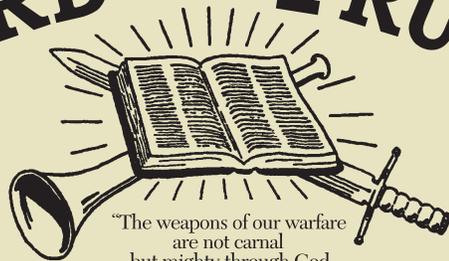


The SWORD and TRUMPET

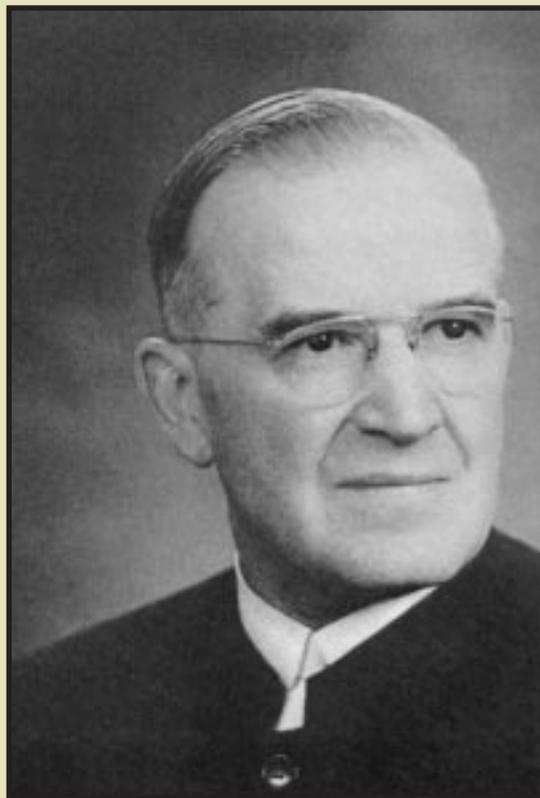
"Blow ye
the Trumpet
and warn
the People."



"The weapons of our warfare
are not carnal
but mighty through God
to the pulling down of strongholds."

"Take the Sword
of the Spirit
which is
The Word of God."

Guidelines



ELMER G. MARTIN

SEPTEMBER 2004

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The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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Person of the Month:

Elmer G. Martin (1894-1974)

Brother Martin was born September 29, 1894, to Ezra W. and Emma (Good) Martin in Spring Grove, Pennsylvania. Elmer was the third of five children.

In 1911 at the age of 17, Martin was converted to Christ and subsequently baptized.

Two years later the family moved to the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, area.

Brother Martin never went beyond the eighth grade in his formal education but in his later years he became a very well-educated man due to his intensive self-study. He had a large collection of religious books including subjects on church history and Bible commentaries and concordances.

Martin's father had started his own meat-processing business and Elmer became its vice-president and treasurer.

On November 30, 1916, at the age of 22, Elmer married Mabel Diffenbach. God blessed their union with one daughter. Mabel suffered from poor health and so for a time they lived in Colorado hoping the climate would be of some help.

During their stay in Colorado, Brother Martin served as superintendent and mission board member of the Colorado Springs congregation.

At some point the Martin family moved back to Lancaster County.

Tragically, seven years after their marriage, Mabel died on April 14, 1923. Her death profoundly affected Elmer and it was during this time that he grew deeply in the Lord.

Two years later, on June 21, 1925, God met Elmer's needs by giving him Ada Kreider as his wife. To this union were born four daughters and one son.

During the time of additional construction of the meat plant, Brother Martin sensed a definite call to the ministry. After attempts to ignore the Lord's prodding Elmer finally told Him he was willing to accept the call. The following year one of the employees died suddenly and it appeared Martin would succeed him in the business. Then on September 8, 1926, he was ordained to the ministry.

As minister he served both the Mellinger and Stumptown congregations. His ministry was not limited, however, to these two churches. He had a widespread ministry as an evangelist, not only in Lancaster County but in other states and Canada.

Brother Martin published many booklets and tracts. He was gifted in drawing premillennial biblical charts.

Twenty years after his first ordination he was again ordained, this time as bishop.

Elmer was known as a quiet, modest, humble man who never betrayed confidences. An intense student, he loved seeing spiritual growth in others. People knew that his love and concern for them was real when he would shed tears while preaching God's Word. The district under his oversight was instrumental in starting new churches.

God called him "home" at Landis Homes on July 10, 1974. —Gail L. Emerson

Who Has Been Sipping Your Coffee?

by Simon Schrock

Open your guest book. Look at the last signature. Start backing up the line through the past year or two of guests. Who has been sipping your coffee? Grandma—Uncle Ben—Aunt Sarah—and your good friend, Bro. Bob and his family? But, you see, they are all your kind of people. Your bloodline, your religion, they do your kind of talk and are your race. They are your friends.

There are three classes of people for whom we seldom pour coffee. First, our brothers in faith we've labeled not quite my kind. Too strict. Too liberal. Too something. The one on the right side of our thinking comes too near to being legalistic. So no coffee. The one on the left is too near an apostate—so no coffee for him at our house. The second type of individual we seldom extend coffee to is the out-of-our-class person. We shy away from the poor ragged man from the ghetto. His manners are poor, his clothes aren't pressed, and he forgets his deodorant. Nor does he talk about what we like to talk about. And what would the neighbors think?

Then on the other side of the story are those we consider more class than we. We don't pour coffee for them for fear we will make a blunder—like spill some coffee. The third class we neglect is the unsaved. Our dinner of chicken and fried potatoes with three desserts usually overlooks the unsaved neighbors. While our unsaved friends stay at their house without God, we enjoy our kind of food with our kind of people.

Oh, sure, you are a born-again, active, Bible-believing Christian with a testimony for Christ. A committee member. An ideal twentieth-century church man. That's you? But why do you serve only your kind of peo-

ple? Shouldn't you be just the one that makes a special effort to serve your fine God-given food to those others neglect?

May I share some lessons learned from Mother? I remember the day when a young man came by the house as a salesman. He was a stranger. Tired. Hungry. Working to earn his way through life. Mother served this stranger what she had. Milk and homemade pie. For years this man remembered, by way of a Christmas greeting, to thank her for the food given him at a time when he was hungry.

Then on the other side of class, there was the doctor with more money than we, sending notes of thanks for the goodies sent. Second lesson, her guest book is filled with names of people from many cities who discovered an open door, her good food, and friendliness. The poor ragged ones were served, as well as those with thousands of dollars' worth of trinkets hanging on them. Good lessons? I think so.

Why not use our homes as a way of building bridges of friendship? This could be a way of building the kingdom of Christ. This doesn't mean we lose our Christian faith and keep company with the world. It means we would be reaching out to give our fellowman an opportunity to reach for faith too.

Build bridges of friendship. Why not? Instead of having your best friend drinking all your coffee—try inviting the most irritable brother in your life to drop by after church. Pour him some coffee to drink with your best pie. Then while you are enjoying good food as best you can with your worst brother, just loosen up. Talk things over. He isn't as bad as you thought. Start filing off your sharp edges that have been rubbing you wrong. You

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just may be talking to your richest brother in faith. That happened to me. Men I admire most for their faith are those who seem like not my kind.

Next time you call your best friend to stop by for coffee and doughnuts, call your pastor or bishop. Do it gently, though, so he doesn't fall over from shock. You'll discover he isn't out to cut you down or run your life. But he has a burning faith and cares for you. He loves you. Build a bridge of friendship; come together in love. It would be a highlight of your life.

Then there are the neglected and rejected. They may be used to coffee out of an old aluminum pot that turned black, with the handle burned off. Some coffee out of your stainless steel electric automatic maker served with Christ's kind of love may give them the idea they are worth something after all. It could be just what it takes to give someone the assurance and encouragement he needs to succeed in life. No, we may never know the results here, but do we need to? This is seedtime—not harvest.

The man that has been begging for one

drop of water in hell rejected the opportunity to give friendship to the neglected Lazarus. He rejected the privilege to pour him something to drink. Lazarus' companionship was left to the dogs. The rich man would be glad to return to earth and "pour that man a drink." Will Jesus have to remind us that—I was thirsty, but you kept it all for yourself and your kind of people?

The unsaved, the neglected, the rejected, the minority, the poor, your neighbors—show them love as you do your friends. Don't just tell them you love them. Just saying "love" may have no meaning at all. They may have to see and feel what it is. They may have to sip your coffee before love comes through. It could be a way of building His kingdom, you know.

Everyone was important to Jesus. His chosen ones. His mother. But then He reached out to sinners too. He considered them of equal value. And that is the pattern we want to follow to be our best for Him.

Next time you pour coffee check who is sipping it. It could become redemptive coffee pouring. But will it? ■

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From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Dealing With My Old Man

by Val Yoder

Do passionless Christianity, fear-of-hell conversions, adolescent baptisms, mushrooming needs for counselors, and retirement playgrounds have anything in common?

Some of us adulate over the dynamic movement that commenced our Anabaptism, yet the vitality of the lives they lived seems to be but little more than a faint mirage on the horizon of our past. We sometimes wistfully wonder if there isn't much more to this walk with God than we are currently experiencing, yet, on the other hand, we often cannot really recall not being a believer. And, if we do, we assess ourselves to not have been all that bad. We may have grown up in a solid Christian home. We were compliant and obedient. We really didn't need too much transformation in our life style. Our culture was deeply influenced by Biblical truth. We solidly observed and supported our church discipline in which sincere, godly men instructed us. Our deeds were applauded by our parents.

We need to be eternally grateful for the characteristics of our culture, churches, and homes which emanated a

godly pressure upon our developing spirituality. There are untold millions that would give anything to have the safety and protection that many of us have experienced. The culture we have been blessed by is not the problem. The problem is deeper. Jesus made a very profound statement in His reproof to the self-righteous Simon. He said, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." It is certainly true, in a general sense, that those who see themselves as barely lost will have an accompanying sense that they need but little salvation.

One may ask, "Should I not seek to be obedient? Should I increase my need for forgiveness so that I can rise to higher levels of love?" Increasing our level of sinfulness is absolutely unnecessary! The problem is not our level of sinfulness but our inability to perceive our level of sinfulness. Simon's problem in Luke 7 was not a lack of sin, but a lack of ability to see it. The woman's advantage was not the immensity or gravity of her sin, but her ability to sense it.

What the woman seemed to understand, that Simon did not, was that her former life style was characterized by

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self-fulfillment. That theme produced every sort of sinful deed which her self-serving desire enjoyed or detested. She may have had the occasional good deed but even those were done in harmony with the underlying self-centeredness.

The problem is not our level of sinfulness but our inability to perceive our level of sinfulness.

Simon, on the other hand, did not have a list of “wicked deeds” that plagued his past. His performance was exemplary. Oh yes, he forgot the gratuity of feet washing, but oversight in a busy schedule is excusable, right? He failed to see what pushed him to be exemplary. Though his deeds, for the most part, were right, it seems obvious that he saw no theme of life underlying his commendable behavior. When we foundationally define sin as actions that are unrelated or disassociated from the deeper motivations, our resulting lives will be characterized by pride and/or apathy.

True conversion happens primarily at this deeper level. It involves seeing below the surface actions to the “old man” that causes them. The “old man” is not unseated merely by a fear of hell. Neither is he dethroned by animated revival services, though they may disturb him. He is quite comfortable with peer and parental pressure for baptism, especially if it brings approval by significant people. He also finds the counselee’s chair to be a regular place of repose. He needs a lot of help. As long as he is alive and enthroned, the church will suffer with his presence. His outward actions may be applaudable but the base line theme brings trouble, division, animosity, apathy, and hardness.

So-called conversions that nurture self-protection rather than self-sacrificing abandonment to the Lord are oxy-

moronic. They are not conversion at all. If fear-of-hell conversions and peer-pressured, adolescent baptisms are characteristic of our self-protecting conversion experiences, then it is little wonder that we are seeking counselors and playgrounds the rest of our lives. The whole nature of what we call “conversion” must change. We must deal radically with the “old man” before we can expect the character of our church life to change.

To see the nature of the “old man” in our well-trained, protected Christian homes takes a vision that is lacking in far too many of us. The “old man” is not just a cantankerous elderly man; he is our very life previous to conversion. He is inextricably a part of our spiritual DNA. He reigns supreme and alone in the throne room of our heart. He will relinquish his throne to no one without a bloody, murderous fight. He will not coexist with another sovereign. He will rule and he alone. He permeates and saturates every crevice of his domain with self-centered living. Nothing is untarnished.

The “old man” has an intellectual ability to twist the truth to suit his purposes. He is driven by a pleasure/pain orientation. What is pleasurable, he pursues; what is painful, he flees. He is totally unjust in that no opponent ever

True conversion happens primarily at this deeper level. It involves seeing below the surface actions to the “old man” that causes them.

wins in the courtroom of his heart. He is cruel. The only reason he fails to demonstrate cruelty is because his kindness brings more desirable results. Even his kindness is self-promoting. He can do nothing but act out of selfish-

ness. Nothing is of faith.

God and my “old man” are as different as Heaven and Hell. Both wage a war of uncompromising extinction of the other. It is a fight to death. Neither can be in the presence of the other without revulsion and opposition. They are eternal and essential opposites. No truce can bring these enemies to peace. One or the other will die! When God breached the gulf of the divine and human, my “old man” could not coexist with Him; could not endure Him. So I killed Him on a cross at Golgotha.

A conversion without battle—a conversion without a blood bath on this level—is no conversion at all. At best, it is only a starting point to actual conversion. Conversions that bring only a vague sense of relief from an icky feeling of guilt may be the true culprit behind passionless Christianity, overflowing needs for counselors, and sedative retirement playgrounds. Maybe . . . just maybe the true problem behind contemporary Christianity, both in and out of our denomination, is not only our view of sanctification and spiritual

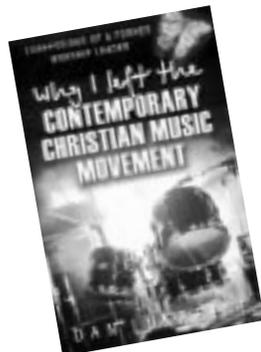
growth, but rather our view of justification and what is to take place in conversion.

After conversion, there will always be the need for ongoing sanctification. That process of growth in Christ will always be at the forefront of a Christian’s agenda. He will need brothers and sisters to encourage, exhort, comfort, and urge him in spiritual growth. But, if the salvation he embraces has not dealt with the extermination of the “old man,” he will never cease to need pastors, counselors, and friends to succor his battle wounds.

When the “old man” is crucified and the Holy Spirit is enthroned, we will then be enabled to bring to death the “body of sin.” This allows the believer to go from one level of glory to another as the flesh is being rendered powerless in his ongoing walk with the Lord. Solomon describes this walk of faith well in Proverbs 4:18 where he says, “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” ■

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

SEPTEMBER 5, 2004

The Crown of God's Creation

Genesis 2:4-7, 15-24

With the new quarter we begin a series of lessons on "The Redemptive Plan of God," tracing God's redemptive plan from Genesis to the New Testament epistles. For the month of September we have two lessons from Genesis and one each from Exodus and Deuteronomy. For context to today's lesson, read Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis. Also see Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2:6-8.

In Chapter 1 of Genesis we have the record of God creating the universe, its components and its inhabitants. The last part of the chapter is the record of God's creation of man, His servant to care for the rest of His created world. Chapter 2 provides a summary of God's creative work, the establishing of the Garden of Eden and a more detailed account of the creation of woman to be man's companion.

The crown of God's creation, the grand culmination of His creative work, was man. After creating the plant and animal kingdoms God needed someone to tend His creation. Chapter 1 tells of God's design and program for man. He was to subdue, or rule over, the earth. God gave him control over the material creation—plants, animals, fish, and fowl. (See 1:26-29; 2:15, 19, 20.) He endowed man with intelligence, reasoning powers, discernment, the ability to plan, and to perform. Man, from the humble origins of the dust of the earth, was elevated to a lofty position of responsibility in God's plan for the earth. Note that when God breathed life into man (2:7) it was more than mere physical life, it was also soul-life.

To help man develop the self-discipline necessary for a meaningful life, God placed one restriction on him when He placed him in the Garden: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." God also warned him of the consequences should he disobey. Man was on his honor, with fair warning. Unfortunately, as we notice in the next chapter, man breached the trust God placed in him—and things have not been the same since.

God so designed man that he was not complete without a companion, one to provide physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual companionship. And since no suitable mate was found in the present creation, God created a special person to fill that role. Woman was made out of man, from his side, to work alongside in his responsibilities.

Adam immediately recognized his relationship with Eve. He said, "She is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh." In other words, she is part of me. God also at this point established the family unit, that both man and woman would leave their parental homes and form a new family unit.

We have here in this passage the record of the crowning act of God's creation. Man, created to reflect the image and nature of God, was endowed with tremendous potential, with unlimited possibilities, and was given human companionship and responsibility over material creation. The future was bright. But it was marred by man's disobedience. And God needed to bring judgment upon man's wickedness, the subject of next Sunday's lesson.

For thought and discussion

1. Explore the idea of man being created in the image of God. Just what does this mean?

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2. Try to imagine the beauty and tranquility that existed in the Garden of Eden before man's fall into sin. Remember, it was created by a God of perfection.
3. Explore the concepts of man's freedom and his corresponding accountability.
4. Why did God form woman out of man instead of starting from scratch as He did with Adam? Any clues?
5. In this day when the sanctity of the marriage relationship is under such severe attack, reaffirm before God your commitment to His way and His plan.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2004

God Judges His Creation

Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 17, 23; 8:14-16; 9:1, 16

At the close of God's creative acts He proclaimed everything He had made "very good." However, it wasn't long till man, God's highest creation, spoiled creation's goodness and changed man's relationship to God by falling into sin. Today's lesson details God's plan to preserve a remnant of faithful people while destroying the wicked. (Read Chapters 3, 4, and 5 for background and all of Chapters 6 through 9:17 for context.)

Our text tells us that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." So God instructed Noah to build an ark to the saving of his household (Hebrews 11:7). Man had proliferated on the earth (6:1) and wickedness had increased proportionately (6:5). Mankind, in his depravity, had sunk to such a low ebb that God could no longer tolerate his existence. So He declared judgment upon the wicked and extended grace to the righteous.

In the remaining portion of Chapter 6, God gives Noah directions for building the ark. Then in Chapter 7, after its completion, He gives direction for taking the animals into the ark, along with Noah and his family. God was cleansing the earth, but He was also preparing for its repopulation (v. 3b).

Notice in verse five that obedience was the key to Noah's right standing with God. His walk with God (6:9) secured for him

God's favor and grace. No matter how wicked the society, there will always be those whose relationship to God is secured by their obedience to His holy will. In that era it was Noah. Today?

For forty days and nights the rain came down and the waters of the deep gushed forth to flood the earth. Gradually everything was covered, but the ark floated free, buoyed by the water, watched over by God's care. Truly it was an ark of safety, a symbol of God's grace and mercy.

For 150 days the flood prevailed, then gradually the waters began to recede. Noah and his family were in the ark about a year, riding out the flood and caring for the animals. During this time every living thing on the earth—plants, animals, and man—perished.

As the flood abated, the ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat. But it was still seven months before the earth had dried enough that Noah, his family and the animals could exit the ark. At God's command they left the ark to start over repopulating the earth. God pronounced His blessing upon Noah and his sons and instructed them to multiply and replenish the earth.

God also set His bow in the clouds as a promise of His everlasting covenant with man not to again destroy the earth with a flood. The rainbow is a continual reminder of God's faithfulness.

For thought and discussion

1. One of the imponderables of the finite mind is why God, knowing what would happen, created man and the world in the first place. Was He giving man a chance to prove himself? Think about this. And think too, of the lessons contained in this story for us today.
2. Take a look at Noah's faith—building a huge boat with no water in sight. Imagine also the ridicule of his unbelieving contemporaries. Could you have stood the test?
3. Consider the logistics of providing adequate supplies of food and caring for the animals during that year in the ark.

4. Do some study on the physical, geological effects of the flood.
5. Don't overlook the lesson of God's grace to the obedient and His faithfulness to His Word.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2004

Moses, A Reluctant Leader

Exodus 3:1-12

We're skipping over wide swaths of history between Genesis and the New Testament as we trace "The Redemptive Plan of God." Be sure to read adequate context and background for each lesson to get the full impact of its place in God's scheme of things. For today, as we study Moses, read at least from Exodus 1:1 through 4:23, and Acts 7:17-36. You will also want to read about Moses in a Bible dictionary or handbook.

After fleeing Egypt to save his life from the wrath of Pharaoh, we find Moses in the desert, tending sheep for his father-in-law, Jethro. Little did Moses realize at this point in his life how valuable that desert experience would be as years later he led the children of Israel through that very land.

Here in Exodus 3 we find Moses at Horeb, the mountain of God. Here God appeared to him in a burning bush to call him to lead His people out of Egypt. God first caught Moses' attention by the burning bush, then identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Furthermore, God instructed Moses to remove his sandals for the ground whereon he was standing was holy ground. God was there. This struck fear into Moses' heart and he hid his face from the dazzling presence of God.

God then informed Moses that He was indeed aware of the afflictions His children were undergoing in Egypt. He told Moses He had heard their cry, He knew of their sufferings under their taskmasters. Furthermore, He said He had now come down to deliver them. In delivering them from suffering and bondage in Egypt God said He would take them into a land of plenty, a

large, spacious land which would produce in abundance for their sustenance.

No doubt to this point everything sounded extremely good to Moses. After all, it had been 40 years since he fled Egypt. Certainly things had not gotten better in that time. Moses would have been thrilled by God's announcement of deliverance. Little did he expect, however, what was coming next.

Then God dropped the bombshell: "Come now and I will send thee to Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." Moses' attitude then changed from joy to consternation. "But who am I, that I should deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Moses' 40 years being a nobody, a simple shepherd in the desert, had taken the fire of retaliation from his spirit. Perhaps he had given up hope of seeing Israel released from bondage. At any rate, he seemed sure by now that any deliverance would not be by his hand.

But God had been secretly preparing Moses, and the time was ripe. Moses had tried once in his own strength, and failed. Now he was to go in God's strength and prevail. But God had to convince him first that he was capable—with His help. God assured Moses of His presence and, after an arguing match which God won, Moses agreed to go, providing Aaron went with him.

God gives Moses one last token of assurance in his mission, that after leading the people out of Egypt, he would again worship God upon this very mountain. So Moses went, and the rest is history.

For thought and discussion

1. God used a burning bush to get Moses' attention. What are some things He uses today to get people's attention?
2. Reflect on the many experiences, oft-times difficult, that God takes people through in order to prepare them to better serve Him in the future. Moses' life is a prime example. Explore it.
3. God always gets His man. In spite of his objections, God got Moses. Look for other

Bible characters for whom God persisted until He got them. How about yourself? Did He need to wear down your resistance to make you a usable vessel?

4. Why do you suppose God allowed the persecution of His children to go on so long before He stepped in to deliver them?
5. Is God taking you through the desert to prepare you for future service? If so, don't balk at His leading.

SEPTEMBER 26, 2004

God Prepares a Nation

Deuteronomy 29:2-15

As we move through Israel's history we now find them on the east side of Jordan, poised to enter the Promised Land. The sufferings of Egypt and the wilderness wanderings are behind them. Ahead of them is the Promised Land and the establishing of nationhood in the land they would settle as their own.

Moses, because of disobedience at the waters of Meribah, would not be allowed to enter with the people he had led. That responsibility would fall upon Joshua, Moses' faithful servant. However, before his death, Moses gathered the people together and rehearsed to them all that the Lord had done for them in bringing them to this point. (See 1:1-3.) He also reiterated the laws God had given them for their well-being.

Here in Chapter 29 he briefly recounts the Lord's deliverance from bondage in Egypt, emphasizing the power and greatness of God on their behalf. He also reminds them of God's providential care as they wandered 40 years in the wilderness and His might in destroying kings Sihon and Og, and giving them their land.

But in spite of all these miracles and acts on their behalf, Israel was still dull of understanding. Their tendency was to look at the immediate situation they were in, and failed to see God's overall plan and purpose for what they were going through. It was spiritual dullness that kept them from seeing God's overarching design in their varied experiences. Instead of praise, they were prone to complain.

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Now Moses calls them to renew their covenant with God as they prepare to cross the Jordan and take possession of the land He had promised to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses' appeal is for them to "keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do." Yes, God had made certain promises, but the obedience of the people was necessary for their fulfillment.

The reaffirming of their commitment to the covenant was incumbent on all the people. (See verses 10 and 11.) Their acceptance of God's terms would establish them as God's people, special, and blessed. Their obedience would not only secure God's blessing for themselves, but as they continued faithful the blessing would also pass to their posterity (v. 15).

Moses wanted the children of Israel to realize just how special they were in God's sight (vv. 12, 13; see also 7:6-11). God's choice of them was not due to any special greatness on their part, but simply a manifestation of divine choice and love. His desire was to make of them a special people and, through them, to bless other people (Exodus 19:6).

The situation in today's lesson is just one further step in God's overall plan of redemption. He needed a nation to provide ancestry for the Son to be born as Saviour of the world. Moses reminds Israel of their potential and calls them to commitment and obedience to God's law.

For thought and discussion

1. Read Chapters 29 and 30 for context to today's lesson. It will also help to briefly review the entire Book of Deuteronomy.
2. Be sure to explore how this lesson fits into the quarter's theme of God's Redemptive Plan.
3. Notice the faithfulness of God in this passage, especially verse 13. How many years had it been since He had promised this land to Abraham and his descendants?
4. Why has mankind been so perennially dull of spiritual understanding? What are some antidotes?
5. Note how for believers today 1 Peter 2:9, 10 fits with God's call and plan for the children of Israel. ■

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Newslines . . .

by Rebecca Good

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings
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A Consuming Passion

The United States boasts twice as many shopping malls as high schools. Americans spend more on garbage bags than 90 of the world's 210 countries spend on everything. Where did this desire to buy (and then to dispose of) all this stuff come from? The drive to accumulate appeared in colonial America, as people aspired to be more genteel. By the late 1600s, mansions were sprouting up across the landscape. George Washington and other American founding fathers demanded the best quality—doing so was a matter of honor. During the 1800s, the middle class began acquiring carpets, mahogany furniture, fine fabrics, books, and other trappings of refinement. Richard Bushman, author of *The Refinement of America*, says, "You have to have a market for capitalism, and the aspiration to gentility provided that market."

America became the world economic leader around the turn of the 20th century, also leading the world in consumerism. In 2003, personal consumption accounted for 70 percent of the gross domestic product of the U.S. Americans work longer hours than other developed nations and then spend that money on consumer goods. Buying things is seen as an expression of free-

dom and individualism. Besides, people tend to compare themselves with television shows and watch movie stars who seem to have beautiful homes, fabulous clothing, and jewelry, and glamorous vacations. James Twitchell, author of *Living It Up: America's Love Affair With Luxury*: "Consumption has become our currency and the lingua franca." —from *U.S. News & World Report*

* * * * *

Plight of Colombian Evangelical Pastors

Colombia is known as the murder and kidnapping capital of the world. Paramilitary groups and the Marxist rebel group known as FARC, founded in 1964, give substance to this ominous reputation. FARC guerrillas control about 40 percent of the Colombian countryside. Kidnappings, murder, extortion, terrorism, and drug trafficking sustain their movement. In 2001, FARC commander Mono Jojoy announced that all evangelical ministers would become military targets. One hundred forty pastors have been killed since then. Yet, God's servants remain faithful and continue reaching out to those who do not know their Lord. —from *The Voice of the Martyrs*

* * * * *

Dangerous Marriages

The Vatican recently issued an 80-page booklet entitled "The Love of Christ Toward Muslims." One issue addressed in the book is marriage between Catholic women and Muslim men. Such unions are strongly discouraged; the document noted that women "are the least protected member of the Muslim family." The Koran forbids marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man, but allows a Muslim man to marry a Jewish or Christian woman if the children are brought up as Muslims.

Intermarriage between the two faiths is more common today because large numbers of Muslim men travel to European countries to work. Many European men no longer view marriage as an attractive option because so many socially acceptable alternatives are available. But women still long for marriage and family and Muslim men desire marriage and family as well.

A Catholic woman who marries a Muslim and then moves to a Muslim country is under Muslim law. The man retains all rights to the children if the couple divorces and the woman has not converted to Islam. If the woman converts to Islam, she still is only allowed to keep the boys to age 7-9, and the girls to age 15.

—from *The Washington Times*

* * * * *

Passionate for *The Passion*

The movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, has beaten all movie popularity records in the Middle East. The idea that the movie is anti-Semitic incited fascination in a people who have no great love for Jews and who do not believe that Jesus was crucified. Fuller Theological Seminary Dudley Woodberry, who spends part of each year in Afghanistan, says he doubts if the movie will cause more violence against

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Jews. "The movie will only 'confirm' their views, but they will also get the message of forgiveness from a prophet that they highly respect." The movie is banned in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, but pirated DVDs are in people's hands. In other Middle Eastern countries, *The Passion of the Christ* is shown freely in theaters, proving more popular than *Titanic* or James Bond.

The film's use of authentic language is an added bonus—Arabic speakers can understand about 10 percent of the film's Aramaic language.

—from *Christianity Today*

* * * * *

God Helps Them That Help Themselves

God helps them that help themselves—not found in the Bible, but a guiding maxim of Ben Franklin. Franklin was born the fifteenth child of a poor candlemaker. Only three years of formal schooling were his, but young Ben did not let that inhibit him. At age 11, he began educating himself, teaching himself Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, and German, and speaking them all with flair. After learning to play the harp, violin, and guitar, he went on to study science, math, and philosophy, reading every book he could get his hands on. Enjoying great success in the publishing business, he amassed such wealth by age 42 that he retired to spend time on his many other interests. Franklin did not bypass public service, aiding in the formation of Philadelphia's first public library, public museum, college, hospital, and patent office. During his "retirement," he invented the lightning rod and bifocals.

—from *U.S. News & World Report*

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Freedom's Blacklist

According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the

SWORD AND TRUMPET

nations who are the worst offenders of religious liberty are: Burma, China, North Korea, Iran, Sudan, Eritrea, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam.

—from *Christianity Today*

* * * * *

Gullible Christians

Armand and Marcela DeAngelis have been indicted for mail fraud and money laundering. The couple owned three companies. They would advertise “rare” gold coins in Christian magazines like *World* and *Christianity Today*. These coins were actually low-grade gold coins. Another one of DeAngelis’ companies, Twenty-First Century Grading Service, Inc., would grade the coins at a higher grade than they actually were. Thus, people would purchase coins, trusting the Twenty-First Century Grading Service’s evaluation, and believe that they had made a good investment. One customer paid \$3,560 for four gold coins worth a total of \$37.50. Some have lost up to \$300,000 in the scheme.

Barry Minkow, a pastor and fraud investigator, says, “There is an implied authenticity imputed to those who advertise in Christian publications to other Christians.

“Christians, when dealing with other believers, may not ask all the tough questions because their guards are down.” Minkow says he knows of more than \$1 billion in fraud perpetrated on Christians in the last seven months alone.

—from *Christianity Today*

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Life Begins at Conception—How Deep Is Our Commitment?

Most evangelical Christians agree that life begins at conception. However, many evangelicals practice techniques that point to a shakiness of that belief. It is considered quite acceptable for

evangelical couples struggling with infertility to try in vitro fertilization (IVF). During the IVF process, embryos are frozen, rated for quality, discarded if genetic defects are discovered, and thrown out if not needed. Christians would react in horror if fully developed babies were vulnerable to such treatment. Yet sometimes evangelical Christians are complicit in such procedures.

It is possible for couples using IVF to create only as many fertilized eggs as they will implant. Egg and sperm can also be frozen at the pronuclear stage, before the egg and sperm are fused. But requesting such procedures, which deviate from the standard, requires the couple to explain very clearly to their doctors and clinic exactly what it is they want to avoid.

The very ability to manage life in its very earliest stages only makes the commitment to support life more difficult. Amy Laura Hall, a United Methodist ethicist adamantly opposed to IVF, believes that the whole procedure undermines the belief that life begins at conception and paves the way for using embryos as raw material for biotechnology. She asks, “Is it possible that what’s going on with IVF is very subtly evil?” The medical field is excited about harvesting cells from embryos in order to heal certain unpleasant diseases. Hall believes that in coming years evangelicals will be tested to the point of personal sacrifice on the question of when human life begins. Will evangelicals refuse to use technologies and therapies that devalue human life in any form? Hall notes that many Christian people use birth-control pills, which in the quest to prevent pregnancy, sometimes makes the woman’s uterus hostile to the implantation of a naturally fertilized egg. Will Christians carefully evaluate their practices and choose only those which protect and honor life from its earliest moments?

—from *Christianity Today*

Chest of Drawers No More

by Frank Moore

Unbelievers receive confusing signals every time Christians respond in ways that seem very un-Christian. Inconsistencies between our faith and our daily choices promote a “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” existence. The Holy Spirit provides the power to change compartmentalized lifestyles into consistent Christianity.

- Another highly talented young minister in our area slipped into moral failure and lost his minister’s license this week. I suppose I should be shockproof to the news by now, yet I never find myself ready to hear another example.
- An energetic student in a class I teach at a Christian university recently wrote me a note confessing her utter despair at her inability as a Christian to control her drinking problem.
- A Christian friend and I ran to the store to pick up some folding chairs for our church. As we secured the chairs in his truck, I noticed the employees had loaded too many. When I headed to report the error, my friend stopped me. “Keep quiet, and let’s go,” he said. “Their loss is the church’s gain.”

What do these stories have in common? In every case, Christians responded in ways that seem very un-Christian. We expect our ministers to avoid temptations that lead to moral failure. We do not easily reconcile Christian discipline with alcoholism. We assume that Christians are honest and trustworthy whether anyone is watching or not. Yet all too often, in a thousand different combinations, stories like these surface in our churches, Christian universities, and Bible study groups.

Admittedly, these are extreme cases. More common forms of the problem include voting for political candidates who oppose Christian values, watching television programs or movies that promote values or lifestyles contrary to Christian virtues, and performing questionable practices at school or in the workplace. Anytime our daily choices do not align with our faith, we contribute to the problem.

***Christianity is either
relevant all the time or
useless anytime. It is not
just a phase of life;
it is life itself.***

—Richard Halverson

If you’re like me, every time you hear about inconsistency between what a Christian says and what he or she does, you question how such a thing can occur. The answer often lies in the simple technique of compartmentalization, the separation of our personal world into two realms. In the sacred realm, we look, talk, and act like a Christian at church, at home, or in the company of Christian friends. In the secular realm, we look, talk, and act an entirely different way. What we say in our religious world does not always inform the way we act in the marketplace. It’s really a “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” existence. That is, we tailor our conversation and conduct to the environment in which we find ourselves, much as a chameleon changes color to match its surroundings.

But Why?

Why do people compartmentalize? At least part of the answer involves society and the way it informs and affects us. None of us can totally avoid its influence unless we live as hermits. Some of the puzzle pieces of society's influence include the following:

1. *The urge to bring a consumer mentality to faith.* Let's face it: as consumers we have a great deal of choice at the supermarket and the shopping center. Merchants urge us to "have it [our] way." Why not lay our religious beliefs

In compartmentalization, we sort contradictory ideas and lifestyles into separate drawers. We cannot reconcile their inconsistency, but no problem—we just live out of one drawer at church or with our Christian friends and another drawer at work or school. As long as we keep the compartments neatly separated, we don't even realize the problem.

and practices on the table, select the ones we like, adjust the ones we want to change, and discard the ones that cramp our style? Why not treat religious belief and action like a buffet where we customize our thought and practice to our own personal preferences?

2. *The urge to build a wall in our thinking between what we say and what we do.* This temptation carefully avoids the pitfalls of hypocrisy. The word *hypocrite* means "putting on a mask." It comes from the ancient theater, where

actors held up a smiling mask to indicate joy or a frowning mask to display sadness. Actors changed their masks on purpose; they knew what they were doing. Hypocrites do too. They have at least some awareness of their inconsistencies. With society's temptation to compartmentalize, the left hand simply doesn't think about what the right hand is doing. The wall between the compartments helps us function in two separate worlds simultaneously.

3. *The urge to expose ourselves to the almost endless supply of information that comes at us from all over the world every day.* We hear news reports from the far-flung corners of the world; we receive e-mail from people we've never met across the country or around the world. Satellite dishes and computer connections bring us more information than we could possibly assimilate into our thinking or adequately judge. We're exposed to too much and at too fast a rate to digest it properly. What's more, like gluttons at a feast, the more we hear, the more we hunger to hear. Information becomes addictive.

4. *The urge to tolerate all beliefs and ideas.* Society calls on us daily to remain open to a variety of points of view and avoid judging any of them. One belief system is just as valid as another, we're told. Who has the authority to say your views are better than mine? We're urged to leave the question open for discussion and not come to any quick conclusions. Add this urge to the last one, and you have an almost endless stream of ideas flowing into your head that bypasses any filtering system to sort the right from the wrong.

I visualize this compartmentalization problem like the chest of drawers in my bedroom. My clean laundry is folded in stacks of like items and placed in their respective drawers. Dress socks go in the top drawer; sports socks occupy the second drawer; T-shirts follow in the

next drawer; underwear goes to the bottom drawer. In compartmentalization, we sort contradictory ideas and lifestyles into separate drawers. We cannot reconcile their inconsistency, but no problem—we just live out of one drawer at church or with our Christian friends and another drawer at work or school. As long as we keep the compartments neatly separated, we don't even realize the problem.

What Can We Do?

Does being a citizen of today's world doom us inevitably to compartmentalization? A thousand times no! Jesus prayed for His disciples to be in the world but not of it (John 17:6-24). Satan cannot outwit us in this battle as long as we apply Christian principles to the problem. Consider these steps:

1. *Recognize what is taking place.* Analyze your life regularly for compartments in your thinking and living. Compare Monday's routine and vocabulary with Sunday's. Look for inconsistencies between what you say you believe and the way you live.

2. *Tear down the wall in your thinking between the secular and the sacred.* Fight society's urge to compartmentalize. The Hebrew people in biblical times did not even have a word in their language for the secular. For them, all of life was sacred and lived before God. They sought to be the same people behind closed doors that they were in public; their goal was to filter every word, thought, and action through scriptural values.

3. *Pass judgment.* That's no longer politically correct, but it's biblical. In Philippians 4:8 Paul gives us a list of criteria for filtering our thoughts. If what you see on television or in the marketplace is not true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy, refuse to allow it to become part of your life. Guard the flow of information into your mind. Choose

to reject all that does not meet the biblical standard.

4. *Live in the Word.* The only way you can properly pass judgment on all that comes to you from your environment is to read the Bible regularly and inform your mind with God's thoughts and values. My computer automatically gets on the Internet every Wednesday at noon, downloads the latest information regarding computer viruses, and checks itself for hidden problems. We must download information from God's Word and check ourselves regularly for inconsistencies as well.

5. *Remain accountable.* The Christian life is not a solitary one; we need each other. Go to church regularly; participate in a Bible study fellowship; have a trusted Christian friend to whom you remain accountable. Talk about compartmentalization at church, in the home, and with your best friend. Ask other Christians what they think about questions for which you don't have clear answers. Search the Scriptures together for God's direction in these matters.

Avoid the Trap

Our world is filled with people who live inconsistent lives. We've come to expect it of our political leaders, media stars, and sports figures. One reason for these inconsistent lifestyles is compartmentalization. As Christians we have an obligation to God, our families, church friends, and the world to avoid the trap. We are called to be God's light to our dark world. One of the best ways we can brightly reflect God's light is to live a lifestyle that plainly demonstrates the influence of God at work within us—and to live it consistently. ■

—Taken from *Holiness Today*



The Lake of Fire

by Henry M. Morris
Founder and President Emeritus of ICR

The subject of hell is seldom taught or preached these days, even in fundamentalist churches. Most people believe that hell is only for monsters of wickedness such as Adolph Hitler, not for themselves. A recent authoritative poll found that:

“Majorities of about two-thirds of all adults believe in hell and the devil, but hardly anybody expects that they will go to hell themselves.”¹

But they are wrong! Most people *will* go to hell. Jesus Christ said so!

I don't like to say such a thing, and would not dare to except for the fact that Jesus Christ said it, and people desperately need to know how *not* to go to hell. After all, it was He who said that a place of “*everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” would also be the place of the “*everlasting punishment*” of multitudes of people (Matthew 25:41, 46) in an age to come.

This place of everlasting fire is also called “*the lake of fire.*” Wherever and whatever it is, hell will not be located on (or in) the earth. This present earth is to be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10) and to have “*fled away*” (Revelation 20:11) before God creates the new heavens and the new earth. Since the “*beast*” and the “*false prophet*” are said to be cast into the lake of fire *before* this earth's destruction, whereas Satan is said to be thrown into it *after* that destruction (Revelation 19:20; 20:10), the fiery lake must be located away from the earth. One suggestion is that it could be somewhere on a star (after all, stars are actually vast lakes of fire) far, far away from the earth.

More important than its location will be its occupants. The “*devil and his angels*” will be there, Jesus said, but also all those men and women whose names are “*not found written in the book of life*” (Revelation 20:15).

And who are these? “*But the fearful,*

and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

Probably most “good people” would agree that “*murderers, and whoremongers*” deserve hell,—but “*the fearful, and unbelieving . . . and all liars*”? Would that not include just about everyone?

In the antediluvian world, we are told that “*all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth*” (Genesis 6:12). During the period of God's greatest blessings in Israel, that wisest of men, Solomon, had to acknowledge that “*there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*” (Eccl. 7:20). The Apostle Paul agreed that “*there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (Romans 3:12). And even Christ Himself said that “*there is none good but one, that is, God*” (Mark 10:18). “*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*” (James 2:10). God is “*of purer eyes than to behold evil*” (Habakkuk 1:13), and so cannot allow even one unforgiven sin into heaven. It begins to look as if the lake of fire will have many, many occupants after all!

There *is* a way to escape hell, of course, but not many people are willing to go *that* way. None other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said that “*narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Matthew 7:14). At the same time, He said also that “*broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat*” (Matthew 7:13).

Please note that the man who said these things was not only the God who created all of us, but also the one who has provided the way out of escape from hell, and who will be our final Judge—and *He* has

said that most people will stay on the broad road leading to the lake of fire! Most of these undoubtedly will be men and women who assume they are “good” and are not expecting to go to hell when they die. But consider several specific categories of people who are in such danger.

(1) First there are those who don’t believe in hell, or any religion at all.

*“According to recent surveys, 39 percent of Americans—111 million of us—belong to no church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious institution . . . an unprecedented 14 percent of Americans tell pollsters that they are atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, or simply disinterested in religion. That’s about 40 million Americans. . . .”*²

That’s in America! In Europe, the percentages of those who don’t believe would be greater. These people are all headed for hell, because Jesus said: *“If ye believe not that I am he [that is, God], ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”* (Psalm 14:1; 53:1; also note Romans 1:22).

(2) Then, there are the billions of people who believe in false religions. Many are “good” people. Nevertheless they are all lost and bound for hell. They all reject Christ and *“there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). Remember that Jesus Himself said: *“I am the way, . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). Most of them know His claims and have either rejected or ignored them. Those who follow the Koran, for example, know that, even though Mohammed accepted Christ as a prophet, he denied repeatedly that He was the unique Son of God, that He died for our sins, and that He rose from the dead. Jesus said: *“. . . he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”* (John 3:18). Mohammed therefore was a lost sinner, and so are all those who believe him rather than God in Christ.

(3) There are also many who profess to be Christians but will eventually be sent to the lake of fire. *“And if any man shall*

take away from the words of the book of this prophecy [that is, not only from the final book of the Bible, but in context, the words of Scripture as a whole], God shall take away his part out of the book of life . . .” (Revelation 22:19). In addition to these sober words of warning to those who would tamper with the inspired words of the Bible, it was also Jesus who said: *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? . . . and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:22, 23).

We might well ask as did the disciples when Jesus said that it was *“easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. . . . Who then can be saved?”* (Matthew 19:24, 25). The fact is, however, as Jesus said: *“With God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26).

God has made our salvation possible and easily available through the incarnation, substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, and glorious victory over death in the bodily resurrection of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. What we could never earn by good works, He has provided as a free gift! *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 3:23, 24).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Paul calls this magnificent offer *“the glorious gospel of the blessed God”* (1 Tim. 1:11), so how could anyone refuse such a gift of divine love?

But aren’t there other ways to be saved? What about Buddhism and Islam and other philosophical systems that seem to make good sense? No: *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Prov. 14:12).

As Paul pointed out long ago to the intellectuals at Athens, all such questions should have been settled by the bodily resurrection of Christ. *“God . . . now commandeth all men every where to repent:*

because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30, 31).

Only Jesus Christ, of all men who ever lived, has shown that He has the power to defeat our greatest enemy, death. Therefore, He is God, and we will do well to believe both His warnings and His promises. Would anyone dare call Him a liar by insisting on some other way? There could be no greater sin, and those who commit this sin will undoubtedly remember it forever there in their fiery prison.

But what about those who have never heard about the Saviour and His great gift of love? The fact is *everyone* knows enough to be saved, if he will act on the light he has. Jesus Christ, the Creator is *“the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”* For those who will act on whatever light they have—whether in the evidence of creation or the witness of conscience or whatever remnants of truth may

have been preserved in their particular religion—then God will presumably send whatever additional light is needed to enable belief unto salvation. The Scriptures provide the experience of Cornelius as a case in point (Acts 10). Most men, however, fail to act on whatever light they may have, and God says they are *“without excuse”* (Romans 1:20).

No doubt some receive more light than others and the Bible teaches that there will be degrees of reward in heaven and degrees of punishment in hell (note, for example, Luke 12:42-48), but the one great divide between heaven and hell is one’s response to Christ’s great sacrifice and gift of love. *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”* (John 3:36). ■

ENDNOTES

1. “Harris Poll,” *The Religious and Other Beliefs of Americans 2003*, *Skeptical Inquirer* (Vol. 27, July/August 2003), p. 5.
 2. Promotional Brochure for the Council for Secular Humanism.
- Used with permission from “Acts and Facts.”

The Gravity of Giving

by Ron Jones

Besides Jesus Christ, no person in Scripture inspires generosity in me more than the widow who dropped two copper coins into a trumpet-shaped offering receptacle located near the temple treasury. This nameless widow has been known worldwide in every generation for the past two thousand years for her simple act of generosity. It took the Gospel writers Mark and Luke fewer than one hundred words and only four verses to tell her story. Of the two, Mark offered the expanded version:

“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came

and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on’ ” (Mark 12:41-44).

What strikes me about this scene is that Jesus deliberately placed Himself in a position where He could watch people give. He made it His business to evaluate the gifts people brought. Rather than hanging out by the bagels and chit-chatting with the disciples before the worship service, Jesus sat, according to Mark, “opposite the place where the offerings were put” (v. 41). Apparently He was close

enough to the action to see the wrinkled hand of a widow as she offered her coins. And Jesus still watches what people give to God. He makes *our* giving *His* business.

One scholar suggests that Jesus might have been sitting near the Gate Beautiful. If so, He was sitting between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of Women. It is well documented by Josephus, the trusted Jewish historian, that thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles sat in the forecourt of the Court of Women. They had been placed there for freewill offerings.

Scores of wealthy people came to worship that day and threw large sums of money into those receptacles. Imagine the wealthy pouring bags of coins that clinked and clanked as the money rolled into the receptacles. But a poor widow came to the temple that day as well. Unnoticed by everyone but Jesus, she made her way over to “the trumpets” and dropped in two lepta. Lepta are small copper coins whose value is one-eighth of a penny or one one-hundredth of a denarius, the average daily wage. The amount she gave was small indeed. Her coins would have made little sound as they fell onto the pile of money.

No doubt the widow’s generosity was surprising and may have even widened Jesus’ eyes. The wealthy had paraded one by one. Some of them, probably, had made such a show of throwing their coinage that the sound could have been heard out in the temple courtyard. Yet none of the gifts made by “major donors” impressed the Saviour that day.

Both Mark and Luke give us a *Reader’s Digest* Condensed Version of the account. We have only Jesus’ punch line as He dialogued with His disciples. However, I cannot help wondering whether the expanded conversation found in the white pages of the Bible might have gone something like this:

“Hey guys!” Jesus calls to His disciples. “Come over here. Did you see her?”

Peter looks around. “Who?”

“Did you see the widow over there—the one standing by the trumpets?”

“A widow?” Judas smirked. “Why would

we have any interest in a poor widow?”

“She gave a gift.”

“To our ministry?” Judas asks.

“No, to the temple ministry.”

“So what?” John wants to know. “Doesn’t everybody bring a gift to the temple? Besides, she couldn’t have given that much. Why are you making such a big deal about this widow? Do you even know her name?”

“She gave all she had, John. That is why I am making such a big deal of her gift. And yes, My Father has recorded her name in heaven. While you guys were over enjoying the fellowship at the bagel bar, I’ve been watching people as they gave their gifts. *I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.*”

Please don’t make a doctrine out of my “sanctified imagination”—we can only speculate about the full conversation Jesus might have had with His disciples. What makes the widow’s gift so remarkable is not how much she gave but how much she had left after she gave. This does not mean God wants us to give until we have nothing. It does, however, introduce us to a new way of thinking about our giving.

Putting in “all she had to live on,” the widow gave sacrificially, not knowing how she would afford her next meal. The rich, who “gave out of their wealth,” might have given up a luxury or two, but they sacrificed little compared with what the widow gave.

If you and I were providing financial counsel to the poor widow that day, would we have encouraged her to give away her lepta or to buy food with it? The latter possibility never seems to have crossed Jesus’ mind—which goes to show how much God values simple faith and generosity. ■

—Used with permission of the author

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EMPOWERED WALKING: Giving Legs to God's Love

by Harold Hoehner

The love chapter of the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 13, but the love *book* of the New Testament is Ephesians. The word *love*, found twenty times in this book (in its verb and noun forms), occurs more than twice as many times per thousand words of text in Ephesians than in all the other Pauline letters.

After the prologue (1:1, 2), Paul gives praise for God's planned spiritual benefits (1:3-14), and points out that God provides all the blessings necessary for the spiritual well-being of believers. The three Persons of the Trinity are involved.

FIRST is the selection by the **Father** that we might be holy and blameless before Him in love, having been adopted into God's family (vv. 4-6).

SECOND is the sacrifice of the **Son** providing redemption and wisdom to understand the mystery of God's will to head up all things in Christ (vv. 7-12).

THIRD is the sealing of the promised **Holy Spirit**, which indicates the security of God's ownership of believers (vv. 13, 14).

For Those Who Have Everything

This magnificent eulogy is followed by Paul's prayer for those who have everything, namely, all the spiritual blessings mentioned in verses 3-14. He prays that the believers might know God more intimately, in order to know:

- (1) the hope of His **calling**, which looks to the past.
- (2) the wealth of His glorious **inheritance** in the saints, which looks to the future when this inheritance will be fully realized in Christ's coming for His saints.

- (3) the greatness of God's **power** demonstrated by raising Christ and seating Him in heaven, which looks at the present (vv. 15-23).

Having described God's eternal plan, Paul then demonstrates the *execution* of that plan.

FIRST, God's love is demonstrated by **grace**, saving sinners who deserved God's wrath and seating them in the heavenlies (2:1-10).

SECOND, God's love is shown by **uniting** individual redeemed Jews and Gentiles into one corporate body, the church, Christ's body (2:11-22). Christ is the cornerstone of the foundation, and the Holy Spirit resides in this corporate body of believers.

It's a Mystery

Paul begins to pray for these believers (3:1) but pauses, abruptly digressing to the mystery of Christ (3:2-13) with two emphases:

FIRST, he states his responsibility to **explain the mystery**, unknown in previous generations but now revealed to New Testament apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that is, both believing Jews and Gentiles are fellow heirs of Christ (vv. 2-6). This is a revolutionary concept. Although the Old Testament reveals that Gentiles may be saved, it never reveals that believing Jews and Gentiles would become one entity in Christ.

SECOND, Paul states his responsibility to **proclaim this mystery** to the Gentiles, thus demonstrating through the church God's multifaceted wisdom to rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (vv. 7-13).

After his digression (vv. 2-13), Paul continues the prayer begun in verse 1 by praying that believing Jews and Gentiles might comprehend and experience Christ's love which surpasses knowledge (vv. 14-21), thus maintaining their unity.

It's All Relevant

In Chapters 4 through 6 Paul applies the doctrine he has related in the first three chapters. The major divisions revolve around the "walk" in 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15. The only exception is 6:10-20, where believers are to "stand" against evil, after which he gave his conclusion and a benediction (6:21-24).

FIRST, believers are to **walk in unity** (4:1-16). They are to maintain a lifestyle worthy of their call to salvation and union with other believers by demonstrating humility and gentleness, making every effort to preserve the unity that comes from the Holy Spirit (vv. 1-3). In fact the three persons of the Trinity are an example of such unity (vv. 4-6), the preservation of which is maintained by the bestowal of spiritual gifts to all believers, thereby equipping them for the work of ministry. Consequently the believing body will grow up in Christ as each member lovingly contributes to that growth (vv. 7-16).

SECOND, believers are to **walk in holiness** (4:17-32), not in futility like the Gentiles (vv. 17-19), but as new persons in Christ (vv. 20-32). The truth in Jesus is that they have laid aside the former old person, having been renewed by the spirit of their minds, and having put on the new person created after God's likeness (vv. 20-24). Therefore they are not to lie but are to speak the truth to one another, not to steal to satisfy personal needs but work with their hands to share with those in need, and not to use unwholesome words but to use beneficial words to build each other up. They are to be kind and compassionate to one another, exhibiting the same graciousness that God had already demonstrated

toward them in Christ (vv. 25-32).

THIRD, believers are to **walk in love** (5:1-6). Positively they are to imitate God and to love as Christ did (vv. 1, 2). Negatively they are to abstain from the evil works of unbelievers who will face God's wrath (vv. 3-6).

FOURTH, believers are to **walk in light** (5:7-14). They are not to become involved with evildoers (vv. 7-10) nor with their works (vv. 11-13), but are to seek to have the approval of Christ (v. 14).

FIFTH, believers are to **walk in wisdom** (5:15-6:9). They are to walk wisely by understanding the Lord's will through the filling of the Holy Spirit (vv. 15-21). This walk in wisdom, enabled by the Spirit, is applied to the domestic realm (5:22-6:9): the relationship of wives and husbands (vv. 22-32), the relationship of children and parents (6:1-4), and the relationship of slaves and masters (vv. 5-9).

SIXTH, believers are to **put on the full armor of God** in order to be able to stand against the schemes of evil spiritual forces in the heavens (6:10-20). Offensive advance against the devil is not commanded. Instead believers are to take a defensive stand in order to hold the territory that Christ and His body, the church, have claimed. Such spiritual warfare demands alertness and persistence in prayer for all saints.

Parting Words

In conclusion Paul writes that Tychicus is being sent to them and will provide further information about Paul's circumstances in order to encourage them (6:21-24).

The theme of love, dominant throughout the letter, shows God's love in saving sinners by His grace and shows that this love is to prevail in all relationships between believing Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ, the church. Believers today are responsible to carry forth this mandate in their relationships with fellow believers. ■

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Emotional Unloading

by Daniel Diener

Paul wrote, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after . . .” (Phil. 3:12). He was referring to his relationship with Jesus, but these words aptly describe my feelings on this subject of marriage relationships as well. Having been married for thirteen years, I cannot say I have attained perfection, but I follow after so that I may get hold of that which I am called to be by Jesus Christ. I have not moved beyond failing, but I do leave the past behind me and ever press toward the goal.

It is proper to discuss how husbands and wives should relate to each other, but in truth our interpersonal relationships are a result of our faith in God. Kind words and deeds are the fruit of such a faith. But sadly, even kind deeds can be insincere and acted out just to make ourselves look good or to gain favor. These have no value for our eternal being.

However, if we believe we are made worthy to be part of God’s family by the blood of Christ, then we will put the desires of self on the cross. Self on the cross makes it possible for us to respond to hurts and abuses in a proper way. A selfish act from a husband or a lack of submission from a wife will hurt a partner, but how we respond is a choice we are given. God as the ultimate authority is our only source of power to respond properly. How we respond to difficulties in marriage depends more on turning to God for help than on the seriousness of the circumstances themselves.

In reflecting on our own marriage, I admit it has been a gradual learning process more than certain incidents bringing big changes. Learning to communicate with my wife on an emotional level was probably one of the biggest steps forward. Sure, we could both speak English and

German. We could both read the Bible and discuss spiritual matters and understand each other. But for years I was not aware of my wife’s need to just talk about her struggles or anything else she felt.

If she remarked she was tired in the evening, I took it as a matter of fact. Maybe I said, “Oh.” Or maybe I asked, “Have you been taking your vitamins?” Maybe I told her, “You sit down and let me wash the dishes tonight.” That was okay as far as physical tiredness goes. But she wanted and should have received more than that.

She had given herself in marriage to me, and she needed me to give back to her. I had been outside all day and she longed to discuss the frustrations of child rearing, a sick baby, or the strain of being on call to settle disputes and to teach children to be responsible. She needed to feel that her problems were my problems and that her trials were mine as well. In short, that I was one with her, and that we were in this together.

By my just addressing the facts, she felt distant. Indeed, I made her feel guilty that she even had all these struggles in the first place. Perhaps she wasn’t right with God if she struggled with this and I didn’t. I eventually learned that my role isn’t necessarily to “fix” all the problems. Rather, if I listen and share her burdens, even though the circumstances may not change, the hopelessness does.

True, sometimes a positive change in routine is needed. Or maybe a better method of correcting children comes to light during a discussion. But the emotional unloading is the primary benefit. She no longer feels alone. In fact, she has transferred her burdens to me.

What do I do with those burdens? To remain emotionally detached doesn’t work.

But accepting her burdens will drain me emotionally, too, if I don't in turn find release somewhere. It is easy for a husband to seek relief through work, reading, or maybe fishing trips. But that is not the solution. Faith in God is the only hope, believing Jesus cares for me and shares my burdens, big and small. I must believe He takes my burdens but still assigns me duties to perform. I must trust Him to provide strength to fulfil those duties.

Why couldn't my wife believe this, too, and obtain relief from her burdens without going through me? She does need to believe these truths, and more. If she were a widow, this would be all she has. But if we are married and God made us one, we are not following God's order if we try to avoid sharing. God made the man head of the wife. But Christ is the head of man, and we are to be a reflection of Him. I have not found Christ unwilling to share a burden I bring to Him.

I believe it is common for a woman to crave emotional support and the husband does not realize it. However, recently something happened when this was

reversed for us. Over a period of several weeks I shared with my wife different frustrations I was experiencing at work. She would listen and maybe make a comment (I don't recall that anything was wrong with her comments). Still, as time went on I became hesitant to mention anything more about my work, (except that which was positive). I had gotten the feeling that my wife was thinking, "That's your problem, not mine." I needed someone to confide in but it didn't feel to me as if she really cared very much.

I finally asked her if she would rather I didn't talk about my problems to her. Was she ever surprised! And also a little hurt. She hadn't been saying much simply because she didn't know what to say. (I could identify with that!) I interpreted her silence as indifference. It ended up being a good lesson for both of us.

Believing God and His promises changes hopeless humans into hope-filled beings, ever pressing toward the mark of His calling. ■

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Who Is Jesus Christ?

by Linford L. Berry

Who is Jesus Christ? The answer to this question is eternally important, for it determines our final destiny. In this day of cultural upheaval it may be easy to agree with those who claim that the God of the Christian is the same as the god of the Muslim, the Jew, or even the Hindu. Many of the religions of the world even recognize Jesus, at least as a prophet or historical figure. So what is the difference between the Christian's view of Jesus as Saviour, and the Muslim or Jewish view of Jesus as a great teacher? The question is whether or not

Jesus is completely God or simply a great man. In this essay we will examine the evidence for the deity of Christ. Our primary source for evidence will be God's revelation to us through the Scriptures. We will operate under the premise that God's Word is inspired by God Himself, and inerrant in all its teachings. If Jesus is God, and if He came to this earth in the flesh, walking among men and giving instructions for life, then the claims of other religions' texts or traditions are wrong when they contradict the biblical record.

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The first test of Christ's deity is His eternal existence. Only God can exist without regard to time (Psalm 90:1, 2). If it can be shown that Christ did exist in eternity past, then we can assume that He is indeed God. John 1:1, 2 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (ESV). "His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). In Isaiah 9:6 we read, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (ESV).

Not only was Christ present before time, He also created it. Both time and space are among "all things" which "came into being through him" (John 1:3) (Thiessen 79). The Apostle Paul confirms that Christ was present and active in creation, "For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16 ESV). About this verse Dr. Chafer says, "This is a reasonable pronouncement only to the extent that Christ is God" (24). Likewise Thiessen in his *Systematic Theology* says, "Neither accident nor mere natural law caused the universe to come into existence or keeps the universe in existence and everything in its proper place. This is the work of deity" (93).

Not only was Christ present in eternity past and at creation; He was also at work throughout the Old Testament period. His identification with the Old Testament Jehovah is further evidence of His deity. "Things that are in the Old Testament said of Jehovah are in the New Testament said of Christ. He was creator, was seen by Isaiah, was to be preceded by a forerunner, disciplines His people, is to be regarded as holy, is to lead captivity captive, and is to be the object of faith" (Thiessen 93). In many prophetic messages the Messiah is said

to be Jehovah. Chafer writes, "Though the finite mind hesitates for want of ability to understand that which is declared, there are many passages of unquestioned interpretation in which the Messiah is said to be Jehovah. In fact, this is true in the majority of Messianic predictions" (28).

The second test of Christ's deity is His self-perception or self-consciousness. What did He believe and teach about Himself? We must admit that Jesus never defined His place in the Trinity in technical theological language. However, He did make many statements about Himself that would not only be inappropriate, but outright blasphemous if He was not really God (Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 700-701). In John 8:57, 58 Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the "I Am," the very words by which God had revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. For this reason the Jews were about to stone Him. They picked up stones again when he said in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one." The references Jesus made to God as His Father, were very remarkable. Dr. James Boice in *Foundations of the Christian Faith* says, "That was by no means a common form of expression in Judaism (as it is in the English language). No Jew ever spoke of God directly as 'my Father.' Yet that was the form of address Jesus used, particularly in His prayers. In fact it was His only mode of addressing God. It referred to His relationship to the Father exclusively" (274). The prerogatives Jesus claimed are also significant. For example, he claimed to forgive sins. When the paralyzed man was let down through the roof in Mark 2:5, Jesus said, "My son, your sins are forgiven." In verse 7 the scribes condemned Jesus: "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Erickson goes on to say, "Here was an excellent opportunity for Jesus to clarify the situation, to correct the scribes if they had misunderstood

the import of His words. This He did not do" (*Christian Theology* 701). Jesus also claimed to have the power and responsibility to judge the world (Matthew 25:31-46). Certainly, this is a power only God has.

Why would someone make claims like this about themselves if it were not true? Many people today are saying that Jesus was a good man or a good prophet. The people of Jerusalem also said on one occasion, "He is a good man" (John 7:12). If Jesus wasn't God then He couldn't possibly have been a good man, because he would have been lying about His identity. C. S. Lewis explains this quite well in his famous piece from the book *Mere Christianity*:

I am trying here to prevent anyone from saying the foolish things that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claims to be God." That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of thing Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would rather be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He didn't intend to (55, 56).

Either Jesus is God or He is a liar. But why would a man lie about something in order to die a cruel death by crucifixion?

One other indicator of how Jesus viewed Himself is in His use of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the way He made His own proclamations of truth. In a number of cases Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, [. . .] but I say to you [. . .]" (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28). He gives His words the same authority as the Scriptures. The prophets when speaking for God, would begin by saying,

"The Word of the Lord came to me," but Jesus begins with, "I say unto you" (Erickson, *Christian Theology* 704).

The third test of the deity of Jesus is the witness of the apostles. In John 20:28 the disciple Thomas, after he had seen the wounds in Jesus' body declares, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus did accept worship by His disciples. This is an important distinction to make. Some groups claim that Jesus is just an angel of God. If that is the case then Jesus would have been blasphemous in taking glory to Himself as God. It is clear in Scripture that angels are not to be worshiped (Colossians 2:18). If Jesus were an angel, He should have corrected Thomas for his declaration of deity.

In John 20:31, the apostle explains his purpose in writing his book, "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (ESV). The Apostle Paul also gives a lofty description of the deity of Christ in Colossians 1:15-20. In Romans 9:5 we have a very clear statement about the deity of Christ: "To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen" (ESV). Why would these apostles risk their own lives by proclaiming the deity of Christ if it were not true? After all this was not a very popular teaching in the monotheistic culture of Judaism. They were either telling the truth or they were all madmen and liars.

Along with the apostles' witness we must not forget the witness of the many miracles of Jesus. Most of the miracles on their own would not suffice to prove the deity of Christ. However, the overwhelming evidence of multiple miracles, some even showing Jesus' power over life itself, should add some weight to the argument for deity.

The fourth and most important test of deity is the bodily resurrection of Christ. Millard Erickson in his book *The Word*

Became Flesh introduces it this way:

Are there characteristics of the person and work of Jesus that set Him apart from the leaders of other great world religions, and, for that matter, from other giants of the Judeo-Christian faith, both in biblical times and since then? It is our contention that such is indeed the case. One of the most significant, probably the most significant of Jesus' distinctive marks, is His resurrection (482).

Erickson then goes on to cite the historical evidences of the empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Lord (487-499). No other religion worships a leader whose body is not in a grave somewhere. No one other than God Himself can leave the tomb empty and then appear in a glorified body. If we accept that what the Bible says is true, then we must accept the evidence that Jesus has risen.

The doctrine of the resurrection is fundamentally important to the Christian faith. Not only does it attest to the deity of Christ, but also to the very hope of the gospel itself. Without this proof of the deity of Christ we would be "of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). Paul sums it all up when he says that while Christ's death reconciled us to God, His present life perfects our salvation (Rom. 5:8-10). "The resurrection is essential to the application of the salvation provided for in the death of Jesus Christ" (Thiessen 244).

Why does it matter whether or not Jesus is God? The most important reason is, that if He is not God, then His death would not have been sufficient to pay the price for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Only God could pay such an infinite price (Romans 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21). Salvation is only available through faith in Jesus Christ. His deity is the reason why He is the only way of salvation. That is why He proclaimed in John 14:6, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (ESV).

Although we have been treating this subject rather philosophically, the real impact of this doctrine should come home to our hearts. If what we know about the deity of Christ remains just head knowledge, we will have just a religion, not unlike many of the other religions of our day. John 14:9 says, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" and verse 12, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father" (ESV). When we realize that because of His deity, He has a claim on our lives, we must fall at His feet in repentance and obedience. Christ has come to bridge the gap between God and man. He is calling all men everywhere to repentance, obedience, and worship.

What is your answer to the question "Who is the Christ"? The answer is the difference between eternal life and eternal damnation. If Christ is not God then He is a liar and we have no hope of salvation or eternal reward. But, if He is who He says He is, and who the apostles say He is, then we have a responsibility to proclaim Him as *the Truth*, *the Life*, and *the only Way* of salvation. Praise the Lord! ■

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Israel—Nation of Destiny

by Lloyd Hartzler

When we think of the Jew or of Israel, we could start in Genesis and go through the rest of the Bible. We are talking about the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Israel.

Why have the Jews endured what no other people have and still maintained their identity? Someone has said, “The Jew is a fact—the most stubborn fact of history.”

We talk about the Dutch, Chinese, Irish, and others, and we say, “Where did they come from?” We may not be able to answer that. But if we talk about the Jew and his origin, we know the answer. If any of these other nationalities come to America, before too long they are simply Americans. But the Jew in America continues to be the American Jew. There is a reason for this.

A CHOSEN PEOPLE AND A PROMISED LAND

In Genesis 12:1-3 the Lord tells Abram to get out of his country unto a land He will show him, and the Lord will make a great nation and name for Abram. “*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*” (Gen. 12:2, 3). What is the purpose of this special God-called people and nation? “*The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; . . . But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers*” (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). (See also Deuteronomy 4:7, 8.) This is what God says. Yet a lot of people today would like to trample the Jew underfoot and say God is finished with Israel.

Mankind became evil and needed redemption. How did God bring this to

pass? God called a man, Abram, and made of Abram a nation. And from that nation He brought forth the Messiah for all nations and for all people.

Why study so much about the Jew? In everything that my heavenly Father is interested, I am interested. Since our Lord Jesus came from these people, we are that much more interested in them.

“*For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever*” (2 Samuel 7:24). So we see, first of all, they are chosen of God “*forever*.” Secondly, when God promised to make a nation, He also promised a land for that nation. In Genesis 12:7, God told Abram, “*Unto thy seed will I give this land*.” (See also Genesis 13:14-17.) “*And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession*” (Genesis 17:8). Here it seems they received a title deed to the land.

UNCONDITIONAL COVENANTS

“*He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance*” (Psalm 105:8-11).

These promises in relation to Israel and their future have never been revoked. Some people say, “When God makes a covenant with man it is conditional. That is, if man continues to obey God and keeps his part of the covenant, God will carry it out. If man does not, then the covenant is broken.” That is true of most covenants, but not all of them. The first covenant God made with man of the bow in the sky was absolutely unconditional. Man has been disobedient and sinful, turning from God, and getting worse and

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worse. Still we see that rainbow, and we know God will not destroy the earth with water because of His unconditional covenant.

In Psalm 89:29-37 we have another covenant that is unconditional. This has to do with a people, even when they go astray. Here God says if they are unfaithful He will punish them, but *"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips"* (verse 34). God remains faithful to His covenant, even though the Jew did not.

There are nearly one hundred references in the Pentateuch alone, concerning the truth that God has given the land of Palestine to His people, Israel.

A STRATEGIC LOCATION

Geographically, Palestine is at the juncture of three continents. It seems God set the Jews in Palestine at the hub of the nations. *"When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam [when He divided all mankind], he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance"* (Deut. 32:8, 9).

Someone has said, Palestine was the nerve center in the days of Abraham, the truth center in the days of Moses and the prophets, the salvation center through the coming of Christ, the storm center through the redemption of Christ and many centuries following, and still is today. It is to be the peace center in the Messianic Kingdom, and the glory center in the new Universe.

Sometimes we read in the Scriptures about the north country or a king of the south or something coming from the west. North, east, west, and south from where? The earth is round. We have our answer in Ezekiel 5:5. *"Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her."*

THE SCATTERING OF ISRAEL

Why did Palestine not belong to the Jew for nearly 2500 years? In Deuteronomy 28:1-14 the Lord promised many, many

blessings, if the Israelites would be faithful to Him. But then from verse 15 to the end of the chapter we read of curses upon the Jewish people, if they were to be disobedient. Someone has said Israel's history for 1900 years is a history of a people without a land, without a home, and without freedom. I cannot think of any people on the face of the earth that survived anything near this who are still a people today.

There have been three dispersions of Israel: the first to Egypt, the second to Assyria and Babylon, and the third as Jesus predicted in Luke 21:24. *"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations."* Numbers 23:9 says, *"The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."* In other words, they have never lost their identity as Jews, even though they were driven from their homeland! We may have friends among the Jews. They are all in this scattering in other nations for hundreds of years, and they still retain their identity.

THE RE-GATHERING OF ISRAEL

*"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king: . . . **Afterward** shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in **the latter days**"* (Hosea 3:4, 5). God told Abraham how long the people would dwell in Egypt, and God told Jeremiah and the people how long they would remain in Babylon, and they came back on scheduled time. But we are not told how long the third dispersion will last, except that the last part of Hosea 3:5 says *"in the latter days."* Are we now in the latter days? This subject is very timely. We shall consider it.

Leviticus 26 has much of the same message as Deuteronomy 28. Leviticus 26:42 says, *"Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land."* God has not forgotten the land.

NATIONAL ISRAEL IS STILL ISRAEL

Who is Israel today? In Romans 9:3-5

Paul is talking about the children of Israel according to the flesh—physical descendants of Abraham. Verses 4 and 5 tell who the Israelites are. They are Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh." And in Philippians 3 Paul says he is an Israelite and a Pharisee.

In John 8:37 Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, "I know that ye are Abraham's seed." But then in verse 39 Jesus said to them, "If ye were Abraham's children . . ." How do we harmonize these two statements? In the first, Jesus is speaking of natural Israel, and in the second, He is speaking of spiritual Israel. Spiritual Israel does not nullify natural Israel. The fact that people believe as Abraham believed does not nullify the promises made to natural Israel.

All who believe the Gospel are Abraham's children by faith. "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:6, 7). Does this do away with the Jew according to the flesh? Never. Thank God we can all be one in Christ Jesus through faith. But that does not do away with natural Israel. "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1 Cor. 10:32). Here are three distinct groups of people—unsaved Jews, unsaved Gentiles, and the church which is made up of regenerated Jews and Gentiles.

"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night: . . . If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever" (Jeremiah 31:35, 36). Since the sun and moon and stars continue to shine, how can we say God has cast them off? (See also Isaiah 49:14-16.)

Israel shall not be cast off forever. We can say this on the authority of the Word of God. We realize some people say God is finished with the Jew. They say everything is fulfilled in Christ, and now the church as spiritual Israel takes the place in God's

program for natural Israel. In doing so they apply the curses pronounced against Israel in the Old Testament to Israel, and the blessings promised to Israel to the church. Do we really have the liberty to interpret Scripture that way?

THE TIME OF THE LAST RE-GATHERING

We will not name a date or a year, but look at the Scriptures. "And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds . . . and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed" (Jeremiah 23:3, 4). This would seem to be the last re-gathering because Israel still fears today. Now notice the time. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper. . . . In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely." (Jeremiah 23:5, 6a). This is the time they shall fear no more—when the King reigns and prospers. This gives us a little idea when the last re-gathering is. See also Jeremiah 31:8-12; Jeremiah 32:37-41; and Amos 9:11-15. Again and again He says, "In the latter days ye shall consider it."

THE FACT OF THE LAST RE-GATHERING

What about the Jew today? In 1838 there were only eleven thousand Jews in Palestine. In 1872 there were still only twenty-one thousand Jews there. In 1914 there were one hundred thousand Jews in Palestine, but they were reduced by the Turks in 1917 to fifty-five thousand. By 1923 there were one hundred thousand there again. In 1935 there were three hundred seventy-five thousand Jews in Palestine. By 1947, there were six hundred twenty-five thousand in Palestine. By November 1960 there were two million Jews in Palestine. In February 1963, there were two million, two hundred thousand Jews in Palestine. Today, in 2003, Israel's Jewish population is over 5 million people.

In 1917, the Balfour Declaration by Great Britain promised Palestine to the Jew as a homeland. After World War I

Palestine was assigned to Great Britain. But Great Britain failed to keep its promise to give the land to the Jews. Therefore Great Britain asked the United Nations to be relieved of that responsibility and the termination date was set for May 15, 1948. We all know what happened that night. Israel, for the first time in twenty-five hundred years, became a nation.

For some years following that, the old city of Jerusalem was still in the hands of the Gentiles, but in more recent years that has changed.

"I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 43:5, 6). Here is a command going out from Almighty God concerning Jacob and Israel (Isaiah 43:1, 3).

from the east

To the east of Palestine is the country of Iraq, which includes ancient Babylon. You might say this was the first Jewish community of the east. It has been reliably reported that in 1948 there were 135,000 Jews in Iraq. These Jews, when Israel became a nation, petitioned their government in Iraq to let them go to Palestine. Of course, Iraq being an Arab nation did not want the Jews to go. So the Iraqi government immediately claimed all the assets of the Jews. The Jews had great wealth. Then they were given permission to go if they would renounce their Iraqi citizenship and promise never to come back.

I say that is a miracle! A giant airlift was organized to take them to Palestine. When these Jews came to the airport to fly to Palestine, in addition to having their property and bank accounts taken away, they were searched at the airport. Anything of value (pens, watches, overcoats, etc.) was taken from them. They flew to Palestine practically penniless and they arrived at the rate of almost 1,000 a day for months. I am not saying this is the full fulfillment of this Scripture, but it's thrilling to me to realize

I live in a day when these things happen. He said, *"I will bring thy seed from the east."* I had to ask myself if this is the end of Babylonian captivity.

from the west

The Lord says, *"I will gather them from the west."* The word *gather* in Hebrew does not mean a wholesale bringing back, but rather it means collecting or assembling a few from here and there.

The United States (the power from the west) is still the largest Jewish center in the world. In 2001 there were approximately 5.7 million Jews in the U.S. But the ingathering from the U.S. to Palestine has not been in proportion to the number of Jews that are in the states. In fact, in the first 4 1/2 years of the new state of Israel, the U.S. contributed only 6/10 of 1% of all those Jews going to Palestine. Why is this? I don't know all the reasons; I suggest a few.

The Jew considers the U.S. a very comfortable place to live; many of them are satisfied here. Secondly, with those thousands of immigrants coming into Palestine with practically nothing, where do they get the money to integrate these immigrants into the Jewish economy? In the first four and one-half years of Israel's statehood, 707,650 Jews came into Palestine. It was reported it cost \$3,000.00 to integrate each one of those Jewish persons into the land of Israel. That makes over two billion dollars. Where did that money come from? How did God meet the need? Our daily paper, back in 1962, reported: "The American United Jewish Appeal has been credited with raising one billion, four hundred thirty-five million to aid Israel during the last twenty-four years." I think that's one reason God didn't take them all back from America right away.

from the north

Then, God says, *"I will say to the north, Give up."* That is an imperative. "Give Me my people!" The survivors from the northwest, Hitler's countries, came, but in Russia in 1981 there were yet something like

2,300,000 Jews. In 2001 the Jewish population of the countries which comprised the former USSR was estimated at 462,000. This was due largely to Jewish immigration to Israel and the United States in a further fulfillment of divine prophecy.

from the south

Then He says to the south, “*Keep not back.*” The Hebrew word for south is *Yemen* which in English is called *Yemen*, a little country in the southwest part of the Arabian Peninsula. We are not saying that is all it means, but *Yemen* at least has to be included because of its location and because of the Hebrew word.

It is not known definitely when the Jews first went into this little country, but over the years they were treated as underclass citizens. Life was very difficult for them; there was a lot of poverty and hardship. They hardly had enough to eat. It has been reported that when the average adult came to Palestine from *Yemen* he weighed 75-80 pounds.

No Jew was allowed to leave that country for years, but they clung to their Torah, their Pentateuch. Because of the shortage of scrolls and printing presses they would crowd around one scroll and read, and they learned to read upside down as well. They were so anxious to read the Word of the Lord. They knew they were in exile, and they longed for the Messiah to come.

Then something suddenly stirred in them. In about 1948 or 1949, from over 800 places in the country of *Yemen*, Jews began to move, walking out over the hot desert sands toward the seaport of *Aden*. They did not know exactly why or what would happen and many died along the way. I believe God put a desire in them to go; and God moved the king to permit them to go.

Israel heard of the mass movement in *Yemen*. Israeli officials organized an airlift to bring these Jewish wanderers home to Israel. Forty-eight thousand Jews were flown from *Yemen* to Israel by September,

1950. Very few Jews were left in that land. Again, I am not saying this is the only fulfillment. What other people can go to a land where they have never lived and say, “I am going home”?

RESULTS OF THE RE-GATHERING

In 1962 there were already 460 synagogues in Jerusalem. The Hebrew language has been revived. The land has been revived. “*But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel*” (Ezekiel 36:8). See also Ezekiel 36:9, 30, 34, 35 and Isaiah 27:6.

Look on the map and see how small that country is. The Bible says it shall fill the face of the world with fruit (Isaiah 27:6). Production of fruit rose by 51% in the four years preceding May, 1964. Some years ago the Israelis were exporting cotton by the ton and textile products, potash, citrus fruit, diamonds, etc. Swamplands have been drained and millions of trees have been planted including many citrus groves. Already in 1963, twelve million cases of citrus fruit were exported from Israel.

On June 1, 1967, the premier of Iraq proclaimed on the radio these words: “We are resolved, determined, and united to achieve our clear aim of wiping Israel off the map. We shall meet in Tel Aviv and Haifa.” The Six Day War followed. Israel destroyed the armies, opened navigation to African countries, and unified Jerusalem. You say, “What does all this have to do with their salvation and the end time?” I do not know how much more going back to Palestine will take place before the Lord’s return. I am thoroughly convinced that what has happened since 1948 is at least partial fulfillment of Scripture. God has something more than just the land for Israel.

“*And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east*” (Zechariah 14:4). I believe that is when the Jews are going to look on Him whom they have pierced.

“*For if the casting away of them [the Jew] be the reconciling of the world, [that*

is, the Gentile has the opportunity to come in also] *what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*" (Romans 11:15). Part of Romans 11:25, 26 reads, "*that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved.*" Not those of Israel who have already died, but those who are living when this time comes will be saved.

"There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness [from whom?] from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take

away their sins" (Romans 11:26, 27). Is God finished with Israel? According to these Scriptures it would appear He is not finished with Israel.

The Jew needs the Gospel today. Thank God for those of Israel who have turned to the Lord for salvation. As a nation, however, they are still rejecting the Lord Jesus. We do not know when "*all Israel shall be saved,*" except that it will happen when Jesus returns with His saints in power and great glory, and they will look on Him whom they have pierced. ■

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A LOOK AT CLASSICAL EDUCATION

by Jennifer Miller

We read headlines almost daily which cite the woes of our educational system in America, and the statistics aren't pretty: According to "The Nation's Report Card," in the year 2000 only 32 percent of fourth grade students were reading at a proficient level. ABC News reported that only 23 percent of eighth graders tested proficient in math. A U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee issued a report in 1998 stating that American 12th graders came in 19th out of 21 countries in mathematics, placed last in advanced mathematics and did just as poorly in physics in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study.

What has gone wrong? We have blamed the breakdown of families, the removal of prayer from schools, television and video games, illegal drugs, governmental red tape, and the stranglehold of teachers' unions. Certainly all of these issues have contributed to the unhealthy direction that our educational system has taken—many of us may look back with a certain amount of nostalgia to the innocent days of our schooling, and we may feel that the system began to derail in the sixties.

In the last 20 years, some dissatisfied parents and educators have made a compelling case for going further back and digging deeper to find the root of the problem.

They argue that the system coasted for many years on the educational foundation of an earlier time. Some argue that our current educational system, based on the philosophy of our great American experiment in democracy, is inherently flawed because of the system's basic beliefs in the goodness and equality of humans. They would take us back to the educational roots of our western culture, an approach that has become known as "classical education."

What is classical education? Differing philosophies within the movement abound, but some shared components include an early exposure to the classic writings in order to take part in what is termed "The Great Conversation" (the progression of ideas through history, as expressed through literature), the study of history chronologically, the avoidance of textbooks in favor of "real" books and the study of Latin. Christian classical educators also place great emphasis on developing an appropriate Christian "world-view" through which everything is examined.

Classical education, as defined by the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS), is based on the ancient Greek mode of education, which was the foundation of the educational system of the Middle Ages. At its core is the acquisition of the tools of learning as guided by the

natural developmental stages of children. The “*trivium*,” as the system is called, moves through three stages, which roughly correspond to the elementary years, junior high years, and high school years. British writer Dorothy Sayers articulated the need for educational reform and proposed the classical education model in her 1947 article, “The Lost Tools of Learning.” Others, such as Douglas Wilson, have followed her proposed model, pioneering in the field of education to create working models of the classical education philosophy.

A Brief Summary of the Classical Education Model

The **grammar stage** (referred to as the *poll-parrot* stage by Dorothy Sayers) generally corresponds to the elementary school years when children naturally love to chant, memorize, and recite. In this stage they are given vast amounts of information to memorize—presidents, mountain ranges, multiplication tables, and Scripture.

The **dialectic stage** (also called the *logic* or *pert* stage) capitalizes on the middle-school-aged child’s natural tendency to question and argue. In this stage formal logic is introduced and the student begins examining the relationships between all of the facts acquired up to this point. He begins asking “how” and “why” and develops a greater understanding of the connections between facts. The goal is to equip the child with thinking and language skills.

The **rhetoric** (or *poetic*) stage is entered when the student is about fifteen. In this phase the student hones his verbal and written skills and learns to express himself effectively and persuasively.

As mentioned, one key component of classical education is the teaching of Latin, usually beginning in about the third grade. Proponents cite many reasons for this. According to Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer, authors of *The Well Trained Mind*, studying Latin trains the mind to think in an orderly way because it is the most systematic language around. Latin improves English skills: both the English grammatical structure and about 50 percent of the English vocabulary are based on Latin. Studying Latin also prepares the child for the study of

other foreign languages: French, Spanish, and Italian are all related to Latin.

Paul Kelly, a former classical Christian schoolteacher in the Boston area, is the founder of “Thought Life,” an educational organization offering classes in Latin, Greek, logic, and philosophy. He agrees with other classical educators about the importance of teaching Latin. “Because it’s not a spoken language, everything has to be worked out on paper. It forces students to work out the grammatical concepts and develops their reasoning and logical skills.”

In 1991, roughly ten years after classical education pioneer Douglas Wilson founded Logos School in Moscow, Idaho, as a result of reading Dorothy Sayers’ article, he wrote a book titled *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*. The book created such a high level of interest from others who wanted to start Christian schools with a classical approach that he founded the Association of Classical and Christian Schools. Now, some ten years later, the organization is about 100 schools strong, including many home schools. The primary purpose of the organization is to “promote, establish and equip schools committed to a classical approach to education in the light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.” The organization seeks to provide accountability for member schools to “ensure that our cultural heritage is not lost again” (from the ACCS website).

Karen Wells, a homeschool teacher from Ohio who has been using the classical approach for two years, views her teaching role as that of laying a foundation, then adding layers over time. She does not use textbooks for most subjects, teaches history chronologically, and emphasizes the *trivium* as the basis for every subject. “In classical education, subjects were not segregated like they are today. We have really dissected subjects.”

Any philosophy or movement has its detractors. Critics feel that the approach is xenophobic or ethnocentric, placing too much emphasis on the superiority of western culture. In ACCS’s mission statement, they respond, “We recognize that Christ was born in the reign of Caesar Augustus, and that Christianity took root and grew

to maturity in the West. For this reason, we believe that we must teach certain subjects so that they are understood and appreciated. This includes ancient history, languages, and culture, studied in the light of biblical Christianity and its impact on western culture. We recognize our cultural heritage as a gift from God, but in seeking to restore that heritage we by no means are intending to idolize it. Therefore, we ground all that we seek to do upon the revelation of God.”

Another valid criticism is the rigor and discipline required. Shouldn't school be more fun? Teacher Paul Kelly experienced firsthand the problems of unmotivated students trying to tackle the rigors of Greek and Latin. “The classes take a lot of work to make interesting,” he admits. Regarding classical education's emphasis on the “Great Books” in order to take part in the “Great Conversation,” Sonlight Curriculum, a supplier of homeschool materials, quotes one mom as saying, “The Great Books will be a drudgery to anyone not yet taken captive by the Great Questions, the Big Ideas. If you are not yet given to pondering the meaning of life it is doubtful you are ready to read the ponderings of others.” Classical educators would argue that a good teacher will pass on the love of learning to his students. “A good teacher is one who loves God, loves her students, loves her subject matter and communicates all three loves effectively to her students,” writes Douglas Wilson in his book *The Case for Classical Education*. The Great Books question? Susan Wise Bauer suggests in her book *The Well-Trained Mind* that young children begin with picture books of classics: “A first grader listens to you read the story of the *Iliad* from [a picture-book version]. Four years later the fifth grader reads . . . a middle grade adaptation . . . four more years go by, and the ninth grader—faced with Homer's *Iliad* itself—plunges right in, undaunted. She already knows the story. What's to be scared of?” Douglas Wilson states in his book, *The Padeia of God*, “The entertainment model of education wants the students to enjoy themselves; the older classical model wants students to be disciplined so that they come

to enjoy their work.”

Even if we are convinced that some arguments in favor of the classical approach have merit, most of us probably won't begin studying Latin or tackling Homer with our children tomorrow. But we can learn some things to equip us to be better parents and educators (after all, parents are educators by definition). As a parent, I want to effectively:

- equip my children to be clear, logical thinkers, to be able to express their Christian worldview and beliefs in an effective and winning way.
- develop in them a love for books so that they will be life-long learners.
- equip them with the tools to learn on their own, instead of just filling them with facts.
- develop in them an appreciation for their western heritage, while at the same time recognizing that God is Lord of the whole world and loves all people and cultures.
- pay attention to my children's natural developmental stages in order to maximize their learning potential.

Dorothy Sayers, whose article was the inspiration behind much of the classical education movement, wrote in 1947:

For we let our young men and women go out unarmed in a day when armor was never so necessary. By teaching them to read, we have left them at the mercy of the printed word. By the invention of film and the radio, we have made certain that no aversion to reading shall secure them from the incessant battery of words, words, words. They do not know what the words mean; they do not know how to ward them off or blunt their edge or fling them back; they are a prey to words in their emotions instead of being the masters of them in their intellects . . . we have lost the tools of learning, and in their absence can only make a piecemeal job of it.

Many are working diligently at recovering those lost tools. The effects on our culture could be significant as scores of young people take their places in society as critical thinkers who are compelling and articulate ambassadors for Christ. ■

—Taken from *Brotherhood Beacon*

When Is My Business Big Enough?

by Harold Sensenig

God's plan is for mankind to earn a living. Early in man's history God said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." To do this, our business or job must bring in sufficient money to provide for our needs. In fact, the failure of an able-bodied person to put forth effort to do so is a breach of Christian duty.

The Scripture is also clear that not everyone will be blest with an equal amount of material goods. We are to work with our hands "the thing which is good, that [we] may have to give to him that needeth." It is normal for some to have more than they need, and some, at times, will be in need. We also learn from the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 that the ability to manage what we have varies among individuals.

The two basic methods of earning a living are having a business in which we sell products or services, or selling our time and skills to someone who does. Both of these methods are acceptable for the Christian. Neither is more righteous than the other. Because of the varying degrees of personal interest and managing ability, it is better for some to work for another: having one's own business is not for everyone.

For those who have their own business, the question remains: When is my business big enough? In light of varying managing abilities among those who have their own businesses, the answer to this question will not be the same for everyone. Neither will this article necessarily answer this question for everyone. We believe that by being sensitive to the Holy Spirit and open to advice from the brotherhood, answers can be found.

We must stay in control of our business and not allow our business, regardless of its size, to control us. Our attitude toward ourselves and our possessions speaks more about our heart condition than about the size of our business. The rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully was

judged for desiring to lavish his wealth on himself, not for the greater barns that he thought to build (Luke 12).

When we contemplate expanding our business, we must make careful evaluations. What is our motive for desiring to increase? Are we attempting to create a life of ease? Will enlarging my business make me more or less available for the Lord's work? Will increasing make it more difficult to maintain proper priorities? Will family life suffer because of it? Will our business consume our thoughts too much of the time? We believe that, after careful and prayerful evaluation, business growth can take place without increased spiritual danger.

What are some legitimate reasons for expanding?

1. To generate more income. If our present income makes it difficult to meet our financial obligations, we may need to expand in order to generate more income.

2. To provide more work for the family. As children grow and become capable of more work, parents may elect to increase the business in order to employ their children at home. A potential snare exists when expanding for this reason. Parents should give some thought of what to do when the children leave home. Will the parents be left with something they cannot handle?

3. To provide jobs for others beyond the family. This can be legitimate when the goal is to provide a wholesome work environment for fellow believers.

4. To meet customer demand. This could be viewed as a natural growth of a business that provides a service or manufactured products. As the demand increases, we increase the output. The owner of such a business must carefully evaluate the business from other angles and not allow demand to be the only factor that governs expansion. Helping someone else to start a similar business to help meet demand

would be an alternative to becoming too large.

5. To become more efficient. Bigger is not always better. However, at times, a modest expansion can greatly improve efficiency, which, in turn, has a direct bearing on the profitability of a business.

While legitimate reasons for expansion exist, dangers also accompany it. What are some dangers associated with increasing?

1. One great danger in expanding is a shift in our priorities. If expanding demands more of our time, it will become increasingly tempting to shortchange more important matters.

2. Sometimes expansion is inviting just to keep up with what others are doing. To increase on such a premise is dangerous both financially and spiritually.

3. It is dangerous to expand in order to compensate for poor spending habits. Perhaps fixing the spending problem will make available the additional working capital that we feel we need.

4. We must carefully guard our giving practice when expanding. If additional debt is incurred to expand, we must not yield to the temptation to limit our giving in order to pay off debt sooner. If we increase our business to increase working capital, we should be able to give more,

not less.

5. Our business is big enough when to expand would necessitate hiring help that would expose us and our families to unwholesome influences. We have no Bible commands to have a certain size business, but we do have Scriptural direction to bring our families up for the Lord.

6. Another danger of expanding is the possibility that greed or covetousness is the motivating factor. We must be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and be honest with ourselves in this area because "he that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house" (Prov. 15:27).

Upon entering the Promised Land, Israel was warned that, when they experience material prosperity, they beware lest "thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God" (Deut. 8:14). Earning a living, even apart from expansion, carries with it some dangers. It is easy to become so earthbound that we fail to live as strangers and pilgrims. May we, through God's help, conduct our business in such a manner that we declare plainly that we seek a better country. Then God will not be ashamed to be called our God. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Eastern Mennonite Testimony*

Separated Unto God

by J. C. Wenger



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