

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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WHAT DOTH HINDER ME

SOLOMON was rich enough to sample all earthly pleasures and after a lifetime of doing so came to the firm conclusion that all was empty and vain. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity". Most rich men have echoed his sentiments. Jesus, who was a greater than Solomon, taught that the greatest pursuit a man can put his hand to is the preaching of the kingdom of God. To feed the poor and engage in charitable works is much to be desired and extremely commendable, but the transcendently good work is to publish abroad the gospel of Christ. After all, if the gospel was to be accepted on a global scale there would, thereafter, be no hungry poor and no 'under-privileged societies'. The 'famous last words' of our Lord and Saviour to his apostles come down to us, 2000 years later, to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Brethren in N.T. times were exhorted to pray that "the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified" but there was always the possibility that it might be hindered. The devil has a vested-interest in frustrating the gospel and uses any means whatever to accomplish this, quite often church members. Quite clearly, in many areas, the gospel does not have 'free course' and is being hindered. What are these stumbling blocks to the preaching of the gospel?

The apostle Paul certainly seems to have thought that preaching the gospel was the most important thing that a man could do, but also that there was much that might hinder such a thing. He testified, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Preaching was not something he could boast about - it was an obligation (a necessity) that Jesus had laid upon him. The same obligation is upon us - the same necessity is laid upon all those who claim to be His disciples. In a previous verse (1 Cor. 9:12) Paul claimed the power enjoyed by preachers 'that they which preach the gospel should live off the gospel' but that "Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should *hinder* the gospel of Christ". Paul could have insisted on material support from those who received his preaching but he elected not to ask it but to support himself, and his fellow-travellers, by his trade of tent-making - *so as not to hinder the gospel*. Paul evidently thought that a lifestyle of self-denial and austerity was more in keeping with the message he carried, and certainly the charge could not be made that his motives were mercenary. A cynic once pointed out to me that clergymen always seem to get 'the call' to a higher salary, and I am not qualified to say whether any

preacher is 'in it for the money' (God alone knows) but certainly no-one could accuse Paul of such a charge. He suffered all things *so as not to hinder* the gospel of Christ. What are the hindrances to the spreading of the gospel?

Faultless Message

The fault certainly does not lie with the message. After all, the gospel is exceedingly good news. God is a God of compassion, and He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Throughout the centuries and down the corridors of time God has sent His prophets and messengers to reconcile man to Himself. There is a great need for the gospel, albeit man may not, at first, realise it. Man's chief end and purpose is to worship his Maker. Solomon's summing up was "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man". This can be accomplished through the gospel. The gospel is, therefore, needed everywhere - from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand. The gospel is also *for everyone*, rich or poor; black or white; male or female; literate or illiterate; bond or free; Jew or gentile - for all have sinned and come short of God's glory. Paul went everywhere and preached to everyone. Indeed he said that he "was a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." The Gospel is for the Royal family as much as it is for the inmates of Pentonville jail. Indeed John Knox is said to have terrified Mary Queen of Scots with his preaching. The gospel is relevant to every century of men, and is as necessary to this 'computer age' as it was to men with an abacus. The gospel is adapted to every age and to every person. It will never be outgrown, outmoded or outdated.

There is no evidence that man will ever outlive his need for the gospel. Indeed it seems that the moral depravity of man does not diminish but rather is ever on the increase. The need to spread the gospel grows more urgent by the minute. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance and so the need for preaching the gospel will ever be with us.

What, then, hinders the gospel?

(1) **Religious Division** — disunity amongst believers must surely be the prime cause. Indeed did not Jesus pray that all His followers 'may be one' that *the world might believe* that God had sent Him. The world remains firmly sceptical and rightly cynical of a religious world torn asunder, where each warring faction denounces the other as false and points to itself as the true guide. The 'man in the street' understandably does not know which way to turn, or whom to believe; and, in the end, dodges up a side-street. Thus the common man is bombarded from all sides by every shade of religious opinion, and, having no deep knowledge of the scriptures, succumbs to false doctrines, and is thereafter very likely to reject even the truth were it to be presented to him. This is not exactly a new phenomenon but was already beginning amongst the Christians in Galatia and caused Paul to say to them, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel*; Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." Later in Chap. 5:7 he said, "Ye did run well, but who did *hinder you* that ye should not obey the truth". False teachers *hindered them*. Thus preachers today find it increasingly necessary to spend much of their time *identifying the truth* and showing the falsity of all other doctrines. This indeed hinders the *free course* of the gospel of Christ.

(2) **Reluctance of Christians To Take the Message To Others.** This surely forms just as serious a hindrance to the preaching as does dis-unity. For a multitude of reasons (or excuses) we fail to take the message to a dying world. "I don't really have the time". "It might affect my business". "It might cause trouble

at home, amongst the family". "My friends will think I am crazy." This is, in fact, exactly what a sister said, some years ago, when asked to hand in to her neighbour an invitation to a gospel-meeting. She said, "I can't do that, she'll think I'm crazy". All of our excuses stem from a lack of love for lost souls. If our neighbour's house was on fire we would dash in and bang furiously on their door, but they can go to a Christless eternity without us 'turning a hair'. "I'm not much good at that sort of thing". "They won't be interested". These excuses are as old as Moses. Moses said, "Why me? - who am I that I should go." - "What shall I say" - "They will not believe me" - "I am not eloquent". Doubtless if we fail to take the gospel to the world, God can raise others who will take it, but this will certainly not be profitable for us.

We read in Acts 8:36, that in response to the preaching of Philip, the Ethiopian Eunuch asked, "See, here is water, *what doth hinder* me to be baptised." Philip replied, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." Some years ago, the church at Tranent, having prepared for the baptism of a young woman, were disappointed at her non-appearance. She had just previously expressed an ardent wish to be immersed. Apparently she had gone to get the blessing of her local clergyman and he had talked her out of it. Thus the clergyman very effectively *hindered* the girl from being baptised and will doubtless answer for his actions. Philip, God's messenger, preached baptism as part of the gospel message to the eunuch (unless we believe the eunuch was clairvoyant) - and subsequently personally took him down into the water and baptised him. The clergyman, by contrast, advised the young woman against it and so hindered an ordinance of Almighty God. We too *can hinder* men from being baptised *if we fail to take the gospel message to them* (or if we preach a 'gospel' which omits the baptismal requirement).

Do We Help Or Hinder?

In the work of the Lord we either help, or we hinder. The preaching of the kingdom requires money and quite often does not take place through lack of funds. Do we hinder the gospel by being mean with our money? Does the preaching suffer hindrance by lack of our support. Are we always present, when we can, at gospel meetings to support the effort? Does our absence from such meetings indicate a lack of love for souls lost, or a lack of confidence in the value of the message? If church members do not support gospel meetings can we be surprised if our friends do not come along? Do we really try hard to bring someone along to such meetings? Quite apart from gospel meetings, are we known for our interest in reaching a lost world with the gospel? (After all, gospel meetings are probably the least effectual way, nowadays, of propagating the word.) Are we always on the look-out for new avenues through which to spread the good news? If we can answer "Yes" to all these questions we may feel like awarding ourselves an "A-plus" mark. Before we do so we should read again *just how* Paul 'suffered all things' lest he should *hinder the gospel* (he considered it a terrible thing to hinder the gospel).

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one
Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, Thrice I
suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In
journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in
perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in
perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea,
in perils amongst false brethren. In weariness and painfulness,

in watchings often, in hunger, and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." (2 Cor. 11:24).

After that what more can be said. Surely Paul considered that preaching the gospel was the most important work to which a man can lay his hand. Clearly he considered himself a debtor to all mankind (to Greeks and barbarians), and that he had a God-given obligation to reach them with the glad tidings. Surely too, he suffered all things, and great privations that he might not *hinder* the gospel of Christ. May we too, as we marvel at Paul's record, be encouraged to meet the onus that lies equally and quite squarely upon each one of us, to contact every creature with the Words Of Life. God is depending on us.

EDITOR

THE VOICE OF GOD

TO speak to God we must pray. Then when we study the scriptures with a seeking heart. God will speak to us. We experience His transforming power. The Bible functions as the voice of God. It tells us who made us, Who we are, and how we can live in truth. The Bible imparts the presence and power of God into our lives. Brethren as a child of God, we can expect this, it's a promise from on high. If we really open our hearts to the truths of the scriptures God will make His presence felt in *power*. Oh how often we lack power. Brethren, God can and will meet our every need! In sorrow He speaks comfort to the soul; in temptation He gives strength to over-come; when facing difficulty God gives strength to surmount the problem before you. Where do we find all this? In God's word - it's a promise of God. The cure for worry is to trust *more fully* in God. We need make our trust *more real*. In doing so, we can truly expect the power of the Spirit to be effective in us. If we would count for God, we need get into the scriptures daily and hear the voice of God. Back to the Bible is the cry.

I am so glad that our father in heaven
tells of His love in the book he has given
wonderful things in the Bible I see
this is the dearest, that Jesus loves me.

Every day we face situations in which a decision must be made between what seems necessary and right. There is no question what we must do. The Bible tells us, "Search ye the Scriptures". Has God spoken to you lately? if not the fault lies with you.

Here is the book of Heaven, the book of victory,
the book which God has given, a guide to eternity,
as you its pages turning, find the message clear,

Oh may your heart be burning, with joy such words to hear.

Brethren let us harness the power of the word of God, so that we may serve Him more fully. The voice is in the Word.

A. P. SHARP, Newtongrange

GLEANINGS

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

WE QUOTE - ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

"The Bible alone is the Bible only, in word and deed, in profession and practice; and this alone can reform the world and save the church. Judging others as we

once judged ourselves, there are not a few who are advocating the Bible alone, and preaching their own opinions. Before we applied the Bible alone to our views, or brought our views and religious practices to the Bible, we pleaded the old theme, "The Bible alone is the religion of Protestants." But we found it an arduous task, and one of twenty years' labour, to correct our diction and purify our speech according to the Bible alone; and even yet we have not wholly practically repudiated the language of Ashdod. We only profess to work and walk by the rules which will inevitably issue in a pure speech, and in right conceptions of that pure, and holy, and celestial thing called Christianity, - in faith, in sentiment, and in practice.

THUS SAITH THE LORD

A deep and an abiding impression that the power, the consolations, and joys - the holiness and happiness - of Christ's religion were lost in the forms and ceremonies, in the speculations and conjectures, in the feuds and bickerings of sects and schisms, originated a project many years ago for uniting the sects, or rather the *Christians* in all the sects, upon a clear and scriptural bond of union, - upon having a "*thus saith the Lord*," either in express terms or in approved precedent, "for every article of faith, and item of religious practice."

FELLOWSHIP

"An older and a younger man were sitting together in the back of a little chapel. The service was not over, but the younger man started to leave. "Don't go yet," whispered the older man, "After it's over, they all shake hands - and that's the best part". "

TRUTH

"Truth, which is mighty, must prevail. Obstacles may be thrown in its way, and may, for a little time, and to some extent, impede its progress, but they cannot entirely obstruct its course. Christianity, as has always been the case, will survive and flourish, when its opponents shall be dead and forgotten. The reason is obvious: It is based on truth, and may be despised, rejected, and trodden underfoot, but -

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again."

And like the blade of grass, every time that it arises, its strength and its beauty will be increased."

WHAT, THEN IS CONVERSION?

"Conversion is a turning, a change. "Convert" is a Latin word of command to the Roman Soldier, equivalent to the order, "Right about face!" Conversion in Scripture terms is the process by which a sinner becomes a Christian, that is, a turning from the love and service of sin to the love and service of God. It is a turning about. From sin unto righteousness and from the kingdom of Satan unto God. It is not something to be experienced, but something to be done; not a passive condition in which men wait for God to work a work in us by His Spirit. Conversion is something not to be asked of the Holy Spirit, but is a work enjoined upon the sinner. The Holy Spirit commands the sinner to repent and turn, and would not command men to do something which belonged to the Spirit Himself to do. Five things are essential to conversion: preaching, hearing, believing, repenting, being baptised. The Apostles preached, the people heard, then believed, then repented, then were baptised, then went on their way rejoicing, having obtained the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life by turning from sin unto righteousness. Conversion, then, is a turning to God under the power of the Gospel."

F.D.P.

THE SECRET

"There lived once a young girl whose perfect grace of character was the wonder of those who knew her. She wore on her neck a gold locket which no one was ever allowed to open. One day, in a moment of unusual confidence, one of her companions was allowed to touch its spring and learn its secret. She saw written these words: "*Whom having not seen, I love*". That was the secret of her beautiful life. She had been changed into the Same Image."

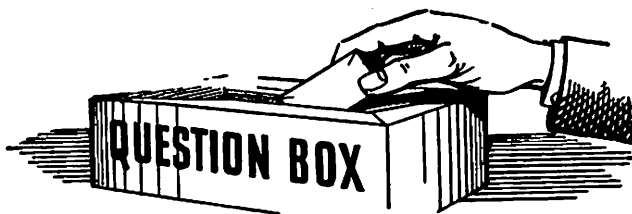
Henry Drummond

WISE WORDS

"Put your problems on the shelf. The difficulties of belief are great, but the difficulties of unbelief are far greater."

J. B. Gough

Selected by LEONARD MORGAN



 Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

"Is there anything God cannot do?"

I have looked at this question a number of times and on each occasion I have laid it aside thinking, "what can I say about a question like that; it is patently obvious what the answer must be". On reflection, however, I have come to the conclusion that this question is not as 'open and shut' as it first appears to be, and consequently I now believe that we can learn something useful from a consideration of it. First of all, however, I must tell you why I thought the answer *must* be perfectly plain.

The Omnipotence of God

I believe that we all understand that the question of the existence of God is never raised in the Bible; it is simply taken for granted. This being so, His Omnipotence is something that we cannot ignore, because it is so unmistakably testified to. He, God, *is* the Omnipotent; the Almighty; the Supreme Being. The following scriptures should convince us that whatever God sets His hand to do, he *can do*.

In Job 42 we read, "Then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that thou cans't do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee" (v 1,2). In Psalm 115 the Psalmist says, "But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (v 3). On one occasion, Jesus said to His disciples, "with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). Again, in the Garden, Jesus prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). The angel testified to Mary regarding the conception of her cousin Elizabeth, and said, "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

So you see, dear reader, that on the face of it there doesn't seem to be *anything* that God cannot do if He wishes to do it. But if we contemplate His *nature* then I believe that there *are* some things that God cannot do, simply because He *is* God.

God cannot tolerate Sin.

It is in the nature of God to abhor sin. Speaking about the contravention of instructions which He had given, and pin-pointing the wickedness of dishonest dealings, Moses told the people, "For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God". The Psalmist says, "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee" (Ps. 5:4). Again, in Psalm 11:5, "The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth". Zechariah said to God's people relative to the restoration of Jerusalem, "And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false hope: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord" (Zech. 8:17). On one occasion, in a reply to the Pharisees, Jesus said, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). What a striking indictment of self-righteous man. That sin is hateful to the nature of God there can be no doubt.

God cannot tolerate sin because He knows the disastrous consequences of it for His creation. When sin entered the Garden of Eden it was God who made the announcement of physical death because His creation had succumbed to it, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). The universality of Adam's action is made clear by Paul in his Roman letter, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

We must understand, of course, that another kind of death is implied, that is *spiritual* death. In Genesis 2:17 we read, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thou shalt surely die". Now we know that Adam did not die on that specific day, so what is meant is separation from God, which is spiritual death, i.e. cut off from the Life-Source. This condition has passed upon all men in that all have sinned (See Rom. 3:23). The important point which this raises cannot be over-estimated. Everyone should realise that there will be no possibility of God changing His mind regarding sin. He abhors it, and it is an abomination to Him, therefore, everyone who dies asinner will be eternally separated from God. That is why all must seek Christ, the Saviour, and become obedient unto Him so that they might experience the regeneration of the spiritual life in Him.

God cannot tolerate Injustice

The supreme justice and righteousness of God is unquestionable. The prophet Amos records that he saw the Lord standing on a wall made by a plumbline. And the Lord said unto him, "Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more" (Amos 7:7,8). The Lord God's judgments are straight and undeviating when it comes to dealing with people. Paul argues in his Roman letter that a just God *had* to deal with sin; He could not let it go unnoticed and unpunished, so He let the innocent One suffer for the guilty. The righteousness of God demanded that *His own Son* should die for *our* sins, the just for the unjust. Why did He do this? Well, let Paul explain, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26. But read the whole of chapter 3).

We are dealing with a God who has always dealt justly with His creation. He has revealed what He means, and He always means what He says. His plumbline

for us today is in His revealed standard of righteousness; listen to Paul again, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:21-23). Contrary to what many people may believe, God cannot tolerate injustice.

God cannot Lie

I have quoted at some length from Romans 3 and I would like to do so again. Paul there says, "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom. 3:3,4). What a comfort it is to know that you can listen to Someone who will not lie to you. God is true to *everything* which He says. He cannot lie.

Furthermore, it is of inestimable value for us to know that this applies to each Person of the Godhead. We know that Paul said of Jesus, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Coll. 2:9), so if God cannot lie, then Christ cannot lie, and we know that Jesus said, "I am the Way, *the Truth*, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me". John the Baptist testified to both Christ and God. Speaking about Jesus he said, "What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John 3:32,33).

Concerning the third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, Jesus said of Him, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *All* of these cannot lie. The world desperately needs truth, salvation, and eternal life. Jesus summed this up when He prayed to His Father, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Take heart brother, sister, friend. The fact that God cannot lie means that we have a true Saviour, and a Counsellor who will lead and guide into all truth through the word of God.

God cannot Deny Himself

Having established the fact that the Godhead is in agreement on all things, we look at the words of Paul to Timothy. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he will also deny us. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:12,13). What I am saying is that even though these words were spoken about Jesus, they apply to the Godhead.

Faithful unto death. Jesus is not like those who are rebuked by Paul to Timothy, "Having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5). Jesus could no more deny His mission, and His fidelity to His Father, than He could deny Himself to the soldiers who came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. This fact is of supreme importance to us because it means that so long as *we* remain faithful He will *never* deny us.

Those of us who are Christians should never try to bring God, or any Person of the Godhead, down to the level of man. God, because He cannot tolerate sin or injustice, and because He cannot lie or deny Himself, has made the initial movement toward us; it is *we* who need to be reconciled to Him, and not *He* to us.

He has provided the Way in Christ. He calls upon *us* to walk that Way. His very nature ensures that if we do, He will never let us down, nor will He ever leave us or forsake us. Personally, I am glad that there are *some* things that God cannot do; aren't you.

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

WHAT A SERMON SHOULD BE

- It should be *brief*; if lengthy it will steep
 Our hearts in apathy our eyes in sleep;
 The dull will yawn, the chapel-lounger doze,
 Attention flag, and memory's portals close.
- It should be *warm*; a living altar coal,
 To melt the icy heart and charm the soul;
 A sapless, dull harrangue, however read,
 Will never rouse the soul, or raise the dead.
- It should be *simple*, practical, and clear;
 No fine-spun theory to please the ear;
 No curious lay to tickle lettered pride,
 And leave the poor and plain unedified.
- It should be *tender* and affectionate,
 As His warm who wept lost Salem's fate;
 The fiery law with words of love allayed
 Will sweetly charm, and awfully persuade.
- It should be *manly*, just, and rational;
 Wisely conceived, and well-expressed withal;
 Not stuffed with silly notions, apt to stain
 A sacred desk, and show a muddy brain.
- It should possess a *well-adapted* grace,
 To situation, audience, time and place;
 A sermon formed for scholars, statesmen, lords,
 With peasants and mechanics ill accords.
- It should with *evangelic* beauties bloom,
 Like Paul's at Corinth, at Athens, or at Rome;
 Let some Epictetus or Sterne esteem,
 A bleeding Jesus is the gospel theme!
- It should be mixed with many an ardent *prayer*,
 To reach the heart, and fasten there;
 When God and man are mutually addressed,
 God grants a blessing-man is truly blest.
- It should be closely, *well-applied* at last,
 To make the moral nail securely fast;
 "Thou art the man," and thou alone will make
 A Felix tremble, and a David to quake.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

JULY 1983

3—2 Kings 5:1-19	Luke 17:1-19
10—Genesis 19:1-28	Luke 17:20-37
17—Prov. 30:1-14	Luke 18:1-27
24—Isaiah 53	Luke 18:28-43
31—Nehemiah 2	Luke 19:1-27

STUMBLING BLOCKS

Precept or example may cause stumbling. Jesus turns from His warning and condemnation of Pharisaic wickedness (ch. 16), and warns His disciples against this disastrous inconsistency. "Take heed to yourselves", He says. There is a danger of causing "little ones who believe in Me" to be made to stumble by self-righteousness like that of the Pharisees. There is a close relationship between forgiveness and causing to stumble. Rebuke for sin is necessary, so is forgiveness upon repentance, regardless of repetition. The christian has to be always ready to forgive, but not to compromise with sin. The instruction indicates a complete patience, but not a hardened heart. So with the service which is DUTY (labour that is due and paid for) to the creditor. Our creditor is GOD ALMIGHTY. It is good not to sin but that in no sense gives credit with HIM. No one can get to heaven by being good for ALL HAVE SINNED. The grace of God and the sacrifice of Christ is our only plea! Would to God we realise this! Enoch and Noah "walked with God" but they sinned, and offered the appropriate sacrifices for that dispensation - and finally the blood of Christ fulfilled the need in HIS. NOTHING WAS EARNED but God's love exercised His grace.

INGRATITUDE

The course of our Saviour's final journey to Jerusalem is hardly traceable from the gospels, but it

certainly terminated through Jericho up to that destination. Samaria and Judaea are on the west bank, Perea on the other. It appears the lepers would live outside any village, so at least one of them was a Samaritan. The hostility between races must have impressed Jesus as He noticed the truly grateful

INGRATITUDE

The course of our Saviour's final journey to Jerusalem is hardly traceable from the gospels, but it certainly terminated through Jericho up to that destination. Samaria and Judaea are on the west bank, Perea on the other. It appears the lepers would live outside any village, so at least one of them was a Samaritan. The hostility between races must have impressed Jesus as He noticed the truly grateful man was a "stranger" (meaning foreigner or alien), not really so! but for those around Him at the time another sign of His disregard of such wrong feelings by "HIS OWN" (John 1:11) by whom He was to be murdered. The man's utter humility tells where we must be - AT HIS FEET. Here was surely a glow of love and appreciation (10:21).

NO FURTHER NOTICE

The electricity bill said "No further notice will be given. If you do not pay, your supply will be cut off." The Pharisees - probably in irony - asked when the kingdom of God would appear - see 19:11 - thinking "nothing has happened, why all this preaching?" The Kingdom of God was there in the person of Jesus, certainly not in them as individuals - "among you" rather than "within you". Nevertheless let us bear in mind that we who acknowledge the Christ have Him ruling in us. If our behaviour does not show it, are we christians? When "the day of the Lord" comes to us or to them, there will be no more notice than we already have received. The resurrection and the preaching of the gospel was the final notice to the Jewish race, and the

eagles gathered around Jerusalem - the corpse of the chosen nation. I dare to wonder whether many disasters, national, city and individual could be described by the Saviour's figure (verse 37). Therefore let us not cling to earthly things - "the things that are seen are temporal". Like us the antediluvians and Sodomites hardly thought of their destruction as a possibility! They had notice and paid no heed at all.

PRAYER

God is not like the UNJUST JUDGE or the UNWILLING NEIGHBOUR but He expects us to keep on praying, and not to faint if our requests are not answered at once. Be sure God's ear and heart are always open to His children's cries and we must always be unselfish, and very humble. We must not dare to think "My way is what you approve", but recognise that His will is always best. How graphically does the content of the two contrasting prayers point the lesson for all disciples of Jesus. Formality and self-righteousness are insulting to God. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken spirit and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. (Psalm 51:17).

THE EVER-READY LOVE OF JESUS

Although the disciples never realised the truth Jesus repeatedly told them about the coming torment and death, they did obviously at this time feel Him to be under stress. We feel a little unkind towards them for rebuking the interruption for blessing children, the importunity of the blind men, and Zacchaeus, but their "protection" was kindly meant (Mark 10:32). The tender heart of Jesus would not tolerate such an attitude and His blessed word has echoed down the centuries and influences today's thought - "Suffer the little children to come unto Me". There is another instance of a more developed love in regard to the rich young ruler -

(Mark 10:21). Did He not yearn for his soul? The blind beggars crying from their place at the roadside could not cry in vain. Jesus could not pass them by. Zacchaeus more or less in fear by reason of unpopularity, hiding in the tree is recognised and honoured. The prejudices of the crowd are defied, and their interference denied. Their support and protection are an embarrassment. They are known to be under delusion, and to be fickle.

POSSESSIONS A FATAL HINDRANCE

Jesus had always taught this truth. Perhaps we are right to say that the lesson never was learnt, then or now. So often our property takes so much of our time and attention that the more important issues of life are neglected. We note that this man came running just when Jesus was moving on (Mark 10:17) and actually kneeled to Him.

Anxiety and urgency had moved him to seek this answer. He was a deeply committed "minister" at the synagogue with obvious sincerity and a dutiful "son of the law". Some of Jesus's teaching must have got through to him. Jesus gave him the immediate and ultimate advice - to sell up everything, and follow. This was the apostolic call. The four fishermen (or perhaps more of them) and one taxgatherer had already done so. Many readers hope the sorrow was not final but that can only be speculation. Jesus knows! He expressed the lesson to the astonishment of His hearers, who of course thought eminence and respectability a passport to divine favour. Do most people almost unconsciously think the same? Peter spoke up for the twelve and received the assurance, afterwards realised in life and death, that they would not be the losers. The hymn writer has it "Whatever Lord we lend to Thee, repaid a thousand times will be!" Eternal life in the balance guarantees that.

THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

This story bears upon chiefly the essential need for fullest use of the capacities we have, and the solemn warning against fear of work and responsibility. It bears upon the twelve in particular after the uncomprehended shock to which they must now submit. Jesus must have taken them aside quite a number of times to impress it upon them. Even if they misunderstood then, in future it would come home to them, and stiffen them against their later trials. It prefigured very plainly the final triumph of Jesus over all His enemies. Their apparent triumph (close at hand) would be short-lived, and defeat final. Diligence in the Lord's service will be rewarded though not earned - "we are unprofitable servants".

SOME QUESTIONS

A few points of difference between the gospel narratives are obvious but surely explainable. Were there two blind beggars (Matthew) or only one? As in the case of the demoniacs at Gadara, Luke and Mark mention only one. Probably in each case one was more violent or demonstrative than the other and the witnesses therefore did not take notice of them. However Matthew was there. The exact location of the blind men is said to be "as they departed from Jericho" (Matthew), "as He went out of Jericho" (Mark), "was come nigh to" (Luke). The explanation that Jericho covers a wide area due to the historically two sites, one the ancient one for which Hiel bore the curse (1 Kings 16:34) the other built much earlier away from the site to avoid the curse. R. B. SCOTT

THE CHURCH NEEDS

More action and less faction, more workers and less shirkers, more backers and less slackers, more praying and less straying.

LONGEVITY

(The following small article on Longevity appeared in the 1788 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

"From the different longevities of men in the beginning of the world, after the flood, and in these ages, Mr Derham draws an argument for the interposition of a Divine Providence.

Immediately after the creation, when the world was to be peopled by one man and one woman, the ordinary age was 900 and upwards. - Immediately after the flood, when there were three couples to stock the world, their age was cut shorter, and none of these patriarchs but Shem arrived at 500. In the second century we find that none reached 240; in the third none but Terah that came to 200 years; the world, at least a part of it, by that time being so well peopled, that they had built cities, and were cantoned out into distant nations. - By degrees, as the number of people increased their *longevity* dwindled, till it came down at length to 70 or 80 years; and there it stood and has continued to stand ever since the time of Moses. - This is found a good medium, for by means hereof the world is neither overstocked, nor kept too thin; but life and death keep a pretty equal pace."

The article also quotes about 32 instances (recent at that time), giving names and dates, of persons living to ages averaging 140 years, or so. The oldest being a negress Louisa Truxo who lived to 175 years, and who was still alive just before the article was written. Henry Jenkins, a Yorkshireman, died on December 8th, 1670 at the age of 169 years. The oldest Irishman was Col. Thomas Winslow who died on August 26th 1766, at 146 years.

BELIEF : (10)

Separation and Purification

AS we have seen, acceptance of the Word of God, as delivered by Jesus and his apostles, was to be the means whereby men and women were to become disciples, so purifying them, or setting them free from sin; and separating them, as the personal possession of Christ.

How is it accomplished?

This is the query we now consider, for it will give us the true answer to the question: "What is sanctification of the Spirit?" There could be no better way of finding this answer than by seeing what our Lord himself commanded his apostles just before his ascension.

Dangers to avoid

In this way we shall avoid giving a partial answer to the question - realising that many people hold imperfect ideas on this important matter. Such wrong ideas are held, often, in all sincerity (see Acts 20: 30-32), and they lead to the preaching of the doctrines of *men* instead of the doctrines of *God*. Our Lord himself warned against this serious danger (Matthew 15:9).

Our Lord's final instructions

Therefore we go to the words of our Lord himself just before his ascension and after his resurrection (which proved his claim to be the Son of God, Romans 1:4). Luke wrote, "Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:45-47). Then the Lord told them, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high" (verse 49).

Before considering the implication of these words, and their relationship to "sanctification of the Spirit" let us

consider what *repentance* and *remission of sins* means. These must have been of great importance in the design of our Lord for the salvation of mankind, since they were his last words before he left the earth.

Repentance

In article three we showed that repentance means a change of mind towards God, brought about by hearing what he says.

"Incline your ear and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live."

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55). What gracious words these are! This was not only an appeal, but also a promise and a prophecy. Doubtless it was one of the passages quoted by our Lord when he opened the apostles' understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. Here his divine mission to a sinful world was about to be fulfilled in his final instructions to his apostles.

Godly sorrow

"Godly sorrow worketh (or leadeth to) repentance to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). It is only sincere sorrow for sin that brings about repentance or a *change of mind* (which is what the Greek word *metanoia* really means). Godly sorrow is brought about when we realise through hearing God's word, the sins of which we are guilty (Otherwise we would not know they were sins-see Romans 7:7). Note what God said through Isaiah, "Incline your ear and come unto me, *hear and your soul shall live*". As we read God's word there is stirring up within us a realisation of our own sinfulness. The sense of guilt afflicts our minds and reaches into the very depths of our souls. We are afflicted with deep sorrow by what we have done, not only to ourselves, but to others (and it is often the innocent who suffer most for

our sins). More than this, there comes the realisation that in breaking the second greatest commandment - "love thy neighbour as thyself" - we have also disobeyed God, and so broken the first and greatest commandment - "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . strength . . . mind".

This godly sorrow is bound to turn us toward God. Why? Is it not to receive remission of our sins, which he alone can give? But how and why does God grant

Remission of sins?

"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22) for sins. This sets forth a principle of God's justice to which we do well to pay serious attention. It affects fundamentally the whole question of remission of sins, sanctification of the Spirit, and salvation.

It is hoped to develop these soul-searching and absorbing subjects in further articles. In the meantime it will assist us if we study the following

Exercises in Belief

Isaiah 1:18; Leviticus 17:11; John 14:6; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9:26-28; Hebrews 10:4-10.

W. BROWN

(To be continued)

AN APPEAL

(from: Steenberg, South Africa)

We greet you in the name of our loving Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We hope and pray that the Lord has blessed you abundantly.

We, the members of the Steenberg Church of Christ are in great need. We need your HELP!

For the past twelve years we have been worshipping in the home of one of our members. The home eventually became too small and uncomfortable to worship in. However, for the past two years we are worshipping in a rented hall which is only available to us on Sundays. We love the Lord very much and our desire is to spread His word by

having more gatherings and gospel meetings. We would like to win more souls for the Lord, but we are unable to do so due to the lack of a Church building.

We have a Youth Group and Sunday Bible School going but we are again only able to meet on Sundays.

Financially we are a poor congregation consisting of approximately one hundred members. We have tried so many times to obtain ground from the council, but failed every time. These grounds are given to other denominations because they are financially stronger.

We have been disappointed several times in the past, but through our faith in God we are continuing our plight to obtain a building in which we can do the work of the Lord.

We plead for financial help that will enable us to erect a Building of our own.

We pray that, you, our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ will through the love you have for Christ, come to our assistance. Brethren we earnestly need your help now!

We hope and pray that you will consider our humble request favourably -

Thanking you and we pray that the Lord will bless and keep you.

Yours in Christ

Brother George Terry
119 Allenby Drive,
Steenberg, Cape Town,
South Africa.

(Our coloured brethren in South Africa need all our help. They are, I believe, very active in the Lord, and extremely faithful to His Word. Ed.)

**NEWS FROM
THE CHURCHES**

Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield:
The church here were greatly encouraged recently when a married

couple expressed their wish to be immersed. Rex and Cynthia Foster had been attending the Gospel meetings for some time and were obviously keenly interested, and on the evening of 28th April they were immersed into Christ. Rex and Cynthia are a happy couple and they should be an asset to the church. Our prayers are for them that they should be guided and kept in the true and living Way.

T. Woodhouse

Haddington, Scotland: The church here rejoiced to witness the baptism of Robert Lorimer, husband of sister Robina Lorimer, on Monday evening 2nd May. The immersion took place at the Meetinghouse at Newtongrange and we would thank the brethren there for the use of their baptistry and for all the kind assistance they provided. Robert has been coming to our meetings at Haddington for some time and we are delighted that he is now one of us. We take courage at yet another evidence of the power of the gospel and we pray that Robert will remain faithful and steadfast in the years to come and that he will be a real asset to the church of our Lord & Saviour.

Ruth Nisbet. Sec.

Kirkcaldy, Scotland: On Lord's Day, 20th March, three precious souls were added to the Lord's Body. David and Doreen Scott, and Steven Sharp (son of Bro. & Sister Sharp) confessed Jesus as their Saviour and were baptised for the remission of their sins. May God guide them through life towards their promised rewards.

Robert Hughes Sec.

OBITUARY

Buckie, Scotland: With feelings of deepest sorrow we report that the church here has been called upon to

part with two aged sisters - Janet Stewart and Mary Jane Reid.

Sister Stewart passed peacefully to her rest on the 27th March, in her 90th year. She had been a faithful member of the church for many years and was always present at the Lord's table (and all other meetings) until her health began to fail a few years ago. Janet was a great favourite with the children, whom she loved, and they, as well as many others who are now grown up, will kindly remember Janet. Her funeral service took place in the Meeting Hall, being conducted by the brethren. To her family we extend our deepest sympathy and commend them to the comfort of our Heavenly Father, knowing that our sister has only gone on a little while before, and that we shall all meet one day in that place where there are no more tears.

Sister Reid passed peacefully to her rest on the 2nd April, aged 91 years. A committed Christian, her life was centred around all the activities of the church. Mary Jane never mentioned her own sufferings, in her concern for others. Her death was typical of her life, for as she fell asleep in Jesus, so she lived in Jesus. She was kind, gentle, gracious and compassionate. For such a life and service we thank God. Her home had an ever open door of hospitality. Many were her trials and deep were the waters through which she passed. Her funeral service took place in the Meeting Hall, being conducted by the brethren. To Margaret, who looked after her mother in her late years, and George and their families, we extend our deepest sympathies and trust that God may give the strength to bear the parting.

Jesus, thou Prince of life

Thy chosen cannot die

Like Thee, they conquer in the strife

To reign with Thee on high.

John Geddes. Sec.

BIBLE QUIZ

For the younger (and older) members

PLACES — in the gospels

- 1 The scene of Jesus' temptations.
- 2 City from which Jesus was thrust out.
- 3 Here, we read, "they were astonished at His doctrine."
- 4 Two walked to it after the resurrection.
- 5 Three of the disciples came from it
- 6 Where Jesus performed the first miracle.
- 7 The city near Jacob's well.
- 8 Jesus met a funeral at its gate.
- 9 The village of Martha and Mary.
- 10 The place of a skull.
- 11 Where seven went fishing.
- 12 Near here Jesus asked His disciples whom they thought He was.
- 13 Jesus wept over it.
- 14 Province where Jesus began his ministry.
- 15 Where the Gararene demoniac made public what Jesus had done for him.

(Sent in by Sister Moncrieff, Haddington).

Answers to Quiz

- 1 The wilderness; 2 Nazareth; 3 Capernaum; 4 Emmaus; 5 Bethsaida; 6 Cana of Galilee; 7 Sychar; 8 Nain; 9 Bethany; 10 Golgotha; 11 Sea of Tiberias; 12

Caesarea Philippi; 13 Jerusalem; 14 Galilee; 15 Decapolis. Over ten is very good, more than five is fair, less than five—study your Bible.

ON FIRE FOR GOD

An old negro preacher of the deep South, who never had a worry about empty pews, always prayed this prayer before his sermon.

"Oh! Lawd, give Thy servant this mawnin', de eye of de eagle and de wisdom of de owl: connect his soul wif the gospel telefome in de central skies: 'luminate his brow with de sun of heaven: saturate his heart with love for all de people; turpentine his 'magination; grease his lips with 'possum; loosen him with de sledgehammer of Thy power; 'lectrify his brain with de lightnin' of Thy Word; put 'pettual motion in his arms; fill him plum full of de dynamite of gloree; 'noint him all over wif de kerosene oil of salvation and sot him on fire! Amen!"

Preachers today might well try such a prayer. Anyhow they are "standing in the need" of something — Selected

WHEN you get into hot water keep your mouth shut.

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