

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES



"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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POSITIVE ACTION NECESSARY

The church of the Lord is a special and separate body of people who are not only "called out" of the darkness of the devil's kingdom, but also called "into the kingdom" of the Son of God (Col. 1:13). It is probable that many professed Christians today do not place the emphasis upon the meaning of "into the kingdom of his dear Son" that should be there.

In many places there is too much emphasis placed upon the negative side of the gospel and not enough emphasis upon the positive obligations of being in the kingdom of Christ. Negative preaching is that which is against or opposed to some attitude or action, while positive preaching is that which is in favor of or exhorting to some attitude or action. It is right and necessary to preach against sin in every form. It is essential "to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down" in order to scripturally "build, and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). But it is also essential to one's salvation to teach him to do the will of the Father. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (James 1:22).

Being called into the kingdom of God involves some duties that are often minimized. There is just one hope of this calling (Eph. 4:4); it is the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14); it is an holy calling (1 Tim. 1:9), and we must be partakers of this holy calling (Heb. 3:1). We must give diligence to make this calling sure (2 Peter 1:10).

Being called into the kingdom of Christ involves several positive and aggressive actions on the part of every one called. We are called into the fellowship of Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). Fellowship means partnership—a sharing. It involves working together with Christ; it also means to share the suffering of the cross. We are laborers together with Christ to attain a positive goal: the salvation of the lost. To do this we must walk in the light (1 John 1:3,7), and this walking requires positive action—something more than not walking in the way of the wicked. We are to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called (Eph. 4:1). This calls for meekness, longsuffering, forgiving, loving, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (1 Peter 3:9; 1 Thess. 2:12).

We are called to liberty, yet this liberty is not to be used to destroy the work of God. Liberty from sin and its consequences and from the works of the law, which could not save, does not permit us to engage in actions that cause weak brethren to stumble and fall into sin. While enjoying the liberty from sin and the works of the law of Moses, we are bond servants of Jesus Christ and must do his will in all things.

We are called to let the peace of God rule the heart (Col. 3:15). This is not peace at the expense of truth. It is not peace with the evil forces of Satan because we are told to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). In fact, this fight is with all forces of evil, including "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). There is no peace with spiritual error, either in the church or out of the church. False brethren cannot be tolerated at any time (Gal. 2:5). This fight is not with the carnal sword, but with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17). We are to be aggressive with the word of God and fight all battles of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Keeping the peace of God involves a fight against all false teachers and all forms of spiritual error wherever they are found, but the peace of God—that peace that comes from God by obeying His word—must rule our hearts. This is one of the reasons for being called into the kingdom of the Son of God.

In 1 Peter 2:9 we are told that we are called to "show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light". To show

forth the praises of God calls for something more than just "I do not do . . ." it includes worship as well as a life of godly living. It is by our "good works" that we give praises and glory to God (Matt. 5:16). These "good works" must be in the New Testament—authorized by Christ—otherwise they are not "good works" at all (Eph. 2:10).

2 Peter 1:3,4 teaches that we give glory and virtue in conducting our lives in accord with the living word of God. 1 Thessalonians 4:7 shows that holiness is the objective of this calling into the kingdom of God. This forbids wickedness that the world practices, but it also demands those actions that are in harmony with the divine nature of which we are to be partakers.

The calling into the kingdom of God requires us to be good teachers of the word of God. The lost of this world can be saved by no other means than to preach the gospel of Christ to them (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16). As a citizen of the kingdom I must do the work for which I have been called, and this includes teaching the word of truth to others.

We cannot be content to say, "We do not lie, steal, commit adultery, get drunk, murder, etc." and think that this is all that is required of us as servants of Christ and citizens of his kingdom. We must make our lives a real service in the cause of Christ. When this is done we will be walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we were called. It is important to be found working when the Lord comes. Think on these things!

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Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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CHOOSING UP SIDES

The people of God have often faced the choice of either serving God or the Devil. When Moses came down from the mount to find God's new nation worshipping a golden calf, cavorting indecently and committing fornication, he "stood in the gate of the camp, and said Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him" (Exodus 32:26). There were only two sides that day: the right side and the wrong side. The Levites who stood with Moses were not factionists. They were right. The others were wrong.

In his old age, Joshua gathered the elders, heads, judges and officers of Israel before him and gave them a choice. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Verse 22 credits them with choosing to serve the Lord. They were not partyists for having made such a choice. They were right.

At mount Carmel Elijah called for a choice when he said "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). The choice was clear. God was right and Baal was wrong.

Wrong choices can obviously be made. The works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) includes the term "heresies." According to Vine, Thayer, Liddell and Scott, Arndt and Gingrich and other sources, the word heresy means a choice in opposition to God's established truth and represents the crystallizing of a movement or sect built around this improper choice. The party spirit in religion is always to be avoided. Standing up to be counted on the side of revealed truth is not partyism, it is fidelity to Christ. Yet there is such a thing as the party spirit.

When No Choice Is Required

Our culture is given to taking sides. We see it in politics and especially in the world of sports. It is not much fun to watch a ball game unless you are "for" one of the teams. Nearly always the underdog has his share of supporters. But it is shameful that this inclination to choose up sides has spilled over into the affairs of brethren in areas where no sides ought to be taken. Consider these cases:

(1) The elders of a congregation decide it is best for the preacher to leave. He does not think so. While

all involved need to practice what the Bible teaches regarding brotherly behaviour, why should other preachers or elders in the area (or out of it) feel compelled to "choose up sides" and decide who are the "good guys" and who are the "bad guys"?

(2) A congregation has internal problems and a split occurs. Each side circularizes the brotherhood to be sure their story is told and to find sympathy. AND THEY WILL FIND SOME. Brethren will be expected to take a stand for one side or the other. Let a preacher go and hold a meeting for either group, regardless of his known fidelity to the Lord and the truth, and immediately his name is Anathema with the other side and all their sympathizers. He is now an enemy of the people and not to be trusted! Woe unto that preacher who gets invited for a meeting at 31st place, and woe unto the one with little enough sense to think he can settle it all in one week by talking to a few folks!

(3) In an area where there are several congregations, one of them has a problem to arise. The area-wide brotherhood council meets to deliberate and decide the matter. It may be in a preacher's study, or at a local cafeteria, but the end result is all the same. Certain ones, reputed to be "somewhat" are definitely "in the know."

(4) A private business enterprise operated by Christians makes a change in personnel and brotherhood meddlers cannot wait to pry into the matter and then—you guessed it—choose up sides! Recently a gospel paper changed owners and editors. Soon after this became public knowledge, no less than four preachers took me aside, all in the same week, and wanted to know where I "stood" on the matter. I told them I did not stand anywhere on it, that it was absolutely none of my business and I did not intend to try and make it so. Preachers have met to eat dinner together, wooled this over, while choosing up sides and engaging in brotherhood gossip. Whatever happened to PRIVATE enterprise?

We wonder if the whole brotherhood picked sides over the dispute between Paul and Barnabas over whether or not to take John Mark with them on their second preaching trip. Barnabas insisted he should go. Paul was just as insistent that he should not go. Was Barnabas just a soft-soaping compromiser who let family loyalty get in the way? Or was Paul full of a pontifical spirit when he made it clear that if John went along, he would not go? Was he being self-willed? Was it unfair to this young man? Inconsiderate of Barnabas? Do you suppose the apostles at Jerusalem, the elders and the church there had to take a side one way or the other? Did anyone take James aside and ask "Where do you stand on this controversy?" It was the business of nobody except the three men directly involved, and they did not allow it to become a lifelong bitterness. It turned out to the furtherance of the gospel for it resulted in two trips being made in different directions, greatly increasing the amount of preaching done. If that had happened in 1975 in this country, meddling and gossiping preachers from Virginia to California

would have known about it the next day. They would have known clearly which one was right and articles would soon have been written in support of both men and John Mark besides.

Brethren, we need to respect both congregational and individual autonomy. It is high time we remembered to mind our own business. "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (1 Peter 4:15). It is interesting to note the kind of company in which the Holy Spirit placed the busybody. Paul condemned those who wander from house to house with nothing better to do and who become "tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13). God hates those who sow discord among brethren (Prov. 6:19). "A froward man soweth strife; and a whisperer separateth chief friends" (Prov. 16:28). "He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips" (Prov. 20:19). "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Prov. 26:20). "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears" (Prov. 26:17). What a predicament! Here is a bad dog ready to bite and you take hold of his ears (or wherever else you can grab him) to keep him from biting you. You cannot hold him forever and you know as soon as you release him you are surely dog bit! Somehow, this seems a just crisis for those with no better judgment than to plunge into other men's matters.

Each one of us has his hands full trying to attend to his own affairs without trying to run the other fellow's. Be on the Lord's side, stand up for the truth, but stay out of things which do not concern you. Let's stop this childish business of choosing up sides over every private crisis. The attitude and action of some in this regard fosters a party spirit which ill-becomes us and which will tear down more in a short while than noble men can build in a lifetime.

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Let No Man Despise Thy Youth

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: With this issue we begin a new column which will be carried several times each year. **LET NO MAN DESPISE THY YOUTH** will feature articles from younger preachers who are just beginning their work and who may not be known to very many brethren. We have invited several to submit articles for this column and have some on hand now. Some brethren are reluctant to employ a young preacher. We hope this column will serve to convince our readers that we have some young men who are most capable and that this will result in a wider use of the talents of men whose labors should not be minimized because they are young.

Our first writer under this heading is **GLENN SEATON** now of Versailles, Kentucky where he works with the church at Grier's Creek. He has had the kind of background which prepared him well for his work. The son of the late Delson Seaton, who was a godly elder at Manslick Road in Louisville, Kentucky, and Oleta Woodward (the wife now of Dr. Paul Woodward, an elder at Expressway in Louisville), Glenn grew up loving the Lord and his church. While yet a high school student, he resolved to preach the gospel. After two years at Florida College, he continued his education at Florence State University in Florence, Alabama while working with the church in East Florence in a two preacher arrangement with Robert Harkrider. He has a younger brother, Doug, who also preaches the gospel. We expect to hear and read many good things about this man through the years).

WORSHIP

One of the most disturbing things to me as a young preacher is the lack of reverence and respect for God in public worship by those who claim to be Christians. It is not unusual to see the passing of notes, laughing, whispering, habitual sleeping, and daydreaming, all while we are engaged in worship or Bible study. I have even seen hugging and kissing on the part of teenagers during services of the Church.

This is evidence to me that while stressing the doctrinal point of worship, we have failed to instill within Christians the awesomeness of coming before the Ancient of Days and the great respect we should have for his Word.

WHEN YOU MOVE OR CHANGE ADDRESS, please notify us of the change. We must have both your old and new address. This consideration on your part will save us much time and expense.

The Old Testament contains many examples of events which should indicate our attitude in worship. Worship is honor, reverence, homage in thought, feeling, or action. Bible worship on the part of man should be specifically and supremely to Deity. The principle Old Testament word for worship is *Shahah*, occurring about 94 times. *Shahah* literally means to depress or bow down. Several passages convey this idea. As Abraham's servant went to find Isaac a wife, we find, "And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth" (Gen. 24:52). Also, as Moses went unto mount Sinai the second time to receive the law, the Bible says, "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped" (Exodus 34:8). The Psalmist wrote, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Ps. 95:6). Therefore, Old Testament worship was the reverential attitude of mind or body or both. This action was based upon an awareness of the true nature of Deity as compared to man. This reverence was usually joined with obedience and service. In the New Testament the idea of bodily prostration is overshadowed by an emphasis upon worshipping in "spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

What made these men fall on the earth or bow themselves and worship? They simply realized the glory, greatness, and majesty of a being that had power over all the universe. The Old Testament worthies had eyewitnessed great manifestations of Divine power. As they tried to comprehend this glory in view of their own human frailties, they could do nothing else but fall before him. If that same realization can be taught to Christians today, then our foolish, disrespectful attitude will be turned to one of awe and praise as we come to worship our God.

Since the Jews felt keenly the greatness of Jehovah, they had great respect not only for Jehovah, but also for his Word and anything else (such as the instruments of the tabernacle) that might reflect the holiness of God.

As Jehovah prepared to meet his people, we find this instruction, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai" (Ex. 19: 10, 11). Later, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, "All the people who sought Jehovah, stood at their tent door until Moses entered into the tabernacle." When the cloudy pillar descended upon the tabernacle, "the people rose up and worshipped" (Ex. 33: 7-10). Another example of this respectful, reverential attitude is found in the book of Nehemiah. Ezra brought the law of Moses before the people to read. When he opened the book, the people stood up and gave attention to the book of the law (Neh. 8: 1-5). Afterwards, we find, "and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands,


and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:6).

How can we overcome this lack of respect today? First of all, we can study again what it means to worship the God of Heaven. Lessons upon his majesty and holiness will cause respect in the hearts of all who seek to serve God.

Second, we can add more enthusiasm and joy to our services without losing order. This can be done by our whole-hearted singing and attentive listening to the Word of God.

Finally, parents can train their children in the home the proper attitude toward worship. Children should be taught that worship is serious, and is something we must prepare our minds for in order to please God, which is our only purpose in worship.

Many auditoriums sound like ringside at a boxing match before services start. However, when that magic minute arrives we are suddenly ready to worship in "spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Who are we kidding? Let us sanctify and prepare ourselves to meet the Lord. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Ps. 89:7).




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QUESTIONS: 1) What is a scriptural divorce? Explain the difference between fornication and adultery in Matt. 19:9.—D. E. H. 2) Please explain: Someone who had never been married, marries unaware that their mate had been involved in an unscriptural divorce. May the person who had never been married and who was deceived into an adulterous relationship, upon cessation of this relationship, be free to marry?—E.E.H.

ANSWERS: By use of the expression "scriptural divorce" one should not conclude that divorce (even when permitted by Scripture) is pleasing in the sight of God. Always, in such divorce, at least one person is in violation of God's law, hence, guilty of sin. This is grievous to God. Therefore, he says, "I hate putting away" (Mai. 2:16). However, provision has been made for the innocent party to divorce and remarry: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9). The exception of this verse, namely, fornication, is the only condition upon which one may divorce and remarry in harmony with the Scripture. This is the meaning of the expression "scriptural divorce." There is no scriptural authority for divorce and remarriage upon any other grounds. Rationalism and civil law may authorize it, but still there is no Scripture for it!

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon defines "porneia," (translated fornication) as follows: "a. prop, of illicit sexual intercourse in general . . . ;" that in some instances "it is distinguished from moicheia" (translated adultery) "Matt. 15:19; Mk. 7:21; Gal. 5:19;" and furthermore, he shows that it is "used of adultery . . . Matt. 5:32; 19:9" (Page 532).

In the light of the above definition, we learn that fornication sometimes means illicit relations by unmarried people; sometimes it means illicit relations by people we are married, and sometimes it comprehends both. In addition to verses already cited by Thayer, consider the following: "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye

may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinence" (1 Cor. 7:2-5). Here Paul gives instructions on how "to avoid fornication." 1) He speaks to the unmarried: "... let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." Otherwise, if they (the unmarried) yield to the temptation, the sin of fornication is committed. 2) He speaks to the married: "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband." Otherwise, if they (the married) yield to the temptation, the sin of fornication is committed. Again, Paul used the word fornication to identify the sin of an illicit relationship involving a married person: "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife" (1 Cor. 5:1).

In the light of the above, I conclude that in Matt. 19:9 "fornication" refers to any illicit relations on the part of one of the marriage partners; that "adultery" refers to the illicit relations of those unscripturally married.

Concerning the question from the second querist, the one deceived into an adulterous relationship, may, upon cessation of the relationship, be free to marry again. In the light of the above observations this marriage was never recognized by God in the first place. Of course, forgiveness of the sin must be obtained by complying with God's law of pardon whether saint or alien.

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THE RELIGION OF FREEMASONRY (1)

That Freemasonry is "a religious institution" with a new birth, a redeemer, offering to the faithful, salvation at last in that grand celestial Lodge above, none who are informed will deny. However, that is the problem. Many people have never tried to learn anything about Masonry. So they do not know what it is. Those who are in the Masonic Lodge either do not know very much about it or when the truth is presented about it, will not admit it.

Masonry has some "secrets" about it and I suppose some of these "secrets" most of us care little about learning. However, one can learn enough about it to know that a Christian has no business being a member of the Lodge.

In this series of articles I will be quoting from official Masonic works. I would suggest that you save each article so that when the series is finished you can go back and read all of them at once. I have double-checked all quotations in these articles and have either the books quoted from in my library or a photocopy of the pages from the books quoted. I suggest that if you have copies of these works and would like to check the quotations, be sure you have the same edition I am quoting from. I have found that the quotes are on different pages in different editions. The quotations in these articles are from the following official Masonic works:

1. Tennessee Craftsman or Masonic Textbook, 1942 Reprint of Sixth Edition, February, 1931.
2. Kentucky Monitor by Henry Pirtle, 10th Edition, 1921.
3. Morals and Dogma by Albert Pike, 1932 edition.
4. 2 volumes, Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Albert Mackey, 1929 edition, Revised and Enlarged by Robert Clegg.
5. 5 volumes, A Library of Freemasonry, 1906 edition.

I. Origin of Freemasonry

Dr. Mackey says at one time the origin of Masonry was placed "at the building of Solomon's Temple" (Encyclopedia, page 87) but goes on to say, "I confess that I cannot find any incontrovertible evidence that would trace Freemasonry, as now organized, beyond the Building Corporations of the Middle Ages" (Encyclopedia, page 87) which he says "its age may not exceed five or six hundred years" (Encyclopedia, page 88). Dr. Mackey further says

that Masonry may be connected "with the Ancient Mysteries of Greece, of Syria, and of Egypt" (Encyclopedia, page 88; emphasis mine, T.G.O.).

Albert Pike connects Masonry with the mysteries of ancient paganism. He says, "These old controversies have died away, and the old faiths have faded into oblivion. But Masonry still survives, vigorous and strong, as when philosophy was taught in the schools of Alexandria . . ." (Morals and Dogma, pages 274-275; emphasis mine, T.G.O.). Pike says "our ancient brethren . . . took their philosophy from the Old Theology of the Egyptians, as Moses and Solomon had done" (Morals and Dogma, page 289; emphasis mine, T.G.O.) Pike further says that men sought "the wisdom of the Egyptian Initiates" in order "to seek the admission into the mysteries of Osiris and Isis" and that "from Egypt" "afterward these mysteries were introduced successively into Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Sicily, and Italy" (Morals and Dogma, page 363; emphasis mine, T.G.O.).

With Pike saying Masonry is connected with the mysteries of ancient paganism, one can understand Mackey's statement "that its body came out of the Middle Ages, but that its spirit is to be traced to a far remoter period" (Encyclopedia, page 88). Mackey says, "The theory, then, that I advance on the subject of the Antiquity of Freemasonry is this: I maintain that, in its present peculiar organization, it is the successor, with certainty, of the Building Corporations of the Middle Ages, and through them, with less certainty but with great probability, of the Roman College of Artificers" (Encyclopedia, page 88).

Further, Mackey says, "Of Grand Lodges thus constituted, we have no written evidence previous to the year 1717, when Freemasonry was revived in England The true history of Grand Lodges commences, therefore, from what has been called the Era of the Revival. In 1716 four old Lodges in London determined, if possible, to revive the Institution from its depressed state, and accordingly they met in February, 1717 at the Apple-Tree Tavern, whose name has thus been rendered famous for all time; after placing the oldest Master Mason, who was a Master of a Lodge, in the chair, they constituted themselves into a Grand Lodge, and forthwith "revived the Quarterly Communications of the officers of Lodges called the Grand Lodge On the following Saint John the Baptist's Day (June 24, T.G.O.) the Grand Lodge was duly organized and Antony Sayer, Gentleman, was elected Grand Master" (Encyclopedia, page 416).

Thus, from the testimony of Masonic works one learns that Masonry based upon the philosophy of ancient paganism, was organized in London on June 24, 1717.

II. Masonry Is A Religion

Most people do not know that Masonry is a religion and Masons who know it will not admit it. Masonry is just another human religious denomination seeking to offer salvation.

Albert Pike says, "**The religious faith thus taught by Masonry** is indispensable to the attainments of the great ends of life" (**Morals and Dogma**, page 196; emphasis mine, T.G.O.). "Masonry is the legitimate successor from the earliest times the custodian and depository of the great philosophical and **religious** truths, unknown to the world at large" (**Ibid.**, page 210; emphasis mine, T.G.O.) "Every Masonic Lodge is a temple of religion; and its teachings are instruction in religion" (**Ibid.**, page 213). "This is the **true religion** revealed to the ancient patriarchs; **which Masonry has taught** for many centuries, and which it will continue to teach as long as time endures" (**Ibid.**, page 214; emphasis mine, T.G.O.) "The Degree of Apprentice (first degree of Masonry, T.G.O.) declares that **Masonry is a worship**" (**Ibid.**, page 219; emphasis mine, T.G.O.) "Masonry is a worship" (**Ibid.**, page 526).

Dr. Mackey says, "**Freemasonry is a religious institution** (emphasis mine, T.G.O.) . . . it is of indispensable obligation that a Lodge, a Chapter, or any other Masonic Body, should be both opened and closed with prayer" (**Encyclopedia**, page 792). "Freemasonry may rightfully claim to be called a **religious institution**" (**Ibid.**, page 847; emphasis mine, T.G.O.). "The **religion of Freemasonry** is not sectarian" (**Ibid.**, page 847; emphasis mine T.G.O.). "The tendency of all true Freemasonry is toward religion" (**Ibid.**, page 847). "We contend, without any sort of hesitation, that Freemasonry in every sense of the word, except one, and that is at least philosophical, **an eminently religious institution**-is indebted **solely to the religious element** it contains for its origin as well as its continued existence, and that **without this religious element** it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and good" (**Ibid.**, page 847; emphasis mine, T.G.O.). "The doctrine of a resurrection to a future and eternal life constitutes an indispensable portion of the religious faith of Freemasonry" (**Ibid.**, page 851).

"Masonry is a religious institution" (**Kentucky Monitor**, page 28).

Conclusion To Article One

Masonry dates from 1717 and is a religious order. Please save this article to use with the next one in this series.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH


Baptisms	1013
Restorations	217

(Reports taken from bulletins, papers and newsletters received by the editor. 547 of these baptisms this month are from reports coming from the Philippines. 91 of those restored were from that country. We know that we are learning of only a small percentage of those obeying the Lord. Let us hear from you when you know of those who have yielded to the gospel.)

**EXPOSITION:
TEXT and
CONTEXT**

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THE LETTER TO THYATIRA — Rev. 2:18-29

Although Thyatira was the least important city of the seven, the problems imperilling the church were not unimportant. Barclay wrote, "The problem at Thyatira was the universal problem, the problem which meets us today, the problem of how far, if at all, the Christian may compromise with the world."¹ Nicolaitanism, which had a comparatively small number of adherents at Pergamos, had a far more powerful influence among the Christians at Thyatira. The purpose of this letter, therefore, was to strengthen those who were endangered, call the fallen to repentance and threaten the impenitent with judgment.

Sterling Qualities

In spite of the evils that were present, there were several virtues which the Lord acknowledges and commends. Jesus states that he knows their works, love, service, faith, patience and their last works to be more than the first (v. 19).

(1) **Works.** These would be their services rendered to God. They would involve their outward and spiritual activities—the whole conduct.

(2) **Love.** Prompting work, yea the basis for work, is love. This quality was absent at Ephesus, their work being prompted by habit and a sense of duty. This love, "agape," is the love of devotion.

(3) **Service.** Love was shown in action at Thyatira. They ministered to those who were **in** need. Perhaps some of them could be described as having addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Cor. 16:15).

(4) **Faith.** Albert Barnes aptly stated, "The word here would include not only trust in Christ for salvation, but that which is the proper result of such trust—fidelity in his service." The verb form, "pisteuo," is defined by Thayer's lexicon, "a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah—the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ" (p. 511). Hence, Christians at Thyatira had fidelity to their religion.

(5) **Patience.** This word means steadfastness, endurance, holding one's own under pressure. Brethren at Thyatira were able to cope with the trials they faced.

(6) **Progression.** Jesus said "thy last works are more than the first." Growth was being realized.

They were growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). Their love, faith, service and patience were increasing—improving. Many today have begun well but they are standing still or have gone back into the world, the latter end being worse with them than the beginning (2 Pet. 2:20).

In light of their admirable qualities and their splendid record, we are made to marvel at the sufferance of the evils in the church. Stott says, "In that fair field a poisonous weed was being allowed to luxuriate. In that healthy body a malignant cancer had begun to form. An enemy was being harboured in the midst of the fellowship."²

Compromise of Moral Principle

Jesus' complaint is that "thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (v. 20). Action should have been taken against those heretics, but instead of disciplinary action, the church tolerated their destructive heresies. The Bible plainly teaches, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Tit. 3:10). We further read, ". . . mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

Maybe their failure to discipline was similar to the failure of churches today to take punitive action. You hear brethren say, "Withdrawing fellowship will further alienate them or it will make it impossible to reclaim them or it will tear up the church." Some brethren think they know more how to run the church than does its head, Jesus. The Lord reprimanded the church at Thyatira for allowing wickedness to prevail and not a few need reprimanding today.

Who was Jezebel? Several views have been presented as to whom the woman Jezebel was. (1) Some contend that Jezebel was the wife of the pastor. But this view is so far-fetched that we will not go into the reasoning behind it. Churches had pastors (plural), who were the bishops or elders, and not pastor (singular). (2) Some theorize that Jezebel was a pagan priestess in the city of Thyatira. But this woman was in the church—not in a pagan temple. (3) A few have said that Lydia is meant by the name, having changed to a reprobate life upon her return to Thyatira from Philippi. This is a slander upon the good name of Lydia. (4) Several propose that Jezebel was a symbolic name of an actual woman in the church who pretended to be a prophetess, a spokesman for God. (5) Some maintain that Jezebel is representative of the heresy—that the name must be taken allegorically.

The last two positions, four and five, are the only ones which have any merit whatsoever. I am inclined to favor number five—the allegorical interpretation. What was called the doctrine of Balaam at Pergamos is referred to as the doctrine of Jezebel at Thyatira. It is the licentious philosophy of the Nicolaitans in both places. Wallace writes, "The name *Jezebel* is the symbol of the powerful heathen influences and ap-

plied to the same defection designated by the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes."³

Beckwith states, "Jezebel here is not a figurative term for a party or movement, it designates an actual person."⁴ But regardless of what Jezebel represents the problems at Thyatira are specifically identified. Whether the name represents the heresy or whether it is a symbolic name of an actual woman, a Mary Baker Eddy, Ellen G. White predecessor, the sins that were sheltered in the church were for real.

The name "Jezebel" is an allusion to the Old Testament woman by that name—the wife of Ahab. The Old Testament Jezebel was a daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians and a devotee of Baal. She supported idolatrous worship in Israel and left behind a reputation of "whoredom and witchcraft" (2 Kgs. 9:22). She was notoriously an immoral woman who influenced Ahab and Israel to practice idolatry. The "Jezebel" at Thyatira was beguiling God's people to engage in idolatrous practices—to make concessions with pagan elements. What was being done at Thyatira was characteristic of the woman Jezebel in Israel.

What was the error of Jezebel? Her error was the same as that taught at Pergamos by the adherents of Nicolaitanism. Jezebel was permitted "to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (v. 20).

There is general agreement as to what eating things sacrificed to idols meant. This involved Christians attending the heathen festivals and eating food, part of which was offered to an idol god, and which they received on their tables as a gift from some pagan god. Paul discusses this problem of eating meat offered to idols in 1 Cor. 8-10. However, there is divided sentiment over the meaning of fornication in the text. Some want to spiritualize the word, having it denoting spiritual infidelity to God. Such usage is found in Ex. 34:15; Dt. 31:16 and Hos. 9:1.

But I am in accord with Lenski when he wrote, "We see no reason for taking "to commit fornication" in a figurative sense. In these idolatrous centers it was always a great temptation to yield to the old ways, to listen to pagan neighbors and friends, and with them to go to the great idol feasts and celebrations, there to eat in honor of the idol and to embrace the temple prostitutes and thus to obtain pagan approval."⁵

The element in the church at Thyatira was encouraging, in essence, the saints to meet the world half-way; to not have such high moral and ethical standards; to not cut themselves off from society's ways and customs. This philosophy is not dead today. There are those in the church who feel in order to enhance their business, their profession or their social standing, they have to compromise with the world.

Message To The Church

First, let's notice Christ's words to the whole church. Jesus introduces himself as "the Son of God,

who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass." As God's Son, he is infallible, with omniscient and penetrating eyes (flaming eyes) and great strength (feet of brass). Jesus can see the flaws at Thyatira and his feet are ready to trample her sins underfoot. He "searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (v. 23).

Second, Jesus warns the Jezebel party. He states, "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds" (v. 22). God had given her time to repent, a period of probation, but she repented not (v. 21). She would suffer tribulation, being cast into a symbolic bed of retribution for her sins. This **refers, of course, to the imminent judgment** that was to come upon the apostate teachers. "Killing her children" (v. 23) was the extermination of the seeds of wickedness and false teachings, preventing the perpetuation of those evils.

Third, Jesus offers advice to the rest. The rest are those who have not been influenced by the libertine philosophy and who have not known the depths of Satan (v. 24). The "depths of Satan" was perhaps the immoral and corrupt practices of this degenerate party.

Unto the faithful Jesus would not place upon them any further burdens than what they were faithfully performing. They were admonished to hold fast till he comes (v. 25). The holding fast would be their adherence to the truth until the judgment against the evil element in the church. This judgment was to come shortly, and, therefore, had no reference to the second advent of Jesus.

Fourth, Jesus promises rewards to the conqueror. Two things are promised to him who overcomes. (1) He will be given power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron (vs. 26-27). This is a figure depicting the irresistible force of the gospel. The rod denotes the chastening of the truth. Wallace says on this verse, "... it refers to **the** impact of the gospel on the pagan world through the victory of the church emerging from persecution." ⁶ (2) He will be given the morning star (v. 28). This symbolizes the guidance and leadership of Jesus Christ. Refusing to plunge into the depths of Satan, the conquering Christian will penetrate the depths of Christ, and turning his back upon the darkness of sin, he will be illuminated by him who is the light of the world.

Footnotes

1. William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
2. John R. W. Stoot, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
3. Foy E. Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
4. Isbn T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 466.
5. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1961), p. 107.
6. Foy E. Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

Using Great Plainness of Speech

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PLAINNESS OF SPEECH

Since I could not obtain the heading for my article that I desired (my first choice was EDITOR, but Connie wouldn't hear to it) I consider the above heading as a great challenge to try to live up to in both my preaching and my writing. In this first article under the above heading, I think it reasonable that we should discuss the title itself which is a quotation from 2 Cor. 3:12.

The word "plainness" comes from the Greek word *arresia* and means, "Freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, openly, frankly" (Thayer, Page 490). If one is always having trouble with people misunderstanding what he says, he ought to examine what he is saying, and perhaps the way he is saying it. For, as I view my obligation to God in preaching or teaching, I believe one of the most important things that I need to understand is the great responsibility placed upon me by God in making my speech and my writings simple and easily understood.

One of the things that Jesus condemned the hypocrites for doing was making a show of themselves. They did this by standing on the street corners and in the synagogues and making long, loud prayers "to be seen of men" (Matt. 6:5). Jesus said they have their reward.

The Bible is written in simple language. In fact, some have estimated that the language used in the Bible is on a 6th or 7th grade level. Thus, when we use the language of the Bible, our language will be simple and easily understood by all. If we use excessively large words and extremely complicated arguments, many of our hearers will not be able to grasp what is being said. And besides, if we are doing this for the purpose of trying to impress someone (to be seen of men) who is in the audience, how much better are we than the ones that Jesus condemned in Matt. 6:5? After all, our business is God's business—trying to save souls—not impress men. If such simple language as that used in the Bible was used by the Holy Spirit through those who wrote the New Testament, can we improve on God's language?

One of the things that the Greeks thrived on was great flowery speeches. However, the apostle Paul (who had both the ability and the education to make such speeches) said, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of

Please renew promptly.
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wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:1, 4). Not only could Paul be understood in the things which he said, he could also be understood in the things he wrote (Eph. 3:4).

May the God of heaven help me to live up to the idea set forth in "using great plainness of speech" and ever to have the desire to speak frankly, openly, using words and arguments that can be understood by all to the saving of souls.

Things Written
for Our Learning

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DAVID

In previous articles on the moral issue, we have considered the personal morality of Joseph and of Samson. Let us now examine the Biblical record regarding the moral life of David.

David's 'Sin'

So glaring and inconsistent with David's normal behavior pattern is the episode between him and Bathsheba that we do not usually think in terms of David's "sins" but rather in terms of his "sin". This beyond doubt is the moral depression in the life of this otherwise great man. Why did it happen?

Background

David was an outstanding person in many ways. He came from a humble family and as a lad was a shepherd. His physique was strong and his appearance handsome and ruddy. Samuel, the prophet, at God's direction anointed David to be the successor to King Saul. Also he is described as "cunning on the harp", "a mighty valiant man", "a man of war" and "prudent in speech" (1 Sam. 16).

After slaying the Philistine giant, Goliath, young David became Saul's armor bearer and right hand man. He served well and was so proficient in battle that the people inadvertently caused a rift between Saul and David that never healed as far as Saul was concerned. They gave more credit to David than to Saul in Israel's victories over their enemies. This was the beginning of the end for Saul and the beginning of a long siege of hate on the part of Saul toward David. We have known of preachers in our day who could not stand to hear other people praise fellow preachers above themselves. The spirit of Saul often rears its head today among God's people. God should get the glory for anything worthwhile that is accomplished but because Saul wanted the glory for himself and felt he was "losing out" he subjected David to many perils, hardships and heartaches.

David's Married Life

With his marriage to Michal, daughter of Saul, David became a family man. He found it difficult to realize that from his humble beginning he **had** become son-in-law to the king. David felt unworthy to be in this position of high honor. Later on David gathered other wives to himself. Of course, God's original plan concerning marriage was one man and one woman for life (Gen. 2:24), but it seems that God allowed this for some reason (2 Sam. 12:8).

Unmet Responsibility

David was a great king and courageous fighter for the Lord. But there came a time when David did not rise up to his duties in either case. He "sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel: and they destroyed the children of Ammon . . . But David tarried still at Jerusalem." Why he did not go and lead the army as on other occasions is not clear. The fact is, he stayed home while they did the work (2 Sam. 11:1). It was when David stayed home instead of leading the battle against the Ammonites that he deviated from his moral pattern.

Progression of His Sin

We have noted already that David is not where he is supposed to be. He has too much time on his hands. Some have properly said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. We believe it is true. At eventide David went out on the roof and from that vantage point saw a beautiful woman washing herself. Just where the woman was is not indicated but she could be seen by David and if by him others also. He desired her.

In the New Testament Jesus said, ". . . whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). Maybe he could not help seeing her but he should have looked some other way. If a woman will not pull her shade down then those across the way will be obliged to. It was wrong for David to look upon her lustfully. At the same time the woman should not have displayed herself. The place to take a bath is in privacy, not in public view. Both were wrong. In James 1:14 "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

After David looked and desired Bathsheba he sent for her after learning first her identity. It was clear that she was the wife of another man, Uriah the Hittite. David over-ruled this fact and sent for her anyway. Indeed, sexual lust is unreasonable!

Bathsheba came as bidden and refused not the king his desire. She was as guilty as David. They had no right to each other. They both knew it. Even if David was wrong she could have refused him. The fact that he was the king gave him no right to commit fornication. James further said in 1:13, "Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. . ."

To add to the complexity of the situation, Bathsheba is found soon to be with child. Think not that the child was illegitimate. The parents were, however. How many innocent children have had to grow up with such a stigma. Normally it would be

thought that Uriah was the child's father but he has been away, is away now, and will not return for some time. So unless something is done the calendar is going to give them away. Instead of both of them repenting and admitting their sin, David resorts to deceit to try to rejoin Uriah and Bathsheba at least long enough to make it feasible for the child to have been fathered by Uriah. There are 7-month babies, you know. We wonder how many adulterers have used the "7 month" plan to try to cover their sin.

But Uriah has a strong sense of duty and responsibility. He is a soldier and he rather wonders why he has been brought home to start with. To use a valuable fighting man as a courier to bring news to the king does not seem reasonable. David is the king, so Uriah does not question but he does refuse to go home and wants to get back into the fight, but David detains him still attempting to bring Bathsheba and Uriah together at least overnight. Failing in this David in desperation sends him back to Joab literally with his own death warrant. The message instructs Joab to put him in the thickest of the battle where the likelihood is strong that he will be killed. Joab obeys the king's order and Uriah is killed. David then takes Bathsheba to be his wife. But God is displeased (2 Sam. 11).

Nathan the prophet is sent by the Lord to David to narrate a parable. David can see the wrong when he thinks it pertains to another. How good we sometimes are in seeing quite clearly the faults of others while overlooking our own. Evidently David thought Nathan was relating an actual case judging from his strong reaction and decision to punish the offender with death. Nathan said, "Thou art the man" (2 Sam. 12:7). Nathan reminds David of all the blessings God has allowed him to have including a number of wives. The prophet further announces the punishment of God in the form of future calamities on the house of David and also that the child will die. At this point David repented. He said, "I have sinned against the Lord." If we would always realize that all sin is against the Lord and that we must, as David, say, "I have sinned." This sin had given the enemies of God the occasion to blaspheme. The devil always gloats when a child of God revolts against the Lord. Oh, the bitterness of remorse. Repentance can change the future of the transgressor but the memory of the sin will linger on. Though forgiven David said later on that his sin was ever before him. Saul, later Paul, in the New Testament could not forget that he had persecuted the church though God had forgiven him.

In Summary

As God had said, the child of fornication died. David did not do as Judas who betrayed Christ and destroyed himself. He arose and met the future to once again serve the Lord with gladness. Whereas in the case of Joseph we have the example of an unusually self-contained man who remained pure at all times, Samson represented the type of person that is always prone to weakness and seems to exert no


particular self-control. David on the other hand is a good man who fell in a weak moment by lust but had the good sense to repent and then remain a "man after God's own heart." He was restored. In Gal. 6:1 Paul said, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Brethren, let us learn what we can about moral uprightness from the things written before time for our learning.

Things Most
Certainly
Believed

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THE GIFT SUPREME

John 3:16 is perhaps the best known passage of the New Testament. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This has been called the "golden text" of the Bible. Although the most often quoted and referred to of any New Testament verse, I wonder how many really appreciate and understand what it says?

As always, the context must be allowed to complement the verse. Beginning with verse 14, we have a quote from Numbers 21, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." Remedy for the bite of fiery serpents raised up in the camp of Israel is remembered. A brazen serpent was raised on a pole above the head of the people. Those bitten who would look upon the serpent were healed, they did not die. The connection with the son of God? "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" on the Cross, thus bringing to those who look upon Him in faith everlasting life. As smitten Israel had to look in faith upon that serpent of brass to be healed so everyone smitten by sin must look in faith to the Christ of the Cross.

There is no passage more comprehensive than this. The whole gospel story is told in these few words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son". What a price to pay! What was wrong to require such a price? All were lost, perishing, doomed and damned by sin. To redeem, in order that all might not perish, God gave. That "whosoever", not the whole world unconditionally, "believeth on him should not perish". There is no comfort to a "faith only" theology, conversely it is

refuted in this passage. In the type, Israel had to not only have faith in the remedy offered through Moses but to act in faith by the looking. "Believeth in him", the anti-type, Christ, involves all He says and requires. It is not only the fact of sonship that we must accept but the application of His word to our lives. The picture herein is vivid. On the one side God, loving and giving. On the other, a perishing, receiving world.

God is not what Satan has made man to believe Him to be. He is not some monster lurking in the shadows as a beast of prey, waiting for man to slip so as to pounce on him, or to seize and cast into torment then forever gloat over his misery. A more distorted view is not possible and Satan has never perpetuated a greater deception.

The Bible pictures God as a kind, compassionate, and loving Father. One "not willing that any perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). To motivate man to repentance, God manifested His love in an expression never before or since equaled, the gift of His Son. Assurances of Divine love are neither new nor strange as one studies the Bible. The Old Testament is filled with such declarations. To Moses, the Lord revealed Himself and declared, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex. 34:6). The Psalmist frequently declares the love of God. "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption" (Psa. 130:7).

Only in the New Testament is there a full and complete revelation of God's redeeming love. Here alone it is graphically pictured in the record of Christ's death, burial, resurrection and ascension. This is the central point of revelation about which all else revolves. God's redeeming love is the basic truth, without this all other doctrine is chaff, all preaching is vain. Here is the basic moving force in conversion to Christ.

"The gospel is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). "Power" is the translation of "dunamis" from which "dynamic", "dynamo", "dynamite", etc., are derived. The gospel is God's "power", "dynamite", if you please. That which moves, the magnetic power in telling of Christ, the gift of divine love and attracting to Him. Of course, included in the gospel are facts, conditions and promises. Facts are to believe, conditions are to be met and promises are to then be received. Obedience results from hearing and believing in Jesus and His love.

Literally, gospel means "good news". Of what does it consist? The fact that man is lost, perishing, without God and having no hope? There is nothing which would classify as good news in this, you say. True. But God saw this deep distress, the despair of man and was moved. In response to the need, He sent Jesus to the Cross to redeem, rescue from enthrallment. That's the gospel, "the power of God unto salvation." "And I, if I be lifted up from the

earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). This is the key note leading to man's salvation, "or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). Thus, "We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

You have seen a blade of grass crushed beneath the rubble of a fallen building, pale, colorless, and feeble. Watch it as it creeps along the ground to turn upward and out a crevice. Once outside, it takes on new life and color, becomes vigorous. What caused this blade to creep toward that crevice? To come out that small opening? Of course, you say, light, the sun's ray. In response to the gentleness of the sun's ray, it took on new life, color and beauty.

Just so does God draw the sinner unto Himself. When the souls of men are crushed by sin and fear of death, the tender ray of the Sun of Righteousness falls upon them and they leap in response to be filled with life divine. In order to make men love Him, God manifested His love. The gospel, the good news of God's love, is the power to move man.

The love of God, to what shall we compare it? Damon and Pythias illustrate the love and devotion of friends. As the story goes, Pythias was condemned to death for conspiring against Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse. Damon pledged his own life in order that Pythias might visit friends before his execution. Should Pythias not return, Damon was willing to die in his stead. But Pythias kept his word, did return, and Dionysius pardoned him. As thrilling as the story is, there is no real comparison because Christ gave His life for enemies.

Mother's love by poet and philosopher is often held up as the very epitome. The swan mother plucks feathers from her breast to line the nest. The mother eagle has been seen to spread her wings to protect the nest from fire, there to burn with the eaglets. The climax to this expression of love can only be reached in the human mother's bosom. The toil, sacrifice and suffering of a mother is well known and most nearly illustrates God's love. But all the mothers' love concentrated is not really comparable to the love of God. The prophet, seeking to touch Israel and reassure, said, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet, will I not forget thee" (Isa. 49:15).

Where are we to find an apt illustration of God's love? How shall we express it? Poets have tried only to succeed in stressing their inability to express. "Could I with ink the oceans fill, Were the skies of parchment made, And every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade, To write the love of God above Would drain the ocean dry, Nor could the scroll contain the whole, Though stretched from sky to sky." God's love can find expression only through the

means of His choosing. There are at least two things man cannot measure, God's love and man's sin. If sin were not so terrible, had its consequences not been beyond human reckoning, God would not have paid the price. The gospel is painted against the blackest background imaginable, gloom and despair. Unless the background is seen, the gospel loses its beauty and meaning. Only when we are able to see ourselves, hopelessly lost, can we appreciate divine interposition. God heard man's despairing cry and resolves to redeem him. But with what and how? Where was a sufficient sacrifice to be found? Not in all the lambs of Israel's altars, these could not expiate sin, nor save the sinner. Not in the wealth of the world could the divine demand for redemption's price be paid. Then where? God robbed heaven of its richest jewel, sent Jesus His beloved Son.

The Cross manifests the full strength of God's love. Reflect upon the agonizing prayer of Gethsemane, "let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Three times Jesus prayed and in the course of this ordeal, Luke says "and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"

(Luke 22:44). Why did God not hear? Was the heart of the Father petrified, or ossified? No! He heard the pleas, He saw the agony of the garden. Explanation is in the fact of another scene far more moving to the mind of God. He saw lost mankind moving toward eternal doom and, loving us, He redeemed us. The cup of suffering for Jesus could not pass, He had to drink of it, lest all be lost. He was heard, but there was no other way. Finally, the ordeal of the Cross and death. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

His burial and resurrection bring victorious acclamation and attestation to the claim of deity in the Son. In Christ's resurrection, death is abolished, the shadow of the tomb is dispelled. No longer must we be obsessed by the fear of death. Herein we have a glimpse of what lies beyond for every man who will benefit from God's love. The redemption price has been paid. Jesus is now the Saviour of all men who will obey Him, "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," (Heb. 5:9).

THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

"... They rehearsed all that God had done with them ..." —Acts 14:27

DISCUSSION ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

There will be a religious discussion between brethren J. T. Smith and Glen W. Lovelady on March 22, 23, 25 and 26 on the following propositions:

March 22nd

"The Scriptures teach that a person who commits adultery when he remarries must dissolve his marriage relations with his adulterous partner before his sins can be remitted. He and his first wife must remain unmarried or be reconciled to each other."

J. T. Smith affirms and Glen W. Lovelady denies

March 23rd

"The Scriptures teach that a person who commits adultery when he remarries must not dissolve his marriage relations with his adulterous partner. They can be forgiven of their sins, and his first wife can now remarry without committing sin."

Glen W. Lovelady affirms and J. T. Smith denies

March 25th

"The Scriptures teach that the put away adulterer can remarry without committing sin."

Glen W. Lovelady affirms and J. T. Smith denies

March 26th

"The Scriptures teach that the put away adulterer must remain unmarried or be reconciled to his wife (husband)."

J. T. Smith affirms and Glen W. Lovelady denies

The first two nights will be conducted in the church building at 3433 Studebaker Road, Long Beach, CA with the last two nights in the building of the church which meets at 24930 Lakme Avenue, Wilmington, CA. H. E. Phillips will moderate for J. T. Smith.

JERRY ACCETTURA, 2314 East Hundred Road, Chester, Virginia 23831 —After two and a half years in Knoxville, Tennessee I am working with the church at Rivermont, near Chester, Virginia. In October I was with the Berwyn, Illinois congregation where Bob Archer preaches. Nine were baptized just before the meeting and the meeting itself was very encouraging. Also, I was with the church at Virginia Beach, VA in a meeting early in November. Jack Gibbert is the local preacher. Four were baptized in that effort. Then Connie W. Adams was with us in a meeting at Rivermont with good attendance from Rivermont members, brethren from the Richmond area and from people in the community. There were two services each day. One was baptized the last night. It is cause for rejoicing to see the gospel being eagerly heard and obeyed.

GENE TOPE, 22 Ronalds Road, Kloof, Natal 3600, Republic of South Africa—In June, 1976 we are hoping to return to the United States after 19 and 1/2 years in South Africa, four of them on this last tour. Can you help with our return travel expenses? Galloping inflation has hit international travel hard and it is going to take just on \$8,000 for tickets and shipping of goods. Yet, we do not want to place an unnecessary burden on anyone. Whether you can send us a check for \$10 or \$100 you will be helping, and many hands will make light work of that which would be a burden for only a few. Send directly to the address above. Each gift will be acknowledged with thanks from us for your fellowship and interest. We will keep you posted as to how this fund is coming along. Our work among the Indians continues to make good progress and our prospects for the future are bright indeed. Two were baptized this month—one was our son, Jimmy, now 13 years old.

(Editor's note: The Topes have labored long and faithfully in South Africa. We hope interested brethren will quickly supply what is needed to bring his family back home. We understand he

will also be available for local work after some time to visit with relatives. He would be a good man for any place.)

H. E. PHILLIPS, P. O. Box 17244, Tampa, FL 33612—The Fletcher Avenue church continues to grow in number and in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Connie W. Adams of Louisville, KY did the preaching in the first gospel meeting conducted by the congregation. He proclaimed the gospel of Christ faithfully and powerfully. The attendance grew each night, beginning with 114 on Monday night and reached a high of 194 on Friday night with an average of 155 for the five nights meeting. Five were restored to the Lord during this meeting. When in Tampa worship with us at the corner of East Fletcher Avenue and 22nd Street.

CONNIE W. ADAMS, P. O. Box 68, Brooks, KY 40109—In 1975 it was my joy to preach the gospel in meetings at Marion, Indiana (Westside), on five islands in the Philippines, at Mooresville, Indiana, Evansville, Indiana, Dyersburg, Tennessee (Northside), Highview near Chaplin, Kentucky, Expressway in Louisville, Kentucky, Fremont, Ohio, Studebaker Road in Long Beach, California, Courtland Avenue in Kokomo, Indiana, Fletcher Avenue in Tampa, Florida, Stevens Avenue in Huntsville, Alabama, Milbridge, Maine and Rivermont, near Chester, Virginia. In these meetings 140 were baptized, and 31 restored. About 25 meetings are now set for 1976. We will give the schedule in this paper along through the year in the hope that some of our readers in these areas will plan to attend.

We have seen evidences of much progress being made among brethren in many places. In some places we have seen a great need for more workers. One of the most neglected fields of all is the great New England section of our nation. Very little work is being done in that area. What few preachers there are in these states are scattered and have to spread themselves too thin in the work. Maine is a good example. There are not more than 7 faithful churches with only three full-time preachers and two part time men. The church at Milbridge badly needs a mature man to help them. We had over 100 for the last three services of a meeting there in November. They have tried and tried to locate a man, but nobody seems interested. Yet there is a harvest of souls in that area to be reaped.

One interesting thing in these meetings perhaps needs to be passed on. Every time we spoke on the family or related subjects, and announced it as many as two or three times in advance, that invariably became the best attended night of the meeting. People are crying for help in this area of study. It has been a good year and we thank the Lord for opportunities to preach and for health to meet each appointment.

JAMES W. ADAMS reports the sad news of the death of Antonino Buta of Messina, Sicily. This faithful Italian brother labored many years supported by the church at Pruett and Lobit in Baytown, Texas. He ably edited a paper, *Risveglio (Awake)*. The loss of a man of his stature is a blow to the work in Italy and Sicily. He is survived by his wife, Cettina and three lovely daughters. We weep with those who weep, while rejoicing in the blessed promises of the gospel.

ED HARRELL, 4225 Old Leeds Lane, Birmingham, Alabama 35294 - I have been threatened with a suit by healer Leroy Jenkins as the result of the recent publication of my book, *All Things are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* by Indiana University Press. If any readers have files of newspaper stories and other materials related to this subject, I would appreciate you sending me copies of that information immediately.