

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

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

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REFORMATION OF LIFE

Among all the religious “buzz” words in Christendom these days, “repentance” doesn’t seem to have a prominent place, yet this is what the world so desperately needs. The world has become so violent, unruly and wicked that it must, by now, be very similar to how it was in Noah’s day, when God saw that **“The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”**

Indeed, from the first murder, in the Garden of Eden, man has, in all ages, stood in need of repentance and God’s call for repentance has not only characterized the entire O.T. but was also the strong introductory theme of the N.T.; personified in the striking figure and voice of John the Baptist.

Even at the untimely death of John, Jesus amplified John’s clarion call, and sent out the twelve and the seventy: preaching **“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”** This sending out of the 12 (and later the 70) is not to be confused with the ‘Great Commission’ (to all nations) but was restricted to the Jews (house of Israel) and we read that **“they went out and preached that men should repent”** (v.12). This was the overriding theme of the message.

We really don’t hear much of that call, today. If we were, at random, to slip into a pew at most denominational places of worship in this country today, and eavesdrop upon the preaching, we would be unlikely to hear any references to **repentance**, just as we might hear very little mention of **sin**. We might hear muted remarks about ‘mistakes’ and ‘foibles’ and slightly louder references to the ‘brotherhood of man’; ‘mutual understanding’; ‘share our faith’; ‘join our worship’ and other fairly vague examples of current religious rhetoric, but generally, vital words like ‘repent’ are disappearing from the present ecclesiastical vocabulary. The thunderings of John Knox (which frightened Mary Queen of Scots) and the hell-fire preachers have all gone: to the great relief of some and sharp disappointment of others. Certainly the importance attached to a drastic reformation of lifestyle demanded by John the Baptist, and Jesus Himself, is not in evidence today. I suppose that in the keen competition for new members, most religious groups don’t emphasise repentance too strongly; and I suppose there are ‘converts’ looking for such groups.

GOD’S CLARION CALL

Perhaps, in stressing the need for **faith** in Christ, and **baptism** for the remission of sins, we have inadvertently squeezed ‘repentance’ out of its rightful place in the process of ‘conversion’. Certainly the N.T. does not fail to give it full force. The

ministry, both of John and Jesus (and the disciples of both) concentrated entirely upon calling men to repentance and Jesus was completely uncompromising in His denouncement of those towns which remained indifferent. He upbraided the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum for their intransigence, comparing them most unfavourably with Tyre, Sidon, Sodom and Gemorrah and predicting that Capernaum would be **"brought down to hell"** (Matt. 11:20-24). We don't hear much talk like that today. Jesus not only condemned these unrepentant cities but the whole generation of His time, recalling that whereas the heathen men of Nineveh had **repented** at the preaching of Jonah: a deaf ear had been turned to a greater than Jonah. Jesus avowed His purpose quite often: he came not to call the righteous, **but sinners to repentance**. When Christ's own close disciples brought to Him news of calamities in the city, involving many "fatalities", He replied (doubtless foreshadowing the coming destruction of Jerusalem) **"except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."**

This summons to repent was not, of course, confined to the House of Israel, but was carried over into the 'Great Commission' (Mark 16:15) and was extended to all nations, Jesus Himself saying, **"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name AMONG ALL NATIONS, beginning at Jerusalem"** (Luke 24:46). The early Jewish Christians were duly convinced of this when Cornelius was baptised, for we read that, **"When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."** (Acts 11:18). And Paul, in his preaching to the Athenians, referring to their unenlightened attempts at worship, said, **"And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere TO REPENT."** (Acts 17:30). Thus the call to repentance is directed at ALL MEN, EVERYWHERE, and surely no statement could be more comprehensive or all-embracing. It means you, and me, it means everybody.

A DEFINITION

There is no pat or concise definition of 'Repentance' or 'Repent' in the N.T. and we must be guided mainly by the way in which the words are used. 'Repent' comes from the Greek *metanoia* which Young describes as "A change of mind." Obviously not every 'change of mind' constitutes repentance. The definition given by most English dictionaries includes, "To feel regret; to resolve to make amends for; to feel sorrow and to change one's ways; to turn," and I suppose that the true scriptural meaning lies somewhere amidst all of these suggestions.

All that glitters is not gold and all regret is not necessarily repentance. Many changes of heart are due entirely to self-interest. Even Dick Whittington, of nursery-rhyme fame, turned for only selfish reasons. The present Prime Minister refuses to make any U-turns in his policies and, apparently, views such a change as a weakness and an admission that he was previously wrong. Indeed most politicians, of any colour, try to conceal any change they make in policy in case it should be regarded as a 'climb-down' and a confession of incompetence. Similarly, much of the heartache and regret that besets mankind has little to do with repentance or sorrow for sin. Usually the criminal is sorry, but only sorry that he was caught. Self-pity was never remotely akin to repentance and we should try not to confuse the two. Even where there is real sorrow for sin, and genuine Godly sorrow; this is not, in itself, repentance, but only something which leads to repentance. Repentance is not regret, or sorrow for sin; it is a CHANGE OF MIND. Clearly it does not refer to any-old-kind of change of mind, but a resolve of mind that whereas we formerly walked contrary to God, from henceforth we would

turn: do a U-turn, and thereafter seek to walk in harmony with God. Thus, repentance refers to a resolve to change from serving Satan, to serving God. Paul draws a valuable distinction between 'regret' and 'repentance' (in 2 Cor, 7:8) where he says, in reference to his previous letter. **"For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent (regret R.V.) it, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a Godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of this world worketh death."** We see, then, that Paul has sent an epistle to the church in Corinth and after he sent it he regretted sending it: but later his regret vanished when he realised that his letter had been received in the proper spirit and had made the Corinthians truly sorry for what had passed. But mainly he was pleased because their sorrow was of a Godly sort and it had led them to repentance. **"The sorrow of the world"**, on the other hand, Paul said **'worketh death'**. Certainly the regret and terrible sorrow that Judas experienced, after his betrayal of Christ, did not result in his repentance, but rather in his tragic self-destruction. Repentance, therefore, is not sorrow and regret, but rather the transformation of life brought about by that regret.

EVIDENCES THEREOF

Similarly, we may sometimes confuse repentance with the fruits, or consequence, or repentance. True repentance should lead to a reformed life, but the reformed life ensues entirely as a result of the repentance i.e. the change of mind. For instance, when the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33) washed the stripes of Paul and Silas, this is properly referred to as an evidence of previous repentance. Later (in Acts 26:20); Paul states that he declared to the Gentiles that **"they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance.** Likewise, (in Matt. 3:7) John the Baptist, on seeing Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism charged them to **"Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance"** i.e. to produce evidence of their professed repentance. 'Repentance', therefore, is neither Godly sorrow nor is it good works, but it lies somewhere between the two. Godly sorrow leads to our CHANGE OF MIND, and good works is the eventual outcome of that change of mind. This change of attitude must relate to God and involve an improvement in our lives. Lancelot Oliver once suggested a good way of remembering the difference: he said that we should regard **Godly sorrow** as the roots of the tree; **Repentance** as the trunk of the tree: and **good works** as the leaves and fruits of the tree.

As mentioned previously, John the Baptist's preaching was almost exclusively devoted to bringing about the repentance of the people and indeed his baptism is several times referred to as the "baptism of repentance". John's baptism was confined only to those who expressed genuine repentance and accompanied their claim with consistent works. Thus we have John's charge to the Pharisees to come back only when they could demonstrate their complete contrition.

When the people asked John the Baptist for some advice on how they should illustrate their repentance, he suggested that, for a start, he that had two coats should give to those who had no coat. To the Publicans he said that they should exact no more taxation than was legitimately required (for Publicans had a habit of exacting not only the tax but also a little extra for the Publican). To the soldiers John said that they should do violence to no man, nor accuse any falsely. (Luke 3:10). And so, John expected to see men become *kind, generous, compassionate, honest* and *non-violent*. We also recall that Zacchaeus, (who was also a Publican), in the joy of his own repentance, declared

that he would give half of what he owned to the poor, and those he had defrauded he would restore fourfold. These benevolent outworkings were, then, *the fruits and evidences* of truly repentant hearts and minds.

There are those today who would insist upon similar evidences being displayed prior to any candidate being baptised, and who would, for instance, insist that anyone, presently part to an 'irregular' marriage, be refused baptism until they had 'normalised' their marital status. Surely without John the Baptist's special intuition in these matters, it would be well-nigh impossible for anyone today to determine the presence of repentance, or gauge its quality, in the breast of any incumbency placed upon us. The only thing that seemed to be likely "to hinder" the Ethiopian eunuch from being baptised was the necessity for him to affirm his believe that Jesus was the Christ. If he had been a polygamist can we imagine that Philip would have said, "I would like to have baptised you, but can't until you go back to Ethiopia and get rid of all your wives but one"? After baptism many men and women would have to set about reconstructing their lives but there seemed to be little time for it prior to their immersion. On Pentecost, 3,000 were baptised and it seems to me that there would be little time for lengthy interviews prior to each dipping to ascertain personal details, including marital status, of each applicant,

CONTINUING GRACE

And so, just as faith is based upon **facts** and that which is **true**: repentance is based upon **deeds** and that which is **right**. Faith involves a change from ignorance to enlightenment: repentance involves a change from evil to goodness. As the writer to the Hebrews puts it, we must seek "**repentance from dead works to serve the true and living God.**" It must surely be impossible to over-emphasise the importance of such a resolve. It must rank as the most important change of heart we can ever make. Many lessons have been extracted from the parable of the Prodigal Son but surely most of them hinge upon the son "coming to himself" and his **RESOLVE** to return to his father. This was a decision the father could not make: it had to come from the son. Paul, (in Rom 2:4) refers to God's **goodness, forbearance and long-suffering** and states that these are designed to lead us to repentance. But, he adds, those men and women with hard and impenitent hearts, who fail to recognise that "**the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance,**" are storing up for themselves disaster on God's day of wrath and righteous judgement. Indeed it is for this very cause that Christ delays His imminent return. Peter says, "**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise (to return) as some men count slackness: but is long suffering to usward not willing that any should perish BUT THAT ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE**". (2 Peter 3:9). And so Jesus delays His coming, not through disinterest or disinclination; but to give us all further opportunities of repenting and turning to God. The alternative is to perish. To what purpose do we put these God-given opportunities? God is gracious and retains Jesus in heaven that we might avail ourselves of His pardon. Does His call fall upon deaf ears? Will we be found on Judgement Day, amongst the ranks of those with the hard and impenitent hearts from Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum? If so, as Jesus says, it will be more tolerable on Judgement Day for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for us. The barbarian men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah: and a greater than Jonah is here. Christ is come, "**Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you...and to as many as the Lord our God shall call.**" (Acts 2:38).

ETERNITY IN HEAVEN

Many people in our generation live in hopelessness and despair. Without a firm faith in God and in His promises, there is not much assurance for the future. Many would echo the words of H.G. Wells, "Man, who began in a cave behind a windbreak, will end in the disease-soaked ruins of a slum", or the despair of Bertrand Russell, "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark." Still others reflect the vain search of the German philosopher Nietzsche: "Where is - my home? For it do I ask and seek, and have sought, but have not found it. O eternal everywhere, O eternal nowhere, O eternal - in-vain!"

In contrast, God's people have a home and a hope! Abraham "looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). He and others desired "a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city" (Hebrew 11:16). This home and this hope became ever clearer in the work of Jesus, who "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:10), as He paid the price of redemption and broke through the barrier of death.

ALIENS AND EXILES

The despair of those who put their hope in this world is understandable. All those things we see around us are transient (II Corinthians 4:18) and will some day pass away (Matthew 24:35). The only treasures which will last are those laid up in heaven (Matthew 6:20).

This earth is not the true home of the children of God. Here we are "aliens and exiles" (I Peter 2:11), for "here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come" (Hebrews 13:14). As the apostle Paul put it, "our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). Reflecting Moffat's translation of this verse "we are a colony of heaven", Merrill C. Tenney has written: "While abiding here, we are like a colony in a distant land, whose privileges and protection are assured by the country to which they belong. Although we may be non-residents, our citizenship is in the homeland, and we expect to return there in due time. The believer's true home is the City of God; he is only a sojourner in this world"; ("The Glorious Destiny of the Believer", p.20).

When we are born again, of the water and the Spirit, our names are entered in the "Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27), the citizenship register of that eternal city. This gives us the privilege of entry into that city, unless we have soiled the robes once washed white in the blood of the Lamb and had our citizenship rights revoked (Revelation 7:14; 3:4.5). We have a home - our Father's house, the City of God!

OUR FORERUNNER

It is proper to speak of the Father's house as "heaven" (Matthew 6:9). Jesus both came from heaven and returned there (John 6:41; Mark 16:19). He is our merciful and faithful high priest, "seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven"; (Hebrew 8:1). More than that: He is our forerunner, making it possible for us to come into the very presence of God by the new and living way (Hebrews 6:20, 10:19,20). He is the pioneer (going ahead of us, leading the way) and perfecter (completer, finisher) of our faith (Hebrew 12:2). Jesus saw the goal, endured the pain of the cross, and crossed the finishing line into heaven, where He now sits at the Father's right hand. Following His lead, we too can finish the race and gain the victorious presence of the Father in heaven.

ONE HOPE

Some people would have us believe that Christians are divided into two groups,

with some having a heavenly hope and others an earthly one. But the New Testament pictures but **one hope**, just as there is but one body, one Spirit, and one Lord (Ephesians 4:4,5). Our future does not lie here, with those things that are transient, but our hope is laid up in heaven (Colossians 1:5). Our inheritance is **“imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven”** (I Peter 1:3,4).

The hope of the apostles lay in the return of Jesus and in going with Him to the Father’s house to enjoy His presence (John 14:2,3). That is also the hope of every Christian! **“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord”**. (I Thessalonians 4:16,17). Underline those last words: **“so we shall always be with the Lord”!** That is our hope - eternity in heaven!

WHAT IS IN STORE

What will eternity in heaven be like? What will it mean to be in the presence of the Father in the ultimate sense? We have been given only the briefest glimpse of the eternal destiny of God’s people, but it is enough!

Basically, eternity in heaven will mean for us **“glory and honour and peace”** (Romans 2:10). But God has gone further in His description, struggling with human language to convey to our finite minds the eternal glory and honour and peace involved in dwelling with Him. Consider the picture given in Revelation 7:15-17: **“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night within His temple; and He who sits upon the throne will shelter them with His presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”**

Without doubt the most thrilling picture of the eternal home of the believer is that found in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. We recognise that this is obviously a poetic and highly symbolic presentation. We do not expect to see literal gates of pearl, streets of gold, nor walls and foundations of precious jewels; any more than we can imagine a city that is a perfect cube, as high as it is long and wide. But we do gain from this description the truth that the City of God, the New Jerusalem, our eternal home, has a preciousness far surpassing anything we have experienced here on earth. Here is perfect security and abundant life, combined with the absence of fear and filth of any type. **“Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away”** (Revelation 21:3,4).

ETERNAL LIFE BEGINS NOW

Eternity in heaven is not for everyone, for one has no part in the City of God unless washed clean by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 7:14; 22:14) and duly entered as a citizen in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 21:27). Eternal life begins here and now as we grasp Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the only way to the Father (I John 5:11, 12; John 14:6). Eternity in heaven is the culmination of a process begun here on earth, when we received in Jesus forgiveness of sins and were delivered from the domination of darkness and made citizens of the kingdom of God’s beloved Son (Col. 1:13,14). Turning from the sins of the past and putting our lives in the hands

of Jesus we are buried with Him in the waters of baptism. This puts us on the pathway which leads to eternity in heaven.

Do you have a home and a hope? YOU CAN!, for there is a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

W. HART.

THE BIBLE (Part 3)

The books of the Bible are not in chronological order. It is important, therefore, to resort to a good Bible Dictionary or a Chain-Reference Bible to assist you in working out the chronology as best you can. The following are some useful OT dates:

Abraham: 2000BC	Solomon: 970 BC
Joseph: 1750 BC	Kingdom Divided: 930-720 BC
Moses: 1350 BC	Captivity of Israel: 722 BC
The Exodus: 1280 BC	Judah Conquered: 606 BC
Judges: 1220-1050 BC	Jerusalem Destroyed: 586 BC
Samuel: 1075 BC	Return from Captivity: 536 BC
United Monarchy: 1050-930	Temple Rebuilt: 520 BC
Saul: 1050 BC	Malachi: (last book of the OT): 397 BC
David: 1010 BC	

The foundational book of the Bible is the book of Genesis. It has been well described as "The Book of Beginnings." It gives us the origin of the universe; the origin of order and complexity; the origin of the solar system; the origin of the atmosphere; and the hydrosphere; the origin of life; the origin of man; the origin of marriage; the origin of evil; the origin of language; the origin of government; the origin of culture; the origin of nations; the origin of religion; and the origin of the chosen people. Henry M. Morris has written: "The Book of Genesis thus is in reality the foundation of all true history, as well as of true science and true philosophy. It is above all else the foundation of God's revelation, as given in the Bible. No other book of the Bible is quoted as copiously or referred to so frequently, in other books of the Bible, as in Genesis . . . The New Testament is, if anything, even more dependent on Genesis than the Old. There are at least 165 passages in Genesis that are either directly quoted or clearly referred to in the New Testament."

THE OLD AND THE NEW

The Book of Revelation should be read in conjunction with the book of Genesis. For example, note the following comparisons between the original world and the new world to come:

Division of light and darkness (1:4)	No night there (21:25)
Division of land and sea (1:10)	No more sea (21:1)
Rule of sun and moon (1:16)	No need of sun or moon (21:23)
Man in a prepared garden (2:8,9)	Man in a prepared city (21:2)
River flowing out of Eden (2:10)	River flowing from God's throne (22:1)
Gold in the land (2:12)	Gold in the City (21:21)
Tree of life in midst of garden (2:9)	Tree of life throughout the city (22:2)
Bdellium and the onyx stone (2:12)	All manner of precious stones (21:19)
God walking in the garden (3:8)	God dwelling with His people (21:3)

There is a more striking contrast between the characteristics of the world under God's curse and the eternal world in Revelation:

Cursed ground (3:17)	No more curse (22:3)
Daily sorrow (3:17)	No more sorrow (21:4)
Thorns and thistles (3:18)	No more pain (21:4)
Sweat on the face (3:19)	Tears wiped away (21:4)
Eating herbs of the field (3:18)	Twelve manners of fruits (22:2)
Returning to the dust (3:19)	No more death (21:4)
Evil continually (6:5)	Nothing that defiles (21:27)
Coats of skins (3:21)	Fine linen, white and clean (19:14)
Satan opposing (3:15)	Satan banished (20:10)
Kept from the tree of life (3:24)	Access to the tree of life (22:14)
Banished from the garden (3:23)	Free entry to the city (22:14)
Redeemer promised (3:15)	Redemption accomplished (5:9,10)

HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS OF GOD?

It is of God because:-

- (1) **ITS UNITY AND HARMONY.** This is despite the fact that the writers were separated by hundreds of miles, and years, and they belonged to the most diverse walks of life. Some were kings, herdsman, soldiers, legislators, fishermen, statesmen and courtiers. Others were priests and prophets. One was a tent-making Rabbi and another was a Gentile physician. Yet, bring their writings together (66 books) and there is one harmonious whole. This must be the work of Divine providence.
- (2) **ITS SIMPLICITY AND PROFOUNDNESS.** The Bible is simple in its profoundness and profound in its simplicity.
- (3) **ITS UNPARALLELED TEACHING.**
- (4) **ITS CONTAINING UNMISTAKABLE INSTANCES OF FULFILLED PROPHECY.** Only God sees the future.
- (5) **ITS HARMONY WITH TRUE SCIENCE.**
- (6) **ITS SUPERIORITY TO ALL OTHER BOOKS.** It is the best seller. It is the oldest book in the world. It has been translated into more languages than any other book.
- (7) **ITS MEETING THE NEEDS OF HUMAN LIFE.** The Bible fits perfectly into human experience. It is perfect for its purpose and its purpose is to make us perfect (lacking nothing).
- (8) **ITS INFLUENCE FOR GOOD IN THE WORLD.**
- (9) **ITS BEING TRIUMPHANT OVER ALL ITS ENEMIES.**
- (10) **THE SIMPLE FACT THAT GOOD MEN COULD NOT HAVE WRITTEN IT AND BAD MEN WOULD NOT HAVE WRITTEN IT.**

INSPIRED OF GOD

A very important subject in the study of the Bible is its *inspiration*. Paul wrote: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17), The phrase "inspiration of God" is a translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*, which literally means God-breathed. When God breathes into something that something comes alive. We recall the words in Genesis: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7).

One of the great books written on the inspiration of the Bible was *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* by Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, who was, at one time,

a professor in Princeton, U.S.A. In it he writes: "The Church has held from the beginning that the Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Spirit as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will. It has always recognised that his conception of co-authorship implies that the Spirit's superintendence extends to the choice of words by the human authors (verbal inspiration), and preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a Divine authorship . . . thus securing, among other things, that entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture by the Biblical writers (in-errancy)". Peter wrote: ". . . **knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit**" (2 Peter 1:20,21).

To be continued

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Conducted by
Frank Worgan

*"Paul talks of a time "when that which is perfect" would come.
To what does he refer?" (1 Cor. 13:10)*

This quotation, as you will have recognised, comes from that beautiful and familiar exposition of the superiority of Love. But whilst 1 Cor. 13 is a chapter powerful and important enough to stand alone, it should really be studied in context with chapters 12 and 14. Misunderstandings arise when the 13th chapter is read out of context and studied in isolation.

If we always bear in mind that when the books of the Bible were written they were not divided into chapters and verses, we shall be spared a great many of the problems which arise from a device which was intended to be a help to us.

1. **Turning, first, to chapter 12,** we find that Paul is continuing to respond to the series of questions sent to him by members of the Church in Corinth. He has now reached an issue which appears to be a major preoccupation with the Corinthian brethren; a question concerning the relative importance of the various miraculous gifts, bestowed by the Holy Spirit Himself (v.11).

Those who possessed such gifts as other tongues, the interpretation of tongues, healing and prophecy, believed that their gifts were the most important of the nine 'charismata' ('grace gifts') which Paul lists in this section of his letter. These were the gifts which attracted most attention and which enjoyed a profile higher than the less dramatic and less ostentatious gifts, such as those of miraculous knowledge or wisdom.

The apostle's first concern, therefore, is to make the brethren recognise that whatever gift a person possesses, it has been bestowed on him, not for his personal elevation, but for the edification of the entire Body of Christ, the Church.

Indeed, this is the illustration he uses. He presents an analogy which portrays the Church as a body comprised of many members, each of which has its distinctive

function and which occupies its own special place (vv. 12-27).

Incidentally, we should notice that in vv. 29-30 how effectively he dismisses the view, still held today by many of the so-called 'Charismatic' groups, which says that anyone who does not possess a spiritual gift has not received 'the second blessing' and may well be regarded as a kind of 'second-class' Christian.

2. Then, in ch. 13, Paul urges the brethren to desire the 'better gifts' = '*kreittona*', or the 'greater gifts' = '*meizona*'; that is, gifts which are 'better' or 'greater' than the things about which they are so concerned. These better, more desirable possessions are Faith, Hope and Love, of which the greatest is Love (v.13).

3. The conclusion which remains to be drawn is that the Corinthians were taught, by Paul, that one could be a true Christian without possessing any miraculous gift, but there is one spiritual endowment - one Christ-like virtue - which is indispensable, because it is a virtue which 'abides'. The word '*meno*' literally means 'to remain when other things have ceased'.

Here we come to the nub of the matter, because in verses 8 to 11 Paul assured his Corinthian brethren that whatever miraculous gifts of the Spirit they possess, those gifts are transient and they *will* inevitably pass away.

'Prophecies', in the plural and referring to a range of abilities which included both *forth*-telling and *fore*-telling, would be 'abolished, end, be caused to cease'. The A.V. states that prophecies 'shall fail', which is an unfortunate rendering, liable to give the wrong impression, because Spirit-inspired prophecy never 'failed'. For prophecy to 'cease' is an entirely different matter.

The gift of tongues, also was destined to 'cease', as was miraculous knowledge, because Paul assigns all of them to the Church's infancy and declares that, like the playthings of childhood, they will one day be 'put away'.

And when would this 'cessation' occur? The question has drawn our attention to that time, 'when that which is perfect is come' (A.V.).

4. The 'end of the age'? The Coming of Christ?

This phrase has sometimes been taken to refer to the end of the age, when Christ returns, and if this were a correct interpretation it would be a strong argument for the continuance of spiritual gifts.

But it is *not* correct, because Christ cannot be described as a 'thing' - as '*that* which is perfect'. The word 'perfect', in this form, '*teleion*', is neuter and would never be used to describe a mature person. It is a form which was used to refer to a baby, or a child.

For example, in Luke 1:35, the A.V. reads, 'that holy *thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'. Strange as it may sound in our ears, in those days all children were described in the neuter gender until they reached the age of puberty, from which time they would be referred to in masculine or feminine forms, as the case required.

Therefore, the word 'perfect' used here in 1 Cor. 13:10, cannot possibly refer to Christ and His return.

Furthermore, if the Holy Spirit had intended us to understand this as a reference to Christ, it would have been easy for Him to have said, 'when He who is perfect', or even, 'when Christ comes again'.

5. The Perfection of Heaven? This is another explanation which has been suggested. We are asked to believe that the phrase refers to the future life in Heaven and to the state of perfection to which the believer looks forward.

But it is difficult to fit this view into these three chapters, dealing, as they do

entirely with the way in which the Church should behave here, on earth! And, in any case, this word, 'perfect', common though it is in the New Testament, is not once used with reference to heaven's state of perfection.

6. **What, then, does the phrase mean?** Well, the word, 'teleios', from 'telos', meaning 'an end', has to do with reaching maturity and the attaining of a purpose or goal. Therefore the contrast is between something that is incomplete, in part, and therefore transient (see v.9 again), and something that is complete and abiding.

Paul has pointed out to his Corinthian brethren that they know 'in part'. They are living in a time when God's will and purpose is in process of being revealed 'through His holy apostles and prophets' (Eph. 4:4-6). Bear in mind that the apostles had been promised that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth, teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance the things they had been taught by the Lord (John 15:26; 16:13).

As we look back from our position today we see that during that period, the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed in order to support and strengthen the infant Church (Rom. 1:11). Indeed, it might be said that the spiritual gifts were the things that belonged to the Church's infancy, which would be one day laid aside.

That time came when the apostolic age ended as the last apostle completed his work.

We have, today, in the New Testament Scriptures, in the inspired writing of the apostles, all that the Holy Spirit desires us to possess and know. We have the full and final revelation of God's will for His people. The complete; the 'mature'; the 'perfect' has come. the miraculous gifts, which the Holy Spirit clearly indicated as of limited duration have passed away, and today, as James tells us, we look into 'the perfect law, the law of liberty' (Jas. 1:25).

(All questions please, to: Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire, PA6 7NZ, Scotland.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

May 5	Genesis 22:1-19	Hebrews 11:1-22
May 12	Joshua 6:15-27	Hebrews 11:23-40
May 19	Proverbs 3:1-20	Hebrews 12: 1-17
May 26	Exodus 19	Hebrews 12: 18-29

HEBREWS 11 - THE FAITH OF THE PEOPLE OF OLD

In this chapter we read the following: *Prologue: the Nature of Faith (1-3); the Faith of the Antediluvians (4-7); the Faith of Abraham and Sarah (8-12); The City of God the Homeland of the Faithful (13-16); More about the Faith of the Patriarchs (17-22); The Faith of Moses (23-28); Faith at the Exodus and Settlement (29-31); Further examples of Faith (32-38); Epilogue: Faith's Vindication*

Comes with Christ (39-40).

This is one of the great chapters in the Bible. It deals with people of faith. What is faith anyway? Faith is trust. Faith in God implies reliance upon God and obedience to God. The people we read about in this chapter were people who simply took God at His word and directed their lives accordingly. They all had the conviction that what God had promised He was able also to fulfil. Note what the Hebrew writer says: "**But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him**" (6).

It is difficult to single out any of the individuals mentioned in this chapter. They are all heroes or heroines. However, I mention Enoch first. Enoch

was a remarkable man. He was the seventh from Adam and a prophet of God (Jude 14). He lived in the patriarchal age of the world and we read of him in Genesis 5:21-24. There we find these words: **"And Enoch walked with God . . . and all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."** The Hebrew writer says he was "translated" (5). The word speaks of his being removed to another place or being taken to heaven without dying. "Enoch never saw death, because he ever saw God" (Alexander Whyte).

Noah is one of the great men of history. He is a genuine historical figure, make no mistake about it. We read of him in Genesis 5 to 9. He is the man, in a wicked world, who, **"found grace in the eyes of the Lord"** (Genesis 6:8). Moses also said of him that he **"was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God"** (Genesis 6:9). That is the first time we find the words "grace" and "just" in the Bible. The apostle Peter once described Noah as **"a preacher of righteousness"** (2 Peter 2:5). He warned his generation of the coming cataclysm, but they would not listen. As a result, they all perished in the world-wide flood. Noah, on the other hand, with his wife, his three sons and their three wives, survived the deluge in the ark. It is a story familiar to all. Tragically, not everyone accepts it as true. Personally, I believe every word of the account in the Bible. The lessons of the flood could not be clearer. Sinfulness will result in the retribution of God. True faith leads to salvation.

Abraham is another outstanding hero of the Old Testament Scriptures. He has been well described as **"the father of the faithful."** Paul wrote: **"He staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully**

persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20,21). I think Abraham would take up a very large volume in covering everything that could be said about him. He is such a significant figure to Jews, Arabs and Christians. What would he make of all the hostilities today among his descendants both physical and spiritual? His faith in God should be an example to all. His faith should inspire the world.

Abraham, in his day, was the equivalent of a modern Arab sheikh. He was certainly wealthy. We read at one point that **"Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold"** (Genesis 13:2). He really became a nomad after leaving Ur of the Chaldees, his home city. All his life **"he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"** (11:10). He never found it. But his spiritual descendants did. We read of their dwelling for ever in a city called New Jerusalem (Revelation 20).

In many ways, Joseph makes the Old Testament for me. His story is wonderful. I always remember a sceptic admitting that whoever wrote the story of Joseph certainly knew a lot about Egyptian history. That he did, because it was written by Moses. Stephen said of Joseph: **"And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him and delivered him out of all his afflictions and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house"** (Acts 7:9,10). The key words are: **" . . . but God was with him."** Dear reader, I pray that He is with you and me too.

Moses of course, has a special place in the history of God's People. "He was born under sentence of death, yet he lived a full span. He grew up amid the luxury of a royal court, yet he threw in his lot with slaves. Protected and pam-

pered by an absolute monarch, he joined the monarch's most persecuted victims. Trained in the strict tenets of a ritual conservatism, he became a revolutionary. Halting of speech, he uttered words of exalted wisdom. In a world of turmoil and corruption, he put forth an inspired code of ethics for humanity. Taken at birth from his people and faith, he established their distinctive religion and moulded them into a nation" (Moshe Pearlman). Truly, he was an exceptional leader, prophet, lawgiver and author.

HEBREWS CHAPTER 12

This chapter deals with: *Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith (1-3); Discipline is for Sons (4-11); Let Us Then Be Up And Doing (12-17); the Earthly Sinai and Heavenly Zion (18-24); and Pay Heed to the Voice of God (25-29).*

The Hebrew writer, in this chapter, mentions Esau, Moses and Abel. To him, they were real people in the real world. He also refers to the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Proverbs and Haggai, which he regarded as part of the revelation of God.

I see a reference to athletics in the opening verses of the chapter. It was a theme used on occasions by the apostle Paul. "The writer . . . is thinking of the Greek games here, the spectators in their tiers upon tiers of seats, the athletes competing in the stadium, the latter speaking of the Christian life as a contest and a race, and the former, of the saints of chapter eleven" (Kenneth S. Wuest). The athletes' goal is the winning line; the Christians' goal is Christ Himself (2).

The writer speaks of chastisement (4-11). Chastisement or discipline is inevitable for the sons or daughters of God. Sometimes we do not like it, but we all have to recognise that, in the end, it is for our own good (11). "The writer insists that we must look on all the hardships of life as the discipline of God and

as sent to work, not for our harm but for our ultimate and highest good . . . We shall cease from self-pity, from resentment and from rebellious complaint if we remember that there is no discipline which does not take its source in love and is not aimed at good" (William Barclay).

We were given a great contrast between literal Mount Sinai and spiritual Mount Zion in verses 18 to 24. We should read of the events surrounding the former in Exodus chapters 19 and 20. They brought terror to the people of God. "But you are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus . . ." (22-24). So we can say that the heavenly Zion is the meeting point for the new Israel and that, spiritually, the already have access to it. Also, that they new Israel have come unto angels, who can and do minister to them; to the whole communion of saints, to God; to believers of pre-Christian days ("*the spirits of just men made perfect*"); and to Jesus Himself, the mediator of a better covenant. There is a lot in this and is worthy of further detailed study.

IAN S. DAVIDSON.
Motherwell.

TRIBUTE TO RUTH COLES

For those of you who may not have heard, my mother Ruth Coles died on February 13, 2002 and is now in Heaven with our Lord.

My mother is still a role model for me, her grandchildren and I know to many others as well. Mum was what she taught. There were no lessons taught by her or words of scripture or encourage-

ment that she did not personally live. She was a sincere Christian. (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

The funeral was held in Buckie at the Church of Christ on Cluny Terrace. The Service was conducted by Robert Hughes, who gave an excellent talk about mum and presented the gospel also. The hymns were as my mother had selected along with the poem. "Death is Nothing at All." Her granddaughters had made a tape of songs for their grandmother at an earlier time and one was played. Her granddaughters also wrote tributes to her that were read as part of the service. For those wishing to make a contribution a fund has been set up called **The Ruth Coles Scholarship Fund**, the proceeds of which will go to help the students' travel expenses who attend the Melanesian Bible College in Lae, Papua New Guinea. These funds will specifically aid those students and their families who live in remote areas such as the Waria Valley where my mother and father worked for 11 years. All the proceeds from the book my mother wrote "*Journey into Yesterday*" will be going into this fund. The book has not come back from the publishers yet. As soon as the book is available we will put a notice in this publication. In the UK the fund will be managed by and the book will be distributed through, the Kirkcaldy Church of Christ, Hayfield Road, Kirkcaldy, Fife, Scotland KY2 5DG.

I want to thank all those who have prayed for us, sent cards, e-mails and made phone calls to us at this time and during her long illness. We have really felt the love that many had for mum and the high regard in which she was held all over the world. We have also been upheld by your love.

Andy & Catherine Scott
Sara Shelton, Rachel Lane
& Celina Scott

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Who was "a mighty hunter before the Lord?"
2. Who was the son of Hagar?
3. Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech here
4. Micah said he would mourn like these birds
5. Which prophet said: "The just shall live by his faith?"
6. The mother brought this child a coat every year. Who was she?
7. Which two men accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey?
8. What does the name Barnabas mean?
9. What does the New Jerusalem not require?
10. In what was Jesus' body wrapped after His crucifixion?

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

A. R. LIMB
38 Chewton Street,
Eastwood,
Nottingham NG16 3JP.

Please note that Bro. Limb is Secretary for the Church in Eastwood. All future correspondence for the Church should be addressed as above. Telephone numbers are unchanged.

THANKS

Brother and Sister Stephen and Jean Farrow wish to thank all those who sent letters, cards and made telephone calls, expressing sympathy on the death of their beloved daughter Stephanie on February 24th. Also for all the kind words and thoughts offered during her long illness previously. All these were greatly appreciated and we were uplifted by the love in Christ that was shown.

Bro. & Sister Farrow,
meeting at Hindly,
Wigan.

COMING EVENTS

KIRKCALDY LADIES DAY

18th May, 2002

Lunch at 12 noon

Speakers: Susan Heinemeier
Hyvot's Bank, Edinburgh.

Kathy Langdon,
Glenrothes.

Theme: A Friend For Life.

BUCKIE

Annual Social

Saturday, 11th May, 2002

Speaker: Michael Gaunt

Also Guest Speaker
on Sunday, 12th May

PETERHEAD

Our Social Weekend

Dates and Times

Saturday 13th April: 3pm and 6 pm

Lords Day 14th April: 10am Bible Study

Speakers: Brothers Mark Hill
(Loughborough)

and Robert Marsden (Wigan)

Gospel Mission

from Sunday 16th June to Sunday 23rd
with no meeting on Monday 17th

Speaker: Bert Ritchie (Coleraine, N.I.)
assisted by the Harding Students

KELSO

Outreach Meetings

at Abbey Row Centre, Kelso

Wednesday & Thursday,

17th & 18th April, 2002

at 7.30pm

Speaker: Jim McGuiggan (N. Ireland)
All Welcome (Refreshments)

GHANA APPEAL

Through your donations brethren,
much suffering has been alleviated and
many have been added to the Lord's

Church in Ghana. They are effectively reaching out to others and so the Church continues to grow. Your funding helps buy land for meeting places and necessary building materials. Bibles, study materials and hymn books have also been provided. However, the main reason for starting the Ghana Appeal was to help brethren in distress and this need is on-going.

A widow with four children is in poor health and in serious need of medical attention. Another widow has died leaving four children. The brethren there will help as best they can but some financial help is needed in these circumstances. A sister has been injured in a vehicle accident in which her husband was killed. She was admitted to hospital but requires further treatment. Another sister, having had her baby delivered by Caesarean section is requiring further surgery as her condition is continuing to deteriorate. The wife of a Church leader has been in hospital for two and a half months. As he has had a bad yield on his farm, the accumulated bill is beyond his reach. Can we imagine the feelings and anxiety felt by these brethren in such circumstances? These are some recent examples of problems experienced by our Ghanaian brethren. Your generosity has helped many - let us continue in the love of Christ. The brethren have expressed their thanks and appreciation for spectacles which have been sent. This has enabled them to read again - what a blessing for a child of God to be able to study the Bible.

Those wishing to help, please make cheques payable to:

Dennyloanhead Church of Christ
Ghana Fund and send to the treasurer

Mrs. Janet Macdonald,
12 Charles Drive, Larbert,
Falkirk, FK5 3HB,
Stirlingshire.
Tel: 01324 562480.

APPEAL FROM NIGERIA

Dear Editor,

Greetings from the Christians struggling in Nigeria. First let me thank you for all the free copies of "The Scripture Standard" over the past. Above all I want to thank you for publishing my last two appeals for material and financial assistance. However it seems that our UK brethren are only interested in assisting the Ghana brethren. The evidence seems clear in your magazine under "Ghana Appeal". It should be understood that my statement is only out of Godly jealousy. Our UK brethren should be encouraged to come over into Macedonia (Nigeria) and help us, especially when we are trying to maintain the standard of the scriptures. We need missionaries, or some help with finance and materials. Nigeria is, by the grace of God, the most populous African nation. Every black man in the world among five is Nigerian. I think the Lord will not be pleased if, for any reason, we neglect Nigeria. I am very willing to work with brethren from the UK to help evangelise Nigeria with New Testament Christianity, as it was at the beginning. Would you please bring my plea to the ears of the churches in your country. Thank you so much.

SAM M. HAYIOYE,
 Enwan Church Of Christ,
 P.O. Box 87, Igarra,
 Imiezua, Enwan Town,
 EDO STATE, Nigeria.

(Bro. Hayioye has a point, brethren. His two previous appeals have met with no apparent interest and nearly all aid does go in mainly the one direction. Those who would like to try to help our Nigerian brothers should contact Bro. Hayioye, or sister Margery Purcell, who, for some time now, has been trying to help the cause in Nigeria. Her address is: 3 Dale Avenue, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 2JP.)

ANSWERS

1. Nimrod (Gen. 10:9).
2. Ishmael (Gen. 16:11).
3. The well of Shebah (Gen. 26:32,33).
4. Ows (Micah 1:8).
5. Habakkuk (24).
6. Samuel (1 Sam. 2:18,19).
7. Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 12:25).
8. "The son of consolation" (Acts 4:36).
9. The sun and moon (Rev. 21:23).
10. Linen clothes (John 19:40).

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