoughts. I am aware that not everything written should be taken literally. There is literal language and there is figurative language. I am reminded here of words by C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity*: "There is no need to be worried by facetious people who try to make the Christian hope of 'Heaven' ridiculous by saying they do not want 'to spend eternity playing harps.' The answer to such people is that if they cannot understand books written for grown-ups, they should not talk about them. All the scriptural imagery (harps, crowns, gold, etc.) is, of course, a merely symbolic attempt to express the inexpressible. Musical instruments are mentioned because for many people (not all) music is the thing known in the present life which most strongly suggests ecstasy and infinity. Crowns are mentioned to suggest the fact that those who are united with God to eternity share His splendour and power and joy. Gold is mentioned to suggest the timelessness of Heaven (gold does not rust) and the preciousness of it. People who take these symbols literally might as well think that when Christ told us to be like doves, He meant that we were to lay eggs."

RULES OF INTERPRETATION

Are there rules for interpretation? Indeed there are. Alexander Campbell has detailed these for us.

Rule 1 - On opening any book in the Sacred Scriptures, consider first the historical circumstances of the book. These are the order, the title, the author, the date, the place and the occasion of it.

Rule 2 - In examining the contents of any book, as respects precepts, promises, exhortations, etc., observe who it is that speaks, and under what dispensation he officiates. Is a Patriarch, a Jew, or a Christian? Consider all the persons addressed - their prejudices, characters, and religious relations. Are they Jews or Christians - believers or unbelievers - approved or disapproved?

Rule 3 - To understand the meaning of what is commanded, promised, taught, etc., the same philological principles, deduced from the nature of language, or the same laws

of interpretation which are applied to the language of other books, are to be applied to the language of the Bible.

Rule 4 - Common usage, which can only be ascertained by testimony, must always decide the meaning of any word which has but one signification; but when words have, according to the testimony - (i.e. the Dictionary) - more meanings than one, whether literal or figurative, the scope, the context, or parallel passages must decide the meaning; for if common usage, the design of the writer, the context, and parallel passages fail, there can be no certainty in the interpretation of language.

Rule 5 - In all tropological (ad.L. *tropus* figure of speech, ad. Gr. *tropos* turn. A figure of speech which consists in the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it) language, ascertain the point of resemblance and judge of the nature of the trope, and its kind, from the point of resemblance.

Rule 6 - In the interpretation of symbols, types, allegories and parables, this rule is supreme. Ascertain the point to be illustrated; for comparison is never to be extended beyond that point - to all the attributes, qualities, or circumstances of the symbol, type, allegory or parable.

Rule 7 - For the salutary and sanctifying intelligence of the oracles of God, the following rule is indispensable: We must come within the understanding distance . . . There is a distance which is properly called the speaking distance, or the hearing distance, beyond which the voice reaches not, and the ear hears not. To hear another, we must come within that circle which the voice audibly fills . . . Now we may with propriety say, that as respects God, there is an understanding distance. All beyond that distance cannot understand God; all within it can easily understand Him in all matters of piety and morality. God Himself is the centre of that circle and humility is its circumference."

SOME ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

I conclude with some additional statements, which are quoted by way of emphasis. "Truth always accords with truth. Apparent discrepancies can be harmonised when all the facts are known." "In doubtful cases, always give the preference to that interpretation of a passage, which is most simple, plain and natural." "He, then, that would interpret the oracles of God to the salvation of his soul, must approach this volume (the Bible) with the humility and docility of a child and meditate upon it day and night. Like Mary, he must sit at his Master's feet and listen to the words which fall from His lips. To such a one there is an assurance of understanding, a certainty of knowledge, to which the main letters alone never attained and which the mere critic never felt" (Campbell). "All words and sentences should be taken and construed literally unless this would imply some absurdity or incongruity, or involve a meaning which is inconsistent with the nature of the subject or the plain and obvious meaning of other portions of scripture" (Robert Milligan). "A certain knowledge of Scripture depends only upon a knowledge of its words" (Martin Luther). "Exegesis: (1) What did the author or speaker mean by what he said? (2) What did his original hearers or readers understand by what he said? Exegesis is thus narrower than exposition. Exposition considers these questions, but considers a further question: What do these words mean for us today?" (F.F. Bruce). "Always remember the five P's, which are Person, People, Period, Place and Purpose" (Tom Nisbet).

IAN S. DAVIDSON, Motherwell.

YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOUR

Most of my life I have had a tendency to ridicule the expression, "Accept Jesus as your personal Saviour." Probably I did it because, in the first place it is not a scriptural expression, and it has long been my conviction that one of the best ways to express a scriptural thought is to put it in scriptural language, whenever possible. However, it is my observation that most of us who think of ourselves as "sound" or "conservative" gospel preachers, though we give lip service to the above principle, are frequent, yea, constant, - in our expressing what we claim are scriptural ideas in our own words. In fact, practically all sermons, even those studded with scripture as in days of yore, are an effort to express God's ideas and words in human language - paraphrase, explanation, etc.

The second reason I ridiculed the expression, "Accept Jesus as your personal Saviour" is that, inasmuch as it was not a biblical expression and had therefore no stable referent, no one could be sure what the one who was using it meant. For example, does "accept" mean "intellectually accept" "emotionally accept" "verbally accept" or "practically accept." When a person asks a girl, "Will you accept me as your husband?" and she says "Yes!" has she? If she has is he her husband? If she has not, has she lied? Furthermore, does the person mean "accept the fact that Jesus *has* saved you" that "Jesus *can* save you" or that "Jesus *will* save you?" In what way is "**personal**" used? Does it refer to your person, or to the person of Christ? Could you accept Him as an impersonal Saviour? If you did would that differ from being personally saved? I have my own personal wife. That means she belongs to me, and not to you. If I have not my own personal Saviour does that mean he belongs to me, and not to you? If not, what does it mean?

Or perhaps the person who uses the expression "personal Saviour" is using the word "personal" to refer to the fact that Saviour is a person, not just a ritual. His act of dying for me was a *personal* act - not just something like an offering of a lamb on an altar.

NO CLEAR-CUT IDEA

We personally have no doubt that a good number of those who use the expression have no clear-cut idea of exactly what they mean by it. But it sounds as if it should mean something good, so it is used.

But, having ridiculed the expression for almost half a century, it is my firm conviction, and always has been as far back as I can remember, that one should do what the expression says, if he knows what he is doing.

For example, "**accept**" means "intellectually be aware of the facts of the gospel (believe), emotionally respond to the message of the gospel (repent), verbally express acceptance of the Lordship of Christ (confess), and practically accept the salvation He offers by being united with Him in the likeness of His death (be baptised for remission of sins)."

"**Jesus**" means the only begotten, virgin-born, crucified and resurrected historically valid Son of God, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, presently King of kings, and Lord of lords, ruling and reigning over His people. If "Jesus" means some mythological, non-historical, unreal, imaginative, impersonal, subjective experience, then you have no Saviour.

"**Personal**" means to me that I need to conceive of Him as a real personal being - a

flesh and blood man, who was the divine Son of God actually, personally went to the cross because He has a personal concern for me - not merely an abstract wish that everyone might be nice and be saved. It is my opinion that a large number of those connected with the Church of our Lord do not feel that proper personal relationship with Him. He is conceived of as a sort of impersonal (that does not mean non-person) Ruler who laid out some regulations rather than a loving personal Saviour.

HOW 'PERSONAL' IS YOUR SAVIOUR?

It is my further conviction that instead of merely ridiculing denominational expressions which may have no meaning, or a "fuzzy" meaning, or a variety of meanings, if we can take the living word of God, express it, and expound upon it in positive, clear-cut, meaningful expressions, we will do more good. I still remember an expression I read many years ago by one of our smart (maybe brilliant) liberal (maybe modernistic) preachers: "It is not the virgin birth of Christ that made His message relevant, but His virgin life." If you were able to figure out what it meant, it might have been worth something - which is doubtful. After talking with him for some hours, I eventually concluded that he meant, "It does not really matter whether you believe what the Bible says about the virgin birth of Christ, if you believe that He lived a pure and holy life, you can be saved." If he had said that in the first place, even my simple mind could have grasped and rejected it immediately.

At any rate, if you have "accepted" Jesus, you need to know for sure exactly what you have done. *What* "Jesus" you have accepted, whether you, personally have accepted Him, or whether you have impersonally accepted Him, and whether you have accepted Him, personally, or whether He is merely an impersonal sort of "story-book" figure. I recognise that Napoleon Buonaparte was a person, but I do not *feel* quite as personal about him as I do my next door neighbour. How do you feel about Jesus? And how would you act if he were personally to stand by your chair, ask you to be baptised, or to follow Him and be a fisher of men? Does the fact that we have so few fishers of men stem from the fact that we did not think of Him personally inviting us? Would you turn down a personal invitation of your Saviour to be present at services in His honour, Sunday?

T. P. BROWN.

This article is inserted in the absence of Question Box

DEMAS

Oh, if we could travel one year with the apostle Paul; how strong we would be. He could point out our weaknesses, correct our slight errings, answer all our questions, and help us plot a course of life. Yet what do we find?

"Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you" (Col. 4:14).

"Ephraim, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, saluteth thee; and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers" (Phil 23,24).

"Give diligence to come shortly unto me for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:9,10).

How could it happen? What dark shadows lurk in a man's soul to cause him to fall violently, even while he associates with an earthen vessel that was such a great treasury of God's truth? What sweet melodious chords of the heart may Satan strum with the hand of a master, to so lure Demas as a dumb brute to the inevitable slaughter? Besides the love of the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17), the call of the wild, what may cause us to lose our soul? The drift of the questions, it is the design of this article to answer,

ANSWER NUMBER ONE

Contemplate first, the damnable notion that we are more religious than we actually are. Paul charges each man, "**not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think**" (Rom. 12:3), and that he "**that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall**" (1 Cor. 10:12).

We suppose we hate sin, know truth, and are fully able to resist any onslaught. Yet we scarcely know what we are up against. Our enemy is dreadful. He is subtle (Gen. 3:1), a wicked enemy (Matt. 13:9; Matt. 13:39), a murderer of the worst type (Jn. 8:44), a liar (Jn. 8:44), a prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; Jn. 14:30), full of devices (2 Cor. 2:11), a god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), and he hungrily seeks to devour all (1 Pet. 5:8,9).

Now is not the time to suppose we are all right, assume we are strong, and let our guard down. How many nations have crumbled, how many armies destroyed, and how many Christian soldiers were destined to hell, because the troops were green, unwary, unknowing, unarmed and unwatchful?!

If we run a race, let us not run uncertainly, but as if only one can get the prize (1 Cor. 9:24,26). If we fight in the ring, let us not waste a moment beating the air (1 Cor. 9:26). If we face our own body, let us bruise it piteously, and lead it about as a prisoner of war (1 Cor. 9:27). If we enlist as a soldier, let us disentangle ourselves from the world (2 Tim. 3:4), and suffer hardship (2 Tim. 2:3). If we approach the hour of battle, let us put on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:11). If we join in battle; "**Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong**" (1 Cor. 16:13). I know of no quicker way to die, than to make the dreadful assumption that we are more religious than we are. Regarding Satan and eternal damnation, nothing we have witnessed in the Christian life has given me grounds to be lax and careless. Our enemy is a horrible opponent, utterly experienced, and he knows each of us as a book. Take care! Take care! Or, fallen, be forever ashamed.

ANSWER NUMBER TWO

Consider, too, what a dreadful effect the mistaking of good feelings for real religion has on our lives. What an awesome gap there is between feeling and acting.

What do people think when they amble down the broad way through the wide gate (Matt. 7:13). I visualise them pausing, looking sincerely back, vowing that tomorrow they will make changes. They shuffle along, say noble things to each other, finding courage through the sheer number of company they have.

Notice how Balaam revered God in his speech: "**If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God to do less or more . . .**" (Num. 22:18). What a grand wish he had: "**Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his**" (Num.23:10). But he died the death of an enemy of God (Num. 31:8). Did he make the tragic mistake of mistaking good feelings for good deeds?

Certainly an important verse is " Corinthians 13:5.

"Try your own selves, whether ye are in faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless ye indeed be reprobate."

Yes, let us love God, feel good intentions and fine notions. But let us always have the custom of trying ourselves by specific works. Good feelings are never the down payment nor the proof of real religion.

ANSWER NUMBER THREE

We must never be guiled by past devotion, as if one good deed is the pledge of another. Thinking that past accomplishments take care of future requirements is certainly a cause of unfaithfulness. As Yogi Bear says of a baseball game, "It ain't over till it's over."

How grand it is to be of the house of Christ. But the Holy Spirit says, "**whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end**" (Heb. 3:6). And again he says, "**for are we become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end**" (Heb. 3:14).

Saul was head and shoulders above the people of Israel (1 Sam. 9:2). How humble he was before Samuel. He did not feel worthy to be king, since he came from such a small tribe and tiny family (1 Sam. 9:21). Our hearts leap with joy at his faith and decisiveness in stopping the arrogant, cruel Nahash of the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11). But it is all downhill from there. His past devotion did not prevent his ignoble end (1 Sam. 15ff).

Remember the seed that fell on the rock (Lk. 8:13). They receive the word with joy, but in time of temptation fall away. One good deed is not the pledge of another.

What else might the Bible say of Demas? Like the dreadful, ominous toll of a funeral bell, we hear over and over, "**he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear**" (Matt.11:15; 13:9; 13:43).

J. MOFFIT.

LET US GO ON TO PERFECTION

(Heb. 6:1)

From time to time we sing a prayer titled "Higher Ground" and this hymn expresses the desire that we do not want to stay "where doubts arise and fears dismay." Our Hebrew text endorses that principle of not wanting to stay in a condition where we must continually go back over the basic teachings, never really being sure of what we were taught, as if we were to remain in kindergarten all our Spiritual lives.

The "*perfection*" we must all aim for is a faith which is so strong and perfect that even if we might sin, all doubt and fear is removed and allows us to continue in full confidence of the love and forgiveness of our Lord, and the unshakeable knowledge that if we are faithful (full of faith) and have no fear of confessing our sins, "**that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins**" (1 John 1:9).

Some brethren have not yet attained perfection of their faith and are continually living in a cloud of doubt, and believe that they cannot know for sure. Those who seem to prefer to flounder around, emphasising that they cannot understand, are those

brethren who are to be treated with compassion, patience, kindness and love, coupled together with the hope that they will even yet perfect their faith.

The lesson in Hebrew is not that we will become a perfect people who have no sin; this unique and singular characteristic is found only in Jesus Christ our Lord. Rather we are to become a people who have perfected our faith to a point which eliminates all possibility of Satan planting doubts concerning the power of God, and the ability of His promise that the blood of Christ washes away all sin. We will then live in full and complete assurance of eternal life. (Heb. 10:22).

Now the perfection of our faith is seen in one other aspect of its effect on our lives. This is clearly demonstrated by **what we do**. This principle is illustrated by the passage in James which tells us that "**faith without works is dead**" (James 2:26).

Those whose faith is limited to mere words without works are living dead men.

God has given us everything that is necessary to perfect our faith in order that we may fulfil it's divine purpose, which is to perform good works. This is revealed to us in 2 Tim. 3:16,17.

THE WAVERING OF A DOUBLE-MINDED MAN

Satan's flaming arrows are frustrated and are of no effect when we use the perfect shield of faith referred to in Ephs. 6:16 (arrows which could cause us doubt).

Failure to attain the perfection of our faith opens wide the door to disbelief. Disbelief, if allowed to grow, (James 1:14,15) will end in our falling away through a complete rejection of the truth: and a full belief in the lies put forward by Satan (2 Thess. 2:10,11). This conflict is continual as long as we entertain the slightest doubt about the word of God. Jesus made this clear when He emphasised that there is only one way to positively know the truth (John 8:31,32) we must "continue" or "hold" to His teaching.

Regarding those who love to excuse themselves by saying that they cannot understand or that they cannot arrive at a conclusion, Jesus had this to say: "**Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My word**" K.J.V., or as the N.I.V. puts it, "**Why is My language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say.**" *Who is it that dulls our hearing today?*

Jesus has given us hope for a clear understanding and way by which we can attain it (but even this depends on our faith - our belief in what He says). James 1:5-7 reads: "**If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.**"

Dear brethren, let us not go back to the kindergarten, or grade-one instructions, about salvation, but "press on the upward way" to *the perfection of our faith*, applying ourselves at every opportunity to the prayerful study of the word, so that we too can be as Paul was (Phil. 3:12-15) *pressing for the mark*, "**Reaching forth unto those things which are before.**"

G. SILLMAN,
P.O. Box 327,
Chilliwack, B.C.,
Canada.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Sept 1	Isaiah 53	Acts 8:26-40
Sept 8	1 Chron. 17:16 to 18:6	Acts 9:1-22
Sept 15	2 Kings 4:8-37	Acts 9:23-43
Sept 22	Leviticus 11:1-25	Acts 10:1-23
Sept 29	Genesis 12:1-9	Acts 10:24-48

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch should be carefully studied by all. I always like to read this encounter between Philip and the chancellor of Queen Candace. It is one of the most memorable in the Bible. There are so many things to consider in the passage (8:26-40). For example, the role of the angel and the Spirit; the need of the human instrument (Philip) to take the gospel to the great man; the distance the eunuch was willing to travel to worship God; the ability of Philip to lead the eunuch to Jesus by way of the actual passage of Scripture he was reading (Isaiah 53); the importance of answering the question: "Of whom speaks the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?"; the necessity of baptism in converting a sinner to God; the fact that Philip must have mentioned baptism in his message because of the eunuch's question: "See, here is water: what hinders me to be baptised?"; the need to believe and confess that Christ Jesus is the Son of the Living God; the going down into the water by both clearly revealing that baptism involves immersion; and the joy that can result from doing exactly as God has commanded.

I often wonder what the eunuch did on his return to Ethiopia. For example, did he tell Queen Candace what had happened to him on the journey home? Did he preach the gospel to many others

in the court? What sort of congregation did he meet with? Did he remain faithful unto death? We shall never know the answers to these questions this side of heaven.

The question is often asked: "Is an inquirer now as dependent upon the presence of a human teacher as was the eunuch?" Alexander Brown has written: "No; for a modern inquirer has in his possession not only Philip's teaching to the eunuch, and to the Samaritans, but Peter's to the Jews, and Cornelius, and Paul's to the jailor, and to others. Inquirers in the days of the apostles had no New Testament from which they could learn what the apostles of Christ taught."

SAUL'S CONVERSION

The *importance* of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus can be seen in the fact that it is detailed on three separate occasions in the book of Acts (chapters 9, 22 and 26). Saul (later Paul) is a very special man in the history of Christianity. His apostleship was critical to the growth of the early Church, especially amongst the Gentiles. Consider what some commentators have said of him: "In order that Christianity might go out to all the world a unique person was necessary - and Paul was that person . . . Here indeed was the man prepared by God to be the bridge between two worlds (Jewish world and Greek world), and to be the bridge by which the Gentiles might come to God" (William Barclay). "This is the man whose career will best enable us to understand the dawn of Christianity upon the darkness alike of Jew and Gentile; the man who loosed Christianity from the cerements of Judaism, and inspired the world Paganism with joy and hope" (Frederic W. Farrar). "He was a great genius and a fine writer" (Adam Clarke). "It is dif-

difficult to gather into one picture the many features of his versatile character. He was by nature intensely religious and his religion controlled his whole being. This was true of him even as a Jew, and much more so after his conversion. Keenly intellectual, he grasped truth at its full value and logically wrought out its implications" (John D. Davies). "He always did the thing he should have done, and said just the thing he should have said. This indicated eminent mental harmony and exquisite mental action. We never feel, when studying Paul, that he should have done this or that, or should have acted thus or so. We never have an improvement to suggest, either upon matter or manner. This points to a mind of astonishing perfections; and such a mind was Paul's" (Moses E. Lard).

We read of another human instrument that brought the gospel to Saul - Ananias. God told Ananias that Saul was to be His chosen instrument **"to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel"** (9:15b). Saul responded to what Ananias told him in Damascus and was saved by his obedience to the gospel call. Just as the Ethiopian eunuch was baptised **"for the remission of sins"** (Acts 2:38), so also was Saul (18). All this talk of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus is in error. Yes, the events on this road were important, but he entered the Lord's true and narrow road in Damascus itself.

Saul immediately began to preach Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus that He was the Son of God (20). Opposition resulted. In fact, the Jews took counsel to kill him (23). The arch-persecutor had now become one of the persecuted. Life was never to be the same for Saul again. In the early days he

owed a great deal to faithful disciples such as Barnabas (27). Saul's conversion helped all the churches. I like verse 31: **"Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit were multiplied."**

THE APOSTLE PETER

Luke once again turns his attention to the work of the apostle Peter. Paul features strongly later on in this great book. Peter could perform miracles. He healed Aeneas (33-35) and he raised Dorcas from the dead (36-42). Here was proof positive that Peter was a true servant of the Lord. What resulted from these miracles? **"And all that dwelt at Lydda (Lod in the O.T.) and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord"** (35). **"And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord"** (42). Hitherto, Peter's labours were with his fellow Jews. Now things were about to change. He was about to use the other key and open the door of the kingdom to Gentiles (Matthew 16:19).

CORNELIUS AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

The first gospel message to Gentiles was delivered by the apostle Peter to one Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and his household. (It is interesting to note that all the centurions who appear in the New Testament Scriptures make a favourable impression.) Cornelius was living in Caesarea at the time, a mainly Gentile city. Both Peter and Cornelius received a vision from God prior to their encounter.

Cornelius was one of those Gentiles classed as "God-fearers." They were attracted by the monotheism, the worship and ethical standards of Judaism. We read this of Cornelius: "A

devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (10:2). I have not read much better in all the Scriptures. Nevertheless, he needed Jesus to save him, as we all do.

What was the lesson for Peter in the vision he received? We read: "And he (Peter) said unto them, You know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (28). Peter's "sermon" on this occasion (34-43) is worthy of deep analysis. His theme is the same as previous addresses: Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

Why did the Holy Spirit miraculously fall on those who heard the word prior to their being baptised in water in the name of the Lord unto the remission of their sins? The true explanation of this unusual circumstance is found in the next chapter. It was done "to remove from the minds of his (Peter's) Jewish companions any doubt which they might still entertain as to the propriety of baptising Gentiles . . . Unquestionably, then, this was its purpose; and herein we find the reason why no such event as this ever occurred afterward, or is now expected; for when it was once demonstrated that uncircumcised Gentiles might be baptised, the question was settled forever, and needed not to be settled again" (J.W. McGarvey).

IAN S. DAVIDSON,
Motherwell.

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. What City had the original name of Luz?

2. He was the captain of the host of the king of Syria.
3. This mountain was also called Sirion and Shenir.
4. What type of wood was used to build the ark?
5. He was the grandson of Hezekiah and was slain at the battle of Megiddo.
6. The brother of Joseph whose mother died when he was born.
7. He was the son of Alphaeus.
8. 470 soldiers escorted Paul on his arrest. What kind of soldiers were included?
9. Where did Paul preach by a river side?
10. To whom did Philip have to say: "Your money perish with you?"

COMING EVENTS

PETERHEAD

Special Weekend

We shall have the services of

Bro. Dwight Eppler, USA

on

SATURDAY, 21st SEPTEMBER,

7.00 pm

and

SUNDAY, 22nd SEPTEMBER,

10.00am & 11.00am

& 6.00 pm

GHANA APPEAL

Our brethren in Ghana evangelise well with whatever resources they have but this has been much more effective because of your donations, as is help for those in severe need. Along with them we thank you for your help in these matters.

Wherever possible we believe it is better to help brethren support themselves.

Irrigation of crops with a bucket of water is obviously inefficient and a farmer has requested hand spraying equipment from a container strapped to his back to do this more effectively. Nets and other fishing equipment are needed by two fishermen in inland waters. The lake is wide and a canoe takes two and a half hours to cross it so it is important to have a reliable craft. They are now in need of new canoes and this is especially important as there is danger from crocodiles at certain times of the year. As we have mentioned before, rain in Ghana is extremely heavy and shelter is needed for worship meetings. Buildings of mud bricks are permitted in more remote areas and these endure well provided the walls are cement rendered, otherwise they are eroded by rain. The top surfaces are protected by the roof. Another new building is now in need of this treatment, as well as requiring a concrete floor, windows and a door. As evangelism proceeds and new congregations are established this need continues.

Those wishing to help please make cheques payable to:-

Dennyloanhead Church of Christ
Ghana Fund, and send to the Treasurer:
Mrs. Janet Macdonald,

12 Charles Drive,
Larbert, Falkirk,
Stirlingshire.
FK5 3HB
Telephone: 01324 562480

EVALUATION

Poverty asked, "Will it cost too much?"
Mammon asked, "Will it pay?"
And Scholarship, "Is the measure wise
And are you sure of the way?"
Statesmanship, "Can we find the time
to finish before the night?"
But when the Seeker had heard them all
He only asked "Is it right?"

- ANSWERS
1. Bethel (Judges 1:23).
 2. Naaman (2 Kings 5:1).
 3. Hermon (Deuteronomy 3:9).
 4. Gopher wood (Genesis 6:14).
 5. Josiah (2 Kings 23:29,30).
 6. Benjamin (Genesis 35:16-18).
 7. James (Mark 3:18).
 8. Horsemen and spearmen (Acts 23:23).
 9. Philipp (Acts 16:12,13).
 10. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9 & 18-20).

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JOHN K. KNELLER, 4 Glassel Park Road, Longniddry, East Lothian. EH32 0NY.

E-mail: john@kkneller.freeserve.co.uk

Telephone: (01875) 853212 to whom change of address should be sent.

EDITOR: JAMES R. GARDINER, 70 Avon Street, Motherwell, Lanarkshire,
Scotland. ML1 3AB. Telephone: (01698) 264064