

# FOUNDATION TRUTH

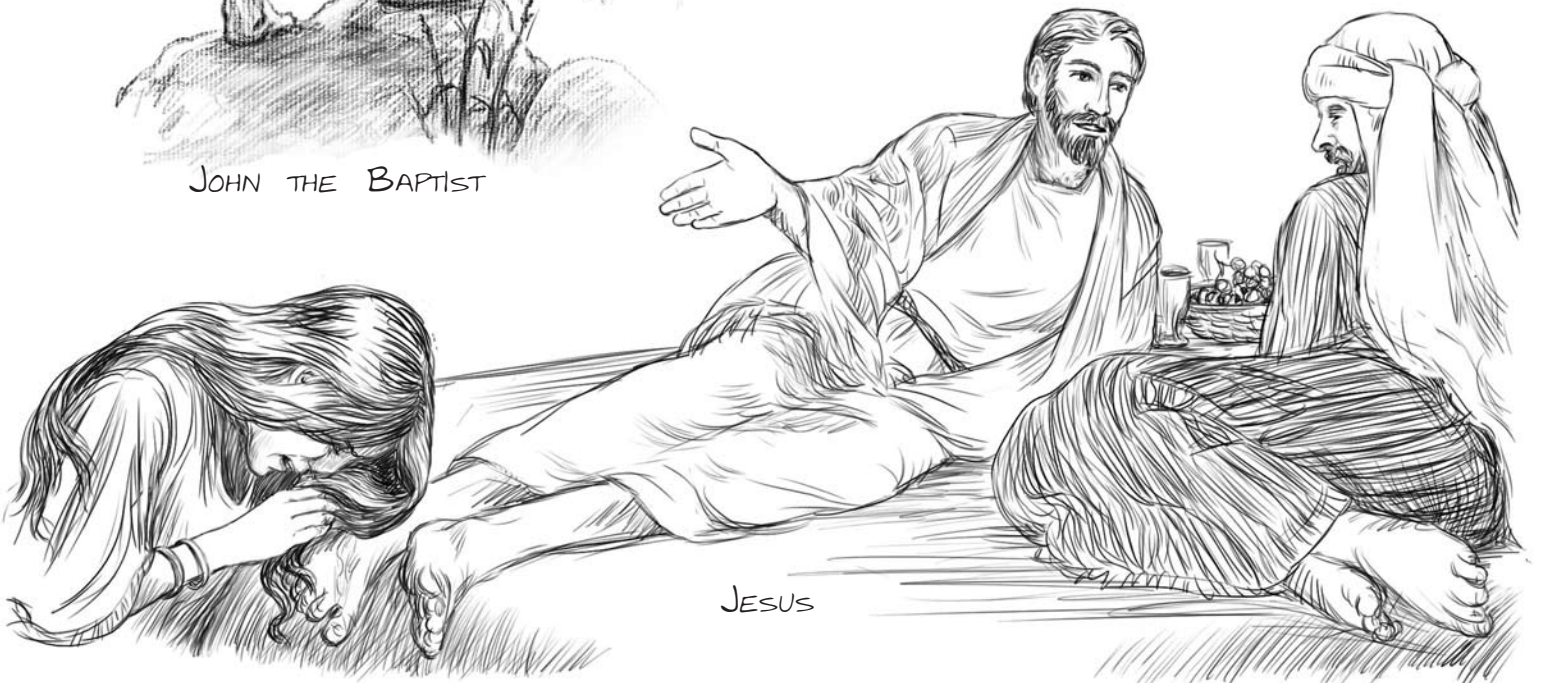
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JOHN THE BAPTIST

## God's Diversities of Operations

—page 11



JESUS

## Dear Reader

“Yet ye say, *The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?*” *Eze. 18:25*

Two years ago my father-in-law died without a valid will, so that his estate had to go through the complex legal process known as *probate*. The six children agreed on appointing one of themselves as the executor, or personal representative; then a long, often tortuous process ensued, involving the division of possessions, efforts to sell a large piece of property, dealings with attorneys, a CPA, and financial manager. As both an observer and participant in the process, I have found an amazing number of ways that the issue of “fairness” has come up, both for others and ourselves, and an education that the Lord began for me long ago entered a new and sometimes fiery stage.

“What is fair?” We all have our perspective, don’t we? Although the Lord has long taught me that only He knows what true justice is, it is amazing how many ways my own sense of “fairness” has been aroused. Also, even though my wife was not the personal representative, we have found ourselves on more than one occasion serving as mediators among those who had different ideas of what is fair.

Sometimes, like the man who asked Jesus to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him, there is another problem at the root of what we think is unfairness (Lk. 12:13-15).

Sometimes, we differ in our sense of fairness because of how certain experiences, our current circumstances, or our limited grasp of the facts shape our thinking.

So we disagree, with one saying “this is fair,” and another saying, “no, *this* is fair.” And sometimes, I look back at something I thought was unfair at the time and realize it was better or “more fair” than I thought.

We don’t really know what “fair” is as well as we think. The scripture at the beginning speaks to this misconception we have. If we really want to learn what “fair” is, we need to learn from God. One

child, after growing up, asked their parents why they were spanked more than one of their siblings. The parents answered that they needed more spankings. The parents didn’t treat their children exactly the same because they weren’t exactly the same. And the Lord doesn’t treat us all exactly the same, either. Some seem to have more opportunities than others, and some seem to have more sufferings than others. But **God knows what He is doing!** When all things come to light on the judgment day, everyone will understand that God has been completely fair with us. Furthermore, even those who go to Hell will recognize that God is being completely fair with them, though the knowledge will bring only bitter remorse.

Dear reader, I want to get all the good out of God’s dealings with me, because I know that regardless of how they feel to me, God is being fair. More than that, He designs all that He allows to come my way so that I can benefit greatly, if I will apply to Him for help to get the benefits. Isn’t it wonderful that God is able to turn everything bad in our lives into something that can bring us good? Won’t you trust God, too, and apply to Him for help to get the good out of everything you go through?

The probate process isn’t finished yet, and I still have more lessons to learn.

Love and prayers,  
The Editor



## About Us

We want to be of assistance to those who desire to live for God and make heaven their home, and we want to work with the Holy Spirit in stirring and awakening all others to the great necessity of doing so.

*Foundation Truth* is meant to be of general interest, but different articles may be of particular interest to different members of the family (which we attempt to indicate in the table of contents), but we look to the Lord for direction on what to include, and the structure may vary from issue to issue.

We publish *Foundation Truth* by faith, its only support being free-will offerings that God lays on the hearts of His children to keep this ministry supplied. If the Lord lays it on your heart to contribute, please make out any checks or money orders to Richard Erickson—we have difficulty depositing any monies made out to *Foundation Truth*.

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TIMELESS TRUTHS PUBLICATIONS was founded with the purpose of spreading the timeless truths revealed in God's Word. We publish literature that encourages folks in walking the straight and narrow road that leads to heaven. Our chief corner-stone is Jesus, and with our focus on Him, we try to avoid putting too much attention on any person or persons. If you are interested in knowing more about us and what we believe, feel free to contact us.

In addition to *Foundation Truth*, we also publish *Treasures of the Kingdom*, "Dedicated to planting young feet on Heavenly soil"—a bimonthly magazine for children ages five to ten.

Back issues of our periodicals, including the former *Dear Princess* magazine, are available at our website, [timelesstruths.org](http://timelesstruths.org), as well as a growing collection of hymn sheet music and online books, tracts, articles and sermons.

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edited by Rick Erickson and others

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*God has not sent us into the world to condemn the world, but to preach the pure gospel, that the world might be saved. It is astonishing what little conception many a professed Christian has of Bible Christianity. They seem to think that church membership, church-going and giving, and a few outward ceremonies is all that is included in Christianity. One woman whom we met entertained hopes of heaven because she sent her children to Sunday school. Has Christianity been changed in its nature since the days of Jesus and the apostles? Is it any less to be a Christian now than it was then? Is not as much required of us today to be Christians as was required of the Christians in the first centuries of this gospel era?*

—Charles E. Orr, Christian Conduct

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. - 2 Tim. 2:15*

**I**s the Bible really a coded book? How can I understand the code?

**R**eply:

The Bible is an inspired book. Brother Peter tells us that, “*no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*” <sup>2 Pet. 1:20</sup> That is, the book conveys the thoughts of God to us about many things that we need to know. It is not up to us to try to figure out what is meant as best we can. If we try to do this, many different and conflicting ideas are put forward. The only way to not have a “*private interpretation*” is to be inspired to understand the original meaning(s) that God put in there for us. In other words, we need to be inspired to understand and rightly divide the Word of truth just as the authors of the different books in the Bible were inspired in the first place. To put this in Scriptural terms, we need to be “*in the Spirit on the Lord’s day*” <sup>Rev. 1:10</sup> as Brother John was on Patmos. When we are in the Spirit and thus taught of God, different scriptures will harmonize that seem contradictory, and we will receive much help that will prove to be sound and right as our lives unfold.

There is another side to this, as well. If we do not approach the Word of God with an inspired understanding, we will wrest the Word of God to our own destruction. It is written in such a way as to confound the wise and mighty (1 Cor. 1:26-29). Many people really believe that they see things in there that mean certain things, when the

truth is that they are deluded and have not been enlightened by the Spirit of God. All around us are the results of people trying to do it some other way than by divine inspiration, and the results are confusion, doubts, and skepticism; yes, “*every evil work*” (James 3:13-16).

**A**re humans born in sin?

**R**eply:

“*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*” <sup>Ps. 51:5</sup>

“*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*” <sup>Ps. 58:3</sup>

“*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.... Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*” <sup>Rom. 5:12,14</sup>

These scriptures help us to understand the nature of the sin which afflicts man from birth. It is not wilful rebellion against what is known to be wrong, as Adam committed, but it is sin which is “*not... after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.*” It is a sinful nature, a nature of wrath, which leads to actual transgression. Inherited sin that leads to committed sin. This inherited nature of sin causes men to go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies, etc., but

at that time of life, the sin is not imputed to the individual, as this is “*before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*” <sup>Is. 7:16</sup> Eventually this innocence ends, and all go astray by choosing to do things that are known to be wrong. Thus the depravity of the nature leads to a guilty conscience and a state of condemnation. As Paul says, “*For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*” <sup>Rom. 7:9</sup> Note that although he had a nature of sin, a nature of wrath (Eph. 2:3), he was alive once. He lost that innocent state before God when sin revived, and he died (spiritually).

## Operation of God’s Body

**I**s it true that the days of miracles have passed?

**R**eply:

“*And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*” <sup>Mk. 16:17-18</sup>

“*Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*” <sup>Jn. 14:12-14</sup>

The power of healing is given to some in the church. “*For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy;*

*All around us are the results of people trying to do it some other way than by divine inspiration, and the results are confusion, doubts, and skepticism; yes, “every evil work.”*

to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." 1 Cor. 12:8-11

The power of healing is given to the elders. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." Jas. 5:14-15

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Heb. 13:8

**W**hat role do women have in the church of God? Can women function in leadership in the church?

**R**epl<sup>y</sup>: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is **neither male nor female**: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:28

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant [the word servant here is translated *deacon* in 1 Tim. 3:8] of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." Rom. 16:1-2 Note the authority and place that this sister had. "That ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you." Paul says she had been a help to him and others, as well.

"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." 1 Cor. 14:3

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and **your daughters** shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on **my handmaidens** I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." Acts 2:17-18

"And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room.... These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren." Acts 1:13-14

Peter related this prophecy in Joel ("your sons and your daughters shall prophesy") to explain to the audience why the men and women who had just been filled with the Holy Ghost were prophesying to them.

"We entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had **four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.**" Acts 21:8-9

"But every **woman** that prayeth or **prophesieth**..." 1 Cor. 11:5

#### Men, laboring in the gospel:

"Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord." Rom. 16:12

"I [Paul] laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." 1 Cor. 15:10

and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Acts 18:26

**W**hat does it really mean that women are to keep silent in the church?

**R**epl<sup>y</sup>: "Let your women keep silent in the churches." 1 Cor. 14:34 "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection." 1 Tim. 2:11 Does the Bible mean to teach us that at all times, in the congregation, women should not teach nor minister? In Acts 2:16-17 they did not keep silent, nor does the Bible manifest disapproval of their prophesying to all. Priscilla did not keep silent in Acts 18:26; she assisted her husband in teaching another brother: "They... expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

*"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.... And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."*

#### Women, laboring in the gospel:

"And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help **those women which laboured with me** in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life." Phil. 4:3

#### Men, helping in the gospel:

"And when he [Apollos] was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace." Acts 18:27

"Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved." Rom. 16:9

"We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth." 3 Jn. 1:8

#### Women, helping in the gospel:

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus." Rom 16:3

"And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila **and Priscilla** had heard, **they** took him unto them,

Well, one may say, what does the Bible mean when it says for them to keep silent? Paul tells us that they should learn in silence when not to do so would be to teach or usurp authority over the man (1 Tim. 2:12). But in the New Testament church, **none** of us (man, woman, child, rich, poor, bond, or free) have authority over the others **in the church relationship**, for there we are all brethren (Mk. 10:42-45; Mt. 23:8-12). Now for a wife to argue or contend with her husband for his position *in the family* is properly termed to usurp his authority, and there she should be silent whenever such situation arises. But in the church relationship, none have authority over each other in respective position for there we are all brethren before Christ, the Head. None of us is given authority over the other *except the authority that comes from being used of God*. And in that, the authority is actually the Lord's as He works within the chosen vessel.

Well, one may say, doesn't the scripture in 1 Cor. 14:34 say for women to keep silence in the church? Yes, and it also tells the men to keep silent (1 Cor. 14:28-30). Note the significance of the pronoun *your* in verse 34. The apostle did not say that all women should keep silent, just *your* women. They were the ones out of order. According to the next verse, they raised inappropriate questions that should be handled out of the church setting—at home. Had the apostle commanded them to hear no women, the meaning would be different from what was expressed. But he was well aware of how God used women in the ministry—he had been blessed and edified by them (Rom. 16:1-2). And he knew that **anyone** should be silent who is out of order. *"If any man speak [the term man is used here as a appellation for all mankind, masculine and feminine alike], let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."*<sup>1 Pet. 4:11</sup> That is the only right that **any of us** has to speak—"of the ability that God giveth." If God is not using us, we should be silent.

## Death and the Resurrection

**Were Enoch and Elijah not taken to heaven, as it seems both did not die physically? How do I reconcile the fact that human souls can die at physical death?**

**R**eply: *"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."*<sup>Gen. 5:24</sup>

*"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."*<sup>Heb. 11:5</sup>

*"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."*<sup>2 Ki. 2:11</sup>

*"Your heart shall live for ever."*<sup>Ps. 22:26</sup>

*"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."*<sup>2 Cor. 4:16</sup>

*"But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."*<sup>1 Tim. 5:6</sup>

These are but a few of the scriptures that teach that man is a two-fold being, comprised of a body and of a spirit. The spirit is also referred to as a heart and as the soul. The term *soul* is also used to refer to the entire combined man, body and spirit. Physical death is the state of the spirit of a man being separated from the body. *"And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin."*<sup>Gen. 35:18</sup> Note that the soul was not in "parting"; the soul was "departing" from the body. When Elijah was praying for the dead child of the widow of Sidon, he prayed, *"O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again."*<sup>1 Ki. 17:21</sup>

But it is possible for a soul to be dead while the physical man is alive. *"But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."*<sup>1 Tim. 5:6</sup> *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."*<sup>Eph. 2:1</sup> People who were alive physically, but spiritually dead at the same time. The condition of the soul is not changed by physical death. If it was spiritually dead when physical death occurs, the soul is still spiritually dead. If it was spiritually alive when physical death occurs, the soul remains spiritually alive. There is a place for the spiritually alive to reside after physical death. There is another place for the spiritually dead to reside after physical death. Both of these places are in *hades*, the world of disembodied spirits. The word *hades* has been translated as *hell* in the Bible. The word *gehenna* is also translated *hell*. This is why Jesus spoke of God as the God of the living, not the dead (Mk. 12:27). He is the God of the **physically** dead, but they are **still living** (in conscious existence).

When the soul is reunited with the body after death, then it is called a resurrection. When a soul is reconciled with God, its source of life, then a spiritual resurrection takes place, and the soul comes alive. *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."*<sup>Eph. 2:1</sup> To "quicken" is to bring to life.

**W**ill there be a time when Jesus will come FOR the saints, and another time that He will come WITH them?

**R**eply: In the following scripture text, both the saints that are alive physically and those who have already died physically will be involved in the (singular) future coming of the Lord. *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that **we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent** [precede] **them which are asleep**. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: [to meet their spirits coming with the Lord—Ecc. 12:7] *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*"<sup>1 Th. 4:14-18</sup> Paul said that he bowed his knees to the Father of the entire family "in **heaven and earth**."<sup>Eph. 3:15</sup> In 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, the entire family is united at the trumpet of God at the resurrection of the dead. *"A resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust."*<sup>Acts 24:15</sup>*

*When the soul is reunited with the body after death, then it is called a resurrection.*

*When a soul is reconciled with God, its source of life, then a spiritual resurrection takes place, and the soul comes alive.*

# GOD

and

MY

CRACKED  
RIBS

**A**re there some people who will not be resurrected?

**R**epl

*There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.* Acts 24:15

This covers everybody, doesn't it? The just and the unjust.

*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.* Rev. 20:12-15

Again, consider the total comprehensiveness of this picture. No one is left out. All of mankind that has ever lived are there.

Some Scripture, such as 1 Corinthians 15, only discusses part of this picture, and it is possible to get the idea that only part of mankind will be there. But, as we see from these other scriptures quoted above, **every-one** will be there. **Everyone** will be resurrected at the general resurrection. ➡

*"MANY ARE THE AFFLICTIONS of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."* Ps. 34:19

*"There hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* 1 Cor. 10:13

It was late last April when I fell against the top of our tub wall, causing great injury to my ribs. Oh, how thankful I am for the Lord measuring out this trial to me. Even at that moment I was thankful. First, I was refreshed from a good night's rest. Secondly, I had just completed my shower, and so I was clean. Next, I called in my heart upon the Lord to help me out of the tub—and He did! I made my way to where my feeble cries could be heard by the family, as I wanted them to be able to pray for me. We called our pastor for agreement in prayer. We also notified the saints we had come to know in other places to be in agreement of prayer as well. I knew the Lord had heard our prayer and would heal me.

At first I was eager to trust the Lord by getting up and walking about, but that made matters worse. Soon the Lord made known to me that it was needful for me to lay on my back on a firm surface as much as possible. I had done contrary for a couple of days with terrible muscle spasms and great pain, so I was more than willing to obey. It was not an easy time, but no true affliction is free from difficulty. We happened to have a narrow hollow-core door in our barn, and that was used as my bed, with a very thin air mattress to help ease the hardness of the door—it worked perfectly. The Lord also made a way for me to get up and down, as it took two people to do this. Shifts were done around the clock, and this was possible since three of our girls are still at home with us. Oh, how wonderful is the Lord to measure out our trials!

My family was pretty well worn out and starting to acquire back strain, and so it was then that I needed to trust the Lord to help me to take care of myself during the night. To get on the door, two of my family would need to lower me down as I leaned back against the door. With the Lord's help, I managed to take lying down

for about 1.5 - 2 hours at a time. The Lord has given me strong legs, and so I was able to manage getting up and down in this manner. Oh, how I looked forward to those breaks from being on my back, but I knew that the more time I was on my back (my ribs were kept free from movement) the sooner I would be able to be up and about as usual. I was able to keep my eyes on the Lord and trust Him moment by moment.

After about a week's time I was able to listen to cassettes, and I chose *Pilgrim's Progress*, as I had only heard bits and pieces of it from time to time when the children were listening to it. It was truly a blessing to be able to be still long enough to listen to it—it took over a week to do so. I was able to listen to *Christiana* but only got part way through it when other things distracted me from completing the story.

The Lord gave me all that I needed for each moment. I believe, at least in this battle, that it took trusting the Lord to help me moment by moment—that was my way of escape. If I was tempted to look to where I was and how much I wanted to be up and about, that would only rob me of the peace that God gives to His trusting children.

In three weeks time I was able to get myself up and didn't feel pain during the day, unless I forgot to lie down and rest during the day. It was finally at 6 weeks that I no longer felt discomfort while trying to sleep at night. A close friend mentioned that it took over 6 months before her sister was healed from broken ribs. Oh, how I thank and praise the Lord for touching me and making me well. I still feel a slight sensation in the area when I turn on my side at night—and oh how I thank the Lord for this reminder of His goodness towards me.

There are many in heavy battles at this time. It is at these times of great trial that we must remember to hold up the hands of the weary in the battle by encouraging them with the promises of God. *"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."* Heb. 13:5

God is there right by us. Our job is to hold on and trust **Him**, never willing to give in to discouragement. In this spirit we are *"more than conquerors"* Rom. 8:37 through Christ Jesus! ➡

## “I Will Guide Thee with Mine Eye”

FOR A LONG TIME, I have been acting just according to my understanding of the Word of God as written in the Bible, telling myself that there was no need of extra leadings from God, over something that is directly written in the Scriptures. I thought it was fanatical to claim that God speaks in any other way extra over what we would read as His Word in the Bible. I would take the Word of God just literally as it says in the Bible. For instance, in relation to doing some acts of mercy, the Bible says, *“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”* Mt. 25:40 I would take this as directing me into doing acts of mercy to everyone in need I possibly would come across—even to the extent of using all the monies I would have for myself and my family, leaving us in need too. I would appeal to a congregation to lift an offering to help some in need as often as the need would be voiced.

I have recently found out that we need to seek God some more for extra directions when it comes to some of our actions. I would like to relate how the Lord has taught me these lessons recently.

In recent years, I came across some brethren in the Lord who have been trying to share these things with me in writing; but the lessons were never made clearer to me as they were made directly by the Lord in my experiences in the months of April, May, and June, 2007.

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Well, I must say this surprised me. I did not have the money at that very moment. But more to the surprise was the fact that I thought that I had done all that I was supposed to do in the area.

In the middle of April this year, I was burdened to go up country from the coast to attend to some spiritual and social duties that were mine to attend to. The Lord supplied the funds needed and cleared me to go up there. There is a joy that settles over me whenever the Lord would have me do something that was not directly written in the Bible. At times, the Lord would impress on me to do the thing and at times, He would speak to me directly and tell me to do it. This time, I was directly instructed by the Lord to go. So I went up there and I remained some time, ministering around the area I used to pastor before I came to the coast. When I had finished what I thought were my duties to do over there, I made a move to return to the coast to my family and my new congregation. This was on Monday, May 21st. But when I got to the capital, I got stuck there. My money was used up and I could not move from there. I fasted, prayed, and waited upon the Lord for some time, but the Lord did not supply the needed funds. I was puzzled and wondered what was wrong with my relationship with the Lord. But all the time, I felt clear in the conscience that there was no sin in my life, so I prayed on and waited.

On one morning I woke up feeling the joy that the Lord fills me with many times when He wants to reveal something to me. The Lord brought up very vividly to my mind the scripture from Proverbs 3:5-6: *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”* I opened the Bible, read the scriptures several times over, meditated and prayed more expectantly, but nothing new seemed to come to me as I read and prayed. The conditions where I was sleeping were so bad that I was not able to write my notes, but I was able to read alright. So I prayed and felt that I should go to check for email letters in a Cyber Cafe.

On my way to the Cafe, the Lord's voice came directly to me so clearly: “Go back to E—— and M——.” (This is the congregation I was ministering to before I left them for the coast.) Well, I must say this surprised me. I did not have the money at that very moment. But more to the surprise was the fact that I thought I had done all that I was supposed to do in the area. There were to be the ordinances services of feet washing and the Lord's supper the following Saturday (the next day), but I had excused myself from the saints there since I wanted to get back to my family and the congregation. So at that very time, I truly did not feel the need for me to get back to M—— again.

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Whenever the Lord speaks, there is a finality and so joyous a conviction that it cannot be easily mistaken.

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When I got to the Cyber Cafe, and opened my mail box, I found that a Brother had advised me that He had sent me \$50. Immediately, I thought it was not money for the coast saints but it was for my fares back to E—— and M——. But again, I was wrong. Immediately I got the money, the Lord's voice again came to me saying: “Send most of the money to your family.” Whenever the Lord speaks, there is a finality and so joyous a conviction that it cannot be easily mistaken. So I obeyed, sent \$40 to the saints at the coast and waited. Again He said: “Call your brother in the flesh and tell him you are getting back to E——.” So I called my brother and the first thing he told me was, “Come for money to use there.” He carefully gave me directions to his place as I had not been there before; and so I went. He had \$31 ready for me! Praise the dear, caring, and benevolent Lord!



By Saturday morning, May 26th, I was at M—— long before the local saints got to the church building. Several testified that they had prayed the Lord to get me back there for the ordinance services. In fact one said that the Lord had already shown them that I would be there. We finished the services late in the evening. However, I felt that the Lord wanted me away from M—— that evening. So I rode a bus to E—— where I spent the night. In the morning, the Lord spoke to me and said: “Go to —— church.” Again it was a surprise as I naturally thought that I would be more useful that Sunday morning at M—— congregation, where the saints had been praying for me to be. But I gladly obeyed the Lord and went to —— . It was around 12:30 PM when I got there, but late as it was, the saints had been late for the services. We began as soon as a good number had arrived and the Lord had me preaching. By the time we finished, it was near to 4:00 PM. We had a good time there as each testified how the Lord had delivered them from man rule and had set them free to only look to the Lord. It was such a joy to me as we had been praying for this congregation for more than three years. Praise the Lord.

I got back to E—— late in the evening that Sunday. In the morning of Monday the 28th, as I was praying (as is my usual habit in the early morning) at 4:00 AM, the Lord brought up to my mind the scriptures in Galatians 5:16: “*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*” It was a blessed time for me again and I was so filled with unspeakable joy. As I sat for my breakfast tea (it was all I could afford), the Lord told me He had work for me to do at a place near M—— . So I went there and, again, the Lord had gathered together a number of the preachers of the several divisions of the “Two Works of Grace Church of God” groups around E—— . We had a good meeting at an hotel place and had a good discussion of the topic of “unity” and how we could be blessed if we obeyed the Lord in this. This was the first time so many of the ministers had met since the divisions in 1999. Only two groups were not repre-

sented in the meeting. It was particularly a special occasion, as the meeting was not called by anyone, but purely ordered of the Lord; each just came to the hotel meeting place by inspiration of the Lord. There were no debates, arguments, or any feeling of antagonism towards one another, as used to be in the time of the divisions. It is amazing what the Lord would do if we allowed Him to work. It was wonderful how the Holy Ghost worked. Please, pray that each one of the ministers humbles himself and obeys the Lord. Usually, it is the ministers who cause divisions as they fight for positions of leadership and money, each campaigning for and drawing whatever following he would get.

For a good number of the days that followed, the Lord had me ministering around E—— where a new congregation is being established. No one had particularly called me to the place and only the Holy Ghost led and organized the meetings. The host in particular had been prepared of the Lord, and had come looking for me at M—— some time after I had left to the coast, missing me. He said he had spent several months praying and had prepared his unfinished shop for the church meeting place. Oh, how the Lord works to answer the cry of some hungry soul in an unknown corner of the world. It reminds me of Cornelius, who prayed until an angel came down telling him to send for Peter. In the course of that time, a lot of blessings fell upon me as I saw the hand of the Lord at work in the provision of my needs and also for the needs of a good number of people. We saw the Lord deliver a person from demons and heal others there. Glory to God for all His goodness.

Finally, the Lord released me to get to the coast to attend to the needs there and continue in my normal place of duty. ➡

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Oh, how the Lord works to answer the cry of some hungry soul in an unknown corner of the world.

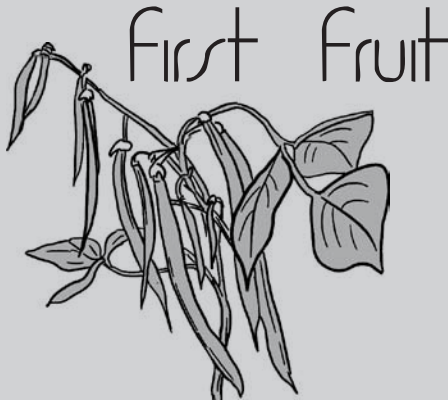


## *a lesson from* The Steering Wheel

Recently I took up a task that required several hours of driving each day. The country route was relaxing, as far as driving is concerned, and was a pleasant change from other, more strenuous, activities. All I had to do was sit back and keep the van on course, right? It was when I was plowing down a straight stretch between a couple fields that I noticed the steering wheel. The van I was driving had a decided bent toward the right ditch! It seemed quite a shame to strain my arm on such a beautifully straight, paved highway, but the pressure had to be kept on if we were going to get to our destination safely. Ah, the One who holds my reins spoke then, and could I neglect to see the lesson?

We have minds of our own, and having yielded up the steering wheel to Jesus (which is the only safe way to drive) doesn't mean that the trip will be smooth going. If I don't stay aligned by the Heavenly mechanic, is there not a good chance that my human tendencies will keep me heading for the ditch? I'm not speaking of taking major turns without God's direction. (Horror of horrors! Some people's steering gear locks up all together—a sure recipe for one of those overturned wrecks.) No, I'm talking of the slight pressure of the Holy Spirit to keep me centered on the road. Do I mind the little checks and cautions throughout each day—the sense of His pleasure or disapproval—or do I resist or ignore them? If I don't yield up fully and trust the Hand guiding my life, might I not be giving my driver some unnecessary arm pains (not to mention, find my life continually under re-directing pressure)? How much more enjoyable the drive when only slight adjustments are needed to keep on course! ➡

It is the time of year when the vegetable gardens are bearing fruit. Oh, how much I have looked forward to picking the first fruits of our labors—hardly anything could be more tasty. If you have a vegetable garden of your own, you will have noticed that the first picking is by far the very best. The beans are straight and uniform, the broccoli clusters are well formed, the



lettuce fresh and crisp—and the list goes on. This is the result of much toil and sweat, but in the reaping, it all becomes worthwhile.

At this time in particular, I am reminded about how much the Lord delights in us giving Him of our very best. For some of us it is the income that we feel is so valuable to do the things that are important to us. For others of us it is being able to be a blessing to those in need, whether it is sharing of our goods, time or talents. To bear fruit that pleases the Lord is only possible when we allow Him to work in our lives to do as He wants to. As a garden is prepared for good fruit, it takes diligence in the caring of our soul for the fruit in our lives to be just as it ought to be. The soil of our soul is dependent upon being fed by the Word of God in Spirit and in Truth. Are we hungry enough for the *Truth*? This is a good question. It is when we are truly hungry that we will *earnestly desire and*

*contend for what we need.* Are you *contending* to commune with God and feed on His Word? Are you eager to be with other believers to hear their testimonies, and encourage one another in the Lord? Are we convinced that the trials in our lives are part of this process that is necessary for our faith to be tested and strengthened to bring forth the fruit that is acceptable to God?

Let the Lord speak to you as you garden this year. If you aren't a gardener, take the time to begin one now, as you will find that the benefits are well worth it. The Lord will meet with you there in your garden if you let Him. How is the fruit of your own personal garden? Remember it is more blessed to give than to receive. Real love is voluntary, so it is with God. Giving of our first fruits, our very best, is what pleases the Lord the most (2 Cor. 9:7). We then can trust Him to give us of His very best in return. ♥

## Do You *Wrinkle* Beneath the Iron?

It may sound like a strange question to ask, but consider for a moment. Have you ever taken up the shirt sleeve you've been ironing, only to discover a deep crease on the reverse side? Or perhaps, in your hurry to "rub out those wrinkles" in a denim skirt, you've actually added a few extra? I have. And the thought came to me quite forcibly, *The process that was meant for good can have the opposite effect. Why? Because I was in a rush—because I wasn't careful to keep the fabric smooth.* It was a lesson to ponder on.

The Lord is so good to make pertinent applications of truth to our lives. To say it more simply, Jesus knows how to make things "hit home" to us. So it was with the allegory of the iron. Not long ago I had an experience of being told to wait for several months on a project that seemed very pressing to me. This was a great trial to me; a heated iron, if you will. I couldn't see any value in sitting still, but Jesus said "sit." There are many perplexities and paradoxes in life that don't fit with how we think things should go, and this was one of them. I'm afraid that at first my questioning of the Divine will caused me to "wrinkle" under the trial. Finally I realized that my inward

puzzling was getting me nowhere, and resigned to fully submit it all to the Master. "It matters not what I think, Lord, but that You have Your way."

Isn't it marvelous how God is so apt to work right at the moment we get completely still? Under His patient hand, the iron was given its free way, and the wrinkles had to go. While I trusted, He prepared me for further usefulness. He taught me more of my need and dependence upon Him, the humility so necessary to be in tune with the Spirit of God. This had been His purpose all along in giving me the trial, but the results had been delayed by my human resistance. How foolish we can be at times! If only we can acknowledge God's Divine right to "bring on the heat" with humble trust, how much easier our lives would be!

In our very nature none of us enjoy trials. But, just as ironing is meant to ready our clothes for wearing, trials are meant to ready our souls for heaven. Instead of trying to "get them over with," wouldn't it be

best to slow down and get still, so God can work His purpose? How apt our wills are to protest: Oh, but I cannot stand being under an iron! It is a heated furnace wherein I will surely burn up, a heavy weight that may crush me! O foolish soul, will you trust the Hand that holds the iron? He does no scorching. The pressure you feel is nothing more than the touch of faithful love, which indeed will not give you a moment too much. Will we so receive it?

In His tender patience, God knows we can so respond to as to come out worse for the ironing. But He takes the risk and applies the iron. Will this foolish soul see its foolishness and submit? Will the wrinkles of impatience and pride be pressed out? Will their resentment melt under the steam? Or will new and harder creases be made by the heat? Oh, dear one, let us ask ourselves solemnly the question: *Do you wrinkle beneath the iron?* ♥



**A**nd there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." <sup>1 Cor. 12:6</sup>

"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" <sup>Lk. 7:33-34</sup>

We are frequently baffled by the diversity of human nature, but God (who created human nature) is not the least frustrated by it. He has designed the work of the gospel to sift and sieve each and every kind of human being, until those who really love Him and His ways are brought to light. And to accomplish this end, God does not approach unity as we would expect. Men expect unity (actually union) to be cookie cutter in its nature; mass production, turning out row after row of identical preachers, gospel workers, all clearly identical by outward characteristics. It is not quite like this. All of God's people *are* holy in life, inward motive, and speech, just as all the individual birds of a species build a nest, but each nest is distinctive. So it is with salvation. Bible salvation ends the sinning and makes each possessor a new creature in Christ Jesus, yet each experience is individual and distinguished from another. We might say that God *cherishes* each person's, each congregation's, individuality. We might well keep in mind that He created the amazing diversity of human beings.

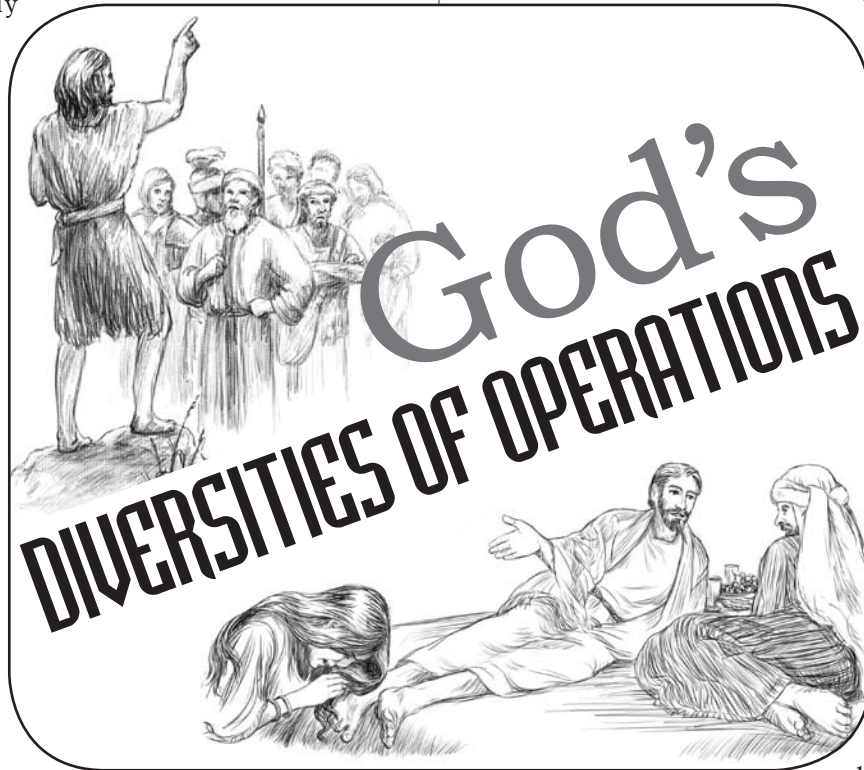
When it comes to public ministry, God is just as comfortable with His ministers' differences as He is with the individuality of experiences of salvation. We are not speaking of having a different *message*. That is not the case. "*Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.*" <sup>Is. 52:8</sup> "*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" <sup>1 Cor. 1:10</sup> It is plain from these scriptures and others that God's ministers possess a high degree of cohesion and sameness in the *message*.

And they are not crossed up, disagreeing and contradicting each other. In no way could that be "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment.*"

What is the diversity, then? And why?

This diversity is plainly demonstrated in the work of John the Baptist and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 7

we read, "*And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about. And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things. And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*" <sup>vs. 17-20</sup> We see from



this that God frequently raises up a work separately from another (at least for a time), as far as the human instrumentalities know. I do want to say that the works *are not separate in the mind of God*. But the persons involved do not know each other, or whether they should recognize each other at a certain point. This ignorance of what God is doing overall will keep us humble and trusting of Him if we will acknowledge it. Please note the simple, childlike inquiry: "*Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*" At first glance, this appears incredibly naïve. How could the children of God be so unwary? But it is not so naïve, after all. Brother John and the disciples there would not be satisfied with a simple "yes." They would expect any claim to be substantiated. They would examine the fruit. Behind this lies a remarkable trust in God. I can afford to ask a plain, blunt, unsophisticated question, such as what they asked, because God is my Guide, my Defender. Praise His name! He will keep me from going astray, so I have no need to be cunning or shrewd.

And their trust was rewarded. The fruit was on hand. It would bear examination, both cursory and profound. "*Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor*

**This ignorance of what God is doing overall will keep us humble and trusting of Him if we will acknowledge it.**

*the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*" vs. 22-23 It is very plain from this that the validity of any work that claims to be of God is established by comparison with the standard revealed to us by God. This way of *comparison* discredits the idea of succession, that is, the tracing a line of heritage from generation to generation. As an example: the Roman Catholic Church attempts to prove that it is the true church by tracing a supposed line of succession back to Peter, the alleged first pope. But even a shallow investigation of this claim, *comparing* what this organization is and has been with the New Testament church, quickly reveals that the claim is false.

Now the outer form of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5) can be passed from generation to generation, but the genuine power and life of the gospel cannot. The real thing is only obtainable from heaven by any who put in for it and get it. It is *God to man only*, not man to man. Perhaps you, dear reader, do not like to think about this, and perhaps you will quote to me 2 Timothy 2:2: "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*" "See," you might say, "the gospel lies in the hands of the faithful men who are able to teach others." No, you are mistaken. Yes, faithful men *can teach* others, but it takes *more than teaching* to have a gospel experience. The reality of the gospel goes beyond teaching. Learning to talk the talk is not the same as learning the walk. Head knowledge of salvation, even accurate head knowledge, is not at all the same as possessing a clean heart and living a holy life.

Most of the splinters of the 1880 Evening Light Reformation teach the same basic doctrine, especially with regard to light on the church question. (What church should I join?) But how right they are can only be established by *comparison with the New Testament church as revealed in the scriptures*. Indeed, the validity of that truth taught back in 1880 (or any other time) can only be established by *comparison with the Word of God and the Spirit of God*. Some would have us believe that they are right because their ministers came from such and such a group, who came from such and such, until finally they trace their roots back to an original that is recognized to be genuine. We might well reply, "*Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?*" That is, "Are you a valid, living demonstration of the gospel? or should we continue to look elsewhere?" As you can see, this is a *comparing* question. And we, too, as well as Brother John the Baptist and his disciples, must needs trust God to help us to discern between who serveth the Lord and who serveth Him not (Mal. 3:18). Let us humbly and patiently, with complete trust in God, try the spirits, to see whether they be of God (1 Jn. 4:1).

**The outer form of godliness can be passed from generation to generation, but the genuine power and life of the gospel cannot. The real thing is only obtainable from heaven by any who put in for it and get it.**

Our main text at the beginning of this article emphasizes a certain outwardly-perceptible difference between the ministry of John the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus. Suppose that I lived in the time of these two ministries, and I'm trying to figure out who is right. I observe that one hardly eats or drinks at all, while the other eats more or less as people normally do. I must needs

look deeper than the surface to observe that the two ministries are the same spirit—both of God and in His order.

It is at these surface differences that the prejudices of people kick in (Lk. 9:53)—some like the way Brother John does it, while others like the way Jesus does it. Some appreciate Brother Paul, others lean to Brother Apollos. Some say that Jesus is a gluttonous man, while others conclude that John just likes to live an abstemious life. These prejudices are not focused on the truth; they are focused on the outer appearance. Above all, *they illustrate that people looking on are following their own ideas and are not interested in the ways of God. And God has designed His diversities of operations to allow people to become entangled in their own prejudices*. It is very plain after a while that the prejudiced do not really love God and His ways above their own ideas. "*For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*"<sup>1</sup> Cor. 3:19 "*They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.*"<sup>2</sup> Jon. 2:8 "*With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*"<sup>2</sup> Th. 2:10

"*But wisdom is justified of all her children.*"<sup>Lk. 7:35</sup> God has designed a criss-cross of different ministering vessels to deal with the hearts of all His own children. A sister arose in a prayer meeting. She had been thinking about things. She said, "You know, there are many among the children of God that you would never choose for your friends. But now they are brothers and sisters in the Lord." She was right. Most people choose their friends on the basis of how well they get along in outward things. They share a common bond in the flesh. But God takes people who are not a people in this sense, and makes a holy people out of all these disparate elements (1 Pet. 2:10).

There was a minister who grated on the nerves of many other people. Some of these were children of God, and he was used of the Lord to feed them, but his personality was rather crude and just did not set well with people in general. For all that, he really loved the Lord. God accepted him and answered his prayers. He had faults and they were of a glaring, obvious nature. Those who did not love the truth, who were just going along with the doctrine, etc.; they despised him. This minister got up on a Sunday morning at a general meeting, before a large congregation, and he brought a message, a precious message, from God. The reaction was typical. Children of God fed on the message; others criticized.

After the brother finished speaking, another brother got up. This brother was much more refined in his delivery, general impression, etc., but he also walked with God. He knew he would be crossing the general impression of the crowd there, but he felt a burden to say something. He kind of put his head at a thoughtful angle, and in a voice of supplication, he said, "Brethren, we must receive what God sends through whatever vessel He sees fit to send it." I wish I could say that everybody there received that, but I can't. Most just immediately categorized the second brother with the first and felt free to reject them both. *Yet the Lord was in both the message and the admonition.*

*"It is the same God which worketh all in all."* <sup>1 Cor. 12:6</sup>

Let us now notice several other scriptures in the New Testament.

*"And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, **Forbid him not:** for he that is not against us is for us."* <sup>Lk. 9:49-50</sup>

*"But Jesus said, **Forbid him not:** for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."* <sup>Mk. 9:39-42</sup>

We observe that God is doing many things—saving souls, raising up ministries, healing people, etc.—without discussing it or clearing it with us at all. We are given a little spot in the great vineyard of God in which to labor, and it is not our business as to what He is doing elsewhere. Unless, of course, in the doing of our assigned work, we need to know whether something is of God or not. Then we need to ask and be taught of God. But we have no right to just draw our own conclusions and direct our own steps. We will get into trouble if we try. Maybe what we will learn is that we are not in as good a shape as we thought we were. Maybe there is more of self alive in us than we knew, and God designed through this diversity of operation thing to expose ourself to ourself. Oh, how needful is this sense of humility! *"Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear."* <sup>Rom. 11:18-20</sup> I got in by mercy

through unmerited favor (grace), and everybody else that got in, got in the same way. How inappropriate, how out of place, it is that I should rise up and usurp the place of the Holy Ghost in the name of doing God service. "I forbade him because he was not with us." I take too much upon me; I am only a worker in the

vineyard; it ill behooves me to take upon me the place that God only can fill and does fill. His work is a stone cut out of the mountain *without hands*. It is a kingdom *not left to people* (Dan. 2:44-45). *"Be not highminded, but fear."* <sup>Rom. 11:20</sup>

I will quote from a sister's experience with God's diversities of operations.

...I haven't known *how* to say anything in answer to the things that you expressed. I have been praying all these months that the Lord would help me to understand just what happened when we were with you, and how I could have been wrong. I could not believe that I was so wrong! [Husband] and I together felt the way that I explained to you! He couldn't understand this either. This morning I felt that the Lord gave me some understanding. It is the first time I have seen this, and I know it has taken me a long time to get here. You've had to wait on me, and I'm sorry. Please forgive my silence, and try to understand.

I think what happened, was that you had a little different order of service than we were used to. We usually begin a service with singing, which is Scriptural, as far as I understand. (You also began with singing.) Then, usually, there is a time for sharing thanksgivings and requests, in preparation for a time of prayer. After prayer, there is usually a space given for the one who has the Word to give it out; or, in the case of prayer meeting, time for various testimonies and exhortations, prayer again, a song, or whatever the Lord leads the saints to do.

In your particular service, after singing, there was general sharing, and I remember that you began with an exhortation, which was rather lengthy. I took it that there would be no other "message," and that's when I felt that my chance was closed out. Since I was a visitor, I had also anticipated some sort of invitation to be free to express what the Lord may have given me, since that is what we usually do when a visiting saint, or minister, visits the congregation. That was not given. After you spoke, there were some other things said by different ones, and then, last of all, we all knelt for prayer. My heart was so heavy by that time. I did pray aloud, but I felt that I had not had a chance to speak the message the Lord put on my heart.

That was Wednesday; we were with you again the following Monday... I was still trying to sort things out, and we all really didn't speak together about these things at length during that day, except you and [husband] shared quite a bit as you drove.

Anyway, the Lord brought to my mind this morning that the order of service confused me, and that, had I understood that you were waiting on *me* to speak, I would have spoken. This answer was not what I expected. I was asking, "Lord, who was

wrong, they or I?" Instead, the Lord is gently letting me see that possibly *neither* had done wrong; just some differences in administration tested me, and actually, I failed that test.

Would it be possible to take the test over? I would hope for such an opportunity. I pray that, wherever God's people are, when we meet together, I will be able to partake of God's blessings with them.

**We trust Him to make of His work what He wants to make of it in these latter years. We are content to stay in the littleness of our place and understanding and leave it to Him.**

Now this is very honest, and I have little doubt that God designed things for this to all come out. Oh, praise His name! “*God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*”<sup>1 Jn. 3:20</sup> We trust Him to make of His work what He wants to make of it in these latter years. We are content to stay in the littleness of our place and understanding and leave it to Him. He is so able! He handles us so eas-

ily—although it doesn’t seem so easy to us! “*And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem.*”<sup>Ez. 8:3</sup> We marvel at the greatness of God. My soul doth greatly magnify the Lord. “*Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*”<sup>Ps. 2:12</sup> ➤

*The testimony given by Joel and Coquetta Erickson at their wedding, October 22, 2005.*

*Part 2:*

## TWO YOUNG *Fools* AND THE GRACE OF GOD

Joel —————  
I first met Coquetta when I was about ten. I can’t say it was love at first sight. But I did like her. In fact, some of the first things I remember liking about her was her books and Legos. A couple weeks ago I said to her, “It seems like only yesterday we were playing with Legos together.” She smiled at that. Because we *had* been playing with Legos just the day before.

Throughout our teens, our two families were together a lot. We did some school classes together, and gardening, and camping, and many other activities of work and play. Because I was the only boy in the group, I was often apart, or else joining in with my older sister and Coquetta. I liked Coquetta’s personality. In my boyish heart I admired her.

As I grew older, I gradually let go of the resolution that I would never get married. Examining life from the perspective and great wisdom of a teenager, I realized that most people got married, so I’d better not make any rash statements, as it could likely be my fate as well. And when I sometimes considered the possibility of getting married, I wondered vaguely if it would be to Coquetta. But I would usually conclude that we were both too critical in our attitudes, and wouldn’t get along very well. Yet I still looked up to her, and would often try to do better in my life because of her.

Then came the time when I realized I was a sinner. I told myself I would never

get married in the condition I was, because I didn’t want anybody who would be willing to marry me with this sinfulness in my heart.

But Jesus came and changed my heart and made me His child. And so I entered upon These Happy Golden Years, as I thought of them. But that was just the beginning of true happiness.

As Coquetta and I and our siblings had grown up, we had all gone into various pursuits, and weren’t together quite as often. I was absorbed in trying to seek a vocation. Computers had always fascinated me, and after several years of programming, I finally stumbled onto web design, which really gave me satisfaction. When I was ten, if you had asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would have said, “A carpenter.” By the time I turned 20, it was web applications that I wanted to earn my living at. But after

The Lord requires us to sacrifice everything to Him, not so that we’ll be deprived of every joy and happiness, but so that He’ll be first in our heart, and so that every blessing will be through Him and in His control.

some disheartening attempts at trying to find a job in that field, I decided to start at something else, and the Lord opened the way for me to work at a construction job at my grandfather’s place. As I look back, God was very gentle in guiding me, and

giving me just what I needed to help me grow. I worked on and off at construction for a couple years, and in between honed my computer skills, hoping for a job to turn up. I practiced by building an online library of books and music, and even recruited Coquetta to help with some proofreading. Although she doesn’t think she did very much, she was a help to me, more so than just the work that she completed.

During this time I was seeking to be fully yielded to the Lord and His will. And when He was preparing me to enter in to His fullness of blessing, He gave me two requirements: I must be willing to be single the rest of my life, and I must be willing to work at whatever job He gave me. It wasn’t too hard to consecrate to be single, for after all, I had been single all my life, and though by that time I knew that I wanted to get married, I believed the Lord could help me, if that’s what He wanted. The job was harder to sacrifice, but I trusted that the Lord would help me to earn a living, too.

One author says that the Lord requires us to sacrifice everything to Him, not so that we’ll be deprived of every joy and happiness, but so that He’ll be first in our heart, and so that every blessing will be through Him and in His control. For Jesus said, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*”<sup>Mk. 10:30</sup>

**C**oquette \_\_\_\_\_  
 Since I got saved I wanted to live for Jesus with my whole heart. The world seemed a much better place. And now I did not feel ashamed to be alive. I asked my Father what He wanted me to do, besides being a good daughter. I mean, what was His desire that I should work at? His answer startled me. (It probably won't startle you folks.) :- "I want you to be a homemaker." The answer was clear. Had I stepped off a merry-go-round? I felt dizzy. What? Me? After the kind of person I had been?

Why, I wasn't ready.

No. I wasn't ready. But God had already thought about it. Many are His thoughts toward us, He said (Ps. 40:5).

My sister obtained guardianship over a newborn baby girl. When I heard of the possibility, I knew the Lord was really changing me, for I desired to take care of her with a very strong desire. And so it was, in God's plan, that I was there and saw baby Victoria as she took her first breath. I felt love for a tiny human being. While Abigail taught school, I took care of the baby, and then took care of her overnight when Abigail was very sick. Then I went to live with my sister and took care of her household and Victoria. Isn't God so careful how He teaches us things? I thought I would die sometimes because of His stretching, that surely I would have to fail. But He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." <sup>2 Cor. 12:9</sup> And it was true. I didn't have to fail when He was with me.

It was while I was at my sister's that a music discussion over email with Joel turned into discussion of other things. I was used to writing him off and on for the website work. His love for songs had brought to my attention the words in songs I had never noticed. Now his outlook taught me more things I never noticed either. Nevertheless, the valentine poem at the end of the letter surprised me. How on earth could he write such lovely poetry about my salvation? But then I went and prayed because I did not know what to do with the rest of the valentine poem.

Many things went through my mind as

I thought of the letter he had sent.

I was eleven when my family met Joel's family. I was delighted that they had a girl my age and soon became best friends with her. Did I notice her brother? Uh-hmm. Did I like him? Yes and no. I was mostly curious what Laura thought of him, because I had never had a brother.

One of my favorite things about him was the stamp collection he had. I had one too. And sometimes we would trade; that was great fun. We seemed to be the only ones that liked stamps, and when we would trade, I wished we could be friends.

Often Joel would get pulled into what Laura and I had dreamed up to do. I guess I liked him, for I would feel quite indignant at how she would order him around.

When he'd refuse to participate under such terms, I admired him, and felt a twinge of self-pity. Hmm.

My other favorite thing about him was how he could read aloud. So often when we baked or sewed or quilted, we were treated to a story, and the stories he would read were never boring.

And then, like he said, as teenagers we went our separate ways. I learned to garden and kept perfecting my sewing skills. Laura went to teaching children. I housecleaned and babysat. And sometimes I would think about Joel—I didn't hear very much about him. Except for his music, and it kept getting more beautiful.

And then my life changed. With Jesus' life in my heart, things looked different. I wondered, out of the blue, if when Joel's heart had been changed, things looked so much better. But the more I thought about it, the more troubled I became. I began to fear that he didn't know what I had found. This made me feel funny. Why was I so worried that

my friend's brother might not know about Jesus. I mean, he knew *about* Him alright, but what about His marvelous power to make darkness light? And then the Erickson family invited me to join them on a camping trip.

Two things happened on that trip. One was that I realized that Joel didn't know. If he didn't know, then he was still bound by sin.

When I thought this, the earth seemed to crack open as it did for Korah, who rebelled against Moses, and it seemed that Joel stood at the edge ready to fall in. I could see him, but couldn't even shout to warn him. I didn't want him to die. And I cried out to the Lord in my heart, "Please, oh, please talk to him. Don't let him die!" And the Lord said, "I will talk to

him." I hadn't realized that I cared. But I didn't want him to live without finding the beauty of life I had found.

The second thing was when I was sitting on a rock all by myself writing in my diary. From the sky came God's voice as a thunderbolt; it shook my heart, my ears tingled, as He asked, "Would you marry someone you were persuaded did not love God with all his heart?" God was waiting—what was I going to say? I realized that if I married one who did not particularly love God, I would have to turn my back somewhat on my Savior. So I promised I never would. And I also promised to pray for Joel every day until he found God.

When you pray for someone, you learn to care about them. And thus it was that the night Joel prayed through and God touched his heart that I felt like I was walking on clouds. Not only had God answered my prayer, He had saved Joel Erickson! I was very, very happy. ➡

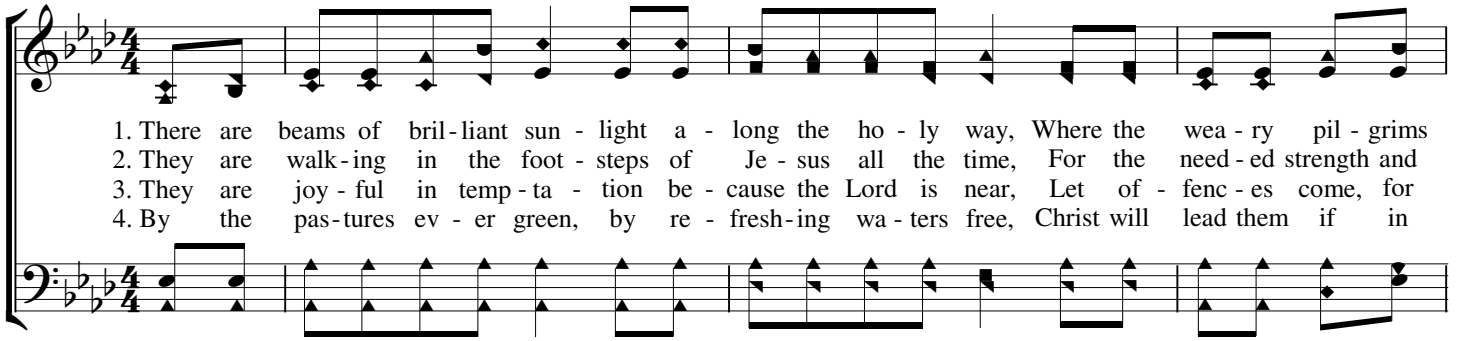
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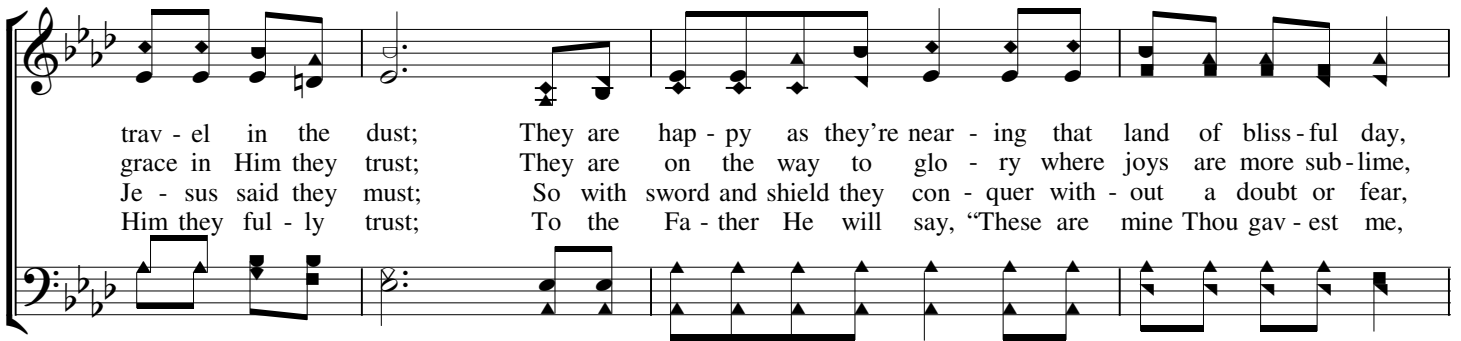
# The Pathway of the Just

PROVERBS 4:18  
B. E. W.

Barney E. Warren, *pub.* 1911



1. There are beams of bril-liant sun - light a - long the ho - ly way, Where the wea - ry pil - grims  
2. They are walk - ing in the foot - steps of Je - sus all the time, For the need - ed strength and  
3. They are joy - ful in temp - ta - tion be - cause the Lord is near, Let of - fenc - es come, for  
4. By the pas - tures ev - er green, by re - fresh - ing wa - ters free, Christ will lead them if in

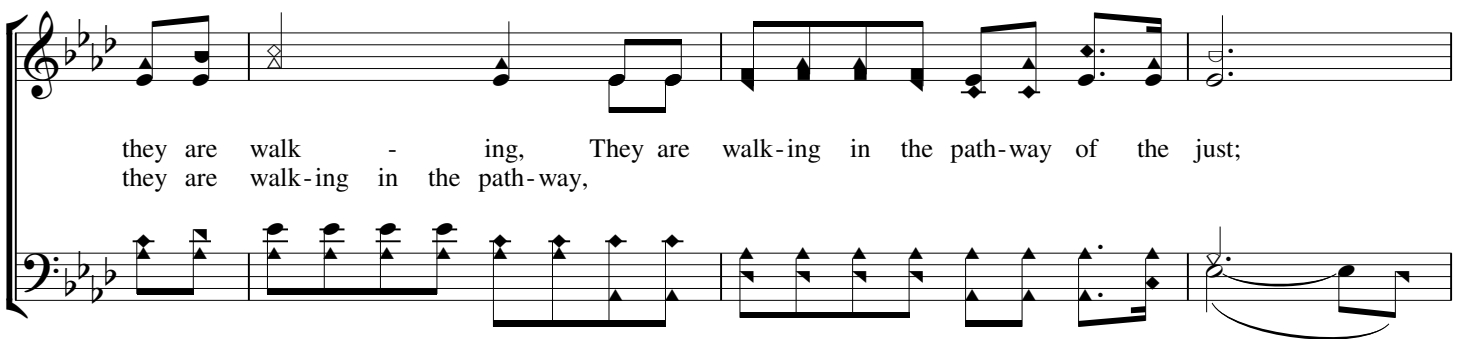


trav - el in the dust; They are hap - py as they're near - ing that land of bliss - ful day,  
grace in Him they trust; They are on the way to glo - ry where joys are more sub - lime,  
Je - sus said they must; So with sword and shield they con - quer with - out a doubt or fear,  
Him they ful - ly trust; To the Fa - ther He will say, "These are mine Thou gav - est me,



*Refrain*

They are walk - ing in the path - way of the just. They are walk - ing,  
They are walk - ing in the path - way of the just. They are walk - ing in the path - way,  
They are walk - ing in the path - way of the just. They are walk - ing in the path - way,  
"I have kept them in the path - way of the just."



they are walk - ing, They are walk - ing in the path - way of the just;  
they are walk - ing in the path - way,



They are walk - ing, they are walk - ing, They are walk - ing in the path - way of the just.  
They are walk - ing in the path - way, they are walk - ing in the path - way,



# The Bond of Perfectness

COLOSSIANS 3:14  
Daniel S. Warner, 1893

Barney E. Warren, 1893

1. How sweet this bond of perfectness, The wondrous love of Jesus;  
2. The bond that circles heav - en's pure— Oh, wondrous, wondrous sto - ry!—  
3. Oh, praise the Lord for love di - vine That binds us all to - geth - er;  
4. "God o - ver all and in us all," And through each ho - ly broth - er;  
5. Oh, mys - ter - y of heav - en's peace! Oh, bond of heav - en's un - ion!

A pure fore - taste of heav - en's bliss, Oh, fel - low - ship so pre - cious!  
Has dropped a - round the ho - ly here, And fills us all with glo - ry.  
A thou - sand chords our hearts en - twine, For - ev - er and for - ev - er.  
No pow'r of earth or hell, with - al, Can rend us from each oth - er.  
Our souls in fel - low - ship em - brace, And live in sweet com - mun - ion.

*Refrain*

Oh, breth - ren, how this per - fect love U - nites us all in Je - sus!

One heart, and soul, and mind we prove The un - ion heav - en gave us.



# FOSTER CHILDREN PART ONE

**H**ave mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Mt. 15:22

"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." Ps. 27:10

God designed for children to have a father and a mother who are entrusted with their care. The children are "under tutors and governors until the time appointed." Gal. 4:2

Before the child is an enormous challenge. The child will become an adult, with an adult's privileges, responsibilities, and accountability. This is true physically, and it is even more profoundly true spiritually. To nurture the child, tutors and governors are given to the young mind and heart. The young human being needs assistance if his/her potential is to be realized. When this oversight is missing from a child's life (such as a child of the streets), there is an inner hunger to "belong," to have roots. This actually finds expression in gangs and idealization of various celebrities in many

children who have been forsaken by their parents.

I would to God that every pair of parents felt keenly the weight of responsibility that is really involved. But many are living so selfishly that they are oblivious to the needs of their children. Others are careless and negligent. Even the more careful do not comprehend that the enemy of our souls is much smarter than we are, and that we need greatly the help of the Holy Ghost to accomplish the great task of rearing the young. The burden is so serious and weighty that *no one should attempt to parent without being fully saved and established.* Most parents are young and immature themselves. There are far too many attempting to raise children who themselves are merely bigger children.

Someone has observed that you need a license to drive an automobile, but there is no license required to be a parent. We would add that there is no valid compari-

son between the skills required for driving and the skills needed for parenting. Good parenting is one of the hardest tasks that a human being can try, and the consequences of failure are vastly worse than a car wreck.

All children are born with an enormous disadvantage—the sinful, fallen nature of Adam. It is a curse, and even the most easy-to-care-for baby has this nature of wrath (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 5:14). A minister was preaching on this subject, and a mother in the audience interrupted him. "My baby isn't like this!" she declared. The minister went on with the message, and before the discourse was complete, that baby was throwing a tantrum, much to the embarrassment of the mother. We would be willing to say that the carnality in the little innocent children shows more in some than others, but we are confident that it is in all, just as the Bible tells us.

The Bible tells us that "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child." Pr. 22:15 There is something in each child that will frustrate and bring to naught the potential of the child to live a worthwhile life here and to make heaven their home over there. Alas, that so many lives are destroyed or fail to be what God designed us to be! Alas, that so many are raised without any oversight, or that oversight is overbearing, oppressive, and destructive.

Civil governments recognize this need of oversight in the child's life, and there are government organizations which attempt to pick up the pieces when the parents fail the child to the extent that physical life is endangered. These government organizations are given enormous authority to interfere in the lives of others, and this authority is abused at times. However, the failure of many parents is so awful and so complete, that the only recourse of many of these greatly wronged children lies in these great bureaucracies. These government agencies are steeped in secular humanism, remarkably impersonal in many significant ways, and largely overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the problem. Thus men deal with men's failures in this matter.

**There is something in each child that will frustrate and bring to naught the potential of the child to live a worthwhile life here and to make heaven their home over there.**

It is hard enough for a child to choose the right and refuse the wrong when governed wisely and carefully by loving parents. Consider for a moment the awful predicament of those children whose governors have failed them, who have a state agency for a parent. The child, already at severe disadvantage from a lack of training and lack of love, and devastated by being severed from all that was familiar, is plunged into an atmosphere of uncertainty, without any assurance that someone will be there for them. No human being can unconditionally commit to the child. The ones that should have committed are gone. No one can say, "You are my child, whether you do well or poorly. *No matter what happens, you are my child.*" This is what the child needs acutely. From the child's perspective, there is **no one** at all for them. No one cares enough, they think. Not enough to take care of me, anyway. And out of this comes a desperate rage, a frantic struggle for affection mixed with a towering skepticism that there is any affection for them. There is jealousy of others. There are all the normal problems of a child along with much, much more. If the normal problems are represented by the varying force of the wind, the foster child has a continual hurricane. These are the results of a child being **forsaken**.

The plight of such a child arouses a great deal of sympathy. How could it not? If any decent, thinking person observes such things, how could it not stir pity and some desire to help? With the exception of Adam and Eve, every single member of the human race has gone through this vulnerable time of childhood. I remember reading an article about children on the streets in Seattle, Washington, some years ago. A boy had been put out of his home. His folks didn't want him. He said, "If someone would just give me a chance!" My heart yearned to give him a chance. But I had my own responsibilities. If I attempted to take on a boy like this, with his special needs, I would have neglected my own children. I might fail at the responsibilities I already had.

If you do not raise your children as you should, then who will (attempt to) do it? If you fail, the pieces will just be there. No one can really pick it up and do it as you

## **We might say that the super-damaged child needs a super-strong foster parent, called of God to the charge. Ordinary parenting skills are not up to the task.**

should have done it. (If parents won't parent, who *will* parent?) So what recourse does the abandoned child have? "*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.*"

*But the child doesn't know the Lord.* And there are many things out there that are vying for his/her attention and investment. Oh, how the child needs a governor! A *wise* governor. A governor *endued with wisdom from above*. Someone to stand in the gap (Eze. 22:30). Someone with power from God. Power to set the will to love. The power of patience and longsuffering. The power to set a good example under awful pressure. The power to keep one's temper under extreme provocation. *The abandoned children need someone like this.* Someone who is not discouraged by the godless intervention of the state. This reality in the abandoned child's life is an awful problem. For the most part, they think they know best. They have low goals. To them, a success is an adult who is not a criminal, and who can hold down a job and be economically self-supporting. They ignore questions of adult morality. They do not care whether one of their children is an atheist or an adulterer. In the pursuit of these inadequate goals, they exercise a god-like authority, which is frequently contradictory and whimsical. In large part, this is driven by too much to do with too few to do it. They believe that man's hopes lie in himself, in complete contradiction of the Word of God (Jer. 10:23). So they faithfully apply the wisdom of men to their children, scheduling regular sessions with psychologists and other counselors. Most of this backfires amazingly (it is provocative and counterproductive), and you would think they would catch on, simply from the lack of good results, but no. This is where they put their faith. *It is all that they know to do.* And so, led by the wisdom of men, they continue on, mechanically scheduling required visits between the abandoned children and the people who have failed them. This reopens all the wounds of the child and exposes the

child to all kinds of unrealistic promises. We understand that the state wishes to motivate the parents to do better, but it is at the expense of the child.

If the foster parent could deal with the child without the intervention of this agency, there would be more hope for the child. If the agency could even respect and esteem the foster parent more, it would be more promising. But money is involved, and most who are involved in foster care become jaded and cynical with the politics and unreasonableness of the system. The combination of all this is deadly and damages the children exceedingly. In many cases, there is little to choose between leaving the child with abusive/neglectful parent(s) or removing them to the abusive/neglectful "oversight" of the bureaucracy. Physical safety, food to eat, and a shelter over the head. These are important, but it is so low. The child needs so much more.

### **Parenting the Foster Child**

We read of the plight of abused children of many years ago in such books as *Just Mary* and *The Poorhouse Waif*. Both are based on true stories. The latter occurred just as the Civil War was ending; the former is probably from the late 1800's or early 1900's. The suffering and neglect of the children is just as real, but the atmosphere is very different. There is no all-powerful state agency that intrudes on the children's lives, but it certainly does not seem that such a thing would have made a difference for the children. The suffering of the children orphaned and abandoned as a result of the Civil War brought about workhouses and orphan institutions. Before this, such children had been indentured, that is, bound by contract to an adult for education and training. None of these methods really worked, for the child needs someone who really loves him/her.

We might say that the *super-damaged child* needs a *super-strong foster parent*, called of God to the charge. *Ordinary*

parenting skills are not up to the task. Parenting is one of the hardest jobs in the world, and a damaged child in the custody of a government bureaucracy only makes it harder. If the foster child is to be shown their *only hope*—that is, that God will “take them up”—then good must overcome this enormous evil. The foster parent must demonstrate daily that “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.”<sup>1 Jn. 4:4</sup>

The arrangement between the foster parent and the state is a signed, contractual agreement in which the state holds almost all the advantages. Basically, in a practical way, the foster parent has no rights. The children can be taken from the home for any reason that the state sees fit to put forth. I know of one case where the foster parent had worked for the state for years. A group of boys had been in the home for many years. The couple who took care of them loved them as their own. They were skillful in the ways of dealing with the bureaucracy. In spite of all this, some workers in the agency had it in for the foster parents; they were successful in manipulating the rules of the agency, and the children were removed from the home. A worker in one of these agencies stated, “Any child in foster care is at risk. They can be moved at any time for any reason.” This is very true. It is not even entirely up to the agency. The courts regularly interfere.

It is true that life itself is full of uncertainties. Parents may die or be imprisoned. Severe and disabling afflictions may prevent parenting. We cannot promise our children that we will always be there for them without adding, “If humanly possible....” But foster parenting is all this with more. Perhaps it is more like raising children in a concentration camp. How accurately the words of the Bible apply here: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”<sup>Ec. 9:10</sup> “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”<sup>Jn. 9:4</sup> The window of opportunity is very short for most of the time.

This lack of control, lack of a free hand, is one of the features of foster parenting. In this respect, it is very, very different from more normal parenting. It is far more perilous to the child *and to the foster parent*. To do what is right under hostile, or at least unsympathetic, scrutiny is quite different than doing right without this pressure. There is a subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle pressure to compromise God-given child-raising standards, to conform to the secular humanism view endorsed by the agency.

is hard to win their trust enough to deal effectively with them.

**The Objective of Home Discipline**

Let’s review for a moment the entire subject of parental/child discipline. The subject naturally breaks down into two distinct parts: (1) the objective, and (2) what it takes to arrive at that objective. The Bible calls the objective *a vision*. “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”<sup>Pr. 29:18</sup> We commonly say of people who have no vision that they do not know

what they are doing. They are floundering, spinning their wheels, going nowhere, etc. Physically, most all of us have a pretty good vision of what a child should be. The physical boy will grow up to be a physical man. The physical girl will grow up to

be a physical woman. We get alarmed if something goes wrong with the process. We know it is not working *because of our vision* of the end result. But when it comes to the spiritual objective, the spiritual vision, people do not do as well. There is a great deal of purposeless drifting out there. Children just growing up, without being raised. Parents who have basically abdicated their responsibilities. They have just dropped out and given up. If they get the children fed, sheltered, and educated, they think they have done their job. Many have even abandoned basic civilized morality, and they are complete strangers to what it means to be like Jesus. They have no vision to speak of, and they are perishing. The vast majority of children that are taken by the child welfare agencies come from living places like that.

Many are persuaded that if you just beat the children enough, somehow everything will turn out all right. As a defense of their vision (?), they will quote you Prov. 23:13-14: “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.” Their vision is the beaten child. Righteousness, according to them, is only obtained by force. Then the child grows

**Many are persuaded that if you just beat the children enough, somehow everything will turn out all right. Might makes right, and God is mightier than us, so He beats us into submission. You can see at a glance that this false vision has little or no room for loving the truth.**

**Spanking**

One of these issues is spanking. We will define *spanking* as moderate corporal punishment, communication beyond words, as administered by a parent to a child for the good of the child *while the parent’s temper is under control*. When the parent’s temper is not under control, spanking easily slips into *beating*, and beating easily slips into *abuse*. We do not believe in beating a child at all, in this sense; and we certainly do not believe in abusing a child. Many parents that have their children taken away claim that they were only spanking their children, when the facts are that they were beating them. It was unfair and really bullying.

Most foster children will not respond desirably to a spanking if you were allowed to give them one. They have been beaten, and the most considerate and loving discipline in the world will cause them to relive the unfairness of the abuse they have suffered, and as a result, your attempts to communicate with them through spanking will not work. “What will work then?” you might say. The somber truth is that *hardly anything will work*. “Surely you exaggerate,” you may be thinking. No, I am not. That little *hardly anything* is all you have to work with. It

up to be a “right-by-might” person and beats the next generation into submission. Furthermore, they would have you believe (by implication) that God is like this. Might makes right, and God is mightier than us, so He beats us into submission. You can see at a glance that this false vision has little or no room for **loving the truth**. For following the right *voluntarily*. The whole issue of choice is lost in the forcing, making, compelling. *This false vision of child raising is responsible for a great deal of the religious fanaticism in the world today.*

What is the objective of child raising? What is the model for an adult? How should we live? Without hesitation, we would reply, “JESUS!” He is our *sample*, our *example*. “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*”<sup>1 Pet. 2:21-23</sup> This is very comprehensive; it covers everything. And it is where all mankind is *called*; God is calling and requiring everyone to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We see readily that to follow in His footsteps that we must be like Him in heart (Mt. 10:24-25; 1 Jn. 3:2), and it is immediately evident that there is much that the most careful training and the most careful discipline cannot impart, yet the most careful training and discipline are very important and a crucial part of the picture.

But what if I am not raised like Jesus was raised and I get really saved, thus becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17)? Is not the change of heart sufficient to make up for my undisciplined growing up? No. Living for God is a mixture of what God does and what I must do. If my ability to carry out my part is damaged, then I will struggle. For instance, if I have formed the mental habit of sloth, I will not turn suddenly industrious when God changes my heart. My motives will change, and something within me will not want to neglect prayer and spiritual activity, but something in my habits and conditioning will still be lazy. If I am to live up to what God has done in changing

the motive of my heart, I will have to press out against my flesh and build an industriousness that should have been built by training in my childhood and adolescence. The same is true in all other areas. “*Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.*”<sup>Jas. 1:9-10</sup> We would apply this scripture to poverty of training and riches of training. Some are too low and need to come up; others are too high and need to come down. To be rich in training will not bring about the humility of mind and heart that is so necessary to live a saved life. To all who are rich in this way, the Bible commands, “*Be not highminded, but fear.*”<sup>Rom. 11:20</sup> (See also 1 Timothy 6:17-19.) To be raised so that you are neither too high or too low is very helpful, but real Bible salvation will cause the low to come up rejoicing and the rich (in this world) to come down rejoicing, too. It will raise the slave and lower the slave owner. It will inspire the uneducated to learn and inspire the educated to humble down.

We are told of Jesus that “*butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*”<sup>Is. 7:15</sup> Jesus did not live spiritually on margarine (much less imitation margarine) and saccharin. He lived on spiritual realities (butter and honey) that taught Him accurately how to refuse the evil and choose the good. We might say that He had a true vision of how to live as a child, a teenager, and as a man. He is still living (forevermore) on heaven’s butter and honey. He is the head of a great family, a multitude of spiritual children. He wants to give you a butter and honey vision of parenting.

### How to Bring About the Objective

We now look at the ways and means to bring about the desired objective of raising a son or daughter in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord.

“*He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.*”<sup>Pr. 13:24</sup> “*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.*”<sup>19:18</sup> “*Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver*

*his soul from hell.*”<sup>23:13-14</sup> “*Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*”<sup>29:17</sup> “*If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*”<sup>Heb. 12:7</sup> These scriptures use the words *chasten*, *beat*, and *correct*. The word *chasten* is defined as “to correct by punishment or reproof, take to task; to restrain, subdue.” The word *beat* here means “to spank or apply corporal punishment with a switch or rod.” The objective in all these scriptures is to bring about a positive and desirable result in the child’s life. To use these scriptures as a justification for anger toward the child will disobey Ephesians 6:4: “*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*” This does not mean not to do anything that will make the child angry (what correction would accomplish that?), but it means not to do anything that would make the child *justifiably* angry. Of course, all or nearly all of the child’s anger is justifiable in his/her sight, but we are speaking of *justifiable* in the sense that all of our thoughts and actions will be answerable to God, who knows all things. If your child has a legitimate grievance against you in the sight of God, if you have been unjust to the child, then it is a *provocation*. This business of family discipline does not put the parents above law, but applies the laws of justice to all, parent and child alike. If you break the law while attempting to deal with the child for breaking the law, then there are two lawbreakers.

Dr. Dobson, in his book *Dare to Discipline*, makes this point:

The issue of respect can be a useful tool in knowing when to punish and how excited one should get about a given behavior. First, the parent should decide whether an undesirable behavior

**If you break the law while attempting to deal with the child for breaking the law, then there are two lawbreakers.**

represents a direct challenge of his authority—to his position as the father or mother. Punishment should depend on that evaluation.... [A]cts of childish irresponsibility... should be handled as such.... [E]xamples [that] do not constitute direct challenges to authority....

In my opinion, spankings should be reserved for the moment a child (age ten or less) expresses a defiant “I will not!” or “You shut up!” When a youngster tries this kind of stiff-necked rebellion, you had better take it out of him, and pain is a marvelous purifier. When nose-to-nose confrontation occurs between you and your child, it is not the time to have a discussion about the virtues of obedience. It is not the occasion to send him to his room to pout. It is not appropriate to wait until poor, tired old dad comes plodding in from work, just in time to handle the conflicts of the day. You have drawn a line in the dirt, and the child has deliberately flopped his big hairy toe across it. Who is going to win? Who has the most courage? Who is in charge here? If you do not answer these questions conclusively for the child, he will precipitate other battles designed to ask them again and again. It is the ultimate paradox of childhood that a youngster wants to be controlled, but he insists that his parents earn the right to control him....

Much sound advice has been written about the dangers of inappropriate discipline, and it should be heeded. A parent can absolutely destroy a child through the application of harsh, oppressive, whimsical, unloving, and/or capricious punishment. I am certainly not recommending such. However, you cannot inflict permanent damage to a child if you follow this technique: identify the rules well in advance; let there be no doubt about what is and is not acceptable behavior; when the child cold-bloodedly chooses to challenge those known boundaries in a haughty manner, give him good reason to regret it; at all times, demonstrate love and affection and kindness and understanding.... “I love you too much to let you behave like that.”

“I have never spanked my three-year-old because I am afraid it will teach her to hit others and be a violent person. Do you think I am wrong?”

I believe you are, but you’ve made an important point. It is possible for parents to create hostility and aggressiveness in their children by behaving violently them-

selves. If they scream and yell, lashing out emotionally and flailing the children for their accidents and mistakes, they serve as models for their children to imitate. That kind of parental violence is worlds apart from the proper disciplinary approach. However, when the child has lowered his head and clenched his fist, he is daring the parent to take him on. If the parent responds appropriately (on the backside) he has taught the child a valuable lesson that is consistent with nature’s method of instruction. Consider the purpose of pain in life. Suppose two-year-old Peter is pulling on the tablecloth and with it comes a vase of roses which tips over the edge of the table, cracking him between the eyes. Peter is in great pain. From this pain he learns that it is dangerous to pull on the tablecloth. Likewise, he presses his arm against a hot stove and quickly learns that fire must be treated with respect. He pulls the doggie’s tail and promptly receives a neat row of teeth marks across the back of his hand. He climbs over the side of his high chair when mom isn’t looking and he learns all about gravity. For three or four years, he accumulates bumps and bruises and scratches and burns, each one teaching him about life’s boundaries. Do these experiences make him a violent person? No! The pain associated with these events teaches him to avoid making those same mistakes again. God created this mechanism as the child’s best vehicle for instruction. The loving parent can and should make use of the same processes in teaching him about certain kinds of social dangers. Contrary to what it might seem, Peter is more likely to be a violent person if his parent fails to apply this principle, because he learns too late about the painful consequences of acting selfishly, rebelliously, and aggressively.

—*Dare to Discipline*, by James Dobson, pages 54-55

With these scriptures and principles firmly in mind, we look at the needs of the foster child. *They need discipline just as much as any child, but they are greatly damaged by inappropriate discipline before they come to the foster parent.* In addition, they are not convinced at all that anyone loves them and is reproofing and correcting them *for their good*. In effect, the foundations for a good parent/child relationship are completely destroyed, and they must be rebuilt, stone by stone, before

any result will show. “*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” Ps. 11:3 “*The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*” Dan. 9:25 You must win the child’s belief in you for their sake, and you must be completely honest with him/her. If the child is old enough, you must explain your limitations and the reality of the child’s situation. If younger, you must act in accordance with a future explanation. And, if the child still will not obey you in due time and will continue to defy you, it must be explained to the child that they will not stay with you. These are the boundaries of your relationship, and it is very important to be completely forthright and plain about those boundaries.

Then you will need a lot of patience, courage, and longsuffering to deal with the child while healing takes place. It is a most *uneven* process, this healing. One day, a happy, obedient child; then *WHAM!* All seems lost, and a little monster appears. There are bad days and good days. There are bad hours and good minutes. Far more of the former for quite a while. But after a while, some gains are noticeable. Then you will be torn the more, for all the instabilities that are the normal characteristics of the foster child’s existence are still present, and the window of opportunity may be slammed at any moment.... This is tough work. “*Only be thou strong and very courageous.*” Jos. 1:7

### The Income of the Home

The child welfare agencies typically pay well for the care of the child, but rest assured that you will earn every cent. It is very hard work, 24/7, but you will not be able to rely on having a job, no matter how well you do. The same instability that can snatch a foster child (or all of them) from the home in an instant, applies to the income, as well. Therefore, the agency requires the foster parent to have another source of income. *It is nearly impossible for a single parent to foster parent a child(ren) without the financial and other support of another person.* If you try it, you will find that being a keeper at home is a full time job (and more than full time). You will let some things slide that should not slide. Things will be allowed that should not be allowed. Vigilance will be less than it

should be. Even in situations where a single parent does not have to earn a living, the emotional strain of one adult attempting to be mother and father to the children is formidable. Any widow or widower who has raised or is raising children will admit to the truth of the above statement.

### What Is the Home?

This brings us squarely to the question of the income of the home, which in turn, comes to the question of *what is a home?* This is a whole subject in itself, but it is worthwhile to follow for a ways in connection with our main thought.

We will quote a little from *Courtship and Marriage*:

A sister told me, not long ago, that there was not a single thing in common between her and her husband—nothing. She named his three major interests in life—things in which she had no interest at all—and then said, “After these three things I come first.” These people are nearing retirement age, coming down to the time in life when

accounts and separate bedrooms. When she took her vacation, she took two or three of her lady friends in her car and struck out wherever they wanted to go, leaving him at home. When he took his vacation he just took off alone and left her at home. They each contributed a certain amount for food and the other expenses of operating the home. Everything that makes a marriage a real marriage was gone and their foundation had crumbled from under them.

—*Courtship and Marriage*, by Ostis Wilson

We see that marriage is a consecration, a covenant, of a man and a woman to each other. It is exclusive of all others, and it gives rights to each of the two that they do not have toward anyone else. This is the foundation of the home, but it is not all that there is to it. God has more for the newly-established home than just each other. The precious consecrated relationship is designed so that equally precious little human souls can be added to that unique relationship. These may

really get the benefit of the heart of the home until the child chooses to love the parents unselfishly and takes a stand to abide by the principles of the founders of the home.

This is a very difficult challenge. Will the natural selfishness of the child yield to the unselfish care of the providers of the home? Will the child willingly come under the yoke? It is a challenge in any home, but it is particularly a challenge in the foster home.

God has provided a process of bringing children into the home of biological parents and children which greatly assists in forming the bonding necessary for the home to continue to be a home. To begin with, the newly conceived child is physically as close to the mother-to-be as is possible. He/she is nourished by her very blood, constantly in closest contact possible with her emotions and heartbeat. The child-yet-to-be-born hears her voice and experiences the very rhythm of her physical being constantly, night and day. He/she is surrounded by her very presence. So profound is this beginning relationship that it is described as “a mother’s love,” as distinguished from a father’s love, etc.

When the child is born into the home, there is a great need for the father to bond with the child. He does this at some disadvantage, compared to the mother. He must love from a certain distance, while she has experienced the closest physical bond that is possible. My father told me that when I was brought into the home after being born, he sat in a rocking chair and held me in his arms. He said that I was so small, so helpless, so dependent, that it just touched his heart, and he cried as he contemplated my need. You can see that my mother had already been committing herself to me for nearly nine months with a constantly growing consecration and dedication, and my father’s consecration was greatly accelerated by the actual sight of me. I was wonderfully blessed by being born into a vital, living home. However, it took me many years before I did not take it for granted and actually *bought into* the values and principles of my parent’s home. ➡

**These may be children of the same flesh and bone or children of another physical origin, but the challenge that faces the home is the same in either case: will the children buy in to their home? Will they enter into the covenant as partakers and inheritors?**

they will need the comfort, sympathy, and strength of each other more than they have ever needed each other in their lives, and now, the foundation is crumbling from under them and they are actually just two people living in the same house—nothing more. There are no common bonds to bind them together in their closing years of life.

Another sister in her middle years of life, who has raised a family, has married children, told my wife a while back that she did not know why she and her husband had ever married, as they had so little in common.

Another couple that I knew quite well and I have been in their home on various occasions were just two people living in the same house—nothing more. They were married for quite a few years but the charm and attraction of those earlier years had faded away. They had separate bank

be children of the same flesh and bone or children of another physical origin, but the challenge that faces the home is the same in either case: will the children *buy in* to their home? Will they enter into the covenant as partakers and inheritors? “*Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.*” Gal. 4:1-2 We see from this scripture that the parents (natural, adopted, or foster) are *over* the children *until* the time the child is no longer a child and is ready to take a place among the adults. *It is a very bad mistake to assume that all this is happening just because the child is in the home and is fed, clothed, and educated.* That is, that the child’s physical and mental needs are met. The child will not

\_\_\_\_\_ to be continued...

## THE SEAT OF THE IMAGE OF JEALOUSY

*“And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.”* Eze. 8:3

Behind all outward sins are the inner causes—the sins behind the sins. Just as a mighty river starts from little beginnings, so an apostasy stems from hidden beginnings. These beginnings are buried back in history, both ancient history and recent, but *the eye of God sees them from their smallest beginning*, for “*all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*”<sup>Heb. 4:13</sup> This fact is both overwhelming and comforting. We cannot get away with anything, for He sees all; but there is nothing that He cannot heal and fix, for His comprehension of our need is absolutely complete. He saw when the Jews went astray; He knew what needed to be acknowledged, confessed, and forsaken. We need to understand that God thoroughly understands why things are not working correctly today, and He knows how to fix it, too.

*“And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.”* Eze. 8:7-8

There is a hole in the wall, a little hole, that is available (through the mercy of God) to every thoughtful soul. Even that little hole, that little insight, is only found because God brings it to our attention. Is it not a *little* hole? It does not seem very significant. A brother’s testimony was mentioned in a previous article. He was in a place where he had been raised, in a church that professed to be the Lord’s, but he kept thinking, “There has got to be more to this.” The inconsistencies and barrenness in that place did not seem

enormous or overwhelming at that time to him. It certainly didn’t appear to him as it does now, since he fled the ruin. It was just a hole in the wall. “*Behold a hole in the wall.*” It was just enough for him to make a choice, and that choice, at that time, was not to stay or flee. It was a choice of whether or not to **dig**.

We can say with great certainty that God is always bringing to the attention of people the holes that lead to the underlying causes of sin; and we can say with equal certainty that most people choose not to look further. They don’t say, “Don’t look at the hole!” Of course not. Just to say that suggests a certain dishonesty—a desire not to look too closely lest I be obligated to act upon what I see.

God is very faithful to mankind, and all of His dealings with us are true and righteous altogether, but the overall picture of men’s dealings with God is a sad contrast. If God has changed your heart so that your one great desire is to please Him and do what is right, then you will attempt to understand what God is trying to show you. But most people do not really have a heart to please Him (even if they think they do). As the Bible tells us, when many were invited to the great supper He had prepared, “*They all with one consent began to make excuse.*”<sup>Lk. 14:18</sup>

At this point, many will attempt to avoid inquiry by stating, “That’s just *your* interpretation.” (But does not *God* have an interpretation? Are not the scriptures of *no private* interpretation? [2 Pet. 1:20]) That “your interpretation” excuse is an excellent tool for avoiding inquiry. It is a long way from “I *must* know what truth is.” It is a long way from “*Buy the truth, and sell it not.*”<sup>Pr. 23:23</sup>

Another sophistry of the devil is, “Thou shalt not judge.” This anti-digging tool is a twisted scripture. It ignores the words of Jesus, “*Judge not according to the appear-*

*ance, but judge righteous judgment.*”<sup>Jn. 7:24</sup> It ignores the pronouncement of Isaiah, “*Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.*”<sup>Is. 1:27</sup> It would have us believe that *any* judgment shows a lack of love. It creates an atmosphere where no line is drawn between right and wrong; where a warm and fuzzy feeling is counted virtuous; where sensitivity to the feelings of others and “meaning well” are the only esteemed virtues. Furthermore, it would insinuate that God’s judgments are unknown, except in the more gross and distasteful immoralities, and that we should not meddle with them, as we are too weak, childlike, and fleshly to properly understand them or employ them. Strangely, this lack-of-judgment is very judgmental against people being judgmental. One young woman declared, “I will not worship with people who are judgmental.” It is one of the more judgmental declarations I have ever heard.

All of these hellish devices are ploys to keep people from digging. (Yes, I know that each can be taken to extremes, and this is just as wrong.) More people are hindered from a rigorous and effective inquiry of what is right and what is wrong by these attitudes than is imagined.

Now in our text, God takes Ezekiel on a fact-finding mission to see what went wrong with the Jewish nation to the extent that the temple is destroyed, the city of David is demolished, and the people are captives in the land of Babylon. And when God points out the *little* hole in the wall, He tells Ezekiel, “*Son of man, dig now in the wall.*” That is why we know the hole was little—digging was needed. **We will never discover what God wants us to know unless we dig.** You will just keep passing by that little hole. You will keep on saying things like, “That little thing? *That’s* not important! Besides, we shouldn’t judge!” Or maybe you will say,

Behind all outward sins are the inner causes—the sins behind the sins. Just as a mighty river starts from little beginnings, so an apostasy stems from hidden beginnings.



“Well, that’s *your* interpretation that the hole means something! A lot of others, including me, feel differently about it. A little hole like that? That’s not important! How could that amount to much?” But Brother Ezekiel had a different mindset, didn’t he? He **dug**. And he found, hidden in the dirt with just a little hole leading to it, a **door**.

There are diggers who never get to the door. We might say, “Well, at least, they dug!” And it is certainly better to do what God tells us to do. “*Son of man, dig*.” But we must go far enough. Well, how far is far enough? Until we see what God meant for us to see.

A brother and sister visited a congregation. This visited congregation was vilified and condemned among the people where the brother and sister came from. But the two had been stirred by recent developments in their church to do some digging. Perhaps the Lord *was* blessing over there in that congregation, they thought. So they visited. Now their expectations were shaped by the people among whom they made their home, and they honestly perceived no need for adjustment in themselves. They felt they were honest and up-to-date in their light, and I believe they were. However, they did not realize *how much* God would require them to change to take a stand against the errors that were bothering them among their people. In short, they vastly underestimated the amount of digging that would be necessary to uncover what would turn out to be a door—a door that God wanted to show them.

The sister came to meeting with a burden to speak. She felt the Lord had given her things to say, and she expected that the Holy Spirit would make room for her. And that room was given to her *in precisely the same way that it was extended to every other child of God*. No special announcement was made that opened the way for her to speak. No inward or outward attitude was raised in opposition to her speaking. In fact, we were all there to hear whatever the Lord would lay upon anyone. The burden of proof that one was in order lay upon anyone who felt compelled to exercise himself or herself. We rather hoped that this sister *would* have something to say.

She did not say anything. She left the meeting without saying anything. She visited with others for the better part of a day without saying anything. She did not say anything for the better part of *five years*. Then she decided to talk. She went to a sister that resided at that congregation and told her that she felt she could not *say what God had given her to say* that night in service without coming under a spirit of domination. She could not offer any evidence of a spirit of domination, even after all that time. She simply stated that there was. After this assertion, things began to come out. She was asked if she had talked to anyone else about the matter, and at first she denied it. She really thought she hadn’t talked to anyone, that she had been impartial and not influenced, but she had forgotten some things. Then God reminded her of whom she had talked to, and she was honest enough to call and confess what she had forgotten. We knew the ones she had talked to. We had been in situations where we had tried their spirit. A picture began to emerge. “I’m still digging. I’m still a digger.” But they do not find the door. We were afraid for her. She had not found the door.

“Well, maybe there is no door to find.” **Whenever wrong is going on, there is a door.** “*Is there not a cause?*”<sup>1 Sam. 17:29</sup> There is a cause. Sin has roots. God knows where those roots are, how to expose them, and how to get them out. But we must have a heart to do our part. Our part is to dig where He points. He will show us the hole. Then we are tested on just how much we want to know and how far we want to go with God. We can leave Him there pointing at the hole and (1) stop digging, (2) dig in other places, (3) dig so halfheartedly that nothing is accomplished. In any of these ways, the door will not be discovered.

What was behind that door that Ezekiel dug up? Behind the door, well hidden, was “*the seat of the image of jealousy*.” At this point, the question is, are you willing to look behind the door? Will you go all the way with God and look at “*the hidden things of dishonesty*”?<sup>2 Cor. 4:2</sup> If you want to

You will find yourself in the position of a man of God who made this statement: “If I had known the hardness of men’s hearts, I would have conducted my ministry differently over the years.”

abhor them as God abhors them, if you want to see what depths deliverance must reach to do the job of establishing holiness acceptable unto God, then you must “*go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here*.”<sup>Eze. 8:9</sup>

We pause to consider the effect on us of this insight. *You will not be the same*. You will not sit and listen to the preaching as you once did. You will see things that will burden you and tear at your soul. You will see why there is not more power and glory. You will see why healings are hindered and so many are spiritually weak and cannot do anything much or stand very much for the Lord. The reasons are *behind* that door. They lie in the sins behind the sins. You will find yourself in the position of a man of God who made this statement in his last message to his congregation: “If I had known the hardness of men’s hearts, I would have conducted my ministry differently over the years.” This was a faithful brother who saw many things behind many doors, but something in his temperament did not care for the “adamant flint” (Eze. 3:9) necessary to penetrate to the depth of need, and God had allowed it to come out in this way at the end of his life and ministry. (Well, how could he be right, then? In the same way that Brother Peter was still saved and sanctified after sitting with the Jewish brethren and separating himself from the Gentile brethren [Gal. 2:11-14].)

We see plainly that the *roots*—the real needs—of mankind are buried. There are two barriers. There is a lot of earth that masks the hidden motives and thoughts of the heart, but God has a way of access *for us*. God is willing and desirous of showing

you your own heart. He has written His Word in such a way as to reflect a perfect picture of you—just how you stand before Him, His standard of holiness, *and* His standard of deliverance and victory made for you (Jas. 1:23-25). To get a hold of God's standard, you must dig through the dirt. You must wade through your fleshly conditioning. How your relatives think. The prevailing values of your family. Your own temperament. Your own prejudices. Your fears. What the devil suggests to you in the fleshly reasoning of your own mind. Behind all this dirt is the door—the will. In the Jews to whom Ezekiel preached, this door was firmly closed to God. God was not in their heart. Other things had been taken through that door. Then the whole thing had been covered over with earth.

This is the classic pattern. Hardly anyone says, "The reason I am in such great trouble is because I shut my heart against God and His ways and piled earthly reasoning over my decision to justify myself." A child of God *will* readily say this and testify with great thankfulness to the process of digging and uncovering, forsaking and cleaning out, opening to God and His salvation that followed. But most people are not children of God. They serve sin and the devil.

There was a professing preacher who secretly used chewing tobacco. His son was convinced that he secretly drank alcoholic beverages, too. "He always had a 'milky' condition in his eyes," the son said. "But when he reached his old age and could no longer get around, that milky condition cleared up." The son suspected that he secretly purchased and consumed alcohol throughout his life until he couldn't do it anymore. This same son was the one who caught him using tobacco. He said, "I think Dad thought that he was one of those people who *needed* tobacco. [There are *no such* people.] He had convinced himself that he needed it just as other people need to eat food or vitamins." In this way, he justified his secret sins. In this way, he piled up the earth before the door of his heart. Behind the door, what he had allowed in, flourished.

It did not seem *expedient* to this man to reveal his secret sins. *Expedient* means fit or proper under the circumstances; conducive to self-interest; desirable; advisable; advan-

tageous; sometimes contradistinguished from right or principled. The word's synonyms include *suitable*, *appropriate*, and *politic*. The hypocrite reasons that his actions would be acceptable in a different moral atmosphere, although they are not acceptable now, so he hides what he does. He does not take into account that God is a revealer of secrets, yea, the secrets of men's hearts, and that God is infinitely holy and hates all sin with an infinite hatred. God's judgments reveal all sin and show the way to righteousness. He does not vary His standards as men do.

A minister had a daughter who loved to dance. But for her, there was a problem. The church of which he was the pastor forbade dancing. This heritage was the result of holy living by their predecessors. It was a valuable understanding. But the minister had something other than a love for truth and holy living in his heart. "Just wait awhile," he counseled his daughter. "Things will change. Eventually, dancing will be allowed among us." This account was written by the daughter when she was an older woman. She rejoiced in the fact that her daddy was correct. Things did change. She got to indulge her love for dancing with the approval of the church.

There are many things going on in secret today that are waiting for a chance to come out and appear respectable, at least to some. And there are others who are not willing to wait, but defiantly champion some sinful thing in open rebellion against the prevailing understanding of what is right and wrong *among men*. Until it is *expedient* to let it come out in the open, it is carefully hidden behind the closed door of the heart, with a small mountain of dirt over it. But God has left a hole in the fleshly reasoning of men against this expediency, this practice of politics. These inconsistencies, the causes of ill spiritual health. If you are not satisfied to accept things without seeking, searching, knocking, then you will begin to dig; and eventually you will come to the door.

The dirt hides the door. The flesh is a veil to the decisions of the heart. The idols of the heart are veiled by the common attributes of humanity. "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the

*dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*"<sup>Heb. 4:12</sup>

God's Word, in the hands of His Spirit, will cut through all obstacles and *reveal* the thoughts and intents of the heart. God will show you what is really behind your door and the doors of others, if you will stay with Him and keep looking.

So we see Ezekiel, taken by the hand of God to the hole in the earth, digging, digging, digging, until *behold*, he finds a closed door (Eze. 8:8). "And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw."<sup>Eze. 8:9-10</sup> **We see then that a man directed by God, willing to dig as God wants him to dig, will find the door to the human heart.** He will be directed and empowered to go in and see. Sometimes it may be his own heart that he is privileged to see (for it cannot be accurately seen without the help of God), and sometimes it may be the hearts of others; but the overall effect will be to understand the will of God (Eph. 5:17) and to be enabled to cry to the Strong for help.

When Ezekiel saw the inward hearts of the Jews, the whole thing made a lot of sense. The judgment (even their captivity) was not too severe in any way. It was directly in proportion to the wickedness behind the closed door. God saw it all the time and had brought this judgment upon them. Now Ezekiel began to see it. And the children of the captivity needed to see it, too. Without this horrible perception, there is no deliverance from the sin. God does not enjoy rubbing the faces of mankind in their sins, but the in-your-face ordeal is absolutely necessary if we are to be saved (2 Cor. 7:11). Without a true impression of the sinfulness of sin, there is no godly sorrow, consequently no heartfelt repentance, and no deliverance.

The stomach-turning tour of the inward thoughts and motives of the Jewish people began, and we read, "*Behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he*

unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, the LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth." <sup>Eze. 8:10-12</sup> We see at a glance that we are looking at spiritual wickedness in high places. Those who should have been guardians of the truth had utterly betrayed it, even the ancients of the house of Israel. The depths of their unbelief and godless philosophy are revealed in the words, "the LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth." This pernicious skepticism had gone through the nation like leaven. Only a handful had not bowed the knee to Baal, so to speak.

This horrible betrayal of truth is just as real today and just as evil. The brethren who re-discovered the truth of God's church, His body, in the Evening Light Reformation of 1880, taught a depth of deliverance from sectish principles and ideas that echoed the same teaching

in the early days of the church of God as portrayed in the New Testament. They exposed the false reasoning that had captured and bound millions of God's children in different churches since the Protestant Reformation of 1530. They insisted on the cleansing and purifying from the idols of party and groupism that defiled these Babylonish captives, and this sanctifying work of God enabled them to escape, one by one, to stand once more on the foundation that God kept from ever being corrupted.

But the current leaders of those who profess to have escaped Babylon have changed the focus of the message. It has been steadily slipping toward holding the "church" together instead of deliverance to a vision of God. The truth has more and more evolved among them to a doctrinal shadow, and when we dig into their attitudes and teachings, we find that they are more like sectism than not.

This is what has happened to a the vast majority of those who claim to be the church of God today. Only by their doctrine can they be distinguished from many other parts of Christendom. "Having

a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." <sup>2 Tim. 3:5</sup> They teach and appear to cherish the doctrines of separation and distinction from all other groups (2 Cor. 6:17) and love to celebrate "having been raised in the truth," but they know little to nothing of the perfect love and eye single that enabled men and women to break every yoke and return to the rebuilding of Zion.

I am thinking of a minister who was esteemed among them because of his spirituality (who nevertheless eventually settled for being one of them), who said

We see then that a man directed by God, willing to dig as God wants him to dig, will find the door to the human heart. He will be directed and empowered to go in and see. The overall effect will be to understand the will of God and to be enabled to cry to the Strong for help.

of them in a certain locality, "They do not know what salvation means." When I first heard this, it seemed rather extreme and a little far-fetched. Surely they could not have such a heritage without at least knowing what salvation means! But he was right. Not only did they not have the experience working in them, they had at that place lost consciousness of it to the extent that they regarded a good moral life, a sensitivity and loyalty to what was taught, and a "sweet" spirit as evidence of salvation. They had lost all consciousness of such truths as, "Anything less than a perfect trust in God is a denial of Him." They actively intermingled with others of the same philosophical bent as themselves in the group of people with whom their congregation fellowshiped, and they were suspicious and a little apprehensive of those who went deeper. Their pastor was a man of mighty intellect; he edified their minds, satisfied their curiosity, and entertained them. They ignored and still ignore the holes in the earth. Behind the closed doors of their hearts, they burn their incense and worship their abominations.

Their descendants come along and build on their work, little suspecting that the effort is adulterated and impure in the eyes of God. These descendants act sincerely, more or less, in following something that is less than complete truth. The same goes on in tens of thousands of sects all over the world.

When faced with this general summary, and very specific accounts of their apostasy, they are highly offended. Just outraged. In a different time, physical imprisonment and even death might have followed. Now

they just kill the influence of those who oppose them as best they can, and keep that door firmly sealed against anything else that conflicts with where their heart is set.

Every now and then, something happens that exposes a hole. This is God's mercy to the people behind the door, although it is largely unrecognized.

About 23 years ago, a pastor was teaching a standard that was in direct contradiction of the Bible on a number of points. If you lived in that congregation and loved the Lord, you were heavily censured, even persecuted, if you did not go along with those Bible contradictions. This pastor was quite influential; he was much thought of in many other congregations, and the less-than-spiritual standards had made headway in many other places. Several spiritual ministers were quite burdened about the situation, and several (unsuccessful) meetings were held in that pastor's congregation to try to help all, including him. These were of no avail. A man in his congregation opposed these same things. Finally a general ministers' meeting was held about the matter, and the details of the spiritual conflict came to light. About twelve points came out—all of them in violation of the Bible. All of them were *apparently* little things. The matter was presented before the ministerial body, and the pastor spoke. It was plain that he was indeed teaching and doing those things. He defended them. He sidestepped the importance of those things.

I sat in that meeting and confidently waited for men and women of God to refute the false teaching and deal with the heart of the brother. And I received one of the great shocks of my life. *They did not.* There were brethren there who had good understanding of what was involved and what it would mean. One of them said, "Well, let's have a Bible study. If we don't know what we believe, then let's study it now." But there was no consensus to study the Bible about those things. Any fair study would come to a conclusion that those things were wrong. Folks weren't mixed up or confused about those things. The problem was not ignorance or confusion.

The problem was political. A young brother and sister approached an older sister and asked her, "What's going on? Why won't any of you speak up? We were taught that these things were wrong." The old sister replied, "We are all so afraid." And that was the truth. They were *afraid* to stand up for the truth. They were afraid that it would split them. Such was the pastor's influence. Instead, *they had a vote of confidence* in the pastor. Most of the ministers there, in the presence of the pastor's apostasy, showed by uplifted hands that they continued to have confidence in the pastor and his ministry. Some abstained (I was one of them). The pastor continued to teach the same poisonous stuff among them until he died.

Now this was a hole in the wall that demanded further inquiry. God was showing great mercy in allowing all this embarrassing, awkward confusion to surface. But much of this was wasted on the vast majority of the ministers who attended the meeting. They were not interested in digging to discover any closed doors. They will deny to this day that there was any significant change among them as a result of their doing (or not doing). In another meeting, some months before the one mentioned, a young minister had voiced the same sentiments as the older minister in this meeting described above. Remarkably, the entire body of ministers had rejected the exact same letdowns in principles and concepts... The young minister did not have the same influence as the older minister.

In this way, people choose (by not taking a stand for truth) the abominations that they really believe in behind their closed doors. And regardless of their overall profession, the actual fruits of their idols and abominations began to manifest themselves.

**God is not pleased with  
nor does He accept any  
worship but that offered in  
His Spirit and in His truth.**

There are two overall trends in this process of falling away. The first is *an increasing skepticism in God and His promises* as He sees fit to work. The second is *the worship of idols*, such as Tammuz. Both are recorded in Ezekiel's writing. The first characteristic leads to the second, for if we are not led by God and His promises, we will be led by *something*.

*"Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, the LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz."* Eze. 8:12-14

The saying, "*The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth,*" pretty well sums up the attitude of skepticism. The idea of an absent, unconcerned Christ is a key thought to how false Christianity justifies its doings.

Tammuz was a young god in the pagan myth who supposedly died each fall and was resurrected each spring. According to the myth, he was very comely, and festivals of rejoicing greeted his arrival in the spring, while mourning attended his supposed annual death in the autumn. In many ways, he represents fleshly, earthly hopes, and this fable was especially attractive to women. Many Jewish women of the captivity found this story particularly appealing. They had hopes that there would be a "spring" from their captivity as they

mourned the loss of Jerusalem, etc. As though there was a natural rhythm of loss and gain, and this "fate" was the explanation of what had happened to them, of why they were exiles in Babylon.

There are many people weeping for Tammuz today. They have little or no faith in God, except as it appears convenient to do so, but their real confidence is in the flesh, especially the flesh at its best, i.e., Tammuz. The Tammuz worshipers believe in the flesh. Better and gifted preaching. More money. Projects. Great enthusiasm and zeal. Great fleshly wisdom. The praise and support of men. It is the exact opposite of Brother Paul's testimony, "*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*" Phil. 3:3

*"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."* Jn. 4:23-24

But if you weep for Tammuz, this scripture does not really mean very much to you, for your worship is offered in fleshly wisdom. God is not pleased with nor does He accept any worship but that offered in His Spirit and in His truth. "*He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*" Rev. 17:14 We see that God is a choosing God. He does not have to take what is offered to Him and be glad to get it. Notice again how particular God is: "*When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*" Mt. 25:31-34 The scripture goes on to tell how the rejected protest their end, but to no avail. **These scriptures are going to come true in front of our eyes, and you and I, dear reader, will either be accepted or rejected before the throne of God.** Oh,

let us all take warning! What do you think will be the fate of those who weep for Tammuz?

The Spirit of God will spoil you for the enticements of Tammuz. He will prove to you the vast superiority of God's way over every other way. He will lead you in such a way that your testimony will be, "Right was the pathway leading to this." He will teach you to see through and "hate every false way." <sup>Ps. 119:128</sup> How precious it is to be under Holy Spirit government! To be one of the number whom God has unified and keeps in unity! It exceeds the unity of a creed as day exceeds night.

Tammuz is only attractive when people have lost sight of God. In Tammuz, the preachers arise in the power of a people united on a creed, anointed with the praise of men, and these people experience a certain kind of reward. But in Zion, the ministers speak "as the oracles of God," <sup>1 Pet. 4:11</sup> anointed by the same Holy Ghost that inspired the writing of the Bible, and the Holy Ghost fire is the same as with the saints in the Book. It proves out. It needs

no revision. As the Lord who gives it, it is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is timeless and will do to live by and to die by. Men change. Their conceptions and ideas vary. But truth in the hands of the Holy Ghost is ageless and eternal.

"He speaks, and eternity,  
filled with His voice,  
Re-echoes the praise of the Lord."

It is a kingdom that cannot be moved, a stone cut out of the mountain without hands.

When the people of Judah fell away from the truth, and judgment fell upon them, God sent His prophet to hold before them eternal truth and to expose what they had actually followed, if perchance, they might humble themselves before Him and repent. And of them that received this message of truth recorded in the book of Ezekiel, they were those that returned to Zion and rebuilt the walls and the temple. The rest stayed in Babylon and grew more Babylonish each year.

"Are you of the holy remnant,  
Gathered to the King of Peace?  
Have you found a full atonement,  
And abundance of His grace?  
Yes, my soul has come to Zion,  
On the high and holy way,  
And I've seen the darkness flying,  
Driven by the light of day.

"Have you heard a voice from heaven,  
Calling in a solemn tone,  
'Come, my people, from confusion,  
This is not your native home?'  
Yes, I heard, and to my vision,  
Zion's glory brightly shone;  
Then I rose and fled the ruin,  
Taking not a Babel stone.

"Have you learned that all this remnant  
Must be dressed in uniform?  
Are you clothed in that white raiment,  
That will shine before the throne?  
Yes, I found the precious fountain,  
Opened when the Savior died,  
Here I washed my stains of crimson,  
And my soul is sanctified."



# MOSES AND THE PROPHETS

**T**HEN HE SAID, *I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*" <sup>Lk. 16:27-31</sup>

This man was and is in the greatest disaster than can befall a human being. "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." <sup>vs. 23</sup> There is absolutely nothing worse than can happen to a human being than to end up in hell, which was not even prepared for humans, but "for the devil and his angels." <sup>Mt. 25:41</sup> But that is where this man found himself. Jesus then tells us that he sought for relief, but found none. Then he sought for hope, but there was none of that, either. There was nothing but torment ahead—unending torment; no lessening, no change. Absolute hopelessness. Never had he thought that he would end up like this—*never!*

In this despair, this anguish, this extreme wretchedness, in the relinquishment of all hopes for himself, he thought of his five brothers. They were still alive and *still had opportunity to get saved*. The mind of the damned man raced through the areas of resistance of these five brothers to the truth. How well he knew those areas of resistance! In himself, that same resistance had ended him up in this awful place!





## And behind the pathetic pleading, we see the desire for something more than God has provided.

The desperate mind of Dives seized upon a plausible thought. If *Lazarus* (the despised beggar of Dives' mortal life) could return from the grave and the world beyond the grave, then *surely, oh, surely!* his five brothers would be affected. Surely they would seek God then! We hear the anguished plea of the tormented sinner:

*"I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."* And behind the pathetic pleading, we see the desire for *something more* than God has provided. It flies in the face of Romans 3:26, *"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* God was being just and fair with these five brothers, even as He has been and is with every other human being in the entire world. In John 1:9 we are told that He is *"the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."* Not a single human being is left out—*every* man is lighted. God is fair and just with everybody. Not a single person in the judgment will be able to say to God: "You were not fair with me. I did not have a fair chance." People end up in hell because they reject God's dealings with them.

When the damned man begged for special consideration, he was told of *what God had provided* that his brothers could be saved. *"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."* This is what God had provided for their salvation: **Moses and the prophets.** Lazarus was able to get a hold of salvation and live it because God had provided *Moses and the prophets.* Why should the five brothers receive more?

But then a solemn and terrible truth is brought to light. The problem was not that what was provided was inadequate. It was more than adequate. To any who would take the time to ponder, to weigh the truth revealed through Moses and the prophets, there was more than enough to help a person get right with God and stay right with Him. But there is something in human nature that wants more than that. Human nature wants to be overwhelmed; it wants to be awed; it wants to be bowled over, swept off the feet, wonderstruck. It is not enough to just know what is right and quietly going about doing it; there is something in mankind that wants to hear an angel shouting encouragement. And the miserable truth is that this desire for something sensational to attend our moral choices is nothing more or less than a desire *to not choose, to evade our responsibility.* "The devil made me do it." "I am really not capable of steering in this temptation." "I am *not responsible.*" "God is responsible for this." "I am just a child; I know not how

to come in or go out." **This attitude is false.** We were made to choose. It is denial to do as we feel like doing, then turn around and blame God for not dealing with us more impressively.

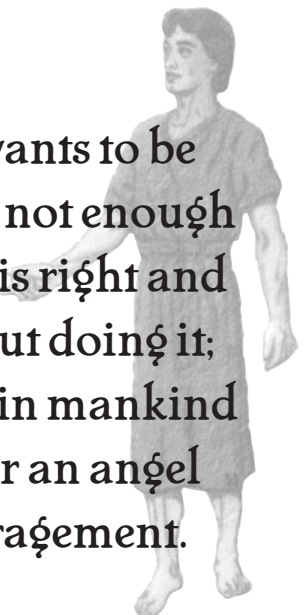
God knows He is dealing justly and fairly with us. He has supplied *"all things that pertain unto life and godliness."*<sup>2Pet. 1:3</sup> Nothing that is necessary is unsupplied. It is all there. Everything that is needed to please God and make heaven our home. Everything that is needed to avoid ending up in hell. *All* has been supplied.

The idea that we need *more* than God has supplied is wrong. It is a deception. When Dives remembered what he had done with Moses and the prophets in his lifetime, he was greatly afraid that *this would not be enough* to prevent those brothers of his from ending up in hell. After all, it had not been enough to keep him from choosing the ways and doings that landed him in torment. So he wanted *more than God had provided.* "Surely," he reasoned, "if they saw a man whom they had despised and spurned in life—if they saw this man come from the blessedness of paradise, with the sweetness of that celestial place upon him, then it would *overwhelm* their resistance, and they would humble down and seek God." How plausible this seemed to the man in torment! He might well have said, "If they saw a man come from the horror of torment, with the nigh-well unbearable anguish upon his countenance, and the scent of the brimstone about him...then *surely...* Surely they would be convicted... they would seek God..."

But **no!** *"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."* Oh, what awful words! **Neither will they be persuaded!** Additional realization will not help! Additional time to live will not help! *Nothing* will help. The heart has made its choice. The opportunity offered is fair. The understanding revealed is fair. **God is utterly fair.** After all, Dives had Moses and the prophets in his lifetime. He threw it all away.

It doesn't matter how *restrained* he was in his sinning, does it? It doesn't matter how much *good* he was able to accomplish, does it? It doesn't matter how much *better* he lived than so-and-so. The *degree* by how much he missed it doesn't matter much, does it? The awful, awful fact is: **he missed it.** He ended up in hell. ➤

## Human nature wants to be overwhelmed. It is not enough to just know what is right and quietly going about doing it; there is something in mankind that wants to hear an angel shouting encouragement.



*It is normal to forget things. But some things are too important to forget.*

*We must find a way to remember.*

*If we do not, it may mean that we may lose our souls  
or the souls of our loved ones.*

## Help in Remembering

AS WE BEGAN A TRIP to be away from home for about six weeks, an impression grew upon us to write a diary of our experiences in traveling and in the visit to both of our mothers. The thought then came to mind, that this was also a way to keep in touch with the ones we normally are when at home—by sending the highlights of God's blessings and dealings by e-mail.

The Lord then brought back a message that was delivered in my hearing recently on how we as human creatures need help in remembering the good. The devil seems to make it easy to remember the negative side of things. It is naturally easy to remember if someone mistreated our ancestors and how rare it is to hear someone say that so and so was gracious to my grandparents. May God help us in this process of remembering the beneficial things.

An older sister once called me back long-distance to counsel that I write down the things I had communicated to her about what the Lord had given me. She felt I would need them in holding on to what the Lord had given. I did, and it was true. As I would re-read them it was renewed in my mind and was not lost. How often you hear of folks going back on what God has given them. We really need help in remembering. *"Bring all things to your remembrance."* <sup>Jn. 14:26</sup>

*"Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee."* <sup>Dt. 4:23</sup> One sister wrote a book of the memorials in her family of the answers to prayer and things the Lord had done. She didn't want her children and grandchildren to forget, but rather remember and be encouraged to continue following her God.

Here is a place I believe young mothers could make their lives more useful for the future.

Someday, if the Lord allows time, you will be in the place of an older woman needing to be teachers to the younger. Young women, if God is helping you in difficult situations, write them down, no matter how awkward you may feel your writing is. If you don't have time to write down sensible sentences, make some notes. This is a good way to use the computer, instead of chatting or writing or sending unprofitable emails. Write down the mistakes too, and how you could have done better. This will help you remember, and to help the ones following. We need to remember we are going to give account of our time spent while here on earth.

My husband asked his mother about the time one of his siblings was going through a lying stage. He remembered his mother asking his sibling, "Why do you keep on lying, when you know you are lying, and I know you are lying?" The child's answer was, "Well, if I keep saying it long enough, I began believing it myself." My husband was wanting more insight in the situation. But his mother had forgotten asking her child the question... What if she had written a diary? Would it have told how God had helped her help her child?

You may think, "I will never forget, they are blazed on my brain." But you will be surprised what the toll of the years will bring. You will forget. As time passes things fade in your memory. I have mentioned to my mother things of my childhood, thinking sure she would remember. But she didn't. Even my own children in their twenties have told me things I have already forgotten!

*"Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."* <sup>2 Pet. 1:13</sup>

God has preserved Jesus' words for our human and spiritual needs. He is our example. We need to write down the Lord's dealings with us in guiding our home and children, that we may remember when we are older, more tired, and the last children are being raised. When my husband and I were first married, we noted in our circle of acquaintances that sometimes the last children didn't turn out as well as the older. We wondered why. Were the parents more tired, so that they forgot principles, and became lax?

*"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."* <sup>Gen. 40:23</sup> Only when something tragic happened did he remember Joseph. This chief butler spoke to Pharaoh and said, *"I do remember my faults this day."* <sup>40:9</sup> It is a big mistake to not remember the blessed dealings of the Lord with us. We don't want God to have to deal hard with us to get us to remember.

*"And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."* <sup>Gen. 9:16</sup> We often see a rainbow, do we not? God knew we would need something physical to remind us. We need to learn how God wants to help us in this remembering process. It is normal to forget things. But some things are too important to forget. We must find a way to remember. If we do not, it may mean that we may lose our souls or the souls of our loved ones.

Nor does the Lord help us just for ourselves. He also wants this treasure passed on down to the younger women and to those who may not have a clue as how to guide their home and children.

*"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."* <sup>Heb. 2:1</sup> ♥

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