

The **SCRIPTURE STANDARD**

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

VOL. 49. No.2

FEBRUARY 1981

LOT'S WIFE

In the latter portion of Chap. 17 of Luke's gospel, Jesus makes reference to His final coming and gives His disciples some idea of the suddenness with which His final advent will be characterised. The world, when Jesus comes, will be engrossed in its normal cares and activities — eating and drinking; marrying and giving in marriage; buying and selling; planting and building. He will come as suddenly and unexpectedly as a thief in the night. Jesus illustrated the point by making reference to world in Noah's day — how they carried on regardless in their evil ways until the very moment the flood came and swept them all away: or the days of Lot when the unsuspecting and uncaring wicked citizenry of Sodom perished in the rain of fire and brimstone sent down by God. It would appear that while Jesus recalled to His disciples that fearful and terrible day when Sodom perished that He considered it opportune to issue to them (and to us) that short but pointed warning contained in V. 32, "Remember Lot's wife." Jesus never spoke in vain and doubtless there are vital and needful lessons contained in those three small words — Remember Lot's wife.

The incident concerning Lot's wife is briefly recorded for us in the Genesis 19. Her name is not given — she is merely referred to as Lot's wife and was living with Lot and their family in Sodom where they were, apparently, prominent citizens. V.13 states, "But the men of Sodom were wicked sinners before God exceedingly." Because of this wickedness God decreed the destruction of the City and its inhabitants. However, because Lot was a just man God decided to spare him and his family from the impending holocaust. Accordingly two angels were sent to warn Lot of what was to come and to urge him to leave the city with all speed. Lot hurried to inform his sons-in-law of the matter but they would not believe him. When the fateful morning dawned the two angels again made haste to Lot saying, "Arise, take thy wife and two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Lot still hesitated and so the angels took Lot and his family by the hands and brought them out of the city in mercy. They were told to flee for their very lives and, "... to look not behind thee neither stay thou in all the plain." With their departure came the fire and brimstone. For some reason or other Lot's wife failed to heed the admonition of the angels not to look back as she fled from the city and V.26 says, in a very simple and matter-of-fact manner, "But his wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt."

There can be little doubt that it was this grim incident to which Jesus made reference when He said, "Remember Lot's wife" and such incidents are, of course, intended for our learning and admonition. Paul says, (1stCor.10) when referring to such examples of God's retribution on disobedient man, "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth beware lest he fall."

Perhaps the lesson which immediately springs to mind in this incident involving Lot's wife is that here we have clear example of God's Goodness and Severity. Some religious bodies spend much of their time speaking of the Love and Goodness of God and one could gain the impression from them that God, being a God of Love, will tolerate any kind of treatment from the subject of His love — man. But this impression is far from the truth. God's Goodness and mercy we see displayed in the persistence and patience He exercised in rescuing Lot and his family from the destruction. God's Severity we see manifested in the fact that after having rescued Lot's wife from destruction in the city He destroyed her because of her disobedience while being rescued. She was instructed not to look back — she disobeyed and was turned into a pillar of salt. The Severity of God.

In applying the lesson to ourselves we can, perhaps, clearly see that God, (as He did in the case of Lot) has manifested great mercy to us and with great patience, and at great personal cost to Himself, God has rescued us from the impending destruction reserved for this unGodly world.

For God SO LOVED the world that He gave His only begotten Son. As God sent angels to Lot He has sent His Son and His Son's apostles into the world to urge us to save ourselves from this untoward generation. As He led Lot by the hand He has also guided us into all truth and has translated us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of His own Dear Son (Col.1:13). So then it is only because of God's Grace and Goodness that we occupy this favoured position — and are reckoned Sons of God and heirs with Christ Jesus. But, says Jesus, "Remember Lot's wife." There are sadly today, those of us who look back longingly at the fleshpots of Egypt. There are those who walk no more with us. Entering the race is no guarantee to obtaining the prize — but the runners must run lawfully, observing the rules, and must finish the course. The apostle Paul in Rom.11:22 exhorts us to "Behold therefore *the goodness and the severity of God.*" He makes the point to Gentile Christians that the fall of Israel is the blessing of the Gentiles but reminds us that although God has removed Israelite branches from the tree (because of their unbelief) and grafted Gentile branches in their place, God can just as easily reverse the process. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity: but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Gentiles should not boast, therefore, regarding their favoured position when compared with Israel for as Paul says, "If God spared not the natural branches (Israel), take heed that He spare not thee (the Gentiles)." V.21.

Another valuable lesson which may occur to us from the incident involving Lot's wife is that God requires our obedience no matter how peculiar, or strange, or insignificant we may regard His instructions to be. It is probable that Lot's wife did not attach much importance to the angel's instructions not to look back (clearly she didn't), and she probably thought that she was doing no harm. We might even think that it was a very natural thing for her to do, remembering that she had left friends and blood-relations back there in the city, and in the extreme agitation and anxiety of the occasion she was almost certain to steal a glance back to see if the fire had yet descended. She was not immoral; nor a drunkard; nor a liar, nor wicked. She did not openly denounce God. She failed however, to give due respect and atten

tion to a simple admonition of God's angel. In effect she simply neglected to heed the instructions given by God and perhaps regarded them as not too important. Much of the religious world today is inclined to regard much of God's word in a similar light and it is not uncommon to hear words like 'insignificant' and 'unimportant' being used in reference to holy scripture. May it be that we shall at all times endeavour to "Remember Lot's wife" and to "Behold to Goodness and Severity of God." May it also be that we shall have the strength and qualities of endurance whereby having put our hands to the plough we shall not be numbered amongst those who look back.

"For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." Hebrews 2:1.

— Editor.

EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING

(Ephesians 1:1-14)

Misers sometimes sit in their secluded treasure rooms and gleefully let their coins trickle through their fingers, delighting in the accumulation of treasure and in the gleam of each golden piece. In the same way, Christians may pore over the . . . first paragraph of Ephesians chapter one. No other place in the New Testament so displays the golden treasure of the Christian's heritage. For here, the apostle lists fourteen verses the spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ. In each verse a new treasure is listed. In each verse is the assertion that each of these golden blessings is "in Jesus Christ", or that he is the source of them.

For our world, impoverished as it is with barrenness and perversity (see the list in Ephesians 2), there is an enormous need for such riches and treasures as these:

(1) Saints who are faithful. Men set apart for God's purpose and loyal to their God-designed destiny. (2) Grace and peace. Unmerited favour on the basis of Christ's sacrifice, and the peace within that the world cannot understand.

(3) Every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Who can exhaust the inventory of EVERY flesh-denying, time-defying treasure. We can begin with freedom, justification, reconciliation, the perfect law of liberty, grace, mercy, love, fellowship, stewardship, trials, ministry, gifts, the delicious and sweet fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity, tolerance, self-control, faith, virtue, knowledge, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection . . . where does the list end? EVERY spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Who can imagine what will be included in that heavenly realm whose nature our minds cannot yet grasp . . . a world without sin, wrong, evil, pain or death?

(4) We are destined to be holy and blameless. By this gift of righteousness, even after our efforts have failed, we can be right before him.

(5) We are destined to be his sons. Can you imagine a rank or status higher than that? (6) Grace freely bestowed on us in the beloved. For us who have never . . . quite been able to achieve it, nobility of sonship has been counted as ours in Jesus Christ. (7) Forgiveness and redemption. Sins are removed so thoroughly as to be counted acquittal.

(8) Wisdom and insight. We are not dumb recipients of a magical impartation of holiness, but we understand and are thankfully aware of each treasure heaped upon us by him. (9) The mystery of his will, according to his purpose. Through his Spirit dwelling in us, we are made to share the insights and the purposes of God, secret from angels and patriarchs, but now unveiled to our understanding . . . Satan's downfall, the purifying of the earth, the inaugural banquet of the new heavens. (10) A plan to unite all things (heaven and earth) in him. The final resolution of every paradox, dilemma, quandary, frustration, inequity, injustice . . . when God shall be all in all, in perfect integration, with no more pieces out of place in the earthly puzzle.

(11) Him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will. For us who are so often defeated by "circumstances beyond our control", what liberation it is to know that our Master is not constrained nor dependent. (12) Destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. No hesitation or uncertainty about why we are here. what our identity is, or where we are bound: we are labelled for angelic choirs. (13) Sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. While we groan in travail that all these spiritual blessings are not yet fully operative in us, the stirrings of power, like the first tiny movements of foetus in the womb, give us full assurance that more power is growing in us, to issue forth in the new creature in Christ, without spot or blemish, because God has worked in us.

(14) The guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it. Whatever joys you have already known, or delights you have already tasted in Christ, be assured that the best is yet to come. It is not in this life only that we have hope. Our true commonwealth is eternal in the heavens, and as far beyond the quality of life as eternity is beyond time. What a heritage! Shall we, then, like the miser, sit in safe seclusion and let these golden treasures trickle through our spiritual fingers again and yet again? One student of the early church has said that the first motivation for evangelism that sped the gospel through the Roman empire was THANKSGIVING, "Every spiritual blessing" poured upon us by our Lord can only produce a wave of thankful sharing. No misers, we are stewards of the treasures of God, unto the praise of his Glory.

— Selected.

GLEANINGS

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

BE A CHRISTIAN

"It has a bad look when a courtier is too intimate with his king's enemies. Even small inconsistencies are dangerous. Little thorns make great blisters, little moths destroy fine garments, and little frivolities and little rogueries will rob religion of a thousand joys. O professor, too little separated from sinners, you know not what you lose by your conformity to the world. It cuts the tendons of your strength, and makes you creep where you ought to run. Then, for your own comfort's sake, and for the sake of your growth in grace, if you be a Christian, be a Christian, and be a marked and distant one."

C. H. Spurgeon.

THE WAY TO HAPPINESS

"The purpose of the Law of Jehovah is ever that of ensuring the prosperity, the happiness of man. It is framed in infinite wisdom, and inspired by perfect love. To rebel against it, therefore, is the uttermost folly, and the most definite wickedness. To obey it, is the true wisdom, and the one and only goodness . . . The law of Jehovah discovers to man the way of goodness, and so teaches him the way of happiness."

G.C.M.

LESS THAN THE LEAST

"I do not quarrel with Paul's language," said the old Puritan, "but I do dispute his right to push me out of my place. Less than the least is my place."

SOUND ADVICE

"If you your lips would keep from slips, five things observe with care — of whom you speak, to whom you speak, and how and when and where."

"If you your ears would save from jeers, these things keep meekly hid — myself and I, and mine and my, and how I do and did."

FIND REST AND CONTENTMENT

"I would therefore lead you to the fountain. Every other river has its seasons of drought. Every other spring runs dry. Other resources will fail us. They will not redeem their promise. They will aggravate the very thirst they profess to relieve. Let us take our thirst to the Eternal spring, and find rest and contentment and health in there abiding."

J. H. Jowett.

THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

"The teaching of Christ has been for eighteen centuries the leaven and the lever of society — the leaven to pervade, the lever to uplift. At first a handful of disciples in the humble homes of Palestine; then that handful flung by persecution broadcast over the surrounding countries, till from Jerusalem the gospel spread to Antioch and Rome and Alexandria and Constantinople. The cross of a crucified criminal at Calvary is the nucleus of a world's illumination and reformation! The fame of gospel triumphs spread beyond the fields of conflict, and as the lines of influence lengthened, and their circles reached round new centres of power and wickedness, in fear men cried out, "It is turning the world upside down!"

Arthur T. Pierson.

DO NOT ABUSE IT

"The principle is, to "use this world as not abusing it." Here Christianity stands between the worldly spirit and the narrow religious spirit. The worldly spirit says: "Time is short; take your fill: live while you can." The narrow religious spirit: "All the pleasure here is a snare and dangerous; keep out of it altogether." In opposition to this narrow spirit, Christianity says: "Use the world;" and in opposition to the worldly spirit: "Do not abuse it. All things are yours. Take them and use them; but never let them interfere with the higher life which you are called on to lead." "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth."

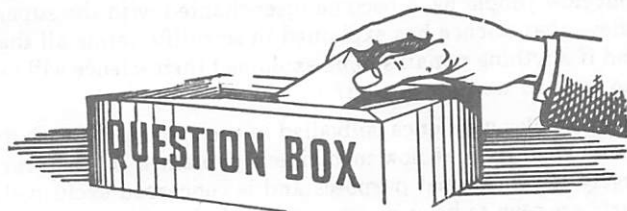
F. W. Robertson.

I WOULD AS SOON DEFEND A LION

One has said, "The Bible does not need to be defended; it needs to be taught." Joseph Parker was asked for the best reply to attacks upon the Bible. "Circulation!" was the answer. C. H. Spurgeon, upon being asked if he could defend the Bible, replied: "Defend it! I would as soon defend a lion. Let it out — it can defend itself."

B.T.I.

Selected by Leonard Morgan



 Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

"Could you please tell me what an Atheist is? My friend and I have discussed this and I think I know what is meant, but his views and mine do not agree. Would you please help?"

This question implies one of the most fundamental questions in the human experience, namely, "Is there a God." Either man regards himself as the supreme being in the universe or he accepts the idea that there is a super-human Being who is Himself uncaused and is the Creator of all forms of life, both human and animal. I

am perfectly well aware that there may be shades of opinion between these two extreme views, but fundamentally it boils down to the problem as I have stated it and how man views it. The question as put is easily answered; the ramifications of it not nearly so.

Atheism and Agnosticism

Atheism is a complete denial of the claim that there is a God, or that there are gods of any description. This is the direct opposite of Theism (from Theos, which denotes a god or deity) which states the reality of the existence of God and also acknowledges His divinity. W. E. Vine says that Theos was appropriated by the Jews from the polytheism (many gods) of the Greeks and was retained by Christians to denote the one true God. In the Septuagint "Theos" translates the Hebrew words Elohim and Jehovah, the former indicating His power and pre-eminence, the latter His unoriginated, immutable, eternal and self-sustained existence.

Agnosticism leaves open the question as to whether there is a God or not. The agnostic holds that nothing is or is likely to be known of a God or of anything but material phenomena. Atheists say that the question is answered, "There is no God."

Theoretical and Practical Atheism

It is necessary to distinguish between these two. Early Christian history indicates that the Jews and the early Christians were looked upon by the Romans as atheists. It is very obvious that the Jews were intensely theistic, and it is equally obvious that the early Christians believed not only in God but also in Jesus, God's Christ. The reason why the Romans viewed both Jews and Christians as atheists was because they would not acknowledge the Roman gods, including the emperor, as truly divine.

We have already indicated that atheism must have gross materialism as its base, and that this thorough-going materialism will lead to the belief that there is no Being that is worthy of, or indeed deserves to be classed as divine. This attitude is only a step from the Humanistic concept that the universe is fully self-explanatory, and that man does not have, nor does he need, any help from a Holy Being. This, of course, effectively dispenses with prayer and any reliance that man might have upon God. This is theory, and many people accept it.

Practical atheism denies in practice that there is a God. This, perhaps, is the most dangerous type of atheism to contend with, because it states that the question of the existence of God is irrelevant to the meaning of life as lived in the 20th century, and also that God has no part in decisions concerning human existence. It is true to say that in earlier days events which we know to be natural phenomena were attributed by people to some supernatural agency, e.g., eclipses of the sun and moon, storms, lightning, etc., but now people have become disenchanted with the supernatural because they believe that science has explained in scientific terms all that needs to be explained, and if anything remains to be explained then science will explain it in due course; so why do we need a God?

Furthermore, religious principles were once embodied in such spheres of activity as medicine, education, and the arts, but now medicine is explained by the practitioner, education is largely for vocational purposes and is concerned exclusively with the finite, and the arts are seen to be expressive of the modern idiom, again, a scene without God. Secularism is also rife, because it seems that scant consideration is given to life after death.

The great danger in practical atheism is that millions of people may be deeply concerned in their outlook on the universe, regarding with almost reverent awe both the processes of nature and the functioning of the society of which they form a part. Many people hold moral values with deep conviction and try to the best of their ability to live up to them; therein is the danger to spread of the Christian doctrine; secularism and materialism are more deep-rooted than we may think.

IS there a God?

The Psalmist states that the fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," so the atheist, by the very Book that he scorns, has been declared a fool for not acknowledging God. Albert Einstein, generally believed to be the greatest scientist of all time and certainly no fool, is reported to have said, "My religion consists of a humble adoration of the illimitable superior Spirit who reveals Himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God." One of the first American astronauts to stand on the Moon expressed himself in terms of wonder and awe at what he considered to be the infinite majesty of God in the universe. Many scientists have also told us that the very design and order of the universe bespeaks a supreme creative power. Many people who express themselves in terms of disbelief in God either do not know, or they do not want to acknowledge, that there is a great degree of harmony between science and scripture; Genesis 1 does not stand alone.

This is what the apostle Paul seemed to have in mind when he wrote to the Roman christians, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." The Psalmist also looks at God's handiwork in creation and cries, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Rom: 1: 19, 20 and Psalm 19: 1). The plain message is that the person who says that there is no God had better look at the universe and find a tenable explanation which displaces God; a very formidable task, I think.

The tragedy of the human spirit of today is that many people are looking exclusively to that which is finite and failing to realise that the infinite has penetrated the finite. God has manifested Himself in the person of His Son, Christ Jesus; does man need any clearer communication than that? Let the christian say to the atheist and the agnostic in the plainest possible terms, "There is a God, and He can be known in the personal experience."

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

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FOR MARCH 1981

1 Isaiah 29,9-24	Mark 7,1-23
8 Deut. 4,1-13	7,24-37
15 Ex. 16,1-16	8,1-21
22 Isaiah 53	8,22 to 9,1
29 Damiel 7,1-4	9,2-13

RELIGIOUS WICKEDNESS

We have seen Jesus "looking round in anger" because He was grieved at hardness of heart. This concerned the use of a day appointed for the special SERVICE of God (3,1-6), which Jesus stated was made for man (2,27). We use the word service in more than one sense,

and must be careful our services do not become formalities inconsistent with service to one another. The Pharisees had fallen into this error. They were so "hardened" that they went out with murder in their hearts.

The inquisition of the Roman Catholic church, which is being swept under the mat at the present time, showed the same inconsistency. It can be mildly manifested now by over emphasis on attendance rather than attention to the christian walk.

Special attention to detailed instructions about cleanliness had become a LAW. Every Jew MUST baptise his hands before partaking of food. This showed his superiority over Gentiles. A doctor said: "Moses was the greatest

sanitarian the world ever knew." God wanted His people to be clean in body and mind. Hence His law demanded cleanliness. Jesus certainly did not discourage this, but He condemns the spirit which makes law out of tradition, and then finds means of escaping real moral obligations. This the professedly religious leaders of the Jews had done.

We may safely believe that the disciples of Jesus did wash reasonably before they ate. All normal folk do this. Read Matthew 23 in this connection, and see how Jesus felt. The Lord bless us with deeply humble hearts.

True cleanliness

It seems Jesus felt He must speak to the people on this question. He called them to Him in order to point the lesson. It is sin which is the real dirt, sin in the heart. We can perhaps appreciate the anxiety of the disciples to know just what Jesus meant, and His elaboration provides a list of horrible deeds AND MOTIVES. We suppose the deeds do horrify us naturally — that is, normal persons — but here Jesus goes deeper. It reminds of "but now put ye also away" (Col. 3,8). It is the heart which needs cleansing indeed. We need to watch even the inclination to think evil thoughts. As the psalmist prays "Who can discern his errors? Cleanse Thou me from hidden faults." (19,12). We need to consider carefully ALL the evil things Jesus mentions on this occasion.

Specialist treatments

From the wonderful words we are reading, I trust with the utmost care, I take three cases of healing — individual encounters with Jesus. First the most unusual and perhaps puzzling one — the Syro Phoenician woman. Jesus sought privacy, but it was impossible. But it was one person in very special need who found Him. Can we as in the case of Jairus appreciate the profound distress this woman was suffering and must have suffered so long. We know the heart of Jesus responded to her need but she must have needed some awakening to

spiritual things. Thus she is first reminded of her heathen darkness so that she might be awakened. She did respond so readily with deepest humility. She fell at His feet at first and accepted the challenge in the faith produced by what she knew of Jesus already. What life-time joy was hers. Remember the gospel was preached in Tyre quite soon. Next we think of the deaf-mute in Decapolis. He was brought to Jesus by friends and it was requested that Jesus should lay hands on him. This Jesus did not do.

He took him away for personal attention. When we think of the multitudes of folk who just touched Him, we are almost surprised at the treatment. He handled his ears, used spittle, and groaned with prayer before saying the final word of command.

Why then did He also command silence by those who witnessed the change in the man? Again we read of the fame of Jesus — "He went about doing good" (Acts 10,38). The evangelist records "They were beyond measure astonished." Jesus could have aroused the nation to violent support had He so designed. Lastly we view another personal encounter with the blind man at Bethsaida where we have again the use of spittle, the removal away from the crowd and the handling in this case of the eyes.

Moreover we see Jesus using a process so to speak. He was able to heal with a word or a touch but this man He chose to treat in steps. We conclude safely that in these cases Jesus saw special needs for the individual and gave treatment accordingly for the ultimate blessing of the patients. We must not think we can fit Jesus into any theological theory of man, but humbly accept in the words of the people, "He hath done all things well" (7,37). The love of God was manifested in the compassion and works of Jesus.

Signs requested

It may seem strange to us that apparently after knowing what Jesus

had done in feeding both the 5,000 and the 4,000 the religious leaders come to Jesus and ask for a sign from heaven. They were sure He could not show one. His whole life and attitude was without ostentation. He showed contempt for their own ideas of what a prophet should do. So far as religion was concerned He was an amateur.

He had not even a certificate from the Sanhedrin, and it was the common people who heard Him gladly. His concern was with them not with religious observances though it was evident He gave obedience to the law and observed the "feasts of the Lord."

What greater sign we ask could possibly be given than Jesus actually gave? Some Pharisees did pay attention and respect Him but they failed altogether to realise His divine power. They only got to providing for His burial! It must have been this that called forth "He sighed deeply in His spirit," for He knew their hearts, hardened beyond redemption by envy and hatred of His goodness. Can anything be worse than this? The Good News Bible translates "Why do the people of this day ask for a miracle? ... "No such proof will be given to these people." We seem to hear a call in these days for miracles, and they will not be given! The awful truth is revealed in what happened to Jesus. Can we think of anything more dreadful than the hardened heart which said "Crucify Him," while all the evidence of over three years was before their very eyes and must have been in their minds.

The same blindness is about today.

A blinding revelation

To those three humble men who had companied so long with Jesus a sign indeed was granted on the mountain when the glory of God was seen in Jesus, and the voice of God was heard by them ONLY, and they were required to be silent for a time ONLY, until they received with their fellow apostles the great commission to GO AND PREACH the truth. One of them records the

experience and we conclude with his words in II Peter 1,16 to 21.

R. B. Scott.

TOWARDS BETTER SPEECH

God has ever required those who love him to have respect unto His Name. "... Holy and reverend is his name ... " said the psalmist. A commandment was given in the Decalogue that the children of Israel should not speak lightly of the Lord God. They were not to take his name in vain. In Leviticus 24:10-16 we read of a man who blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed. Moses took the matter to the Lord and the answer was that the man should be stoned to death.

We in our present society witness a complete lack of respect for God. Time and again we hear the exclamations, — Christ — My God! — Oh Lord! — By Jeez! or the more watered down perversions such as, — Golly or Gosh (God), Gee (Jesus), Cripes or Crikey (Christ), Gee Whizz (Jesus), Jeepers (Jesus). The degenerate forms of the names are numerous. The question also arises as to who is being invoked when men explain, Holy . . . x (insert whatever noun is in current use).

The expression "Good God" is made to sound less profound by saying "Good Gracious or Good Heavens." The intent however is the same, — an appeal to God to witness one's petty annoyance or surprise. Similarly the expressions such as "Damn it" or Blast it" are really a call to God to consume in wrath the object of our fanciful dislike.

In days past a profane oath was often accompanied with an invitation for divine retribution such as "God blind me if . . ." (Cor Blimey). The profane oath which is a degeneration of the judicial oath, was probably the origin of today's profanity.

These expressions, often in an emphatic form, are used as tokens of man's emotion, as swear words, as a blasphemous and open defiance of the reality of God, as a form of jibe or

simply as an ignorant sort of colloquialism. To partake in such is to take the name of the Lord our God in vain in some degree.

No Christian would think of using direct profane language, but many go along with the halfway variety. They can't swear but yet compromise. Blooming and blinking is far preferable to bloody and bleeding; yet the derivation is the same. One is amazed at the many subtle ways Satan has of denigrating the Christian religion.

Anyone reading the New Testament will find ample corroboration of the essence of the third commandment. The first petition in our Lord's model prayer is "Hallowed be Thy Name." Jesus commended those who showed love and respect for our eternal Father. He accepted worship as deity and warned against the sin of blasphemy. The epistles also contain much guidance about our every day speech and bridling the tongue, e.g. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Eph. 4:29. "If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue . . ." etc. James 1:26.

To some who may read this article these thoughts may seem trifling, but to those who know that our eternal Father hears all that we say the admonition is surely clear enough. It should not be necessary to speak loosely of heavenly things; the English language is such a wonderful medium for varied expression. Let us then develop a manner of speech with which we may ultimately be glad to address our Saviour.

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WE PREACH CHRIST

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Cor. 4:5.

In this verse, Paul revealed the theme

of apostolic preaching. This point stands out in many places in the New Testament. It was Peter's theme in Acts 2:14-36. It was Phillip's theme in Acts 8:5, 35. We should be deeply interested in apostolic preaching, because it is world-wide in its scope and revolutionary in its effect. Even the enemies of the gospel of Christ said that it "turned the world upside down." Acts 17:6. Paul himself shook continents in his lifetime with the gospel and even more so after his death. A handful of men conquered the great Roman Empire with the gospel as was prophesied by Daniel in the long ago. How? "We preach Christ and him crucified."

Many thousands of preachers are standing in the pulpits of the churches of the world claiming to preach Christ. Yet religious division and confusion run rampant throughout the world. Truly, all of this religious uproar could not be coming from preaching Christ. 1 Cor. 14:33.

Everyone, preachers especially, should stop and ask themselves this question: "What does it mean to preach Christ?" We desire, in the remainder of this article, to give a Bible answer to this timely question.

To preach Christ is to preach His deity, His divinity, His Sonship. Jesus claimed for Himself deity and Sonship. "The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." John 19:7. See also Mk. 14:61, 62. God the Father ascribed deity to Christ. At His baptism, "And lo, a voice out of the heavens saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matt. 3:17.

Modernists say that all men are sons of God by fact of the creation. But they are not all sons as Jesus Christ is God's Son. John 3:16. God called Christ, "God". Heb. 1:8-10. Jesus Himself manifested every known attribute of deity by His power to forgive, by holiness, by justice, by mercy and love. He also worked miracles to establish and

confirm his deity. John 20:30, 31. Preaching the deity of Jesus does not deny His humanity. 1 Tim. 3:16.

To preach Christ is to preach His pre-existence. Jesus Himself taught it. John 8:58; 17:5. His followers also taught it. John 1:1, 2.

To preach Christ is to preach His coming in the flesh. John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-11. Matthew said that Christ's birth was in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin birth. Matt. 1:22, 23; Isa. 7:14. The virgin birth is beyond our understanding, but many try to eliminate anything that cannot be explained from a natural standpoint.

To preach Christ is to preach His crucifixion. Christ said that He would die. John 10:15. Paul said that "Christ died for our sins." 1 Cor. 15:3. Isaiah prophesied concerning it in chapter 53. Christ cannot be preached and His death for our sins ignored.

To preach Christ is to preach His resurrection. Christ said that He would rise. John 2:19-22. Paul argued this point with fervour. 1 Cor. 15.

To preach Christ is to preach concerning His kingdom or church. Acts 8:15, 12. Christ died for His church. Acts 20:28. He is its head. Eph. 1:22, 23. One must also preach His commandments and His promises. This is what is meant in preaching Christ.

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DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS?

If the end justifies the means, then the desperado, Jesse James, was justified for his robberies, since he sometimes gave money he had taken from wealthy men to poor widows. If it were true that the end justifies the means, a man would be justified for selling whisky, gambling or making music for the dance, if he gave liberally to the church from his profits.

Paul said it was slanderously reported that we say, "Let us do evil that good

may come." Romans 3:8. So, regardless of the good we intend to do, we cannot sin in order to accomplish it. Good results must be achieved by righteous means, if we want to please God. To do otherwise is disgraceful, and to accuse the just of doing or teaching otherwise is slander.

There are numerous applications of this principle to our day and age. There are those who feel justified in neglecting duty now because they hope to prepare for better service later. A student who cheats on examinations may excuse himself on the grounds that he can finish the course more quickly and at a much earlier day begin his life's work. But he has sinned regardless of his worthy plans for the future. Some parents neglect to give their children companionship and religious training now in a mad rush to make money to educate them later. They are still robbing their children and sinning against God. If one neglects to worship, or if he neglects any known duty, in order to do great things for the Lord later, he is doing evil that good may come. Some have been known to engage in practices that are admittedly evil in order to win to Christ a friend who does the same evil. Such is an abomination to the Lord.

TIME

WHAT would your answer be if you were asked, "What is your most prized possession in this world?" Would it be education, popularity, or money? I believe the best answer would be, "time," for without it we would have none of the others.

How a person uses his time determines what he is. With time we go to school, clean the house, earn our living, make friends or get into trouble. Each one of us gets this time issued at the same rate of speed; we all have 60 minutes in a hour, 24 hours in a day, and 7 days in a week. The only difference is the time when each of us reaches his last day, hour and minute. We may not regard our present time as very important, but how important would 5

minutes be to us if we knew it were the last 5 minutes we would ever live to see?

Those among us who are grandparents would like to be in their grandchildren's "shoes." But this we cannot change. Those of us who are still young should realise what riches we possess in just youth alone and start to work in the Lord's vineyard. Let's not wait until we are old and then wish differently in our youth. Romans 13:11, 12, says, "And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

You who are teenagers may think it will be a long time before you reach your 70th or 80th birthday, or you may think the Christian road of life would be too long if you were to begin now. In reality we only have now, the present minute. We can only live a minute at a time. If we can think of the long years ahead in terms of a minute or a day at a time it is much easier to bear. If a person starting a trip from California to New York thought in terms of one long trip he might quit before he started. But if he started and was only concerned about a mile at a time, it would be much easier.

Those of us who apparently have this asset of time should consider this statement found in 1 Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

So let us begin today to use our time as if it were God's most valuable gift to us, because it is, as far as this life is concerned.

ON PRAYER

THE time may be delayed, the manner may be unexpected, but the answer is sure to come. Not a tear of sacred sorrow, not a breath of holy desire poured out to God will ever be lost, but in God's own time and way will be wafted back again in clouds of mercy,

and fall in showers of blessings on you and on those for whom you pray.

URGENT NEEDS IN THE CHURCH TODAY

1 MORE OPEN HEARTS AND FEWER OPEN MOUTHS. All conduct proceeds from the heart. Prejudice closes the heart to the true consideration of the facts. If the heart was made right before the mouth was opened, most church problems, locally and universally, would cease to exist.

2 MORE KNOCKING ON DOORS AND LESS KNOCKING ON EACH OTHER. The greatest commission demands that we be busy ourselves in taking the gospel to others. The Bible says "Speak not evil one of another". It is so much better to be busy doing the good rather than the evil.

3 MORE SOUND HEADS AND FEWER SORE HEADS. Perhaps there was never a time in the history of the church when we have greater need for men sound in faith and wise in Judgment. Sometimes the voice of the wise goes unheeded and the voice of the foolish takes over. If this is done it always brings division and destruction, as it did in the days of Rehoboam.

4 MORE SEED-SLINGING AND LESS MUD-SLINGING. The task of sowing the seed of the Kingdom is so great that it should leave no time for the slinging of mud at a brother. The fact that we have the whole-world as our foe should draw us closer together. There should be no division in the Lord's camp. One can never whitewash himself by slinging mud at another. He who tries gets his own hands dirty.

5 MORE SACRIFICE OF SELF AND LESS SACRIFICE OF OTHERS. There are many members of the church who are willing to sacrifice the other fellow — his talent, his time, his money, and even perhaps his reputation. Sacrifice should begin at home.

6 MORE STANDING FOR THE FAITH AND LESS FALLING FOR THE FANCIFUL. The church has always been hurt by those who had a desire for that which was new and different. They have been blinded by the glamour of such newness. Truth never changes. It is fixed unalterable, and everlasting.

Woodstock Bulletin

SINS AGAINST OUR CHILDREN

Luther Burbank once said: "If we cared for our shrubbery as we do for our children we would soon be living in a jungle." He had reference to those parents who leave their children to shift for themselves and to the parents who permit their children to become spoiled by always choosing their own direction rather than being guided and moulded in the pattern that builds true beauty of character.

By their failure to "bend the twig", or to "prune the wild shoots," and to "water and fertilise" in spiritual growth, parents commit grievous sins against their children. This writer is by no standard qualified as an expert; however, the inspired Word of God gives us authoritative counsel on how to train up a child. And if we fail to follow God's counsel, we are wronging our children.

SPIRITUAL STARVATION

Communities get stirred up over news of a parent who has allowed a child to starve. Such a terrible act would justify sending the parents to jail! But which is the most important, the inward or the outward man? While we may rightly accuse parents who starve their children's outward bodies, we condemn ourselves if we give more concern to physical food, to education in this world's wisdom while failing to give the greatest concern to feeding them spiritual food.

We are derelict parents if one could not describe our children as Paul did Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which

are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). We often hear the plea for more faithful preachers, but the reason there is a shortage of "Timothy's" is because of the shortage of "Lois's" and "Eunice's"! Let the Bible be read daily in our homes (Deut. 6: 6-9).

NO RESTRAINT

Another sin against our children concerns the kind of food we allow them to eat. Would you feed poison to your child or allow him to play where he could easily obtain it? Why then as parents would we give our children the freedom to poison their spiritual lives by reading salacious literature, attending movies, exposing illicit love, or to have friends of questionable character? Remember the proverb, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7).

The cause of ungodly children is often the lack of restraint. Many godly parents have been heartbroken through their ungodly children. Like Eli of old the cause of sorrow is that "he restrained them not" (1 Sam. 3:11-14). Correction is a proof of love, not hate (Heb. 12:5-11). A child needs someone to lean on, to soothe hurts, to heal wounds; but parents must remember and need parental restraint and guidance. "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15); read also Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14).

Let's not be too busy to reach our children both by word and example God's laws regarding love and marriage, how to become a Christian, and what it means to be a Christian. And may God help us to avoid sinning against those we love so dearly.

— Robert Harkrider,
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HOW TO RAISE A DELINQUENT

(1) Begin at infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will

grow up believing the world owes him a living.

(2) When he picks up bad words laugh at him. This will make him think he is cute.

(3) Never give him spiritual training. Wait until he is 21 and let him decide for himself.

(4) Pick up everything he leaves lying around, books, shoes, clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility on others.

(5) Quarrel frequently in his presence. In this way he will not be too shocked when the home is broken up later.

(6) Give him all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?

(7) Satisfy every craving he has for food, drink and comfort. Denial may lead to harmful frustrations.

(8) Take his part against neighbours, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.

(9) When he gets into real trouble apologise for yourself saying, "I never could do anything with him."

(10) Prepare for a life of grief; you surely will have it.

—Selected by R. L. Townsend.

MISCELLANEA

Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. (2 Cor. 3,3).

IT is not by seasons of mystical meditation and rapturous experience that we learn to abide in Christ; it is by feeding upon His written Word and looking to the Holy Spirit to implant it in our hearts and to make it a living thing within us.

I have seen his ways, and will heal him. (Isaiah 57,18).

WHATEVER our perplexing problems may be personally, God is in them. Even the dark days of backsliding can be used to His glory in a more virulent

testimony. All is being done for the sake of His Kingdom, the sake of His Glory, and for our own final glorification and perfection.

Oh, that men would praise the Lord. (Psalm 107,8).

WE were not only unholy, but unthankful before grace taught us how to pray and to praise, but ingratitude must never characterise us now. The one who said, "Rejoice in the Lord always," rejoiced even in a prison and could take pleasure in infirmities.

Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. (Heb 12,6).

GOD does not waste suffering, nor does He discipline out of caprice. If He plough, it is because He purposes a crop.

My presence shall go with thee. (Exodus 33,14).

THIS promise is for us. His presence can lighten the darkest path and calm our every fear. His presence can fill our hearts with joy and rest. We need never be alone, for He has said — "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" — He will lead us till we are brought safely to our eternal home.

Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. (Matt. 6,8).

LEARN this, Christian! For God's glory, and for your good, your heavenly Father bids you lay down the load of anxiety. Trust His hand! He has led thousands unnumbered already safely through life. He can, He will, lead you. All things are already working together for good for you. Leave the helm in the hands of the Captain of our salvation.

NARROW MINDEDNESS

There is no room for broad-mindedness in the mathematics classroom. Neither geometry, calculus,

nor trigonometry allows any variation from exact accuracy, even for old time's sake. The solution of the problem is either right or it is wrong (no tolerance there).

There is no room for broad-mindedness in biology. One varying result out of a thousand experiments will invalidate an entire theory.

There is no room for broad-mindedness on the athletic field. The game is to be played according to the rules with no favours shown for "charity's sake."

There is no room for broad-mindedness in the garage. The mechanic says the piston rings must fit the cylinder walls within one-thousandths part of an inch. Even between friends there cannot be any variation if "the motor is to run smoothly."

How then shall we expect that broad-mindedness shall rule in the realm of Christianity and morals?

Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13-14).

meeting on Saturday, 6th December when the brethren discussed the subject of "What the Old and New Testaments revealed about the Devil."

The speakers were Bro. L. Purcell, Motherwell, and Bro. H. McGinn, Dalmellington.

Much was discussed and learned about this and in conclusion all were exhorted to realise that it should never be the case that the church is being defended against the Devil's works of evil, but rather that the church is ever on the offensive in this fight against the evil one.

It is next planned to meet (D.V.) at Tranent on Saturday, 7th March, 1981 to discuss "What is the difference between the Sabbath Day and the Lord's Day" and should they both be kept holy.

The speakers arranged for this meeting are Bro. E. Jess, Tranent, and Bro. H. Davidson, Motherwell, and in the chair Bro. A. Scobbie, Dennyloanhead.

We thank the brethren at Wallacestone for their hospitality.

H. Davidson

OBITUARY

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan: We are sad to report the passing of Sister Molly Melling, aged 76 years, on December 30th, 1980. She had been a lifelong and well loved member of the church at Scholes, and will be remembered for the hospitality she was always prepared to show to visiting brethren. Despite her own failing health in recent years, she continued to lovingly minister to the needs of her husband James, who is suffering from the effects of Parkinson's disease. We commend those who mourn her passing to the comfort and assurance which can only be found in the Lord.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Bristol: On Sunday December 7th Mrs. Jean Donaldson, who has been meeting with us for some time made the good confession and was baptised for the remission of sins. May God richly bless her in her new life of service to the Lord.
— L. Daniell.

Slamannan District. The church at Wallacestone hosted the mutual benefit

COMING EVENTS

Longshoot, Scholes, Wigan: April 11th-14th, 1981. Mission with Michael Caunt (Peterhead), as preacher.

"Jehovah is His Name" the writer was brother Steve Kearney, 253 Woodlawn Park, Firhouse, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

CHANGE OF SECRETARY

Sister Mary Neilson has had to give up being Secretary of the Slamannan church owing to illhealth. The new Secretary is John B. Wilson, 24 Owen-dale Avenue, Bellshill, Lanarkshire, M14 IN5. Tel. 0698 (Bellshill) 746874.

STAMPS
Bro. John Partington, 37, Northbrook, Corby, Northants, is taking over the collecting of used postage stamps, and will also use them to buy Bibles.

(Miss) R. M. Payne

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

David Chalmers is now staying at 62 Park Crescent, Dalmellington, Ayr.

PASSING THROUGH
I expect to pass through this world but once; any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kind-ness that I can show to any fellowman, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

— Author Unknown

AUTHOR OF ARTICLE

Although not printed at the end of the article in last month's issue, entitled

THE SCRIPTURE STANDARD is published monthly.

PRICES PER YEAR - POST PAID BY SURFACE MAIL

UNITED KINGDOM and COMMONWEALTH	£4.00
CANADA & U.S.A.	\$9.00
AIR MAIL please add £1.50 or \$3.00 to above surface mail rates				

DISTRIBUTION AGENT & TREASURER:

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

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