

# The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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## THINGS HIGHLY COMMENDABLE

I suppose there are very few of us who do not suffer from vanity in some form or another, and doubtless we all like to be commended now and again. Some exploit this weakness of human nature and push commendation to the point of thinly disguised flattery. Jesus often *condemned* what He heard and saw; sometimes *commended* what He heard or saw but never flattered. Unlike flattery, commendation is quite legitimate but suffers if overdone. There are qualities of character we see in others which fill us with a warm glow, not least the complete innocence of very small children. Parents, for instance, are always very pleased to receive some unsolicited remark from some outside source that their children are well-mannered, industrious and kind. Jesus was similarly pleased to see in humanity that which was well pleasing and He was not blind to the virtues of men as well as the vices. Jesus delighted in that which was good and wholesome, and when He encountered these attributes in men He commented on it with pleasure. I believe that we can profit as much by considering what Jesus commended as by what Jesus condemned, and in this short little article I propose to direct attention to the circumstances and qualities He encountered which caught His eye and brought forth His commendation. What, then, were the characteristics which brought praise and compliments from the lips of the Master? By what was He favourably impressed?

### REMARKABLE FAITH

Probably the best known commendations of Jesus relate to the degree and depth of faith displayed by the Centurion and the Syrophenician woman, all the more remarkable because neither of them were *'of the people of God'* but were Gentiles. Indeed the Centurion, as his title suggests, was a Roman soldier. Luke tells us (Chap. 7) that this Centurion had a servant near to death and when he heard of Jesus he sent unto Him some Jewish elders to beseech Jesus to come and save the servant. The Jewish elders recommended that Jesus should do this on account that the Centurion was a worthy cause. **"For he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue."** When Jesus was not far from the house the Centurion, knowing that Jews would not be disposed to enter the house of a Gentile, asked Jesus not to trouble coming into his unworthy house but merely to say the words and he knew that his servant would be healed. **"When Jesus heard these things He marvelled and turned around, and said to those that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."** This was praise indeed when the faith of a Roman officer exceeded the faith of Israelites. Jesus **'Marvelled'** at this man and Jesus only **'marvelled'** twice in the New Testament - the other occasion being when He marvelled at the unbelief of the Jews (Mark 6.6).

Matthew (Chap. 15) tells us, that on *the only* occasion when Jesus during His ministry

went outside Palestine, that Jesus went into the coast of Tyre and Sidon and encountered the Syrophenician woman (a woman of Canaan) who followed Him crying **“Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”** This Gentile woman acknowledged Jesus as Lord and **“the son of David”** which was more than the Jews did. However Jesus ignored her for some time and his disciples urged Him to send her away because she was becoming a source of annoyance. Eventually Jesus explained to the woman that He had come to the lost sheep of Israel and she was thus excluded from His mission. The woman persisted however and Jesus had again to explain that He could not possibly take the **“children’s bread and give it to dogs.”** The astute woman accepted the inference that the Jews were God’s children and regarded Gentiles as dogs but still she persisted and countered our Lord’s words with **“Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.”** With this wonderful and ingenious retort our Lord conceded ‘game set and match,’ and in surrendering completely said, **“O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”** Her faith certainly was *great* - she had approached Him with hesitation being a Gentile: she had been rebuffed twice but she still pleaded when obstacles had been presented and had *persisted* in waiting at the feet of Jesus until He had mercy. What a wonderful example.

#### PENITENCE AND HUMILITY

One of the best known of Jesus’ parables, directed in this case to those who considered themselves righteous and despised others, must be the parable concerning the Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee in his prayer thanked God that he was not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even publicans. He fasted twice a week and gave tithes of all that he possessed. Righteous as he undoubtedly was he disgusted God with his pride and with his disdain of others. Much more to God’s liking was the Publican, sinner as he was, who stood afar off with downcast eyes and who smote his breast with anguish for his sins, and cried **“God be merciful to me a sinner.”** Jesus certainly commended the Publican and said that he went down to his house **“more justified”** than the Pharisee. God cannot exalt those who exalt themselves - He can only exalt the truly humble. Is it possible that there are some in the Church who, like the Pharisee, consider themselves righteous and despise others?

#### SACRIFICIAL GIVING

The late brother Crosthwaite used to say that we should give until it hurts, but that some of us were too easily hurt. Mark tells us (Chap. 12) how Jesus on one occasion, sat beside the Jewish Treasury and watched the multitudes putting their money offerings therein. He noticed how many that were rich cast in much. And then there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites which make a farthing. The Greek word from which the word ‘poor’ (poor widow) is translated means abject poverty, well below the bread line and in imminent danger of real starvation. Thus we can perhaps understand why Jesus called her to the attention of his disciples and said **“Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast in to the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance: but she of her want did cast in *all that she had, even all her living.*”** The widow was quite oblivious to the fact that Jesus was closely observing what was put into the treasury and by whom, and was equally unaware that her two mites had brought forth this splendid panegyric from the Lord. Church collections might be greatly enhanced if we thought that Jesus was standing by watching what we put in. To God, the gift, or contribution, into His treasury is measured **not by its intrinsic value but by the sacrifice made to give it.** Although she was a destitute widow, verging on starvation, she cast all that she possessed into God’s treasury, obviously with complete trust in God’s providential care. Many Christians have extravagant houses, cars, gadgetry and pastimes but the widow was

*extravagant in giving*, and she little thought that men would be writing about her 2,000 years later.

### WORKS AND GRATITUDE

On the Saturday before the crucifixion Jesus was in Bethany in the house of one Simon the leper, having been invited there for a meal and (as he ate) Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed His feet and His head with spikenard, a very expensive ointment from an alabaster box. Jesus' disciples were indignant at the extravagant act and Judas voiced their protest and demanded to know why such a waste had been allowed, pointing out the charitable use to which value of the ointment could have been put. Jesus reminded the assembly that the poor are always present in the world for those with charitable intentions but He was soon to cruelly die and Mary had come beforehand to anoint His body for the burial. **"She hath wrought a good work on Me,"** said Jesus, **"She hath done what she could."** *There was not much Mary could do* - she could not alter the course of future events and she certainly could not prevent the crucifixion, but out of feelings of love, anguish and gratitude for Jesus *she did what she could*. Very often we are likewise powerless to influence future events albeit we can see them coming - yet we must do what we can. Mary would always be grateful to Jesus for bringing her brother Lazarus back from the grave and all she could think to do for Him was to expend upon Him this valuable possession she had - the spikenard ointment. Her act was therefore one of kindness, gratitude and deep love. Because she had done for Jesus what she could, Jesus said that **the incident would be immortalised in the form of a memorial for her** (not a marble statue or plaque in the wall), **but wheresoever and whensoever in the world the gospel would be preached, her loving action would also receive mention.** "She did what she could" for Jesus - what an eternal epitaph.

### WHAT ABOUT US?

And so Jesus was astonished at the faith of a Roman soldier: won over by the persistence of the Syrophenician woman: impressed favourably by the sacrificial giving of the pauper widow: protective of the woman criticised for "doing what she could" and ready to commend the humility of the publican. All of this assures us that Jesus is just as capable of recognising real qualities when he sees them, as He is at recognising all kinds of pretence and humbug. In short, Jesus was as ready to commend as He was to condemn.

Jesus also commented on the innocency of children and stressed that men would have to become childlike (not childish) in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus rejoiced also in persons like Nathanael and said when He met him, **"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."** This, strange as it may seem, can't be said of all those who claim to follow Jesus. There is, perhaps, more scheming and political "wheeling-and-dealing" in the Vatican than anywhere else in the world, and who knows if any religious order is entirely free from it - even churches of Christ. When Jesus encountered the rich young ruler who came running to him and claimed to have kept the law **"from his youth up"** Jesus **"loved him"** - not because he was rich. And so we could go on. Surely when we consider the *qualities and attributes* which won the admiration and approval of Jesus, we must wonder if there is any such quality in us which Jesus could commend, and this certainly is a good exercise. Do we have a selfish lifestyle - do we *care* about others as Jesus did? In Burns' poem entitled *Holy Willie's Prayer*, Willie prayed only **"For me and mine."** What is there about us that Jesus could *not only approve* but take the trouble to actually *commend*. Others may commend us, and indeed we may commend ourselves, but it is important that God should be able to commend us, for, as Paul says (in 2 Cor. 10:18) **"For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom God commendeth."** And Jesus (in the commendation of the unjust steward: (Luke 16) refers to the fact the worldly-wise are actually wiser than "the children of light" and show much more effort, interest and initiative

in their worldly pursuits, than Christians show in the things pertaining to God and life everlasting. Enough to make us think.

EDITOR.

## GLEANINGS

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

### THESE THINGS

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Peter 1:8

### THE BIBLE SPEAKS

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if *these things* be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh *these things* is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do *these things*, ye shall never fall."

2 Peter 1:4-10

### J. H. JOWETT

"Then if a man possess these things he is consequently endowed with sight. Every supplied grace enlarges the spiritual vision. Every refinement of the disposition is the acquirement of an extra lens. And now I think of it, my text is like a vast drawn-out telescope, with lens after lens added, ever contributing to the intensity and extension of its range. See how it runs: "Add *virtue*, and *knowledge*, and *temperance*, and *patience*, and *godliness*, and *love* of the brethren, and *love*!" What seeing power a man will gain with a telescope like this! . . . Lacking "*these things*," bread is bread alone; let these things be added, and our daily bread becomes a sacrament through which we see the very beauty of the Christ . . . let "*these things*," be added, and we can see its issue in "*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*." . . . "WHEREFORE, BRETHREN, GIVE THE MORE DILIGENCE."

### IN REMEMBRANCE

"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of *these things*, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you by putting you in remembrance;

Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

2 Peter 1:12-15

### SOMEONE HAS SAID

"The simple gospel which saves sinners also feeds saints."

"Empty buckets are fittest for the well of grace."

C.H.S.

"Teach self-denial and make its practice pleasurable and you create for the world a

destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer."

Sir W. Scott

"God's leadings lead to God's glory."

William Law

### EYE-WITNESSES OF HIS MAJESTY

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His Majesty.

For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy, where unto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

2 Peter 1: 16-19

Selected by Leonard Moragn

## THE "IFS" IN YOUR LIFE

If you are not a Christian, you can be saved by *accepting* and *obeying* the Lord Heb. 5:9, for He is the Saviour of the body, the Church Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18 You can be *added* to the Church Acts 2:47, IF you will *believe* ("Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," Heb. 11:6), IF you will *repent* or turn away from your sins ("The time of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent," Acts 17:30), IF you will *confess* your faith in Jesus ("I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," Acts 8:37), and IF you will be *baptized* ("He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark 16:16).

IF you are already a Christian, there are still some IFS to your eternal life. Yes, there are those who try to make John 5:24; John 10:28-29; and John 3:16,36 teach that there are no IFS to one's salvation after he has become a Christian, but by considering those verses prayerfully and then compare them with the following verses, you will see that there are some IFS to eternal life. All of these verses teach, "Ye shall never perish if . . . "

- IF YE CONTINUE -

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my work, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

- IF A MAN KEEPS MY SAYINGS -

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death" (John 8:51).

- IF YE LOVE ME -

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

- IF A MAN LOVE ME -

"Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

-IF A MAN ABIDE NOT -

"If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men

gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). See verse seven also.

- IF YE KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS -

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

- YE ARE MY FRIENDS IF -

"Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

- IF GOD SPARED NOT -

"If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" (Romans 11:21).

- IF THOU CONTINUE -

"Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou shalt be cut off" (Romans 11:22)

- IF YE KEEP IN MEMORY -

"By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:2).

- IF WE HAVE BEEN PLANTED -

"If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5).

- WE SHALL REAP IF -

"Let us not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

- HOLY and UNBLAMEABLE and UNREPROVABLE IF -

"And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight; if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Col. 1:21-23).

- FOR NOW WE LIVE IF -

"For now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thess. 3:8).

- HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF -

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . .?" (Heb 2:1-3).

- WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE IF -

"But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6).

- PARTAKERS OF CHRIST IF -

"For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14)

- IF ANY MAN DRAW BACK -

"Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38). "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

- IF ANY OF YOU DO ERR FROM THE TRUTH -

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

- IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT -

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

- WE KNOW HIM IF -

"And hereby we do know that we know Him; if we keep His commandments. He that saith I know Him and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3,4).

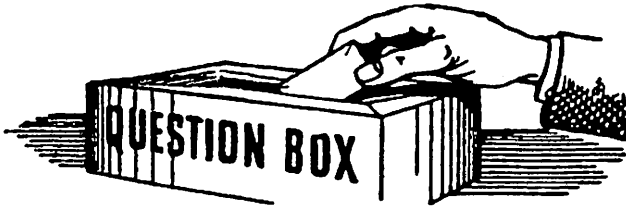
- IF THAT WHICH YE HAVE HEARD SHALL REMAIN -

"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye shall also continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1 John 2:24)

- IF ANY MAN TAKE AWAY -

"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:19).

L. Green




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Conducted by  
Alf Marsden

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"What is really meant by the expression Paul uses when he says  
'I am crucified with Christ'?"

We had better give the whole expression from Gal. 2:20, which reads, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me". We shall need to consider all the implications of this statement in detail.

#### Crucified With Christ

When a person had been convicted, and the death penalty passed, crucifixion was the method employed in those days for ensuring death. It is quite evident that it was the mortal body of Jesus which died on the Cross; it is equally evident that mortal man could not destroy the Divine life which Jesus had received from His Father. It then becomes clear that the Divine nature (of which Jesus never divested Himself) had within it the seeds of the Resurrection. It is this fact, perhaps, which is the greatest hope of the Christian's life in Christ.

Paul uses the expression, "I am crucified with Christ". What is the 'I' to which Paul refers? It is quite evident that he is not referring to his mortal body because that was still intact. No, Paul makes much of the duality of natures; he refers in a number of places to the 'old man' and the 'new creature'. The 'I' which is crucified with Christ is the 'old man', "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin". Rom. 6:6,7.

Paul saw the law as that which escalated sin. In Rom. 5:13 he affirms, "but sin is not imputed when there is no law"; later at v20 he says, "Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound". He emphasises the argument in ch.7 when he says, "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the

commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death". 7:8-10. There is not the slightest doubt that Paul knew what Christ had delivered by His crucifixion; in Gal. 3:13 he says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree". That is why the 'I' was crucified with Christ. The 'old man' - striving under the law for a righteousness which could never be achieved - was dead, crucified with Christ who was the true righteousness of God 'without the law'.

#### NEVERTHELESS I LIVE

We have just said that the 'I', which is the 'old man', has been crucified; so, then, this must be a different 'I' to which Paul refers. Writing to the saints at Corinth he says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new". 2 Cor. 5:17. The same idea is expressed by the Hebrew writer, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old, Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away".

Paul says, "And all things are of God", and it was God, through Jeremiah, who had said that the new law 'should be in the mind, and written on the heart'. Paul refers to this new law and calls it 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus', and he goes on to say 'that this new law had made him free from the law of sin and death'. See Rom. 8. Obviously, if this new law is 'in Christ Jesus', then we must in some way have access to Him in order to be a partaker of it. We are all sinners. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". Rom. 3:23. Therefore, all have an 'old man' which needs to be renewed, and that renewal can only take place 'in Christ Jesus'. To be 'in Christ Jesus' is one of those mystical statements that Paul is fond of using. In Rom. ch. 6 he explains in terms that we can understand how this can be achieved. It is as well to read and study the whole chapter in order to get the full meaning. We must never forget that when we submit to Jesus we are accessing the new life which, because of His sacrifice at Calvary, is available to all who in faith and obedience submit their lives to Him. It is by the *grace* of God, and *must* be received as a *gift*.

#### YET NOT I

We must not be confused by Paul's use of the pronoun 'I' in the first person singular, after all, even though he is writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he is still seeing himself as a complete entity, but one who is responding to the different emphases which have had such a profound effect on his life. He indicates the most profound change which has come upon him if we complete his words, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me".

We can now see that the 'I', even though singular to himself, is the product of his *own life*, and also the life of Christ. This is a fundamental and wonderful thought. It is no longer 'I' in a detached sense. So complete has Paul's identification with Christ become, that his separate personality is merged into that of the Christ who has saved him; we can almost echo the words of John the Baptist, but in a different sense, "He must increase, but I must decrease". This surely must be the experience of every Christian; it is only when we die to self, and take on *His* yoke, that we shall feel the blessedness of our lives becoming *His* life. I'd like to quote some lines from a poem I wrote:

I bore the cruel nails,  
On bitter Cross impaled;  
If you're My disciple,  
Come, die with me.

#### THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE

"And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me". It is our *belief* in Christ, and our *obedience* to him in repentance, confession, and immersion, which brings us *into* Him; it is *our faith* in Him



which keeps us there. It is not *His* faith shown to us, but *our* faith in Him expressed in the lives that we lead. I have said this before, and reason will not allow a different conclusion. If the new life in Christ Jesus is the product of *our* lives and *His*, then how can some interpret Rom. 7 to mean that Paul could do the will God in his *mind*, but in his *flesh* he would inevitably have to sin. What we are really saying is that the mind is in control, but the flesh is out of control. I have heard some brethren say from platforms that they sin hundreds of times every day; the mature Christian should not be capable of that, especially if he believes that Christ makes His abode with him. Oh, I know what they mean; they contrast their own fallibility with the Divine strength of Christ. But Christ *is* our strength, and the Holy Spirit *is* our guide, and our resource *is* the Godhead. I feel sure that the great Apostle saw his life in Christ like that. Read 1 Cor. 4:11-16. Also 1 Cor. 9:27, "**But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway**".

Brethren, we are saved individually and personally. I pray that our personalities will always be in subjection to the One whom we love and adore. For His name's sake.

(All questions please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,  
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## CHRIST'S LOVE FOR THE CHURCH

Christ loved the Church because of God's plan and purpose through it; because of its position; because of the price that was paid for it; because of the kind of people who make it up; and because of the praise these people in the Church can give to God.

In Ephesians 3:8-11, we see that the Church was according to God's eternal purpose; that through it he planned to make known to the world the manifold wisdom of God. The Church therefore occupies an exalted position in the eyes of the Lord. It is spoken of in connection with "**the heavenly places**" (Ephesians 1:20-23. Jesus purchased the Church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). It is called His body (Ephesians 1:22,23). The Bible says, "**For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the Church**" (Ephesians 5:29).

Jesus loved the Church because of God's purpose and plan through it. He loved it because of its exalted position before God. He also loved it because He bought it with His own blood. He loved it because the saved are added to it (Acts 2:47). He also loved it because of the praise the people in the Church could give to God. "**Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end**" (Ephesians 3:21).

### TO WHAT EXTENT DID JESUS LOVE THE CHURCH?

Christ loved the Church so much that He gave Himself up for it (Ephesians 5:25). He loved it so much that He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). He loved it so much that He sanctified it and cleansed it by the washing of water with the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

The love Christ had for the Church was not a shallow one, but a sacrificial one. To be Christ-minded, we, too, must have a sacrificial love for the Lord's Church.

### BUT WHY DO MANY NOT LOVE THE CHURCH?

Some today think the Church is not very important. Why? Some have lightly esteemed it. Why?

In the first place, some don't really know a whole lot about the Church our Lord established. They think of it only as a denomination. But the Church of our Lord is not a denomination. The Greek word "church" means "called out". The Church consists of those who are called out of the world into Christ. The Church is in Christ (Romans 12:4,5). A man cannot be in Christ without being in His Church. A man cannot be saved without being in

the Lord's Church (Acts 2:47). If people could realise this, surely they would come to love the Church more.

Some do not like the Church because they are not in sympathy with its mission. In the Church there is a grand fellowship, but the Church is more than a mere social order. Its mission is to make known to the world the manifold wisdom of God. What a responsibility God has placed upon those who make up His Church.

Some do not love the Church because they are not deeply committed to Christ, who is the head of it. They are not ready for the sacrifices Christ calls for. One cannot live any way he wants and be a member of the Lord's Church. For this reason, many do not love it.

#### HOW CAN WE SHOW OUR LOVE FOR THE CHURCH?

We show our love for the Church by showing our love for Christ and His Word. We cannot love Christ without loving His Church. How could a man honour Christ and dishonour His body?

We show our love for the Lord's Church by being members of it. It is by one Spirit that we are baptised into this one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). We show no real love for the Church of our Master unless we have been scripturally baptised. There is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:4, 5), and unless we have been baptised exactly as the New Testament teaches, we could never be members of the Lord's body.

We show our love for the Church by godly behaviour and faithfulness in our work and worship. We also show our love for it by showing love and concern one for another. The Church is made up of the Lord's people, and we cannot love the Church without loving and serving the Lord's people.

#### HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE THE CHURCH?

It might be well to ask, "How much do you love Christ?" Christ is the head of the Church (Colossians 1:18). The Church is the Lord's body (Ephesians 1:22,23). Do you love the Church enough to submit to everything Christ, the head of the Church, has requested of you? Do you love it enough to support it with your means, to proclaim its glory to the world? Do you love it enough not to substitute anything in its place, but to do everything you can to help bring the whole world into it? Since Christ loved the Church so much, you cannot be Christ-minded without your showing much love for the Church!

G. W. Bailey

## INDEPENDENT FAITH

A faith that is anchored solely in the word of God can truly be called an independent faith. If it is derived through other sources, it is misbegotten. Faith comes only by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17). Faith obtained by God's word will stand under every condition to which it is subjected. It cannot be altered by circumstances, emotions, public opinions or other factors.

When faith is based on *circumstances*, it may be strong as long as the circumstances are good. Here a person is faithful and believes he has a great trust in Jesus, but what happens when the circumstances change from good to bad? What happens when a tragedy occurs? Suddenly things are not working out just as he had them planned. As his life falls apart, so does his faith! If his faith is founded totally on the Bible, then no matter what temporal disappointments come along, his faith will be present to sustain. A person with Bible-based faith cannot be separated from the love of God by circumstances.

**Job** is an important character in the Bible for illustrating this point. When everything in life was wrecked for him, he held on to his faith in God. Satan believed that Job's faithfulness was linked to the good circumstances surrounding him. The devil suggested that

if conditions were otherwise, then Job would curse God to his face. God allowed every tragedy possible, short of taking of his life, to happen to Job. Still his faith stood! His attitude was, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him . . ." (Job 13:15a). There is no doubt about Job's faith, it was independent of circumstances.

And then, consider the three Hebrew children of Daniel 3. They refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image and were threatened with the fiery furnace. Even as they faced the flames, they declared, ". . . Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But, if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3:17, 18). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had confidence that God could deliver them, but even if He did not, they still believed everything would turn out right for them. That's faith above circumstance!

When our faith is strong only when the circumstances are favourable, we are walking by sight. Paul said Christians "walk by faith, not by sight."

#### FEELINGS

Some people base their faith on their *feelings*. The thing that feeds their faith is an emotional experience. If they have an emotional "high" they feel sustained by their faith. These individuals are often heard to say, "I can just feel the presence of Jesus in my life," or statements similar. Again, this is not the way God intends for us to obtain faith. An all-sustaining faith comes only by hearing the word of God.

When these people experience an emotional "low" their faith fails them. But a faith based on what God's word says is independent of our feelings. This way when we are feeling low, the word of God can elevate us. The man who gets his faith through his emotions cannot be strengthened through the word; he must have another emotional experience.

Those who endeavour to build through emotional experiences are labouring under a delusion because faith comes only by diligently poring over the word. Paul wrote that many would be deluded into believing lies and thus be condemned. Hence, it is clear that our faith must be independent of our emotions.

#### PERSONALITIES

Finally, sometimes people base their faith on personalities and human opinions instead of Jesus and the word. Paul wrote a reproving letter to the Corinthians because some were founding their convictions on different preachers. Some were followers of Peter, others of Paul and some of Apollos. Too many today rely on "big name preachers" with their popular doctrines instead of God's word for faith. But Paul told the Corinthians not to rely on human props. He asked them, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" From this first chapter of Paul's letter to Corinth we conclude that it is the message of the cross and not the doctrines and personalities of men that provides a saving faith.

#### CONCLUSION

We must realize that the Christian life is wholly founded on faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son. Many Christians, instead of "overcoming," are being overcome. Some are weak and others are falling away. Perhaps more of us need to examine the source of our faith. Maybe your trust in Jesus has been predicted more on circumstances, or your own feelings, or popular opinion than solely on what God has said in His word. If so, then you need to return to the real source of faith. Spend some time praying, meditating and study over the word. This is the only avenue through which your faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son can be sustained!

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 5	Ezekiel 18:21-32	Ephesians 1:15-2:10
May 12	Exodus 12:37-51	Ephesians 2:11-22
May 19	Genesis 11:26-12:3	Ephesians 3
May 26	Psalms 68:1-18	Ephesians 4:1-16

### JESUS OUR PEACE

Paul in this epistle refers to the division between the Jews and the Gentiles in his day. Jews regarded the Gentiles as fit only for the fires of hell. The hatred was so great that it was not even lawful for a Jew to render help to a Gentile woman in childbirth. If a Jew married a Gentile then the funeral of that Jew was immediately carried out. A Jew was unclean if he entered a house of a Gentile. Gentiles looked on the Jews as strange, fanatical and stubborn. Keeping the sabbath, abstaining from certain kinds of food and circumcising their male children were weird practices as far as the pagan Gentiles were concerned. How could God bring them together? The answer was a person - Jesus of Nazareth, His beloved Son.

Paul wrote: "For He is our peace, who has made both (*Jew and Gentile*) one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; to make in Himself of two one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you who were afar off (*Gentiles*) and to them that were nigh" (*Jews*). Our peace is not a pact, a programme or a profession. It is a person! One writer put it this way: "Jesus did not try to get the Jew and Gentile to make up, or to confer with a view to settling their differences. He arranged no delegate conference to iron out the problem. Instead, He simply died for all of them. He gave Himself for them,

in the most agonising way known to man. And the blow-torch of divine love melted hearts that had been like stone. And when the wall was removed, broken down by death and washed away by blood, there they were sitting together, their hatred gone and their ire dissolved". Brethren in Christ, if Jesus could bring Jew and Gentile together, then He can bring any hostile enemies together - Catholic and Protestant. Serbian and Croat, Arab and Israeli. Jesus is THE answer.

### PAUL THE PREACHER TO THE GENTILES

The apostle Paul was a man for his time. Out of all the Jews in the Roman world, Saul of Tarsus was the one man who could help bridge the gap between the Gentile world and the Jewish world. God knew this and therefore he was chosen by God to be the great apostle to the Gentiles. He played a unique role in the development of Christianity in the world. Personally, I think he was one of the greatest men who have ever lived.

We read: ". . . unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the mystery of the fellowship (a better translation), which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God . . ." (3:8-10). The term "mystery" is the antonym of "revelation". In the past, certain things were hidden by God, but have now been revealed unto His apostle and prophets, who, in turn, taught them to the Church. One commentator has said: "Paul saw himself as a man who had been given a double privilege. He had been given the privilege of discovering the secret that it was God's will that all men should be gathered into His love. And He had been given the privilege of making

this secret known to the Church and of being the instrument by which God's grace went out to the Gentiles". He lived up to these privileges - and he was humble in his work. What humility to call himself "less than the least of all saints!" (3:8).

#### A PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS

There are many great prayers revealed in the Bible. For example, **David's**, when denied the privilege of building the temple (2 Samuel 7:18-29); **Solomon** for wisdom (1 Kings 3:6-9); **Solomon** at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:22-53) **Hezekiah** at the invasion of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:14-19); **Ezra** for the sins of the people (Ezra 9:5-15); **Daniel** for the captive Jews (Daniel 9:4-19); **Habbakuk's** prayer (3:1-19); **Jesus** intercessory prayer (John 17:1-26). **Paul's** prayer for his Ephesian brethren (3:14-21) is a worthy addition to this outstanding list.

The infinite love of Christ is at the heart of prayer. He prays that they might grasp the meaning of the breadth, length, depth and height of Christ's love. I pray for this too in my life. I know that it is a love that surpasses knowledge (3:19), but I want to know and experience it as much as I can. Truly, there is no love like the love of Jesus!

#### THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE

We read: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1-3). Lowliness is *tapeinophrosune* and literally is "humility of mind". Meekness is *praotes* and speaks of one who is self-controlled. It describes the character in which strength and gentleness go together. It is the opposite of arrogance and pride. Longsuffering is *makrothumia* in the Greek and T. K. Abbot defined it as "the self restraint which does not retaliate a

wrong". Love, of course, is *agape* and speaks of unconquerable benevolence and the highest good for everyone.

We further read: "There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (4:4-6). A book could be written on these verses. There is one body. Christ is the head of the body, which is the Church. Can you believe that there is in excess of twenty-two thousand so-called "Christian" groups in the world? There is one Spirit. He is, of course, a personality of the Godhead. He dwells in all believers to help and strengthen them in their pilgrimage on earth. There is one hope of our calling. The hope of heaven is "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast . . ." (Hebrew 6:19).

There is one Lord. Actually, this was a designation of the Roman Emperor. But all Christians everywhere in the Empire in Paul's day knew that their true Lord and Master was not on earth, but in heaven. There is one faith. This is the faith that "was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). The faith constitutes a real belief in the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth. It is a firm conviction that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. Paul defined it as "my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Roman 16:26). There is one baptism. F. F. Bruce was once asked: "Is the 'one baptism' of Eph. 4:5 baptism in water?" He replied: "So far as I can judge, yes. I suggest that baptism in the New Testament is always baptism in water unless the context shows it to be something else; that is to say, the word is always to be understood literally unless the context indicates a figurative meaning". There is one God. Paul says He is "Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you

all" (4:6). Yes, it is the Christian belief that we live in a God-created, God-controlled, God-sustained, and God-filled world.

Ian S. Davidson,  
Motherwell.

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## TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

- 1) How many towns were given to the Levites in the land of Canaan?
- 2) In whose house was Jeremiah imprisoned?
- 3) How many sons did Bilhah have?
- 4) How many children did Abraham and Keturah have?
- 5) What is the shortest book of the Old Testament?
- 6) What was the ancient name of Jerusalem?
- 7) Who comforted Paul in Macedonia?
- 8) From what tribe was Jesus a descendant?
- 9) By what was King Herod eaten up?
- 10) Who said to Paul: "Have you appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shall you go".

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## MORE GADGETRY ON THE LORD'S TABE

Last Sunday morning, while travelling to the morning service, and listening to a religious programme on the car radio, I was intrigued to hear a discussion taking place upon the merits, or otherwise, of the latest contraption to come to Britain for "a speedy, efficient and hygienic" communion service. Perhaps other readers heard this programme. An American salesman was being interviewed in connection with the proposed introduction into Britain (and already being experimented with by some denominational bodies) of a small plastic vessel (similar to the types used for fast food) with an upper and lower compart-

ment, which would be given to each worshipper.

During the communion service, at a given signal, worshippers would peel off a plastic covering off the top of the vessel and be given access to a small individual piece of bread. After the bread is extracted and eaten the worshippers would again, at a given signal, peel of the second plastic strip of the lower vessel and have access to a small quantity of wine, which all would drink simultaneously.

The salesman said that sales were slow but were expected to "take off" eventually. Initial reaction from some of the churches had been generally unfavourable: some thought the whole thing was "cheap and nasty" and some thought it all as fairly representative of our "throw away" society, while others felt that it demeaned the occasion and seemed completely foreign to any "spirit of communion". The salesman was quite unabashed by this and was confident that any initial reluctance would *gradually* be overcome and that worshippers would come to appreciate that the vessels were "fast, efficient and very hygienic: for the bread as well as the wine". One has to wonder what the Lord thinks of these plastic intrusions and the "reasons" for their employment; i.e. "fast, efficient and very hygienic".

(Ed.)

## NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

**Slamannan District:** The quarterly Mutual Benefit Meeting was held at Denyloanhead Meeting Place on Saturday, 9th March, 1996, when a goodly company discussed the question "Is the Principle of Mutual Ministry Taught In The Scriptures"? Our speakers were Jim McGinn (speaking for the first time at these meetings) and David Chalmers, both from New Cumnock. In the chair was John Kneller, Tranent.

The speakers made a fine job of introducing the subjects and thereafter we enjoyed the usual hour long period for questions and comment from the audience. Many interesting points were made, as usual, and a very enjoyable time was had by all. The next proposed meeting, God willing, will be on Saturday 8th June, 1996, at Haddington, when the subject will be "What is meant by Baptism For The Dead as per 1 Cor. 15:29". The speakers will be Drew McGinn, New Cumnock and Neil Scobbie, Dennyloanhead, and the chairman will be J. R. Gardiner.

Again we thank the good sisters of Dennyloanhead for their excellent refreshments.

Harry McGinn.

**Kirkcaldy:** We welcomed into fellowship Sister Helen Irvine and Brother Tom and Sister Maureen Morton at the end of 1995. On the 20th January, 1996, Irene Laughlin was baptised. We continued to study with our new sister.

Our Treasurer's new phone number is 01592 592758.

Ruth Moyes (Sec.)

## OBITUARY

**Newtongrange:** It is with a deep sense of loss that we report the passing of our beloved sister Jean Halliday, aged 79 years, on Tuesday, 27th February, 1996. Jean had been in indifferent health for a good number of years but, nevertheless, attended very regularly both Sunday services and also took an active part every Thursday afternoon at the Ladies' Meeting. Jean, in fact, met with us at both services on Sunday 25th although clearly unwell.

Jean served the village and the wider community for a long number of years: e.g. hospital work with children, then later on, in voluntary work with children, senior citizens and visiting the sick and the elderly. She was a faithful servant of her Lord, preaching the good news by her

deeds and actions, and was indeed a "doer of the word". She has finished her course and kept the faith. "And the king said, unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince (princess) and a great man (woman) fallen this day in Israel."

We express our love to her husband Willie, to her son Bill and daughter Jean (in South Africa) and Bebe, with their families, pointing them to the Father of all mercies, and the God of all comfort. The very well attended funeral was conducted by the writer both at the Meeting-house and at the Cockpen Cemetery in Bonnyrigg. Brother David Ferguson offered prayers at both places.

Jean will be greatly missed and we thank God for her example in life, and for her faith.

Joe Currie, (Sec/Treasurer)

## THANKS

**Newtongrange:** Brother John Wilson and wife, Sister Janette Wilson, would like to thank all the brethren who have sent good wishes, cards and telephone calls, during those recent days of John's periodic hospitalisation and Janette's present hospitalisation. The letters and calls have been a great source of support, strength and encouragement and very much appreciated.

Thank you.

## GHANA APPEAL

This short article is written in Ghana. Bill and I have been visiting the churches to see how the funds have been used. We are 11 days into a 33 day visit. The brethren here have a great joy and enthusiasm for the Lord. We have seen 3 meeting places which now require roofs to complete them. Other meetings take place in hired halls at night by candlelight. It would be good to give them a gas lamp fed from a small bottle of Butane.

We have seen the results of the medical aid and, on our return, we will give a full report. Meanwhile, we urge you to give generously as the needs are great, far greater than we realised.

Please send cheques to Graeme Pearson (Ghana Fund), 13 Fairways, Dunfermline, Fife. KY12 ODU.

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA APPEAL

The fund for Solar Power for Papua New Guinea is now closed. I have received to date two thousand, one hundred and eighty-nine pounds, sixty pence. This includes interest of £3.44 from Barclays Bank in Manchester.

I want to thank again, the congregations and individual Christians who responded so generously to this appeal.

Ruth B. Coles

## COMING EVENTS

### KIRKCALDY ANNUAL SOCIAL

20th April, 1996

Speaker: ALEX STRACHAN

Time: 3.30 p.m.

### KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 1996

Speakers:

PAM MITCHELL (Hylvots Bank)

LINDA FERNIE (Northside)

Theme: Blessings

Time: 10.00 a.m. Refreshments

### BUCKIE ANNUAL SOCIAL

Saturday, 1st June, 1996

Time: 3.30 p.m.

Speaker: JOE NISBET

Students from Harding University

Led by Dwight Smith

27th May - 9th June

Correction does much, but encouragement does more. Encouragement after censure is as the sun after a shower.

10. Festus (Acts 25:12)
9. Worms (Acts 12:23)
8. Judah (Hebrews 7:14)
7. Titus (2 Corinthians 7:5-6)
6. Jehus (1 Chronicles 11:4)
5. Obadiah
4. Six (Genesis 25:2)
3. Two (Genesis 30:5-7)
2. Jonathan's (Jeremiah 37:15)
1. Forty-eight (Numbers 35:7)

## ANSWERS

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