

THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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Abiding in the Love of God

*"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."
- Jude 21*

What is one of the first blessings to result from the opening of the eyes of human understanding to the character and love of Jehovah? It is the sight of a higher type of love than that which the natural mind perceives. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he [Christ] laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). "Herein was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). We cannot remain in this love unless we have first gotten into it.

The love of God is distinct from love common among mankind. We need to be directed to it. We need to grow in it. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" (2 Thess. 3:5).

How are you directed into the love of God? Through the Word of God which brings to one's attention the peculiarities of Jehovah's love. Natural love is generally selfish, even when it is expressed towards friends. But God displayed his love towards us, showing it to be superior to ours, and he did so while we were yet sinners, aliens, strangers, and enemies through wicked works; for by God's arrangement Christ died for us. This self sacrificing love directed towards those who do not merit love is set apart from all human loves. It is a love of which our Lord spoke, saying that it is the greatest love among men: a love in which a man would lay down his life for his friends. There is yet a greater love, a love that is not found among men -- the love in which a man lays down his life for those who are his enemies; such is unselfish, gracious, and heavenly love beyond comparison (John 15:13; Rom. 5:7).

How Is God's Love Received?

After one perceives the love of God it begins to work in them. That is, if a man's heart is in a favorable condition to receive God's love -- if it is good ground, prepared for the knowledge of God's love. "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14) -- it draws us, awakens us, causing a reciprocal love in our hearts so that we will in turn love God.

What is the effect of God's working in human hearts? It compels a person to reach a decision, a decision saying that the person could do no less than return this love toward God, to be willing to lay down life itself in God's service. This is a love which considers its actions to be nothing more than a reasonable response to the favors of God already received.

The apostle Paul sums up the transformation from selfishness to godlike love in a few words:

We ourselves also were at one time foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers desires and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another; but when the goodness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared he saved us [delivered us from this evil condition of heart], not on account of works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his own mercy; he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:3-6).

Perfecting the Love of God

This new spirit or mind, this harmony in the love of God, is only received by those who are begotten by the holy Spirit and who pursue the steps of justification and consecration. The new life grows and the Christian is increasingly filled with the spirit of God, that is, the love of God.

We may expect that individuals will reach varying degrees of maturity in this area. Look within yourself, honestly, to see how much of this love you demonstrate. "This is [proof of our possession of] the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and do not find them grievous" (1 John 5:3). He who, in keeping the Lord's commandments, finds them grievous, demonstrates his lack of harmony with them -- or with God -- and that he has not yet fully consecrated himself to the Lord. The obedience of such persons would be no proof of their possession of the "love of God." Whoever is so in harmony with the Lord that they delight to do his will have in this fact an evidence that the love of God is dwelling in them.

This is what the Apostle means when he says, "Whosoever keepeth his Word [loves the Word of God, and does not take pleasure in turning, twisting, and forcing the Word, but who keeps and cherishes it, loves it, and seeks to conform himself to it] in him verily is the love of God perfected" (1 John 2:5).

This reminds one of our dear Redeemer, in whom verily the love of the Father was perfected. The prophet presents him as saying, "I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). Our Lord marked out this spirit as essential to discipleship, saying, "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). None of these scriptures even suggests that formalistic obedience or outward piety are ever considered by Jehovah. The Lord "seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23) -- such as have the spirit of righteousness which is known by a love for righteousness, a love for truth, a love for all the qualities of the divine character and a desire to conform to it in thought, word, and deed.

Walking in Love

The first evidence of the "love of God" is a love for God. But the Scriptures point out another requirement -- that is, a special love for Christ's brethren -- for those who have the spirit of God, and a general, comprehensive, sympathetic love for all men. The Apostle says, "If we love one another [it is evidence that], God dwelleth in us, and [that] his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). The Apostle emphasizes this point saying "Whosoever hath this world's goods [interests, affairs], and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him" (1 John 3:17)? The intimation is that a lack of sympathetic love or a meagerness in assisting a needy brother implies that the love of God either did not dwell in such an one at all, or else that it was only slightly developed.

This love does not merely exercise itself toward Christ's brethren in temporal concerns. This is a love which affects all of one's life, leading the one who enjoys it to "walk in love" and forebear "in love" (Eph. 5:2; 4:2). Even when it is necessary to speak things which might be unpalatable to the listener, the spirit of the Lord would dictate that one speak lovingly. Such a character and love evidences our growth in Christ (Eph. 4:15).

Knowledge is valuable, but incidentally so. The Apostle says that knowledge inclines one to be inflated, to make them vain, boastful and out of harmony with God's spirit, the spirit of love, meekness, and gentleness. Knowledge transforms us into little more than noisy cymbals which produce sound without merit in the Lord's sight. Knowledge, when it serves its purpose, brings the mind to appreciate the "love [that is] of God" and the wisdom of copying his character. Knowledge, so used, makes us like our Lord and our heavenly Father. To this position the Apostle directs our attention, saying,

"That ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know [appreciate] the love of Christ ...and be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:17-19).

Daily Practice

Love, unquestionably, becomes the principal object of a Christian's attention. Divine love is to be copied and practiced -- because it makes us more like God. It is our sincere prayer that many brethren have already become partakers of the "love of God" and that all such are seeking to perfect that love in them.

Based upon the Apostle's assurance we know that those who take a firm stand progress in grace and knowledge. Those who enter the "school of Christ" and refuse to accept its discipline may expect knowledge to slip from their grasp. Contrariwise, those who are transformed through God's teaching expect that the dimensions of the divine plan will unfold before them and that their knowledge will keep pace with their growth in love.

A reminder is not out of place at this point. The believer's growth in the love of God is not a matter that God needs to attend to, it is a matter that we must attend to. God provides all we need to learn of his love and to experience the constraints of his love in character building. But it is our responsibility to keep ourselves in the love of God. We can keep ourselves in his love only by practicing the principles of God's love in daily affairs. God's love needs free reign in our lives if it is to push us forward into self -- sacrifice in the Lord's service, his honor, and the spread of his truth. So also must the love for the brethren be allowed to fill our hearts so that by practice we may learn to lay down our lives "for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Our love for the world, too, must reign in our hearts, making us more sympathetic towards mankind, those composing the "groaning creation." It is essential that we be more generous and kind towards all with whom we

have contact. In this way the love of God extends itself, through us, towards that part of the creation under our "care." In this way we fulfill our responsibilities for their interests, their nurturing, their development. This is essential to developing the love of God.

Resolve to please God. Practice his love. Perfect it in your life. Love is the spirit of our Father, the spirit of our Lord, the spirit of all who are the members of the Body of Christ.

Prejudice

Prejudice is prejudgment. It is the forming of an opinion without examining the facts. Prejudice is hastily accepting a conclusion without investigating the evidence upon which it rests and allowing ourselves to be hoodwinked and deceived when slight reflection would keep us from such a mistake. Prejudice is being satisfied with common opinion when we should demand proof, and it is rejection at first sight of whatever does not agree with our former convictions, confirm our beliefs, suit our former tastes, or agree with our preconceived ideas. It is a revolt against the unpalatable and distasteful which harbors a deep seated reluctance to part with that to which we have become accustomed. Prejudice is a hesitation to accept as true what we have not previously believed. Prejudice is a wicked unwillingness to admit that we can be wrong and others right. It favors or condemns on the slightest pretext and recoils or embraces as it is moved by caprice.

Prejudice is not limited to persons. As a result its influences are extensive and its evils are manifold. Prejudice does not hold opinions, it is held by them. Its views are like plants that grow upon rock, that stick fast even though they have no root. It looks through jaundiced eyes and listens with itching ears. Prejudice speaks in partial and biased accents. It clings to that which should be relinquished and relinquishes that to which it should cling. When beaten it remains defiant. When disproved and vanquished it is sullen and obstinate. There is nothing too low for its love or too noble for its hatred. Nothing is too sacred for its attacks or too deserving of its aspersions. It is as cruel as it is universal; as unjust as it is relentless; as unforgiving as it is conceited and ill-formed.

-- Anonymous

The King

A bright star shone, sweet angels sang
One glorious night of old,
While o'er the hills glad tidings rang
Three wise men brought their gold.
Far off, yet full, the words still ring
"This night is born to you a King."

The moon rode high -- still lay the sky
One tragic night of old,
When priestly hate cried "Crucify"
A man for silver sold.
Still down the years the echoes ring --
The words which crucified The King.

The night is dark -- the weary earth
Awaits with hope the dawn,
She travails in the pangs of birth
Through which the Age is born.
And, cleverer still, heaven's trumpet rings
He comes to reign -- Great KING of Kings.

- F.A. Shuttlesworth

The Annual Report of the Directors

Many annual reports of organizations are written in terms of profits and losses incurred during the preceding year. The group's activities, changes, innovations, highlights and other salient features are usually put in the spotlight. An attempt is generally made to put the company's "best foot forward."

Although a financial report is also published annually, our intent is not to emphasize the monetary aspect of our association. Our heavenly Father knows our needs, individually and collectively. From his bountiful storehouse he provides abundantly. For this we are continually thankful!

This past year witnessed many changes. Events have occurred world-wide that have changed the economic, political and social aspects of the time in which we live. The rapid pace at which these happenings have transpired has surprised and startled many. Not only Bible students, but serious people everywhere are searching for the strand that is being woven in the midst of the tumult.

Many have endeavored to connect the events to Biblical prophecies and to predict still future events. The skeptic quickly points out that previous chronological surmising have often not materialized in the fashion or according to the timeline expected. Therefore, the cautious student may shy away from arriving at any rash or possibly premature conclusions.

Yet, the Apostle Paul admonished us to not treat prophecies with contempt. He told us to test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. (1 Thess. 5:20-22, Niv).

We would do well to remember these guidelines as we attempt to editorialize with respect to current events and world affairs. Indeed, as directors, we would prayerfully request that the pages of this journal and the activities of this organization be evaluated according to the standards enumerated by the great Apostle Paul. We welcome your close scrutiny if done in the spirit of Christian love.

Our ministry is not extensive in comparison to others. Gone are some of the "spiritual pillars" of former years. Without their influence and considering the existence of other groups and publications, some have even questioned whether the Pastoral Bible Institute should continue its work.

And yet others sense a Divine injunction to "keep the torch lit," to not "drop the baton" and to "keep on, keeping on," as long as the Lord so directs. As in the time of the prophet, may we not despise the day of small things. (Zech. 4:10). It is our prayer that this labor of love has been and will continue to be a blessing to the Lord's people, whoever and wherever they may be.

The story has been told of a young boy walking on the seashore. As he continued, he approached an older man picking up starfish and throwing them into the sea. Asked why he did that, the stately senior replied that he was saving the fish from certain death away from the water and its nourishment.

But the lad responded skeptically, saying, "Surely, knowing the abundance of starfish in the world, you realistically cannot make much of an impact." The grandfatherly gentleman smiled as he reached down, picked up another starfish and tossed it out to sea. As he did so, he remarked, "Maybe not. But it makes a big difference to this one."

Our attempt is not to "save the whole world." But, according to the Lord's command, we are endeavoring to preach the Gospel of the kingdom as a testimony to all. (Matthew 24:14). As we do so, we hope and pray that "one here, and one there," will be nourished, fed and sustained.

We live in a materialistic and immoral world. Temptations assail us on every side. Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8, NIV).

Our response should be to assist fellow believers by standing firm in the faith, knowing that our brethren throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings (1 Peter 5:9 NIV). May we live by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited nor provoke and envy each other (Galatians 5:16-17, NIV).

We are instructed to "...not love the world or anything in the world." If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world -- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does -- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15-17, NIV).

The Apostle Paul indicated that our sanctification was the "will of God" (1 Thess. 4:3). Our Lord Jesus asked that his followers be sanctified through his Father's truth and added that "thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Our desire is that the activities of the Pastoral Bible Institute assist in the sanctifying process. Additionally, we pray that our love may abound increasingly in knowledge and depth of insight so that we may discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ -- to the glory and praise of God (Philippians 1:9-11, Niv).

The Ministry of The Word

Our pilgrim and speaker service is a great blessing both for those visited and for those invited to address various gatherings of brethren. We remind you that this service exists and that you can avail yourself of it either by contacting the director or editor of your choice, or by addressing a request directly to the office.

Those who are isolated, because of their location or prevailing attitudes, from fellowship with established Bible study groups are urged to state their request anyway. The Institute will do its best to provide a ministry fit to your needs.

Another aspect of this service relates to funerals. Often, brethren who are somewhat isolated desire to witness to their lifelong beliefs and provide comfort to those they leave behind. Sometimes, because of distance, they feel they can call on no one to minister to their family and friends when they may most need it. This has been an important part of our pastoral service.

Outreach

The preaching of the Gospel to the world continues in our small way.

We advertise in a variety of publications. The inquiries received from these seekers after God can be most delightful and surprising, both in their content and the attitude of the correspondent. Reading through their sincere questions is the only reminder needed to assure us of the need that this work continue. Elijah thought that only he was left to serve the Lord but he was mistaken. Who can proclaim the Gospel without God giving them an appreciation that there are still hearts seeking after him if, haply, he may be found.

This we mention to remind you that our effort in this area is gauged by donations which are tagged by you -- the Institute supporters -- for the "Free Subscription" work. If you want this outreach to continue, please tell us how much of your donation is to be reserved for that effort.

The Annual Meeting

On June 2, 1990 the membership of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc. assembled at its offices for its seventieth Annual Meeting. After opening the meeting with prayer Br. T. M. Thomassen was selected as meeting chairman and Br. P. J. Pazucha was selected as meeting secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The directors' report and financial statements were presented and approved with notation. [All three reports are published in full in the July -- August issue of the Herald.] In connection with the minutes suggestions were made about increasing interest among the membership in Institute activities. In connection with the Treasurers report it was reported that the loss suffered in Fiscal year 1989-90 has been made up during the first month of the new fiscal year. Lengthy discussion centered subscriptions paid for by others and the increasing number of public receiving the Herald.

The names of deceased members and new members were read. The roll of membership was distributed to members for their assistance in locating members whose addresses were not current.

Br. M. Rutkowski and Sr. D. Petran were appointed as election inspectors. While they tallied ballots the members joined together in praise, prayer and testimony. The names of those brethren elected as directors were read at the conclusion of the count: C.A. Czohara, A. Gonczewski, A. Jarmola, P.J. Pazucha, L. Petran, T.M. Thomassen, J. B. Webster.

During the membership discussion which followed the following topics were discussed and suggestions received for board action: That member feedback on Institute activities continue to be encouraged; That the membership newsletter be announced in the Herald with an offer to mail upon request to non -- members; That a notice run in the Herald making a distinction between readership and membership and that details about membership accompany that notice; Finally we were reminded of the essentials of the Christian calling and were urged to keep those ever before our mind.

The meeting adjourned with prayer and members fellowshiped together during the remainder of the day.

The new board of directors met following the Annual Meeting. Among the actions taken was the election of officers and the selection of the editorial committee. The names of officers and editors follows:

Chairman: T.M. Thomassen, Vice -- Chairman: A. Jarmola, Secretary: P.J. Pazucha, Treasurer: L. Petran.

Editors: A. Jarmola, M. Knapp, B. Kuehmicel, P.J. Pazucha, W. Scheel.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FISCAL YEAR ENDED APRIL 30, 1990
(1) Balance Sheet as of April 30, 1990

Assets

Cash on hand		\$ 9,174.46
U. S. Treasury Bills		80,000.00
M & I Partnership Savings Account		8,926.14
Accounts Receivable		158.00
Interest Receivable		1,867.63
Prepaid Expense		430.16
Inventory:		
Divine Plan	\$ 42.00	
J. T. Read Tapes	\$1,194.30	
Miscellaneous Items	\$ <u>185.01</u>	
Total Inventory	\$1,421.31	<u>1,421.31</u>

Fixed Assets

Office Equipment	15,209.32	
Accumulated Depreciation	<u>11,325.00</u>	
Total Equipment	3,884.32	3,884.32
PBI Library	3,000.00	<u>3,000.00</u>
Total Assets		\$108,862.02

Liabilities

Berean Bible Institute, Australia	\$186.00	.
Herald Subscriptions Paid in Advance	<u>\$680.00</u>	
Total	\$866.00	<u>\$ 888.00</u>
Net Worth (as per analysis below)		\$107,996.02

(2) Statement of Income and Expense and Analysis of Net Worth
Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 1990

Income

Contributions	\$15,843.20
Herald Subscriptions	6,490.00
Legacies	2,100.00
Interest Earned	7,625.36
Herald Gift Subscriptions	463.90
PBI New Members	<u>15.00</u>
Total Income	\$45,620.57

Operating Expense

Pilgrim Expense	\$ 6,367.85
Herald Expense	9,196.25
Office Staff	17,000.00
Free literature and Herald Subscriptions	624.25
Administrative and Office Expense (Milwaukee & Racine)	1,900.69
Office Rent & Utilities	3,457.54
Depreciation of Office Equipment	1,903.00
Booklets, Newsletters, Advertising	1,988.25
Library	<u>111.09</u>
Total Operating Expense	42,549.56
Net (Loss) or Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 1990	\$10,013.00
Net Worth, May 1, 1989	<u>118,009.02</u>
Net Worth, April 30, 1990 (as per Balance Sheet above)	\$107,996.02

The Experience of Servitude

The experience of servitude is recurrent through history. And the experience has never been happy.... Power breeds oppression. Masters get lazy and become scornful of those under them. The cry "too long our soul has been sated with the scorn of those who are at ease, the contempt of the proud" is believable (Psa. 123). We live in a similar slavery. True, we have, in our country abolished institutional forms of slavery and all but eliminated a servant class, but the experience of servitude is still among us and is as oppressive as ever.

Freedom is on everyone's lips. Freedom is announced and celebrated. But not many feel or act free. Evidence? We live in a nation of complainers and a society of addicts. Everywhere we turn we hear complaints... And everywhere we turn we meet the addicts -- addiction to alcohol and drugs, to compulsive work habits and to obsessive consumption. We trade masters; we stay enslaved.

The Christian is a person who recognizes that our problem is not in achieving freedom but in learning service under a better master... Every relationship that excludes God becomes oppressive.

- Eugene Peterson

Unity and tolerance are indispensable. They can only be acquired by association with those with whom we do not agree. They must be practiced in spite of differences of opinion which will arise.,

They are the ripe fruit of love. While divisions and exclusivity are always the evidence of the lack of brotherly love whatever excuse may be made.

The value of Jesus' sacrifice lies in the Christian's acceptance of it.

Never let your Christian life disown its past. Let every new and higher consecration and enjoyment into which you enter be made real to you by bringing into it all the grace and knowledge that Christ has already trained within you.

-- Bishop Phillips Brooks

If Ye Know These Things

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." - John 13:17

There are theoretical lessons and there are practical lessons. Theory and practice sometimes overlap, as in our theme text. However theoretical our knowledge may be our Master here commands us to put knowledge to work in our life, to use it. In the spirit of bringing your life into fuller submission to the will of God, ask yourself this question: When you come together with other believers what is most important to you: That others grow up into the image of Christ? Or that they agree with you?

When believers assemble there are many helpful, instructive thoughts offered for consideration. But how many of these godly, sanctifying messages are made ineffective by the well meant comments of other brethren? What do I mean?

Imagine that in your Bible study group there is a Christian brother who has become notorious (perhaps even a little bit boring...) because he always speaks on certain subjects. Character is an example commonly complained about but the illustration holds whatever the individual's preoccupation may be.

It is evident that we all do not regard the same subjects as important. Therefore, I may say to myself that the speaker is wasting my time by talking about something I already think I understand. If I do this I am reacting to the (1) topic or (2) the brother without ever hearing what he has to say. I am not being noble as were the Bereans, because they heard with "readiness of mind..." and they searched the Scriptures to prove whether what they were told was true.

Scarcely a Christian has never discounted one subject or another. It is a human reaction reflecting our likes and dislikes. To do this is not inherently wrong, although we miss many blessings unless we grow up as Christians. But how quickly a brother's good thoughts are gobbled up by the "birds of the air" if I, because I am disinterested *in* the brother's thoughts, spread my disillusionment to others. "Oh he always talks about character. He never talks about doctrine or chronology," I might say. And by such a thoughtless slip of the tongue the more impressionable among us, the spiritually immature, is taught not to listen to brother "A," or to scoff at the instruction of brother "B." I often hear such comments and I have made them myself. But when we are dissatisfied, when we are caught up in faultfinding, we may not care to criticize ourself for stealing spiritual food from the mouths of others for whom it is meat in their due season.

We conveniently forget that if we judge ourselves we will not be judged. Never mind that you or I don't care to eat particular spiritual morsels. It lies within our power to take those morsels from the mouths of those who would eat. When I do this I am reminded that our Savior criticized the Pharisees for the same thing. He said that they would neither enter into the kingdom, nor would they permit others to do so. It is good to be caught by our own conscience so that we can repent and receive forgiveness from God.

Dear brethren, do not allow idle words to turn you into Satan's tool for snatching away seeds of truth from those who can be swayed by your opinion. You may mean well. And no one but God can judge your motive. But do not recoil with amazement that you could be so used! This is not the time for injured sensitivities. The instructions of God are profitable, and the discipline of God is never easy. But he brings his own under discipline so that they may learn and live. Do you remember Peter's example? That impetuous, beloved Apostle fell prey to Satan. It was necessary that the Lord reprimand him, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

We should not be respecters of persons. God is not a respecter of persons. It follows then, that to be swayed by the opinion of others is to be immature as a Christian. This should be a temporary condition, passed through on the lifelong journey from spiritual infancy to maturity. We are not all at the same place in our Christian development. We must individually learn to care for the needs and the weaknesses of our brethren. That does not give us the right to intercept experiences in the lives of our brethren or to live their Christian life for them. Instead, we should teach them to discern the spirits and afterward we should stand aside as God works in them to will and do of his good pleasure.

Something worse than being used by Satan can occur, however. We may intentionally hinder our brethren. Well meaning ones are not beyond convincing others that they should discount the teachings of a fellow servant whom they do not appreciate. Such intervention teaches the impressionable to interfere in the affairs of others. Inadvertently we can teach others to engage in busy -- bodying instead of teaching them to avoid it.

How little we know of what God is preparing us for beyond this life. The nature of his instructions sometimes eludes even the most faithful and mature believer. This being true, what folly it is to presume that we can intercept another person's lessons. To do so is to practically deny our faith in God's intervention in the lives of other faithful ones.

It is sobering to think that we might be used as Satan's pawn. We don't want that to happen. The thought that we could discourage a brethren should put us on guard. But consider further manifestations of this practice and how dangerous it can be in extension.

Society has lost much of its confidence in organizations and in men. Why? Because repeated scandals taught man that institutions and other men are not trustworthy. Society is infected by a social disease which may be called "tunnel-vision": the inability to consider context, to look narrowly and only at a pinpointed subject. Wherever you look you see tunnel-vision: in society at large, in religious circles, and even among students of the Bible.

How is "tunnel-vision" manifested in the fellowship of believers? It is found in the inordinate concentration upon disagreements. This arises because we are unable to see a thing in context, to recognize that there are subtleties, shades of meaning, and yes, even uncertainties: things we have not yet mastered. Have you ever listened to a biblical discussion and heard one little idea that disagreed with something you thought you understood? How did you react? Did you think of *all* the reasons why that thought was incorrect? Or did you continue listening so as to determine whether the speaker had reasons for making that statement? Perhaps he was viewing the subject from a standpoint you have never considered.

This is one reason why special interest groups are so popular today. Each special interest wants to assure that their particular interest is taken care of. They do not care about the merits of other views, they are inherently selfish. They do not care that their own view may be partial, and that others might have needs as well. They care only that their view predominate. Among Bible study groups we see similar manifestations: new classes, new organizations, special projects.

Each may have merit. But what is the effect? Do we build one another up into one body? Or are we generating more and smaller bodies?

It is hard to listen to ideas without comparing them to what we already accept. It is hard not to feel that a speaker has somehow forgotten all the things you or I hold dear when we hear one idea

that differs *in* some little detail. Our mind forgets life's subtleties. We can easily assume that because the believer differs from us in some detail that somehow their entire doctrinal base must be different because we, ourselves, disagree with them. What a danger there is here! We assume that we are correct *in* everything we understand -- a problem with our ego. We find fault and suppose evil, rather than seeking to harmonize what we heard with what we believe.

Having fallen into this trap, the writer uses a test to examine himself. When a brother or sister is speaking to me what am I doing? Am I listening for the aspects of truth that he is bringing out, or for those which I have not understood previously? Or am I thinking about those scriptures which I think disagree with the speaker. If I am listening with this latter state of mind then I am demonstrating that deadly condition. The attitude is to presume that I am always right. It is an assumption that the speaker is always wrong. It is ego and self -- centeredness at its worst. It may help you to ask yourself the same thing.

How does this relate to our subject? Is it harsh judgment? Is it inharmonious with the Lord's spirit or inappropriate for consideration by believers?

Remember the sense of our theme text: If we know a thing then we are happy (or blessed) if we do it. A person who studies in order to master a foreign language is blessed if he speaks that language after having learned to do so. A student who attends college to *qualify* as a physician is blessed by the practice of medicine over the years of his working life. But what about the person who learns a language or who masters a profession and upon completing his course of instruction closes the textbook and never considers the matter again? What about the student who passes his medical board qualification exam, is granted a license to practice and then takes a job as a telephone repairman. Such behavior appears to be unwise if not foolish. But how much more foolish it is to learn the things pertaining to life and godliness and then to forget to perform them!

There are principles at stake here. "Knowing" and "Doing." The words are nearly synonymous with the religious concepts of "doctrine" and "character." Our Lord relates our doctrine to our practice. He has told us that "character" cannot be divorced from "doctrine." There is, in the godly sense, no doctrine without practice, and no practice without doctrine. The two are intertwined and as such we read in the New Testament of the doctrine [singular] of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His message to man was singular, united, completely harmonious with itself.

A review of Jesus' earthly ministry, that short three and a half year period in which so many were so blessed by his presence among them, reveals an interesting pattern of teaching. Ask yourself, "To what chapter and verse can I turn to find Jesus' explanation, from beginning to end, of the plan of God?" Anyone familiar with the Gospels will admit that there is no such place. Nor can we find such a discussion from the pen of the Apostles. The teaching of Jesus and his followers alike were occasional, tailored to the needs of their hearers. They were partly doctrinal, partly practical, because the needs of the infant church were for that balanced state of life in which men and women acted according to their understanding, and that each bit of additional understanding lead them to increased responsibility to behave accordingly.

We are reminded of Paul's instructions about how Christian women wore their hair and jewelry. The lesson had literal importance in those days. There was a tendency [and still is] to emphasize physical appearance. But a greater issue was at stake, a universal issue which related to man and woman. What issue?

Spiritual qualities matter more than jewelry. These characteristics endow a person with true, intrinsic, worth which can not be lost, stolen or corrupted. These beauties of character we are

taught to honor first of all, and then to seek after them. Paul's doctrine, or teaching, dealt with how a person was adorned. But the practice dealt with what a person was. They could be naked of ornament, or they could be clad. But if the believer had their choice between the gold and silver or the characteristics of patience, hope, and love, which would serve them best in the heavenly mansion to which they thought to ascend?

Such is the continual conflict between doctrine and practice. This conflict has been with us throughout the Gospel Age and will be with us as long as this present evil world continues. But the problems besetting the believer today are more acute because of the discontent and distrust so prevalent around us.

To Know And To Do.

Such simple words. If a person be convinced that they understand the Word of God what incentive is there for that one to listen attentively so as to be taught? Here lies the subtlest of tendencies to pride.

One may claim an interest in learning about God. But like well fed persons who have dull appetites and little zest for eating, if you presume to understand God's plans your spiritual appetite will be as sated as your stomach. Spiritual food is much like natural food and the desire to learn is as important as the sitting at the table. Given our society's penchant for snacking, the desire to eat may even be more important because we no longer think it strange to see people eating almost anywhere. How wonderful it would be if our minds were always prepared for spiritual nourishment, whether among the assembly of believers, in the quietness of our study, or amid the throng of unbelievers where we may also hear words of importance even though the speaker himself may be unaware of his own utterance.

The Apostle's teaching about what kind of things we should devote ourselves to go largely unheeded here, in the beginning of the 1990's:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).

One might expect that such admonitions would be ignored among the heathen and apostates. But what of the believer who listens to the servant of God with skepticism and disbelief, instead of receiving the word into a good and ready mind? Ought these things to be?

To What State Of Mind Should We Aspire?

In partial answer of this question we refer you to three passages of Scripture:

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein" (Heb. 13:9).

"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 1:25-2:3).

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:9-11).

Brethren, it is true today just as it always has been, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John 13:17). Apply your heart to wisdom and express in your life what your head has learned. In doing so you will demonstrate your approval of his way and your submission to him. Learn first the happiness of loving what he says you must do. Then the joy of what you would do will be all the more full.

-- Peter Pazucha

"It shall greatly help ye to understand scripture if thou mark -- not only what is spoken and written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstance, considering what goeth before and what followeth after."

- Miles Coverdale, A.D. 1535

He Shall Silently Plan For Thee

O let him plan for thee
through all the coming days;
His good is better than our best
His choice alone can bring true rest,
and fill our lives with praise.

'Tis passing sweet to know
that prayer can still avail,
For God is planning for his own,
And that his strength and his alone,
can never, never fail.

The longings of my heart
he knows and understands;
His plans of peace encircle thee
Wait then his afterward to see,
the working of his hands.

His plans are always love,
no evil thought can dim
His working, and the hearts that rest
within the shelter of his breast
find all they need in him.

Then let us trust him more
to choose for us his best,
With childlike confidence to place
our hands in his, and let him trace
the pathway to his rest.

Jehovah, thy God, is in the midst of thee
As a mighty one he will save thee
He rejoiceth over thee with joy
Will renew thee in his love
He joyeth over thee with singing.

- Zephaniah 3:17

The Glory of Solomon's Reign

"Blessed is everyone that feareth Jehovah, that walketh in his ways." - Psalm 128:1

By his fortieth birthday, Solomon, by God given wisdom, had built Israel into a world -- renowned civilization. His kingdom had connections in Egypt to the west, the desert in the east and south, and the Mediterranean Sea on the north and west. Only Phoenicia, ruled by Hiram (who had made a treaty with Solomon), had not been conquered and subjected. In point of fact, Hiram had been of great assistance to Solomon in the preparation of materials and workmen for the Temple. The ships of Solomon and Hiram were recognized by all nations of that era as far east as Judea and as far northwest as Britain.

Accounts of Solomon's wealth are astounding. His table dishes were made of gold. A thousand shields for his mighty warriors were made of gold. His possessions were magnificent almost beyond belief. Solomon, himself, was brilliant in a variety of ways. Not only was he a financier but along military lines he was equally adept. Fourteen hundred chariots were imported, along with thousands of horses to power them. Along with these went a large cavalry detachment for his army.

He was a writer of beautiful sonnets and spoke three thousand proverbs. His fame in all these areas was world-wide.

The Half Was Never Told

We limit our lesson to the visit of the Queen of Sheba to the court of Solomon. She declared that she had heard of his fame and came to see, with her own eyes, what she had been told. But so outstanding was all that she beheld that she declared that the half of his glory had never been told her. It is estimated that she traveled some fifteen hundred miles to make the trip. Her travel being largely by camel, at an average of about twenty miles a day, it is estimated that the trip took over five months -- in addition to the time she spent at Solomon's court.

Tradition says that she sent ambassadors to Solomon in preparation for her visit. Along with them were five hundred youths dressed as young girls with instructions to behave as such. She sent a thousand costly rugs woven with gold and silver, and a crown constructed with pearls and gold hyacinths. There were camel -- loads of musk, amber, aloes, and other precious products of South Arabia. To all this was added a closed chest containing an unperforated pearl, a diamond intricately pierced, and a crystal goblet. The letter accompanying these gifts is translated as reading:

As a true prophet thou wilt no doubt be able to distinguish the youths from the maidens and divine the contents of the enclosed casket, to pierce the pearl and thread the diamond and to fill the goblet with water that has not dropped from the clouds nor gushed forth from the earth.

The legend goes that when this retinue reached Jerusalem King Solomon told the bearers the contents of the letter before they presented it and easily took care of their weighty problems. The thousand slaves were instructed to wash their hands and faces -- from the manner in which they did so he determined which were male and which female. He ordered a spirited young horse to be ridden through the camp at top speed and on its return caused its abundant perspiration to be collected in the goblet. The pearl he pierced by some process known to him. The threading of the diamond with its crooked perforations puzzled him for a moment, but at length he inserted a

small worm which wound its way through, leaving a silken thread behind it. He dismissed the ambassadors without even receiving their gifts. When the ambassadors made their report to the queen, she decided that a personal visit was warranted, and we treat in this lesson the account of her trip.

Scripture makes no mention of the character of the questions she asked. The custom of the day was to exchange complicated riddles, and perhaps such were among the things of which they spoke. Everything connected with the Bible story, however, assures us of the vitality and vigor of this truly wonderful man -- King Solomon. Nothing may better illustrate this than the waterworks which he provided for the capital city. These are thought to have been the first of their kind in the world and resembled in many ways the versions which the superior engineering of the present day has provided. They were constructed over twenty five hundred years ago, but they were so accurately constructed that they were restarted and used again at the early part of the twentieth century. There can be little doubt that the Lord's promise to Solomon was richly fulfilled, that he was wiser and richer than others of his day and subsequently. The queen was attracted by the sumptuous construction of the palace, his appointments for the ministers of the realm, and the grand stairway which lead to the Temple. The expression "there was no more spirit" in her corresponds to that of our saying "it took her breath away."

The Greater Than Solomon

Solomon, with his wisdom, his glory, his prosperity, and the peace which ruled over his kingdom, was representative of someone far greater. Our Lord Jesus Christ indicated this, lest it should not be apparent otherwise. Truly, he spoke as never a man spoke (John 7:46) and the people rightly testified to the gracious and wondrous words which proceeded from him (Luke 4:22). Although his fame was spread abroad throughout the country, he was so far from being recognized by his own people that they became instrumental in his crucifixion as an enemy of their nation and their

God. It was apt, therefore, that he referred to the days of Solomon,

"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:42).

Our Lord showed his admiration of the Queen's desire for wisdom. Indeed a hunger for wisdom is the spirit of the Scriptures -- growth in grace, knowledge, love :these are essential to the "developing of character." This is the same lesson as Jesus taught in the beatitudes. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Those who hunger and thirst for wisdom, for knowledge, for understanding of the good and true know that they shall be blessed by the Lord and shall find what they seek.

The Lord's words (Matt. 12:42) were a reproof of his own nation. They indicated how carelessly indifferent they were towards the truth of God. It is important for believers of today to notice that the same spirit of indifference prevails among those who claim to be spiritual Israel but who are such in name only.

Just as the smallest indication of heavenly wisdom in the words of our Lord should have excited the nation of Israel to a zeal for God, so in our day the confidence which we have in our Lord, his character, and his plan should awaken spiritual Israelites to seek him -- the great Fountain of wisdom (1 Cor. 1:30).

At the First Advent those who were "Israelites indeed" were attracted to the Lord and taught by him. Today, spiritual Israelites are also drawn to him and his wondrous words. As the number of followers were few in the days of Jesus' First Advent, so we may expect only a few of the millions of professing Christians to take any real consolation from his gracious words.

When did Solomon's fame begin to spread? It was following the completion of the great Temple! We find in Christ Jesus an antitypical similarity. After Christ has erected the great Temple of God (which is the Church) and after it has been filled with the glory of God as the New Creation (and not until the New Jerusalem shall shine resplendent with the riches of divine grace and the brilliancy of the Lord's polished jewels) will the fame of Emmanuel reach the uttermost parts of the earth. The Scriptures declare that then:

"...many peoples shall go and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2,3).

Wisdom Of the Great King

The salvation of the Lord will be seen by those at the furthest ends of the earth. The whole world will have its eyes opened to the riches of divine grace and wisdom: as seen in Christ, head and body, who will reign in the New Jerusalem for the blessing and uplifting of the human race. The knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth just as the waters cover the face of the great deep. In that day there will be no need to say to your neighbor or brother "...know the Lord because every man shall know the Lord" (cf. Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34). Our great King is the antitypical Solomon. He will use his wisdom for the benefit of all nations -- not for just one. Yes, for all who come into covenant relationship with the Lord the blessings of the great King are assured, just as they were with God's typical people. The New Jerusalem is glimpsed in the Book of Revelation; there the greater than Solomon is said to be the light of that city, and we are told that all nations will walk in his light. And the kings of earth will bring their glory to him (Rev. 21:22,24).

The queen was astonished at what she found. We are reminded, therefore, of what men shall learn from the greater than Solomon. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared in reservation for them that love him." Now we understand in part and see this world as through a clouded mirror. Then we shall see as clearly as we are seen, we shall know as fully as we are known. We shall be like our Lord. We shall share in his glory (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9; 1 Cor. 13:12).

Do you remember how the queen concluded her stay at the Court?

"Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighteth in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee King to do judgment and justice" (1 Kings 10:9).

The antitypical Solomon is prepared to share his glory and his kingdom with his faithful servants of this present time. Imagine how happy those servants will be in his presence. They will see him face to face. They will be like him. They will receive of his favor and grace.

O blessed thought!

O words with heavenly wisdom fraught!

Riches of the Millennial Kingdom

There is an order in all of God's arrangements. It is not surprising that the first and primary blessings of the Millennial kingdom will be distributed among the church of this Gospel Age. These will be associated with our Lord in the glory of the kingdom. They will sit with him and be participants in his glory.

But there will be abundant blessings for the world. The queen of Sheba expressed the situation aptly in respect to the typical Solomon: God blessed Israel through choosing Solomon as king. So, in the Millennial kingdom, God's blessing to the world will occur because he chose the Christ to be king over all the earth, to bless all the families of the earth, and to grant them opportunity to return to a covenant of life with God. Thus, eventually, if they obey his judgments and consent to his justice all that was lost in Adam will be restored -- with added favors and mercies.

By faith some hear of the Lord's fame in advance of the days of his glory. By faith some approach him with their treasures -- laying all before his feet. By faith some are accepted by him. But instead of accepting their gifts he gives gifts to them: great and precious promises; hopes far outweighing the little "all" which they present to him.

Pictures never represent one hundred percent of reality. We find this true of Solomon's illustration of Christ. Solomon was wise, he was great, he possessed riches, and was accorded honor. But his weaknesses and the decay of his greatness are not typical. Remember, the antitype was declared to be "greater" than the type. Of the kingdom of the Christ it is said there will be no end. This partial correspondency is true of many types. David was a type in some ways; so was Moses; so was Adam a figure of him who was to come, yet not a figure in his transgression and condemnation.

One of Solomon's sayings was "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice" (Prov. 29:2). This has been only partially true of any of the kingdoms of this present evil world. Satan is the ruler of this world and not Christ. Even the best specimens of humanity are far from absolutely righteous. Consequently, no government of the day can fulfill this prediction. But it is implied throughout Scripture, in this verse and others, that this condition will one day exist. The Lord promises that he will establish his kingdom over men under Emmanuel's government and that all the families of the earth will be blessed. For this reason the Lord's people continue to pray: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). For this reason the Apostle declares that the "whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now" (Rom. 8:22). They await the manifestation of the sons of God.

In time the sons of God (the Little Flock) along with their Shepherd (their Head, the Lord Jesus) will compose the "righteous" who will be in governing authority over the world. This will be through God's decree and will be based upon the great Atonement sacrifice offered by Jesus. Then it will be true that "in his hand shall the righteous flourish" (Ps. 72:7). And it will be at this time, also, that Satan shall be bound so that he is unable to deceive the nations any longer. With the powers of truth and righteousness let loose and the powers of evil and deceit restrained, the world will be flooded with the light and knowledge of the glory of God. Under such blessed conditions all will be able to drink of the water of life freely and live forever.

The Greater Work

"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, 'He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.'" - John 14:11,12

Life is sweet. Life is dear. It is the greatest gift of God; for without life nothing can be experienced, nothing can be enjoyed, nothing can be known, nothing can be hoped for -- "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" (Eccl. 9:10). For this reason mankind clings to life tenaciously. A man will spend his every treasure, and whatever he can borrow, to regain his lost health, and to prolong his life to the pitiful utmost.

Let there be a rumor that cures have taken place at some remote shrine and thousands of stricken people will journey there -- regardless of the cost to themselves of money and pain. People will travel around the world on the chance that their ailments might be healed and a few more days of life enjoyed. The announcement that a new drug is successful against a disease instantly brings tens of thousands of frantic requests for the medicine.

Man seems to instinctively realize that he was designed to live forever and he protests and struggles against any termination of that life. So powerful is this natural instinct for survival that even the Lord's people who confidently expect that "...this mortal must put on immortality," nevertheless cling tightly to human life. And rightly so, for it is for God to decide the time of our change.

I remember an old brother, many years ago, when I was a child in the truth. He was crippled and literally bent double with arthritis. He was in constant pain. He had suffered several heart attacks and always expected that the next one would be fatal. When he came to meetings he inched his way along, slowly and painfully, by the use of two short canes. And the burden of his testimonies was always the same: "Oh, if the Lord would only call me home! I, like Paul, have fought the good fight; I have kept the faith; I have finished my course. If I could only lay down this miserable, misshapen, mortal body in which I am imprisoned, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, be clothed with that glorious divine body the Lord has promised me. I can hardly wait for my change to come," he would say. "Oh, dear friends, it is so hard to wait!" Then after a while, he would have another heart attack -- and immediately send for the doctor, to administer adrenaline or oxygen or whatever emergency treatment might be necessary to prolong his tortured existence a little longer.

I am reminded of Elijah, who sat under a juniper tree in the desert and wished earnestly to die. And why had he fled to the desert in the first place? -- because Jezebel had threatened to kill him -- it doesn't make sense does it? Except to show that life is sweet and every human instinct makes men cling to it.

Human nature was the same in Jesus' day, except that the situation was much more hopeless. Today, techniques of medicine and surgery control many diseases. Research facilities have been set up. Clinics and hospitals are widely available and new cures and wonder drugs are found almost daily. But in Jesus' day medical knowledge was primitive and comparatively ineffective. Sanitation was poor and there were no diagnostic and treatment centers, and some serious diseases were handled by such desperate measures as heartlessly banishing the sufferers into desert or wilderness areas so that others may not be contaminated. It is reasonable to suppose that the proportion of sick and suffering and crippled and blind was greater in those days than today.

Under these conditions, the Jews, who had the scriptures read to them every Sabbath day, would think with longing on some events in their past history. The sick would think of the time the fiery serpents bit the children of Israel so that many sickened and died; but under the Lord's direction, Moses had made a brazen serpent, and raised it upon a pole -- if any were bitten they looked upon the brazen serpent, and were healed (Num. 21:8, 9). "What a wonderful arrangement that was!" they would say. "We, too, have been bitten by sin and disease and death -- if only someone like Moses, or greater than Moses, would appear, and we could just look to him and be healed!"

There were many lepers in those days. Those having this dreadful disease would remember and say, "Elisha, the prophet of the Lord, healed the leprosy of Naaman, the Syrian" (2 Kings 5:10-27). If only another prophet of the Lord would come and heal us of our leprosy!

The poor and needy -- those suffering from malnutrition and starvation -- would remember the manna and the quails of the wilderness journey. They would also remember how Elisha caused the widow's oil to increase and never fail (2 Kings 4:2-7). And how he made twenty pieces of bread feed a hundred men with some left over (2 Kings 4:42-44). "Oh, Lord, send us bread too" they would pray.

Then there were those who had lost loved ones in death -- the cruelest blow of all. They would remember how, when the widow's son had died, Elijah raised him back to life: "And the woman said to Elijah, now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is the truth" (1 Kings 17:17-24). Yes, they too would recognize a prophet from God and listen to him and believe him if one would only come healing the sick, feeding the multitude, and raising the dead like the prophets of old.

The afflicted ones in Israel would remember other promises. The psalmist had sung:

"Bless the Lord, Oh my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction (or death)" (Ps. 103:2-4).

Isaiah (Isa. 33:24) spoke of a time when "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Then he joyfully announced a message from God saying,

"He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing" (Isa. 35:4-6).

Malachi spoke of a mysterious "...sun of righteousness ... with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2). These were the things they looked for, longed for, hungered, and thirsted for.

There was no telegraph or telephone in those days, no daily newspapers, not even a regular mail service, since not many knew how to read or write. But word began getting around, as though by electricity, and rumors started to fly -- a new prophet had arisen in Israel! "This man can heal all manner of diseases, even leprosy," the reports said. "He can cast out demons! He just tells them to leave and they do!"

At first there was disbelief -- there had been false prophets before. "Let's not get too excited about this," someone would say, "probably nothing to it." Then the next caravan would bring more news -- "He is a young man, named Jesus from Nazareth; he has cast out a legion of demons;

they entered a herd of swine, and went over a cliff! A touch of his hand, and the blind receive their sight! Even one born blind can now see!"

There was still some disbelief -- this was just too good to be true. Then came the news that the dead son of a widow at Nain had been restored to life by this wonderful young man; he had miraculously fed -- not a hundred as Elisha had done in days of old -- five thousand persons! That was all they needed to know! How could they miss? Here was a man of God who would not only heal their diseases, but if they ran out of money he would feed them as well. So we read in Luke 4:14, "And there went out a fame of him throughout all the regions round about." So thousands upon thousands of people left their homes and businesses and converged upon the place where Jesus was. The sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf and dumb, those with mental afflictions; the able -- bodied carried the disabled; those with sight led the blind; all with one purpose -- to find Jesus and be healed of their diseases.

It was the most natural thing in the world that they should do this. This is what Jesus wanted them to do. He wanted them to come to him. It was ordained that he should be identified in just this manner -- by his miracles of healing, and thus to draw men to him. As we read:

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him: Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached unto them" (Matt. 11:25).

Jesus knew that John the baptist was familiar with the prophecies he would recognize their fulfillment, he would know from the works of Jesus that Jesus was the Messiah. And John did know.

Picture the situation. Suppose it was announced today by reputable eye witnesses that there was a man lecturing publicly in your city who could heal every disease, regardless how advanced, including cancer and insanity -- cure every degree of blindness; instantly repair the damage to any organ or limb, and even bring back to life any who had died up to four days before. What would happen? Why there would be the greatest traffic jam in history! Just about everyone would want to see him and hear him. Although many would come out of curiosity, most would come in desperate earnestness -- to be healed of their afflictions. Human nature was the same in Jesus' day; and the proportion of afflicted ones was much greater.

So they came by thousands and thousands, most of them on foot -- poor, ill-clothed, dusty, hungry, sick or caring for the sick, weary from their journey, homesick in strange surroundings, scattered from their homes, and Jesus' heart went out to them when he saw them. We read, in Matt. 9:36, "When he saw the multitude he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad."

Many of us do not realize the magnificent scope of Jesus' healing activities. Some have the impression that he healed only a few people, as a sort of small sample of what would eventually be done in his millennial kingdom. But the fact is that he gave a most generous sample. He translated his great compassion into great action.

"And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon; a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him" (Mark 3:8).

"A great multitude of people, out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and be healed of their diseases. And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue [power] out of him and healed them all" (Luke 6:17, 19).

A great multitude is a lot of people, and he healed them all -- not just one or two, here and there, but all. We also read:

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease, among the people" (Matt. 9:35, 36).

Visiting all the cities and villages and healing every sickness and every disease, covers a lot of territory and a lot of people.

"Now, when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with diverse diseases, brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. And when it was day, he departed" (Luke 4:40,42).

Now note this -- He seems to have started his healing when the sun was setting, and did not finish until daylight -- it took him all night, but he healed "every one of them."

How else could it possibly be? Could Jesus, with his loving and compassionate heart, turn to his disciples and say, "That is enough, I will heal no more today -- maybe some other time?" Ah no! Because in that great multitude would be those who had traveled long distances to find him, and had already waited for days for their turn to see him. Some had reached the limit of their endurance and were faint. And the most serious cases of illness would find it the most difficult to approach him. The crowd is described in one place (Luke 12:1) as "An innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another." So, in their desperation to be healed, the somewhat stronger would push aside the weaker, literally treading upon them, so that those who needed healing the most would be left to the last. So Jesus stayed to the last and healed every one of them, even though it took all night! Thus we read in Matthew 8:16-17, "He healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet saying: Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." And Heb. 4:15 says that he was "...touched with the feeling of our infirmities." What does "himself took our infirmities" mean? It means that Jesus' healing ministry cost him something!

"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ... he was wounded [tormented] for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities ... with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:4).

The reference here is not only to his painful death on the cross as a ransom -- it included far more than that his heart ached, for every unfortunate person he saw. He was moved with compassion. When he saw someone in pain, he sympathetically felt that pain. When he saw heartbreaking sorrow over the death of a loved one, he wept! He daily bore their griefs, and carried their sorrows. His heart was wounded and bruised by the things he saw -- the hopelessness and degradation and despair of the people under their bondage to Satan. He was tormented by their suffering.

All this was a drain on his nervous energy. But when he healed them he suffered a further loss -- "For there went virtue out of him"; vitality went out of him; and he felt the loss of it. This is revealed by an incident recorded in the fifth chapter of Mark -- a certain woman had been afflicted by a wasting disease for twelve years. During this time she sought help from the

physicians and suffered many things at their hands, but with no relief. Going from one doctor to another she spent everything she had, but instead of getting better she had grown worse. Then she heard of this wonderful young man named Jesus who was able to heal every disease, and weak as she was, she sought him out. But when she found him the crowd around him was so great she could not get the Master's attention. Important things were going on just then -- one of the rulers of the synagogue had asked Jesus to heal his dying daughter. Jesus had consented, and a great crowd was accompanying him to the ruler's house to see a miracle. So the poor woman knew that it would be impossible for her to push her way through that crowd to face Jesus and present her petition. After all, who was she to claim his attention ahead of a ruler of the synagogue? Then, in her humility, she reasoned, "Why should I even take his time to speak to Him? He has such an abundance of power that if I may only reach out and touch his clothes I shall be whole. He won't miss it, he won't even have to know about it." So she joined the multitude. And as the crowd pressed to the front and sides of Jesus to catch his every word, she slipped up behind him and reaching out she managed to touch his garment. It was as though she had touched a live wire -- she tormented by human sins, yet without sin. And when we consider the multitudes he contacted during his ministry, we realize that his three and a half years of experience along this line far exceeded a lifetime of ordinary human experience.

Let us recapitulate for a moment. Jesus had come to offer himself as a ransom for all, but he also came to preach the truth of God's kingdom to Israel -- to give natural Israel an opportunity to become spiritual Israel. One of his last statements on earth was, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world -- that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). "Every one that is of the truth..." "The truth" -- this means that he had to give the opportunity to -- all Israel to hear his voice or message, and he was only one man with a few ignorant and unlearned disciples. No radio, no television, no microphones, no power amplifiers, no tape recorders, no printing presses, no tracts, no magazines -- and his time was very short too -- only three and a half years in which to perform a great task.

What did he do? When he told his disciples that he would make them fishers of men (Matt. 4:19), he revealed to them his method. As a fisherman offers the fish a bait, he would offer the people something they wanted very much -- and they would come to him. Then he would preach to them the gospel of the kingdom -- the good news that they could become the spiritual seed of Abraham, a nation of kings and priests that could be used to bless all the families of the earth.

What was the bait? A rich foretaste of the blessings eventually to be to all the families of the earth by his millennial kingdom, when life felt a surge of energy permeate her body, and with exhilaration she knew that she had been healed.

We read the rest from the record in Mark 5:30-34, "And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned about in the press and said 'Who touched my clothes?'" His disciples said unto him, "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee; and sayest thou who touched me?" He looked round about to see who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." Yes, Jesus instantly felt "virtue" or "power" go out of him; and we presume that this occurred every time he healed anyone.

Let's get the implication of this. Thousands upon thousands -- a very great multitude, from all parts of the country -- gathered to see and hear him, bringing all their sick with them. Luke wrote: "And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him and healed them all" (Luke 6:19). If one woman touching the hem of his garment caused a loss of vitality that he

could feel, what would the touch of a great multitude do to him? Of course he was a perfect man with an extraordinary store of natural vitality and unusual recuperative powers, but we can reasonably conclude that each incident of healing and teaching the multitude left him tired and exhausted physically. He was, after all, human. So, as the multitude sought him, he was literally touched with the feeling of human infirmities, he literally bore human griefs and carried human sorrows. He was wounded and bruised and would be given more abundantly, when there would be no more sickness and pain, when all tears would be wiped away, when there would be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying (Rev. 21:4). Yes, a foretaste of God's Kingdom, when the desire of all nations shall come (Hag. 2:7). This is confirmed by Luke, "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, 'The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you'" (Luke 10:9).

Near the close of his ministry, Jesus commissioned seventy disciples to perform a harvest work, or gleaning work, after him to go to every city and place and preach the gospel so that no one might be overlooked. He gave these seventy disciples miraculous powers in order to attract the people to them. And he told them that when they entered a city they should "...heal the sick that are therein and say unto them, "'The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.'" In other words, "You have tasted in advance of the blessings of God's Kingdom to come -- this is but a sample of what the Kingdom of God will eventually do, on a vast and worldwide scale." So Jesus' miracles, especially his healings, identified him as the Messiah "...and the common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37).

For a while Jesus was the most popular person in the land. On one occasion five thousand banded together and "...when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, 'This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world'" (John 6:14). And they planned to take him and make him a king.

Soon the time came when Jesus had taught his disciples everything their fleshly minds could absorb. They must now wait for the coming of the holy Spirit to further enlighten them, to lift them to a higher plane of understanding. So on one of his last days on earth Jesus gathered his disciples about him and said, "I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when the spirit of truth is come it will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12,13). For three and a half years they witnessed his mighty works of healing and his other breathtaking miracles. They had been empowered to perform some miracles in the name of Jesus. So they were thoroughly persuaded that Jesus was indeed the Messiah sent from God.

It was on the occasion of this same gathering that Jesus said the words of our text, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works sake." Then he made a surprising statement which has mystified and frustrated Christians for centuries. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14:11,12).

"Greater works than these?" -- What an astounding thought! What could be greater, for example, than raising the dead?; to defy the cruel finality of death as Jesus did? To tell the mourners to stop their lamentations? To tell a heartbroken mother to refrain her voice from weeping, and her eyes from tears (Jer. 31:16)? to take the cold hand of a little dead child and say "arise"? To feel the pulse leap beneath your fingers and see the warm flush of life flood the white cheeks? To see the eyes open and look about with wonder at the strange gathering? To see the mother's tears of hopeless sorrow turn to tears of joy, as she clasps her darling in her arms? Greater works than this?

Greater works than these -- to have all the sick of the entire countryside assemble before you -- sick of every conceivable disease and infirmity, and to take them one after another and to heal everyone of them?

Greater works than these? To cause the blind to see? the deaf to hear? the dumb to speak? the lame to leap and run? -- Greater works than these? To change water into wine? to feed five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes? to walk on water? to still a mighty storm? Greater works than these?

Yes, it is true! Absolutely true! Greater works than these have been performed and will be performed by the followers of the Master! And I do not refer to the tent meetings of so -- called healing evangelists, where, from among the thousands that come, only a pitiful handful claim to have been helped. Nor do I refer to the shrines and grottoes where the purported healings are even less frequent. These are not "greater works."

Have you ever seen someone rise from the dead? I have, and it is a most inspiring sight. I have seen men, dead in trespasses and sins, become quickened and rise up, and walk joyfully in newness of life (Eph. 2:1-5). You have too! -- Is not this a greater work? Those whom Jesus raised up died again in due course, but these have life eternal -- destined for glory, honor and immortality! In the language of Paul, the two are "not worthy to be compared!" Jesus did not do this greater work at his First Advent because it was not yet due time to do it. He had first to die and ascend to the Father before "the new and living way" could be opened and the greater works be performed.

Have you ever seen the healing of the blind? -- Of course you have. There is no greater blindness than that of the mind -- blinded by Satan, blind to God's mercy and lovingkindness, blind to God's plan of the ages, spiritual blindness -- gross darkness! We have all been blind, but now we can see -- really see! The blind ones healed by Jesus were able to see the things of earth for a few years, and it was a wonderful thing, but how much greater the opening of the eyes of the understanding - - to have the glorious gospel of Christ shine into the mind! To see the heavenly light, to appreciate the beauties and colorations and marvels of all the facets of the divine plan and finally to see him as he is! This is a greater work!

The healing of those being tormented by the fevers of worldly ambition or pride or discontent, through the truth, releasing them from the burdensome anxieties and cares of this life, just as Peter's wife's mother, healed of her fever by Jesus, arose and ministered unto the Master and those with him (Matt. 8:15) so these -- healed from their feverish lust for riches, and consuming ambition and pride of life joyfully minister serving the Lord and his brethren. This is a much greater work!

Then there is the healing of the loathsome leprosy of sin, bringing about the blessed state of justification, transforming the unclean outcast into a child of God how much greater this is than the extending of human life for a few brief years!

Changing the water into wine? Yes, greater works than this too. Taking the clear water of truth and using it to produce the most excellent wine -- the wine of participation and communion in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and the wine of joy, which, at his invitation we drink with him in his kingdom at a wedding feast far grander than that at Cana.

Have you seen a multitude of five thousand fed and filled with only five barley loaves and two small fishes, which the Lord had blessed? You have seen a far greater work than that, with very

modest resources, aptly comparable to only five loaves and two fishes, but richly blessed by the Lord. A worldwide promulgation of spiritual food has been made during this harvest time by the use of tracts, books, newspapers, public meetings, radio, television, and personal witness work -- to millions of people. Who knows whether there may be twelve baskets full leftover for us to use in China and elsewhere? Is not this a much greater work?

Have you seen anyone rebuke a mighty storm and create great calm? Is it possible to perform a greater work than that? Yes it is? Remember there were only a few disciples on the ship that day who were saved from the storm which Satan had brewed. On the other hand, how many thousands of the Lord's people have been caught in Satan's storms of circumstances and have cried, "Master, Master, we perish!" and have heard the Master's "Peace, be still," and have experienced that blessed calmness of mind which comes from a renewed faith that "all things work together for good." And as Jesus walked upon the stormy sea the Christian serenely walks the way he has chosen in a world gone mad, rising above the restless and turbulent conditions of this present evil world; and the faith of Jesus' followers today is stronger than was Peter's, who in attempting to follow Jesus upon the water sank in panic and cried, "Lord save me!" This too is a greater work.

In what way do we personally have part in these "greater works?" This is important because Jesus said that those who "believe in him" would do the greater works. First, we individually participate in these "greater works" in the sense that they are done in us, with our cooperation and invitation. We have, as Paul expressed it, yielded ourselves as servants to righteousness and holiness (Rom. 6:19). Each consecrated and accepted follower of the Master has been raised from dead works to newness of life, and what an exhilarating experience it has been! Just as Lazarus, hearing the voice of Jesus say, "come forth," rose up and left the tomb, we have responded and passed from death unto life.

The eyes of each one of us have been opened to see the deep things of God, but first it was necessary for us to realize our blindness and earnestly desire to see. There was once a poor blind beggar on the Jericho road who persistently cried out, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark 10:46)! And when Jesus stopped and asked him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" he eagerly responded -- "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" He knew what he wanted! So, too, we must cooperate and yield ourselves. Take, for example, the incident when Jesus, passing by, saw a man who had been born blind he made clay with his saliva, "...and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay" (John 9:1-25). Then Jesus told him to go to a certain pool of water and wash off the clay, and when the man did so he received his sight. Jesus could have healed him just as easily without this procedure, but he gave the man an opportunity to cooperate -- to yield himself. Blind as he was, he had to travel a certain distance to the pool it tested his sincerity and his faith. A skeptical man would have said, "What nonsense is this? Will mud cure the blindness I have had from birth?" But this man went and did as he was told, and when the splendor of light and sight burst upon his new eyes he was able to say the words from which a grand old hymn has been composed -- "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind now I see!"

There was a deeper significance to this peculiar method our Lord used to heal the blind man, illustrating our part in the "greater works." The secretions of his mouth, representing the spirit of the Lord's lips -- his grace and truth -- and the soil with which he mixed it represented the poor, earthly talents of the Lord's people engaged in telling forth the truth as they have opportunity. This combination has been effectual in opening the eyes of understanding of those whom the Lord has called.

And so, by desiring these "greater works" to be done in us, by yielding ourselves to their accomplishment in ourselves, by cooperating with the Lord, and our brethren in Christ to apply these works to other called -- out ones, we fulfill the prophecy of our text -- "And greater works than these shall ye do." By our efforts and cooperation, feeble, but blessed by the Lord, other ears too are unstopped to the truth. The lameness of character in others, as well as ourselves *is* overcome, the spiritual palsy and leprosy are healed, and the minds, obsessed and sick with doctrines of devils, made clean and lucid!

Of course, no one individual does all of these "greater works." But as members of the Body of Christ we share in what is accomplished by the whole body. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:21, 22, "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." And now, the next verse from the *Diaglott*, "But much more necessary are those members of the body which are thought to be more feeble." This is encouraging. We can take heart from that verse. Our humble and feeble efforts, which we think are so futile and so ineffective, are noted by the Lord; and we are reckoned and counted as having a real part in the complete works of the entire body, including the head, Christ Jesus! I continue with 29 and 30, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? All workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" The answer, obviously, is "No." But we are, each one of us, regardless of our positions in the body, considered by God as participating in the works of the body.

There is an important application of our text which is yet to be fulfilled -- more "greater works" to be done, and it is a wonderful and delightful prospect. We are assured that if we are faithful unto death we shall "live and reign with Christ a thousand years." The work of that Millennial Kingdom is restitution.

We will be the administrative agents of Christ in the performance of that work. At his First Advent, Jesus, by his wonderful works, gave the people a foretaste or sample of the work. It will be our grand privilege to bring about its complete fulfillment. Instead of a few persons, being temporarily raised, all the dead will be awakened. If they are obedient they will live forever. Under our administration all the sick will be healed and every physical disability eliminated, and the people will stay well. Satan and his angels, with their evil influences, will be removed from the scene, to obsess human minds no more. Instead of five thousand, the entire world of mankind -- all who have ever lived -- will be supplied abundantly with the bread of life. And as back there Jesus gave the bread into the hands of his disciples to distribute to the hungry multitude, it will then be through us that the merit of Jesus' ransom sacrifice will be applied. And "...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9); then will be completely fulfilled the prophecy of our text, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do."

We thank thee heavenly Father for the privilege accorded us, to participate in the "greater works" now. Prepare us and use us, for the still greater works of the future!

-- R. Seklemian

As we grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord, in the knowledge of the truth, we shall have this to comfort and strengthen us; and we shall thus have more of the peace of God everyday, and be able to abide in his love.

Zion's Watchtower, Page R5432.

The Question Box

Do the physical acts of abortion, begettal, birth and miscarriage have their corresponding spiritual counterparts?

A quick scan of any concordance will indicate that the begettal/birth process of procreation is rife with correspondencies to the spiritual life. Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus emphasizes this relationship.

Briefly summed up, the picture seems to be as follows: As the union of a female ovum with male sperm creates a new life, so the union of our desire to do God's will (Ps. 40:8) with the God -- given knowledge of what that will is (James 1:18) creates new spiritual life.

As the embryo is protected in the womb and nourished by the mother through the umbilical cord, so the fledgling new creature is created in the womb of the mind and nourished by the umbilical cord of faith during its formative period. As further protection is provided by an envelope of waters mixed with blood, so the developing Christian is protected by the justification that comes from belief (pure waters of truth) in the shed blood of his Redeemer.

As either abortion or miscarriage can prevent the birth process from reaching its maturity, so the new creature stands in jeopardy of death if not faithful to its spiritual birth experience (Heb. 6:4-6).

As a properly developed child completes its gestation period in the miracle of birth, so spirit begettal, if carried full term, will produce a spirit nature (Rev. 2:10).

-- Carl Hagensick

We should be extremely cautious in projecting our thoughts into making any picture that the Lord has not made, for when one does they are apt to make an erroneous assumption and thereby lose sight of God's true message.

-- Tom A. Herz

Yes, most aspects of the growth and development of a natural embryo/fetus appear to have spiritual counterparts when considered from the standpoint of the new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). New creatures are begotten of God through his spirit to become joint heirs with Christ and members of his body (John 3:3) -- the Greek *gennao* in this text is more appropriately translated "begotten" than the KJV's "born again." Birth of the new creature occurs at the time it is changed to its glorious spiritual condition beyond the veil, when it takes on divine attributes (John 3:8).

Between these states of begettal and birth, the new creature is also subject to weakness or illness from a lack of spiritual nourishment or by feeding upon false doctrines with their poisonous effects. If such a course is persisted in, it can lead to a miscarriage prior to full birth in the kingdom, implying the Second Death (Jude 12,13).

Only an abortion, if considered a deliberate act to prematurely terminate the life of a fetus with the mother's consent, would seem out of character to the new creature counterpart: its mother is the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 4:26) and the promise of God, which can be depended upon to nurture and sustain it until brought to full term.

-- Charles F. Redeker

Take Paul's advice given in 2 Timothy 2:23 -- "foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife." Also Titus 3:9 -- "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strife about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain." See Titus 3:11 also.

-- Loyal Petran

I have wrestled before with this question and I am aware of various suggestions for spiritual counterparts to these acts, but I am hesitant to suggest any, since I find no Scriptures alluding to abortion. Begetting and birth are explained sufficiently.

-- Len Griehs

The Scriptures do not speak unmistakably, so we cannot speak positively. There are some scriptural implications: The Christian is here on earth begotten of an incorruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23; incorruptibility belongs only to the divine nature). If the Christian develops in this life, he will be born (resurrected) incorruptible (1 Cor. 15:42; Rev. 20:6; 1 John 3:2) in the little flock (Luke 12:32). Or, he could willfully quench the spirit, leading to stillbirth, Second Death, no resurrection (1 Thess. 5:19; Jude 12; Rev. 20:14; Heb. 6:4-6). Alternatively, the developing new creation could be damaged by the will in a nonfatal way so that it would be born/resurrected without all its intended faculties (II John 8; 1 Cor. 3:11-15). These last were typified by straying Levites who receive a partial reward (Ezek. 44:10-14) and are called "a great multitude in heaven" (Rev. 19:1 ASV; Rev. 7:9-17).

-- James B. Parkinson

The Present Ministry of the Saints

"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." - Colossians 3:17

One of the most distinctive scriptural metaphors is used to describe that closeness of relationship which exists between Christ's followers and himself. This is pictured by the relationship between a person's head and their body. Jesus's followers are the body. He is the head. For this reason one of his apostles described the believer thusly, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Furthermore, the Lord calls upon his disciples to demonstrate their loyalty to him by walking in his footsteps. Faithfulness in pursuing this course will result in their change of nature, from human to spirit, in a resurrection like that which exalted their great Head.

Our Lord was honored as the ambassador or representative of his father. We share a similar honor because he considers us to be a part of him just as a body belongs with its head. The Lord warns us, however, that we are not to expect that the world will show any appreciation of his high standard of teaching. Rather, in proportion to our faithfulness in letting our light shine, we are to expect to attract opposition. Our master explained it simply, saying that the darkness and those who are of the darkness hate the light. They oppose all who are children of the light in proportion to their faithfulness as representatives of the light.

Although we have this special relationship with our Master we can never hope to accomplish anything ourselves. Everything must be done in the name and by the power of our glorious and living head. This is not an easy task (to put aside self), and we see that some people are always striving to do things for their good and to their credit. This is contrary to the spirit of our Lord. He taught that such an attitude will not be judged worthy of a place in the kingdom -- whatever that person's ultimate end might be. The class which the Lord is seeking in the Gospel Age will be composed of those who have such an appreciation of the Lord and his grace that they will delight in crediting all honor and praise to him.

Announcing the Glad Tidings

This is an important part of the present ministry of the saints. Every member of the new creation is called [or anointed] to proclaim the message of God in this age: that of truth and grace in Christ Jesus. No one should engage in this ministry with the desire to distinguish themselves in the service of God. Nor should a person's own opinions be the decisive factor in deciding their course of action.

By faith the divine word calls all who receive the grace of God into good hearts to "show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). This call includes all those begotten of the spirit of truth -- whether man or woman, servant or master, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, and from any nationality. Does anyone need a further commission than that to be found by acknowledging the new song that has been placed in their heart, even the loving kindness of Jehovah.

"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:18). This is a wonderful assurance concerning the destiny of those who obey the Master. They will be assigned their positions by God. In spite of God's will to order the members of the

body of Christ we are told that some will seek to "...set themselves in the body," as teachers and otherwise. If we are following our true head, should we not be alert for those self -- seeking and ambitious brethren who would usurp the Master's position in the lives and love of the children of God? But to do so we must be clear as to the teachings of Scripture. Our regular return to the Word of God is thus pointed out as being particularly important to spiritual progress.

The Master gave us a principle which applies nicely to such situations. "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). This rule is always to be applied by the follower of the Master. It exemplifies the spirit of the Master himself and is a necessary state of mind if we are to know and obey him as Lord. It matters little that few appreciate humility or self -- subjection. The believer need only care that it pleases their Lord. Looking to the parables, we are reminded that the Lord favors those who demonstrate patiently, zealously, and with long suffering their faith and love in him by managing the little daily affairs of life:

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Matt. 25:21).

When one looks at the "ladder of honor," there always seems to be room at the bottom. Any person who wishes to be used in the Lord's service need not wait long for opportunities to serve. The proud and self -- seeking will neglect certain jobs which they consider too lowly, too menial, or those which are not noticeable by other men. But those who are serving the Lord rather than themselves will rejoice in any service. To them the Lord will open the door of opportunity.

In closing our meditation on the present ministry of the saints we quote from a writer of long ago:

"It is said that Beethoven customarily tested newly completed compositions on an old harpsichord so that a more perfect instrument would not flatter the composition and hide its flaws. Many are unwilling to subject their labors to such an arduous test, preferring to be deceived and to deceive others with the outward appearance of their work. The traits of character which most entitle us to the love and esteem of God and men are not always those which appear on extraordinary occasions or events. Rather, we find them revealed in the run of daily life. Our lives are the "old harpsichord" that tries our character on its merits."

It is one thing to appear popular and successful. It is quite another to carry a noble, generous, giving spirit through the worries and anxieties that trouble us each day. Ruskin [a nineteenth century writer] said that "greatness is the aggregation of minuteness." It is the sum of little things well done that constitutes a useful and ennobling life. Those who wait for some chance opportunity to make a name for themselves are not likely to win this spiritual race. Those who do with their strength the jobs they find to do are apt to make quick progress along the spiritual race course. Not many men are privileged to discover new worlds; to perform an act that sets a race free from bondage; to speak words that will stir the hearts of a multitude. Such acts are rare. But each individual may live his life so well -- nobly, truly, faithfully near to God -- that all life is uplifted and all the world made better by such living.

Where Can We Be Generous?

We can learn how to care for others by referring to the instructions of Scripture. "Pure religion and undefiled before the God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Another reads:

"[The Lord] executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the prisoners: The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous: The Lord preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow..." (Ps. 146:7-9).

These verses and others should impress us with the Way of God.

Have we heard of a widow who can barely pay her bills and have we given something to assist her as Paul suggests: "Honor widows that are widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:3)? Have we seen a family struggling in need of food and clothing? Have we delivered items to their aid? The poorest among us can give a little labor to aid such in caring for their home and a little time in teaching practical tips to help them in the future.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies (Ps. 41:1-2).

Some need Bibles to learn of God and should we not eagerly divert funds to this worthy effort as spoken in 2 Tim. 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine, and in Rom 10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. For missionary work (exemplified in Acts 13:1-3) and in the dispensing of God's word, time, labor, and money must be used as we are taught in Col. 1:29: "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Those poor crippled children; how can we forget them or those underfed and sickly who have no helpers save God and a few more to care?

Psalms 140:12, 12:5 and Psalms 72:12-14 tell us why:

"I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight."

"We need to assist orphans and encourage wed or unwed mothers to preserve the life of the child of their womb. Yes! We must support this work for God is not the God of the dead but of the living that they may praise Him."

"I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise Him among the multitude. For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul [feeble life]" (Psa. 109:30-31).

Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless (child of the womb), yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? (Jer. 5:25-29).

"Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee: thou art the helper of the fatherless" (Psa. 10:12-14).

How can we turn aside from supporting by time, effort and money the unity and harmony of the family; both of our own and of others? God instituted the family unit in Eden and blesses this union of husband and wife in fidelity and the birth of children. Gen. 1:27-28 and Matt 19:4-6 speak to us thus:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

Are these various things cheerfully and willingly done? Would we go beyond, willingly offering our home to any soul for refuge, encouragement, a meal, a place to rest? Would we receive the unfortunate or sorrowing at our door and lodge them as needed? With such small actions as these we still may not have gone beyond a small portion of our annual income, entrusted to us by the LORD. How pitifully small the results seem. How we admire the widow spoken of in Luke 21:2-4:

"And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

Even more do we admire Christ Jesus who had no home, no bed, no guarantee of daily food. Yet he journeyed on our behalf for three and one -- half years giving continually of himself. With splendor left behind and poverty ahead, willingly he came, willingly he gave, willingly he was spent as our example. Let us consider our Lord Jesus Christ to see where we can give, not necessarily money but our own selves!

For our giving so little; O LORD, forgive us!

-- Brian Kuehmicel

On doing God's Will **Ascertaining the Will of God**

At the beginning one must seek to have a heart that has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine -- tenths of the trouble with people is right here. Nine -- tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what his will is.

Having surrendered your will, do not leave the result to feeling or impressions. Doing so can result in becoming liable to great delusions.

The will of the Spirit of God is to be sought through or in connection with the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If the holy Spirit guides us at all, it will do it according to the Scriptures -- and never contrary to them.

One must take into account providential circumstances. These are often plain indicators in conjunction with his Word and Spirit. Ask God in prayer to reveal his will -- correctly.

Thus, through prayer to God, the study of his Word, and by reflection, one can come to a deliberate judgment. If one's mind is at peace and continues to remain at peace after repeated prayers, proceed accordingly. In trivial matters and in transactions involving important matters we have found this method effective.

-- George Muller

Difficulty

No literature is more realistic and honest in facing the harsh facts of life than the Bible. At no time is there the faintest suggestion that the life of faith exempts us from difficulties. What it promises is preservation from all the evil in them. On every page of the Bible there is recognition that faith encounters troubles.

-- Eugene H. Peterson

Honoring the Servants

When Christ chooses to particularly honor his servants he often allows them to be humbled in the sight of men. If the saints are favored to suffer reproach for Christ's sake they will accept the honor of being conformed to their master thus conferred upon them. Christ never allows any of his servants to suffer loss. Rather, he turns that loss to gain. He honors faithful servants. He comforts persecuted ones.

Truth Most Precious

Great truths are dearly bought. The common truth
Such as men give and take from day to day,
Comes in the common walk of easy life,
Blown by the careless wind across our way.

Great truths are dearly won; not found by chance,
Nor wafted on the breath of summer dream;
But grasped in the great struggle of the soul,
Hard buffeting with adverse wind and stream.

Sometimes, 'mid conflict, turmoil, fear and grief,
When the strong hand of God, put forth in might,
Ploughs up the subsoil of the stagnant heart,
It brings some buried truth -- seeds to the light.

Not in the general mart, 'mid corn and wine;
Not in the merchandise of gold and gems;
Not in the world's gay hall of midnight mirth,
Nor 'mid the blaze of regal diadems;

Not in the general class of human creeds,
Nor in the merchandise 'twixt church and world,
Is truth's fair treasures found, 'mongst tares and weeds;
Nor her fair banner in their midst unfurled.

Truth springs like harvest from the well ploughed fields,
Rewarding patient toil, and faith and zeal.
To those thus seeking her, she ever yields
Her richest treasures for their lasting weal.

Entered Into Rest

Esther Czajkowski WI
Hattie Kukawich WI
Bessie Sheldon CT