

# THE HERALD

*of Christ's Kingdom*

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## EDITORS' JOURNAL

*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts 9:6*

Once again we arrive at the beginning of another year with a call for retrospection and introspection. Appropriately enough this season betokens a time for resolutions to improve our lives. Unfortunately it also conjures up memories of resolutions broken from prior years. This observation, however, provides no excuse not to fail to make our resolves for the coming year: *A just man falleth seven times and riseth up again* (Prov. 24:16).

In this issue of the HERALD the focus is on our theme text from Acts 9:6: *Lord, What wilt thou have me to do?*

When the Apostle Paul asked this question he was at the turning point of his career. He had just seen a vision. He had come face to face with the one he had been persecuting-Jesus of Nazareth-as of *one born out of due time* (1 Cor. 15:8).

His life changed. The persecutor became one of the persecuted. The Pharisee became one of the disciples of the man he had considered the arch apostate. It is little wonder that he spent three years in Arabia (Gal. 1:17, 18) to fully settle what the Lord would have him to do.

When he returned he soon became as active in the cause of the Nazarene as he had been in persecuting it. The zeal that had driven him to hunt out the Christians now drove him to seek new converts to the new religion.

No individual, other than Jesus himself, has left as deep an impact on the age to come as the Apostle Paul. His was the commission to the gentiles. His mission provided the bulk of the writing for the New Testament. His was the work of organizing the Christian church throughout much of the far-flung Roman Empire.

## What Are We To Do?

Paul's question is also ours. Each year, yes, each day, we constantly evaluate the will of God for us in our continuing walk. And this is a profitable area of study. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

Articles in the following pages deal with areas of Christian responsibility in the various fields of life.

"First Things First" deals appropriately enough with the primary area of our responsibility-our obligation to the Lord. Having taken on a commitment in our lives to serve him, what does he expect in our discipleship?

"Temple Builders" probes another area of the Christian's life, his relationship with other believers in church or ecclesia arrangements. From the very onset of Christianity, meeting together formed the focal point of the Christian's spiritual life. What are the responsibilities within the Christian community?

None of us make a more solemn commitment, after our covenant with God in the vows of consecration, than that of marriage. "Love and Marriage" view the responsibilities of this estate as a training ground for a still future marriage, which the members of the church look forward to-with their heavenly bridegroom.

As one thing leads to another, so frequently marriage leads to the joys and responsibilities of parenting. The challenges of properly rearing children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4) is another daunting task. Its reward is well expressed by the beloved apostle, *I have no greater joy than to hear my children walk in truth* (3 John 4). "Train Up A Child in the Way He Should Go" examines this subject.

Another area of life which demands a large amount of time for most Christians is the workplace. In a two-part series, "Of Slaves and Masters," the authors examine the obligations of both employers and employees.

The natural reward of labor in the workplace is financial remuneration. Proper management over one's funds presents its own share of difficulties. Many of these challenges are treated in the article on "Stewardship."

The final article in the series, "Our Heavenly Citizenship," is a treatise on civic responsibility and how the Christian relates to government.

The *Echoes from the Past* feature is a condensation of a discourse by the late A. L. Muir: "Spiritual Sicknesses."

*The Question Box* looks at a related query, *How can we know the will of God in our lives?*

We are omitting our regularly featured verse-by-verse Bible study from this issue because of lack of space, but will continue this series in the next issue.

Our wish for each of you in 1994 and the future is that each year may bring you closer and closer into the likeness of your Lord and Master as we each seek to fulfill our responsibilities as mature Christians, reflecting the life of our Master to the world around us.

## First Things First

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." -- Deut. 6:4-7.*

By James Parkinson

Our life responsibility is to our God. Scholars reconstruct the past, and experts confidently give conflicting predictions for the future. But only God was there when it all happened, and only God can bring about the future that he has promised. We must be decisive. Elijah stated the matter clearly: *If the LORD be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him* (1 Kings 18:21).

Where is Baal today? Who professes to worship him now? But even today the LORD GOD of Israel is at the helm and steering a determined course. Each of us should wholeheartedly answer, as did Joshua, *Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River [Euphrates], or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me, and my house, we will serve the LORD* (Josh. 24:15).

### Worthy is the Lord

God the Father was the architect, and his Son the craftsman, in the creation of all life and the planet on which we stand. To us *there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him* (1Cor. 8:6).

*Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they are, and were created.-Revelation 4:11*

God gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that every man might have one full and complete opportunity to learn righteousness and to do righteously forever. *As through one trespass condemnation cometh unto all men; even so through one act of righteousness justification of life cometh unto all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous* (Rom. 5:18-19).

*Worthy art thou . . . for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they shall reign upon the earth.-Revelation 5:9-10*

Christ with his bride, the church, will raise all the dead and reform them, fulfilling God's sworn promise, *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed* (Gen. 22:18).

*Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.-Revelation 5:12*

After the thousand-year Kingdom of Christ, and the little season of the world's final examination, God will forever head up all things in Christ, *the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth* (Eph 1:10). The experience with Satan, sin, sickness, and with death will ultimately bring health everlasting to all the families of the earth (Ps. 74:14).

*Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.-Revelation 5:13*

## **Our Responsibility**

We must learn both what our Lord does for us and what our own undone condition is. The more conscious we are of our own shortcomings, the more we see our need for Christ.

We have nothing of which to be proud. We brought nothing into this world, and we have nothing of our own. We owe everything to our Lord-even ourselves. *Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God in your body* (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

How can we glorify God? How can we show him our devotion?

Consider how a wise young man can know what kind of wife an attractive young lady would be for him. When he sees how she treats others before they are married, he will have a good idea of how she will treat him after they are married. (Similarly, can a wise young lady look ahead.) In like manner, Jesus Christ watches his prospective bride: he watches to see how we treat others.

*As we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith* (those who are on trial for life now).-Galatians 6:10

It is tempting to put on a good face toward those we see only occasionally. But it is a better measure of the heart how we treat those whom we see continually.

*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. - John 4:20*

A similar standard will apply in the thousand-year Kingdom of Christ, *Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me* (Matt. 25:40).

We are sinful. To bring glory to the Lord we must do our utmost to overcome sin.

*Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? Be it not so. Know ye not that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? - Romans 6:15-16*

And again, *Give no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our ministration be not blamed* (2 Cor. 6:3).

We are to be cheerfully zealous Quotations from ASV (1901) translation; to honor the name of our heavenly modified where required by the Greek text.

Father and of his son Jesus Christ. In case of conflict with anyone and anything else, above all we must not deny our Lord. However, this in no way excuses us from our responsibilities towards others: spouse, father and mother, children, providing things honorable in the sight of all men, and those with whom we meet in the ecclesias of Christ. We must not excuse ourselves by saying, I cannot help you, because I have devoted all my available substance to God (Mark 7:11). Both the Mosaic Law and Jesus Christ affirm that our responsibilities to those we have seen are essential to fulfilling our responsibilities to our Lord whom we have yet to see (Exod. 20:12, Mark 7:8-13).

## **TEMPLE BUILDERS**

*Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.-Ephesians 2:20, 21*

The word "ecclesia" is commonly used to refer to a regular gathering of individuals who desire to study the scriptures. No commitment of membership is required and no attendance is taken. The origin of this word comes from the Greek *ekklesia* (literally, *those called out* and is translated as "church" or "assembly." The meaning refers to a meeting especially a religious congregation. Therefore, "ecclesia" is an assembly or congregation of God's people in the same context as the church or *ekklesia* at Ephesus. As the theme text suggests, Jesus Christ is the foundation of the true church of God and all members conform to his example and instruction. Ephesians 5:23 says that Christ is the head of the church. All ecclesias of God's people have Christ as the common head and are bonded in love.

### **The Ecclesia**

Jesus promised: *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. 18:20). Certainly this is an encouragement to meet together with those of like faith and to organize "ecclesias." In recognizing his presence at such gatherings or meetings, the utmost care is taken to honor his presence with proper conduct and spiritual focus. Being with fellow brethren is a privilege and an opportunity to please our Lord by leaving worldly concerns and distractions behind. Gathering together provides an opportunity for spiritual refreshing and reconfirmation of Christian focus. Truly the church class is as strangers and pilgrims on this earth and the ecclesia is a temporary oasis of spiritual refreshment while waiting for a heavenly country. (See Heb. 11:13,14.)

Each member has a responsibility to embrace the privilege of an ecclesia arrangement and must recognize that each member has an effect on the overall spirit of the class. As the holy spirit develops the fruits of the spirit in individuals, so these same fruits of the spirit are reflected in the collective members of an assembly of God's chosen people.

### **Personal Growth**

Personal spiritual development is uniquely interwoven with ecclesia experiences. Attending studies, participating in choosing leaders, supporting class activities, and serving in various ways stimulates Christian growth. Interrelating with the trials and joys of other members, making brethren's needs a sincere concern and an important part of daily prayer is vital for Christian development.

*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. -Colossians 1:9*

*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.-James 5:16*

### **The Loss Of Self**

Intimacy with fellow brethren increases when self is removed and the true focal point is on the spiritual well being of a brother or sister because they have been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12).

The Apostle Peter reminds us to love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17) and this concept carries with it the insistence to be attuned to others needs to the degree that self becomes not only unimportant, but actually non-existent in sacrifice and preference for fellow members of the body. By not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25) and actively participating as a member of such an arrangement proves a sincere appreciation for the privilege of meeting together. We should speak the truth in love, setting

as our goal to grow into Christlikeness, being kind and forgiving. (See Eph. 4:15, 16, 32.)

### **Individual Maturity**

Truly, the free grace received from God and the privilege of the high calling has a humbling effect. Sincere concern for the spiritual well being of others and a determination to encourage them to be faithful to their calling reflects the maturity of the new creature; the selfish desires of the old man are replaced by true Christian love.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.-Matthew 22:37, 39*

### **Provoking Others**

**Paul** encouraged the Hebrews to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water (Heb. 10:22). Upon achieving this condition the consecrated member is in a position to consider others and to provoke unto love and good works (Heb. 10:24). A commitment to fellow brethren is required in order to assist them in their Christian walk.

Indeed, we are our brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9). By "keeping" our brother we guard him, protect him, and attend to his needs. Listening, caring, and sharing in daily experiences in a nonjudgmental fashion and with an attitude of brotherly love is not only a privilege, but a responsibility to each ecclesia member.

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he*



*laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.- 1 John 3:14, 16*

### **Class Affairs**

The new creature strongly desires to do all things pleasing in God's sight. (1 John 3:22) He is sensitive and conscientious in behavior and attitude when dealing with class affairs. When the new creature is watching and praying for personal guidance within his own life and concentrated on obedience to God's law of love, spiritual maturity naturally turns outward and overflows into the lives of others. Through faithfulness and trust in God's promised grace, the fruits of the spirit have a fertile heart in which to develop and flourish. Feature each member contributing his "fruits of the spirit" in an ecclesia setting. The atmosphere is filled with the holy spirit and an awareness of God's presence. Unity of the spirit prevails and selfish desires are totally absent.

*Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.-Philippians 2:2-5*

### **Serving One Another**

Love for the brethren reflects love for the Lord. *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Matt.25:40)*. The assembling of brethren together provides a wonderful opportunity to serve one another and to provide spiritual gifts for one another. Encouraging, forgiving, and praying for brethren are means of truly supplying them with a "drink of water," lifting them up and refreshing them. Let us be cheerful, zealous and generous in giving spiritual gifts.

*He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. - 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7*

*And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.-Matthew 10:42*

### **Ecclesia Maturity**

The Christian maturity of each ecclesia will vary depending on the maturity of the individual members. But, Christ is the ultimate goal both individually and collectively; and with the power of the holy Spirit the fruits of the spirit are manifested-love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (See Gal. 5:22). In recognizing the influence of the individual's role in the ecclesia, each member

endeavors to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Following in the footsteps of Jesus, all strive to keep the law of love and dwell together in unity (Psa. 133:1).

*Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.*

### **The Example At Antioch**

As an example of an ecclesia organized under the teachings of the apostles, the following verses describe and reflect the Christian character of the brethren at Antioch:

*Who, when he [Barnabas] came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.-Acts 11:22-26*

Barnabas recognized the grace of God manifested in the believers at Antioch revealed by their faith and conduct. The cleansing and sanctifying power of the truth amongst these believers was quickly discerned, and Barnabas "was glad" for them.

This is a beautiful example of Christian development in a young assembly of brethren. They met together and studied the scriptures diligently. They were sensitive to the needs of their fellow brethren and were organized in such a fashion that agreement and action could be taken jointly. Their spirit of sweet sacrifice both spiritually and monetarily reflected in their decision to send aid to the church in Judæa. They chose their leaders after much prayer and fasting and trusted according to God's will. The result of their obedience permitted them to serve the Lord by providing for his little ones. The example of the Christians at Antioch continues to serve as a stimulant to good works for the church class today (Acts 11:27-30).

*Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.-Hebrews 10:24, 25*

## **Ecclesia Elections**

Following the example of the early churches, each ecclesia has the privilege and responsibility to elect leaders by stretching out the hand. (2 Cor. 8:19; Titus 1:3)

Among the brethren are usually found those who have leadership qualities either as an elder or deacon. They are humbly devoted and obedient to the Lord, and they are self-sacrificing. Their knowledge and understanding of the scriptures is doctrinally sound, and they have a sincere desire to serve their fellow brethren. Each should be totally willing to either be elected or not.

In electing servants of the class a serious responsibility falls upon each consecrated member. All candidates for office should be prayerfully considered, leaning upon the Lord's spirit of love and wisdom to make a final decision.

Once elders, deacons, and other assigned roles are determined, the responsibility does not end. It is more important to continue praying and fasting in support of the leaders. Preparing and participating in studies and other meetings, cooperating in activities, and assisting when possible, strengthens the class and permits the leaders to fulfill their responsibilities to the flock. Each member has an opportunity to be a blessing by contributing to the spiritual nourishment of all.

## **Liberty**

As the new creature progresses in his Christian walk, he recognizes his failures, weaknesses, and imperfections. An appreciation is developed for the heavenly Father's mercy and patience and the provision of the robe of righteousness to cover fleshly weaknesses. In the humbleness of this reality, liberty for fellow brethren is achieved.

Each individual called is entitled to a personal walk with Christ. The necessary experiences to make his calling and election sure are unique. No one can fully understand the personal trials and experiences of others, and only God knows their needs. Therefore, liberty and mercy toward fellow members must prevail!

*For the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.-2  
Corinthians 3:17*

*Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.-1 Corinthians 7:24*

*For the body is not one member, but many .... But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. There should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.1 Corinthians 12:14, 18, 25, 26*

*Be ye kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another. Romans 12:10*

### **Conventions**

Each ecclesia is recognized as Christians bonded together in the faith, and each in turn is bonded to other ecclesias of like faith. Thus, as the theme text indicates, each

class is "fitly framed together," growing unto the same holy temple. Consecrated Christians gather in various ecclesias around the world. Continuing to this day is the blessing of uniting with members from other ecclesias in a convention setting to share the depth and beauty of the riches of God's plan and to participate in an even greater realization of the bond of love in one body, one faith. Praise the Lord!

*In all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.-Ephesians 4:2-4*

## LOVE AND MARRIAGE

*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.-Genesis 2:24*

By Brad Bach

The Gospel age is essentially for one basic purpose, the choosing of a bride by the heavenly Father for his Son. We all long for the marriage of the bride and the Lamb (Rev. 19:7), so that the children of the kingdom may begin to be brought forth-the same children that were born of the first Adam and the first Eve. These-born *in sin and shapen in iniquity-will*, under the second Adam and the second Eve, be nurtured through the kingdom to gain eternal life. Seeing then that we are all striving to this position we should be giving a great deal of thought to what constitutes a desirable spouse for Christ. If we can perform these duties faithfully here in an earthly marriage, this will demonstrate our future performance when joined to our heavenly bridegroom.

Marriage, like all the concerns of a Christian life, is to be guided by God's principles. These principles we find in abundant supply in the scriptures. We should not expect to

find a law of specific rules governing married life, a "do this and don't do that" structure, nor for any of life's affairs. Following a set of rules and regulations is not the Lord's purpose for the church. Rather, he desires us to learn scriptural principles as a basis for decisions and sound behavior. These principles can then be applied both to marriage and to various other situations.

Many of the issues in marriage are common to all the issues of life with which we have dealings as a Christian. The same principles apply. The main difference is that we spend so much time with our spouse that the influence we exert upon one another is far greater than in any other relationship.

### **Aquila and Priscilla**

Consider the principle found in 1 Timothy 4:12 as it applies to our married life: *Be thou an **example** of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* Marriage means a responsibility regarding our example and how we influence for good or for evil the one to whom we have been joined. This fact is illustrated in scripture in the case of Aquila and Priscilla, who are mentioned in five separate occasions by the Apostle Paul, and always as husband and wife. What a great influence to zeal they must have had upon each other in the service of the Lord, to be about the Father's business-exhibiting a willingness to serve and encouraging each other to lay down their lives in the Lord's service. As with Aquila and Priscilla, we now are proving where our

true affections lie and what kind of marriage partner we will be for the Lord Jesus in the kingdom. The Apostle Paul must have had a special place in his heart for this husband and wife team. Observing how they worked together must have made him think of the unified effort of Jesus and the church. Thus, he often mentions them in his epistle greetings.

### **Ananias and Sapphira**

On the other hand, note Ananias and Sapphira. This husband and wife team conspired together to lie to God and to the church about their assets, which they claimed were all being given to the communal purse.

*But Peter said, Ananias, why hast Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God . . . . And Peter answered unto her [Sapphira], tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the .spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Acts 5:3, 8*

How much influence did these two have upon each other? We can well imagine that they had some lengthy discussions about the moral integrity of the choice before them. While one may have had a greater influence on the decision reached, both were in agreement in the end. Whether by themselves or with another spouse their decisions may have been different, we cannot know; but in any case they reached a mutual decision and thereby showed themselves unfit to be considered by the Lord as a bride for himself. They showed a mind willing to deceive, a mind untrustworthy, unbelieving, uncertain. As James states it, *a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8)*. These are qualities a wise bridegroom would not seek in his bride. Compared to the glowing legacy of Aquila and Priscilla, Ananias and Sapphira influenced each other to a legacy of destruction. Quite a contrast! Each of us must keep in mind that how we influence our spouse and those around us is a serious matter and may well affect our eternal destiny.

### **Unequally Yoked**

Many in the early church were already married when the gospel was first preached to them and may not have found their spouses sympathetic. This occasioned the Apostle Paul to write specifically on this matter in 1 Corinthians 7. These thoughts can well be coupled with the principle in 2 Corinthians 6:14-*be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. To marry outside of the Lord's people is to court spiritual disaster.*

Even those who do follow the Lord's counsel should not conclude that they will be the perfect spouse, nor should perfection be expected of their mate. We are still in the flesh. The Apostle Paul knew that our imperfections would be a source of friction in married life. With a subtle touch of humor, he states in 1 Corinthians 7:28: *if thou marry, thou*

*hast not sinned, . . . nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh; but I would spare you.*

### **Covering up Weaknesses**

It is wise counsel that one should try to "cover up his weaknesses" so as not to be a hindrance in one's marriage. Married life is excellent practice for gaining control of the flesh and bringing our thoughts into subjection. In marriage the opportunities for self discipline and seeking not our own come at frequent and rapid intervals, giving the chance to truly inscribe these desired traits into one's character. Being conscious of our own imperfections should help us to allow love to cover the weaknesses and imperfections of our partner. In this vein Paul says, *and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness (1 Cor. 12:23).*

*Love suffereth long (1 Cor. 13:4).* This has the meaning of forbearance. It puts up with flaws and seeks to be constructive. *Love fervently, for love veils a multitude of faults (1 Peter 4:8, Weymouth).* We imagine that this was the attitude of both Aquila and Priscilla. There simply must have been a willingness to extend patience and mercy to each other in order to have their marriage and work together in the Lord's service. In exhibiting this behavior we demonstrate once again that we have a heart and character that is compatible with Jesus. Who is more patient and enduring than our Lord? If he has shown this merciful attitude toward us, shall he not expect his future bride to be of the same disposition.

*Love is kind (1 Cor. 13:4).* This Christian principle is a key element in a good marriage. Ask yourself how easy or how hard it is to find a compliment for your spouse. We all desire that our spouse be kind. Certainly the Lord shows his kindness toward us daily. He even shows kindness to the unthankful and estranged, how much more to those that are his begotten. How easy or how hard is it to point out a fault that would belittle our spouse? A tactful, occasional mention of an area for improvement should be tolerated (as the Lord shows us our faults), but a harsh statement is unkind and will serve to tear down a spouse's self-esteem and the marriage as well. How would we feel as a Christian if the Lord smote us each time we did something less than perfect? But he does not. He tells us that though we may need to be forgiven seventy times seven, yet he will never leave us nor forsake us. Let your spouse know that you accept and love them as they are but your hope is that, by and by, you both can grow together in the Lord. We can imagine many discussions, filled with tender, upbuilding, complimentary, kind words spoken between Aquila and Priscilla, but few unkind words. The bride of Christ is loving and kind.

### **Speak No Evil**

Another responsibility in marriage is found in Titus 3:2, *Speak evil of no man.* How important this principle is in marriage. A great deal of our character testing takes place within the family circle. Here, we "let our hair down." Here, that "that little member"-the tongue-can rear up. Every husband and wife knows that there can be a temptation to talk

about others. This is because of the high level of acceptance of each other and a consequent feeling of ease in conversation. It should be a lesson early learned, however, that this type of conversation is misplaced confidentiality; the Lord is hearing every word spoken (Matt. 12:36). Think of your marriage to the Lamb of God. Will he desire a wife that speaks evil of others? No! His bride shall stand and speak in the light. Do not let your marriage become a sanctuary for speaking evil and getting away with it. Rather, resolve to be an example to your spouse and thereby earn their respect in Christ. We feel certain that Jesus will have a bride in whose mouth is found no guile.

## **Arguments**

In 1 Corinthians 7:28, Paul saw that marriage occasionally brings trouble in the flesh, which he would like to spare us. Arguments are one of these troubles. *If any have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye* (Col. 3:13). In marriage an occasional argument will occur. This is not surprising. Having to deal with many hard decisions and trying moments causes pressure. The point to be made however is that we should be quick to make up. Daily reconciliation is the scriptural prescription. *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath* (Eph. 4:26). We need to remember how frequently the Lord has forgiven us and how quickly he brings us back into his loving arms. What a wonderful bridegroom he is! If a quarrel has occurred and your spouse comes to you, make it easy for them to do so. Do not make them go through a great penitence performance while you reluctantly look on. Forgiveness as an abiding attitude in our heart before it is even sought after is necessary. An appreciation of our Lord's readiness to forgive us should be reflected in our readiness to forgive and embrace our spouse (Eph. 4:26).

## **Order**

An absolute feature of God's character to consider in marriage is order.

*But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.-1 Corinthians 11:3*

The Apostle Paul has couched this marital information within a much broader theme of God's order. This emphasizes that "order" in marriage is not a singular consideration but rather part of a cohesive structure that stabilizes all his creation (Eph. 5:22-33). We know that with the change of dispensations the -world is advocating arrangements different from those the Lord designed for the development of the church- women's rights, women's equality, even women in the role of priests and pastors. The influence of the world in our day strives against the headship of the man. Therefore it poses a threat to the contented Christian home. Marriage can be looked on as a partnership, but the husband is the senior partner. While it may be true that senior partners do not always make the best choices in the best way, the Christian responsibility in marriage is for the husband to do his very best and thereby to earn and hold the respect of his wife. The husband should honor his wife and consider her wishes as he seeks to live up to his responsibilities (1 Peter 3:7).



The position of the wife must be as a solid helpmate to the husband's position as head. There should not be a struggle for power and control of the family. It may at times, because of the husband's lack of ability and the wife's greater ability in certain matters, **seem wise to** alter this order. However our wisdom should be quick to relinquish to the higher wisdom of God. When we step out on our own wisdom, departing from God's ways, there is a likelihood of unpleasant results.

### **Child Raising**

God carefully selects the bride of Christ. He chooses one that will be compatible to the heavenly Bridegroom and be his helpmate in the raising up of his resurrected children in the kingdom. Having the capacity to guide children well is a trait of a mature Christian (1 Tim. 3:4).

In choosing your spouse and in your spouse choosing you, each gave the other one of the highest compliments they could possibly give. In effect, each said that they saw in each other something so desirable that, of all other people, this was the one person with whom they wanted to spend the rest of their life and with whom they wanted to raise their children. This is a goal for each of us to try to live up to—the beauty that first attracted us to the other as a marriage partner.

Although a cliché, it is nevertheless true that good marriages have to be worked at. You have to think about them. Daily and hourly consideration has to be given as to what effect your attitude and words and actions are having on your spouse. As with the development of the individual Christian, so with the Christian couple, it is the little every day things which make the relationship strong. Be positive. Look for the good qualities in your spouse and be quick to mention the things you appreciate about them. It is necessary that Christian marriage partners help each other to a good positive self esteem. To do so will encourage growth, both within the marriage and in the Lord.

Finally, Christian responsibility in marriage means to let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). How we handle our marriage responsibilities and how we treat our partner will not go unnoticed by the world around us. Since it is a living testimony, it is one of the most powerful ways to let the sanctifying effect of the truth bring glory to our wonderful heavenly Father. The world is in a state of turmoil with only solid marriages and families surviving the test.

Those whose marriages are healthy give evidence that they are led by the holy Spirit of God. May God bless all that are so joined together in him to this very end, so that all may be to his honor and glory.

## **TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO**

*Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my **house**, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15*

This is our goal -- to have our house, our family, love and serve the LORD. Toward that end, we hunger and thirst for every bit of help we can get. This article considers some suggestions given by a Bible Student educator of our fellowship.

As parents, or as friends who want to support the parent in his earnest endeavors to fulfill this proverb, how can we best train a child ?

The word "train" (Strong's #2596) means to initiate, discipline, catechize, or instruct as to correct manners and habits. Does this list overwhelm us or seem impossible to obtain in today's society? We are not "of the world," but we and our children are most certainly "in the world."

### **Parents, the Experts in Everything!?**

Parents are expected to provide physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual support to their offspring through many years of loving care and nurture. They are also expected to fulfill many-faceted marital obligations. Most important of all, we have made a life-and-death covenant with the Lord to sacrifice our personal desires to fulfill his will. Being the best parent we know how to be and being the best spouse we know how to be is counted by our God as a part of the stewardship he includes in our consecration to him.

As parents, our primary responsibilities during our children's developmental years are the provision of the basic necessities of life -- food, shelter, clothing, and protection from harm. This is scriptural: "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). When we are cooking nourishing meals for our child, cleaning his house, washing his clothing, acting on our concern for him in this evil world we are not just being a conscientious parent (which all should be as long as they have brought a new life into the world); we are also fulfilling God's will in our consecrated lives.

We are not commanded to serve our child caviar, house him in a palace, buy him the most expensive designer jeans, or create a bubble around him to protect him; we are admonished to provide a healthy environment for him.

## Love, Love, Love

Love and affection are vital in stimulating children to learn and grow as human beings-love and affection and **communicating these feelings** by displaying our sincere emotions for them. *Love is of God . . . every one that loveth is of God, and knoweth God . . . God is love . . . he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:7, 16).*

We cherish the tender story of Jesus, our example: *And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not . . . Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:13-16).*

## Children Learn What They Live

Because parents are their children's first teachers, they play a major role in the socialization process, enabling their children to become independent members of society.

"If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.

If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive.

If a child lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with jealousy, he learns what envy is.

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative.

If a child lives with acceptance, he learns to love.

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with recognition, he learns that it is good to have a goal.

If a child lives with sharing, he learns about generosity.

If a child lives with honesty and fairness, he learns what truth and justice are.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith in himself and in those about him.

If a child lives with friendliness, he learns that the world is a nice place to live.

If you live with serenity, your child will live with peace of mind." (Dorothy Law Nolte).

Parents teach their children to speak the language, to dress themselves, and to perform basic life skill activities.

"Most of what I really need to do and how to be I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate-school mountain, but there in the sandpile at Sunday School. These are the things I learned:

`Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life-learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Be aware of wonder.'" (Robert Fulghum)

### **Laying the Foundation**

Parents give children opportunities to display proper etiquette and manners: *A soft answer turns away wrath. (Prov. 15:1) Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted ox and hatred with it (v. 17). Be gentle (James 3:17). Be kind (Eph. 4:32). Dress modestly (1 Tim. 2:9). Be strong and of good courage (Deut. 31:6).*

Parents foster independence and self-reliance by teaching their children how to solve problems and make wise use of their time: *Wealth not earned but won unjustly will dwindle away; but he who gathers little by little will increase (Prov. 13:11). Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death (Prov. 10:2).*

Parents give guidance related to educational and vocational choices and assist their children in understanding the value of money: *Poverty and shame shall be to him who refuses instruction: but he who heeds reproof shall be honored. (Prov. 13:18). He who is greedy for unjust gain troubles his own household, but he who hates bribes will live (Prov. 15:27).*

Wise nurturers give their children both "roots" and "wings."

## Parents/Teachers

According to a Jewish guide for parents, the Hebrew word for parents (*horim*) and the Hebrew word for teachers (*morim*) are so similar they sound alike. Both words mean to instruct, to teach. Christian believers emulate this Judaic heritage, which has traditionally linked the roles of parents and teachers, for in fact the parent is the principal teacher of his children.

It is primarily the responsibility of the Christian parent to provide spiritual guidance and character development-ethical values, morals--for their children.

*You must love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these words with which I charge you this day, **Impress them upon your children.** Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.-Deuteronomy 6:5-7, Torah, Jewish Pub. [Author's emphasis].*

I [Jehovah] have singled him [Abraham] out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is just and right, in order that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him [to bless all the nations of the earth].Genesis 18:19, Torah

## Correction/Encouragement

Sometimes it is necessary to correct or chastise errant children, but such discipline must convey a message of love. *Bear in mind that the LORD your God disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son (Dent. 8:5, Torah). Whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (Prov. 3:12).*

Various proverbs suggest that children benefit from being chastened, sometimes with a rod; but at a time when (more than ever before). children suffer physical abuse at the hand of adults in authority, we temper this advice with Proverbs 17:10: *A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.* It is possible that constant physical punishment may actually diminish its long-term effectiveness and become a stumbling block to more constructive discipline.

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul emphasizes, *Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* In Colossians 3:21, the Apostle reiterates, *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.*

It is advantageous to instill the concept of human dignity into children: *When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.* (Gen. 5:1, Torah). The word "likeness" or "image" implies a spiritual relationship, not a physical one. Man possesses qualities that set him aside from the rest of the animal kingdom, being capable of reasoning and feeling compassion -- dimensions that are not limited by the senses. *Thou madest him a*

*little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands (Heb. 2:7).*

A moderate amount of self-esteem is necessary in any person, even a young one: *Love thy neighbor as thyself* (Matt. 19:19 and 22:39; Mark 12:31; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). We must first love (respect) ourselves-develop a healthy self-concept-so that we can adequately direct our love toward others.

### **Learning by Imitating**

Children are charming imitators. Charming and frighteningly accurate. Raise your voice; they raise theirs. Whine; they whine. Complain, criticize; you are shocked to hear yourself in what they say.

If we are their closest models, it behooves us to develop the fruits of the spirit which we desire in them: *Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance* (Gal. 5:22, 23).

### **"That's Not Fair!"**

Children have a keen sense of fairness; they love the concept of Leviticus 19:15 (Torah): *You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly.. They quickly remind us if we are not consistent. Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you"* (Deut. 16:20, Torah).

They will see the justice of *Honor your father and your mother*, and they soon become aware of the promises: *That you may long endure on the land which the LORD Your God is giving you* (Exod. 20:12; see also Eph. 6:2).

### **Obedience**

Children love the hymn, "Trust and Obey." The wonderful story of Samuel echoes the response every child of God must continually answer to the Lord, *Speak; for thy servant heareth*, and even Eli's humble acquiescence, *It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good*. Finally, *To obey is better than sacrifice* (1 Sam. 3:10, 18; 15:22).

The Lord does not suggest; the Lord commands: *He who repudiates (reviles) his father or his mother shall be put to death* (Exod. 21:17, Torah).

Because Hezekiah did not render again according to the benefit done unto him, there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem when his son, Manasseh, reigned. Generations to come suffer from our neglect to obey God's will.

## **Practical Guidelines**

*The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children (2 Cor. 12:14).* How practical scripture is! It not only lays out the divine plan for all mankind but personal admonitions toward success in the way toward God.

The instructions of the Bible do not end with childhood, any more than its principles only apply to the new creation. The laws of God are unending. They guide us in every stage of our lives.

A practical expectation for later years is found in I Timothy 5:4: *Requite* (give back to or recompense in a good sense) *your parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.* As parents age, adult children may find themselves in the position of providing the necessities of life for the parents.

## **Helping a Child Helps the World**

"He who helps a child helps humanity with an immediateness which no other help given to human creature in any other stage of human life can possibly give again" (Phillips Brooks).

We pray fervently to the Lord for help. Surely he is our primary guide. But we remember the parents who asked for guidance from God, and then refused the help proffered by their neighbors, by the schools, by the doctor, and by their relatives. Perhaps the Lord was using these tangible methods to help the frantic parents. He does not always reveal himself in a miraculous vision; we to child care. do not always hear his voice in the thunder. Consider what helps are available. If they are in harmony with God's methods, avail yourself of them!

We are not entirely responsible for our child's strengths and weaknesses. The same boiling water that softens a carrot hardens an egg. Children from the same parents, raised in the same environment, do not always react the same way. Friends, teachers, even television characters often influence our children. Parenting is a major challenge in this end of the twentieth century.

## **Today's Greater Need For Help**

For hundreds of years parenting was governed by trial and error or by traditional methods--that is, parents reared their offspring in a manner similar to the way their parents had treated them. There was no formal training for parenting; there were no courses to outline the step-by-step progression of child development or to list suggestions and techniques for disciplining children.

Several factors may have contributed to the rapid growth in parent education during the 1900's. A major cause has been the diversification of the "traditional American family." With so many family patterns today-single parents and extended families-parents face

more challenges than ever before. Thus, these new family patterns and problems often require child-raising skills that tradition may not have needed to provide. In addition, discoveries in psychology and other sciences may have stimulated an interest in applying new knowledge

### **There is Help**

During the late *1800's* and early *1900's*, a number of organizations were established to address the growing concern related to parenting issues. These groups included what is now the *Parent Teacher Association* and the *Society for the Study of Child-Nature*.

In *1912*, the United States government began to actively help parents when it established a federal agency called the *Children's Bureau*, which distributed information about child development and published many popular pamphlets.

In *1914*, the *Smith-Lever Act* set up what is now the *Cooperative Extension System* to provide advice about child care. Then in the *1920's*, the scientific study of child development was begun. Many universities established child study centers where researchers investigated the growth and development of children, applying their findings to educational methods.

Since the *1960's*, parent education has expanded greatly, due in part to government support—for example, *Head Start*, a federal project that was established to help low-income parents prepare their children for school.

We are God's stewards; our children are our stewardship. We are to do with our might what our hands find to do. We are to be diligent in whatsoever state we are. But what a comfort: After we have done our best, we can cast all our care upon God; for he cares for us—and for our children.—Deut. *11:19, 12:25, 28, 29:29; Eccl. 9:10; 1 Pet. 5:7.*



## OF SLAVES AND MASTERS - Part One

*"Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive." -- Titus 2:9-10 NIV*

By David Rice

Secular employment constitutes the largest single mortgage of time and effort for many Christians. Therefore it will provide the background for much of the experience of life and test many features of our Christian character.

In both Ephesians 6:5-9 and Colossians 3:22-4:1, Paul gives advice to servants and to masters. Employees today are not servants and employers are not masters in the same way that society was organized when Paul gave this advice. Nevertheless, Paul's advice is founded on principles which do apply.

### **Employees**

The two passages are very similar. We quote here the Ephesians passage, which is more complete, Paul's counsel to servants:

*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be' bond or free.-Ephesians 6:5-8*

Could we imagine a more wonderful approach to our secular responsibilities? Faithfulness to our duties is counted as faithfulness to the Lord! This is a precious prospect. The discharge of this mortgage-a necessary burden in any case-if done *as to the Lord* will bring favor and blessing from the Lord. *Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord.*

Do we wish to please the Lord with our conduct? Then we shall wish to please our employer. Do we wish to show the Lord that we are diligent, dependable, and loyal? Then, while we are required to serve an employer, the Lord offers to accept the spirit of that service as indicating the spirit of our service to the Lord himself.

Imagine for a moment that you need to take leave of your job for a pressing family obligation, and you will be away for two or three months. Most employers would find that an imposition; nevertheless many would, if possible, agree and even wish you well. But imagine the employer who offers to pay you for discharging your obligation and even

promote you on your return according to how well you served that responsibility during your absence. I think all would like to work for an employer like that! In fact, all of the Lord's consecrated do so. The Lord is our master; and even if we are not engaged directly in his business while serving our temporal obligations, he offers to reward us for the service in accord with our diligence.

Perhaps we have a difficult, overbearing, selfish employer. These traits are frequent in the world, and it should not surprise us to find these problems in an employer. Paul's counsel does not apply to pleasant employers more than to unpleasant ones. In either case, our service is directed to the Lord but for the benefit of our employer. If our employer is a difficult one or our job an unpleasant one, we will have more opportunity for overcoming, perhaps for suffering unjustly, perhaps for showing grace under provocation, and certainly for showing that our loyalty is based on principle rather than on favorable circumstances.

However nothing in Paul's counsel tells us that we may not speak reasonably and kindly for our rights. Polite communications with our employers about problems, possible injustice, or excessive burdens is a wise policy and will be to the overall benefit of all. Harboring resentments and bearing unjust burdens without recourse is likely to engender bitterness, which is always an evil fruit. But even here we should be *swift to hear, slow to speak* (James 1:19). We as well as our employers are human. We should not expect our views always to prevail, even if we are actually correct.

### **Some Practical Considerations**

**Determine what your employer considers a "job well done."** Our view and his view may be different. But we are willing to serve the employer and therefore must respect his view. He may not always be right, but he is always the boss. We are not here speaking of matters of conscience. We cannot, for example, lie on our employer's behalf because he considers it part of our duty to him. Principle always comes first. If we sense an expectation which would violate our conscience, we must be pleasantly, politely firm in our position. *We ought to obey God rather than man* (Acts 5:29).

**Use initiative.** Common sense and employer feedback are useful gauges here. Few things are more helpful or more remarkable in an employee than spontaneous, thoughtful, perceptive application to a task not specifically required. Are there procedures or methods that clearly would be helpful and not disruptive to others which you can implement? Is there a small service not normally obligatory, perhaps one which may be considered beneath your position, which time permits you to do? Would you do it if you were directly serving the Lord? Then do it while you are indirectly serving the Lord.

**Remember that many things weigh upon an employer's mind which are not openly apparent.** Keep in mind that his relationship to each employee may be slightly different than to you. Every interpersonal relationship is unique. Never give place to jealousy. If a favor is extended to others, be glad for them. If a kindness is extended to you, how would you wish your peers to react.

## **Employers**

*And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. -Ephesians 6:9*

*Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven. -Colossians 4:1*

Every position of authority brings a risk of abuse. If we are an employer, we have a responsibility for which to account. If it is exercised with justice and with fairness, even though with firmness, our characters will be enhanced and a proper sense of self respect increased. If it is exercised as a means of personal gratification, our characters will be weakened.

There is, of course, a motive for being an employer. In the present arrangement it is a means to an end. Those who are willing to work industriously and supervise the labors of others to further the enterprise undertake that responsibility for the hope of a financial return in order to provide for themselves and their dependents. Christian employers hope also to have some financial gain to use for their greater service to the Lord. Often there are monetary risks and great labor expended by the employer with the reasonable hope of gain in the future. But along the way one of the responsibilities gained in the process is toward those who labor in our employ. Any Christian person will surely have a great deal of concern for how they discharge that responsibility. It is not a responsibility taken from the motivation of charity, even though a successful employer may take some pleasure in providing gainful employment for many workers. Therefore, while we wish to exercise a spirit of charity and goodwill in all affairs of life, the fundamental concern of an employer is that he treat his employees justly and fairly-the same qualities Paul emphasizes in his advice.

Paul also reminds us that we are under a Master, perhaps implying two things: (1) We should follow the example of Christ as far as possible; and (2) We may be judged by our Master to some extent upon how we exercise our authority over others.

### **Some Practical Considerations**

Always retain a genuine concern for your employees.

**Remember the 3:1 rule** -- give at least three honest encouragements for every criticism.

**Have a hearing ear.** If a decision must be made which is disagreeable to others, explain your reasons kindly and respectfully.

**An employer or supervisor will encounter stress.** These stresses differ when one is responsible for another's productivity. These stresses may point to areas of our character which need special work.

**Long hours.** Employer or business responsibilities can demand our mental attention and interest after normal working hours more than, for example, working for hourly remuneration. Be alert to this, and establish boundaries for yourself.

Finally, to paraphrase Luke 6:31, Do unto your employees as you would have them do unto you if they were your employer.

## OF SLAVES AND MASTERS - Part Two

*Servants, be subject to your masters with fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. -1 Peter 2:18*

By Peter Karavas

### Employee Emotions

"My employer is not fair nor understanding." "He doesn't pay me what I'm worth." "I'm tired of office politics." "My boss expects too much overtime." "I'm stuck in a rut." Ever had any of these thoughts? Just what should be our consecrated attitude toward our boss and work? Can we wholeheartedly serve a boss who does not appreciate us? How far can we allow our boss to push the limits of our honesty? Where do we draw the line between our time and energy commitments towards work versus towards our consecration and family?

### "I Try To Love You Boss, But It's Not Easy"

What does God teach our attitude towards our boss should be? We suggest that many of the scriptures referring to master and servant relationships can and do apply.

*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free-Ephesians 6:5-8, NIV*

"Obey my boss just as I would Christ!? Not just to win his favor but from my heart?"

In many cases this is not an easy task to accomplish. "Can the Lord really want me to take this approach with a boss who is unfair?" *Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.-1 Peter 2:18 [Author's emphasis].*

"So am I trapped forever working for a horrible boss?" Not necessarily. As long as you choose to stay at your job remain faithful to your harsh boss. Nobody is forcing you to stay though. You can look for another job with a better boss elsewhere. Some people will continue in their jobs for years working for an unfair and abusive boss. If this is you, you might ask yourself, "Why do I allow myself to be abused by my boss daily and why do I keep going back for more?" Often the motivations for staying are fear and insecurity. The fear of facing another boss and the insecurity of not succeeding at a new job. These fears are generally ungrounded. As we will later see, hard work, diligence and good skills will bring success at our job.

"But I've prayed about it, and God hasn't shown me a clear sign to leave. Maybe it's his will that I stay." God will not always give a clear sign about what we should do. For example, let us take our children. As they mature, we give less guidance to every detail of their lives and trust them with more responsibilities. God does the same with us. As we mature in the consecrated way, he trusts that we will more accurately apply biblical principles to our circumstances. Having signs to point the direction in which we should go would make decision making much easier, but studying the scriptures to learn God's principles is a more difficult yet more reliable way of learning God's will.

Another approach is to kindly but firmly confront a harsh boss in the spirit of Matthew 18 to discuss our work performance and his reaction. This meeting may help us decide whether it is worth staying longer or help us to see that the situation is hopeless and it is time to take courage and move on to a new job.

### **I Am Always Honest**

Is it naive to think that in today's work environment I can be totally honest?

What do I do when the boss says, "If anyone calls, tell them I'm out of the office today," when I know full well he is really in all day?

Should I say no when the boss tells me to "adjust the numbers so that the pro forma shows a 12% rate of return," when I know the project will really only yield a 5% return at best? The scriptures are straightforward in their testimony on this topic.

*Speak the truth, each one of you with his neighbor (Eph. 4:25 NASV;) Do not lie to one another (Col. 3: 9 NASV; ) Truthful lips will be established forever, But a lying tongue is only for a moment (Prov. 12:19 NASV).*

One might challenge, "Was David not justified in deceiving Ahimelech the High Priest while fleeing for his life from Saul, or when he feigned madness to save his life from Achish, king of Gath" (1 Sam. 21)?

David wrote two Psalms in response to these two experiences. In Psalm 52, David expresses his anguish over his deception which resulted in the death of Ahimelech the High Priest: *Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit. Behold the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, And was strong in his evil desire (vs. 2, 7).*

In Psalm 34, David repents from his deception of King Achish, which was based on fear, not trusting in the Lord's protection: *I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit (vs. 4, 13).*

If David acknowledged the error of deceit even though in danger of death, can we practice a lower standard when all that is at risk is our job?

Letting our boss know our feelings up front will discourage him from attempting to compromise our high moral standards. This may cause some short term discomfort, but in the long run most bosses will respect and trust us more for it.

## **Office Politics**

"I think people see `target' written on my forehead." "Other employees work against me for their own advantage and to make me look bad in the eyes of the boss."

Honestly defending oneself to the boss against false accusations may at times be both wise and appropriate. Paul defended himself to the Roman centurion (Acts 22:25) and to Governor Felix (Acts 24) from the Jews who were accusing him.

Whether we may choose to respond or not, we do well not to be filled with deep worry and anxious care, remembering that all is in the Lord's hands. None can harm us without his permission.

*For I have heard the slander of many, Terror is on every side; While they took counsel together against me, They schemed to take away my life. But as for me, I trust in Thee, O Lord, I say, 'Thou art my God.' My times are in Thy hand; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.-Psalm 31:13-15 NASV*

*Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.-Psalm 101:5 NASV*

*This poor man cried and the Lord heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them.-Psalm 34:6, 7 NASV*

It's not unusual that the Lord's people would be spoken against, especially out of fear and jealousy. In our efforts to give our employer the very best we can, as unto the Lord, other employees may view us as competition and consequently as a threat to their own advancement within the company. But we are not to retaliate.

*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. . . Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, " says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.-Romans. 12:17, 19-21*

*And keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame-1 Peter 3:16*

Those who speak evil of us falsely will eventually be found out and suffer the consequences of their actions. *A false witness will not go unpunished, And he who tells*

*lies will perish* (Prov. 19:9). As long as we continue to work honestly and hard, most bosses will usually sooner or later see through the deceit of others and put their trust in a faithful worker.

### **Good Attitude? High Integrity? No Problem! . . . Well?**

"When I work hard I feel like I'm just spinning my wheels. My boss won't reward me. It won't get me anywhere."

Bosses may not always provide much feedback on our performance, but often they see much more than they let us know. Hard work, good skills and attitude are vital factors in how the boss evaluates us. Do not believe it if you think they do not know when employees take an extra long lunch break or spend business time socializing.

*Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor. Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men* (Prov. 10:4; 12:24 22:29 NIV).

Stealing anything from our employer--from pencils to time--brings shame, rather than a witness, to the name of Christ.

*Teach slaves to be subject to their masters . . . not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive* (Thus 2:9, 10 NIV). *It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy* (1 Cor. 4:2 NASV).

As ambassadors for Christ we must exercise the utmost integrity and the highest practice of Christian principles at work. Can we pass the test of Daniel? *Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.*-Daniel 6:4 NASV

Looking at employment from the employees point of view is interesting. But what about the employers point of view?

### **Employer Emotions**

"Who can blame me for getting so angry at such a bad employee?"

No matter how bad we may feel an employee is, we are not to temporarily put aside the Christian graces when dealing with him: *Do not threaten them* (your servant) (Eph. 6:9 NIV); *You shall not rule over him* (your servant) *with severity* (Lev. 25:43 NASV);. *You shall not oppress a hired servant* (Dent. 24:14 NASV)



Compensation should be fair and prompt. We are not to make our employees feel like we're doing them a favor by giving them a paycheck. They have worked hard for their wages; if we do not think so perhaps we should consider replacing an employee. But before doing so, let us ask ourselves, "Am I accurately assessing the scope of my employee's responsibilities, his skills, and the effort he's putting forth? Does it reflect badly on my performance as a manager? For the same wages could I acquire a better employee?"

*The laborer is worthy of his wages (1 Tim. 5:18); The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning (Lev. 19:13); Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due (Rom. 4:4).*

Encouragement can go a long way with an employee. He needs to know that we are interested in him, that we have noticed and appreciated his successes and that we are not unreasonable or unfair in our approach to his failures. *An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up (Prov. 12:25 NIV); The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, and he who smooths with the hammer spurs on him who strikes with the anvil. He says, "It is good" (Isa. 41: 7 NIV) .*

A wise employer will not surround himself with lazy employees. They will be the death of his business. Lazy employees tend to be very unproductive and to make unreasonable excuses for not getting the work done quickly and correctly. *The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!" (Prov. 22:13); I passed by the field of the sluggard, And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense; And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles, Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down. Prov. 24:30, 31).*

## **Final Words**

Christian principles are not like a light switch that turns on and off depending on where we are and who we're with. The high moral standards of our consecration are to be applied across the board, not just at the ecclesia but at home, among friends, among strangers, and at work. Applying these standards will relieve work related stress and anxiety, because by practicing them we are placing our faith and trust in God. In his hands, and under his protection, we know we have nothing to fear.

## STEWARDSHIP

*And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them saying, the ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully and he thought within himself, saying, what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, this will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?-Luke 12:15-20*

By Leonard Griehs

Wealth, historically has been associated with ownership. In biblical times, land, slaves, and animals constituted ownership. Today wealth is often defined in terms of money, so the two terms may now be used interchangeably.

The man in this text is not condemned because he is rich--he had wealth before his superabundant crop. It was his **attitude** toward his wealth that caused concern. The overabundance was hoarded rather than used in the service of his faith. An abundance of, or lack of, money does not affect our relationship with God. As in the parable, it is our attitude about it that affects our relationship. In Hebrews 11 the author lists the heroes of faith who were deemed worthy to gain God's greatest earthly reward--perfect human life. We note that some, such as David, had much in terms of worldly possessions while others had nothing. Yet all are said to be rewarded the same for their faith. Their victory came from dedicating themselves and their possessions to the service of their faith.

### **Proper Attitude Important**

Matthew 19:16-22 teaches an important lesson about money. Here Jesus shows that it is not the amount of money possessed but our attitude about it that either blesses or condemns us. The rich young man appeared to have the proper spirit of the law--he was accountable and tried to conduct his affairs under the precepts of the law. He answered affirmatively to each of Jesus' questions. However Jesus saw beyond his pretenses and detected a selfish attitude. When the young man asked, "What lack I yet?" Jesus was quick to show him that his attitude about what he owned prevented him from being free to enjoy God's blessings. When told he must abandon his earthly wealth, the young man went away "sorrowful, because he had great possessions." Had the young man possessed a better attitude he might have questioned Jesus to understand why it was necessary to give up his possessions.

Jesus might have told the young man that what he had must now be used for the service of God. If he turned over his possessions to God and became a steward of the property--not merely to keep it but to oversee its wise use--his wealth might be a source of support for the cause. He could thus be a blessing, and his particular talent for managing

financial resources could be used of the Lord. However the young man's fear of losing his possessions outweighed his faith. Jesus challenged him, and the young man's attitude about his possessions prevented his entering into the joys of discipleship. Jesus laid down a related principle in the parable of the talents given in Matthew 25:14-30. God gives each of his people certain abilities or talents in a variety of forms in order to accomplish his work. He then expects each to use their abilities to develop and manage these talents as stewards. The one that hoarded his talent for fear of losing it had the same attitude as the landowner and the rich young ruler. We are to use our talents to produce an increase for God. That is just as true in our stewardship over his financial resources.

### **Focus on Money Creates Bondage**

Many suffer mental anguish over money-either too little (worrying about how and whether they can get it) or too much (worrying about losing it). In Proverbs 30:7-9 Solomon makes a helpful observation:

*Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty or riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

Too much money and too little money both create dangerous temptations. The temptation of poverty is to do something dishonest in order to gain money; the danger of too much money is to be content without God.

An abundance of the good things of the present life can supplant our dependence upon God. Financial gain can become our purpose above the pursuit of spiritual treasures. However, Solomon also says that having nothing can result in covetousness which makes us just as guilty because our desire takes precedence over our service to God. This can result in neglect to provide adequately for loved ones.

Solomon urges a lifestyle which results in contentment; an attitude which places God first. Without this we become slaves to money with or without financial resources.

### **The Bondage of Debt**

In Matthew 5:25, 26 Jesus shows how a lack of self-discipline can result in another kind of slavery to money-through the bondage of debt. This passage refers to borrowing beyond the capacity to repay. In biblical days, if a man could not pay his debts he was thrown into a debtor's prison and whatever he owned became the possession of his lender, including the debtor's family. Jesus points out the danger of violating this principle of borrowing beyond the capacity to repay-one may lose much more than was borrowed in order to repay his debt. This can result in both financial and mental jeopardy.

Proverbs 17:18 expands on this principle: *A man lacking in sense pledges and becomes surety in the presence of his neighbor.* Surety refers to borrowing without an underlying

asset of comparable value or a sure means to repay an unsecured obligation. It also can refer to guaranteeing the obligation of another. When we ignore this principle we subject ourselves to financial bondage. Let us look at an example, remembering that God gave us this principle to help us avoid subjecting ourselves to a situation where money becomes the means for distracting us away from his service.

Suppose a car you are buying costs \$10,000. You make a \$2,000 down payment and borrow \$8,000, pledging the car as collateral and guaranteeing to pay back the note over five years. You have become "surety," because if you are not able to make payment and the car is repossessed it may be sold at a loss and you will be required to make up the difference between the loan value and the sales price. If you do not pay, you would be subject to judgment in court. If you work, your wages could be garnisheed. However if you do not guarantee the contract beyond the value of the car you would not get the car either! No lender would make a loan under those conditions. Does that mean that you must pay cash to avoid violating God's principle about surety? Not if you make a substantially higher down payment! If you put down more money and the car became total collateral, it would more than cover the loan value for the life of the loan. You would be released from the note free and clear. You would not be subject to financial bondage created through unforeseen circumstances. This is a wise principle given by God for everyone. By following it no one would be subject to financial bondage!

When purchasing a house this principle is magnified. A sufficiently high down payment can prevent surety even if a substantial drop in the value of the property occurs. This may require a longer period of saving than many desire, but that is exercising self-discipline in order to live by God's principles.

When we take upon ourselves the financial burdens of another through guaranteeing their borrowing, we have also gone "surety" and subject ourselves to the same worry and trouble that we would have ourselves if we were in the same situation.

### **Principles for Financial Stewardship**

If God chooses to make us a steward over financial resources, we will be faced with many decisions which affect the growth or shrinkage of those resources. By exercising sound principles given to us in God's Word we can keep the proper attitude and be like those faithful stewards endowed with the talents in the parable, who gave back to God more than they had been given.

**Avoid speculation and borrowing money to make money.** Most schemes which promise high returns for a small investment are either unethical or illegal. Getting involved with them will almost surely result in a loss of funds, reputation, and family health (1 Tim. 6:9).

**Keep finances current.** Avoid situations that will put financial freedom in peril. Live below your means. Do not depend on the necessity of a windfall (a hot tip or winning a

lottery) to meet a current obligation. This causes irrational decisions and compromise (Luke 14:28).

**Set aside adequate sources of income for doing God's work.** Although we must commit our trust to him, we should not launch into a venture without some clear direction about how we will meet our obligations. Expecting God to provide funds for a venture without clear direction is tempting him (Matt. 4:7).

**Give, rather than lend, to others in need.** While scriptures support the concept of lending, it is a better testimony to share without expectation of repayment (2 Cor. 9:13; Luke 14:12-14).

**Avoid co-signing for anyone.**

Pledging assets for the debt of another makes you surety and a risk to family, reputation, and mental health (Prov. 6:1; 17:18; 27:13).

**Evaluate purchases based on needs.** God has only promised to provide for our needs. Unhappiness often arises as a result of unsatisfied wants and desires. We are to distinguish between luxury and necessity (1 Tim. 6:8).

**Never make financial decisions under pressure.** Most phony schemes rely on the necessity to "sign up now." Many states require a three-day "thought" period in which it is possible to cancel a transaction. If this principle is recognized as good by man, how much more should it be right in the stewardship for God (Prov. 21:5).

**Accept God's decrease as well as his increase.** Remember that God's will is often achieved through need rather than through prosperity. A life committed to Christ must be independent of circumstances (Phil. 4:12, 13).

**Prevention from Servitude to Money**

How can we assure that we maintain the proper attitude so that the lack of money does not divert our attention and take us away from God's work? By exercising sound principles based upon God's Word we can eliminate mental bondage to money.

**Transfer ownership to God.**

When we consecrate we turn all of our possessions over to him. As we focus more on him and less on ourselves, we will become less concerned about earthly possessions and realize that he always gives us what we need (Prov. 3:9, 10).

**Get out of debt.** If payments are past due and the balance of what we owe exceeds the value of what we own, we must exercise self-discipline to reverse our situation.

Whenever we pay interest we lose, and when we borrow so much that we subject ourselves to surety we enter into financial bondage (Rom. 13:8).

**Accept God's direction.** Worry over the lack of money (perceived or real) will diminish if we believe God takes care of our, every need (Matt. 6:31, 32).

Excel in work. If our standard is excellence then slothfulness will never cause problems. God expects us to be diligent and do well because our attitude should be to do all things as though they were being done for him (1 Pet. 4:11).

**Make restitution.** Bad habits in the past can make it difficult to start over unless we first remove the results of our past bad practices. Making restitution is one of the principles that we find consistently repeated in God's law (Matt. 5:24).

**Be content.** Greed and covetousness usually arise out of discontent. The wisdom of a moderate life-style is not just for spiritual, physical, and mental health but for financial health as well (1 Tim. 6:6, 7).

**Provide for family needs first.**

Often this means personal sacrifice and cutting back on personal preferences. That is the beginning of self-discipline which is God's basic principle for Christian living (1 Tim. 5:8; James 4:3).

**Keep a balanced commitment.**

No one on his death bed has said, "I wish I had spent more time at the office." Excessive overtime or a second job is often rationalized under the guise of providing a better living (Prov. 23:4, 5).

**Sacrifice personal** desires. A commitment to gaining wealth is unscriptural. That does not mean that God wishes us to live in poverty. God does expect us to live less than extravagantly and not be swayed by the "lifestyles of the rich and famous" (Eccl. 2:10, 11; Matt. 6:24).

**Proper Stewardship a Reflection of Proper Attitude**

Money is only valuable for its use and every Christian possessing it must render an account of his or her stewardship. Man's tendency is generally toward selfishness, as Jesus points out in our theme text. Therefore it is essential that the Christian's attitude about money reflect spiritual values and the custody of wealth reflect scriptural principles.

The true Christian with an overabundance of financial resources will encounter many opportunities for benevolence. Through proper stewardship those so entrusted can show the praises of God effectively and show their devotion and faithfulness as stewards in the Lord's cause.

# OUR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP

*For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. - Philippians 3:20 ASV*

By Carl Hagensick

The responsibility of a Christian toward his government raises many questions. How deeply should he be involved in the political processes of his country? Should a Christian run for elective office? Should he campaign for a political candidate? How should he make his positions known on issues that have religious ramifications? Should a Christian vote?

## **Holy Men of Old**

The Old Testament depicts the lives of many saintly men of God. These were often deeply involved politically. Moses is still known as the greatest of all lawgivers. Deborah was not only a judge but a woman directing the course of a nation. David and his son Solomon were mighty kings and empirebuilders. Jeremiah and Elijah are but two examples of prophets who boldly spoke forth on the political issues of their day.

Lest we get the impression that ancient servants of God served only in the theocracy of Israel, we need but remember the activities of Joseph as grand vizier of Egypt, the service of Daniel as prime minister to the kings of both Babylon and Medo-Persia, and Mordecai as counselor to the Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes).

## **New Testament**

However, when we turn the pages of the Bible to the New Testament we find a marked contrast. Though some were civil servants before they became Christians [such as the centurion Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, and *those of Caesar's household* (Phil. 4:22), and Matthew the tax-collector], and some may have kept their office afterwards, there is no record of them seeking such office after becoming Christians.

There may be some natural reasons for this. The Christian church was chiefly selected from the poor and the outcasts of the earth, ones who would not have been likely to hold such office. Also, whereas the Old Testament covers a history of some 4000 years, the New Testament is limited to about 37 years; insufficient time to draw a solid conclusion.

## **Early Church Fathers**

Following on in the history of the early church we find further evidence that the Christian community disdained involvement in the governments around them. Two quotations may suffice to illustrate this point:

**Clement of Alexandria (150-215)** -- "Now this age and the future are enemies . . . . We cannot therefore be friends of both, but must hold companionship with the one and bid farewell to the other. We reckon that it is better to hate the things that are here, for they are small and short-lived and corruptible, and to love the things that are there, for they are good and incorruptible."

**Origen (185-254)** -- "The reason why Christians avoid the public service of earthly life is not because they want to evade them, but because they are reserving themselves for the more divine and needful service of the church of God, taking the lead-at once needfully and righteously-in the salvation of men, and being concerned for all men."

### **Otherworldliness**

The premise in both of the above quotes is that of otherworldliness. The Christian claimed a heavenly citizenship and a consequent lack of interest and involvement in things of the present life. This is in marked contrast to the philosophy of the leading lights of the Old Testament and is in agreement with the words of Jesus in Luke 16:16-*The law and the prophets were unto John: since that time the kingdom of heaven is preached.*

The promises taught by Jesus were radically different from those of Old Testament Judaism, though they complement each other in teaching of a coming thousand-year kingdom. The law of Moses promised an earthly kingdom-one nation under God. The kingdom which Jesus taught was to be heavenly. *My kingdom is not of this world* (John 18:36). So different were these two concepts that the followers of Jesus could not divide their loyalties between them.

*No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.-Luke 16:13*

### **A New Kingdom Needed**

Man has long felt the need for the stabilizing force of government. Great kingdoms of the past were not without their accomplishments. Consider the laws of Hammurabi, the splendor of ancient Babylon, the conquering might of Persia, the learning and culture of Greece, and the raw power of Rome with its Caesars. Yet these served more to heighten oppression than to bring true peace. Each gave way in its time to a new power.

It was just such a new kingdom that Jesus proposed-a kingdom *not of this world*. It was a kingdom with a platform of real social welfare (Isa. 35), or real peace and domestic tranquility (Isa. 2:4), and promising the ultimate freedom -- the freedom from death itself (Rev. 21:4).



This would be a kingdom with a spiritual ruling power, Christ and his church (2 Tim. 2:12; Matt. 19:28) and with billions of subjects--all who have ever lived returning from their graves (John 5:25-29; Rev. 20:11-13).

This kingdom would be endowed with the necessary power to accomplish its aims. It would rule with *a rod of iron* (Rev. 2:26, 27) and would conquer all forces opposed to its righteous rule (1 Cor. 15:25, 26).

With such a vision before them it is no wonder that Jesus' disciples cast their votes for him and his kingdom. But this kingdom was for some indistinct future time. It left the believer with hope but with no current alleviation from oppression. No wonder such activists as Karl Marx called such religious hopes "an opiate of the people" dulling their sensibilities to current injustices.

There is a partial truth in Marx's observation. The kingdom is still for the future. We live in the present--in the "meantime" of anticipation. What is the Christian's role now?

### **Ambassadors**

*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20); For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Eph. 6:20).*

An ambassador is a citizen of one country representing his government in a foreign land. While vitally interested in the affairs of his host country, his citizenship and enfranchisement is in his native land. As a result, he is not eligible to vote or hold office in the country of his residence. These privileges and restrictions seem to define well the viewpoint of the early Christian church toward political involvement.

The role of the ambassador is well expressed in a 1955 critique of the American ambassadorial community, *The Ugly American*:

"What we need is a small force of well-trained, well-chosen, hardworking, and dedicated professionals. They must be willing to risk their comforts and--in some lands--their health. They must go equipped to apply a positive policy promulgated by a clear-thinking government. They must speak the language of their assignment, and they must be more expert in its problems than are the natives. If the only price we are willing to pay is the dollar price, then we might as well pull out before we're thrown out. If we are not prepared to pay the human price, we had better retreat to our shores . . . . We are trying . . . money alone, instead of remembering that it was the quest for the dignity of freedom that was responsible for our own way of life " (Pages 239, 240).

Notice the six itemized qualifications:

1. **Speak the language of the country** -- even as Jesus spoke the language of the common people instead of the classical Greek of the scholars.
2. **Mingle with the populace** -- as Jesus and the disciples mingled in the market places, seeking out the needy instead of the aristocracy.
3. **Give practical assistance** -- Do good unto all *men as you have opportunity* (Gal. 6:10).
4. **No spirit of condescension** -- Not showing a "holier than thou" attitude, but the spirit of Elihu of old, I also am *formed of clay* (Job 33:6).
5. **Represent the ideals of your native country** -- Live the Christian life so that others may see your good works and glorify your Father *which is in heaven* (Matt. 5:16).
6. **Assist toward dignity and not toward materialism** -- *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth* (Luke 12:15).

### **Civic Responsibilities**

#### **OBEY LAWS:**

*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1); Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work (Thus 3:1); Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well (I Peter 2:13, 14).*

#### **RESPECT GOVERNMENT:**

*Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king (I Peter 2:17).*

#### **PAY TAXES:**

*Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:21).*

## PRAYER:

*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (1 Tim. 2:1, 2); And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace (Jer. 29:7).*

## Acceptance

Following the path of the early church-non-involvement-bears a cost. It has been well said that "the penalty for good men who do not vote for good government is to live under bad government." This was a cost the early church was willing to bear. The results of an election should not raise the Christian's ire, for as the pre-election truism has it, "if you don't vote next Tuesday, don't complain next Wednesday."

## Conclusion

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.-Romans 12:18*

The Christian is to live a life that, as a good ambassador, demonstrates Christ to the world around him, while at the same time not becoming involved with the world -- an other-worldliness with concern for those around us.

*Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.-James 1:27*

## **SPIRITUAL SICKNESSES**

<< (Echoes from the Past) >>

*But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" And Jesus answering said unto them, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." -Luke 5:30-32*

Condensed from a discourse by A. L. Muir

In speaking of those that are "righteous," our Lord was referring to those that were "self-righteous," as represented by the scribes and Pharisees. They thought themselves to be "whole" because of their prestigious and holy position, but Jesus wanted to reveal to them that they were not of a condition worthy of his calling. On the contrary, Jesus was interested in sinners who were in a repentant condition and recognized the necessity of a savior. They would be receptive of Jesus and desirous of his instruction.

The condition of the scribes and Pharisees has existed all through the ages. The conditions of the current world include an attitude of self-sufficiency, pride and intellectual independence. Scripture study can become an intellectual challenge rather than a spiritual hungering and spiritual desire becomes secondary or is lost entirely. When truth touches the heart, sanctification should be the result. Truth is provided for those who seek for spiritual benefit; when truth is used as an intellectual project, void of the true purpose, spiritual sickness results.

### **The Natural Man**

The natural man is often alerted to a health problem because he experiences symptoms. Some of these symptoms might be weariness or exhaustion, indigestion, headaches, high blood pressure, infections, pain, affecting various parts of the body. When the natural man experiences symptoms of illness, he seeks relief from his discomfort through remedies, medications or perhaps a visit to the doctor. An accurate diagnosis from a trained physician may be necessary before steps can be taken to relieve the patient from the illness.

The new creature, one who is begotten and quickened by the holy Spirit, can experience spiritual sickness. For example, spiritual weariness may manifest itself with symptoms of preferring to be in the company of those who are not new creatures, or with a loss of enthusiasm as a soldier of the cross. Just as weariness is a symptom to the natural man, it should serve as a warning of spiritual illness to the new creature. In this condition the new creature may forsake opportunities to witness and strive less to make his calling and election sure.

Another example of sickness to the natural man is eye infection. The eye records events that occur in life. When the natural eye is infected and vision is impaired, the natural man suffers. Not only is pain endured, but total life style is limited. Normal everyday functions become difficult or impossible.

In comparison, the spiritual eye of faith records the daily experiences and lessons gained in the Christian walk to strengthen and encourage the new creature. The spiritual eyes are able to discern the truth and allow one to gain wisdom in daily decisions. However, if an infection occurs, spiritual loss results and vision or understanding of the scriptures becomes limited. Ultimately, the new creature must turn to the Great Physician for relief of spiritual illness and trust in his overruling power for a cure.

As the loss of vision affects the spiritual condition, so also does the loss of hearing. The hearing of faith strengthens Christian character and increases oneness with the Lord. If a loss of hearing is experienced, the scriptures or teachings of our Lord may not be heard properly, causing a loss of scriptural knowledge and limited spiritual development.

Again, the heart condition also reflects the spiritual health of the new creature. Only the Great Physician can properly diagnose the heart condition. Just as the natural heart may need medication and/or a change in diet, so the Great Physician provides the proper prescription for the cure of heart illness.

### **Go On To Perfection**

*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. Hebrews 6:1*

When spiritual sickness is experienced, a revival and review of those basic principles which initially brought one to the Lord is necessary. These may be elementary doctrines or principles of truth which were applied in past experiences. Sometimes problems of spiritual sickness are the result of negligence in applying the scriptures to daily experiences. Rather than relearning truths, a review will reinforce what has already been laid as a foundation of faith and the Christian is ready to proceed to maturity by adding to this foundation of faith.

The word "repentance" in Hebrews 6:1 means reformation. Not only is repentance involved, but an actual reformation. In Acts 3:19, the Apostle Paul says, "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . .*" He is referring first to repentance and then reformation. Our faith is the practical application of repentance and reveals a reliance upon the foundation of truth as a basis of life. An honest assessment of character must be made realigning it with the foundation.

Christ says he is the way, the truth, and the life. By following him and feeding upon his words, Christian development automatically develops. This is medication for the new

creature in Christ. A transformation occurs -- a reformation of character takes place and faith is aligned with truth. The power of truth sanctifies. With the blessing of everlasting truths, proper application provides spiritual growth and good health, allowing clearer vision and focus on spiritual goals. By the Lord's grace the fight of faith is fought. In yielding to God or submitting to his will-that is "leaving" (Heb. 6:1) the principles of the doctrine of Christ-a condition of trusting in God's power, sanctification results. Therefore, when feelings of spiritual sickness-pains, aches, infection, weariness,-manifest themselves, go quietly before the Lord as the Great Physician and review those truths which at one time brought the blessings of spiritual knowledge and closeness with the Lord.

### **Spiritual Cleansing**

*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1); If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1: 9).*

Cleanliness is associated with the flesh in the sense that all mankind is born under the fallen condition of Adam. The new creature manifests the new mind in a fleshly body, but if the mind becomes influenced by the filthiness of the flesh a cleansing process is necessary through the precious blood of Jesus.

A personal and sincere examination determining the condition of faithfulness must be made. In recognizing faults and confessing sins an attitude of repentance is attained. Repentance is required. With this condition of heart, the throne of grace must be approached and a renewing of faith is received from the Great Physician, allowing the Christian to proceed to perfection of holiness. Fellow new creatures can assist and encourage one another with this cleansing process by participating in studies and sharing experiences in testimony meetings.

### **The Healing Process**

*And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. **Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.-Ephesians 4:30-32***

A process is described in these verses. Bitterness comes from suppression of feelings, which eventually leads to passion or wrath controlled by this bitterness. Expression of words follows in the form of anger, and violent words reveal the original bitterness in the form of malice. This describes a possible practical experience of a new creature. This type of behavior belongs to the flesh as inherited in Adam.

Likewise, upon consecrating the old man is buried, replacing the "old man tendencies" with kindness, tenderheartedness, and the thrill of forgiving, which is the spirit Jesus had.

There is a progression in the growth of each new creature while striving to attain perfection. The truth gathered by the new creature sanctifies and prepares him for the inheritance of the saints.

Jesus taught his followers to pray *"forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"* (Matt. 6:12). Sins are forgiven to the extent that forgiveness is offered to others. God is gracious to forgive. With recognition and confession of sin, a spirit of compassion, sympathy, generosity, understanding, and helpfulness toward others develops in the new creature.

### **Anointing**

*But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him (1 John 2:27); The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16).*

Jesus frequently went up to the mount and left the crowds behind and sought privacy with his heavenly Father. He would spend all night in prayer. Following this example, the new creature needs to take time to speak with the heavenly Father in prayer and seek knowledge of him by studying his word. Time is required to permit the child of God to learn God's word and apply it in daily experiences.

### **A Balanced Life**

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.- Matthew 11:29,30*

This yoke may be described as a bar or scale. When using it to carry materials, it must be perfectly balanced or the carrier will feel awkward and fatigued, possibly causing him to stumble. The things that are burdensome are due to imbalance; that is, untruths or influences of the world distract the new creature from spiritual truths. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).*

By communing with God, peace of mind is attained. The power of truth works in the heart and mind and burdens become light when put in proper perspective with God's plan. Through experience, the new creature appreciates the necessity of maintaining spiritual health and learns to watch his daily affairs, always going to the throne of grace in time of need. *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).*

## **THE QUESTION BOX**

*How can I determine the will of God in my life?*

I seek in the beginning to get my heart in such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our Hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be.

Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusion. I seek the will or spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone, without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the holy Spirit guides us at all, he will do it according to the Scriptures, and never contrary to them.

Next, I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will, in connection with his Word and his Spirit. I ask God in prayer to reveal his will to me aright. Thus, by the prayer to God, the study of his Word, and reflection, I come to deliberate judgment according to the best of my knowledge and opportunity, and, if my mind be thus at peace, I proceed accordingly.

*George Muller*



## *News & Views*

### + ANNUAL MEETING +

The Board has accepted an invitation for the 1994 Annual Meeting to be held June 4 in Gulfport, Mississippi. Further details will be printed in the March/April News & Views section.

Members who wish to attend can write the secretary, James Caudle, for information on accommodations.

### + NEW BOOKLETS FROM ENGLAND +

We have received notice from the Bible Fellowship Union in England that two of their most popular booklets have been reprinted. First is *The Plan of God -In Brief*. This is a 100-page abridged version of *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, by C.T. Russell. It is pocket sized and handy to carry.

The second booklet is *Future Probation in Christian Belief*, by A.O. Hudson. This 80-page booklet examines the historical Christian belief in a future time of judgment incorporating a resurrection and trial period. It is a scholarly treatise and can be used effectively to show that the historical position of the church favored a millennium during which man will learn righteousness.

The Institute has received a limited supply of these two booklets. They may be ordered by writing the Institute secretary.

### + INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION +

The International Convention of Bible Students will be held from August 7-11, 1994, in Poitiers, France.

The cost for three meals plus room with private bath at the convention hotel will be about \$55 (U.S.) per person per day. Anyone interested in attending the convention should write now for information to: International Convention of Bible Students, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

+ **LETTERS FROM OUR READERS** +

I'm sending along a couple of articles that may interest you. The first, "The Palestinisation of Jesus," speaks of Canon Naim Ateek of Jerusalem. He is also referred to in the July-August issue. (**Editor's Note:** the article referred to was quoted as claiming Jesus was not Jewish but Palestinian-please see July / August issue).

Our son is married to a Palestinian girl from Jerusalem and Naim Ateek officiated at their marriage. They gave me a copy of his book, "Justice, and Only Justice," a couple of years ago and I hadn't read it until I received the enclosed article. I had always wondered how the Palestinian Christians accepted Jesus, since he was a Jew, but that isn't their belief. I've not entered into discussions with our daughter-in-law about the Israeli-Arab situation, because it's a very touchy subject and I wouldn't want to cause any friction or hurt her feelings in any way. She has become more outspoken about her thoughts on the Israelis and, of course, they are very negative. I wonder how that situation will be resolved there and with the recent developments, I watch the papers with great interest. Our Heavenly Father will work out his plans and purposes in His own way, we can be assured of that.

I look forward to receiving the Herald and have very much appreciated the articles. I especially enjoyed "The Easy Yoke" in the March-April issue, written by my uncle, Stuart Sowers. I have very fond memories of him and it was touching to read comments from two sisters in the July-August issue and their remembrances of him. He was a very special person.

*(Linda Veach)*

+ **AROUND THE WORLD** +

*MEDICINE*

Scientists at the George Washington University Medical Center have cloned human embryos successfully. Many bioethicists are determined to minimize the significance of this once hotly-debated topic. They reason that if society already allows eggs and sperm to be bought and sold; in vitro fertilization; surrogate motherhood; freezing and storage of embryos for later implantation, then why should it balk at cloning. Cloning puts back on society's agenda what bioethics has set aside: Where is science and medicine taking humanity?

*(New York Times, 10/30/93)*

## *Christendom*

The Southern Baptist Convention recently published a county-by-county estimate in Alabama which indicated that 46.1 percent of the populous is in danger of "going to hell." The report applied the traditional Baptist view that members of non-Christian religions are not saved. The report also indicated that virtually everyone not belonging to a church congregation is counted among the lost. The estimates of the unsaved from other sects were based on how closely those groups' beliefs matched Southern Baptist doctrine. That means that more Methodists are counted among the saved than are Roman Catholics.

*(Associated Press, 9/19/93)*

A Virginia reporter has accused Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) ministry of a conflict of interest. CBN spent \$2.8 million of funds on a for-profit vitamin and cosmetics company in which Robertson owns half the stock. The company sells Sea of Galilee cosmetics and the American Whey nutritional drink.

*(Washington Post, 9/20/93)*

## *Israel and the Middle East*

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Because events change quickly in Israel, news events about the peace process is outdated quickly. Therefore, articles quoted are not on events themselves, but on subtle changes which occur that may help link events to prophecy. We lead off in this issue with a list of the modern equivalent of the Arab nations listed in Psalm 83. Many Bible students believe that this psalm is a summary of the ongoing conflict between the descendants of Isaac and the descendants of Ishmael. There is some debate about the settlement of the conflict between these two groups because Ezekiel 38-the definitive presentation of the final conflict of Israel-omits any reference to Arabic peoples.

<b>Psalm 83 Name</b>	<b>Modern Nation</b>
1. Assur	1. Iraq
2. Hagarenes	2. Egypt (?)
3. Tyre	3. Syria
4. Gebal	4. Lebanon
5. Moab	5. Jordan
6. Ammon	6. Saudi Arabia
7. Edom	7. Kuwait
8. Amalek	8. Qatar
9. Ishmaelites	9. United Arab Emirates
10. Philistines	10. Bahrain

All ten nations listed occupy part of the old Roman Empire. In fact, these territories overlapped parts of empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Excluded from the overlapping territories are the modern nations of Yemen, Oman, and Iran. Today's Palestinians form a majority in three of the countries in the list: Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

*(Christadelphian Watchman, 10/93)*

### *Iraq*

News of Iran's continuing arms buildup comes almost daily. North Korea delivers Scud missiles, and other weapons come in from China and the former Russian republics. In the region of the Red Sea, the alignment between Libya, Ethiopia, Iran, and Sudan has added significantly to the threats faced by Egypt.

*(The Intelligence Digest)*

**EDITORS COMMENT:** Note Ezekiel 38:5: "Persia (Iran), Cush (Upper Nile Region, including Ethiopia and Sudan) and Put (Libya) will be with them, all with shields and helmets." Each of these nations appears in the period of "Jacob's Trouble" as part of the alliance hostile to Israel.

### *The Palestinians*

Arafat may have decided to make the appropriate peace gestures toward Israel-for now-in order to gain a foothold in the occupied territories, new funding (this time from the West), and a new chance to continue his 40-year war against Israel.

*(Time, 9/13/93)*

This should not be interpreted as (God's) dislike of the Palestinians. On the contrary, the Palestinian Arabs are also people of the Bible and God has explicitly set aside a land for them too. He has promised them the land of "Moab and Ammon"-present day Jordan (Deut. 2:4,5; Johua 24:4).

*("Peace in the Middle East!" by Richard Kindig)*

### *Russian Jews*

Israel has taken in more than a half million Russian Jews in the last several years. This would be similar to the United States taking in more than 30 million immigrants in a few years. Uri Gordon, head of the Aliyah (immigration of Jews to Israel) Department of the Jewish Agency, recently wrote an article entitled "It's Time for Every Jew to Come Home to Israel." In the article he states, "There remains just one large pocket of Diaspora (Jews in dispersion) left: the North American continent." He has called for those Jews to come home. He envisions a Jewish population in the State of Israel of seven to eight million in the near future, contending that North American Jews cannot support Israel from afar.

*(Israel My Glory, October/November, 1993)*

## BOOK REVIEW

The first book review that appeared in News and Views was *The Making of a Tradition*, an examination of the development of the doctrine of Trinity. That book showed how avoiding the historical elements of the development of a concept can lead to confusion and error. In this book review, I highlight another doctrine in Christian belief—the existence of a personal being known as the Devil.

*Satan, The Early Christian Tradition*, by Jeffrey Burton Russell, is the second book of three on the subject of belief in the personality of an evil spiritual being. The first of the series is *The Devil, Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*. The third is *Mephistopheles, The Devil in the Modern World*. This second book in the series is the most useful for Bible students because it focuses on the development of thought about Satan during the period when the New Testament was being written.

In recent years there has been a growing trend for non-fundamental Christians to express doubt about the existence of the Devil. The purpose of Russell's book is to document the development of the concept of the Devil in early Christian thought. Why is that important? As Russell says:

"The history of concepts argues that a phenomenon such as the Devil is best defined through its history. The Devil is the tradition of what he has been thought to be . . . The Devil is the personification of the principle of evil. Some religions have viewed him as a being independent of the good Lord, others as being created by him. Either way, the Devil is not a mere demon, a petty and limited spirit, but the sentient personification of the force of evil itself, willing and directing evil... What history shows is the concept of the Devil, a coherent historical development growing from pre-biblical roots through Hebrew and Christian thought to the present. The essential point of this tradition is that the Devil is a Satan, an "obstructor" of the will of the good Lord. Satan's basic function is to say "My will, not yours, be done." . . . To deny the existence and central importance of the Devil in Christianity is to run counter to apostolic teaching and to the historical development of Christian doctrine .... If the Devil does not exist, then Christianity has been dead wrong on a central point right from the beginning."

Russell draws extensively on earlier literature, but has much original research. In his foreword he describes changes in his own beliefs as a result of his research. For example, he says that at one time he tried to distinguish too sharply between theology and history. Now he admits that theology cannot be expressed independently of history. This is important for all students of the Bible. Whether it is our own movement's history or the history of the development of major doctrines, we must be aware of the events and arguments shaped our ideas. That is the best way to deal with the doubts of many who no longer see the importance of those ideas, or those who question the validity of beliefs.

Importantly, following his extensive study and analysis of the historical development of views regarding the Devil, Russell concludes, "I am still inclined to believe that the Devil exists and that his works are painfully manifest among us."

The book is a valuable addition to all Christian libraries. It is published by Cornell University Press and is available in bookstores with large religious sections.

## Which Mountain Will You Move?

**Matthew 17:20-If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.**

Here three of Jesus' disciples had just descended from **the Mount of Transfiguration** where they had witnessed a picture of Christ's kingdom, seeing, in vision, Jesus in discussion with Moses and Elijah. They found the other disciples at the base of the mountain unable to cast out a demon from a young boy. They wondered why they could not do so. Jesus said it would take faith-like a grain of mustard seed--and they could move the power of **this mountain-the Mount of Transfiguration**, the kingdom--to **"yonder place,"** where the child was now, and they could accomplish the miracle.

**Mark 11:23-For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that these things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.**

In this instance, Jesus and his disciples are on the side of **another mountain, the Mount of Olives**, where Jesus had shortly before cursed the fig tree. This miracle represented the casting off of the nation of Israel. Like all other prophecies it required faith to believe in the fulfillment of an action yet in the future. So today there are many Bible prophecies still unfulfilled. If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed--infinitesimally small--we can believe that not only the judgment of Israel, but all of God's prophecies--those of blessings as well as those of judgment--will come to pass.

**Luke 17:6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.**

Here we find Jesus outside the house of a Pharisee. There was no mountain to point to, so he pointed to a nearby **sycamine, or mulberry tree**. His lesson had been forgiveness, even as often as seven times in one day. His disciples' response was, *Lord, increase our faith*. Pointing to the sycamine tree he uttered these words. The sycamine tree has the unique quality that when a branch is cut another grows very quickly in its place. The lesson was that if they were cut-offended-by the words of another, they should forgive and God would quickly heal the wound, and new blessings would branch out in the place of the wound.

**Which mountain will you move?** Or will you find mountains of your own that faith can move? Mountains of fear, mountains of doubt, mountains within, mountains without, whatever your mountain, **YOU CAN MOVE IT** if you only have

***Faith As A Grain Of Mustard Seed!***