

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."

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

Vol. LXXVI **JULY 2008** **No. 7**

THE 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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS — Sword and Trumpet, Inc.
Raymond P Brunk, Chairman
John J. Forry, Vice Chairman
Stanley Good, Secretary/Treasurer
David L. Burkholder
Paul M. Emerson
Lawrence Garman
James Hess, Honorary

Luke L. Horst, Honorary
Lee H. Kanagy, Honorary
Darin Shank
Marcus Yoder

EDITOR IN CHIEF — Paul M. Emerson
SS LESSONS — David L. Burkholder
NEWSLINES — Hans Mast
BEGINNING ISSUES — John Mullett
SONG OF THE MONTH — Douglas A. Byler
PERSON OF THE MONTH — Gail L. Emerson
CIRCULATION — Ethel Rhodes
COVER DESIGN — Shirley Byler

IN THIS ISSUE

1. Person of the Month: Eli S. Hallman	1
2. The Impromptu Tongue.	2
3. From the Editor's Desk:	
Thoughts on Hypocrisy	4
4. The Sunday School Lessons	6
5. Newslines	10
6. "Purpose Driven" or Patent Distortion?	13
7. Sermon of the Month:	
How to Go from Good to Great in God's Eyes	16
8. Beginning Issues:	
The Ark: Comfortable Cruise or Refugee Camp	19
9. Song of the Month: "Like a River Glorious"	20
10. Malingerers, Morons, and Morally Worthless	22
11. Counseling From the Word:	
The Wounded Healer	25
12. Simulated Holiness	27
13. How to Leave a Brotherhood	29
14. The Christian and His Country	31

THE SWORD AND TRUMPET (USPS 615-540) is published monthly by *The Sword and Trumpet, Inc.*, P. O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, Va. 22803-0575. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisonburg, Va. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 1 year US \$15.00, 2 years US \$25.00. Bulk rates on the basis of US \$12.00 per year. Add US \$3.00 per year for countries outside USA and Canada. Telephone (540) 867-9419 or 867-9444. FAX (540) 867-9419. E-mail address: swandtrump@verizon.net.

king.” We are to give the king due respect as God’s minister (steward) over the country. For this reason, too, we ought not to make fun or light of his person. This goes for good kings and for bad kings. Peter wrote during the time of the despotic Roman emperors. In this country, we have received many benefits and privileges from the government. We are especially thankful for the generally peaceful environment and the freedom we have to witness for our Lord. We honor God by respecting His order of civil administration.

Secondly, the Christian will **obey the laws** (as far as he conscientiously is able). Titus 3:1 says: “*Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey the magistrates, to be ready to every good work.*” Again, we say, we should obey the laws as far as we conscientiously are able. When pushed to the place where man’s law comes into conflict with God’s law, we are instructed in Acts 5:29: “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*” Because the Christian functions on a higher plane than the civil government, conflicts will arise (2 Tim. 3:12). The Christian, in these, is careful to be respectful and courteous—while still insisting that he must be obedient to God rather than men. The Christian will submit to the State in all matters which do not violate God’s Holy Word.

Thirdly, the Christian **will pay his taxes**. Jesus said, “*Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s*” (Matthew 22:19-21). There is no better reason to pay taxes than to note in this Scripture that Jesus sanctioned their payment. The payment of taxes is further explained in Romans 13:6 as an obligation because the rulers are God’s ministers (stewards) looking after God’s assignment of maintaining the order. Real respect for the rulers (and, subsequently, for GOD) is reflected in an honest reporting and payment of taxes due.

Fourthly (but not the least), the Christian will **pray for the rulers**. “*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*” (1 Timothy 2:1, 2). Prayer for the government is one of the

Christian’s primary responsibilities to the State. As the Scripture indicates, our prayers should be filled with thanksgiving. We should pray for peace—and this not for our own comfort. We think of the freedom to spread the Gospel. Our prayers rise to God that His Will might be accomplished and that the borders of His kingdom might be extended. We pray for the responsible actions of the government. The civil authorities are conferring on many issues of great importance—great issues, such as, abortion, gay marriage, war and peace, and many others. We believe that prayer can change things and can even move nations. We believe, though, that we must pray rightly! Therefore, in meekness and in all reverence, we ask God—for His sake and to accomplish His will—to undertake in the actions and plans of the civil leadership. We pray that the leaders would make all their plans and laws **IN THE FEAR OF GOD**. We pray that in the midst of their duties, the leaders would be moved to a **GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS** and that they would find peace for their souls in Christ Jesus!

Beloved! **I have met Jesus! . . . And this world is not my home!**

This world is not my home, I’m just a passing thru:

My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue;

The angels beckon me from heaven’s open door

And I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.

Chorus:

O Lord, You know I have no friend like You,
If heaven’s not my home, then Lord, what will I do?

The angels beckon me from heaven’s open door,

And I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.

There are two kingdoms here! **I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO HEAVEN!**

In the midst of this life, in the midst of this world, in the midst of this daily grind, in the midst of these politically-charged days, **won’t you step up to a higher plane in Christ Jesus?**

IT WILL MAKE AN ETERNITY OF DIFFERENCE! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Anabaptist Pulpit*, 2004

Person of the Month:

Eli S. Hallman

(1866-1955)



Eli S. Hallman was born in Ontario, Canada, on February 26, 1866. He was the sixth child in a family of twelve children.

In 1887, when Eli was 21, he and his brother decided to join the Methodist church in town since the local Mennonite church did not have much vitality at that time.

Six years later, on August 9, 1893, Eli Hallman married Melinda B. Clemens. The Lord blessed their family with five children: four boys and a girl.

Although the Hallmans were both active members of the Methodist church, neither one of them was yet saved, even though they sang in the choir. However, the Holy Spirit was convicting them of their sin and need of Christ as Saviour and Lord. While at a revival meeting in the Blenheim church, under the preaching of J. S. Coffman, Eli and Melinda accepted Christ. Before too long they returned to the Mennonite church, which Eli had always preferred. Once the Hallmans were back in the Mennonite church the congregation began to see Eli's gifts and talents, so on June 17, 1897, at the age of 31, he was ordained to the ministry in his home church—First Mennonite Church of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.

During the years of 1897 to 1904 Brother Hallman also spent much time in evangelistic meetings in Ontario, as well as areas of the U.S., but the most fruitful series of meetings was held right in his own church in Kitchener. These meetings lasted for four weeks and when they were finished, many souls had been saved.

In 1905 when Eli was 39, the Canadian government opened a tract of land for Mennonite colonization in the province of Saskatchewan. A number of the Ontario families moved west to the Mennonite Reserve in central Saskatchewan. Hallman was invited to go and pastor the new Sharon Mennonite flock. After he spent much time in prayer and consultation with others, he consented to make the move. Over time many Mennonites moved to Saskatchewan resulting in the organization of the Alberta-Saskatchewan Conference. In 1907 Brother Hallman was ordained the bishop for the Alberta-Saskatchewan District.

Eli Hallman particularly enjoyed preaching about the subjects of "Grace" and "The Second Coming." He demonstrated the love of Christ for those ministers who were not from his conference but was firm in expressing Biblical doctrine. He never apologized for his faith.

Brother Hallman's other interests included winter Bible schools, which he strongly promoted, and missions.

In 1912, at the age of 46, Hallman moved to Goshen and took over the position of Field Secretary at Goshen College. He served in that position for three years.

The next several years the Hallmans moved to Grand Bay, Alabama (1915), Allemands, Louisiana (1917), and Guernsey, Saskatchewan, Canada (1920). These moves were made to help churches in the various areas. All of this was done while Eli was holding evangelistic meetings, helping in Bible conferences, and assisting in bishop work.

When the Alberta-Saskatchewan Conference organized a Mission Board in 1920 Brother Hallman was made their president. Hallman was also involved

(continued on page 3)

The Impromptu Tongue

by Paul Anderson

What power words have! They can launch wars, destroy marriages, divide life-long friends, split churches, and send children spiraling into depression. Job expressed the pain delivered by unkind speech when he asked his so-called friends, “How long will you torment me and crush me with words?” (Job 19:2).

Yet words also have the power to prevent suicides, restore friendships, quell potential wars, and bring emotional healing.

When a baseball manager was fined for chewing out the commissioner, a sports writer defended the manager, arguing, “They were just words.” But Solomon likened rash words to sword thrusts (Prov. 12:18). Words contain potential for good or evil. In fact, “The tongue has the power of life and death” (18:21).

Taming the tongue takes us to our limit. If we succeed at that assignment, everything else is a snap: “He who guards his lips guards his soul” (13:3). But with a machete in your mouth, it doesn’t take long to do damage with a few swipes. Maybe that’s why Jesus said that we will render account for every careless word uttered (Matthew 12:36).

A bit

The rider of a broken and bridled stallion needs only a flick of the wrist to turn the mighty beast in an instant and bring its will under control. Even a ninety-pound person can rule a racehorse. James likewise says that a controlled tongue makes possible the direction of the whole body. If we want to obey our Master, we start with the tongue.

We can find several lists of sins in the Bible (Rom. 1:30; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 22:15). We may not realize that sins of the tongue show up in each list. I may say, “I have a little problem with my mouth.” What I view as minor, God calls major. With four examples James illustrates that something small can be significant:

“When we put **bits** into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small **rudder** wherever the pilot wants to go.

“Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a **fire**, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly **poison**” (James 3:3-8).

A rudder

On a recent vacation my wife, Karen, and I sat at one of our favorite restaurants along the San Pedro harbor in California and watched oil freighters cut their way through quiet waters to dock. How amazing that the direction of these huge ships is determined by a relatively small rudder, operated by one person’s hand.

Similarly the direction of our lives is determined by the funny little member in our mouth. It will take us down a path of destruction or it will deliver us. “He who guards his lips guards his soul, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin” (Prov. 13:3).

A fire

News coverage of the 2007 California wildfires reminded me of another fire that burned through that state in 1993. My wife and I had watched the fire on television, while our close friends watched it for real. It wiped out their guesthouse, tool shed, and several cars. One match can do great damage; so can one word.

PAGE 2

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Pyromaniacs can make a crime look like an accident. James removes any doubt about the origin of fires ignited by the tongue—the pit of hell. From our point of view it starts with a small prayer request or a little criticism. James corrects us by saying that it was fueled by the fires that will rage for an eternity.

My dad and I were once cleaning up the tumbleweeds around our property in the Mojave Desert. Dad decided that a shortcut would make our work easier. “I’ll set fire to this pile,” he said, “and we’ll be done with them in a moment.” When a wind came up and blew one from the heap, we almost started a prairie fire. “I should have known better,” he confessed, recalling fires raging in Montana, where he grew up. God sees all such blazes, started by a word of sarcasm, a fit of outrage, or a yearning for vengeance as much more than “just words.”

Poison

A quiet and controlled woman once put her troubled daughter in our church school. The girl lasted only a few weeks. As the principal explained why she was dismissing the child, the mom listened impatiently. When she’d heard enough, she stomped out of the room, spewing venomous profanity along the way.

A South American snake called the two-

step is so named because anyone bitten by one is dead in two steps. The poison works about that fast, paralyzing the nervous system. In the same way, a deadly tongue poisons reputations, kills futures, and destroys relationships.

In his hard-hitting letter James did not deal with predestination or the nature of the church. He talked about temptation, anger, favoring the rich, and speech. He did not let us off the hook. He wanted reality with-

out religious clothes, and inconsistencies deeply bothered him. He lamented, “Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing” (3:10). In a similar vein Paul told us that carnivorous Christians will sooner or later be eaten alive: “If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (Gal. 5:15).

Scripture tells us to tame the tongue, but it also tells us we cannot do it in our own strength. Only Jesus, who always chose the right words and spoke with grace and truth, can control our tongues through the Holy Spirit. We must surrender this organ to the Master, trusting more than trying, believing more than blathering. If we trust Him, Christ promises to do this work of maturity in that moving member between the head and the heart. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Kindred Spirit*, Spring 2008.

“Speak softly. It is far better to rule by love than fear. Speak softly. Let no harsh words mar the good we may do here.”
—Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

ELI S. HALLMAN . . . cont’d.

in the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Being on the Executive Committee of the Colonization Board consumed much of his time as well. The board was instrumental in bringing thousands of Russians to Canada. He also was editor of the *Christian Review* which helped Germans understand English.

Due to health reasons the Hallmans moved to Texas where they spent the next eighteen years. During this time he was given bishop oversight of the churches in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

After returning from his ministry responsibilities in 1951, Brother Hallman and his wife finally moved to Akron, Pennsylvania, to be with their son, when Eli was 85 years of age.

Eli S. Hallman went home to be with the Lord August 25, 1955, at the age of 89. His funeral was in Monterey, Pennsylvania, with burial at Breslau, Ontario, Canada.

—Gail L. Emerson

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Thoughts on Hypocrisy

by James Plank

Everybody everywhere hates a hypocrite. Church youth often point to hypocritical church attendees and to hypocritical parents as reasons that they are “turned off” by religion.

People exiting churches sometimes point to hypocrites as reasons for their exit.

While we will tolerate fake flowers we have a low toleration level for fake Christians.

Observers of the Christian religion look to the church and to the congregants to “just be real.”

The truth is this: Hypocrisy can happen to anybody anywhere.

The list is longer than we wish of those who have turned out to be known hypocrites: preachers, evangelists, pastors’ wives, Sunday school teachers, missionaries, church leaders, musicians, televangelists—Christian professors of all backgrounds and descriptions have fallen in the danger zone—for some, great was the fall.

Busyness can turn to hypocrisy. Spiritual suicide can happen when men and women complicate and frustrate the Christian relationship with the rush of modern living. The peril of financial progress is that the world can be gained at the loss of our soul.

Nobody is busier than Christians intent on having the best of both worlds—trying to answer a call to ministry and the call of materialism at the same time. To answer the call of materialism means Mom and Dad both working long hours in secular employment to gain the modern home, new cars, designer clothes, and high-powered vacations. To answer the call of ministry means each evening and all weekend—pounding the pavement and knocking on doors and squeezing in the calls for counsel and the services of the church. Many must balance ministry with secular employment—but the thirst for material things can cause secular employment to demand more and more and more of our priority. Somewhere in the rush we can become lean in our soul and our testimony becomes a false front.

Laziness can turn to hypocrisy. This is a lazy society. We are active, but most often at work behind desks or computers. The ethic of hard labor, so known a generation ago, was passed on largely through generations of pioneers and farmers who worked by the sweat of the brow. In this modern age, most children have had minimal chores and are raised lazy. There is plenty to eat. There are plenty of comforts. There are minimal

PAGE 4

SWORD AND TRUMPET

hardships. There are insurance companies and government subsidies for most any crisis that may be severe. We are raised lazy. Laziness is a curse to the Christian walk. Holy discipline coupled with heart purity was the crown jewels of Methodism's revival. It was known that when disciplines were destroyed, purity would soon be decimated. When we are lethargic to pray and lazy to study the Word, when we skip prayer meetings and are careless with our attendance to and participation in worship, we soon bring poverty to our soul. Rarely does anyone sit down one day and decide to transform into a hypocrite. Hypocrisy begins slowly but surely—and it can begin with laziness.

Carelessness can turn to hypocrisy. In a daily, even moment-by-moment walk with God, He is faithful to help us and guide us. In our first-love relationship, it is a joy to walk with God. It is simple. As time and trials and temptations ticktock with the rhythm of the clock, we can become careless. When we are careless with His dealings we can become numb and dumb and then phony. It is not legalism to be careful. It is love. That love turns to legal when we become careless with inward relationship or outward duty. A life of carelessness turns to a life of counterfeit.

I knew of one who had real flowers and fake flowers in her home. When she was away, she left instructions on the fake flowers: "Do not water, these are fake." In our churches, fake people remain camouflaged and are seldom found out.

No one attends Sunday worship with a sign around his or her neck, "I have not read my Bible this week." Or, "I do not pray much anymore." Or, "I have given in to temptation." No, instead, people too often come and play the organ as usual. They teach the lesson out of habit. They preach the message and sing the songs. We learn how to say "Amen." We learn what is expected of us. We look the same. We act the same. But we are not the same.

Others cannot put their finger on the exact problem—but the deadness and decay of weekly worship in too many places indicates

hypocrisy. In the stress of life, hypocrisy will come out on you—in the home, on the job, in the church board meeting, in the wrong decisions and poor judgment calls. Little eyes and wondering eyes watch it all. It's fake and phony and forgivable!

The God of Heaven calls "confess" and I "will forgive." "Knock, and the door will open." "Seek and you will find." "Draw nigh to me and I will draw nigh to you." "If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, you shall be filled."

Hypocrisy is forgivable if you confess your hard heart. Unforgivable if you do not. ■

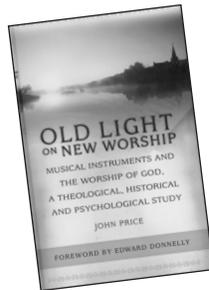
—Reprinted with permission from *Convention Herald*, March-April 2008.

NEW BOOK!

OLD LIGHT ON NEW WORSHIP

by John Price

***Musical Instruments
and the Worship of God.
A Theological, Historical,
and Psychological Study***



Retail price:
\$15.99

Available from:
Sword & Trumpet
for **\$14.50**
postpaid!

This is an excellent work providing Biblical rationale for maintaining a cappella singing in congregational worship. Written from a non-Anabaptist perspective, it provides ample evidence for the non-instrument approach.

P.O. Box 575 • Harrisonburg, VA 22803
(540) 867-9419

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

JULY 6, 2008

Christ as Master Teacher

Luke 4:31-37; 20:1-8

The lessons for July continue the theme “Portraits of Christ.” July’s lessons are taken from the gospels—one from each of the four gospel writers. Today’s two text passages are taken from Luke 4, at the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and Luke 20, at the end. In Luke 3:22 we see the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus following His baptism, and His credentialing by God the Father. In 4:1-13 we see Him tested by Satan and coming through victorious. These experiences confirm the power and authority by which He spoke in the texts of our lesson.

As our text opens Jesus had just come through the traumatic experience of rejection by His hometown neighbors in Nazareth (read verses 16-30), and gone from there down to the seashore town of Capernaum which became the headquarters for His ministry in Galilee. There He again entered the synagogue on the sabbath and taught from the Old Testament Scriptures. The hearers were “amazed at his teaching” because there was evident in His teaching an element which they had not experienced heretofore. There was power and authority behind His words, an authenticating element not seen in other teachers of the Law. And no wonder, for here was no ordinary man. Here was the Son of God. His words carried weight.

Jesus’ power and authority was demonstrated in His recognition by the demon possessing the unfortunate man. He recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God who had the power and authority to destroy him. He pled with Jesus to leave him alone. (See James 2:19.) But Jesus could not allow him to continue to torment this man so He commanded

the unclean spirit to leave him. In one last defiant act the devil threw the man down but Jesus’ power prevailed to defeat the unclean spirit and preserve the man’s life.

The crowd looked on with utter amazement. Who is this who can command the evil spirits? They recognized an otherworldly power at work. As a result the fame of Jesus spread throughout the region. His power and authority were established though as yet He was not truly recognized for who He was.

Our second passage takes place close to the end of Jesus’ ministry. The setting here is the temple. Jesus had just previously entered Jerusalem in triumph and cleansed the temple of those who made merchandise of God’s house. As He taught in the temple courts He was confronted by the religious leaders who questioned His authority. They were bent on His destruction (see 19:47) so their question regarding the source of His authority had the intent to entrap Him and bring Him into disrepute or set Him up for arrest or silencing.

But Jesus was onto their trickery and instead of answering directly, posed a question to them in return. If they would answer His question correctly, then they would have the answer to their own question. John was obviously a prophet and accepted as such by the people. His message was of the Christ who now was proclaiming Himself by word and deed. But if the religious leaders openly acknowledged John as a prophet of the Messiah they would have to recognize Jesus as the Person of whom John spoke. And they could not. So they refused to answer. And so Jesus had eluded their trap and went on in the next verses to give a parable pointedly showing up these religious leaders. So Jesus’ authority prevailed. He is the Master Teacher.

PAGE 6

SWORD AND TRUMPET

For thought and discussion

1. Familiarize yourself with the pattern of synagogue worship services. On what basis was Jesus permitted to read and speak?
2. Jesus taught with power and authority. Were there other elements that set His teaching apart from the teaching of others?
3. Is demon possession a prevalent evil in our society today? If so, how can it be dealt with?
4. Many today do not recognize Jesus for who He is. How can we best help to make Him known to a needy world? Discuss.
5. What can we learn from Jesus' teaching methods that will help make us better teachers? Discuss.

JULY 13, 2008

Christ as Healer

Mark 1:29-45

The setting for today's lesson is near the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus had recently been baptized by John, endured a period of temptation, and begun His preaching ministry. He had also called four of His disciples, taught in the synagogue at Capernaum, and cast out an unclean spirit. Following that experience He went home with two of His new disciples, Simon Peter and Andrew his brother. There He performed His first act of physical healing.

This act of healing, by a touch of the Master's hand, was done in the privacy of a home. The healing was instantaneous and brought forth an immediate response of gratitude. Peter's mother-in-law arose from her sickbed and served the group. However, though done in privacy, Jesus' power and compassion could not be kept quiet (see verses 23-28). At sunset, marking the end of the sabbath (v. 21), many sick and demon-possessed individuals gathered around the door of Simon's house seeking healing.

Jesus, ever true to His nature, had compassion on these distressed individuals and responded to their needs. Note the distinc-

tion made (v. 32) between those physically sick and those possessed by demons. Demon possession was recognized as a spiritual malady, although it carried physical implications (see v. 26).

The key to Jesus' power we find in verse 35. Although the Son of God, He needed continuous communication with the Father for strength, for courage and affirmation. (See also Luke 6:12 and setting.) When Jesus was discovered missing by the expectant crowds, the disciples set out to find Him and bring Him back to continue His ministry of teaching and healing. However, Jesus informed them that His ministry was not to be confined to one place. There were others who needed His healing touch and soul-cleansing teaching. His ministry was expanding. He needed to move on. In the casting out of demons "Jesus both teaches the message of God's kingdom and reinforces its reality by overthrowing the agents of Satan." —*Standard Lesson Commentary*

Along the way Jesus was confronted by a lone leper. Here was a hopeless outcast from society who saw in Jesus a solution to his need. He humbly knelt before Jesus, begging for healing, obviously aware that Jesus had the power to do so. Jesus, moved with compassion for this helpless individual, broke with convention and reached out with a healing touch: "Be thou clean." And he was cleansed, immediately.

Jesus then sent the man on his way to fulfill the requirements of the Law for one cleansed from uncleanness (see Leviticus 14). Jesus laid a restriction on the man to "say nothing to any man." Due to the man's joyful exuberance, however, he could not keep quiet and published abroad the matter and manner of his healing. The result was that Jesus found it necessary to retire to a quiet, out-of-the-way place, no doubt because of the growing crowds and, perhaps, to avoid unnecessary and early confrontation with the religious leaders.

But still the people came. This miracle-working healer was in demand. And He recognized this as the work for which He had come.

JULY 2008

PAGE 7

For thought and discussion

1. List the types of healing done by Jesus and the various methods He used.
2. Do divine and miraculous healings take place today? Can you cite examples? Why is not everyone healed who prays for healing? Good for class discussion.
3. Why did Jesus forbid the devils (v. 34) and the leper (v. 44) to speak? Go below the surface for your answers. Does verse 45 hold a clue?
4. What does verse 35 teach us about the need for prayer?
5. How does Jesus' ministry of compassion speak to us about needs in our day? Discuss.

JULY 20, 2008

Christ as Servant

John 13:1-17

Our lesson today is the very familiar "footwashing" passage from John 13. The theme of the lesson today, however, will not be so much on the ordinance as on Jesus' teaching and example of servanthood. The scene is the upper room where Jesus was eating the Passover supper with His disciples just prior to His betrayal that evening and the subsequent events which led to His crucifixion a few days later.

Jesus, well aware that events were moving toward culmination, still had some things to share with His disciples. In fact, in addition to this passage, the next four chapters comprise last-minute teaching for His faithful disciples. We note in verse one that love motivated Jesus' actions, not only in the act which followed, but in all of His relationships to the Twelve.

The meal was over and Jesus set about to teach His disciples a supreme lesson in humility and servanthood. The washing of feet soiled by travel, done by a servant of the household, was not new to the disciples. However, what was new was that here the Master assumed the role of a servant and stooped to perform this menial task.

Peter was taken aback as he watched the proceedings and protested vehemently when Jesus reached him. His question in verse 6 is one of incredulity: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" In spite of Jesus' hint that there was a lesson to be learned, Peter impetuously declared, "Thou shalt never wash my feet!" Only after Jesus had explained the broader purpose behind His act did Peter acquiesce. But then he wanted a complete bath to be assured of his secure relationship to Jesus. Again Jesus had to explain that His act was not one of physical cleansing but carried a deeper, symbolic meaning.

The supreme love, compassion, and mercy of Jesus is seen in the fact that He also washed the feet of Judas, whom He knew would yet that night betray Him. Though He knew the ultimate outcome, Jesus was making one last loving appeal to Judas to turn from his evil intent. But he would not, as evidenced by further events. In contrast to the spiritual cleansing experienced by the eleven, Judas was under the control of the master of evil (see verse 27).

After the act, Jesus gave the lesson, the reason behind the act. He acknowledged Himself as their Lord and in that admission implied that it was not His duty to humble Himself to the position of servant. However, in so doing, Jesus laid the groundwork for Christian equality and humble servanthood. He has given the example. He expects His followers to follow His example.

Rather than being degraded by humble acts of servitude, Jesus says that such will create a feeling of happiness. True Christian joy comes from serving others, from stooping to do the uncomely, menial task, for therein we most closely associate ourselves with our loving Master who took upon Himself the form of a servant and stooped to the ignominy of death in order that we might have life.

For thought and discussion

1. Be sure to note the many parallels between Jesus' giving Himself to be our Saviour in context of the Passover.
2. The towel and basin have become

- universal symbols of Christian servanthood. What other symbols do we recognize as representing our faith?
3. Discover, from one of the other gospels, what the disciples had argued about just prior to the events in today's text. How does this enhance Jesus' teaching here?
 4. An item for discussion with your class could be various ways the role of servanthood can be expressed in our daily lives.
 5. Jesus expects His followers to model His life and attitudes. Are you enjoying the role of servanthood? Remember, it is not demeaning, but uplifting if done in the right spirit.

JULY 27, 2008

Jesus, the Christ

Matthew 16:13-23

Who is Jesus? That is the question confronting us in today's study. Many in Jesus' day, no doubt, knew Him only as Mary's son. Some knew Him as a great teacher, or a miracle worker. Others saw Him, as our text indicates, as a resurrected prophet—Elijah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist. (Even Herod thought as much. See Matthew 14:1, 2.)

Jesus was nearing the end of His earthly ministry and was concerned that His mission to earth was understood, especially by those He had chosen to carry on His work after His departure. He had withdrawn with His disciples to a more secluded location to spend time in teaching and instructing regarding the events which would soon be unfolding and the ongoing work of building His kingdom. In that setting He posed to them His question.

After explaining how the crowds were responding, Peter, with divine insight, answered correctly and succinctly, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." As such, Peter was identifying Him as the long-awaited Messiah, the One anointed of God to provide spiritual freedom for His people. This in contrast to the anticipation of the multitudes for a regal, political leader

to free them from the bondage of Rome.

This conflict of understanding is no doubt the reason Jesus told His disciples (v. 20) not to publish the fact that He was the Messiah. The multitudes did not understand the concept of Jesus' spiritual deliverance and He did not want a popular, political uprising to derail plans for the establishment of His spiritual kingdom.

In somewhat of a parenthetical statement, Jesus here established Himself as the foundation stone of the church, speaks to its invulnerability, and hints at the significant role Peter would play in the formation of this church (see also 1 Corinthians 3:11).

Jesus then continues to explain to the Twelve the events which would soon transpire regarding the fulfillment of His mission. They were already aware of the animosity of the religious leaders but here Jesus added a new dimension—suffering and death. He also mentioned resurrection, which piece of information was lost on them until after the event.

This was too much for Peter. How could this be? How could this Son of the living God be put to death? What would that do to their hopes? It was unthinkable. So Peter, uncomprehending and in his humanness began to rebuke his Lord: "This shall not be!" But it was true, as Peter was all too soon to find out.

Jesus saw in Peter's rebuke a renewal of the temptation that began after His baptism and faced Him to the end in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was not rebuking Peter as Satan, but for not understanding God's plan and, in his rebuke, serving as an agent of temptation. Peter meant well, but was misunderstanding of God's purposes. For the Messiah to live, and offer life, He must first die. This was the reality Peter had not yet grasped in spite of his insight into the identity of the man Jesus.

For thought and discussion

1. Why do you think the disciples were so slow to catch on to who Jesus really was and the nature and outworking of His mission to earth?

2. Explain why some thought Jesus to be one of the old prophets come to life again. What was their significance to the coming of the Messiah?
3. Explore the concept of Jesus being the foundation of the church and the disciples as builders. First Corinthians 3 will be of help.
4. Perhaps we think of Jesus as the victorious Son of God. And He was. But this les-

son should help us see how temptation was a reality throughout His life. (See Luke 4:13; Hebrews 4:15.) How does this awareness help us in our daily struggle with temptation? Discuss.

5. What does the experience of Peter at the close of our lesson text have to teach us in regard to our supposed knowledge of God and our expression of that knowledge? ■

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems
 experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings
 bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

Sadaam Paid for Lawmakers' Trip to Iraq

Three anti-war Democrats had their fact-finding mission to Iraq paid for secretly by Sadaam Hussein's intelligence service. Just before the U.S. invaded Iraq and as Bush was working to persuade Congress to authorize the war, three Democratic congressmen traveled to Iraq on a mission to stop the war effort. Their expenses were paid by Sadaam himself. When asked how it feels to be used as a propaganda tool against his own country by a country that recently tried to assassinate the president, Jim McDermott (D-WA) replied that, "We don't mind being used."

—Sources: AP, *The Weekly Standard*
<http://tinyurl.com/32n47o>

* * * * *

Christian Fined for Refusing to Photograph Lesbian Couple

A Christian photographer who declined a job request to photograph a homosexual wedding was fined \$6600 by the New Mexico Human Rights Commission. When

Elaine Huguenin turned down a job from Vanessa Willock, Willock complained to the New Mexico Human Rights Commission which has been given jurisdiction over such cases and is not held to the same standard of judicial procedure of evidence and law as regular courts.

New Mexico has a law that prohibits discrimination based upon sexual orientation. This law is similar to laws in 19 other states and to the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act pending in Congress—touted by Democrats, blocked by Republicans.

According to the Alliance Defense Fund which is appealing the case to a real court, this law and others like it are a gross violation of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Jordan Lorence, a senior counsel with the ADF said, "The Constitution prohibits the state from forcing unwilling people to promote a message they disagree with and thereby violate their conscience. The commission's decision shows stunning disregard for our client's First Amendment rights, and we will appeal . . . The constitutional right of Americans to refrain from

participating in a ceremony or other event because their sincerely held religious beliefs conflict with its message is at stake. Christians could be forced to advocate for viewpoints with which they disagree or to participate in events that violate their conscience. There is a great threat to our religious liberties and our ability to speak out in favor of traditional marriage when these non-discrimination laws are interpreted in such a harsh way to censor Christians and others. The government cannot make people choose between their faith and their livelihood. Could the government force a vegetarian videographer to create a commercial for the new butcher shop in town? American business owners do not surrender their constitutional rights at the marketplace gate.”

—Sources: *The Washington Times*, *WorldNetDaily*

* * * * *

Fear of Messing Up May Undermine Interracial Contact

For years I have been saying that “civil rights leaders” of today only exacerbate racial tensions by their constant emphasis on racism. Finally, a study has shown this to be true. Northwestern University writes in a press release: “Democratic consultant Donna Brazile brought home America’s reluctance to talk openly about race in a *New York Times* article that preceded the Barack Obama speech that now has the whole nation buzzing. In essence, she said in her quote, any serious discussion about race has the effect of clearing a room.

“Brazile’s remark and the presidential hopeful’s groundbreaking speech about a subject that politicians generally tiptoe around in public hint at the complexities of race relations in America today. As we approach the second decade of the 21st century, research shows that many Americans feel anxious during interracial interactions whether or not race is even mentioned.

“Now a provocative new study from Northwestern University suggests that whites who are particularly worried about appearing racist seem to suffer from anxiety

that instinctively may cause them to avoid interaction with blacks in the first place.

“‘The Threat of Appearing Prejudiced and Race-Based Attentional Biases,’ by Jennifer A. Richeson, associate professor of psychology and African-American studies and faculty fellow at the Institute for Policy Research (IPR) at Northwestern, and Sophie Trawalter, post-doctoral fellow, IPR, recently appeared in the journal *Psychological Science*.

“Study participants indicated that they worry about inadvertently getting in trouble for somehow seeming biased. As a result, the study suggests, they behaved in a way that research shows people respond when faced with stimuli that cause them to feel threatened or anxious: they instinctively look at what is making them feel nervous and then ignore it.”

—Excerpt from “Fear of messing up may undermine interracial contact” from *EurekAlert* (<http://tinyurl.com/28xkq7>)

* * * * *

North Koreans Taped at Syrian Reactor

“A video taken inside a secret Syrian facility last summer convinced the Israeli government and the Bush administration that North Korea was helping to construct a reactor similar to one that produces plutonium for North Korea’s nuclear arsenal, according to senior U.S. officials who said it would be shared with lawmakers today.

“The officials said the video of the remote site, code-named Al Kibar by the Syrians, shows North Koreans inside. It played a pivotal role in Israel’s decision to bomb the facility late at night last September 6, a move that was publicly denounced by Damascus but not by Washington.”

—Excerpt from “N. Koreans Taped at Syrian Reactor” by Robin Wright in *The Washington Post*, 4/24/08 (<http://tinyurl.com/6pw4cy>)

* * * * *

Blind Homeowner Captures Intruder

“A blind homeowner [who is 49 years old] used the wrestling skills he learned more than 30 years ago to overpower an intruder

and hold the man at knifepoint until police arrived this morning.

“An Indianapolis police official called it one of the most incredible tales of citizen self-defense that he’s heard in years.

“‘It’s pretty remarkable for anyone that’s blind to be able to defend themselves, let alone make an apprehension,’ Lt. Jeff Duhamell said. ‘To be able to grab this [25-year-old] guy and hold him down until police got there is pretty remarkable.’”

—Excerpt from “Blind homeowner captures intruder” by Vic Ryckaert in *The Indianapolis Star*, 4/21/08 (<http://tinyurl.com/3r36st>)

* * * * *

Praying Passenger Removed From Plane

“NEW YORK (WABC)—A passenger who left his seat to pray in the back of a plane before it took off, ignoring flight attendants’ orders to return, was removed by an airport security guard, a witness and the airline said.

“The Orthodox Jewish man, who wore a full beard, a black hat, and a long black coat, stood near the lavatories and began saying his prayers while the United Airlines jet was being boarded at John F. Kennedy International Airport on Wednesday night, fellow passenger Ori Brafman said.

“When flight attendants urged the man, who was carrying a religious book, to take his seat, he ignored them, Brafman said. Two friends, who were seated, tried to tell the attendants that the man couldn’t stop until his prayers were over in about two minutes, he said.

“‘He doesn’t respond to them, but his friends explain that once you start praying you can’t stop,’ said Brafman, who was seated three rows away.

“When the man finally stopped praying, he explained that he couldn’t interrupt his religious ritual and wasn’t trying to be rude. But the attendants summoned a guard to remove him, said Brafman, a writer who had been visiting New York to talk to publishers.”

—Excerpt from “Praying Passenger Removed from Plane” on *WABC7 Eyewitness News*, 4/17/08 (<http://tinyurl.com/67gm58>)

* * * * *

PAGE 12

Riots, Instability Spread as Food Prices Skyrocket

“(CNN)—Riots from Haiti to Bangladesh to Egypt over the soaring costs of basic foods have brought the issue to a boiling point and catapulted it to the forefront of the world’s attention, the head of an agency focused on global development said Monday.

“‘In just two months,’ [World Bank President Robert] Zoellick said in his speech, ‘rice prices have skyrocketed to near historical levels, rising by around 75 percent globally and more in some markets, with more likely to come. In Bangladesh, a 2-kilogram bag of rice . . . now consumes about half of the daily income of a poor family.’

“The price of wheat has jumped 120 percent in the past year, he said—meaning that the price of a loaf of bread has more than doubled in places where the poor spend as much as 75 percent of their income on food.

“In Haiti, the prime minister was kicked out of office Saturday, and hospital beds are filled with wounded following riots sparked by food prices.

“In Egypt, rioters have burned cars and destroyed windows of numerous buildings as police in riot gear have tried to quell protests.

“Images from Bangladesh and Mozambique tell a similar story.”

—Excerpt from “Riots, instability spread as food prices skyrocket” on *CNN*, 4/14/08 (<http://tinyurl.com/4rg557>)

* * * * *

Olympic Torch Attendants: Chinese Paramilitary “Thugs”

As the Olympic torch travels around the world, it has been beset by protesters who decry China’s crackdown on peaceful pro-independence demonstrations in Tibet. China has sent along a force of elite paramilitary police drawn from their army to ensure the flame remains lit. It was extinguished by protesters in Paris three times. However, their strong-arm tactics in places where they have no legal jurisdiction has brought widespread condemnation. The strongest language was used by Lord Coe of Britain, the head of the London 2012

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Olympic games when he said, "They tried to push me out of the way three times. They are horrible. They did not speak English. They were thugs." One of the torch bearers said, "The men in blue perplexed everyone. Nobody seemed to know who they were officially or what their title was. They were very robotic, very full on, and I noticed them having skirmishes with our own police and the Olympic authorities before our leg of the relay, which was confusing."

—Sources: *UK Daily Mail*, *Times of London*

* * * * *

US Lawmakers Condemn Chinese Crackdown on Tibet

The brutal Chinese repression of peaceful demonstrations for Tibetan independence has brought widespread condemnation throughout the world. China has been caught dressing agent provocateurs as Tibetans and engaging in faux violence against police so that they can justify the violent crackdown. There are several efforts to boycott the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympics and some propose boycotting the Olympics entirely. The US House of Representatives just passed 413-1 "a bi-partisan

resolution condemning China's crackdown in Tibet and urging Beijing to hold a substantive dialogue with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama."

—Sources: *Voice of America*, *ChinaView* (<http://tinyurl.com/639syh>), *Times of London*

* * * * *

Recommended Reading

"'Terror plot' to blow up transatlantic flights out of London" in *The Times of London* (<http://tinyurl.com/39med2>)

"Police Surround Zimbabwe Hotel" in *AP* (<http://tinyurl.com/38enfx>)

"For sale: West's deadly nuclear secrets" in *The Times of London* (<http://tinyurl.com/2s2key>)

"Climate facts to warm to" in *The Australian* (<http://tinyurl.com/3xangr>)

"Ecuador pulls diplomat from Bogota" on *CNN* (<http://tinyurl.com/6c3ae3>)

"Kenyan pastors share stories of violence, survival" by the *International Mission Board* (<http://tinyurl.com/52ar4x>)

"Israel's UN ambassador calls Jimmy Carter 'a bigot'" in *AP* (<http://tinyurl.com/3ken3h>)

Feedback: hansmast@hansmast.com

"Purpose Driven" or Patent Distortion?

by Larry Pauley

Most books claim positive things about what is found between their covers. After all, the author is not going to spend the time and energy writing a couple of hundred pages producing something he or she thinks is worthless! However, when a book's back cover hails itself "a priceless gift for everyone who wants to know their purpose and fulfill their destiny"; a work that "will guide you to greatness"; "a masterpiece of wise counsel for you"; and concludes with an endorsement that says, "Believe me, you'll never be the same after reading this," it is

going to garner some attention. This is especially true when the individuals making these claims are named Billy Graham, Max Lucado, Lee Strobel, and Bruce Wilkinson.

A book with some 500,000 pre-publication sales, *The Purpose Driven Life* by pastor/author Rick Warren was the number one bestseller according to the *New York Times* last April (where it continues to rank very highly), and has been number one on the Christian Book Association list for more than five consecutive months. In addition, more than 4,000 churches of every stripe

from Episcopalian to non-denominational have signed up for the “40 Days of Purpose” campaign based upon this book, including many in our own area. Obviously this book has made a major impact of some type, and any self-proclaimed “ground-breaking manifesto on the meaning of life” certainly invites a closer look by any pastor wanting to properly shepherd the flock of God.

Beginning with the very first chapter, Warren lays out a main thrust of the book with the chapter title, “It All Starts With God.” He states, quite correctly, “You must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose.” (*Italics* his) He goes on in the chapter to denounce any “self-help” approach to Christianity, arguing instead that only God’s Word can reveal the true purpose of life. “You must build your life on eternal truths,” Warren states, “not pop psychology, success-motivation, or inspirational stories” (p. 20).

With this foundation established, Pastor Warren systematically moves through his five areas of purpose (Worship, Fellowship, Spiritual Growth, Spiritual Service, Evangelism). Throughout the book the author strives to convince his readers regarding the benefits of living with those purposes in mind.

Based on this beginning, *The Purpose Driven Life* sounds pretty good. After all, who can rightly deny the importance of worship, fellowship, or evangelism in the Christian life? And a stated appeal to God’s Word as the final authority on how life should be lived is not only correct, but an increasing rarity even among Christian books.

In fact, it is precisely the claims and goals of this book that make it such an important issue. Does it derive its content from the teaching of the Word of God? Will it lead a person to truly discover the purpose that God Himself has established for that person’s life? Sadly, the answer is negative. In fact, an investigation of *The Purpose Driven Life* reveals several problematic areas—areas in which the book proves to serve up patent distortion of the truth of God.

Distortion of the Word of God

Beyond the declarations of an ordinary book, *The Purpose Driven Life* claims to be “a guide to a 40-day spiritual journey that

will enable you to discover the answer to life’s most important question: What on earth am I here for?” (p. 9). The author makes much of this 40-day time period, even stating “The Bible is clear that God considers 40 days a significant time period. *Whenever God wanted to prepare someone for His purposes, He took 40 days.*” (*Italics* mine)

How unfortunate that a book purporting to be based upon God’s truth would make such a claim! True, there are several biblical events that took place within such a framework, but there is no stated or implied spiritual significance to that number. Warren lists several in his book (p. 10), but many of his examples have nothing at all to do with the claim of spiritual preparation he makes. Consider these:

- The flood of Genesis 7–9 was God’s judgment on a wicked world; it was *not* preparing Noah for anything.
- Moses was given the Law on Mt. Sinai over a 40-day period, but it was not about life change or preparation for Moses.
- The Israelite spies in the Promised Land were not “transformed” by their 40-day mission. Two of the spies were faithful men—the other ten were faithless and led Israel into judgment!
- David heard about Goliath’s challenge after the 40 days had passed. He had been watching the sheep.
- We walk on very thin theological ice when we say that Jesus was “empowered by 40 days in the wilderness.” He was already God in the flesh—what empowerment did He need?

Claims of any special “preparation,” “transformation,” or “empowerment” being supernaturally linked to a 40-day time period are just human fabrications and not biblical truth. In fact, should we wish to press the matter further, we can find several examples of God using various time periods in order to truly prepare people for His service:

- Moses was “trained” for two 40-year periods before God was ready to use him in the last 40 years of his life.
- In Galatians the Apostle Paul speaks of a period of at least three years that involved his being prepared to serve the Master.
- And what of Simeon and Anna, the elderly duo mentioned in Luke 2, who waited

for decades to be used of God in their own unique way?

The Bible does *not* maintain that whenever God wanted to prepare someone for His purposes, He took 40 days. Sadly, this is an example of Scripture being misused to back up the author's thoughts and to try to persuade the reader of the importance of the book.

But that is not the only distortion of God's Word that is troublesome in this book. In fact, it pales in comparison to the poor use of God's Word throughout its pages! Warren uses no less than 15 different Bible translations and paraphrases throughout *The Purpose Driven Life*. While this is not wrong or even a problem within itself, Warren consistently pulls Scripture passages completely out of context and applies them however he sees fit (using whatever loose paraphrase best fits his argument). The author offers "proof-texts" for much of his discussion, usually without any exegetical or contextual support. Any honest student of God's Word understands why this is a serious problem. However, Warren explains his reasons for doing this in Appendix 3. He states, "I haven't always quoted the *entire* verse, but rather focused on the phrase that was appropriate. My model for this is Jesus and how He and the apostles quoted the Old Testament. They often just quoted a phrase to make a point." (*Italics* his) Unfortunately, unlike Jesus and the apostles, Warren is not inspired by the Holy Spirit—meaning he does *not* possess the authority to use God's Word however he pleases! Such a casual approach to Scripture can only lead to problems, and it does throughout the book.

* On page 19, Warren cites Matthew 16:25 from *The Message* paraphrase ("Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self") to argue that, in order to be successful in life, you need more than self-help advice. Yet, a more literal translation of Matthew 16:25 quickly reveals that Christ is not talking about self-help advice in this context, but rather about the essential nature of the saving gospel (NASB-update: "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it"). By not giving the context of the verse, and by using a very loose paraphrase, Warren

changes the intended thrust of Jesus' statement.

* On page 53 the heading of Chapter 7 has the following verse: "The Lord has made everything for his own purposes" (Proverbs 16:4, NLT). However, this is not the complete verse! Here is the complete verse from the same translation: "*The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for punishment.*" Not only does the author fail to use the Scripture correctly, but also the second half of the verse is in direct opposition to a major component of the author's thesis throughout the book!

* On page 139, speaking about fellowship in the church, Warren states, "God has made an incredible promise about small groups of believers: 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18:20)." Yet, Matthew 18:20, in its context, has *nothing* to do with small-group fellowship in the church, but rather with the church's authority in disciplining its members who are unrepentant of known sin.

* On page 165, the author encourages his readers not to spread or listen to gossip. This is certainly a good thing to encourage. He then says, "If you listen to gossip, God says you are a troublemaker. 'Troublemakers listen to troublemakers.' 'These are the ones who split churches, thinking only of themselves.'" Warren's footnotes state that he is referring to Proverbs 17:4 and Jude 16. Yet Proverbs 17:4 does not directly mention gossip (but rather evil speech and lying), and Jude 16 is not speaking of gossipers at all, but rather false teachers (regarding their grumbling, pride, and flattery). Again, Warren strings two out-of-context verses together (citing only half of each verse) in order to make his point. While the point may be valid (that gossip is wrong), it cannot be validated from these verses. In addition, applying it to something totally out of its context weakens the truth of Jude's warning!

*(This article will be continued
in the August issue.)*



Sermon of the Month



Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expositional sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by "snail mail" or email to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrump@verizon.net.

How to Go From GOOD TO GREAT in God's Eyes

by Chip Ingram

Let me begin by asking you an important question: Could it be that God gave you the intelligence, position, money, and spiritual maturity you have to make a huge difference in the world at this important time in history?

I firmly believe that this is exactly why God gave you the particular set of gifts you have, and the same is true for me and for every believer. The reason I say that is because I read in God's Word, "For the eyes of

God made a great world, and He made us in His image, so I believe God wants you and me to do something great with our lives.

the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" (2 Chron. 16:9). I believe this was not only true when it was first spoken, but is still true today.

This verse was actually spoken to King Asa of Judah, who began to depart from the Lord after 30 years of being a king who "did what was good and right in the eyes of the

LORD his God" (2 Chron. 14:2). Asa's story reminds us that success in the past is no guarantee of success in the future. Spiritual accomplishments in the past are no assurance that we will be just as spiritually fruitful and productive in the future.

An Ambition That God Births in Your Heart

The key at all times is a strong sense of

dependence on God—a feeling in your gut that you know you can't do what God has called you to do without His power and enabling. That's why the ambition I want to talk about is a *holy* ambition, one that God births in your heart and then leads you to accomplish as you follow Him in obedience and faith.

So with that caution as our background, I want to show you how anyone who has a genuine heart for God and is willing to take some risks can be great in God's eyes and do things for Him. Usually, when someone talks about greatness, too many people excuse themselves because they figure they aren't smart enough, talented enough, wealthy enough, influential enough, or whatever enough to make a huge difference.

But let me clue you in on something. Being sharp and smart and talented and all of that is overrated in God's economy. The first time I read the Old Testament, I began to think about the kind of people God really uses. And what I discovered is that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. God's criterion for greatness is not what we think of as great human skills or abilities, because He is looking for someone whose heart is fully His.

So the fundamental question you and I need to ask ourselves is, How do we know if our hearts fully belong to God?

To answer this question, I want to give you some principles from the life of

Nehemiah. One reason I like Nehemiah is because he's what we would call a layman, a guy from the business world. As the cup-bearer and confidant to the king of Persia, Nehemiah is a person of influence. But it's not his influence in the Persian palace that makes Nehemiah great, but the fact that his heart fully belonged to the Lord.

So what God did in Nehemiah's life was raise up a person who would take steps that changed the entire course of history and fulfill the promises God made to Abraham and to David—as Nehemiah led the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem that had been destroyed for decades.

You can read Nehemiah's story for yourself. What I want to do is give you six conditions that will tell you if you have the kind of heart God is looking for, which is the prerequisite for His doing something great in your life.

Before I share these, I sincerely hope you want to make a difference for God and be used by Him to do great things. God made a great world, and He made us in His image, so I believe God wants you and me to do something great with our lives.

A Dislocated Heart and a Broken Spirit

The first condition for greatness in God's kingdom is to have what I call a **dislocated heart**. Nehemiah was living a life of luxury in the palace of the king of Persia. If life were all about personal peace and prosperity, then Nehemiah would have gotten an A+. But we learn that although Nehemiah's body was in the Persian capital of Susa, his heart was in Jerusalem, because Jerusalem represented God's agenda.

So Nehemiah wasn't content with his life of comfort after a messenger came to him from among his Jewish brothers back in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-3). Nehemiah questioned him about the people and the place, and the report was not good. Jerusalem was not only in shambles, but the way God's people were living was an embarrassment to God's great name.

As soon as Nehemiah heard this terrible report, he wept and began to pray that God

would use him to do something about the disgraceful conditions in Jerusalem. There are times when we need to get alone in a room, take stock of the world, and then pray, "God, I want to see the pain the way You see it. What do You want me to do? What part can I change?"

A dislocated heart is a God-given concern for others that propels us out of our comfort zone. It's a passionate concern for God's agenda that supersedes our own desires for personal peace and prosperity. It's something in your heart and your gut. Nehemiah wept and mourned because it hurt to think of God's people and God's holy city in disgrace. Nehemiah said, in effect, "I don't know what to do. I'm just one person, with one king, and God's agenda is going south. I am going to refocus and fast and pray."

The second condition we see in Nehemiah is a **broken spirit**. Nehemiah 2:1 shows us that Nehemiah had been praying for four months with intensity, night and day, that God would give him the opportunity to make a difference back in Jerusalem.

That's the kind of spirit we need. God grabbed Nehemiah's heart and said, "I put you on the planet for a reason. I placed you over there in Persia with power and influence, and now I have changed your heart to see where the needs are." A broken spirit begins with a restored view of God.

If you study Nehemiah's prayer in 1:5-11 carefully, you'll find 44 references to God either by personal pronoun, by adjective, or by His name. Nehemiah prayed a God-centered prayer. Here's a principle you need to remember: *If you have a big God, you will always have a small problem. But if you have too big of a problem, you always have a small God. Nehemiah had a big God.*

Notice that the only issue was that Nehemiah knew he couldn't do the job of rallying support and going back to rebuild Jerusalem on his own. Nehemiah knew he couldn't do it himself, which is what a

A dislocated heart is a God-given concern for others that propels us out of our comfort zone—a passionate concern for God's agenda that supersedes our desires for personal peace and prosperity.

broken spirit is all about. You say to God, “I can’t do it.” But God says, “That’s all right, because what I am looking for is someone whose heart is fully Mine.”

A Radical Step of Faith and a Strategic Plan

The third of the six conditions for greatness in God’s eyes is a **radical step of faith**. This is where it starts getting a little risky—but remember that God’s eyes are going to and fro through the whole earth looking for someone whose heart is fully His, someone He can strongly support! That means giving you whatever you need personally, corporately, or any other way to help you fulfill His agenda.

That’s what God did for Nehemiah, as the king of Persia outfitted him with everything he would need to return to Jerusalem, rebuild the wall, and more important, restore God’s glory in the eyes of His people and the people who surrounded them.

Many of us want to do something big and great for God, but we often need to narrow our vision down to a few people and a few things instead of trying to do everything. The issue is what God has called you to do. Once you find that, then make your difference for Him.

A radical step of faith is obeying God’s known will to you, even at great personal risk and sacrifice. This is why a lot of people don’t experience the strong support of God. They come to a fork in the road that calls for a radical commitment, and they take the easier road and go off and do some nice things. But other people take the God-directed risks and are strongly supported by God.

Nehemiah prayed for four months and then discovered that he was the answer to his prayer. He knew he couldn’t stay in the luxury of the king’s palace, so he risked his life to go back to Jerusalem. I don’t know what a radical step of faith would look like in your life, but I can tell you that if you want to do great things for God, He will

***If you want to do
great things for
God, He will
bring you to that
place of decision
and ask you to
take a radical
step of faith.***

bring you to that place of decision and ask you to take a radical step of faith.

The fourth condition for true greatness is to make a **strategic plan**. Nehemiah did more than pray. He drew up a plan with exactly what he would need so that when the king gave him permission to go back to Jerusalem, Nehemiah could say, “Great. Here is what I need and who I need and how much time I need.”

Many great visions fail because they lack a plan for their fulfillment. A strategic plan answers such crucial questions as, How am I going to get where I believe God wants me to go? What resources do I need? Who am I going to partner with? You don’t have to put it on a brochure, but you need to write it out like you would a business plan.

A Personal Commitment and a “Niche on the Wall”

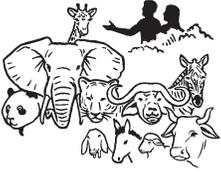
Here are the fifth and sixth conditions for greatness I want to share with you. Number five is to make a **personal commitment**. Once you have your strategic plan and know that this is what God has called you to do, go for it. Once you see the bull’s-eye of your life and define what the target is, make a commitment to hit it.

Finally, find your **“niche on the wall.”** As you read Nehemiah 3 and 4, you see that every person who worked on Nehemiah’s wall-rebuilding team had a personal niche, a personal place to serve that connected each individual with the person next to him on the wall. And within 52 days, Nehemiah and his workers had achieved a miracle—rebuilding the destroyed walls of Jerusalem.

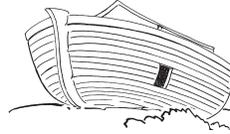
This is what it takes to make a real difference for God, to achieve greatness before God the way Nehemiah did. My goal in this message has been to inspire and to disturb you, to challenge you to dream a great dream for God, yet also to help you realize the radical commitment it will take to achieve that dream.

I hope you will take the challenge, because the fact is that we can’t make it today without a new generation of Nehemiahs—and you can be one of them! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Veritas*, April 2008.



Beginning Issues



The Ark: Comfortable Cruise or Refugee Camp?

by John Mullett

Once Noah and the animals were on the Ark how did eight people take care of all those animals? How did they account for feeding and watering up to 16,000 animals and then still manage to get rid of all their waste? Was there enough fresh air for all to breathe and stay healthy? These are legitimate questions to be asked when researching the feasibility of the ark and a global flood. One key to remember is this was a temporary emergency survival situation, not a long-term care zoo-like environment and certainly not an extravagant cruise. Food and space requirements would have reflected this. It was about staying alive, not looking sleek and presentable for tomorrow's crowds of onlookers.

In studies of non-mechanized animal care the key to eight people being able to take care of up to 16,000 animals is to avoid unnecessary walking around. Therefore it would be important to store food and water near each animal although water could have been piped in to troughs using gravity flow from some distance while saving storage space and hard work. Also a simple and easy solution to feeding some of the animals would have been some type of self-feeders (hoppers) which would only have to be filled occasionally. It is also possible and even likely that at least some of the animals would have been in hibernation mode (perhaps even intensified) and therefore would have reduced food requirements. This could have been triggered from being in a predominately dark environment in the lower decks of the Ark and/or the rocking motion of a ship on water. At any rate there are many animals that presently hibernate for a season each year demonstrating that possibility for us. The Bible tells us God

brought the animals to Noah (Genesis 6:20). Surely He could also have prepared them for survival on board the Ark.

The window at the top of the Ark along with wind could easily have provided the needed means of ventilation. If necessary wave motion, convective movement of air driven by temperature differences, and even small animals powering fans could all have been possibilities to aid in air movement.

While up to twelve tons of animal waste may have been produced daily this didn't need to be a problem either. Slatted floors with pits below to accumulate waste and sloped floors with central gutters are among possible solutions. The constant rocking of the Ark on water along with adequate ventilation would prevent methane gases (which escape easily) from accumulating waste to reach hazardous levels. Central gutters could easily have been cleaned out and the waste dumped overboard. If indeed there were a number of animals in a hibernation state and especially if it was intensified for this special situation, it would have served to reduce the amount of waste to be dealt with.

While God could have provided miraculous care if He so desired we can see a number of possibilities exist that can easily provide solutions to questions regarding the feasibility of the Ark without the need to resort to fanciful explanations and miracles which the Bible does not mention or require.

Much of the content of this article was taken from the following resources:

1. John Woodmorappe, *Caring for the Animals on the Ark*, March 29, 2007, <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v2/n2/caring-for-the-animals>
2. Ken Ham, *The New Answers Book, Answers in Genesis 2006*, Master Books, Chapter 10



Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

This column welcomes the submission of original hymns. Please send hymns, as well as applicable information about the author and/or composer to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

Like a River Glorious



by Havergal/Mountain

Lyrics: “Peace Like a River” is a common simile in much Christian literature. Since this phrase is almost a direct quote from God’s Word, it is safe to assume that it is a good comparison. As with any such figure of speech, we must ask ourselves, “What is the point of comparison?” God’s peace obviously does not have any physical characteristics in common with a river (such as water and stones), but there must be certain aspects shared by both entities. The first verse of “Like a River Glorious” highlights the points of comparison that Isaiah may have been thinking of when he penned God’s message to us.

The second and third verses speak of the blessings that we experience when we rest completely in God’s peace. God has stated in His Word that there is a point where “Never foe can follow.” First Corinthians 10:13 makes it clear that God will never allow our foe to pursue us to the point that it is not possible to withstand him. When we realize this, it cuts down on the worry, care, and hurry that are discussed in the latter part of the stanza.

With this perspective in mind, it is apparent that the opening line of the third verse does not imply that God throws trials at us to see how much we can handle. Rather, it is suggesting that every trial that does happen to us must first meet God’s approval. The Bible is very clear that God is not the instigator of trials and tempta-

tions (see James 1:13). Any wrong desires or unpleasant circumstances are a result of sin (whether in our own lives or the lives of others) for which God is not ultimately responsible. The message of this hymn is to remind us that He actually *limits* the bad things that happen to us!

The chorus identifies the way to attain this type of peace. Only those who have trusted Christ for their salvation and entered into a relationship with Him can experience the blessings of God’s peace.

Music: One of the reasons this hymn is so singable and easy to learn is its repetitious melody line. The rhythmic pattern presented in the first line (“Like a river, glorious / Is God’s perfect peace,”) is simply repeated five more times with new melodic and harmonic material. Even this simple line can be broken down into two almost identical parts. The only difference between the first two measures of the phrase and the next two is the two half notes on “glorious” as opposed to the whole note on “peace.” In essence, this whole hymn is built out of a rhythmic motif laid out in the first two measures.

Another factor aiding the accessibility of this tune is the slow and consistent *harmonic rhythm* (how often the chord changes). For most of the song, the harmonic rhythm consists of straight half notes, meaning that the chord changes

PAGE 20

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Like a River Glorious

Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river. —ISA. 66:12

FRANCES R. HAVERGAL

6. 5. 6. 5. D.

J. MOUNTAIN

1. Like a riv - er, glo - rious Is God's per - fect peace, O - ver
 2. Hid - den in the hol - low Of His bless - ed hand, Nev - er
 3. Ev - 'ry joy or tri - al Fall - eth from a - bove, Traced up -

all vic - to - rious In its bright in - crease; Per - fect, yet it
 foe can fol - low, Nev - er trai - tor stand; Not a surge of
 on our di - al By the Sun of Love. We may trust Him

flow - eth Full - er ev - 'ry day; Per - fect, yet it grow - eth
 wor - ry, Not a shade of care, Not a blast of hur - ry,
 ful - ly, All for us to do; They who trust Him whol - ly

CHORUS

Deep - er all the way.
 Touch the spir - it there. Stayed up - on Je - ho - vah, Hearts are
 Find Him whol - ly true.

ful - ly blest; Find - ing, as He prom - ised, Per - fect peace and rest.

every two beats. Even during the quarter note measures, the chord usually stays the same for beats 1 and 2 and then changes for 3 and 4. ■

Malingers, Morons, and Morally Worthless

The Results of a Psychological Evaluation of World War I Conscientious Objectors

The World War I persecution of drafted Mennonites and other conscientious objectors has been well documented. By holding fast to their peace convictions, these COs were usually characterized as ignorant, irresponsible, intellectually weak, and mentally unbalanced. Refusing to combat the obvious threats to their country could hardly be the position of sensible people. That was the prevailing opinion of commanding officers, drill sergeants, fellow conscripts, and boards of inquiry (not to mention the general public). But they were not qualified to adequately make such assess-

ments of those with whom they so dramatically disagreed. Surely someone with the proper training and credentials could determine that peace adherents were not stupid, crazy, and just plain lazy. Yet even an alleged expert could be grossly blinded by the fervor of the times, his professional obligations disintegrating into hyper-patriotic name-calling. That is disturbingly illustrated by the following reports from the psychologist at Camp Cody at Deming, New Mexico, submitted as evidence in the May 24, 1918, court-martial of Mennonite CO Gerhard J. Klippenstein.

Camp Cody, Deming, New Mexico

May 4, 1918

Report of Chief Psychological Examiner on examination of Conscientious Objectors

NAME	RACE	AGE	OCCUPATION	SCHOOLING	RELIGION	OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS
Leo, Ernest	German	24	Teacher	College 3	None	Coward, personal weakness, socialist
Waltner, Edward J.	German	28	Farmer	H.S. 2	Mennonite	German bias
Cover, Jesse J.	American	22	Farm laborer	Grades 8	Dunkard	Fanatic, apparently sincere
Zehr, Christian	German	24	Farm laborer	H.S. 1	Mennonite	Weak personality, German bias, hypocrite
Rediger, Wm. James	German	22	Farm laborer	College 1	Pentecostal	Cowardly, self-righteous, weak, little religion
Dirksen, Peter P.	German	24	Farm laborer	Grades 8	Mennonite	Hypocrite, German sympathizer, clearly a malingeringer
Mull, Edward H.	German	22	Farmer	Grades 8	Lutheran	German bias
Herman, John H.	American	25	Farmer	College 1	Church of God	Abnormal nervous condition, maniacal fanatic
Rosentrater, Wm. F.	German	23	Farmer	Grades 8	Nazarene	Coward, weak motives, German sympathy probable
Klippenstein, Gerhard J.	German	31	Farmer	Grades 4	Mennonite	Morbid mental condition, pathological heredity
Salty, Gustave W.	Finn	25	Fisherman	Grades 8	None	Socialistic camouflage, neurotic malingeringer
Harder, John E.	German	25	Farmer	Grades 8	Mennonite	German sympathy probable, religion an afterthought
Wedel, Henry B.	German	30	Farmer	College 1	Mennonite	German sympathy, no religion
Dickson, Alexander R.	Scotch	29	Miner	Grades 8	None	Coward, slave to physical fear
Nelson, Lloyd E.	Swedish	24	Farmer	Grades 8	Adventist	Cowardly, weak, religious sham, malingeringer
Lorenz, Samuel J.	German	28	Farmer	H.S. 3	Mennonite	Germanic, extremely nervous, malingeringer
Peterson, Elmer A.	Danish	22	Farmer	College 1	Adventist	Weak, sanctimonious, "Too good to fight"

NAME	RACE	AGE	OCCUPATION	SCHOOLING	RELIGION	OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS
Elstun, George E.	German	28	Farmer	Grades 7	Dunkard	Pathological degenerate, malingerer
Danner, Fred A.	Russian	29	Farmer	Grades 8	Adventist	Worthless, weak
Toevs, John J.	German	26	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite	Stubborn, malingerer
Blom, Bouke	Dutch	29	Farmer	Grades 6	Dunkard	Insincere, feels no obligation to U.S.
Heppner, Peter	German	22	Farm laborer	Grades 7	Mennonite	Malingeringer
Hiebert, Frank L.	German	26	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite	Silly obstinacy, no sense of honor or responsibility
Bates, Julius A.	American	28	Farmer	Grades 8	Brethren	Sacred hypocrite, no religion
Graber, Charlie P.	Russian	22	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite	Germanic, nervously peculiar
Witherbee, Glen H.	American	27	Farmer	Grades 6	Church of God	Basest type of malingerer, a brazon [sic] hypocrite
Schmidt, Jake J.	German	23	Farm laborer	Grades 7	Mennonite	Weak, illogical, obstinate, malingerer
Lemke, David	German	23	Farmer	Grades 4	Mennonite	German sympathy probable, hypocrite, no religion
Villiard, Paul	American	24	Farm laborer	Grades 4	Mennonite	Lor [sic] moron, simple malingerer
Springer, Edward	German	22	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite	Extremely weak personality, malingerer
Buller, Peter	German	27	Farmer	Grades 5	Mennonite	Deaf, no brains, F.M. [feeble-minded]
Adrian, Peter I.	German	22	Farmer	Grades 5	Mennonite	F.M., no religion
Klassen, Frank	German	25	Farmer	Grades 6	Mennonite	Illogical, weak malingerer
Vlachos, Angelus Nick	Greek	23	Factory hand	?	Church of God	Hypocritical malingerer

Camp Cody, Deming, New Mexico
May 4, 1918

Report of Chief Psychological Examiner on Examination of Conscientious Objectors

Summary

1. The foregoing tables indicate clearly that the salient characteristics of the "Conscientious Objector" is (sic) not religion or conscience. Of the 34 individuals examined, 21 were of German parentage, of whom 10 gave presumptive evidence of German sympathy. The next largest group, 6 in number, was plainly actuated by physical cowardice their one motive was to escape service at all costs. A third group, 5 in number, characterized mainly by a weak sanctimoniousness, shows an utter lack of personal strength; though not distinctly cowards, they are morally worthless. The most obviously criminal group consisted of five unmistakable hypocrites whose "religion" was only a studied form of malingering. Nervous peculiarities, bordering on the pathological, appears (sic) in four cases. These are mentally defective to a degree that might warrant S.C.D. under A.R. 148 1/2. Of the entire group only one appeared reasonably sincere: this individual was either a skillful actor or an astute fanatic.

2. Discharge on account of feeble-mindedness is recommended for Peter L. Adrian, Paul Villiard, and Peter Buller.

3. The other 31 individuals are of no possible use to the Army but should be kept under military jurisdiction and dealt with in such manner as to impress upon the civil population the fact that religion and conscience cannot be prostituted as a means of escaping service. It is recommended that these 31 individuals be forced to unremitting hard labor for the period of the war, either in an internment camp, or in a penitentiary by sentence of a General Court-Martial.

Henry T. Moore
1st Lieut., Sanitary Corps,
Chief Psychological Examiner

Memorandum for the Division Surgeon, 34th Division:
Subject: The disposition of "Conscientious Objectors"

1. It is urgently recommended that the disposition of so-called conscientious objectors be such as to discourage as effectively as possible the prostitution of conscience and religion as a means of escaping service.
2. While there are some individual cases of apparent sincerity, it is the opinion of this office that the great majority are malingerers of the most insidious and shameless type.
3. There is every reason to believe that the press of the country is partly responsible for the large number of malingerers on religious grounds. Various statements to the effect that conscience would be respected absolutely have appeared with great frequency in the press; in like manner the names and locations of churches and societies whose creeds forbid participation in war or politics, or physical resistance of any sort, have been widely advertised by sensational feature-writers in the press.
4. Such sensational publications, by their "half-truth" character, have given rise to the idea that conscience was the "Open sesame" for the door to civil liberty and escape from military service. This idea, prevailing as it does in the masses of the civil population, stimulates malingering of this type all the more effectively because it acts so insidiously. If the problem is to be attacked at its source, the attitude of the civil population, especially as reflected in the press, must be changed.
5. This may be accomplished in part by giving deservedly severe punishment to the most shameless offenders and publishing the proceedings widely with appropriate emphasis upon the certainty that future offenders will be treated in the same manner.
6. The less consciously guilty, those who have been misled, those who are mentally or educationally not qualified to judge such matters in a responsible manner, should also be treated in such manner as to further the end aimed at in paragraph 5 above.
7. It is earnestly recommended that no person be discharged from the Army on account of so-called religious objections. If a so-called objector is feeble-minded and discharged under A.R. 148 1/2, it is urgently recommended that feeble-mindedness be stated as the cause of discharge.
8. No very definite precedent has so far been established as to the ultimate fate of these "objectors." It is an axion (sic) of free government that those who partake of its bounties are responsible individually and collectively for the maintenance of its capacity to afford them. This government can protect freedom of conscience only so long as its people are virile enough to enable the government to endure against the forces that would destroy it. Certainly a man who denies this responsibility to his government and to the society which his government had enabled him to enjoy cannot be said to possess a conscience in any true sense of the word; and in the present emergency, the government can ill afford to acknowledge such men as other than deliberately disloyal and devoid of conscience. Their status differs so little from that of enemy aliens that this office strongly recommends the prompt establishment of a precedent of interning them with Germans, publicly stigmatizing them as disloyal, and forcing them to hard labor for the period of the war.

Henry T. Moore
1st Lieutenant, Sanitary Corps,
Chief Psychological Examiner

—Reprinted with permission from the *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, Jan. 2008.



Counseling From the Word

The Wounded Healer

by George Robertson

While I was a student at college, we had a special speaker in chapel who addressed the growing trend of suicide among college students. He listed some warning signs that friends could be aware of in the event that one of their peers was contemplating taking his or her life. One example was of a student who the week before he took his life had suddenly given away his entire record collection.

It was the tradition to go to the mail-room after chapel. There was usually a lot of joking, and two students were bantering back and forth when one student said to the other, "Hey, you want my records?" They both laughed, not realizing that the woman, whose mailbox was between theirs, had a friend who committed suicide a month before.

She burst into tears and ran out. A few students tried to stop and comfort her, but she ran into the woods. Jackie, my wife, ran after her, and found her collapsed over a tree stump. When the young woman saw Jackie, she told her to go away. Then as if she were presenting her credentials to a foreign embassy, Jackie simply said, "My mother committed suicide three months ago." Jackie was admitted, she sat down on the stump with the girl, and they wept together. We all know this phenomenon. If anyone wishes to help us in a time of grief, he or she must be experienced in it or at least be able to understand before we will allow that one to minister to us.

The same is true about the Saviour. John Stott writes, "I could never myself believe

in a God if it were not for the cross. . . . In the real world of pain how could one worship a God who was immune to it?"

If it was the Saviour's ministry to identify with His people's brokenness, then it must be ours as well. Such a statement begs two questions: First, was it a principle of Jesus' mission that He had to identify with human suffering? Hebrews 2:10 and 17 answer that positively. Second, if it was a

basic principle in Jesus' ministry, must it also be in ours? Colossians 1:24

answers us again in the affirmative with the doctrine of our union with Christ in His sufferings. Because afflictions were in His pathway, they must be in the pathway of the Christian as well.

The supreme example of identifying with human suffering is that of the Wounded Healer of Isaiah 53. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (verses 3, 4).

Here we see that we must be doctors of the human condition. Jesus identified with human suffering. The course of action that He took in our redemption was His choice ("he hath borne"). Hebrews 2 explains that this was necessary for Jesus to become our complete Saviour.

Jesus' example describes our own adoption of this principle. He did not enter into

"If anyone wishes to help us in a time of grief, he or she must be experienced in it."

every kind of human suffering. Some specific things He did experience. But He did not have to become a paralytic, or a leper, or an epileptic in order to look on such with genuine compassion.

How could the Son of God identify so compassionately with human suffering? He was willing to be near it. That is the pattern we must follow, and yet we still find ways to avoid suffering. One way is through mental distancing. It is easy to keep someone's affliction from touching us by discussing it "professionally" or with psychological jargon.

Suffering is an occasion for ministry. As we imitate the One who was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3) we will not be able to distance ourselves from human affliction.

But to go beyond mere association to identification with suffering, we must know our own spiritual ruin.

Several years ago one pastor described how he had reached a crisis point in his life. One evening for family devotions he read the account of Isaiah's vision of God's glory in the Temple, a glory so awesome that Isaiah, sensing his own sin, cried out, "I am ruined!" The pastor's wife looked at him and said, "The problem with you is that you have never been ruined." God began to open up to him the sinfulness of his heart and make him freshly appreciative of God's grace, first for himself and then in a new way for his congregation.

Why is it that it must begin here? Because suffering is not a disconnected entity. It is a sinful invasion into God's good world. And although we are not solely responsible for the whole broken condition of the world, our own sinfulness contributes to it. Such realization of inward brokenness enables us to empathize with outward manifestations of brokenness.

The sinless Son of God could be compassionate toward sinners, because the drive of His whole mission was to become a sinner in our place. The severity of what we are

internally was displayed externally by Him on the cross. It was His business to know brokenness.

But we are not only to be wounded, we must also be healers, that is, doctors of grace. Isaiah 53:5 describes the Healer's solution to our broken condition: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

We can trust God with the question of suffering not only because He can empathize with us, but also because He has redeemed us. Job could trust God without a clear answer to the question of suffering because he witnessed God's faithfulness in the creation. Our assurance is even stronger. We have seen the cross,

which tells us that if God can be trusted to provide His Son, He can be trusted to deal with our suffering.

If the secret to being wounded is discovering the depth of one's own sin, then the secret to being a healer is recognizing the power of the cross in our own life. Until we can personally apply the finality of the verbs in Isaiah 53:5 ("he was wounded . . . he was bruised . . . we are healed") to our own sin, we will never be able to speak as "dying men to dying people."

In the playlet "The Long Silence," millions of human beings have gathered on a great plain before God for judgment. A commotion erupts in the front, and a young pregnant teenager says, "What right does He have to judge me? I didn't do this to myself." An African American man rises and rips open his collar to display rope burns, "Judge me? Lynched for no other crime than being a Negro?" Another folds back his sleeve and reveals a tattooed serial number from Auschwitz and says, "I suffered in a concentration camp, and He dares to judge me?" And so they caucused and decided to put God on trial. "This will be His sentence," they concluded. "Let Him be

"But we are not only to be wounded, we must also be healers, that is, doctors of grace."

born in poverty, let Him be born a minority and let the legitimacy of His birth be questioned for the rest of His life. Let Him be given a work that is so fantastic that even His closest family will think Him a lunatic for attempting it, and let Him be condemned for it. Let Him be condemned to die. Alone.” Suddenly, a long silence fell over the crowd. They realized that God had

already served His sentence. And because Jesus has served this sentence, we can offer real hope, the Healer, the atoning Healer Jesus Christ, to a broken world. ■

—This article originally appeared in *Covenant*, the quarterly magazine of Covenant Theological Seminary. It is reprinted with permission.



SIMULATED HOLINESS

by Larry Warren

We are slowly making the transition from being filled and led by the Holy Spirit to a humanistic substitute—a life centered on human interests and values, embellished by religious verbiage and beautified by the appearance of moral excellence. So much of the fruit displayed in the lives of many who profess the name of Christian is not the fruit of the Spirit, but the learned ability and resourceful execution of human efforts to achieve a simulation of the Spirit’s fruit.

Benjamin Franklin, a deist, excelled in just such a humanistic effort to strive for moral excellence. He had twelve guiding precepts he endeavored to incorporate into his life to achieve the virtuous qualities he desired. These twelve would not be at odds with the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians. When a Quaker friend told him he was quite often arrogant and overbearing, he added humility to his list of twelve. He said, “I cannot boast of much success in acquiring the reality of this virtue, but I had a good deal of success with regard to the appearance of it.”

Many, like Ben Franklin, have had a good deal of success with regard to the appearance of the Spirit’s fruit without acquiring the reality. They are like a housewife who cannot decorate her home with fresh fruit, replete with sweet nectar, and silently breathing out its refreshing aroma, so she

settles for the artificial. It has the appearance of the real thing, but it lacks the qualities of the genuine in every way, but outward appearance.

Synthetic, or man-made fruit in the spiritual realm is sterile; it has no power to reproduce. It emits no sweet, heavenly fragrance. Unlike the fruit of the Spirit, its very existence depends on the works of the flesh.

When this simulated holiness appears to be somewhat blighted, its defenders rush to its rescue with their humanistic alibis, such as, “the blemish is caused by a personality quirk, or it runs in the family, or there are some things holiness will not do for you.” Those leavened with simulated holiness are determined to make God’s Word fit into the framework of their life, rather than their life be in agreement with God’s Spirit and His Word.

Those who have heart purity and take great pleasure in the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit, grieve over individuals who profess to be entirely sanctified, but do things or manifest a spirit that is not consistent with true holiness.

Some who see the carnal flaws in others launch a crusade to convince everyone that Christian maturity does not exist, and no one has it. Since they do not have it, they are sure no one else has it either. They are in doctrinal confusion and are busy making

others mentally uncertain of where they are spiritually, or where they can be spiritually.

Those who have embraced simulated holiness will hurry to the side of the ones who have professed so high, but lived so low. The defenders of the carnal have a host of rational people to explain away carnal uprisings.

This proneness to explain away the carnal traits of others may be an indication they themselves are having an inward struggle with similar problems.

This is not just a modern-day fixation to dilute holiness of heart and life, it has always been with us. I was reminded of this when I received a letter from a reader. He called my attention to an article I printed some months ago. The article was first printed in a holiness periodical back in the fifties. It was written by a well-known and highly respected minister of that time. I apologized to the reader saying, with camp meetings and all the other responsibilities clamoring for attention, I grabbed the article to meet a pressing deadline. I did not remember reading it all, if any. Seeing who had printed it, and the author's name, I thought it was on target—I was wrong.

The letter from the reader stated, "This article is a most shameful defense of holiness, but it is represented as a reality. This is the reason the holiness church of today is weak, confused, powerless, up and down, in and out. In this article, not one mention is made of the work of the Holy Ghost in the life of the believer. God's Word states, 'Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.' 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' 'As he is so are we in this world.' These Scriptures identify the Holy Spirit as the source of power in the life of the sanctified which enables them to live a consistent holy life."

The brother closed his letter with this statement, "Many times I feel I'm among the few standing for death route holiness, and what it does for a soul."

Simulated holiness is taking the place of true holiness, because people are not willing to pay the full price God requires of a

person seeking heart purity. The price is death with all of its pain and separation. Paul paid the price; he said, "I am crucified with Christ." Few can say that and know it to be a reality. They try to go over the same ground the saints of the past went over, but they bypass the spiritual death the old saints experienced. They want people to think they have been cast in the same mold. They have every appearance and near likeness, but are not the real thing under their skin, because they have refused to die.

When carnal traits become visible and evident in a person's life, some will say they are part of the human, and try harder to suppress the source of embarrassment. At times they have sufficient inward resources in the human to force their carnal traits to behave on formal occasions and stay in line on the Lord's Day. But Katie, bar the door, and get out of their way when something or someone antagonizes them on blue Monday.

A church dominated with empty-hearted people, lacking God's Holy Spirit, must be continually jumpstarted with lively music and oratorical dramatics. The more you see of them, the less you see of Christ. Without Christ living and reigning within, the more dependent they become on humanistic solutions to deal with their many confounding defects. In time this spiritually lifeless, simulated holiness will shrivel up and mummify like all other man-made attempts to make a please-all holiness.

Some who have struggled through the intense pain and darkness of a spiritual death have not, by faith allowed the life of Christ to be fully formed in them. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The life of Christ within is what makes the holy life possible, and a living reality. Christ in us is what makes the sanctified "more than conquerors" in every distressing, harassing, irksome, torturous gamut we must pass through—even if it is God's will that martyrdom be our end. Christ living within makes us "more than conquerors." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Evangelist of Truth*

How to Leave a Brotherhood

by Jeff J. Jarmon

From the beginning of the Anabaptist movement in Europe, the history of the Mennonite church has been punctuated by change. The formation of a Biblical church that would stand in stark contrast to the state-church system represented a change. The migration of early Anabaptists from region to region and ultimately to North America resulted in profound changes: economically, culturally, and spiritually. As we ponder the events within the Mennonite church during the last fifty years, one word seems to characterize the period: change. With rare exceptions, history books portray change as being the result of massive forces, producing a response among masses of people. From this perspective, it is difficult to remember that history is fundamentally the cumulative result of individual choices. The sweeping spiritual fervor in early Anabaptism was the result of individuals choosing to change. The apostasy so evident in much of what is called the Mennonite church today is a result of individuals choosing to change.

Our generation is marked by another change that is perhaps unique to our place in history. While generations past were characterized by the migration of the church, our generation will perhaps be remembered for migration within the church. We live in an age when moving from one church setting to another is a clear and present reality. Many of us have exercised the choice to change, and identify with another church body. As a result of godly choices many have been brought to a closer walk with God. For some, the change of church brotherhood has brought multiplied woes. While God gives His children freedom to choose, we must remember that He will ordain the outcome of our choices. It behooves us to choose wisely. When we evaluate the possibility of changing from one church fellowship to another, what things must be considered?

The first issue shouldn't really be "how

to leave" but rather, "Should we leave?" God may call an individual or family to leave a congregation for various reasons. The key element is "God's call for us to leave." God will not "call" when motives, attitudes, or other heart issues are not in line with His will. God will not "call" when it is His desire for us to continue in our current situation. We might desire ever so much to alter our setting, but if a move is not His divine will, He will not call. When a family moves from one church setting to another, it often brings questions from others. Various individuals will not always understand or appreciate the change. The sincere knowledge that it was God's desire (not man's idea) that we separate from a local congregation and establish a new congregational relationship is critical in making the decision to leave a brotherhood. A contemporary Mennonite historian has said that "our decision to leave a particular church setting will likely impact three generations of family before we would leave this earth." "God's call" is the only safe way to relate to a decision that will bear good fruit for generations to come.

God has designed that His people work under the authority of a local body within the greater body of Christ. There are no Biblical grounds for "dropping membership" prior to committing our support and accountability to another congregation. Moving from one setting to another is to be done with the full knowledge of church leaders. It is consistent with Christ-like relations to share with the ministry openly and honestly about one's spiritual struggles and concerns in relation to church life. Likewise, godly leaders need to be approachable and listen patiently to those who are contemplating a change in fellowship.

There are several important practical aspects to be considered in relation to changing church affiliation. Each needs to be prayerfully considered and discussed

with those who will give solid Biblical counsel.

It is not “unsettling” to share your considerations in regard to moving with others in the congregation if it is done in a Christian manner. Some people justify their “confidentiality” as not desiring to destabilize the brotherhood. Often the basis of their secrecy is little more than fear that a brother or sister will challenge their real motivation for making the change. As a church body, we have an obligation to communicate openly with one another. Probably not everyone will be ready to share their insight on the matter. But we must remember that failure on the part of others to communicate will not excuse me before God of this sacred responsibility.

Communication should be such that it does not give any reason for others to sense bitterness in our reasons for leaving. Those who leave a congregation should be told that they will be evaluated in regards to comments made in relation to our “former setting” before, during, and after the move. It should be made clear that any statements that did not meet the Bible’s requirement for purity, honesty, and the edification of the church will be called into account.

As much as is possible, relationships within the current setting should be maintained or strengthened. It is a human desire to let relationships cool off when one thinks about separating themselves from a brotherhood. We believe that the separation will be made easier if the relational ties are not as strong. This is actually a process that accelerates our separation. Church attendance wanes, visitation is limited to a select few, and soon those considering a change begin to feel estranged from our own congregation. This “feeling” is often used in an attempt to bolster one’s reasons for leaving.

Once the decision to leave is reached, it should be acted upon promptly. The home ministry should be notified that God’s call to move to another setting has been recognized and that a commitment has been made to fellowship with another group of believers. It is expected that worship with

the first group would be suspended in favor of worship with the second. Attempts to “fellowship” with both groups results in confusion for each. It should be understood that the individual making the change will maintain the standards of his or her prior group until a transfer of membership has been achieved. If the individual desires to make certain changes in order to show support of convictions shared by the new group, it should be done with the knowledge of the congregational ministry of their former setting.

A church move should prompt us to serious personal inventory. Are we moving because we want more freedom for carnal expression, or are we moving to draw closer to Christ? Have we exhausted every possibility of continued fellowship with the current group? Have we done all that could be done or are we simply tired of struggling with this body of believers? Have we labored to do all that we can in an effort to build solid church-life in the current setting? Some have compared church-life to a group of individuals who desire to sit in the shade of a beautiful tree. Everyone wants to enjoy the comfort the tree provides, but precious few are willing to get a shovel and toil hard in the heat of the day to plant a seedling. Good church-life is hard work. Have we really done our part?

In light of the reality that the church is a living entity, we can expect to see continued change within the body of Christ. Some of us will be “called” to change our church affiliation. In this time of discerning God’s will, others will invariably struggle with our choice to change. There is a strong desire to try to convince those who have doubts, that this is clearly the Lord’s leading in my life. Words will seldom achieve this. In an effort to reassure them that God is truly in the midst of this change of fellowship, we are often tempted to tell them, “Just watch my life as I join this new brotherhood.” Perhaps equally revealing is how we leave our current brotherhood. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, April 2008.

The Christian and His Country

by Ronald J. Border

When we think of our “country,” we think of the geographical plot of ground where we were born or where our heart lovingly considers home. In the natural sense, we are tied to that piece of real estate by sentimental heart ties, cultural preferences, language, educational bias, economic practice, and/or family history.

Every country has its National Anthem. In Germany, their National Anthem started out with “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, über alles in der Welt” (Germany, Germany, over everything, over everything in the world) until the victorious Allies after WW II concluded that its singing had too much inflamed the nationalistic fires. The first two stanzas were then prohibited from usage in Germany. Only the third stanza may be sung at this time!

Even in the United States there are quite a few traditions and songs which serve to fire patriotic fervor and promote a pride of country. Who in the U.S. doesn't like to hear when the American, Lance Armstrong, wins the Tour de France for a record sixth time? During the Olympic Games, each country tries to win as many gold, silver, and bronze medals as it can for the glory and honor of the country. The public schools recite the Pledge of Allegiance. “The National Anthem” is played or sung before many athletic events. Songs like “God Bless America,” “America the Beautiful,” our state song “Beautiful Ohio,” all serve to glamorize the geographical area. The lyrics from a couple of popular songs in the public domain serve to illustrate the citizen's personal pride in his country: 1) “You're a grand old flag, you're a high flying flag, and forever in peace may you wave. You're the emblem of the land I love, the home of the free and the brave.” 2) “This land is your land, This land is my land, From California to the New York Islands, From the redwood forests to the Gulf Stream waters, This land was made for you and me.”

We remember the poem, “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” by Sir Walter Scott, parts of which are quoted at many patriotic events:

Breathes there the man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said:
“This is my own, my native land”?
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?

The parade of songs and poetry and literature and speeches and mass media communications are so widely proliferated and such a factor in our society that there is a tendency to be caught up in this sentiment about “our homeland.” There is something nostalgic about one's own country, isn't there? The U.S. has a short but storied history about many individuals who were willing to put their lives on the line to defend the country and protect its freedoms. Many have committed their lives to military service or some other form of governmental service as a “love gift” to their nation. Abraham Lincoln, in his Gettysburg Address, spoke about the dead “who gave their last full measure of devotion” on the field of battle. We cannot help but acknowledge the “well-intentioned” sacrifice and labor which has been expended for the sake of the country.

I “understand” this sentiment and I shared in it fully in my younger years. I was desirous to commit myself and my ALL for this geo-political country. My political moorings were deep. My philosophical base was conservative and I strongly supported public honesty and morality. I knew what it means to get the “goose-bumps” when hearing the National Anthem. I believed in my country and was proud of the fact that I was a citizen of, what I thought was, the greatest nation on the earth! I believed that service to my country was the highest good!

I could say a lot of things and, I suppose, could share an interesting story or two, but allow me to just say this—*I met Jesus!*

You see, I thought I knew Jesus all the time! Yes, I thought I was a Christian all during those early years. I thought of God and country as being somewhat synonymous. In the Boy Scouts, there is a God and Country Badge. I thought of God and country

together! I thought of God blessing our country, because, well, we were, as I understood it, *RIGHT!* I thought of the U.S. in terms of being a Christian country! We did so many positive things here! We believed in human rights! We took in immigrants. On the base of the Statue of Liberty are written these beautiful words:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free;
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send them, the homeless, tempest tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

Surely such a wonderful country was worth my BEST efforts and my allegiance and my loyalty!

But . . . May I say it again? — *I met Jesus! . . . and He became my Saviour and my Lord!* I don't know if it is the same for everyone, but when I met Jesus I found myself dying to the things for which I had lived. I was finally FREE TO SERVE the God that I had missed! I was SO attached to an "earthly" kingdom! Jesus opened the door to a "heavenly" kingdom. Oh, yes! I was still in this world. But I was no longer seeing this world as the "end." The Bible distinctly teaches and I began to see a "two kingdom" theology. More on this later!

There are some notable differences between the Christians and the non-Christians. The Christians have Christ in them (Gal. 2:20) and they belong to His kingdom (Col. 1:13) and they possess eternal life (Rom. 6:23; John 10:28) and they have entered into a covenant relationship with God through Christ (1 Peter 3:21; Rom. 6:1-11) and they are one with the Lord Jesus (John 17:16-26; Rom. 12:5; Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 6:17).

As I think of the faithful saints, as are recorded in the Bible, I am moved with what the Bible had to say about them:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But

now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:13-16).

Indeed, Jesus Himself spoke about a blessed home far removed from our natural home country:

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

As much as we respect and appreciate our country, we must confess that the United States, the country of our birth, is NOT God's gift to the world!—**God sent His Son into the world that ALL might be saved!**—*God's Son is God's gift!* God's gift is universal in scope and cannot be limited within the boundaries of a particular country.

The "worldly" man at his "highest" level seeks to create a better society where equality is observed and human rights are protected. He looks after the needs of a transitory (temporary) government and order.

The "Christian" man, however, manifests a clear vision of Christ's universal and eternal kingdom and considers his situation (or plight) only within the context of God's Master plan. The Christian is not concerned with immediate political fulfillment. His desire and ambition centers around being a conscientious witness for our Lord.

Many times, those who "rebel" against a prevailing structure in society to create a NEW ORDER are, in effect, lifting up their own agenda. Their eyes are not focused on the blood-stained cross of Christ. Their cry is NOT for God; but instead, they lift up their voices and initiate their actions as a response of selfish aggrandizement.

The Christian, on the contrary, in the true Spirit of vibrant Christianity, confesses that *his* country is a "heavenly" one. He expects no earthly gain or reward. In fact, he has willingly forfeited ALL for the excellence of the heavenly kingdom.

The "worldly" man puts his energies and his trust into a physical country; whereas, the Christian, recognizing the perishing

nature of the physical (2 Peter 3:10, 11), lays hold on “eternal” riches and the mansions (spiritually, “provisions”) for the saints of God in heaven (John 14:1, 2).

The “worldly” kingdom is of flesh and blood (through the physical birth); but the Christian’s kingdom is of the Spirit (spiritual birth—John 3:5).

The government and men of the “worldly” kingdom have to continually confront the issues of taxation, administration, daily detail, judicial matters, law-making, and appeasing the dissatisfied segments of the populace; while, on the other hand, the government of God’s chosen and holy people is upon the worthy shoulders of Christ, “*and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this*” (Isa. 9:6, 7). Based on our sure confidence in God and in His plan for His people, it is our continual prayer that He would daily purify our motives and our actions and that He would help us to understand the overwhelming supremacy and mandate of our heavenly home and citizenship over the claims on our life from this land through which we are now passing.

We are SO secure in our corner of the world. We are seemingly, for the present time by the mercy and grace of God, but “mildly” affected by world hunger and poverty, suffering, and the immediate effects of war. It seems SO comfortable, SO ideal, SO peaceful, SO “routine-friendly.” The lines in this world have fallen unto us in pleasant places. Everything is SO agreeable that we just settle back and view this “world” as wanting to be our friend. And, then, as a result, we find ourselves wanting to be a “friend” to the world. **Beloved! It is time to wake up! Awake thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light!** God’s Word straightly warns us: “*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*” (James 4:4). Unfortunately, there are some who don’t see

Bible Truth in the midst of their infatuation with the world. They seemingly go right on—drawing closer and closer to this dying world.

Nevertheless, one day, they may get a phone call from the doctor—the tests are in, the tumor was malignant, and their comfortable “world” is turned upside down and shattered. Their house may be destroyed by fire. They may suffer the loss of their substance. They may experience the death of a loved one. All of a sudden, dear one, their attachment to the world grows strangely dim. All of a sudden, they face the reality of brushing against the foothills of eternity. All of a sudden, their eyes are lifted up to behold the beauties of God’s kingdom. All of a sudden, they see and long for heaven like never before! **When we set our sights for heaven, we lose the focus for the things of this world.**

I can’t help but think about the famous allegory, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and the trip which Christian made through Vanity Fair (an allegory for the world). Christian, it seems, drew a lot of attention as he passed through Vanity Fair. He was especially noted because of three things: 1) his attire; 2) his language (he spoke in a sanctified tongue), and 3) he took no interest in the wares of the fair (in the things of this world). A remarkable lesson for us today! There are a number of helpful songs about this lack of attachment to the things of this earth. I’d like to share the words of one of them with you:

Here on earth I am a pilgrim,
And my journey, and my journey won’t last long;
Oh, let me move to those [blessed] heights,
Where palms of peace forever wave!
Here on earth I am a pilgrim,
And my journey, and my journey won’t last long.

We are on our way to heaven! Heaven is our long home! We are “in” the world, but we are not “of” the world! While we are here, though, we cannot but tell of the marvelous things which the Lord has done for us!

In fact, the Christian’s marching orders are found in Matthew 28 (“The Great Commission”). It involves telling the world what the Lord has done! It is interesting that the “Commission” follows Jesus’ testimony of power. He says in verse 18: “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*” This is

important to notice. Jesus is the source of power! The power lies in Him, not in political maneuverings or in the political resolve of men. The power is in Jesus! We must never forget this!

Now, based on the fact the real power is in Jesus' hands, we, as His disciples, are to go forth and tell the world. Verses 19, 20: *"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."*

A Christian is a meek and suffering servant of Christ the King. The Christian's primary purpose "for being," in addition to worshiping and praising our God and living for our Saviour, is to preach the Kingdom of God to men everywhere. Men will either accept this teaching or they will persecute the message bearer. This, indeed, is the work of the Christian! Man may kill his physical body but his spiritual body lives forever with Christ. In this, the Christian takes heart.

For the Christian, it must be that his one and only desire is to do the will of his Blessed Saviour. This is the proof of the reality of his love! Jesus says: *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* More than anything else in this world, the Christian wants to do God's will and live after the example of Christ. (*Who, by the way, refused an earthly crown, that He might do the work for which He was sent to do.*)

Thirty-four years ago when I declared myself a nonresistant follower of Christ, I concluded my submitted statement to the Department of the Army with these words:

In obedience to the will of my Blessed Saviour (as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount), I am convinced that He calls Christians to the path of love and nonresistance. In other words, I, as a Christian, cannot take the life of one for whom Christ died. I am to love my neighbor (whether he be *friend* or *foe*) as myself, and in so doing seek to win him to Jesus Christ. As a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, my loyalty to Christ and His teachings transcend every earthly loyalty and nationalistic allegiance, and my primary mission must be to see to the salvation of men every-

where. In this light and with a firm and abiding belief in God as my Guide, I respectfully—but firmly and conscientiously—refuse to draw my weapon in the event of an actual attack. This decision is not borne out of a disregard for my country, but instead, out of my commitment to Jesus Christ, His teachings, and His kingdom.

I was told by some government officials at that time that Christians taking this position make themselves "parasites" on the nation. They are not pulling their weight and are irresponsible. To this I responded with a statement from the early church:

For the men of God are certainly the salt of the earth; they preserve the order of the world; and society is held together as long as the salt remains uncorrupted . . . And as we by our prayers vanquish all demons who stir up war, and lead to the violation of oaths, and disturb the peace, we are in this way much more helpful to the kings, than those who go into the fields to fight for them . . . We do not indeed fight under him (the emperor), although he requires it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army—an army of piety—by offering our prayers to God . . . Christians are benefactors of their country more than others. . . . It is not for the purpose of escaping public duties that Christians decline public offices, but that they may reserve themselves for a divine and more necessary service in the church of God—for the salvation of men.

Beloved! There ARE two kingdoms in this world! Yes, there are more than 150 nations in the world, but there are only TWO kingdoms. Deny it if you will! But there will come a day and a time and an hour and a minute and a second . . . at which time you will not draw another breath—and THIS LIFE and its NATIONAL PRIDE and EARTHLY CITIZENSHIP will ALL BE OVER. IT WILL BE FINISHED! No longer a U.S. citizen! No longer a Russian citizen! No longer an Iraqi citizen! Is your citizenship in heaven NOW, so you will hear those loving words THEN, when it will be said: *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matt. 25:34). Some say this kingdom is to come!

PAGE 34

SWORD AND TRUMPET

The Bible says in Colossians: “*Giving thanks unto the Father . . . who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Col. 1:13). If you have been truly, as the Bible says, *translated into the Kingdom*, you have received the earnest (down payment) of the inheritance! Oh, the **fullness** of the kingdom, to be sure, is yet to come, but, if you are a Christian, Christ **is** your King and you **do** have kingdom responsibilities **today!** The Sermon on the Mount speaks of our kingdom responsibilities. Only a Christian and a citizen of the kingdom of heaven could live up to the high requirements of that Great Sermon! Don’t put it off until some “future age”! We have a “down payment” on the kingdom NOW! Are you living for Christ today? He has a kingdom! He is the King! Are you one of His subjects?

A young man in Czarist Russia who had become a conscientious objector to war through the reading of the New Testament was brought before a magistrate. With the strength of conviction, he told the judge of the life which loves its enemies, which does good to those who despitefully use it, which overcomes evil with good, and which refuses war.

“Yes,” said the judge, “I understand. But you must be realistic. These laws you are talking about are the laws of the kingdom of God; and it has not come yet.”

The young man straightened, and said, “Sir, I recognize that it has not come for you, nor yet for Russia or the world. But the kingdom of God has come for me! I cannot go on hating and killing as though it had not come!”

Listen, friends! Between the Christian and the world there exists a vast difference like that between heaven and earth. The world is the world, always remains the world, behaves like the world, and all the world is nothing but world. The Christian, on the other hand, has been called away from the world. He has been called never to conform to the world, never to run along with the crowd of the world, and never to have confidence in the world. The world lives according to the flesh and is dominated by the flesh. Those in the world think that no one sees what they are doing; hence, the world needs the sword

of the authorities. The Christians live according to the Spirit and are governed by the Spirit. They think the Spirit sees what they are doing and that the Lord watches over them. Hence they do not need or use the sword among themselves. The victory of the world is the sword by which they overcome (whatever is in their way). The victory of the Christians is the faith that overcometh the world (1 John 5:4).

The Christian, by virtue of his high calling, always lives in “tension” with the world. The Christian is “in” the world, but is not “of” the world. There is a line which must not be crossed! Let me use “language” for an example. I personally feel that it would be an advantage for every Christian to learn a foreign language, through which he would be enabled to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those of other nationalities. Just to know American English and to be focused on the U.S. has a tendency to shrink our “world-view” of God’s work. There have been those, on the other hand, who have so given themselves to language and culture study and they become so well assimilated into the other national group that they lose the vitality of Christian distinctives. This is NOT good! They have gone into all the world. That is good! But they, because of their infatuation with the people, have left off teaching the ALL things to be more culture-friendly. This is NOT good! In reaching out to any people or to any individual, it is important to maintain our identity WITH GOD and not to lose the godly distinctives by identifying too closely with the people we are trying to help. The Russian Mennonites give us a historical example of a group that was TOO detached in the midst of keeping distinctives, and, in so doing, they had no vision to reach out to the surrounding people at all! This, also, is NOT good! I believe God would have His people to be *separated*, but *friendly!*

So it is with our relationship with the country. We need to be careful we do not lose important godly distinctives by snuggling up closer and closer to the worldly political process. Could we take a lesson from history? In the book, *Moving Toward the Mainstream*, the author Donald Fitzkee, chronicles the 20th-century change in the Church of the

Brethren and how it moved away from its historic doctrinal and practical base. In the chapter on “Responsible Christian Citizenship,” we find these notations:

The shedding of distinctive dress was a highly visible outward sign of important inward changes taking place among the Brethren in the early years of the century. Their growing penchant to dress like the world indicated that brethren had begun to think like the world, as well. . . .

Prior to the turn of the century, [the Brethren] believed in sharing God’s love by being a pure and holy city set on a hill, not by soiling themselves in the swirl of worldly politics. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Thus, the primary responsibility of meek and humble followers of Christ was to “*come out from among them and be separate*” (2 Corinthians 6:17). Convictions such as these which sprung naturally from their doctrines of nonresistance and nonconformity prevented Brethren from voting, campaigning for the candidates, holding political offices, joining civic organizations, using the law to prosecute claims, displaying national flags, and participating in warfare. In general, preserving purity [of faith and practice—my insertion] took precedence over political participation.

Yet, in 1928 the political struggle over the repeal of the Prohibition Amendment caused the denomination to abandon its long-time position and its members went to the polls.

Today we find ourselves under increasing pressure to join the political process. A recent issue of the local paper had a front page piece headlined: “G.O.P. looks to Amish for support.” We want to point out here, that what was true in the days of Daniel is, also, true today: “*The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.*” It is not about the election . . . Or about voting! **It is about God’s will.** Daniel expressed it when God revealed to him the dream of Nebuchadnezzar: “*Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings*” (Daniel 2:20, 21). It is **God who is in control.** Not the voting machines! The cam-

paign trips through the States are not changing God’s mind! God does not need the opinion polls to make His decision! Consider this: **God has NEVER lost an election!** Whether the country is a democracy or not, God always installs His intention! Christians have no more business being involved in the political process than government officials have in giving their voice for an ordination in a church! There are two kingdoms! Make no mistake! Which kingdom are you promoting??

I suppose the political debates and the promotion of issues would hold some attraction for me today, except for two things: ***I know God is in control of the situation and I met Jesus and He turned my life around and gave me a new work to do!*** I am working for **SOULS**—not for **VOTES!** Please take note of this very important point! ***For Amish-Mennonites to involve themselves in the political arena, it will cause their witness to degenerate into another voice of an opposition party—another segment of the political pie—and they will lose the pure and separated voice of God’s moral and ethical authority in the land.*** This land—and ALL lands—needs a people who can speak with God’s prophetic voice apart from the political agendas of the day! A very pertinent Scripture to guide us in this area is found in 1 Peter 2:11, 12: “*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*” It is SO important to keep the testimony of God clear and free from the political infighting so prevalent in this world. It is important that we remain God’s men and women so we can speak with the authority of God’s Word!

Even though there are distinct lines of difference between the worldly kingdom and the godly kingdom, we want to accent here that we DO have responsibilities toward the earthly government.

First of all, we must **honor the king.** In 1 Peter 2:17 it says: “*Honour all men. Love*