

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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AN IMPERFECT WORLD

We often wonder why the religious world is so divided, and why so many interpret the Bible so differently. When one considers the simplicity of the language employed in God's word one can only be astounded at the myriads of 'Christian' groups, cults and 'churches' which abound, all claiming to follow God's truth and all claiming to do it fairly exclusively. God's revelation is certainly most profound yet it is surely couched in very simple terms. Think of the theological division which rages and has always raged around what is known generally as the 'communion' and then read the clear account in the New Testament of its institution by our Lord. Jesus made the remembrance feast as simple and uncomplicated as one could imagine possible, yet it is one of the most fruitful areas for dispute and dissent. Thus the feast intended to bring followers of Christ together in fellowship has been made the cause of parting them asunder. In trying to sort out all the many problems of the early church in Corinth, Paul says "For first of all when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you: and I partly believe it. For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be manifest among you." (1 Cor. 11:18). Surely this is an interesting view the apostle Paul took of division in the churches — heresy imported by brethren merely highlights that of which God approves in faithful brethren. In similar vein in 1 John 2:19 we read (speaking of anti-Christ) "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Quite often when discussing the lamentable state of a religiously divided world we hear people say, "Why didn't God make His word so plain and emphatic that there would have been positively no room for error or misunderstanding"? God, of course, did make His word plain and emphatic but men have chosen to divide on it. By the very possibility of dividing on it integrity is capable of being identified. Men divide even upon matters where no division is necessary because of vested interest (clergy etc.). I think 'St. Augustine's golden rule' was "In doubtful questions, liberty: in essentials, unity: in all things, charity".

Not only could God have made His word such that division on it was impossible, but, by the same token, God *could* have made man (His creature) such that he could not err. For that matter, God *could* have made man such that he would be quite incapable of sin. Man *could* have been 'programmed' by God very like the way in

which we programme our computers but the fact is that God did not choose to do so. Apparently God did not want to people the earth with automatons or robots but wanted some completely independent response from His creation. The scriptures tell us that God wants our love, obedience, prayers, praise and adoration and that such things must spring unforced from free beings and come forth in response in our sheer delight in God and His goodness. We *could* have been 'programmed' to give praise but such praise would have been quite worthless. Friends can be bought but love cannot. Obedience can be demanded but respect cannot. The very rich have few friends and often die in recluse. It is said that they have few real friends because they never know whether someone is being friendly merely on account of their riches. Some very rich men might never be certain that their very wives love them (it is not unknown of course for a woman to marry a man for his money). Thus the really rich are, of necessity, very lonely men and suspect those close to them of having designs on their wealth. Similarly the powerful men in the world are often surrounded by 'Yes men' who nod at the right time and laugh at the right jokes. These 'Yes men' have, perhaps, schemes of their own, and as is common nowadays, may themselves be actually hatching up some coup d'état. Mostly, however, such 'Yes men' are motivated by fear of their masters. Yes, God *could* have programmed us so that we would have loved Him, or so that we would have obeyed Him but such love and obedience would have been as worthless as those who love the rich for their riches or those who, as 'Yes men', obey the powerful through self-interest. God left us, therefore, as completely free agents in the world, so that our love for Him would be true and spontaneous, and our obedience to Him would be free from fear or guile. The Prodigal Son lost his 'friends' as fast as he lost his money but his return to the father was wonderful and so genuine; completely vindicating God's decision not to make robots.

Some have also wished that more telling and tangible evidence existed regarding Jesus which would convince the world so much more readily. Such people doubtless welcome the interest and speculation caused recently by the Turin 'Shroud'. They complain that (apart from a brief mention by Josephus) the New Testament is the only source of information concerning Jesus. "If only we had a Photographic likeness" they say, "or a book or two written by him". When we see the awesome reverence given to alleged 'relics' by some religious bodies (the R.C. church for example), and when we remember that there are in the world enough little pieces of wood 'from the cross of Christ' to make a battleship, then perhaps we are glad that we have no photograph (had there been photography), painting, sketch, garment, statue, lock of hair, book, house, shoes or whatever else which may have belonged to our Lord. Such an item would now be revered much more than its owner. There is however a more compelling reason for there being no 'special' evidence of the existence and deity of Jesus. Christ's disciples walk BY FAITH and not by sight. If 'sight' is present, then faith has no virtue and is, in fact, an impossibility. Just as realisation extinguishes hope, actuality renders faith unnecessary. The evolutionist often tells us that *we cannot prove* that there is a God, or that *we cannot prove* that the Bible is God's word, or that *we cannot prove* that Jesus was God's Son, or that Jesus did any miracles: or that *we cannot prove* that Jesus rose from the grave, etc. etc. It is true that our belief in God and in His word, and in His Son Christ Jesus is based upon certain evidences, (which other men may disdain to accept) but that surely is what *faith* is. Obviously if we could see God, or touch God, or put Him in a box, or put Him under a microscope — then *faith* would be quite unnecessary. Did not Jesus say, "Thomas, because though hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, yet been believed."

Truely we live in an imperfect world but how else can perfection be sought? If the world was perfect the seeking and striving to perfection would not only be irrelevant but inconceivable. Men complain about the disease and pain which abound in the world; the poverty and starvation which exists in the world; the hatred and injustice which seems to reign in the world (and God doesn't seem to care): how the evil seem to flourish and the virtuous seem to flounder. Many of these maladies can, of course, be traced back to the Fall in Eden and many are self-induced, but regardless of their origin they make it possible *for good works to be done*. Dorcas was "a woman full of good works and alms-deeds which she did" only because of the poor in her vicinity. Misfortune and hardship are in the world so that we might pour out our good works upon them, so that we might alleviate the pain, treat the disease, feed the poor, redress the injustice, support the weak and comfort the lonely. Thus adversity not only tests the character of those undergoing it, but also allows others to bestow upon it their good deeds.

If therefore we fret about religious division in the world perhaps we can look at it as Paul seemed to do — that it exposed the heresies and highlighted the faithful. If we feel that God could have revealed more of Himself with 'hard' evidence let us remember faith is the very antithesis of 'sight' and is "the evidence of things not seen". We can be either depressed by living in an imperfect world, or we can see it as a challenge and an opportunity for indulging ourselves in all kinds of good works. There is much scope, is there not, for helping our fellowmen. *Editor*

GATHER THE FRAGRANCE

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys"

(Song of Solomon 2:1)

Have you seen a garden of rest for the blind? It is one in which only sweet scented flowers are planted so that they who cannot see can enjoy the fragrance of the flowers.

Come with me for a short while to the garden of God's word and let us gather the fragrance from the sweetest flower of all. Jesus is the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley, the altogether lovely one. He has come so that those who are blinded by sin may capture the sweet fragrance which He distils.

"Gather the fragrance from Jesus,
Gather the fragrance of life,
Learn how to live for others
Banishing hardship and strife."

Of Jesus, John says, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Jesus says, "I am come that you might have life, and have it in more abundance." What is this life of which He speaks?

Is it walking and resting, eating and drinking, existing day by day to enjoy the pleasures of this present world? Nay! It is more. It is sweet union with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to share in His fellowship and to enjoy His rich blessings.

As we read the story of Jesus we see how He lived for others. He had always time to give to them, healing their sickness, relieving their distress, sharing their sorrow and suffering. By doing so he showed that God cared and desired their happiness and joy. The dead were raised to life again, and in the three examples we are given of the daughter of Jairus, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus, we see one who had just died, one on the way to burial, and one in the state of corruption. All these had to respond to His voice, to testify that He is indeed the resurrection and the life. Let us breathe deeply of the fragrance of His life that we may have this life in ourselves.

“Gather the fragrance from Jesus,
Gather the fragrance of love,
Learn how to give to others
Visions of Heaven above.”

Jesus came to show us that God is Love. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but might have everlasting life.”

On countless war memorials the immortal words of Jesus have been carved, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Yet in the giving of their lives for their country there has also been the taking of the lives of others. The love of Jesus far surpasses this for He laid down His life for His enemies, giving His life that all might be saved. “God commendeth His own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” With the hymn-writer we would say, “Amazing love, How can it be that Thou, my God shouldst die for me?”

We love, because He first loved us. There is a story told of a small boy calling across a valley “I hate you” and receiving the reply “I hate you.” He ran home weeping and told his mother, who wisely advised him to go back and shout “I love you.” It is only an echo, but the answer depends on the call. Jesus calls I love you.

Let us deeply inhale the fragrance of His love and answer His call by saying “I love you.”

“Gather the fragrance from Jesus,
Gather the fragrance of peace,
Learn how to find with others
Blessings which never can cease.”

Jesus distils the sweet fragrance of peace. He is our peace making our peace with God through the blood of His cross. The barrier which kept Jews and Gentiles apart has been broken down. Those who were not of the select race which God chose to bring forth His Son; who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, without hope, and without God in this world, may now sit down together in heavenly places through Christ Jesus our Lord. Now also built up together a spiritual house upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone, to show forth the excellency of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His most marvellous light, having translated us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. It is here that Grace reigns and peace. A peace that the world cannot give, an everlasting peace.

The peace of Jesus grows sweeter day by day, which the tumult of the world with all its problems, perplexities, anxieties and cares, cannot suppress. It sails upon the troubled waters of life and brings the perfect calm which only Jesus can give.

Let us fill our inward souls with the fragrance of this peace that it may sweeten all our lives.

“Gather the fragrance from Jesus,
Gather the fragrance of joy,
Learn how to share with others
Fellowship none can destroy.”

In the presence of Jesus there is fullness of joy. This is one of the priceless gifts of the Spirit. There is so much sadness in the world brought on by sin. Sickness, disease and death create unhappiness to all people. In His lifetime Jesus made many people happy by the wonderful miracles which He performed. His ability to cure the mortal body was a token of His power to heal the sinsick soul, and to raise it to the habitation of God.

That there is a prepared home for a prepared people should fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory that fadeth not away. The trials of this life are not worthy of comparison with the joy that shall yet be revealed in us. The new life we entered upon at our baptism into Jesus Christ will have many tokens of the fuller life yet to come when our Lord returns. Then all things will become new. The Lord we have loved and served by faith we shall see and we shall find that eternity is too short to utter all His praise.

Breathe in my soul the fragrance of His joy and hope to the end until His joy be complete.

“Gather the fragrance from Jesus,
Spread it abroad through the earth,
So shall there be lives of beauty
Showing the dear Saviour’s worth.”

I well remember a dear brother in Tunbridge Wells who was always to be seen with a beautiful flower in the buttonhole of his coat. It was from his own garden and here he was carrying the fragrance to others.

The precious fragrance of Jesus which we have here gathered, we can wear upon our own life and character and thus bring to others the influence of the one whom we love so much.

What joy the gift of flowers bring into the lives of those in sadness, in sickness, in health. Silently they breathe out their message of love and of cheer.

What greater blessing will the fragrance of Jesus bring. Hope for the hopeless; life for the lifeless; upliftment for the downtrodden; happiness for the sad and distressed.

There is no secret about what God can do for us if only we will allow His power to work in our lives.

“Go gather the fragrance,
Gather the fragrance from Jesus,
Go gather the fragrance,
Gather the fragrance from Him.”

TOM KEMP
2.2.82

GLEANINGS

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” James 1:26.

We quote — Peter Mackenzie

“Now, this little member, this speaking apparatus, is only about six inches long by two inches broad. That is the average measurement of a man’s tongue ... If our speaking apparatus be rather small, however, there is a mighty force in connection with it, for we have no less than 3,240 languages, ... Over 3,200 languages! What a lot of work for the tongue there must be! ... Yes, life and death, social, moral, political, intellectual, spiritual life are in the power of the tongue. It has as keen an edge as that of a new patent Sheffield razor, a point as sharp as a spear, and an entrancing eloquence more fascinating than the liquid music of a nightingale ...

Hasty speech: We must take care lest we speak unadvisedly. Five words cost Zacharias forty weeks of silence. When the angel spoke to him, he said, “Whereby shall I know this?” And the angel shut his mouth so that he never spoke again until the baby cried, and he learned that he was the father of John the Baptist.”

“Two ears, and but a single tongue,
By nature doth to man belong:
The lesson she would teach is clear —
Repeat but half of what you hear.”

Someone has said

“We sow a thought and reap a word, we sow a word and reap a work, we sow a work and reap a habit, we sow a habit and reap a character, we sow a character and reap a destiny.”

W. Makepeace Thackeray.

The Tongue

“The Apostolic Epistles are filled with fearful warnings against sin in all its fascinating forms. There is a solemn admonition against the licentious use of the tongue — that small, though unruly member. The Apostle James has written wisely upon this point: his illustration of the intractability of this little member, is worthy of the Apostle — it is bold and graphic. God has never blessed us, nor will he ever bless us, for abusing any of the blessings and privileges he has been so kind as to confer upon us: he has always blessed us in the proper use of them. His comparisons are not dark and unintelligible: he selected examples well known to every one, the best calculated to produce deep and lasting impressions, and at the same time to exert a salutary influence upon the heart. “If any man” says the Apostle, “offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” — James 3.2. For the first example he selects the horse, and shows the manageableness of this noble animal. “Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body.”

Here we have a large and apparently ungovernable animal to manage. We put a small bit into his mouth, and turn about his body whithersoever we please — and can we not govern the tongue, can we not silence this diminutive member? Can we not extinguish this little spark that kindles up the angry passions of the heart? Ah! It is an unruly member. “Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great, are driven of fierce winds, yet they are turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.” Mark the great contrast between the unwieldy body to be governed, and the feeble power by which it is managed and turned about. A great ship rigged for the ocean, launches forth upon the fearful bosom of the briny deep, her wide spread canvass gathers the increasing breeze as she glides over the immense waters.

The gale becomes more violent, the sails are furled, the tempest is fearful, whilst the lonely vessel in the midst of angry billow every moment threatening to engulf her beneath their mountain waves, is driven by the fierce winds of the angry elements, but the helmsman is at his post guiding her with all those fearful odds against him. But the tongue moves unimpeded, unguided, and unrestrained, amidst the angry passions that war against the soul. “Even so the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.”

G.B.M.

Conversation

“Keep clear of personalities in conversation. Talk of things, objects, thoughts. The smallest minds occupy themselves with persons. Do not needlessly report ill of others. As far as possible dwell on the good side of human beings. There are family boards where a constant process of depreciating, assigning motives and cutting up character goes forward. They are not pleasant places. One who is healthy does not wish to dine at a dissecting table. There is evil enough in man, God knows. But it is

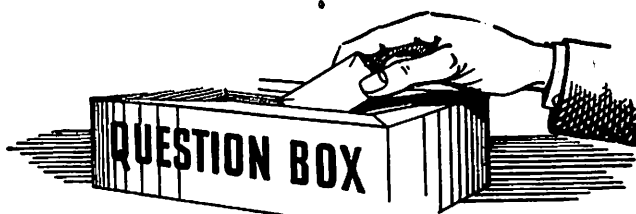
not the mission of every young man and woman to detail and report it all. Keep the atmosphere as pure as possible and fragrant with gentleness and charity.

— John Hall

Angry Words

“Angry words! Oh, let them never from the tongue unbridled slip;
 May the heart’s best impulse ever check them ere they spill the lip.
 Love is much too pure and holy, Friendship is too sacred far,
 For a moment’s reckless folly Thus to desolate and mar.
 Angry words are lightly spoken; Bitterest thoughts are rashly stirred;
 Brightest links of life are broken, By a single angry word.”

Selected by Leonard Morgan



Conducted by
 Alf Marsden

“I am a young Christian and I have my own opinion regarding the so-called “generation gap,” but I would like to hear your comments on this, and whether or not such a state of affairs is desirable so far as the Church is concerned.

Before we say anything meaningful on this subject we must know what we are discussing. What is a “generation gap?” Well, I think the questioner will have in mind a period of time some thirty years, and will be conscious of the fact that some assemblies have this sort of gap in age among their members, so that there will be a group of, say, sixty year olds and nothing between them and, say, thirty year olds, a state of affairs which is not uncommon in some assemblies. That such gaps do exist I have not the slightest doubt, so I think we must satisfactorily answer the questions (a) why, if there is a generation gap, does it exist, and (b) what effect does this have on the corporate assembly of Christians in any locality?

Why do Generation Gaps Exist?

If we are right in saying that ‘gaps’ refer to missing age ranges, then the answer which first springs to mind is that for a period of some years no one has been converted to Christ as a result of those assemblies activities. This in turn may suggest the idea that there has been a lack of evangelical zeal, which may or may not be true. A generation could be missing because families have moved out of the area. It could also be that married Church members have decided to have no children; or it could very well be that the children of Christian parents have decided that the Church is not for them.

As I see it, Churches of Christ in the British Isles fall into two categories. There are those long-established Churches with a strong family tradition and membership, and there are those more recently established Churches with a strong evangelical base. It would seem that the long-established Churches have lost quite a lot of their evangelical zeal, and consequently have relied almost exclusively on member’s children being converted in order to maintain some limited numerical increase. This has led to the situation where one or two large families, having strong Christian parental influence, have become predominant in the assemblies to which they

belong. This has encouraged those families to assume control of the particular assemblies, often to the detriment of other families who have not been quite so closely knit, and whose children, disenchanted with a situation over which they have no control, have left the Church, often to the profound sorrow of their parents. Thus, the gaps have been established in those assemblies.

On the other hand, the newer assemblies with a strong evangelical base have preached and taught the Message across the whole age spectrum, and consequently the response has been across the whole age range. Now to my mind these assemblies have a unique opportunity, if they can hold on to those members, to escape the so-called generation gap and thus to establish over a period of time a well-balanced and stable membership so far as the age ranges are concerned. In order to maintain this they must also maintain their evangelical zeal.

Is the 'Generation Gap' Desirable?

In view of the foregoing, the answer must be an unqualified no. It can never be desirable in the Church of Christ to lose any sort of continuity. Continuity of doctrine, for example, has been, and still should be, the main support of the Church, and this has been exemplified in the importance which we attach to God's Word, the Lord's Table, the Gospel, and the pastoral care and direction of the Church which is resident in the Leadership. The principle enunciated by the Deuteronomists regarding the inviolate nature of God's Word — which called for strict observance of His decrees, and which should be taught to their children, and their children's children — is as important to us as it was to them. But how can we ensure this if we have generations missing in some assemblies?

It is my belief that we should re-examine our objectives so far as response to the Gospel is concerned. It is perfectly clear that the scriptural injunction, "whosoever will may come" is vitally important, but is there anything wrong with an assembly aiming its Gospel effort at certain age groups which are missing in that assembly. Or, for that matter, is there anything wrong with aiming the effort at a particular sex, if the opposite sex is numerically predominant in the assembly? Some assemblies seem to be irrevocably tied to the 6.00 p.m. Lord's Day Gospel Meeting, and rather tragically they seem to have opted out of the Gospel scene at any other time; the attitude in such assemblies seems to be that if people come into the Gospel Meeting, well and good; if they don't, then the members can carry on undisturbed with their normal living. You may think that this is a harsh judgement, but surely it is incumbent upon every assembly of Christians to update its objectives and in the ultimate to act to preserve its continuity as an assembly. If we as individuals take pleasure in leaving a stable and well-ordered situation within our families when we die, why should we think that anything less desirable would be acceptable for the Church which, after all, is the beloved family of God.

Some Difficulties

The so-called 'generation gap' leads to certain difficulties which can have a retarding effect on the well-being of the assembly. The most serious difficulty is, perhaps, the gap in age itself. I think we are all aware that there is a marked antipathy between the old and the young, and that this is on the increase in our modern society; there is no reason to believe that the Church is immune from the difficulty, and we need to recognise it for what it is. How does this exhibit itself in the Church?

Firstly, it is in the nature of the old to look back, and in the young to look forward, and therein we find our first problem. How do we reconcile the view to two distant horizons? The larger the age gap, the deeper will be the problem. I suggest that initially we recognise that the problem exists, and then take practical steps to

alleviate it. The older Christian, rather than pining for his own lost youth, should be trying to lead the present young into experience and maturity. Younger Christians might have the desire to lead if they could see a prospect of leadership in the future. But what do we see? The older leader, even though age may have dimmed the perception and illness the physique, still clings to office when reason demands that he should graciously step down and perhaps employ his experiences and maturity in an advisory capacity. Doesn't this make sense when there is undoubted potential and drive in younger Christians. Or does our ego tell us that no one else could possibly do as well as we?

Secondly we should try to understand each other better. The old have borne the burden and the heat of the day over many years. They may have sacrificed much for the Church. This shouldn't make them expect to be worshipped because of the effort they may have made, but at least they have a right to be understood when they try to guard the things they have fought for. On the other hand, the young want to sacrifice things for the Church and they also have a right to be understood in their desire to promote the cause of their Saviour. If we can bring together the wisdom and maturity of age and the exuberance and drive of youth, then there is nowhere that the Church cannot make an impact.

Yes, there probably are 'generation gaps,' but we should not continually bemoan the fact that there are, but rather we should take positive steps to rectify the position and so present a united front in the unceasing battle against sin.

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

JOY

The experience of joy is highly sought after, consequently the joy the Christian should seek is the deep spiritual joy that God can give.

In living, we have all experienced the effect of joy in our lives. Even those outwith the Church may experience joy, albeit of no lasting effect.

Words may express joy. In the Hebrew language, I am told, up to ten different words express the word 'joy.' One writer states that the Israelites had more words for joy in their language than any other people of their day, yet strange it may seem, they rarely experienced great joy of lasting consequence. Shunted about, persecuted, they suffered greatly; much brought upon themselves.

The range of feelings related to joy in the bible is varied. They include gladness, mirth, peace, contentment, good cheer and exuberance. The concept of "shining" and "springing about" are also included.

In study, we find most bible references refer mainly to joy in the natural sense. The others, however, related to a deeper spiritual joy in the moral and spiritual sense. There are many wonderful spiritual truths to be found. The sincere Christian needs, as the Bereans, "To search the scriptures."

The Fountain of Joy

Joy, Joy, my heart is full of joy,
 Joy, Joy, my heart is full of joy,
 My Saviour dear, is ever near,
 That's the reason why my heart is full of joy.

Brethren, can we sing these words sincerely from the heart? If not we are indeed missing out on so much. Jesus is the fountain of joy. He is the source. Let us be like the explorers of old and seek the source of the water of life.

Heaven is a place of joy; the scriptures confirm that it is the "wellspring" of all our rejoicing. The angelic response to creation was great joy.

"All the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7

Heavens response to *salvation* was great joy.

"Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:7.

The angels sang at the great birth.

"Good tidings of great joy." Luke 2:10.

Joy abounds to all who would seek the Lord Jesus.

In reality however, our journey through life here on earth may not always be joyful. It may, and no doubt at times, be filled with tension and hardship. However, in faith, we may know that great joy awaits us in heaven.

Jesus stated. "Enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Mat. 25:21.

From Heaven real joy is the experience of those of the Kingdom. Brethren, we have much to be joyous about.

Fullness of Joy

The fullness of joy comes from being attuned to the presence, power and word of the Lord. Do we follow Jesus? Oh yes, but how far behind in the footsteps. Or is it that we have fallen far behind with blessings few and far between, with joy on the wane. Loss of joy comes through loss of contact with God. This has happened to many. We remember the case of King David. Sin destroyed his happiness and peace, and he cried: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." Psalm 51:12.

Joy did return through confession, cleansing and forgiveness. Perhaps we need to recall this lesson today. God's word relates "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. John 25:11.

"In thy presence is fullness of joy." Psalm 16:11.

The Christian who is experiencing joy is that soul who is relying upon His word, who is resting in the confidence of God's strength.

Fellowship of Joy

There should be a real sense of joy whenever Christians meet. Real joy resides in the community of believers. As I write, my mind relates to the joy of our own annual socials at Newtongrange. The gathering of the saints creates real joy.

"Fulfil ye my joy that ye be likeminded." Phil. 2:2.

Function of Joy

The practical lesson of scripture is that joy is related to trials, testing and tears. Trouble and joy, it seems, go hand in hand. Seed sown in trouble may end with a harvest of joy.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into various trials." Jas. 1:2.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Psalm 126:5.

Christian joy is not a fleeting emotion, it is an attitude to life. It is an inner strength and assurance that blessing awaits the individual who seeks aright the Kingdom.

The psalmist of old suggests that weeping endures for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5. It may be that night refers to this life and morning the new ahead, eternal life in God's presence.

The function of joy is that we might be built up in faith, assurance, so that we in turn will indeed reach that heavenly home prepared by God himself.

A. P. Sharp
Newtongrange.

UNLESS we pray for others we are lacking in that spirit in which alone we can pray hopefully for ourselves, and we are living in neglect of a prime duty to God's dear ones who need and deserve our prayers. — Clay Trumbull.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

FOR APRIL, 1982

4 Exodus 34, 21-30	II Cor. 3
11 Jeremiah 38, 1-13	II Cor. 4
18 II Kings 2, 1-15	II Cor. 5
25 Nehemiah 10, 28-39	II Cor. 6

The Glorious Ministry

Ministry is SERVICE. The Son of Man came to serve, not to be served (Matt. 20, 28). His was the lowest place, and therefore the HIGHEST (Phil. 2, 5-11). Service to the humblest child is service to Jesus, and therefore glorious. But what a triumphant ministry Paul's had been at Corinth and elsewhere (2, 14), and what a responsibility (2, 15 & 16)! The existence of that church, the blessings received by the members, and the radical change in their lives were the result of his unpaid labours. What more effective letter of recommendation could there be than these visible results of the Holy Spirit's work? Some had exalted the Mosaic law but its glory had passed in more senses than one. The physical acts of obedience, had brought condemnation upon Israel, but the gospel had brought terrors of Sinai by their greatness, and its strict insistence upon physical forgiveness and eternal life to light. God had glorified Jesus in the supreme act of submission to the cross, preceded by the life of perfect love and holiness (John 12, 28). That Paul was displaying the reflection of Jesus to which he refers (3, 18) there can be no doubt. This letter of his abundantly proves it. Let us humbly endeavour to display the same for that is the privilege and duty of every professional follower.

The Earthen Vessels

We may well feel that Paul is "blowing his own trumpet" and undoubtedly he did himself feel that it was so (12, 1 & 11). However in the interests of truth it was needful. Behind it all is a deep

humility, a consciousness of absolute dependence upon God. Satan's ministers had been to Corinth with the errors Paul was compelled to deal with in "First Corinthians," and he knew the evil influences were still at work. They would have to be dealt with in person if this letter does not serve its purpose (12, 20 & 21). How persistent and acceptable are human errors which feed upon our pride. The teaching of Jesus requires the continuous application of self-denial. Paul's insistence upon his absolute honesty is made necessary by the insistence of his enemies that his work is for his own interests. They perhaps cannot think of his endurance of hardship being purely unselfish and due to love for God, Christ and those to whom he preaches. The little tent-maker who laboured assiduously at his task to ensure sufficient food for himself and his companions was carrying through almost insurmountable trials the priceless treasure of God's message of Life — eternal life, love joy and peace — to his fellowmen, in many cases with persecution and violence (4, 8 & 9). Death, so to speak, continually stared him in the face while he was carrying "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" (4, 6). Sometimes he was suffering bodily infirmity but even that made him serve the more. The weak and possibly unsightly body bore the message effectively for his sufficiency was from God (3, 5 & 6; Gal. 4, 13 & 14).

The Sustaining Hope

"We do not lose heart" because we have received this ministry (4, 1). God chose and appointed Paul for his special mission in the church. It was this personal sacred commission which authorised him. Some had alleged it was just his own claim, possibly using the fact he was not "one of the twelve." We have noticed his emphasis "I received of the Lord" (I Cor. 11, 23; 15, 3). That he was obeying the Lord prevented him ever losing heart (4, 16) whatever the trials might be. His conscience was clear while he carried out the ministry but he

remained conscious that strict discipline was essential — and failure a possibility (I Cor. 9, 26 & 27). When awaiting death we assume at Ephesus (Acts 19, 30 & 31; 15, 32), he had no fear for the assurance of resurrection to glory was with him. He had no fear of the judgement (5, 10) for he regarded the affliction of the moment light in comparison with the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (4, 17). The hymn-writer has expressed the thought, “and daily pitch my moving tent, a day’s march nearer home”, and though filled up with duty and care of earthly business — the Lord’s — that was his steadfast background (5, 8). What a stimulant to christian behaviour this must be to us also! This is the other worldliness which makes us most useful while here, reminding us of G. Y. Tickle’s hymn “Jesus Thy love so rich and free, might us constrain on bended knee, to plead with men to come to Thee, for Thou hast love for all”. (796 in 1908: 162 in Wigan Book 1957). Christians may be accused of thinking too much of heaven, but it would do them no harm to consider it more earnestly. The sad decline in the Christ-oriented religious world, now being more and more infiltrated with other religions, sceptical attitudes and strange cults is surely due to worldliness, and failure to give priority to eternal reality.

The Longing Heart

“O Corinthians!” The care of all the churches was in that heart but for a time these brethren and sisters had a first place. Even the call to preach at Troas was set aside because of the deeper concern for their spiritual welfare. In spite of the joy which Titus brought (ch. 7) Paul was longing for deep-seated changes in some of the members. So much had been accepted as true about him, which he is making sure by this letter should be corrected, that he longed to have loving response from all. The majority had given obedience and accepted rebuke. He was being entirely frank in all he writes, and it is not a selfish wish to get the better of his

enemies but to bring about a holy relationship of love and harmony. Sometimes an outside harmony is secured by a compromise but there is restraint because the feelings have not really changed. We think that is what the expressions (A.V.) mean. Note the effort in A.V. to make the closeness appear by adding “my” to children. The appeal is preceded by a list of troubles which show the depth of feelings experienced in the course of Paul’s journeyings, all on behalf of those he loves so dearly. There may seem to be a disconnection at verse 14 (ch. 6). The things which have caused grief in that church have a close connection with the life habits of the Corinthians, which from heathen influences must have been hard for the christians to break away from. Therefore it was necessary to demand a very definite separation. With the vast change over the years in civilised nations nominally christian, there is still the call for separation, not the “holier than thou” attitude but certainly a firm stand against all the evils which surround us, and our permissive society seems indeed to be drifting into “corinthianism” — immoral standards. How large a proportion of national prosperity is sunk in gambling, drinking and doubtful “sport”!

R. B. SCOTT

A CHRISTIAN APPEAL

From the Church of Christ, Burn’s Street, Ilkeston, Derbys.

We earnestly appeal to our Sister churches for financial assistance, in our dire need, for we regret to say the recent inclement weather has dealt us a severe blow, in damage to our heating system, the frost has left us with damage to the boiler, pump, and burst pipes.

At the time of writing the engineer informs us the cost of putting this in order once again will cost about £900, Nine hundred pounds, and this is beyond our means.

We are conscious about making this appeal for we remember during 1979, being left with an account for a new roof on the church for £3,500, this again at that time was beyond our means, yet it was very much needed for the weather was seeping through the whole roof and could not be patched up, so we reluctantly asked our Sister churches for a donation, and thanks to our heavenly Father it was these donations that gave us courage, and together with the cash that we had, and the donations, we approached the roofing contractor, and arranged to pay the amount by monthly installments, this took us two years to settle in full.

About fifteen months ago we decided being free of all debt to install Gas Central Heating at a cost of £2,300, and together with our cash in hand we borrowed from the bank the balance, our deeds being held by the bank as security, this debt is now being paid and with God's blessing will be settled in another Twenty Eight months.

The position now makes our financial position an herculean task but with Faith in God and prayers we hope to keep our Church open.

We were encouraged some four months ago to add a soul to our present numbers and we are strengthened in the knowledge that some three years ago we had but six members and now we have fourteen at that time we had no Sunday School we now have about sixteen scholars.

This again gives us Christian determination to press on, for God has blessed us and we feel that HE will be continue to do so, we have good reason to love the brotherhood, and thankful that the Lord has worked it out to the extent that the future is not dark, but shines bright, for all who simply seek to make Jesus, absolute Lord and Master.

So in view of the state of our hall we respectfully seek any donation that may be given and would very sincerely thank any donor.

Please forward to:

W. S. Bradley,
212, Park Road,
Ilkeston,
Derbys. DE7 5GQ

THE DEATH OF MRS PRAYER MEETING

MRS Prayer Meeting died at First Neglected Church, on Worldly Avenue. Born many years ago in the midst of great revivals, she was a strong, healthy child, fed largely on testimony and Bible study, soon growing into worldwide prominence and was one of the most influential members of the church family.

For the past several years Sister Prayer Meeting has been failing in health, gradually wasting away until rendered helpless by stiffness of knees, coldness of heart, inactivity and weakness of purpose and will-power.

At the last she was but a shadow of her former happy self. Her last whispered words were enquiries concerning the strange absence of her loved ones now busy in the marts of trade and places of worldly amusements.

Experts, including Dr. Works, Dr. Reform and Dr. Joiner, disagreed as to the cause of her fatal illness, administering large doses of organisation, socials contests and drives, but to no avail. A post mortem showed that a deficiency of spiritual food coupled with the lack of faith, heartfelt religion and general support, were contributing causes.

Only a few were present at her death, sobbing over memories of her past beauty and power.

In honour of her going, the church doors will be closed on Wednesday nights, save on the third Wednesday of each month when the ladies Pink Lemonade Society serves refreshments to the men's handball team.

R. L. MCKINLEY

TREASURERS REPORT AND BALANCE SHEET FOR 1981

You will see below our financial report for last year. I would like to give you some additional explanation to show the financial position of the magazine.

First, I would like to point out that the bank balances and the cash-in-hand which we carry over to this year are largely due to brethren and Churches who subscribed in December for 1982. They DO NOT show the surplus left over from 1981 contributions. The December issue was paid in January 1982 so when this was deducted from the 1981 contributions we had approximately £80 left. This was the reason we had to raise the subscription rate. Unfortunately when we raise the price our circulation falls.

Can you help us increase our readership by encouraging someone to subscribe or by suggesting to someone who finds it too expensive to share the cost of a copy with a friend? We send approx. 30 copies each month to our brethren in third world countries and mission stations free of charge. Please let me know if you would like to 'adopt' one of these subscriptions. Any other suggestions you have would be welcome.

I would like to say a word of special thanks to those brethren at home and overseas who already send gifts of money to help us keep the 'Standard' in print.

We look forward to a year of new blessings in His Service. Thank you.

INCOME

EXPENDITURE

Balance b/f		£733.16	W. Barker (Printer)	£1968.71	
Subscriptions	£1834.42		Petty Cash	220.00	£2188.71
Gifts	158.49		Balance in Dep. A/c.	233.44	
Bank interest	85.70	2078.61	Balance in Cur. A/c.	191.12	424.56
			Cash in Hand		198.50
		£2811.77			£2811.77

DETAIL OF PETTY CASH

Cash in Hand 1/1/81	£10.87	Postage	224.03
Drawn from Bank 1981	220.00	Stationery	6.84
	£230.87		£230.87

Treasurer J. K. Kneller

Auditor J. McLuckie

ABRAHAM did not know whither he went but he knew with whom he was going.

PARADOXES IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

He who is the Bread of Life began His ministry hungering.

He who gives the Water of life said: "I thirst".

He who was weary is our true rest.

He who prayed hears our prayers.

He who was led as a lamb to the slaughter is the Good Shepherd.

He who was sold for thirty pieces of silver redeemed the world.

He who died destroyed the power of death.

TO say religion is the cure for the ills of the world and to be no more specific is like the doctor who examines the patient who is dying, taking out his prescription book, writing "Medicine" and handing it to the dying man.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield.: The church here rejoices in another soul won for the Lord. On the evening of Lords Day 31st January, Mrs. Joan Blackburn made the great confession and was immersed into Christ. We thank the Lord for the power of His word and pray that our Sister may be given grace to live the christian life to his praise. — T. Woodhouse (Secy).

Tranent, Scotland: The church here were overjoyed at the baptism on Sunday evening (31st January) of Miss Lorna Kerr (15 yrs.) daughter of sister Elleen Kerr, and we hope and pray that she will remain faithful and be a great asset to the Lord. — J. Colgan.

OBITUARY

Blackburn, Lancs.: With deep regret we record the passing of our dear sister

Esther Wilson (aunt Essie as she was affectionately known) just a few weeks short of her 92nd birthday. She was the devoted wife of our late brother Slater Wilson and although baptised 77 years ago (which is longer than many of us live) she remained true to the Lord all that time. She was a good example to all who knew her; always ready to discuss her Lord, and cheerfully endured her infirmities (albeit having had two strokes in the last few years). Until her illhealth she attended the Lord's table regularly even though she stayed in an adjacent town (Darwen). She leaves behind her a son 'Jack' and two daughters, Peggy and Betty, and these we leave in the Father's love and care. 'Aunt Essie' passed away on Jan 29th and was laid to rest on Feb. 3rd, 1982. Brother Roy Renshaw conducted the services both at the chapel and at the crematorium. She will be missed by the church for a long time to come but she left an example others are trying to follow. — H. N. Holden.

Buckie, Scotland: With sad hearts we record the passing of our beloved sister Sheila Innes, at the age of 61 years. Sheila had been ill for some time, but bore her illness with great courage and fortitude. She became a Christian when she was fifteen years old, and has remained faithful all her days. Eldest daughter of our late brother and sister Peter Innes, she leaves two sisters Margaret and Ethel, who tended so faithfully to her. Our prayer is that the bereaved will be upheld by the 'Everlasting Arms' and that they will find consolation and true comfort in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Without a cloud between,
Lord Jesus haste the day;
The morning bright without a cloud,
And chase our tears away.

The service in the Meeting Place was taken by brother John Geddes and at the burial by William Mair. — J. Geddes.

BIRTH

On Saturday, 6th February, 1982, to Jim and Maimie SINCLAIR (nee Strachan) a son Moray James at Kettering Maternity Unit. Bill and Margaret Strachan of Buckie are delighted to be grandparents, as are Jimmy and Elsie Sinclair of Tranent, and Mary Jean Reid of Buckie is delighted to be a great-grandmother. John Kneller will, of course, be the rich uncle. Jim and Maimie's new address is: 213 St John's Road, KETTERING, Northants, NN15 5AW.

READING THE BIBLE

WHO that ever read the tale of the Prodigal Son failed to remember it?

No literature, no book was ever so well-knit as the New Testament, no library richer than the Bible. Fine literature it may be, but this goes for nothing if we do not make it so by fair reading. It is a sober fact that not only the church but civilisation is built upon it. "Reading maketh a full man." Shall we be content with a Sunday ration? No feast is richer than the Bible.

(Advert by Book Tokens Ltd)

SOCIAL

Tranent, Scotland: on Saturday, 20th March, at 4 p.m. in the Tranent Primary School. Speakers: John Geddes, Buckie and Leonard Morgan, Wigan.

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

Oxford Street, Brighton: on Saturday, 3rd April, 1982, 5 p.m. for 6.30 p.m. Speakers R. B. Scott and D. L. Daniell.

SOCIAL

Slamannan, Scotland, on Saturday, 22nd May, at 4 p.m. All welcome. Details of speakers to follow later. — J. Wilson.

THE Lord's purpose in coming to dwell in your heart is to enable you to do His work. There are those who think only in terms of the joy of sitting at His feet and hearing His Word, and becoming Pietists or Quietists, without a thought of the activity which should result from dwelling in the King's presence. — A. T. Houghton.

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