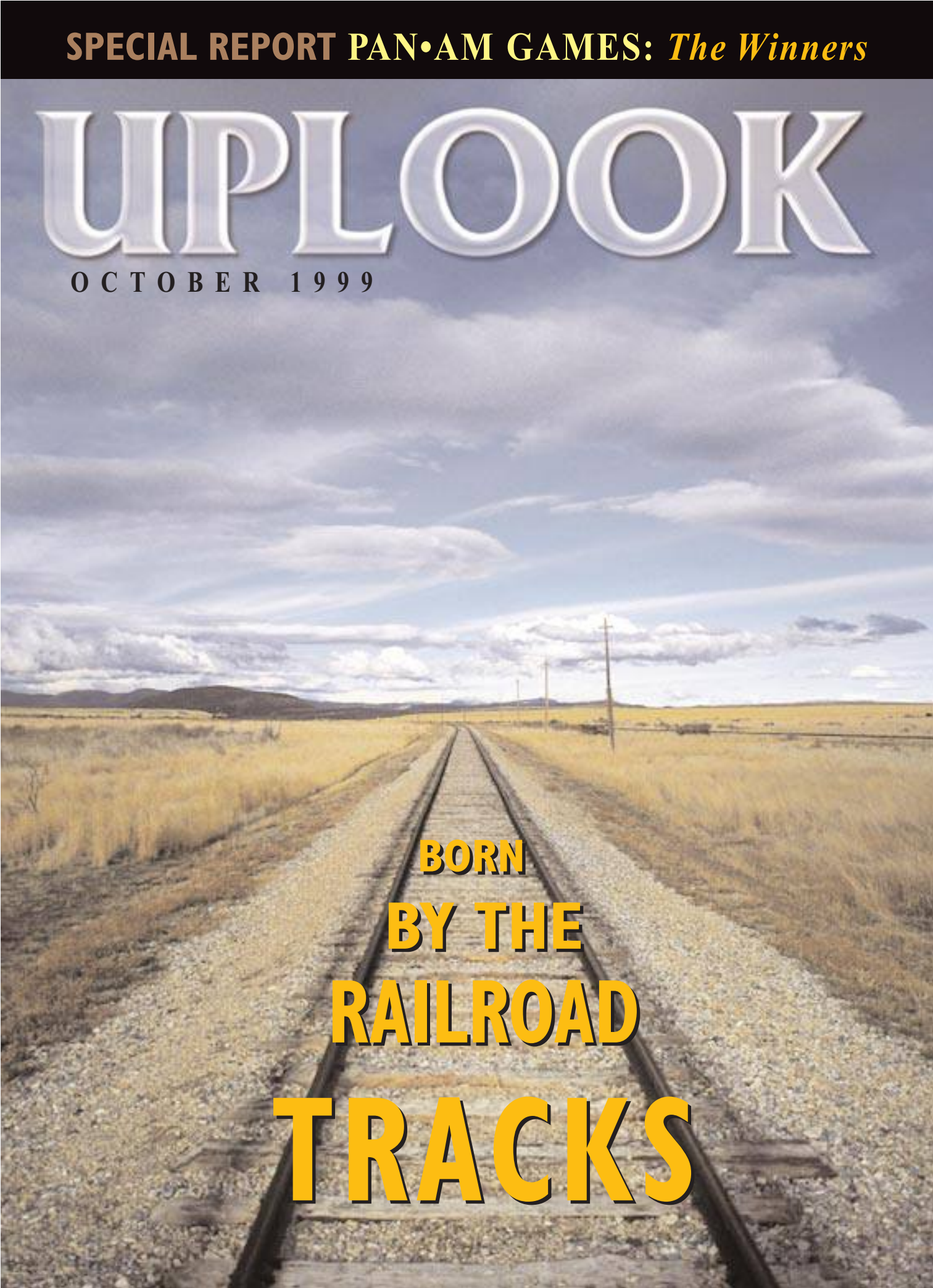


SPECIAL REPORT PAN•AM GAMES: *The Winners*

UPLOOK

OCTOBER 1999



**BORN
BY THE
RAILROAD
TRACKS**

BORN BY THE RAILROAD TRACKS

Confessions of a zero-point Calvinist

I grew up in a passionately evangelistic assembly where we were taught the railroad track view of divine sovereignty and human freedom. I deeply admired the brethren who taught me the Word and consider it one of the best Bible schools I could have attended. These men took every word of the Bible seriously. They did not harp on particular doctrines and did not press exotic views.

It was not Calvinism we heard, for man could freely accept or reject the gospel. Christ died for all, and the gospel was offered to everyone. However, having accepted Christ, we were told, a new believer discovered that he was destined for heaven before time began. Was it a real choice? Yes, they insisted. He must repent and believe the gospel in order to be saved. But could this elect person actually choose to perish? Theoretically, yes, but actually, no. God had elected him. These are parallel truths, they told us. Like railway tracks, they appear to meet at the horizon but they would only actually “meet” in the mind of God. I could not help wondering what would happen to that train of thought when the lines actually met. In these discussions I felt more like an engine spinning in the round-house. I saw the words “elect” and “chosen” in the Bible, but what did they actually mean?

In those days I rarely heard the words *Calvinist* or *Arminian*. But a caricature developed of the two views: Calvinists believed God saved you and you couldn’t lose it; Arminians believed you chose to be saved, so you could also choose to “unsave” yourself. And everyone was in one camp or the other, it was said. If that definition held, I would be with the Calvinists. But it doesn’t.

Don’t get me wrong. Some of my friends are unabashed Calvinists. Others reject the tag but believe the teaching, or most of it. And I’m surrounded by fine, hard-working Calvinists in Grand Rapids. (In this area of the country I regularly tiptoe through the TULIP.) As well, many of the representatives of evangelicalism—R. C. Sproul, D. J. Kennedy, John Stott, J. I. Packer, and now John MacArthur—promote Calvinistic soteriology.

John Calvin (1509-1564) systematized the teachings

of the Reformation, largely based on Augustinian theology. Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), a scholar in the Reformed Church (who admired Calvin), questioned certain of his teachings. His followers called on the Dutch theologians to consider whether Calvin’s teachings were biblical at five points. At the Synod of Dort (1619), Arminianism was rejected, and the answer stated five points as the Church’s position. But after careful study, I find myself a 0-point Calvinist. Here’s why:

1. **Total Depravity** (Inability): The notion not that every man exhibits his depravity as thoroughly as he could, but that the *guilt* of Adam’s sin rests on everyone, and the *corruption* of sin extends to every part of man’s

nature, making him *incapable* of responding to God’s offer of salvation. The Calvinist believes man is not only separated from God but insensible to God, “unable of himself even to stretch forth his hand to receive salvation” (*Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, p. 109). Thus God must quicken man before he can believe.¹ What does Scripture teach? That man has been damaged in every part by the Fall, and does

not seek God by his own initiative (Rom. 3:10-18). But *God* has come seeking sinners. How many sinners? The world! His light lightens *every man* who comes into the world. Paul could preach to the pagans at Mar’s Hill: “*He [is] not far from every one of us,*” and “*God commandeth all men every where to repent*” (Acts 17:27, 30).

The verse, “*There is none that seeketh after God,*” is an important verse, but it is not the whole Bible. What of “*Seek ye the Lord while He may be found...*” (Isa. 55:6)? See also Acts 15:17; 17:27. But, says the Calvinist, man is *dead* and cannot respond to the offer of the gospel. Reformed scholar Loraine Boettner writes: “If any person believes, it is because God has quickened him; and if any person fails to believe, it is because God has withheld that grace.”² Yet the passage which is the basis for this view (Eph. 2:1, 5) speaks of the dead walking, and having a manner of life. It is true that man is spiritually dead, but to think of death as inability to receive God’s gift is wrong. Death in the Bible is *separation*. Man is still

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by J. B. NICHOLSON, J. R.

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December 27-30, 1999
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If you are planning to attend the Rise and Shine conference and would like to find out about others from your area that might be interested in arranging group travel, contact the individual listed below who is nearest your area. If you are planning to drive your own vehicle and have extra space, please let your area rep. know—you may be able to provide a ride for someone.

DC/Maryland/Virginia	Rajan Eapen	(301) 299-7787	reapen@caci.com
DC/Maryland/Virginia	Craig Shakarji	(301) 417-6744	cmshakarji@yahoo.com
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British Columbia	Harold Summers	(604) 738-8943	
United Kingdom	Roy Hill	01275-332475	royhill@compuserve.com

† **Southern Ontario**

A bus is scheduled to leave from Brockview Bible Chapel (St. Catharines, ON) for the *Rise and Shine* conference. The bus will leave the chapel parking lot Monday, December 27 at 7 AM. Cost is \$60 (Cdn). Contact Bill or Anita Sloetjes: Fax: (905) 563-6211. Other info. above.

* **Manitoba, North Dakota, etc.:** Plans are being made to charter a bus which will leave Winnipeg on Sunday, December 26, at 12:30 PM, and arrive back in Winnipeg on

Friday, December 31 at 12:30 PM. Arrangements are being made to stop enroute to pick up passengers in Fargo, ND and Minneapolis, MN. The approximate cost per person of the group transportation will be between \$160-\$200 (Cdn), depending on the size of the bus and the number of passengers. For contact info., see above.

§ **Georgia:** A bus is scheduled to leave from Augusta, GA Monday, December 27, returning Thursday the 30th For information, contact Jon Reimer. Contact info. above.

TEMPUS IS FUGITING! NEED AN APPLICATION? CALL 616-456-5123

**We've extended the
PRICE DISCOUNT
DEADLINE until
OCTOBER 31, 1999!**

ANNUAL FALL CONF.

The saints at Lakeside Bible Chapel (Sterling Heights, MI) are planning their annual fall conference with speaker, Tom Taylor, Lord willing. On Oct. 22 there will be one evening session and on Oct. 23, two sessions are scheduled with supper served between. The last session will be on Oct. 24 at 11 AM. A children's program and nursery will be available at each session. For further information, call the chapel at 810-247-5226. stevecollard@home.com

WORD ALIVE WEEKENDS

The assemblies in Winnipeg, MB, are looking forward to their monthly young people's series again this year. The dates and speakers are:

Nov. 26-28 Ken Fleming, IA
 Jan. 29-30 J B Nicholson, MI
 Feb. 25-27 Mike Attwood, GA
 Mar. 24-26 To be confirmed

Each weekend includes a Friday Word Alive Rally for youth and an all-day Saturday Word Alive Seminar. Out-of-town visitors are welcome. Contact Ron Hampton:

Phone (204) 669-6026
rhampton@mb.sympatico.ca

FALL BIBLE CONFERENCE

Calvary Bible Church (the Jermyn/Scranton area of PA) will hold their fall Bible conference Nov. 5-7. The planned speakers are Jim Van Duzer from Grace Gospel Chapel (PA) and Emmitt Cornelius (PA). The theme is "Always Abounding in the Work of the Lord." For directions or to arrange accommodations call Debbie Cannon: (570) 563-2812

METRO MISSIONARY CONF.

The believers in the New York City area invite you to the Metropolitan Missionary Conference at Good Tidings Gospel Hall (Malcolm

X Blvd. Brooklyn, NY) on Saturday Nov. 6 from 10:30 to 4:30. The speakers expected are Art Auld and Patrick Long. Contact Jim McCall: (718) 994 1318 Jimannabel@aol.com

CHOOSE TO ATTEND

The Christians that meet at Bethany Bible Chapel (4312 E. 116th St., Carmel, IN) extend an invitation to their fall conference, Nov. 6-7. Ministry will be given by Jim Paul (ON), and David Brown (OH) will conduct meetings for children.

Meeting times are 4:00 and 6:30 on Saturday, Nov. 6; and 11:00 and 1:30 on Sunday, Nov. 7. Any questions may be directed to Donald Mateer at (317) 835-2811.

1999 FALL CONFERENCE

A ministry conference is planned at Brandywine Bible Chapel (Wilmington, DE) on Nov. 5-7 with Iain Rodgers (Scotland), Rex Trogdon (SC) and George Pirie (NJ). The Bible reading on Friday evening at 7:30 will be on 1 Peter 3:13-4:19. Meetings on Saturday and Sunday are scheduled for 2:30 and 6:30 with dinner served in between. Contact:

Tony Colaiuta (610) 459-1707
 Sid Bhatt (302) 425-0762

THANKSGIVING CONF.

Holiday Gospel Assembly (1842 Grand Blvd., Holiday, FL) will host a conference, Lord willing, Nov. 19-20. Art Dixon (ON) and Randy Amos (NY) will be addressing the topic, "Occupy Till I Come." For more information, call Lee Capiello at: (727) 845-4572

NIAGARA REGION MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

The Niagara Region (Thorold South and Ridgeville) Missionary Conference is to be held in the

Thorold South Chapel on Nov. 19-20. The meeting on Friday at 7:30 is especially for youth, but all are welcome. Mike Attwood (Ireland) will speak DV at 2:45 on Saturday and a missionary information meeting will be held at 6:25. Call Ross McIntee: (905) 684-6772.

BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM

The sixth year of the Bible Study Program, hosted by Hopedale Bible Chapel (Oakville, ON) is under way.

Classes run from 9 until 12 noon, including three 40-minute sessions with 15 minute breaks between each.

The subjects are as follows:

Nov. 20 William Yuille, ON
Overview of Colossians
 Dec. 11 Joe Reese, ON
"Let us go on" (Heb. 6:1)
 Jan. 15 Brian Gunning, ON
Thought-flow through 1 Corinthians
 Feb. 19 Boyd Nicholson, ON
Peter: the Making of a Fisherman
 Mar. 18 Randy Amos, NY
Spirit of Babylon & God's Answer
 Apr. 15 J. B. Nicholson, MI
Setting a Course for the Millennium

YOUNG ADULT SERIES

The Brandywine Bible Chapel is planning to host a series of conferences for young adults. Each conference runs from 9:30 until 3:00, with breakfast and lunch served.

Feb. 19 Wade LeBlanc, NB
7 Churches in Revelation
 Mar. 18 Doug Kazen, WA
The Climax of the Ages
 Apr. 15 Keith Keyser, PA
The Christian's Hope
 Contact Tim Bhatt
 (302) 425-0762
tim_bhett@yahoo.com

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Rest Haven Homes (Grand Rapids, MI) has a wonderful opportunity for retiring Christians to settle

in a quiet, safe community with like-minded believers. There are four assemblies in the Grand Rapids area and many opportunities to be involved. Call for more information about the cottages that are available.

There are also immediate openings for long or short-term work in a variety of departments at the nursing home. Housing is available. Call:

Brian Wilson
(616) 363-6819

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

A fulltime opportunity is now available at Western Assemblies Home in Claremont, California. The current administrator is planning on leaving soon and is searching for a replacement. Contact:

Gregory Crozier
(909) 626-3711

COMMENDATIONS

Dale and Rosemary Konkol

The elders and saints at Mountain Ridge Bible Chapel join the oversight of Calvary Bible Chapel (Alamosa, CO) in commending Dale and Rosemary Konkol as missionaries to the people of Paraguay. They recognize Calvary Bible Chapel as the primary commending assembly.

David and Judy Shoop

After serving the Lord in Zimbabwe for a number of years, the Shoops felt that God was leading them to return to the United States in 1996. The assembly that meets at Mountain Ridge Bible Chapel (Berkeley Heights, NJ) is confident that the Lord sent them to their assembly at a crucial time for blessing.

During the past two years, the saints have come to appreciate them—they are a vital part of the work and both give evidence that they have a heart exercised to serve God.

David is a deep student of the Word of God and an able teacher. He

has felt called to work among assemblies in outreach and strengthening of New Testament churches.

After careful consideration during the past two years, and in accordance with their own desires, the elders of Meadow Ridge Bible Chapel commend David and Judy to the work of the Lord at that assembly and elsewhere as the Lord leads.

Harry and Betty Hamilton

The elders at Hilltop Chapel (Redfield, IA) would like to commend to the Lord's work our brother in Christ, Harry A. Hamilton. He has been in fellowship at Hilltop Chapel for three years and has been in assembly fellowship 58 years. During his days of employment, he was able to share the Word in many midwestern states.

Harry and Betty, his wife of 54 years, have raised seven girls and three boys. They are not looking for financial support, but for the Lord's leading in ways the gospel can be shared. He may be contacted at:

192 Hickory Blvd.
Altoona, IA 50009
(515) 967-3271
HAHBEH@juno.com

Jeff and Kara (Detweiler) Rickert

The elders of Bethany Bible Chapel (Conway, SC) announce a different ministry focus for Jeff and Kara Rickert. Their primary ministry will be in teaching and working with the local Christian school. Jeff and Kara will continue to assist in youth work and other ministries of the local assembly as well as other assemblies, camps, and retreats. The elders and the saints of the chapel believe this to be the Lord's will for Jeff and Kara and heartily renew their commendation to reflect this.

Peg Hart

Upon her own request, the elders of the Fifth Ave. Chapel (Belmar, NJ)

are withdrawing their commendation of Peg Hart to the Lord's work in France. This action does not reflect any reservations about her ministry, but is solely due to family obligations which will prevent her from returning to the field in the foreseeable future.

CALLED HOME

David Leathem

David Leathem went home to be with the Lord on Mar. 2, 1999 at the age of 89. He was living in Northern Ireland at the time.

In the 1930's he did pioneering work in Nova Scotia, seeing many souls saved and establishing a number of assemblies. He will be remembered by many on both sides of the Atlantic as a soul-winner, an encourager, and an able expositor.

The family is gathering information on his life and ministry. If you have any memorabilia, pictures, taped messages, or anecdotal information that you would be willing to share, please contact: David Leathem (Jr.)

PO Box 209
Unionville, PA 19375
jleathem@kennett.net

Robert Gay

After a lengthy illness, Robert Gay was called to be with his Saviour on Aug. 24, 1999. He and his wife Winnie celebrated their 50th anniversary this summer. Their labors are well-known at Lake Geneva Youth Camp, among the assemblies in Florida and North Carolina, at CMMML, and Greenwood Hills. For the past two years they have been hosting the guest home for Rest Haven Homes in Grand Rapids, MI.

Bob was an example to all who knew him for his cheerful nature and his servant's heart. He lived for the day when he would see Christ face to face. Maranatha!

Teen challenge

*Adapted from an e-mail report
by William Howell (Storybook Lodge, MN)*



Forty-seven young people along with fifteen adults and ten children were involved in a week-long evangelistic outreach in Eau Claire, WI, in August. We stayed at a local camp, and enjoyed ministry each morning from John Duckhorn.

We did door-to-door work in the afternoons and then met in Carson Park at 5:00 for dinner, a puppet show and a gospel meeting at 7:00.

Maps were marked to divide the city into areas for the outreach teams. The Lord greatly encouraged us older ones through the enthusiasm of the teens and those in their early 20s!

One day it was pouring rain, so we improvised by going to the nursing home and hospital to sing and share the gospel. An 80-year-old man professed to put his faith in the Lord.

On the last afternoon several wanted to go out before lunch to visit the community and invite them to the meeting. We had an early lunch and then offered the choice to enjoy some free time or head out early to knock on doors. Nearly everyone chose to put extra time into doing visitation work! After all, what's more exciting

than joining others to share your faith in Christ? Volleyball or taking a walk in the campground just doesn't compare!

That afternoon, one of the girls spent nearly three hours visiting with an older woman in a wheelchair. During that time the woman professed to turn to the Lord for her salvation. It was a blessing to see the creative ways the young people utilized in witnessing for the Lord.

Each night at the gospel meetings two young people shared their testimonies. Others had special musical numbers. Both the testimonies and enthusiastic singing were a blessing!

Some had the idea to go to a downtown plaza after the evening meeting to sing and hand out gospel literature. Some of the best conversations with young people resulted there.

Each night more and more of the young people were looking for places to witness after the meeting. In fact, the last two nights hardly any teen returned to camp without personally sharing the gospel with someone after the meeting.

The teens who were challenged to be more involved in evangelism at the August outreach in Eau Claire.

The assembly in Eau Claire has just three families so they will appreciate your prayers as they continue doing follow-up work.

The Hanson's report on the follow-up work that is being done:

We have had some encouragements and some disappointments in follow-up. About twenty people expressed interest in Bible studies, so we have contacted them. Most seemed enthusiastic about coming, but when it came to the actual study time, very few showed up. One man keeps coming over to the house to talk about the Word. A neighbor lady who didn't seem very interested, pleasantly surprised us by coming to our ladies' study. Others have come off and on. We still have calls or notes trickling in, so it is hard to know how the "follow-up" will continue.



After breakfast, Joel Hanson leads the group in preparation for the day's work.



The teens made good use of their puppets in presenting the gospel each evening in the park before the meeting.

This was no game

Gospel outreach at the Pan Am Games

ROSS McINTEE

He stood on the busy street. The crowds pushed impatiently past. Some glanced curiously and cautiously his way. Others with a cynical sneer scoffed and went on. A few with an encouraging smile gave the universal thumbs-up sign. The text he held high read, "For by grace are you saved"...but few seemed to care. Then suddenly came a gentle tap on his shoulder and he turned around. It was a young girl. "Sir, can you tell me what that means?" Of course he could! An hour later, 20-year-old Pat, with tears brimming, confessed with her mouth Jesus Christ as Lord. Ivan went on his way rejoicing to arrange follow up.

This was Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the 1999 Pan Am Games. Five thousand athletes along with tens of thousands of fans and visitors converged on the city for Canada's largest athletic event ever held. Our gospel team members arrived on Saturday, with visitors coming from Moncton, NB; Markham, Toronto, Tavistock and St. Catharines, ON; Calgary, AB; and as far away as Brazil (Don DeWeese missionary). Of course, there was the ever needful support coming from host assemblies in Winnipeg. Without their assistance

Some of the team members from across Canada preparing to head out to do evangelistic work.



in transporting us to the various venues, providing us with meals and very comfortable accommodations, the effort would have been impossible.

Ron Hampton, former worker in Ireland, now serving the Lord in Canada, assisted by Gary Weeks from Toronto, did a great job of organizing every detail of the outreach.

The outreach, Aug. 1-7, took place in conjunction with the 18th Pan American Games. They are held every four years and are for all countries in North, Central, and South America.

Winnipeg is a city of 650,000 people located at the geographical center of North America, north to south and east to west. It is an ethnically diverse city. There are several assemblies in Winnipeg—and several more within an hour's drive of the city.

It was a tremendous week of evangelism. There were approximately 35,000 pieces of gospel literature given out. We visited the various Pan Am event sites, shopping malls (a good place to meet athletes), downtown streets and the central Forks Festival site. The tracts—in French, English, Spanish, and Portuguese—seemed to be fairly well received and there was little discarding. Praise God for the tremendous sowing of seed that took place!

Along with the literature distribu-



Ron Hampton (Winnipeg) shares the gospel on the street.

tion, there was also effective open-air preaching with the use of sketch boards and gospel texts to confront the tens of thousands of people as they streamed out of the Forks area each evening. Additionally, many people were personally witnessed to by members of the team.

Whenever the Word of God is presented, in whatever form, we are mindful of Romans 10:17: "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." And "My word shall not return unto Me void" (Isa. 55:11). The Lord alone knows the work that took place in the hearts of these people. Team members seemed careful in presenting the gospel. There were about 20 professions of faith in the Saviour. A follow-up work is underway.

At one Winnipeg assembly there were 5 new people at the Family Bible Hour on the Sunday following the outreach. Two of those had professed salvation during the outreach.

Will you pray? Remember the seed sown, those who trusted Christ, those who received a personal witness, read the texts and heard the message preached.



Gary Weeks (Toronto) preaches with the help of a translator from S. A.

morally responsible and capable of responding to invitations—“come,” “believe,” “trust,” “receive”—the list is extensive. The Judge at the last trial declares the basis of His judgment in John 3:16-19—not because they are non-elect, or because they were not given faith,³ but because they chose darkness over light. See also Jn. 20:31; 2 Thess. 2:10; Heb. 10:39.

2. **Unconditional Election:** This is said to be the act of God in eternity, to choose to save certain ones whom He fore-loved, entirely apart from any cause in them or choice by them. God has indeed chosen some (Christ, Israel, the Church) but for a *role*—to be the means of accomplishing His purposes. The basis of that choice is found in 1 Corinthians 1:23-31 (see also Jas. 2:5).

Dr. James Orr states: “Electing love, one comes to see, is never election to the exclusion of others, but election with a view to the future larger blessing of others.”⁴ M. R. Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Vol. IV, p. 16) writes, “Election...and the kindred words, to *choose*, and *chosen* or *elect*, are used of God’s selection of men or agencies for special missions or attainments; but neither here (1 Thess. 1:4) nor elsewhere in the N.T. is there any warrant for the revolting doctrine that God has predestined a definite number of mankind to eternal life, and the rest to eternal destruction.”

It should be noted that multitudes in Israel (including Judas Iscariot⁵), though elect, perished, while some non-elect (like Rahab and Ruth) were saved. The election of Christ obviously had nothing to do with His being saved.

What of “*chosen you to salvation*” in 2 Thessalonians 2:13? Lightfoot, Kittel, and Arndt & Gingrich all concur that this is not the usual word for election. Plummer writes: “The verb (*eilato*) is rare in Bibl. Grk., and is not used elsewhere in N.T. of election by God...It does not imply predestination to final salvation...”⁶ The word “*chosen in the Lord*” (Rom. 16:13) is translated as “eminent” by Vine⁷ and by Young as “the choice one.”⁸

Believers are not elected and therefore put into Christ any more than Israelites were chosen and therefore put into Israel. In the last dispensation election was based on natural birth; now it is based on spiritual birth. The sphere of our choosing is “*in Him*” (Eph. 1:4). How does one come into that sphere of privilege? “...*through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*” (2 Thess. 2:13; see also 1 Pet. 1:2).

3. **Limited Atonement:** This idea that the death of Christ was only for the elect, that His death not only *provided* salvation, but *accomplished* it for the elect alone. But what does Scripture teach? That God so loved *the world* (Jn. 3:16); that He is the propitiation not for our sins only, but for *the whole world* (1 Jn. 2:2); that the “*righteousness of God...is by faith of Jesus Christ unto*

all and upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22). The last invitation in the Bible says: “*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*” (Rev. 22:17).

4. **Irresistible Grace:** The notion that everyone on God’s “list” will be saved and cannot resist God’s grace when He “sweetly force[s]” us in. This because God’s sovereignty cannot be thwarted. But what does Scripture teach? The Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying, “*I would [willed]...ye would not.*” Why was He weeping? He wanted them; they did not want Him. He let them have their way. To those in His day, Jesus said: “*Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life*” (Jn. 5:40). They might have had life, but they would not come. Stephen declared, “*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did*” (Acts 7:51). Notice also Heb. 10:29.

5. **Perseverance of the Saints:** At first this appears to be the biblical doctrine of eternal security. But this point teaches not merely that the saints will persevere (or be preserved, more correctly) but that the proof that you are a saint is that you persevere. This is necessary in the Calvinistic system because if not only the provision but procurement of salvation is all of God, how do I know when I am saved? As stated in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, “The fruits which accompany salvation supply to us men the proof of God’s election” (p. 179). While it is true that fruits supply proof to others: “...*by their fruits ye shall know them.*” a recipient of the gospel does not need to wait until fruit develops in his life to assure him that he is saved. God’s promise is our own proof: “*as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.*”

God sovereignly chose to give man a will. Christ has fully provided salvation for all who will receive His gift, a gift to which we contribute nothing. The Spirit must initiate the process, and has done so—He has come to convince *the world* of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Faith comes to the individual, not as a special gift to some, but by hearing the Word of God. There is no merit in the sinner’s empty hand receiving this wonderful gift. To believing sinners come all the blessings; to God be all the glory.

ENDNOTES:

1 Are sinners quickened (or regenerated) before they believe? “*Heareth...believeth...hath everlasting life*” (Jn. 5:24). See also the order in Lk. 8:12; Jn. 20:31; Acts 16:31.

2 *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, pp. 166-167.

3 Is faith the gift in Ephesians 2:8? Not according to Alford, Robertson, Bruce, Vine, Sir R. Anderson, and others (*Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* by Samuel Fisk, pp. 32-36).

4 *Sidelights on Christian Doctrine*, p. 34.

5 “*I have chosen you*” (Jn. 15:16) must be put beside Jn. 6:70.

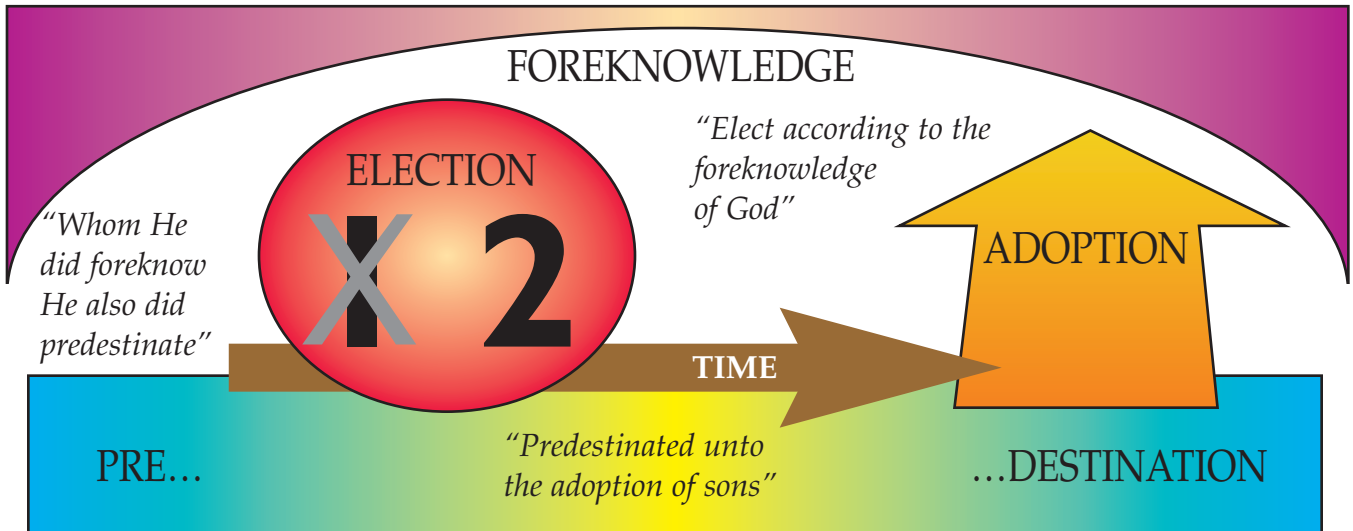
6 *Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*, pp. 75-76.

7 *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

8 *Young’s Literal Translation*.



God's sovereignty in action




Here are four aspects of God's sovereign choice. They have nothing to do with man's choice (a vital issue in itself). Three common impediments to understanding these truths: a) we come with preconceived ideas about their meaning instead of allowing the Word to speak for itself; b) we confuse these truths as if the words were interchangeable; c) we are seeking to understand with finite minds what is infinite. Yet there is something for us to enjoy in these truths or God would not have revealed them. As much as possible, we must let the Word define both the words and their relationship to each other so that our understanding is consistent with God's revelation.

1. FOREKNOWLEDGE, *prognosis* (7x): That aspect of God's nature that allowed Him to design the plan of salvation before time with all facts at hand. Knowing man's rebellion, Israel's failure (Rom. 11:2), their rejection of Messiah (Acts 2:23), and the personal failures of His people, God nonetheless devised a plan that would overrule man's stupidity and accomplish it in spite of us. It determined His elective scheme regarding Israel (Rom. 11:2), the Christ (1 Pet. 1:19-20), and the Church (1 Pet. 1:2). Romans 9:11 declares that no failure on man's part could thwart the overall purposes of God. (The word cannot mean fore-loved as used in Acts 26:5 and 2 Pet. 3:17.)

2. PREDESTINATION, *pro-orizo* (6x): Before time began, concerning the terminus of time, it is an act of God based on His foreknowledge (Rom. 8:28-30) whereby He makes the goal of adoption certain for the believer (Eph. 1:5). This necessitated the pre-planned death of Christ (Acts 4:23-31). It involves the utilizing of hidden wisdom

(i.e., what man calls foolishness and weakness) to accomplish it (see 1 Cor. 1:20-2:16). It ultimately leads to two great blessings: to be sons in all the privileges and responsibility of such a position (Eph. 1:5), and to be like the Son Himself (Rom. 8:29). God's predetermination guarantees that present circumstances will work in us to produce conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:28-30) and guarantees our inheritance in the future as well (Eph. 1:11).

3. ELECTION, *eklektos* (51x): God (for reasons explained in 1 Cor. 1 & 2), in blessing mankind, sets to one side all firsts and chooses all seconds that the plan might be based solely on grace. The word is used to describe the divine choice of Christ (Isa. 42:1; Lk. 23:35; 1 Pet. 2:6), angels (1 Tim. 5:21), Israel (Rom. 11:28), the twelve—including Judas (Lk. 6:13; Jn. 15:16; Jn. 6:70; Jn. 13:18), the Church (Eph. 1:4), and the remnant in the Tribulation (Mt. 24:22, 24). This selection is for a role, to bring blessing to the widest possible number. In this age, the sphere of the believer's choosing is Christ (Eph. 1:4) and is linked to God's foreknowledge (1 Pet. 1:2). See also Jas. 2:5; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:10.

4. ADOPTION (son-placing) *whythoesia* (5x): This is the ultimate goal God has set for the believer (Eph. 1:5) at the end of time, bringing us into eternal realities. We are made sons at the moment of salvation and thus already have received a spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:14-15), but the son-placing will occur at the time of the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23). By clinging to the law, Israel failed to enter into sonship (Rom. 9:4), a privilege into which we come by the work of Christ (Gal. 4:1-7). 

OUR STANDING IN CHRIST

There is no condemnation to those in Christ

REFORMED THEOLOGY
AND SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCE

There can be no greater joy for a believer than to know that through the work of Christ his standing with God is settled. Once an enemy of God, he is now a child of God. He who at one time was at war with God now has peace with God. The apostle explains, “*Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand*” (Rom. 5:1-2).

Our immutable standing with God is the position in which God now views us because of the finished work of Christ. We are justified, holy, children of God, kings and priests of God. We have unfettered access to Him—all this and more is ours because of our standing in Christ. Victory over sin does not enhance our standing in Christ. And our standing in Christ should never be used in such a way as to excuse sin. Our standing is what we are in Christ, secured by the very power of God; therefore it can never suffer damage nor loss.

This standing, however, must be seen as distinct from our state, which changes day by day. Our state is the practical side of our Christian life; it is the “living out” of the Christian life. Our standing is perfect, but our state is imperfect; this state is what we are in ourselves. Spiritual failure, sin, and disobedience are all common to our state. We must not be satisfied with our state, but should seek to rise to the level of our standing in Christ. Yet at the same time, we should not condemn ourselves and engage in self-flagellation because of guilt of sin. Our salvation is never in doubt; we are eternally secure because of our standing in Christ.

This truth is extremely important in striking the proper balance in our spiritual life. Careless thinking in regard to this truth will have far-reaching spiritual consequences. Throughout the history of the Church there have been those who have not fully appreciated the truth of the believer’s state and standing.



Reformed theology has never clearly acknowledged the biblical truth of a believer’s standing in Christ. Respected Reformed scholar and author John Gerstner illustrates this position: “The classic dispensational distinction is evidence of a persistent misunderstanding of

the doctrines of justification and sanctification.” Elsewhere he writes, “A man’s standing is perfect before God, though his state may not be. This might seem to be the only traditional distinction between justification and sanctification, but it is not. In Reformed teaching this difference is one of fact...that is, according to the Reformed view, the justified person is not perfectly (positionally) sanctified.¹

Instead of affirming that a believer in Christ has an unshakable standing, Reformers sought to attain this standing through fasting, asceticism, and a rigorous discipline of the flesh. They soon discovered, however, that the flesh is incorrigible; it can never be improved. Leaders of this

doctrinal perspective from the 1700’s down to the present day have suffered spiritually because of this misunderstanding. This suffering arose out of the guilt from indwelling sin, which, in turn, cast doubt on one’s eternal salvation. This resulted, in some cases, in heart-wrenching despair, and the unnatural desire for death, as a means of deliverance from the corruption of the sin nature.

Listen to the voices of spiritual anguish, the result of setting aside the importance of our standing in Christ. One year before his death, in 1769, George Whitefield, the renowned eighteenth century evangelist, wrote concerning an earlier time of difficulty in his life, “I began to fast twice a week for thirty-six hours together, pray many times a day and received the sacrament every Lord’s Day. I fasted myself almost to death all the forty days of Lent, during which I made it a point of duty never to go less

by DAVID DUNLAP

than three times a day to public worship, besides seven times a day to my private prayers. Yet I knew no more that I was to be born a new creature in Christ Jesus than if I had never been born at all.”

On another occasion he writes, “The searcher of hearts alone knows what agonies my poor soul has undergone...the Lord has withdrawn Himself from me...I have sunk into deep despair, and like Elijah, I wish for death.”²

Some Reformed leaders have laid such stress on the elimination of all sin that it became the determining factor in whether one was a Christian at all. The clear distinction between standing and state, law and grace became hopelessly blurred. Representative of this perspective is William Law, the famed author of *A Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. He writes, “Unless our heart and passions are eagerly bent upon the work of our salvation; unless holy fears lead our endeavors, and keep our consciences strict and tender about every part of our duty, constantly examining how we live, and how fit are we to die, we shall in all probability fall into a state of negligence, and sit down in such a course of life as will never carry us to the rewards of heaven.”³

This practice of excessive introspection often led to self-condemnation for the guilt of sin. Instead of a focus on Christ and His finished work, the focus was directed toward self, sin, and personal failure. In time this practice became the source of a incurable spiritual plague withering the souls and spirits of men in the front lines for the cause of Christ. David Brainerd, a missionary to the Indians in New Jersey, wrote of this plague in his journal. He mourns, “My heart seemed like a nest of vipers, or a cage of unclean and hateful birds; and therefore I wanted to be cleansed of all sin...my sinfulness, the plague of my own heart...which often drove me to an impatient desire of death, a despair of doing any good in life: I would rather choose death than a life spent for nothing.”⁴

Reformed theology seeks to establish the believer’s standing in grace by the progress he has made in his state. The result in the lives of the most illustrative saints is misery, guilt, and despair. The word of God is clear that we grow in grace, not into grace (Rom. 5:1-2).

C. H. Macintosh carefully sets forth the inherent dangers regarding this point of view, when he writes, “We must not measure our standing by our state, but ever judge our state by our standing. Many err in reference to this, and their error leads to disastrous results. Hence, if a Christian set about measuring his standing by his state, he must be miserable, and his mental misery must be commensurate with his honesty and intelligence...there must be mental anguish if the standing is measured by the state.”⁵

The Adversary of our souls longs to turn our eyes from all that Christ has wrought to that which we are in the flesh, from an immovable standing in Christ to a standing of shifting sand.

The believer’s standing in Christ was first clearly taught by early dispensationalists as an important pillar in the foundation of biblical truth. Leaders of the so-called Plymouth Brethren were among the first to provide clarity in this area. Many were pleased to see biblical balance struck in this area at a time when Reformed Theology was the dominant. Leaders among the Church of England, Presbyterians, Baptists, and other denominations expressed their appreciation of this teaching.

Watchman Nee, the Chinese church leader, looking back to this time in Church history, sums up the theological impact of this teaching when he writes, “They showed us how the blood of Christ satisfies the righteousness of God, our standing in Christ, the assurance of salvation...Since church history began, there never was a period when the gospel was clearer than in that time.”⁶

However, leaders from the Puritan and Reformed churches began to circulate papers largely critical of this teaching. Criticism came from such notable Reformed leaders as C. H. Spurgeon, and later from Dr. A. H. Strong and B. B. Warfield. It continues from Reformed leaders in our own day. Much of this criticism rises from a commendable zeal to stem the rising tide of Antinomianism in the churches. The critics charge that Dispensational theology fosters and advances Antinomianism. They point to dispensationalism as the primary reason for a growing permissiveness in the carnal living among Christians today.

Leading dispensationalists such as D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, Louis Sperry Chafer and J. N. Darby spent much of their lives vigorously fighting against every inroad of Antinomianism. Those who knew them well would testify that they would never condone sin nor promote a worldly Christianity. Moreover, how can the work of Christ, which affords the believer a righteous position, ever be the cause of unrighteousness? Clearly, disobedience in Christians must never be ascribed to the work of Christ, but rather to the failure of the believer to avail himself of his rich spiritual resources in Christ. Is our emphasis on the believer’s standing in Christ a case of aberrant dispensationalism carried too far? Or is it a gracious provision as taught in the Word of God?

THE BELIEVER’S STANDING AND THE FLESH

The Word of God tells us that the moment one trusts in the finished work of Christ, he is a child of God, a new creature in Christ. The moment one places his trust in Christ, his standing is secure. Even as the moment a child

is born into the family of a king, he becomes a prince; he may not yet behave in a princely manner, yet his standing is never in doubt because of his royal birth. In the same way, the Christian's standing in Christ is secure through regal birth. At his new birth, the Christian receives a new nature, a new relationship, a new power. The new nature enables him to enter fully into his new relationship with Christ. Out of this vital, living relationship comes the strength to live a godly life.

Our standing is not based on a process of improving the flesh. It will never do to take the material of the "old man" and, through fastings, vigils, and religious discipline, attempt to make the corrupt flesh acceptable to God. Consider, for a moment, the example of a homeowner who negotiates with a builder about some work that needs to be done, and then he inquires how much it will cost. "Oh, it won't cost very much at all," the builder explains, "because we can use all the old material." Similarly, in the things of God, that just will not do. There must be a new start with altogether new material. The apostle explains further the purpose of God, "*For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*" (Rom. 8:3).

The flesh was disqualified and set aside as unusable, worthless for the purpose of God. Our standing is founded upon our new life in Christ and that standing in Christ is based on grace. The true estimate of a believer is not what we are in the flesh, but rather what we are in Christ by virtue of His grace. It is not what we are doing now, but rather what Christ has done on Calvary's cross. It is not what we think of ourselves, but what Christ thinks of us, that is of eternal consequence.


The apostle John counsels believers that the condemnation of our heart is a faulty compass and it is not to be trusted. He writes, "*Beloved, if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things*" (1 Jn. 3:20).

We may be like the thief on the cross, sentenced to be unfit to live on earth, but through His boundless grace, we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). All our attempts to live righteously in Christ, when viewed in the light of eternity, may be no more than soiled rags; yet our true standing in Christ is that we are justified, declared righteous (Rom. 5:2). We may be clothed in this world with rags of poverty, but in Christ we are "*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*" (Rom. 8:16-17).

Reformed teachers have so stressed the guilt, the horror and plague of sin that they have inadequately emphasized the believer's standing in Christ. This is one of the great shortcomings of Reformed theology. However, it is one thing for a non-Calvinist to make such a statement

but it is a powerful indictment for one from their own camp to pointedly address this issue.

J. Sidlow Baxter, the Reformed Baptist pastor and author writes, "Also, the more I reflect upon it, the surer I become that we cannot have a true disposition toward the New Testament teaching on holiness unless we have a discerning appreciation of our standing and privilege in Christ. Nobody thanks God more than I for the Protestant Reformation. Nobody glories more than I in its triumphal arch of the 'doctrines of grace,' with it shining keystone, 'justification by faith.' Nobody marches more positively than I under the aegis of Luther and Calvin. Yet just because I march beneath the same banner I claim the same right to differ...the 'miserable sinner' emphasis of the Reformers may be overdone to the point where it actually incapacitates our response...All the New Testament epistles were written to Christian recipients, and they all alike assume that the new Christian standing has fundamentally changed all the relationships of those who are 'in Christ.' The standpoint is not that we are seeking forgiveness but that we are already forgiven...we are not just seeking peace with God but we 'have peace with God'."⁷

A proper understanding of our standing in Christ will on one hand preserve us from legalism, and on the other from spiritual laxity. Christ, in His infinite grace, came and died in our place, paying the eternal punishment for our sins, and thereby satisfying perfectly the righteous demands of a holy God. Now God sees every believer in Christ; He has accepted them all because of the Beloved One; no one and nothing can ever touch this high and glorious position, which is ours through and because of Christ. 

ENDNOTES:

- 1 John Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth*, Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991, pp. 213, 240
- 2 Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, London, Banner of Truth, 1970, pp. 60, 401
- 3 William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1977, p. 21
- 4 Jonathan Edwards, *Life of David Brainerd*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 1978, p. 117
- 5 C. H. Macintosh, *Treasury: The True Workman*, Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1976, p. 490
- 6 Dana Roberts, *Understanding Watchman Nee*, Plainfield, NJ, Haven Books, 1980, pp. 16-17
- 7 J. Sidlow Baxter, *A New Call to Holiness*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1967, pp. 35-36

"SO GREAT SALVATION"

Chart prepared by W. H. Burnett

	REPENTANCE	FAITH	REDEMPTION	SUBSTITUTION	PROPITIATION	JUSTIFICATION	RECONCILIATION	SANCTIFICATION	GLORIFICATION
Definition	<i>Metanoia</i> : "to have an afterthought," i.e., a change of mind.	<i>Pistis</i> : firm persuasion, conviction of the truth; belief, trust. Always used in N.T. of faith in God, Christ, His promises.	a) (<i>Ex</i>) <i>agarakō</i> : to buy (out), purchase. b) <i>Lutroō</i> : to set free, or to deliver, to release on receipt of ransom.	A word meaning "instead of." Not found in Scripture but descriptive of a scriptural truth.	<i>Hilaskomai</i> : appease, propitiate, linked with the Mercy Seat. Note that the Heb. 2:17 should be <i>propitiation</i> (as KJV marg.)	<i>Dikaiōō</i> : to render righteous, to judicially declare or pronounce one to be just (not to make them righteous).	<i>Katallagē</i> : adjustment of a difference; a change on the part of one party induced by an action of another.	<i>Hagiazō</i> : to separate for a purpose, usually to God; to consecrate, to purify and cleanse. Linked with "holy," "saint."	<i>Doxazō</i> : to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate, honor, make glorious, excellent or illustrious.
Description	Involves turning from sin and turning to God. Implicit in the terms "believe" or "trust." Repentance does not save of itself, but there can be no salvation where repentance is absent. Not to be confused with penitence or penance, although there will be outward evidence, "fruits meet for repentance."	Faith is the empty hand that stretches out to receive God's gift. It is the logical complement to repentance. Faith must be exercised by man, a responsible moral being, upon hearing the gospel, otherwise he will not be saved. A firm conviction concerning the truth leads to personal surrender to the Object of faith.	<i>Exagarakō</i> signifies the price paid, while <i>lutroō</i> signifies the actual deliverance. Redemption is first by purchase, then by delivering power (Ex. 12). The blood of Christ was the purchase price. Redemption embraces the entire body, soul and spirit. It has a future aspect—redemption of the body.	The entire Levitical sacrificial system was based on the fact that another could die instead of the offender (i.e., substitution). All may avail themselves of this Substitute—though not all will. (See Rom. 3:21-26.)	Never used of an act by which man brings God into a gracious disposition. It is the work of Christ by which God can exercise grace towards the sinner consistent with His character, the means by which God is appeased. Used of the lid of the Ark—the Mercy Seat upon which the blood of atonement was sprinkled yearly.	A forensic term, as opposed to condemnation. It goes beyond the remission of sins, being the legal and formal acquittal of guilt by God. God can be both "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). Justification comes through faith, not by law-keeping or good works (Rom 2-3).	Man by nature is at enmity with God and therefore estranged from Him. Adam's sin turned the throne of God into a throne of judgment; Christ's work on the cross had turned it into a throne of grace. Salvation had not only brought us forgiveness and justification; we have been "brought near."	There are four aspects of the believer's sanctification: • Purposed • Positional • Progressive • Perfect Purposed: see 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13. Positionally: all believers are sanctified in Christ. Practically: we can progress daily in sanctification by co-operating with God.	What God has already done with Christ—He has glorified Him. The ultimate goal of our predestination—to be conformed to the image of Christ. The expressed desire of the Lord before the cross: "That they may be with Me where I am that they may behold My glory" (Jn. 17:24).
O. T. Reference	"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6) "And God saw that they turned from their evil way..." (Jonah 3:10)	"Abram...believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:3, 6)	Exodus 12 gives the example of redemption by blood (in Egypt from the judgment of God) and water (out of Egypt by the power of God)	Gen. 22:13 Ex. 12:13 Lev. 1-7 Isa. 53:4-6, 8	Ex. 25:21 Ex. 30:6 Lev. 16 In the Sept. found in Lev. 25:9 Num. 5:8 Ps. 130:4	Gen. 15:15 Hab. 2:4	O. T. sacrifices could not remove sin (Heb. 10). Reconciliation awaited the work of Christ on the cross.	God's plans went beyond redemption; He wanted a people separated to Himself: "Israel...My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen" (Isa. 41:8).	Ps. 2. Ps. 24 Isa. 52:13 Isa. 53:10-12
N. T. Reference	Mk. 1:15 Lk. 13:3, 5 1 Thess. 1:10 Acts 11:18 Acts 17:30 Acts 20:21 Rom. 2:4	Jn. 5:24 Rom. 3:25 Rom. 10:17 1 Cor. 2:5 Gal. 3:8 Eph. 2:8	Rom. 3:24 (b) Rom. 8:23 (b) Eph. 1:7 (b) Gal. 3:13 (a) Gal. 4:5 (a) Titus 2:14 (b) Rev. 5:9 (a)	Rom. 3:22 Rom. 4:25 Rom. 5:6 2 Cor. 5:14-15, 21 1 Tim. 2:6	"God be merciful [propitious] to me a sinner" (Lk. 18:13) Rom. 3:25 1 Jn. 2:2 1 Jn. 4:10	Acts 13:39 Rom. 3:24 Rom. 3:28 Rom. 5:1, 18 Rom. 8:30 Gal. 2:16 Gal. 3:11	Lk. 15:11-32 Rom. 5:10-11 2 Cor. 5:18-20 Eph. 1:10 Col. 1:20-22	2 Thess. 2:13 2 Pet. 3:15 1 Cor. 1:2 Heb. 10:10, 14 Eph. 5:26 1 Thess. 4:3	Jn. 17:4, 24 Acts 3:13 Phil. 2:9-11 Rom. 8:17 Rom. 8:30 2 Thess. 1:12 Rev. 19:16

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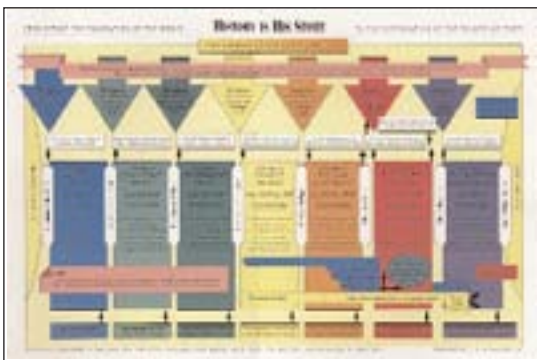
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DANGER!

The devil without and our flesh within are on the prowl.

The local assembly is a beautiful thing. It is not an impractical theory or an unreachable lofty spiritual ambition available only to a few. The assembly really works, even in this and—if the Lord has not returned—in the next century.

But with every effort to please the Lord, the enemy is not far away trying to destroy it. The assembly is no different. While it is true, “*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” our own faithlessness can let the enemy gain an advantage in robbing the assembly in many ways. Our own flesh is a ready and willing ally in the battle. Paul was amazed at the Galatian believers’ quick departure from the gospel. And what shall we say about the Corinthian assembly? They wasted no time in getting away from God. Here are a few dangers facing us today:

The danger of spiritual pride. The ever practical James, quoting from the Proverbs, reminds us, “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*” (4:6). It is possible to have a spiritual pride about the assembly. We can smugly point out the errors of religious systems without making a distinction between the system itself and individual believers in those systems. We must acknowledge that many believers, who have not seen certain truths we know, may be more fervent in their love for Christ.

We can be guilty of equating spirituality with our history in the assembly. No one should underestimate the spiritual benefit of a long history in assembly fellowship. The weekly remembrance of the Lord, regular sound teaching of the Scriptures, the faithful proclamation of the gospel, fellowship with like-minded believers, all of these over many years equip us in spiritual things. But when this history keeps us from patience towards new and young believers, or develops constant fault-finding, then we have a problem. Paul warned the Corinthians, in the great love chapter, that “charity” is not puffed up.

The danger of professionalism. This occurs when natural talent, academic training, and intellectual ability are the determining standards by which ministry is measured. These things may be good or can lead to disaster.

A spiritual man leaves the glory to God, and his ministry will leave us talking about the Lord. It can be good if the assembly takes it as a gift from God, but at the same time doesn’t prohibit other spiritual believers with less natural ability to also minister in the assembly. People with natural ability are not to be despised. However if we set arbitrary standards in measuring ministry, we can fall into the danger of professionalism.


The danger of legalism. The Galatians were guilty of legalism. They were taught that observance of the law would add value to their justification and bring about sanctification. I do not know of any North American assemblies that insist on observing the Jewish law. But it is possible to be guilty of the same kind of problem, namely assuming spirituality comes from observing outward forms or customs while ignoring the work of the Spirit Himself in the life.

Many young believers (and older ones, too) have been discouraged by those who insist on an outward conformity to mere tradition, without regard to spiritual reality. This is



not to say that experience is to be despised. The practices in your assembly may be the result of many years of consideration by mature Christians. We do well to pay attention. And Christian grace demands that I respect my fellow believer. The same flesh that in one person demands legalism in another can also inflame rebellion.

The danger of familiarity. Some behavior is out of place in the presence of God. The holiness of God is not intended to immobilize us in fear, but neither should we be casual in our conduct in assembly meetings. To be continually late, to dress sloppily, seems to make a statement about how we value our meeting with Him. To be cavalier or silly in our public expression, or to fill our platform ministry with talk about ourselves, exposes our small thoughts of God. How did the disciples speak of Him? The New Testament will tell you.

How do we avoid these dangers? One safeguard is to give the Lord the supreme place of honor in the assembly, “*holding the Head.*” When His glory is pre-eminent, then everything else finds its proper place. 

by BRIAN GUNNING

How God puts our sins away

*A heart-enflaming excerpt from
“Important Truths That All Should Know.”*

JAMES M’KENDRICK

The threefold malady of sins, doubts and fear that has afflicted the human family is a condition for which this world has no remedy. We know there are many religious “quacks” who advertise their abilities and offer their prescriptions, but they cannot touch the spot, nor grapple with man’s awful guilt. The case is far too desperate. Believing that God has abundant provision to put away every sin, doubt, and fear you have, we call prayerful attention to the following scriptures.

We start with the assumption that our sin and guilt is so great that no created power, neither men or angels, can come to the rescue. But God in His infinite love has intervened to meet the need. That being so, let us clearly grasp, by heaven’s light, God’s attitude towards lost sinners.

Do not, for the present, think of your attitude towards God, but only of His towards you. We have it clearly defined in 1 John 4:10, “*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.*” Calmly consider, before reading further, this wonderful fact: God loves you altogether apart from your attitude towards Him. Yes, He loves you; not your sins, but you. God hates our sins with a holy hatred, but ourselves He loves with a love that no words can express. Christ crucified alone can express it.

This being so, what will God do for those whom He loves? If He does anything, He must do everything, for He does nothing imperfectly. Behold then, God doing the very best and most that He can do for the objects of His love. View with holy adoration on the wondrous sight—for in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son (1 Jn. 4:9).

GOD’S LOVE PRACTICALLY DEMONSTRATED

Fix your mind for the moment on the cross. All creation above and below bears witness to God’s power and wisdom, but Christ dying for our

description of the situation. It was more by the nature of sin than the number of offenses, that this separation was effected. But God in infinite love has sent His sinless Son to take the guilty sinner’s place—to die the death that we deserved, and to bear all the just judgment of God against our guilt, and thereby put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself.

What a rest it is to our hearts to learn that our sins have been punished. Not passed by or lightly dealt with. The holiness, justice, and righteousness of God made this impossible, demanding that the full penalty be paid to the uttermost farthing.

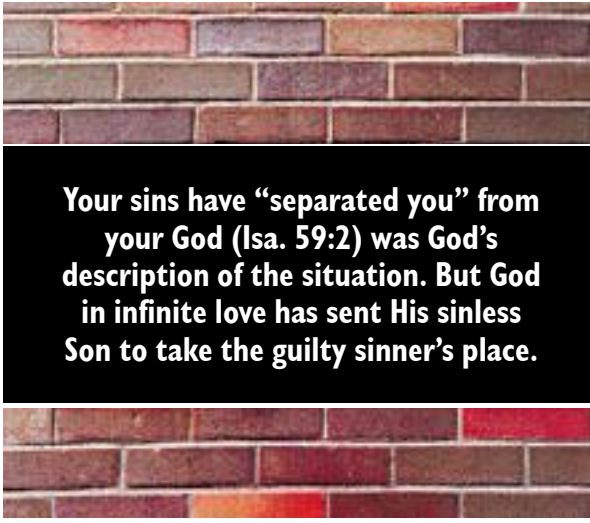
But who shall be the victim? Will God choose to make the guilty sinner suffer in his sins and for his sins? That would have been justice without

mercy, God’s holiness apart from love. But instead, love joined hands with righteousness; God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die in the sinner’s place. Jehovah-God leads Jesus, His holy, sinless Lamb, to the slaughter. There at the hill called Calvary, Christ is wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities (see Isa. 53:5-6). The childlike faith that grasps this glorious truth exclaims with joyous exuberance, “*We know He was manifested to take away our*

sins and in Him is no sin” (1 Jn. 3:5). For this purpose He came, to take away our sins.

THE REMOVAL OF THE GREAT BARRIER OF SIN

Re-read the words “*to take away our sins,*” and as you do so seek heaven’s help to concentrate upon



Your sins have “separated you” from your God (Isa. 59:2) was God’s description of the situation. But God in infinite love has sent His sinless Son to take the guilty sinner’s place.

sins is the manifestation of His love. God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (v. 10). He sent His Son to settle the great sin question, to span the gulf between the holy God and guilty men, bridging the otherwise unbridgeable distance.

Your sins have “*separated you*” from your God (Isa. 59:2) was God’s

this great fact. Let nothing distract your attention, and then say to Him with holy adoration and deepest thanksgiving, "O, my Lord, it is done, to the eternal satisfaction of my God, and for the eternal salvation of my soul." Open up your heart to Him. Let His love lead you and the Holy Spirit guide you to the cross. And as you gaze by faith upon our Lord there crucified, let the lines of the well-known hymn be the language of your heart:

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood,
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!*

In light of the foregoing, if anyone should ask you, "What did the Saviour come to do?" would not your answer be "*He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*" (Heb. 9:26). In light of language so plain, you would not allow anyone to persuade you that He came to give a recipe for us to work out our own salvation. Nor would you allow any to shake your faith in this great fact, for there can be no argument about it.

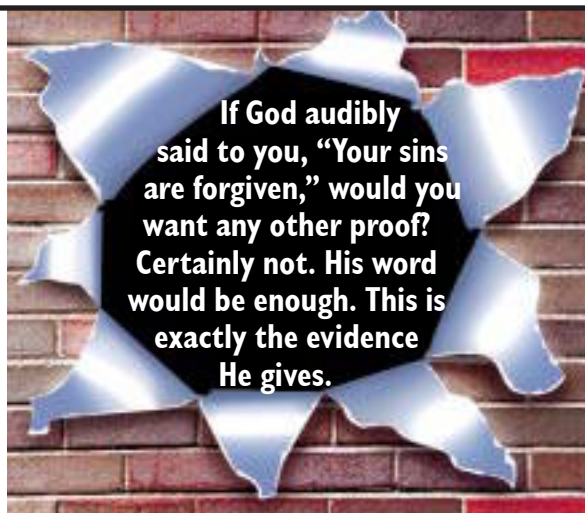
Therefore, one of two things must be true: He either did this or failed in the attempt. You are forced to declare that Christ's mission was either a success or a failure. You would not for a thousand worlds say His mission was a failure. But have you ever knelt down and thanked God that His mission was a success? If not, do it now. Could you make a mistake in so doing? No, but what a mistake you make if you don't. Let the language of this hymn be yours today:

*All my sins were laid on Jesus,
Jesus bore them on the tree,
God, who knew them, laid them on Him,
And believing, I am free.*

THE ASSURANCE OF SINS FORGIVEN

Finally, let us see how God gives to us the *assurance* of sins forgiven. This is a source of great confusion to many. Let me ask you, how do you expect to know if your sins are forgiven? God has only one way of giving this assurance, and that is by His Holy Word.

Let us propose a question. If God audibly said to you, "Your sins are forgiven," would you seek or desire any



other proof? Certainly not. His word would be quite enough. Well, this is exactly the evidence He gives in 1 John 2:12. He says to every true believer, "*Your sins are forgiven you for His name sake.*" Faith asks no more, triumphantly exclaiming, "God says my sins are forgiven, therefore with all my heart I believe it."

Unbelief wants to feel or see something as if God's Word needed confirmation. Shame that I should have such an attitude toward God and treat Him

as if He were unworthy of our trust. It should be self-evident that if we believe what God says, without hesitation or reservation, we thereby prove that we are believers.


THE GROUND OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Consider the cause of our forgiveness. God does not forgive without cause, but the cause is not in the forgiven ones. There are causes, many and varied, within us, why God should damn us; but none why He should forgive us. Grasp the cause of our forgiveness and you will never doubt again. Your sins are forgiven you "*for His name's sake.*"

We are saved because He suffered; we live because He died. Our sins are forgiven because the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7).

We would wish our love was warmer, but warmth of love is no cause of forgiveness. We wish our faith was stronger, our zeal greater, and our repentance deeper, and every virtue and merit multiplied greatly; but all these for sin could not atone. It is the blood of Christ alone. Our sins are forgiven for His name's sake. Therefore we appeal to all to look away from unworthy self to our worthy Saviour—away from sinful self to the sinner's Saviour. And as you gaze by faith upon Him who dies for our sins, hear God saying to you, "Your sins are forgiven you for *His name's sake.*"

Slowly repeat the follow Scripture, "*The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 Jn. 1:7). Thank God for the cleansing blood, then welcome with childlike trust His word of pardoning grace.

If you have received Christ, your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake (1 Jn. 2:12). Now with all your heart, thank God for His word of assurance and henceforth declare the blood of Christ has made you perfectly safe; and God's holy Word has made you perfectly sure. 

EDWARD PERRONET

The regal poet who knew real persecution

Edward Perronet (1726-1792) penned what is today called the National Anthem of the Church: "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." Edward and Charles Perronet, sons of Vincent Perronet, an Episcopal clergyman, who preached fifty years at Shoreham, England, joined forces with the Wesleys in 1846. Charles Wesley refers to him as a companion and co-laborer. His older brother Charles (1720-1776) also entered the ministry to labor with Wesley.

On Sunday, August 10, Charles Wesley wrote: "At Gwennap, nine or ten thousand, by computation, listened with all eagerness, while I commended them to God, and to the word of His grace. For near two hours I was enabled to preach repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ. I broke out again and again into prayer and exhortation. I believed not one word would return empty. Seventy years' suffering were overpaid by one such opportunity."

That September he became acquainted with Edward Perronet, "a sensible, pious, and amiable young man." From there Edward took Charles to meet his father, the vicar of Shoreham, in Kent. Wesley described him as a man with an "artless, child-like spirit, and zealous for the doctrines of the gospel. But his preaching and godly conversation, had, as yet, but little influence on the minds of the people, who, through ignorance, opposed the truth with great violence."

In time Vincent would become to John and Charles Wesley a kind of father figure. Charles called him the "Archbishop of Methodism." Wesley

preached there in Shoreham and "as soon as I began preaching, the wild beasts began roaring, stamping, blaspheming, ringing the bells, and turning the church into a bear-garden [sp?]. I spoke on for half an hour, though only the nearest could hear. The rioters followed us to Mr. Perronet's house, raging, threatening, and throwing stones. Charles Perronet hung over me, to intercept the blows. They continued their uproar after we got into the house."

In 1746, Edward traveled as far as Newcastle, England with Charles Wesley. The attack against the Methodists was in full swing. Methodist historian Abel Stevens says, "Perronet showed good courage, and sometimes intercepted blows and missiles aimed at Wesley by receiving them himself." At Bolton he was overcome by a mob and was rolled in mud.

Charles' journal for Oct. 15, 1746, reads: "I preached at Tipton-green the necessity of taking Christ's yoke upon us. The few remaining Antinomians were present; but they only mocked at God's Word and messenger.

"We were hardly set down when the sons of Belial beset the house, and beat at the door. I ordered it to be set open, and immediately they filled the house. I sat still in the midst of them for half an hour. Edward Perronet I was a little concerned for, lest such rough treatment at his first setting out should daunt him; but he abounded in valour, and was for reasoning with the wild beasts, before they had spent any of their violence. He got a deal of abuse thereby, and not a little dirt, both which he took very patiently."

*All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
To crown him Lord of all!*

*Let high-born seraphs tune the lyre,
And, as they tune it, fall
Before his face who tunes their choir,
And crown him Lord of all!*

*Crown him, ye morning stars of light,
Who fixed this floating ball;
Now hail the Strength of Israel's might,
And crown him Lord of all!*

*Crown, him ye martyrs of your God,
Who from his altar call;
Extol the stems of Jesse's rod,
And crown him Lord of all!*

*Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,
Ye ransomed of the fall,
Hail him who saves you by his grace,
And crown him Lord of all!*

*Hail him, ye heirs of David's line,
Whom David Lord did call,
The God incarnate, man divine!
And crown him Lord of all!*

*Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget
The wormwood and the gall,
Go, spread your trophies at his feet,
And crown him Lord of all!*

*Let every kindred and every tongue
That bound creation's call
Now shout in universal song,
The crowned Lord of all.*

by JOHN A. BJORLIE

Charles Perronet had attended school at Oxford, intending to become an Anglican priest. Once initiated as a preacher under John and Charles Wesley, he co-labored with Charles Wesley in 1747 in Dublin, and for half a year went preaching across Ireland.

Edward appears in Charles' journal as "Ned." He possessed "a large fund of wit" and would in time become part of a poetic trio with John and Charles Wesley. John Wesley had heard about the gifted young Perronet and was eager to hear him. Edward came to London to hear Wesley. When Wesley saw him in the audience, he announced that Edward Perronet (without asking him) would preach at the next early morning session, beginning at 5:00 AM. Perronet felt unqualified to speak with a man like Wesley in the audience but revered Wesley too much to deny him. The next morning he stepped into the pulpit, frankly told the congregation that he was not there by his free choice, that he had been compelled by Wesley, and that he felt inadequate for the job before him. All that said, he then pledged that he would furnish them all with the best sermon ever delivered. Opening his Bible, he turned to Matthew 5 and read the entire Sermon on the Mount, without comment, and closed with a hymn and prayer.

Perronet was a Christian who placed the truths of God's Word above any allegiance to great leaders. John and Charles Wesley were his superiors in giftedness and in labors, but Perronet was able to graciously differ from the great Wesley brothers. For instance, the Wesleys, all through their careers, maintained their status as clergymen in the Anglican church. They also felt that it was wrong for an unordained Methodist itinerant preacher to "administer communion." This issue came before the Methodist conference in 1755 and the Wesley brothers stood firm for honoring the Anglican system.

Perronet disagreed. He was convinced that the Church and State were separate institutions, and that believers had no right participating in a state church. This sort of courage springs from the conviction that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to answer for the way we treated the authoritative sayings of God.

In 1756, he even wrote a poem titled "The Mitre, a Satyricall Poem" which ridiculed the state church clergymen. Charles Wesley was not amused. John Wesley suppressed the publication of the poem, but later confessed, "For forty years I have been in doubts concerning that question, 'What obedience is due to heathenish priests and wicked infidels?'"

Health concerns were another reason for pulling back from his efforts with Methodism. Once distanced from the Wesleys, Selina, the Countess of Huntington (1707-1791) took an interest in his work. She gave large sums

of money to support traveling evangelists, and eventually built 70 buildings devoted to gospel preaching. She had been raised an Anglican, but her evangelical fervor made her an oddity in the established church. The network of preaching points she built became known as the Countess of Huntington's Connexion. She was the patroness of great preachers like George Whitefield, Howell Harris, and Rowland Hill. She can also be credited with promoting and preserving many of our best hymns. She helped Isaac Watts, Philip Doddridge, John Cennick, William Williams, Charles Wesley, Thomas Olivers, Augustus Toplady, and Edward Perronet.

Edward's brother Charles, despite a weak physical constitution, carried on for twenty years as a part-time itinerant. Unlike the younger Edward, he was an unquestioning Methodist who gave himself to travel under Wesley's direction. *The Arminian Magazine* praised him as "a living and a dying witness of the blessed doctrine he always defended—entire sanctification. Shortly before dying, he said, "God has purged me from all my dross; all is done away. I am all love."

About the year 1779, his regal hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" was penned. It first appeared in 1780 in *The Gospel Magazine*. This hymn originally had eight verses, and was entitled, "On the Resurrection." Shrubsole, an organist at Spafield's Chapel, London, composed a tune called "Miles Lane." It was generally sung to this, until it became wedded to the American tune "Coronation," written by Oliver Holden, a Massachusetts carpenter. Later still the hymn was sung to "Diadem" written by James Ellor, a hatmaker. The hymn became the English *Te Deum*, and receives the spontaneous approval of all Christian hearts.

In 1785, his poems and hymns were collected in a volume, *Occasional Verses, Moral and Sacred*, "published for the Instruction and Amusement of the Serious and Religious."

In his last years he worked with a group of dissenters at Canterbury. John Wesley and his itinerants were shown hospitality there and he opened the pulpit to their exhortations. Though compelled to differ with these choice saints, he maintained a large heart toward them to the end. He died at Canterbury in January, 1792. His last recorded words were: "Glory to God in the height of His divinity; glory to God in the depth of His humanity; glory to God in His all-sufficiency, and into His hands I commend my spirit." To his dying breath he wanted to "crown Him Lord of all."

MATERIALS FOR THIS ARTICLE TAKEN FROM:

Edwin M. Long, *Illustrated History of Hymns & Their Authors*
Abel Stevens, *History of Methodism*, in 3 vols.

Journal of Charles Wesley, in 2 vol.



The heart of the gospel

The message at heart is so simple a child can grasp it; yet its fullness only the mind of God can embrace.

W. H. BURNETT

What has prompted this study, is the perception that many important scriptural terms in connection with the gospel are losing their value and significance in our day. Terms such as Substitution; Redemption; Justification; and Propitiation are becoming increasingly confused, and in some cases they are spoken of as if they all basically mean the same thing. This depreciates the value of these great truths of salvation which God had given to us in His Word.

Salvation is obtained through simple faith in Christ, but the understanding of what that transaction involved will unfold throughout eternity. It is important for us to understand what these scriptural terms mean.

THE ORIGIN OF THE GOSPEL

There are a multitude of scriptures which make it clear that the gospel has its origin with God, and has nothing to do with man. The following references will suffice to establish this point: the gospel of God (Rom. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:2), the gospel of the glory of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11), the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24), the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mk. 1:1), the gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:14), the gospel of His Son (Rom. 1:9), the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thess. 1:8), the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4), and the gospel of Christ (Rom.

15:19; 1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 2:12).

These scriptures show that the gospel has its origin, and therefore it's authority, from God. Man is not at liberty to change its terms or modify its message. It is of God.

THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL

The word "gospel" in the original language of the Bible simply means "good news." The Apostle Paul gives us a succinct summary of what the gospel message is when he writes: *"the gospel that I preached unto you... how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and rose again, according to the Scriptures"* (1 Cor. 15:1-4). A scriptural gospel message, therefore, must deal with the question of sin, and the relation of the Cross to it, and the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. These are the foundation truths of the "Good News" that God has for fallen humanity. A summary of what the gospel contains follows:

- Sin had alienated man from the presence of God, and from fellowship with Him.
- Man by nature is spiritually separated from God, and depraved in every part.
- Man cannot remedy his situation by good works or sacrifices.
- God in His infinite love and mercy has sought after man with a view to salvation.

• God sent His Son to Calvary to die for sinners, to pay the price of redemption.

• Christ rose from the dead and ascended to God's right hand, evidence that His sacrifice satisfied every claim of God.

• The death and resurrection of Christ has opened the gate of salvation to all who believe.

• Those who reject the gospel and die in their sins will go to hell awaiting the final judgment.

• Unbelievers will be judged by the risen Christ at the Great White Throne. The Judge will assign both death and hell to the Lake of Fire for all of eternity.

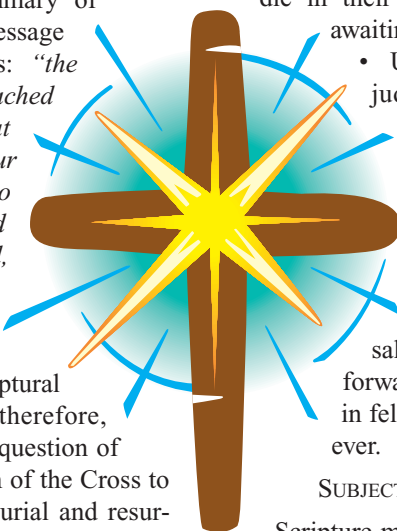
• Those who have salvation in Christ look forward to dwelling in bliss in fellowship with God forever.

SUBJECTS OF THE GOSPEL

Scripture makes it very clear that the gospel is for a universal audience, without fear or favor. The scope and availability of God's gospel is without limit. John 3:16 tells us, *"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* There can be no limitation on the potential of the grace of God to save all, and the gospel is offered to all for acceptance or rejection.

Sir Robert Anderson wrote:

Does not every principle of truth and right forbid that the elect should be



scared into repentance by concealment of the fact that the ink upon their discharge was dry long centuries ago, and that others should be tantalized with deceptive promises of blessings that they can never know, enforced by threats of judgment from which, for them, there is no escape?

And again,

He [God] gave His only begotten Son, and He adds, not as a cold formula which the initiated know to be overshadowed by the doctrine of election, but as the expression of the longing of that mighty love—"that WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Scripture teaches that there is not a human being on the face of the earth who is excluded from the possibility of salvation through faith in Christ. To teach otherwise, is the death knell of biblical evangelism.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL

Preaching is the primary means by which men hear the gospel, upon which they have a responsibility to respond in faith. We see this demonstrated practically in the Acts where the apostles spent their time preaching the Word, with exceptional results. Of course we can all be "witnesses" to Christ by our lives and by word of mouth, but preaching involves public declaration. The word used conjures up the picture of the "heralds" who were dispatched from Rome to the various provinces and towns of the Empire to publicly declare whatever message the Caesar wished to convey, with the expectation of obedience from the hearers. Some examples:

"How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14); *"Faith cometh by hearing...by the Word of God"* (Rom. 11:17); *"Christ sent me...to preach the gospel"* (1 Cor. 1:17); *"The preaching of the gospel...is the power of God"* (1 Cor. 1:18); *"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching"* (1 Cor. 2:21); *"We preach Christ and Him crucified"* (1 Cor. 2:23).

HOW THE GOSPEL IS RECEIVED

The gospel is received by faith. That is, the sinner coming under the conviction of the Spirit of God is required to exercise faith in Christ. He is asked to "believe," or to "receive." This involves the exercise of the human will. The following Scriptures will suffice to demonstrate:

"But as many as received Him...become the sons of God...those that believe on His name" (Jn. 1:12); *"That whosoever believeth in Him...hath everlasting life"* (Jn. 3:15); *"That whosoever believeth in Him...hath everlasting life"* (Jn. 3:16); *"He that believeth...hath everlasting life"* (Jn. 3:36); *"Many more believed because of His*

own word" (Jn. 4:41); *"He that heareth My word and believeth..."* (Jn. 5:24); *"They that gladly received His word..."* (Acts 2:41).

The work of the Spirit and the preaching of the Word of God is to be followed by a response from those who hear. They must "receive" or "believe." Some teach, based on Ephesians 2:8, that the ability to "believe" or "receive" is a gift from God given to the elect. Sir Robert Anderson calls this "the fatalistic theory of faith, which regards it as a kind of grace imparted to the soul by God." Alford writes, "To read the text as though the faith were the gift, is to destroy not only the meaning of the verse 9, but the force of the whole passage." *"The gift of God"* spoken of in Ephesians 2:8 is not the "faith," but the salvation which follows the exercise of faith. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17).

THE RESULTS OF BELIEVING THE GOSPEL

It will take eternity for us to discover the outcome of believing the gospel. We will continually be discovering new things that will thrill our souls forever, and provoke fresh songs of praise to the Lamb in the midst of the Throne. Some of the more evident results are:

- Our sins are all forgiven—past, present and future—and we have peace with God.
- We can never again be lost for we are possessors of eternal life.
- We are designated "sons" and "heirs of God."
- Heaven is our home forever.
- God is our Father, and the Lord Jesus is our Saviour, High Priest and Advocate.
- We are baptized in the Holy Spirit, and He takes up residence in our bodies.
- By the baptism of the Spirit, we belong to the universal Church, the Body of Christ.
- We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
- We have a "blessed hope"—the Lord has promised to come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

How our salvation should thrill our souls daily. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

IN CONCLUSION

The gospel has its origin in God. The historical essentials of the gospel are: Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again. The gospel is a universal message which has the potential to save all, and is primarily made known through the vehicle of "preaching." It is received by faith on the part of the hearer, that is, by believing or receiving. The gospel brings an eternity of blessing to the

Get it straight

There are many mistaken notions about conversion. Soul-winners can't afford to get it almost right.

JAMES GALL

It is commonly held by many in Christendom that instant salvation from the penalty of sin is impossible. It is supposed that conversion is a process which requires much time and earnest perseverance before God can accept the sinner and pardon his sin. It is supposed that the blood of Jesus, although it cleanses from all sin, can only be applied to those who sincerely repent and turn from their iniquities; and that this repentance must not be the fear of hell, but a godly sorrow for having offended so kind and so holy a God.

It is supposed that it is necessary to cry earnestly and perseveringly for mercy, in order to obtain it. The parable of the importunate widow, and such passages as these: "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate,*" and "*the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,*" are supposed to prove that great earnestness and long-continued efforts are requisites in order to be saved.

However plausible this appears, it is an erroneous representation of the gospel—powerless, comfortless, and fruitless. It never did, and never can, lead one sinner to glory.

Such a system rests on a wrong foundation because it places the sinner where the Saviour should be and the Saviour where the sinner should be. No wonder it leads to nothing. The Bible represents the Saviour as standing at the door of the sinner's heart, waiting and longing, and even entreating to get in. All that is needed



is that the sinner should open the door. But men cannot bear the idea of salvation being had so easily, and therefore they represent the sinner as standing at the door of the Saviour's heart, knocking and waiting until it be opened. Oh, how dishonoring to God! How contrary to Scripture.

The Bible represents the Saviour as a shepherd going after the lost sheep. This powerless gospel represents the sheep as standing at the closed door of the fold, calling on the shepherd to let him in. The Bible bids the sinner accept the salvation freely offered him; but this gospel retracts the offer and tells the sinner that he must not only pray for salvation, but must continue to pray, without any certainty that he has received it.

No, you do not even need to pray for it; you may have it simply by believing and accepting it. If, while we were yet sinners, God gave His Son that we might be reconciled, the holding back, the enmity is now all on our side, not on His, "...as though

God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

I wish that every sinner would agonize in prayer for salvation; but that in itself would not be conversion, because it would not be faith. It is only when the sinner believes in God's willingness to save him and accepts eternal life freely given to him in Christ, that he receives the pardon of his sins. It is only then that he believes the record that God gave of His Son; for this is the record: "*that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life....*" If you are really willing to have Christ, all you have to do is to tell Him so, and the thing is done. Cease that unbelieving cry, as if you had discovered your danger and not God; as if you only were in earnest and not He, about the salvation of your soul.

This idea of substituting prayer for believing is not only dishonoring to God, it is also cruel to the sinner. He prays, and even agonizes in prayer, waiting till he gets some sign that God has answered him. And because he feels no change he thinks that God does not mean to save him. He looks inward for something to rest his hopes on, but the more he looks in, the more he sees to terrify him. The change he looks for cannot take place till he accepts salvation. No wonder, then, that he cannot see it. The love, joy, and peace are received by resting on the promises; they cannot exist before.

REPENTANCE

But, you ask, Must I not repent before I can get Christ? I answer: If you mean by repentance that which the Scripture means, a change of mind, then I say, "Yes." You must repent, for that is what God calls you to do now. But if you mean by repen-

tance, “a godly sorrow for sin,” then I say, “No.” You can have no godly sorrow until you yourself are godly. It is one of the instincts of the new nature; and that can be had only in believing. If you must have this new nature before you come to Christ there is no need of your coming to Christ to get it. If you wait till you have “a godly sorrow for sin,” you will never come to Christ at all.

The only thing that you can feel before you come to Christ is the fear of hell, and a desire for rest: you can have no higher motive and therefore you have no merit in coming to Him. It is not love to God, nor even a real hatred of sin, that the unconverted man feels. He may be disgusted with some sins to which he is not inclined, and he may hate the sins that he indulges in; but it is not because they are sins against God and dishonoring to Him—and without this there can be no “godly sorrow.”

Your coming to Christ, therefore, must be an act of the purest self-interest, as God’s willingness to save you is the purest benevolence. He knows that you have no love to Him, and that your only anxiety is to escape the punishment of your sin; but He invites you notwithstanding, and appeals to your very self-interest as an inducement to come. “*Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?*” He knows that you dislike Him, and therefore He cannot appeal to your love; He knows that your heart is polluted, and therefore He cannot appeal to your hatred of sin. What He wants is, that you would have compassion on yourself; and what He mourns over is your madness in neglecting your own most important interests.

The repentance spoken of in the Bible is a change of mind, not a change of heart. Repentance is the turning point of a man’s history, when he discovers his misery and turns to Christ as his only hope of salvation. The prodigal son repented when he rose from the swine-trough to return to his father, saying: “*How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger.*” This was pure self-interest but it was true repentance notwithstanding: for he never felt sorrow for his sin, or shame at the treatment he had given his father, until he had received the kiss of forgiveness and was restored to the place of a son.

But is it not said: “*Strive to enter in at the strait gate*” (Lk. 13:24)? Yes, but though the gate is strait, it is open, not shut; and the striving is not with the gatekeeper, but with your own heart of unbelief that struggles to prevent you from going in. The door is narrow, but it is wide enough to let the sinner through if he will not attempt to carry his idols in with him. Perhaps the last thing he is willing to part with is his own righteousness. He would fain enter with some rag of his own to cover him, but it is impossible. It is too strait even for that.


Yet as soon as he consents to go in empty and naked,

helpless and ruined, trusting all to Christ, that moment he passes through without any difficulty. In one sense this may be called a gradual process, but it is nothing the better for that; an instant and unconditional surrender would have been more pleasing and more honoring to God. But, moreover, it is not a gradual conversion, because the entering in, when it does take place, is an instantaneous act. It is impossible to be both in and out at the same time.

But is it not said that “*many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able*”? Yes; but read the next verse and you will see that “*when once the master of the house has risen up and shut to the door*” **then** we are told that striving will be in vain (see Lk. 13:24-25). In the matter of salvation it is God’s call to the sinner that makes the door open, though it be narrow. “*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded...then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer...*” (Prov. 1:24, 28).

But is it not said that we are to knock, and it shall be opened unto us? And, have we not the parables of the importunate widow, and the friend who wanted three loaves, besides other passages, showing that although prayer is not answered at first it shall be assuredly answered at last? Yes, but these promises are all to God’s children in Christ, and the only reason why He does not at once give them what they ask is because He is their Father and knows best what and when to give them. Notwithstanding, He wishes them to continue praying, assuring them of His fatherly love, even when He does not answer; and promising that, when the right time shall come, “*He will avenge His own elect speedily.*”

But it is a fatal mistake to suppose that the believer’s privilege is also the sinner’s misfortune. It never can be good for the sinner to continue under God’s wrath and curse, an enemy to God and a slave to sin, even for one moment. If God had really promised salvation to those who prayed instead of to those who believed, the very first cry of the unbeliever should have been answered, for there can be no love in withholding mercy.

What then must one do to be saved? “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). But you reply: “I have always believed and yet am not saved. I know the doctrines of Christianity and have no doubt about their truth, and yet I cannot say I know that I possess the gift of God.” You believe that Christ is offered to you in the gospel, but that is not the same as **receiving Him**. “*...as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name*” (Jn. 1:11-12). You must not only believe the doctrine, for that is only opinion. You must believe in Christ Himself, trusting Him as a Person to be your only means of salvation. 

Saved...from what?

Is worldliness an old-fashioned word? Is separation (not isolation) a thing of the past?

DONALD L. NORBIE

God's grace does not encourage licentiousness. We glory in the fact that we are saved by grace alone, apart from human works (Eph. 2:8-9). But God's grace leads us away from the world culture in which we live to a life of godliness. One's life proclaims his faith.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious

appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:11-13, NKJV)

Christians used to be warned about being worldly but the term is seldom heard today. The lifestyle of many professing Christians is little different from the world around them. Does this mean the world has gotten better? Hardly! It simply indicates that many Christians no longer have a tender conscience concerning sin. When this happens, Jesus said, one is like salt that has lost its savor and is utterly useless. It is thrown out on the path to be trodden underfoot. The world is quick to discern and to reject hypocrisy.

The first and great commandment of western civilization is: Thou shalt be tolerant. The second is like it: Thou shalt not judge another person. This is the end result of rejecting moral absolutes and a belief in objective truth for conduct. Our culture now accepts abortion on demand, sex outside of marriage, wholesale divorce, and sexual perversion such as homosexuality and bestiality. To raise an objection is to be "unchristian," intolerant, bigoted and mean spirited. A tolerant spirit is a cardinal virtue. And it is easy for Christians to slip into such a permissive attitude toward sin.

Israel was warned about the fearful, sexual immorality

of the nations in the land they were to possess. *"You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out...And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine"* (Lev. 20:22, 26). God wanted His people to be separated to Himself, rejecting the depraved culture around them. But one might object, "That's Old Testament Law and was just for Israel." But Paul also pleads with the Corinthian believers to practice separation from their evil world: *"Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you"* (2 Cor. 6:17). God is still holy and He still desires His people to be a holy people.

Some believers in their reaction to the evil world around them have withdrawn physically into a commune type of existence. Paul emphasizes that scriptural separation does not mean going out of the world (1 Cor. 5:10). Believers need to maintain contact with unbelievers in order to function as salt and light in the world. But spiritually and morally believers must maintain godly standards and practices. Refuse to *"be conformed to this world"* (Rom. 12:2). *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Rom. 12:2 NIV). For this to take place one will need to spend more time with the Word of God than with television.

What is the pattern of the world that Christians must resist? The mind-set of the world is materialistic. Material possessions are viewed as the measure of a man. Believers can be swept along with this think-



ing, chronically dissatisfied and wanting more. A new car, a bigger car, a larger home, a more luxurious vacation—these are viewed as essential to happiness. If necessary, one will work two jobs and sacrifice family and church time to achieve these goals. The treadmill of materialism leads to an exhausting lifestyle. Our Lord warned: *“Beware of covetousness.”* As a believer, learn to live frugally in order to give time and money to the things of God.

Pleasure, sensual pleasure! This is the good life to the world: expensive gourmet foods and well aged wine. Drinking used to be avoided by evangelical Christians but now more and more professing Christians also drink. Alcoholism is a fearful problem in much of the world, destroying families and the physical health of millions. Alcohol is one of the oldest drugs known to man and now there are many other illicit drugs promising the user new highs, destroying both mind and body. Must one have drugs to experience happiness? Is not the Lord enough to satisfy your heart?

Gambling is sweeping America, whether it be casinos, slot machines, or the lottery. Everybody is doing it. Many who would not frequent a casino see no harm in buying a lottery ticket. Besides, one might rationalize, “If I win, I’ll give the Lord a tithe!” The lure of instant riches causes many to waste money on a chance when that money is needed elsewhere. *“Be content with such things as you have”* (Heb. 13:5). Scripture is replete with warnings about greed (1 Tim. 6). The person who gambles is greedy for more, desiring gain without labor—and that is sin (see Eph. 4:28).

This sensual culture is obsessed with sex. Years ago movies would not even show a husband and wife together in bed. Today one is pressed to find a film without explicit sexual scenes. Marriage is not glorified as good

and right but the need to gratify raw, sexual urges is emphasized. If you “love” one another, all is permitted. Normal, heterosexual acts are not only depicted but sexual perversion. It is amazing how moral standards have been degraded. That which God created for good and has sanctified in marriage for the happiness of mankind and procreation (Heb. 13:4) has become a twisted, selfish, animal act. The Christian community must guard itself from becoming desensitized to sin by novels, TV and movies which feed fleshly lusts. Television is perhaps the world’s most effective molder of thought and desires. Christian, guard the input of movies, television, and radio into your home and life or it will kill your spiritual desires. The beauty and happiness of marriage need to be modeled by the Christian community.

What is the antidote for worldliness—a love for the world? It is love for God and for the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said that the first and great commandment is: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”* (Mt. 22:37). Love for God is a choice, and will come as one reads and meditates on God’s Word and spends time in prayer. In this way one will grow to appreciate the greatness of God and His love and grace as revealed in Christ. Love for God will drive out a love for the world. *“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him”* (1 Jn. 2:15).

The Christian community needs to be in the world, rubbing shoulders with the unsaved, fervently witnessing to them. But to be effective, like salt, it must be distinctively separate in its lifestyle, a holy people for the Lord. It must model its conduct by the standards of God’s Word. It must speak out against sin with the boldness of John the Baptist. It must teach and discipline its own members so they maintain a holy lifestyle. It must not withdraw from the world but be a loving, fervent witness in a ccf

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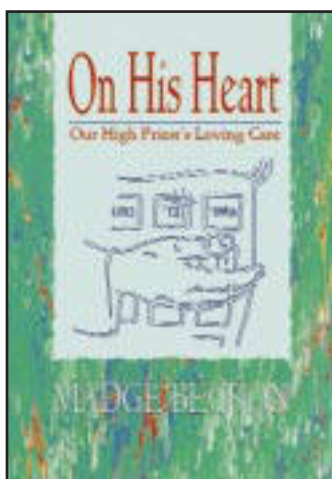
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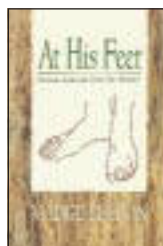
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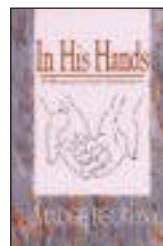


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Bring...



A Sunday school teacher was dying. Just before he slipped away he turned to his daughter, who was bending lovingly over his bed, and said, “Bring...”

More he could not say, for the power of utterance failed him. His child looked with earnest gaze in his face and said, “What shall I bring, Father?”

“Bring...”

His child longed to know her dying father’s last request, and she said: “Please, Father, try to tell me what you want. I’ll bring you anything you wish.”

The dying teacher rallied all his strength and finally murmured:

“Bring...forth...the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”

—Edwin M. Long *Illustrated History of Hymns and Their Authors*