

REPORTS: TORONTO & N. DARTMOUTH, MASS.

UPLOOK

NOVEMBER 1999

I
DON'T
CARE FOR
DAISIES
EITHER

I DON'T CARE FOR DAISIES, EITHER

I'm not an Arminian, please.

Last month we considered Calvinism's view of salvation, forming the acrostic T-U-L-I-P. But someone has observed that Arminians have a flower, too—the daisy: “He loves me; He loves me not...” This refers to the question in the fifth Arminian point which wondered about the possibility of true believers losing their salvation. More of that later.

It is a danger-fraught process to set in concrete a system of theology and then attempt to fit every scripture into it. F. F. Bruce (ironically just after he tells us he is “an impenitent Augustinian and Calvinist”) states:

There is a great danger, when once we have adhered to one particular school of thought or adopted one particular system of theology, of reading the Bible in the light of that school or system and finding its distinctive features in what we read. (From the Foreword of *God's Strategy in Human History*, by R. Forster and P. Marston.)



Whether consciously or unconsciously, we arrange Bible information in our heads in some systematic way as we attempt to understand “*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 1:3). Yet the Word of God is not a systematic theology text. We often find ourselves dissecting the butterfly to find out how it flies, only to discover that we have, by our dissecting, made sure that it will never fly again.

When we consider God's ways with men, what we are seeking to understand is a miracle. In response to Nicodemus' query: “*How can these things be?*” the Lord Jesus said, in effect, “Nicodemus, if you can't track the movements of the wind, how will you trace the moving of the Spirit? If you can't understand natural birth, how will you grasp spiritual birth?”

Yet God has taken great pains to explain something of His ways in salvation. He has used pictures, types, and shadows in the Old Testament; He has given many step-by-step conversion stories in the Gospels and the Acts; and Paul especially has written tirelessly, under the Spirit's tutelage, of the amazing anatomy of salvation.

We ought to have a ravenous hunger to know what has happened to us as a result of being saved (and what can

happen to everyone who will “*repent and believe the gospel*”). Others certainly have been curious about our salvation: “*Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently...which things the angels desire to look into*” (1 Pet. 1:10, 12). You remember that the prodigal's older brother had to ask a servant what was going on in the father's house. Would it not be a sad thing if we found, on arrival at the Father's House, that the angels knew more about our salvation than we?

The fatal flaw in Arminianism is the so-called “falling-away doctrine.” The Arminians who pled their case at the Synod of Dort first raised a doubt concerning eternal security in their fifth point:

Whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginning of their life in Christ...of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds.

But they stated without equivocation in their “Opinion of the Remonstrants”:

True believers can through their own fault fall into horrible sins and blasphemies, persevere and die in the same: and accordingly they can fall away and get lost.

This introduces with it a host of errors. For example, if I, having truly believed, can lose my salvation through committing some “horrible sins,” did Christ's death not cover those sins? No, say the Remonstrants:

...we heartily reject the following doctrines...namely...that all present and future sins are now forgiven.

The Remonstrants are honest when they call these statements “Opinions.” Often those who believe one can “fall away” from Christ (really “fall out” of Christ!) argue their case not so much from Scripture as from logic. Their two main points: i) they know some who they say were true Christians who cast off their belief and now repudiate the gospel; ii) if you believe in eternal security, nothing will hold you back from going out and living like the

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by J. B. NICHOLSON, JR.

UPLOOK

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UPLOOK

(USPS 620-640)

Founded in 1927 as *Look on the Fields*, UPLOOK is published eleven times a year by Uplook Ministries, 813 North Ave., N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

Phone: (616) 456-9166

Fax: (616) 456-5522

Website: <http://www.uplook.org>

E-mail: uplook@uplook.org

US POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to UPLOOK,
P. O. Box 2041, Grand Rapids, MI 49501-2041

CANADIAN POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to UPLOOK,
P.O. Box 427, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6V9

ISSN #1055-2642

Printed in USA.

© Copyright 1999 Uplook Ministries

Periodical postage paid at Grand Rapids, MI.

International Publication Mail Product (Canadian Distribution) Sales Agreement No. 1064363

UPLOOK magazine is intended to encourage the people of God in fidelity to His Word, fervency in intercessory prayer, labors more abundant, and love to the Lord. Believing in the practical Headship of Christ and the local autonomy of each assembly, this is not intended to be an official organ of any group or federation of local churches. The editor and authors take responsibility for materials published. For any blessing which accrues, to God be the glory.

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Uplook Ministries is a tax-exempt corporation looking to the Lord to provide for the needs of this ministry. This magazine is sent freely to those who request it, but evidently is not freely produced. Donations may be made by check or money order denominated in US\$, Canadian \$ or £ sterling. All checks should be made payable to "UPLOOK" and sent to:

U.S. & Foreign readers: P.O. Box 2041
Grand Rapids, MI
49501-2041

Canadian readers: P. O. Box 427
St. Catharines, ON
L2R 6V9

U. K. readers: P.O. Box 1163
Bristol
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Cincinnati, Ohio

An International Conference convened by

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hosted by



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
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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.

STILL NEED AN APPLICATION? CALL 616-456-5123. WE'RE APPROACHING 1000 REGISTRANTS!

SINGLES RETREAT

The Summerville Bible Chapel will sponsor a retreat and conference for singles between the age of 21 and 40-something at Seabrook Island (Charleston, SC) on December 3-6. The expected speakers are Tom Rawls and Sam Thorpe, Jr. For more information, contact:

Skip and Cathy Elliot
(843) 873-7083

SKIING IN THE SMOKIES

Camp Living Water in Bryson City, NC invites you to the Second Annual Assembly Ski Retreat, Jan. 14-17, 2000. Rex Trogdon (NC) is scheduled to minister from the Word for the weekend. For more info. contact Theresa Gustafson or Joel Sasscer at (828) 488-6012

Living-h2o@juno.com

WORD ALIVE WEEKENDS

The assemblies in the Winnipeg, Manitoba area are looking forward to their monthly young people's Bible study series.

January 29-30 J. B. Nicholson, MI
February 25-27 Mike Attwood, GA
March 24-26 To be confirmed

Each weekend includes a Friday Word Alive Rally (WAR) for youth and an all-day Saturday Word Alive Seminar. Out of town visitors are welcome. For those wanting more information, contact:

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

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.

January 15 Brian Gunning, ON
February 19 Boyd Nicholson, ON

March 18 Randy Amos, NY
April 15 J. B. Nicholson, MI

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.

February 19 Wade LeBlanc, NB
March 18 Doug Kazen, WA
April 15 Keith Keyser, PA

Contact Tim Bhatt
(302) 425-0762
tim_bhhatt@yahoo.com

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY**Retirement Home Administrator**

A fulltime service opportunity is available in a Southern California retirement home. The current administrator is planning to leave soon and is now searching for a replacement.

Contact:

Gregory Crozier
Western Assemblies Home
350 Berkeley Ave.
Claremont, CA 91711
(909) 626-3711

Guest Apartment Managers

The Chicago Missionary Guest Apartments in Glen Ellyn, Illinois are a ministry of the Chicago Missionary Study Class. The primary purposes of the apartments are to provide a home for Chicago area missionaries who are home on furlough, and a place to stay for other missionaries visiting or passing through the area. There is a current need for a couple to be live-in managers of the CMGA. The managers handle hospitality, minor maintenance, yard work and reservations. In return, they occupy one of the four room apartments, rent free. Anyone interested in more details concerning this service opportunity may contact:

Bob Marshall (847) 524-6675 or
Bill Warke (708) 599-1389

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.

Brian Wilson
(616) 363-6819

COMMENDATIONS**Toros and Virginia Pilibosian**

Toros and Virginia Pilibosian of Limassol, Cyprus have recently been commended to full-time service by the saints at Limassol Gospel Hall. They will serve the Lord in the country of Armenia.

CHANGE IN LOCATION**El Centro Biblico**

The Spanish assembly of believers meeting in the Los Angeles, CA, suburb of Hawaiian Gardens will be relocating due to the sale of their building by the landlord. They have placed the bookstore inventory and furniture in storage and are presently meeting for worship in the Taylor home and yard. This is inadequate and also against regional zoning laws. They are looking to the Lord for a suitable place to meet. Presently, communications can be had through the correspondent:

James Taylor
11615 E. 185th St.
Artesia, CA 90701
(562) 865-5657

NEW MINISTRY

Due to illness, Scott and Marsha Blair (missionaries to Peru) returned to the States this summer and have

been advised not to return to Peru. They spent the summer helping at Greenwood Hills Bible Conference. Scott accepted the position as general manager effective October 15.

TRAVEL TO BIBLE LAND

Travel with believers from the midwest United States to Israel. The ten-day tour, with J. B. Nicholson, Jr. as teacher, is scheduled for Mar. 4-13, 2000. The \$1995 cost will cover airfare from Chicago to Tel Aviv, double occupancy in first class hotels, two meals a day, tips and taxes. A \$150 deposit will secure a registration.

Steve Allan
(573) 744-5843
sallank@juno.com

LATINO EVANGELISM

Summer vacation was a time of evangelistic activity for those

involved with Spanish ministry in the Los Angeles (CA) area. They had meals and meetings in homes, get-togethers in parks, camps for young people, and regular meetings of the local church—all focusing on reaching out to new people with the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fifteen people (young and old) professed faith in the Lord, but there are others who are vacillating and are still not saved.

Their Monday evening radio broadcast, “The Open Bible” continues, and a new broadcast has been added. It is a four-minute Bible message for women called “From Friend to Friend.” This program, broadcast in Argentina for many years, is now being adapted for the LA area.

Currently, there are approximately 80 students enrolled in the Emmaus Bible Correspondence Courses.

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE
A CALL TO HOLINESS**

New assemblies in New England, like ones in Cheshire and Waterbury, CT, where Jack and Ruth Spender and Joseph Pratt labor, had an infusion the week of October 5-7. Commended workers, elders and their wives gathered at Westwoods Bible Chapel in Hamden, CT for the annual National Workers and Elders Conference.

Topics varied, but the theme of the conference was a call to personal holiness in all aspects of life. If the Lord has not come, next year’s conference is to be held on October 3-5, 2000. It will be hosted by the assembly in Lawrence, KS. Mark your calendar. For information, contact:

Donald L. Norbie
(970) 356-0817
DLNorbie@juno.com



THE 1999 MIDWEST YOUTH CONFERENCE



Left: Around 150 young people from Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado, Missouri, Arkansas and Tennessee attended the conference.

Below: The speakers were Phil Miekley (OH) and Jamie Hull (CO)

The saints of Westside Bible Chapel (Wichita, KS) were pleased to host around 150 young people at the 1999 Midwest Youth Conference. All the details worked out smoothly and the ministry of the Word was a blessing, reaching into hearts, we trust with a life-changing impact.

Phil Miekley (OH) based his messages on five “One Things” in scripture: “one thing I know,” “one thing you lack,” “one thing is needful,” “one thing have I desired,” and “this one thing I do.” Jamie Hull (CO) gave three messages about the last words of Paul and David, teaching about the fight, the faith and the finish. Hurley Dixon (MO) was a great song leader! They are looking forward to another time of fellowship and study of the Word at next year’s conference. Young people: plan now to attend!



Campus outreach

Taking the offensive without being offensive.

PETER SODERLING

“**B**ehold now is the day of salvation!” (2 Cor. 6:2). How emphatically the Scripture presents the need for immediate salvation. The sinner must not delay in his meeting with the Saviour because he is not guaranteed even one more earthly breath. Often we use this text in our gospel meetings, but in its N.T. context it is applied to us: If today is the day of salvation for the unsaved, then today is the perfect day for saints to be testifying of the Saviour!

The New Testament presents what we typically refer to as the idea of the “local” church. The fascinating thing is that the local church should not only be considered “local” to a group of believers, but it should also be remembered that it is “local” to a far larger group of people—the unsaved. Many assemblies have a heartfelt concern for the gospel-needy lands around the world, yet the harvest field around the corner remains untouched. Public parks, downtown street corners, high-school sporting events, and college campuses are areas local to most assemblies that present a tremendous opportunity to share the gospel with a varied assortment of people, ages, and cultures.

The saints at Crossroads Bible Chapel, North Dartmouth, MA (along with the help of some friends from MI & NY) recently engaged in one such effort at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth.

Monday, September 13 through Friday, September 17 were filled with open-air preaching, tract distribution, and one-on-one conversations with

students and faculty. Each evening, gospel meetings were held at the chapel with Randy Amos.

It didn’t take us long to discover that the campus was completely virgin territory to this type of gospel outreach. We asked many students if they had ever experienced open-air preaching on their campus before. No one responded in the affirmative. Students stopped to listen to the preaching and often interacted with questions. Thousands of pieces of literature were distributed and some students even started to read the material immediately!

We had encouraging conversations with individual students and professors. Several students were obviously under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit and were quite burdened about the condition of their souls.

On one occasion, a young man sat and talked with us for more than an hour. He would ask a sincere question and then hang on our every word as we explained to him what the Scripture had to say about getting right with God. Then he would ask another question, and another. Throughout the whole conversation, he was sincerely interested in the answers that the Scripture provided.


Although we received a good response from the students in general, it became quickly apparent that the enemy has emissaries active everywhere as well. College campuses are no exception.

Early in the week we were subjected to the tactics of one heckler who wore a black T-shirt that had a red circle around a cross with a strike-mark through it. The label told the story: “Bad Religion.” He carried a large

flag with the same slogan on it and, as John Bjorlie spoke, the student would walk in front of him, and attempt to cover the preacher with his pagan flag. In the face of opposition, the Lord remained faithful. As we sought ways to sincerely minister to this individual, we found that he started to respond in a very positive way. Every day he would reappear, making his way back to our preaching site. By the end of the week, he had turned from his strong opposition to the point where he was carrying on peaceful conversations with members of our group.

This proved to be the pattern for the week; the students that opposed the gospel message the strongest, could be found returning to the preaching site day after day. The Spirit of God was doing an obvious work of conviction in their lives, causing them to seek us out repeatedly, only to have a greater measure of the Word of God applied to their hearts with each contact.

As a result of this work, the enthusiasm among the believers is very high. We are actively seeking to start an on-campus Bible study so that we might continue to have opportunities to share the gospel message with students starving for truth. The prayers of the saints are greatly appreciated.

May our hearts be encouraged toward local evangelism as the Spirit of God continues to give us opportunities to reap the harvest in our own field just around the corner. 



The campus outreach area at U. Mass (Dartmouth)



Peter Soderling sharing life

Toronto blessing

But this is the real thing!

SHAWN CUTHILL

Do you think the Great Commission applies to you? Could the Lord be calling you to lay down your life in a place like Afghanistan, China, or Papua New Guinea? How will you know? Is the Lord still calling out, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?*" (Isa. 6:8). Why do more not answer, "Here am I, Lord, send me"?

Perhaps so few seem to "stand in the gap" because the upcoming generation has not been provided with proper evangelistic training at home. Acts 1:8 shows that we must be missionaries where we are before we can go "*into all the world.*" How can a new generation "catch the vision" to reach across the sea if we've never reached across the street?

The Lord convicted me of this at the Missionary Orientation Program at Greenwood Hills last year. He showed me that I wasn't being a missionary in my own backyard and that missionary training starts at home. I began to meet with believers from the Toronto area and we have established a summer-long outreach program called "Impact Toronto." Basically, our desire is not only to get the gospel to the people of our city, but also to provide evangelism training to believers in the Toronto area.

Using a sketch board, the gospel is presented to passersby on the Toronto streets.



Hopefully others will also be encouraged to throw away their excuses and fears, and trust the Lord to use them to reach the world, starting right in our own hometowns!

The project ran every Saturday, from May 15 to September 25. Believers would meet at Greenwood Chapel at noon. From noon until 1 PM was time set apart for teaching. Different religions and evangelistic methods were discussed, and fundamental doctrines were clarified in the minds of those who would be going out to evangelize. Next, we would pray for an hour that the Lord would use us that day. Finally, we would divide up into teams and head out on the streets from 2-5 PM to preach, sing, sketch, knock on doors, hand out tracts, and talk one-on-one to many about the Lord Jesus.

This not only got the gospel out and allowed the evangelists to exercise their gift, but it gave many young people from surrounding assemblies a vision and training to go back and reach their own towns. We sent out letters to surrounding assemblies at the beginning of the summer and invited everyone to come and experience being "a missionary for a day." Youth groups, elders, and individuals came from as far away as Windsor, St. Catharines, Listowel and Peterborough. The multicultural mix of our city made it easy to pro-



Evangelist Gary Weeks (ON) uses a sketchboard

vide training for any ethnic, religious, or social group. What better way to train for the Buddhist Far East than to preach at a Buddhist parade in Toronto? We did this one week in July and we each were able to talk to 15-20 Buddhists as well as two Mormon missionaries, three homosexuals, and five atheist teenagers! What better place to start preparing for the mission field?

If you're within a few hours' drive of Toronto and wondering how to get involved, we will be starting up next year, Lord willing, on Saturday, May 20, 2000, with an all-day conference at either Greenwood or Markham Chapel. More details about this "Impact 2000" conference will be announced. After that, we plan to meet every Saturday at Greenwood Chapel at noon to train, pray, and experience our own mission field.

Now, what about your city? What's your plan? If you don't have one, I hope that you'll pray about how you can get involved in evangelizing your city. Get into God's Word, find out what the apostles did, get in touch with your elders, then put a gospel tract in every mailbox in town! Do something! Time is short!

I pray you do not read this and smile, thinking at least someone's doing something. Take responsibility for your area. When that happens in every city, we will then see the kind of missionary output that should be expected from "the New Testament assemblies."

For more information, contact:
Shawn Cuthill at (416) 443-5369
impact-toronto@canada.com

THREE WORDS



© AP photo

In 1979, 8-year-old Cary Ann Stout was raped and then brutally stabbed to death with a pocketknife.

Robert Glen Coe confessed to the killing and told the FBI agent that what Cary Ann said just before she died made him mad. She told him, "Jesus loves you."

Coe faced execution for his crime on October 19. It was the first death penalty issued in the state of Tennessee since the 4-year ban was lifted by the Supreme Court in 1976.

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

A quasi-religious philosophy called Christian Identity has been tagged as the link between many of the hate groups in the US. A researcher states, "Adherence to it is probably the single greatest common denominator among the various fragmented factions of the radical right wing in America. It is practiced by the neo-Nazis of the Aryan Nations, by the leaders of the Militia of Montana, and by the remnants of the Ku Klux Klan in the South."

An Oak Park, IL, watchdog organization counts 272 hate groups in the Midwest, with more than a dozen white-supremist groups in southwest Missouri. An estimated 90 Christian Identity groups are operating in 34 states. R. R. Ruether of Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL, counts some 50,000 "core" adherents who call themselves "Identity Christians." —*Pulse*

PREACHING TOLERANCE?

A media campaign produced by Exodus International about overcoming homosexuality may never again see airtime on any major television

USA Today reported in October that Cary Ann's mother planned to be there when the execution was carried out. "I believe in heaven and hell," she said. "I'd love to hear him ask for forgiveness and say what he did was wrong."

Richard Ward is the retired principal of Cary Ann's school. He travelled throughout rural Northwestern Tennessee to help gather 28,000 signatures petitioning for Coe's death sentence. He says people haven't forgotten Cary Ann or her killer. "There's a hatred that exists for what this man did," Ward told *USA Today*. "As a Christian, I can't say I wish Robert Coe a front seat in hell. But I have heard it said."

network due to complaints from homosexual-rights activists.

After accepting a paid "Truth in Love" commercial, Time Warner Communications and Central Florida News 13 jointly decided not to run it because the corporation and affiliate station were "concerned that the advertisement could be perceived by our viewers as subjecting the gay and lesbian community to discrimination.

Exodus International is a ministry for people who want to overcome homosexuality. "We don't slam anyone," says Bob Davies, director. "We only offer an alternative."

The commercials include a personal testimony, then the Exodus contact number with the tagline: "It's not about hate. It's about hope."

The Human Rights Campaign began protesting the TV commercial after it first aired on a Washington television station in May. The HRC has created its own TV campaign promoting acceptance of homosexuals. It has aired in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Obviously the same organizations that preach tolerance aren't tolerant of other viewpoints. —*CT*

CHRISTIANS AS CULTISTS


Christians in the US do not understand the level of intolerance against Christians in Western Europe, according to Louis DeMeo, missionary with Evangelical Grace Church and founder of Baptist Theological Institute in Nîmes, France.

DeMeo testified before the US Congress and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe about the poor treatment his church and seminary have faced since being added to a list of dangerous sects maintained by the French government. Only half of one percent of France is evangelical, and the French government defines evangelicals as "representing extreme factions of the traditional reformed church." That is why they are placed on the same list as apocalyptic and satanic groups.

The French Parliament began to track "cults and sects" after 23 members on the Order of the Solar Temple committed suicide in Switzerland in 1994. The results were made public in published reports.

Since June, the cars of four seminary students and staff were fire-bombed; church members have been denied bank accounts and asked to leave their jobs because of their connections. —*CT*

OPENING VIRTUAL DOORS

This year Saudi Arabia opened its virtual doors to the Internet. The electronic revolution has also come to Iran. So-called "Internet cafes" are drawing crowds in Riyadh and Tehran. Authorities, however, are monitoring users and blocking sites. At an Internet establishment in Jiddah, one listener to the MTV site told *The New York Times*, "Sometimes I get angry that we had to wait so long. But now the Internet is all that my friends and I talk about. There are so many things in this world!" —*Pulse* 

devil. It is “harmful to piety and good morals.” Such thinking harbors four fatal flaws:

1. ***It elevates human discernment to the level of divine omniscience.*** Of the Lord we read, “...*Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man*” (Jn. 2:24-25). Peter, assuming such knowledge, declared, “*And we [including Judas] believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*” But Jesus answered, “*Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” (Jn. 6:69-70).

It is “*the Lord*” who “*knows them that are His*” (2 Tim. 2:19). But just as certainly as the Lord knows, the Christian shows, for the verse concludes, “*And let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*”

However, the evidence is sometimes misleading. In the story Jesus told of the four kinds of soil, three of them appeared to give acceptance to the seed. Later it was seen that one piece of ground actually preferred weeds to the good seed, and only later did the superficial acceptance of the shallow ground become obvious. Only one type of ground represents those who are truly saved.

2. ***It misses the true motivation for holiness in the life***—love to Christ cultivated by the Spirit through the Word. No amount of guilt or slavish fear can produce godliness. That experiment was tried with Israel and proved legalism to be useless in producing holiness.

At this point Calvinists and Arminians sound strangely similar. Does it not remind us of the devil’s logic regarding Job, to say that people would never desire a relationship with God unless forced into it? The devil thought Job was being paid off for his relationship with God. The Calvinist thinks a person must be “sweetly forced” into salvation or he would never come willingly. The Arminian believes a sinner may come willingly to Christ, but must be held in that relationship through fear of losing this not-necessarily-eternal life. To see how similar the positions are, listen first to an Arminian, respected Lutheran commentator, R. H. Lenski:

Referring to 1 Cor. 9:24-27: What a calamity when a professing Christian finds himself “rejected” in the end! How much worse when one of the Lord’s own heralds has this experience!...The fact that he is an apostle is not yet proof to him that he will be saved (*1 & 2 Corinthians*, p. 388).

But prizes and crowns, rewards for faithful service, should not be confused with the gift of salvation. Yet Calvin sounds amazingly similar in his observations:

In short, [Paul] says that what they had attained so far is nothing, unless they keep steadily on; because it is not enough that they once started off on the way of the Lord, if they do not make an effort to reach the goal.


So it is that while many churches espouse Calvinistic soterology officially—Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Presbyterian—many in the pews have concluded that the perseverance of the saints means just what it says—that you must persevere if you are to be saved. And no wonder when Calvin comments thus on 1 Timothy 4:16:

The zeal of pastors will be greatly increased when they are told that both their own salvation and that of their people depends upon their serious and earnest devotion to their office (*Commentaries*, Vol. 3, p. 82).

How refreshing to turn from the surmisings of men to the clear declaration of Scripture: “*Therefore [justification] is of faith, that it might be by grace*” (Rom. 4:16). His grace in every way is undeserved, and our faith in Him, once placed in Christ, is maintained by His High Priestly ministry: “*I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*” (Lk. 22:32). “*Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded (disappointed, put to shame)*” (1 Pet. 2:6).

3. ***It makes a false distinction between sins*** that can cost you your salvation and others which you can commit without jeopardizing your security, strangely like the Catholic system of venial and mortal sins, which puts some sins beyond the ability of Christ to cleanse. But He “*gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity*” (Titus 2:14). “*There is...no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 8:1).

4. ***It denigrates the cross work of the Lord Jesus.*** Are not “all present and future sins...now forgiven” to every true believer? “*And you...hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses*” (Col. 2:13). See the resemblance between the Calvinist and Arminian again. The middle point of the Tulip declares that Christ died only for the elect, *not for all men*. The Arminian believes His death is sufficient for all men, but *not for all sins*. In both cases, they believe in a limited work of Christ on the cross. If this is so, the promises of God cannot mean what they say. Leaving mere logic aside, hear the certain statements of the Lord: “...***whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life...He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life***” (Jn. 3:16; 5:24).

Thus in the multitude of those who profess to believe the gospel of God’s grace, precious few have both assurance and eternal security. I am so happy to be one who does, and it stirs my heart to love Him all the more. I am neither a Calvinist nor an Arminian. I am content to rest on the sure word and work of my blessed Saviour. 

Nicodemus: a case study

He came to Jesus as the Master Teacher, but first what Nicodemus needed was a Saviour.

C. H. MACKINTOSH

Being by birth a Jew and as such being entitled to all the privileges of a son of Abraham, it must have perplexed Nicodemus to be told that he must be born again to see the kingdom of God. This was a total setting aside of all his privileges and distinctions. A Pharisee, a ruler, a master, was not one whit nearer to this heavenly kingdom than the most disreputable.

If he could carry all his advantages and distinctions with him, to have them placed to his credit in this new kingdom, it would be something. This would secure for him a position far above that of a harlot or a publican. But to be told that he must be born again left him nothing to glory in. This was deeply humbling to a learned, religious, influential man.

But it was puzzling as well as humbling. *"Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* Surely not. There would be no more gained by a second natural birth than by a first. If a natural man could enter ten thousand times into his mother's womb and be born, he would still be nothing but a natural man; for *"that which is born of the flesh is flesh."* Do what you will with flesh, you cannot alter or improve it.

Nothing can change flesh into spirit. You may exalt it to the rank of a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, a master of Israel, but it will be flesh nonetheless.

Flesh, in itself, is withered grass; and its most pious endeavors—works of righteousness—have been pronounced by the inspired Word to be *"as filthy rags"* (Isa. 64:6).

Let us see how our blessed Lord replies to the "How?" of Nicodemus. Jesus answered, *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit"* (Jn. 3:5-8).

Here we are distinctly taught that regeneration is produced by *"water and the Spirit."* A man must be born

of water and of the Spirit before he can see the kingdom of God or enter into its profound and heavenly mysteries. The keenest mortal vision cannot "see" the kingdom of God, nor the most gigantic intellect "enter" into its deep secrets. *"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor. 2:14).

BORN OF WATER

Many are at a loss to know what is meant by being *"born of water."* Certainly, the expression has been made the ground of much controversy. It is only by comparing scripture with scripture that we can ascertain the real sense of any particular passage. It is a special mercy for the uneducated Christian that he need not travel outside the covers of that volume to interpret any passage.

What, then, is the meaning of being born of water? In the opening of John's Gospel, we read, *"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (1:11-13).

From this passage we learn that everyone who believes on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is born again—born of God. This is the plain sense of the passage. All who, by the power of God the Holy Spirit, believe on God the Son, are born of God the Father. The source of the testimony is divine; the object of the testimony is divine; the power of receiving the testimony is divine; the



entire work of regeneration is divine. Instead of inquiring, How can I be born again? I have simply to cast myself, by faith, on Jesus. Thus, I am born again. All who put their trust in Christ have this new life.

Again, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”* (Jn. 5:24). *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life”* (Jn. 6:47). *“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name”* (Jn. 20:31).

All these passages go to prove that the only way we can get this new and everlasting life is by simply receiving the record concerning Christ. All who believe that record have this eternal life. Notice, it is not those who merely *say* they believe, but those who actually *do* believe. There is life-giving power in the Christ whom the Word reveals, and in the Word which reveals Him. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.”*

Lest ignorance should marvel, or skepticism sneer, at the idea of dead souls hearing, it is added, *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment”* (Jn. 5:25, 28, 29). The Lord Christ can make dead souls, as well as dead bodies, hear His quickening voice. It is by His mighty voice that life can be communicated to either body or soul.

If the infidel or the skeptic reasons and objects, it is simply because he makes his own vain mind the standard of what ought to be, and thus entirely shuts out God. This is the climax of folly.

BEGOTTEN BY THE WORD OF TRUTH

But what has all this to do with the meaning of the word “water” in John 3:5? It shows that the new birth is produced by the voice of Christ, which is really the Word of God. We read in the first chapter of James, *“...of His own will begat He us with the word of truth”* (1:18). So also in 1 Peter, *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever”* (1:23) In both passages, the Word is expressly set forth as the means by which the new birth is produced. James declares that we are begot-

ten *“by the word of truth”*; and Peter declares that we are *“born again by the word of God.”* If, then, our Lord speaks of being *“born of water,”* it is obvious that He represents the Word under the significant figure of “water”—a figure which a master of Israel might have understood, had he only studied Ezekiel 36:25-27.

There is a beautiful passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians in which the Word is presented under the figure of water. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”* (5:25-26). So also in the Epistle to Titus: *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life”* (3:5-7).

From all these quotations, we learn that the Word of God is the grand instrument which the Holy Ghost uses in calling dead souls to life. This is confirmed by our Lord’s conversation with Nicodemus. Instead of replying to the repeated inquiry, *“How can these things be?”* He sets this master of Israel down to learn the simple lesson taught by the brazen serpent. The bitten Israelite of old was to be healed by simply looking at the serpent of brass on the pole. The dead sinner now is to get life by simply looking at Jesus on the cross, and Jesus on the throne. The Israelite was not told to look at his wound, though it was the sense of his wound that made him look. The dead sinner is not told to look at his sins, though it is the sense of his sins that will make him look. One look at the bronze serpent healed the Israelite; one look at Jesus quickens the dead sinner. *“Look and live.”*

MAN’S REASON VS. GOD’S WORD

It was not the way he looked, but the object he looked at, that healed the Israelite. So it is not the way he looks, but the Object he looks at, that saves the sinner. *“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”*

Such was the precious lesson which Nicodemus was led to learn—such the reply to his “How.” If a man begins to reason about the new birth, he will be confounded; but if he believes in Jesus, he is born again. Man’s reason can never understand the new birth; but the Word of God produces it. Many are astray on this. They are occupied with the process of regeneration, instead of the Word which regenerates. They are looking at self, instead of at Christ.

JESUS SETS
THE MASTER
OF ISRAEL
DOWN TO
LEARN THE
LESSON OF
THE BRAZEN
SERPENT.

As there is connection between the object at which we look and the effect of looking at it, we can easily see what must be the effect of looking in on one's self. What would an Israelite have gained by looking at his wound? Nothing. What did he gain by looking at the serpent? Health. What does a sinner gain by looking at himself? Nothing. What does he gain by looking at Jesus? Everlasting life.

THE RESULTS OF REGENERATION

Who can estimate aright the glorious results of being a child of God? Who can unfold those affections which belong to that high and hallowed relationship in which the soul is placed by being born again? Who can fully explain that precious fellowship which the child of God is privileged to enjoy with his heavenly Father? *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure"* (1 Jn. 3:1-3). *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..."* (Rom. 8:14-17 RV).

It is most important to understand the distinction between life and peace. Life is the result of being linked with Christ's person; peace is the result of His work. *"He that hath the Son hath life"* (1 Jn. 5:12). But *"being justified by faith, we have peace"* (Rom. 5:1). *"Having made peace through the blood of His cross"* (Col. 1:20). The very moment a man receives into his heart the simple truth of the gospel, he becomes a child of God. The truth which he receives is the *"incorruptible seed"* of *"the divine nature"* (1 Pet. 1:23, 2 Pet. 1:4).


Many are not aware of all that is involved in simply receiving the truth of the gospel. As in nature, the child of a nobleman may not know the varied results of the relationship, so is it in grace. I may be ignorant of both the relationship and its results; but I am in it, notwithstanding. And being in it, I have the affections which belong to it, and I ought to cultivate them and allow them to entwine themselves artlessly around their proper Object—the One who has begotten me by the Word of truth (Jas. 1:18). It is my privilege to enjoy the full flow of paternal affection emanating from the bosom of God,

and to reciprocate that affection, through the power of the indwelling Spirit. *"Now are we the sons of God."* He has made us such. He has attached this rare and marvelous privilege to the simple belief of the truth (Jn. 1:12).

We do not reach this position *"by works of righteousness which we have done,"* or could we; but simply *"according to His mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. That, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life"* (Titus 3:5-7). We are *"called sons,"* and *"made heirs"* and all this simply by the belief of the truth of the gospel.

Take the case of the vilest sinner who receives into his heart the pure gospel of God. Let him heartily believe *"that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures."* He then and there becomes a child of God, a thoroughly saved, perfectly justified, and divinely accepted person. In receiving into his heart the simple record concerning Christ, he has received new life. Christ is the truth and the life. When we receive the truth, we receive Christ; and when we receive Christ, we receive life. *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life"* (Jn. 3:36). When does he get this life? The moment he believes: *"believing, ye might have life through His name"* (Jn. 20:31). The truth concerning Christ is the seed of eternal life; when that truth is believed, life is communicated.

Observe, this is what the Word of God declares. It is a matter of divine testimony, not merely a human feeling. We do not get life by feeling something in ourselves, but by believing something about Christ; and that something we have on the authority of God's eternal Word. Many are looking *in* for evidences of the new life, instead of looking *out* at the Object who imparts the life. It is quite true that *"he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself"* (1 Jn. 5:10), but remember, it is *"the witness"* of a life which is received by *"believing on the Son of God,"* not by looking in upon one's self. The more undividedly I am occupied with Christ, the more distinct and satisfactory will be the witness in myself. If I make the witness my object, I shall be plunged in doubt and uncertainty; but if I make Christ my object, I have the witness in all its divine integrity and power.

There is special need of clearness on this point, because of the strong tendency of our hearts to make something within the ground of our peace and contentment, instead of building exclusively on Christ. As soon as we take the eye off Him, we become unhinged and unhappy; but the more simply we cling to Christ, the more peaceful and happy we shall be. 

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

Giving and receiving correction are needed in a healthy assembly.

A wise son heareth his father's instruction"; "A fool despiseth his father's instruction" (Prov. 13:1; 15:5). Many assembly problems would never become serious if we could wisely give and receive correction. Here is God's advice:

ON THE MATTER OF GIVING CORRECTION

1. *Include praise.* The Lord gives us this example in His assessment of the seven churches (Rev. 2-3). He identified what was good about them before exposing what was bad.

2. *Verify the facts.* Paul cites the Lord's words of Deuteronomy 19:15 in 1 Timothy 5:19 in regard to establishing an accusation against an elder. Mere gossip and rumor should never be the basis on which we venture to correct another. Get the facts before you act.

3. *Begin privately.* With private offences we are taught to "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone" (Mt. 18:15). This was the example of the Lord regarding Peter (1 Cor. 15:5). And in his case the wrong was well known, but the Lord would not embarrass His disciple.

4. *Let people know you care.* Correction is not just about righteousness. It is about grace as well. It is a child of God that we are dealing with. Remember the Lord's parable of Matthew 18: "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant?" (v. 33). Paul reminds us to speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

5. *Consider yourself.* There is nothing quite like self-examination to temper our rebuke of others (Gal. 6:1). None of us is above error or failure.

6. *Know when to act*—with "a word fitly spoken," says the proverb. There is a time to hold our peace and there is a time to act. To refrain from acting at the right time is as bad as acting rightly but at the wrong time. The counsel of elders would be useful in the matter of timing. Prayer is a vital resource in all areas of giving correction.

7. *Watch who and how you correct.* Paul warned Timothy about rebuking an elder (1 Tim. 5:1). Not all old men are wise. But some are. Not all young men are foolish. But some are. When you see the need to correct a

more experienced believer, approach the situation with care. Be careful that your correction is not an expression of inexperience. Paul was also careful to advise Timothy not to let any man despise his youth. He encouraged young Timothy to be faithful in the Scriptures, for that is our final authority, not human experience. Nevertheless, be especially cautious when dealing with a senior saint.

ON RECEIVING CORRECTION

1. *Consider who is doing the correcting.* The writer says, "Remember them which have the rule over you...whose faith follow..." (Heb. 13:7). The writer adds, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account..." (13:17). I might resist an elder's correction, but I cannot dismiss his motive. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6).

2. *Is God speaking?* I need to pay special attention when a group of spiritual men point out something in my life. It is highly unlikely that an entire body of elders would be wrong about

their correction or counsel. When the shepherds speak, it could be the Lord Himself.

3. *My reaction should be Christlike.* Don't get into an argument with your brother or sister. Conversations that end with words of strife are not of God (see 1 Tim. 3:3-6). The sad stories of Christians losing their tempers, speaking unkind words, childishy stomping off and leaving the assembly because they were spoken to about something is unacceptable. Always react with grace and submission. We are to be "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21).

4. *Commit disagreeable counsel to God.* The purpose of correction is to bring my life in line with the will of God. Therefore I have the privilege of bringing this all to the Lord. When I determine I want His will, then I can freely speak to Him about the difficult parts. I do not need to make excuses. Prayer has way of putting things in perspective and helps me sort out good counsel from bad. Make correction a matter of prayer.

Correction. Be kind. Be faithful. Be careful. 



by BRIAN GUNNING

Am I teachable?

I have stopped making progress in my Christian life when I have stopped learning.

MARK KOLCHIN

The words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy are telling: “*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*” (1 Tim. 4:12). Apparently, Paul had reason to believe that there might be some who, because of their advanced years, would be reluctant to be taught by someone younger in the faith. Anticipating this, he admonishes his son in the faith to be an example to believers in more than just words; to evidence qualities befitting a servant of the Lord.

Thinking that we are beyond the

point of teachability—for whatever reason—is a trap that can easily snare any of us. Perhaps it is because we have been Christians for many years that we bristle at the thought of being corrected by someone else. Or maybe because we associate with a particular group of churches, we feel we are beyond instruction in a certain issue. Or it may be a matter of simply refusing to admit that we are wrong, a lack of biblical understanding, or an abundance of spiritual pride. For whatever reason, the excuses for not having an openness of heart and an attitude that is “*easy to be intreated*” (Jas. 3:17) are difficult to justify in the light of Scripture—even though we may not be conscious of harboring these debilitating attitudes.

The Bible is replete with examples of those who thought they were beyond receiving instruction. The Pharisees scolded the man born blind who, after receiving his sight extolled the One who had opened his eyes. His clarion testimony only served to infuriate the proud Pharisees. Incensed, they chided “*Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?*” (Jn. 9:34). They could not bear to think of someone less instructed than they were, to be in the position of teaching them.

Likewise, the nation of Israel as a whole demonstrated an attitude of unteachability. Three times they are accused of being “*dull of hearing*” with hearts and eyes closed to the Word of God. Isaiah was the first to utter these words during his ministry (Isa. 6). They were reiterated by the Lord Jesus to the nation during the time of His earthly sojourn (Mt. 13) and cited again by the Holy Spirit at the close of Paul’s ministry as the root sin of Israel in his day (Acts 28).

Additionally, the Athenians in Acts 17 also evidenced an attitude of unteachability. After hearing a convincing argument for the gospel by the Apostle Paul, their response indicated the condition of their hearts: “*some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter*” (v. 32). So much for telling or hearing some new thing! Fortunately, some did believe, reminding us that God’s Word will not return void.

But the epitome of the unteachable attitude is vividly pictured by the scene in Acts 7 at the defense of Stephen, just prior to his martyrdom. After a convicting message that struck at their consciences, we read they “*cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears...*” (v. 57). Like petulant children, they refused to hear the very truth from heaven.

WHEN
WE ARE
TEACHABLE,
WE ENLARGE
OUR
CAPACITY
FOR
UNDERSTANDING
AND OUR
APPRECIATION
FOR THE THINGS
OF CHRIST.



We are tempted to dismiss these examples of unteachable attitudes by unsaved men and women as inapplicable to the Christian. Yet at its core is the same attitude with which the believer must also continually do battle. As long as the “old man” is allowed to get some air, he will make every effort to revive and stir up trouble. Thus the exhortation to “put off” this corrupt expression of our former self (Eph. 4:22).

The Corinthians forgot this truth when being corrected by Paul for their blatant carnality. They had become puffed up in their knowledge to the point that they resisted instruction from the very one who was directly responsible for their faith in Christ. Amazing!


The Galatians also demonstrated that they had become calloused by allowing the leaven of false doctrine to permeate their ranks. They questioned Paul’s integrity and sincerity, causing him to exclaim: “O foolish Galatians! Who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Gal. 3:1). Yes, we can also allow an unteachable attitude to insidiously creep into the life. Sin and pride are the twin culprits in these cases—they were then, and they are now.

But not all the examples in the Bible are so dismal. Apollos, a man cited as being eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord and fervent in spirit, still had the humility of mind to be taught the way of God more perfectly by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 16). His is a heart-warming example of the type of attitude that should characterize us all.

The two on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24 also evinced a teachable spirit. Having been joined by the Lord, “their eyes were holden so that they did not know Him.” Incredulously they asked this “stranger” how it

was that He did not know the things which had happened in Jerusalem in recent days (v. 18), as if their knowledge was greater than His. Patiently, after a gentle rebuke, the Lord Jesus—beginning at Moses and continuing through all the prophets—“expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself” (v. 27). Not long afterwards, their eyes were opened, and they admitted that their hearts had burned within them while He taught them along the way. They were ready to listen to what the Lord had to say to them, even though they thought they were “on top” of things. How we need an attitude like this!

And look at Peter. He had to be taught again by Paul that the middle wall of partition had been removed between Jewish and Gentile believers. Paul declared that he had to withstand him to the face (Gal. 2:11) in the presence of fellow believers because of Peter’s weakness in the face of pressure. Had Peter forgotten the vision of the white sheet (Acts 10)? Yet the true greatness of Peter’s character and teachable attitude shines through when we hear him refer sometime later in his second epistle to “our brother beloved Paul” (2 Pet. 3:15).

These examples from God’s Word serve to remind us of the great men and women used by the Lord whose lives evidenced a teachable spirit. When we make a deliberate commitment in this direction, we will enlarge our capacity for understanding and our appreciation for the things of Christ. As Psalm 25:9 reminds us, “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.” May the Lord help each one of us to effect this quality in our lives so that we can “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). 

Teach Me

by F. H.
ALLEN



Morning by morning waken me, my Father,
Let Thy voice be the first my soul to greet,
Bidding my spirit rise from earthly slumber,
And sit a learner at Thy sacred feet.

There, in the stillness, open Thy good treasure,
The precious things of Christ unfolding still,
And, as Thy Spirit brings them to remembrance,
Let gratitude and love my spirit fill.

Teach me to do Thy will, Thy pattern show me;
Reveal Thy purpose for my life each day.
Then for Thy service with fresh oil anoint me,
And with Thy presence hallow all my way.

In praise of learning

The assembly should be marked by intelligence, but intellectualism can be a man's downfall.

DONALD L. NORBIE

Some evangelical believers regard formal learning with suspicion and doubt. Part of this may be a fear of the unknown. To the person with no education after high school, university training may seem quite foreboding. To many, a man with a PhD may be very intimidating. Consequently, some delight in demeaning education—especially theological education with its study of Hebrew and Greek.

The exhortation of Paul to Timothy shortly before his death was: *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15, NKJV). The force of it is *to cut straight*, to get the intended meaning from the Word of God. Another translation is, *“who correctly handles the word of truth”* (NIV). The teaching of God’s Word requires diligent study on the part of the teacher if he is to discharge his responsibility faithfully. It is a study which he should pursue all of his life.

Formal education is certainly not required to be a faithful servant of the Lord. Apparently none of the twelve apostles had much formal education. Many people read widely and are self-educated. However, some may desire college work or other education to prepare for a vocation and also to broaden and to discipline the mind. There are subjects one is required to study which he might not study on his own. And then there is always the

stimulation of interaction with a good teacher. While talking with Jim Elliot when he was in college, Jim commented to me that he believed his experience there would sharpen his mind and could be useful to the Lord. Jim went on to glorify God in missionary work and by giving his life for the Lord in Ecuador.

Some who feel called by God to teach His Word may wish to acquire a working knowledge of Hebrew and Greek and of related biblical subjects. One who does not know the original languages may find it difficult at times to evaluate commentaries and their discussion of a passage. Some knowledge of church history, theology and background subjects may be useful. This knowledge may be acquired through the study of correspondence courses, at a Christian college, university or seminary.

Paul had a good education at the feet of Gamaliel, the outstanding rabbi of his day. Luke was educated as a physician and handled the Greek language beautifully. Both of these men were used by the Holy Spirit to give us much of the New Testament. Apollos was a learned teacher of the Word from Alexandria, who strengthened the churches. The church would be the poorer without their contributions.

Many of the early brethren in England during the 1800’s were well educated. One thinks of George Mueller, J. N. Darby, William Kelly, Samuel Tregelles, George Wigram and others. These were men who knew the original languages of the Scripture and were diligent students. In more recent years there have been men such as W. E. Vine and F. F. Bruce who have used their education for God and remained in fellowship with a New Testament assembly.

Having said this, it must be recognized that there are dangers in the field of education. The educated person may be prone to pride: *“knowledge puffs up.”* It is very easy to look in a condescending manner upon the person who lacks formal training. This spirit God hates. Degrees and pride are to be left outside the door



of the assembly. Here we are all brethren, enjoying the common grace of God (Mt. 23:6-11).

It is possible to become too intellectual in one's study and teaching of the Bible. Biblical study can become an academic exercise, a mind game, quite devoid of spiritual life and power. There are scores of seminaries and professors who deny the inspiration of Scripture. Yet they study the Bible rigorously. Beware of subjecting your mind to the intellectual pressure of such. We need to cultivate the spirit of awe and reverence as we open the pages of Sacred Writ. *"But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word"* (Isa. 66:2, NKJV).

Some become enamored with higher critical theories concerning the writing of Scriptures and lose confidence in its inspiration. Spiritual life cannot flourish without reverence for the Word of the living God. If the Bible is not the inspired message of God, man is left without a revelation, without guidance as to how to know God and to please Him. Avoid like the plague this tendency to destroy confidence in Scripture.

Another danger is indoctrination into one scheme of theology. For the one who studies theology in a seminary, it is very difficult not to develop a mindset for life concerning Scripture. If he goes to a Reformed seminary, he will find it difficult not to adopt covenant theology and amillennialism with its rejection of a literal millennium. It is better to acquire one's theology gradually from the Bible than to have a certain systematic theology form a plastic, young mind into a rigid mold.


Another danger for those from simple assemblies is to become infatuated with becoming a "pastor." In most schools, the teaching staff believe in a clergy system with a hired pastor. It is hard to resist this influence. There is the prestige of being a "Reverend" and of having a salary

and position of authority. Most assemblies are smaller; there is the allure of speaking to hundreds or even thousands in large churches. Would it not be a waste of one's education and knowledge to spend time with these small assemblies? And financially there is not much security.

Years ago, a well-known teacher among assemblies was asked to become the pastor of a large church. He struggled with the decision and with his conscience over the issue, but finally decided to take the position. His rationale was that he could speak to so many who needed teaching. When Alfred Mace, a gifted servant of the Lord, was asked about the decision, he commented, "I don't believe any man's gift is too big for God's principles."

God desires to use men and women with their gifts in different ways. Certainly formal education is not a requirement. However, if some desire more advanced education for a vocation or to further their study of God's Word, let us recognize that God can use this for His honor and glory.

All of life for the believer is sacred. A vocation is not simply to earn money to put bread on the table. It can be a ministry for God and bring glory to Him. Bach would write at the head of his composition, "Help me, Jesus." At the end he would conclude, "To the glory of God." And we thank God for his magnificent music.

One thinks of Handel writing the Messiah, whose music and words have moved millions. A servant, bringing his meal to him, saw tears streaming down his face and heard him say, "I did think I did see all heaven before me and the great God Himself." Were these not serving God, using the unique gifts He had given them? May each of us as believers desire to do this as well: *"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men"* (Col. 3:23, NKJV). 

In Hebrews 5, the writer gives a solemn warning of the dangers of not going on, of the tragedy of spiritual undevelopment and the desirability of going on to maturity. Spiritual growth will always lead to the capacity to discern between good and evil (5:14). It has been said that maturity is made up of three things: knowledge, experience, and conduct, or the apprehension of the way by the mind, the desiring of the truth by the heart, and the embracing of the life by the will.

-Robert McClurkin

JOHN FOXE

This Foxe chased the hounds of church and state right to their judgment.

John Foxe (1516-1587), born in Lincolnshire, England, was an English church historian whose massive and unanswerable work, *The Acts and Monuments*, nerved all of England against the Church of Rome.

John entered his training at Brazenose College, Oxford when just sixteen—in the same year that Henry VIII's Church of England made its breach with Rome. King Henry was a shrewd politician who had the remarkable ability of speaking out of both sides of his mouth at the same time. In our day this usually requires extensive cosmetic surgery, but Henry had learned to do it naturally, as he compromised between the old medieval church and the new rising Lutheranism. Though England had made a break with Rome, Romish doctrine held sway.

In that tenuous climate, Foxe graduated in 1538, and became an instructor at Magdalen College, Oxford in 1543. He had a talent for poetry and wrote several Latin comedies based on biblical themes, so we know he was being exposed to the Word of God. He was converted when about 26 years of age while studying the controversy between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

In 1545, due to his new-found beliefs, he was accused of heresy. He had rejected the idea of the physical presence of the body and blood of Christ in the elements of the Lord's Supper. Heresy was a serious crime. Heretics were outcasts, often ostracized by family, banned by law from owning property and/or receiving patrimony. When he did not back down, but rather defended his Protestant opinions, he was fired from his job. The previous

year three men had been burned at the stake for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. So when Foxe was dismissed from his teaching position, he was informed that he was getting off easy.



JOHN FOXE, chronicler of the trail of martyrs' blood

by JOHN A. BJORLIE

But Foxe knew whereof he spoke. By his thirtieth year, he was intensely investigating the errors of the papists and the truth of the gospel. He mastered ecclesiastical history, becoming conversant in all the Greek and Latin Fathers, the Church creeds and councils, and the writings and controversies of the schoolmen. He was acquainted with Jewish and rabbinical writings, and mastered both the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament.

His often protracted studies kept him up into the night hours, especially his studies of the Bible in the original languages. Throughout his life, he ensconced himself in his study. Did he do the right thing? The abiding monuments left by such men are their own vindication.

For the next several years, Foxe supported himself by tutoring, first in the family of Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote. While there he married the daughter of a gentleman from Coventry who had been a guest in the house. God blessed that union with children who adored and admired their father. Yet they were not easy days. John's father-in-law cut them off from any financial support on his part because of the heresy charge.

In 1547, Foxe tutored the children of the Earl of Surrey. Between 1547-1553, he tutored the grandchildren of the Duke of Norfolk at Reigate. There Thomas Cranmer assisted Foxe in researching a book. It was a massive project that Foxe would entitle *The Acts and Monuments of the Church*, otherwise known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

Foxe was a personal friend of Hugh Latimer and William Tyndale. In 1550, he was ordained a deacon in the Church of England by Nicholas Ridley.

After the accession of Bloody Mary to the throne, more than 2000 clergymen were turned out of their pulpits. Of these about 800 Reformers sailed to foreign parts, including notables like John Jewel, John Knox, and William Whittingham. Many foreigners such as Peter Martyr and John á Lasco also fled.

Foxe survived the reign of Mary Tudor by fleeing to a Reformation-friendly northern Europe. In the year 1554, several friends disappeared, and the prison system was experiencing a sudden influx. The young Duke of Norfolk secured passage for Foxe's family, and arranged for them to stay with one of his tenant farmers near Ipswich while they waited for the ship to sail. The Foxes hid in the barn. The day they embarked, a messenger from the Bishop of Winchester broke into the farmer's house with a warrant for his arrest. So the difference between John Foxe becoming the author of a book of martyrs and being the subject in a book of martyrs was only a matter of minutes.

Safe in Nieuport, they moved on to Antwerp, then to

Strasbourg, where, in 1554, he published the first part of his labors, a 1000-page volume in Latin narrating the persecutions of the saints in the two centuries preceding the Reformation, notably those of the Wycliffites and the Hussites. This original edition of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was the result of eleven years of research. He had written every word with his own hand.

He moved on to Frankfurt where Peter Martyr and John Knox also resided. There he engaged in disputes between the English who followed Knox's Puritanism by rejecting the English Prayer Book, and those who followed the Episcopalians in embracing it. That experience showed that being thrown into the same foxhole in the crisis didn't mean that they all agreed. These were strong-minded men who had paid a heavy price for their beliefs.

In 1555, Foxe moved to Basil. There he revised, expanded, and improved several later editions of his book. In 1559, the first enlarged edition was published from Basel in Latin and from Geneva in French. This 1559 edition was in three volumes, the second volume covering Luther to Henry VIII and the third volume recounted the years and persecutions under Bloody Mary.

And between 1555 and 1558, Mary had Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley and—it is generally accepted today—about 300 Protestant leaders burned at the stake. According to Foxe's careful computing, 285 died.

J. Strype in his *Ecclesiastical Memorials* says that 288 perished by the flames or the broadax, not to mention those who perished in prisons from starvation and exposure. Another historian, A. G. Dickens, discovered still other cases that neither Foxe nor Strype figured in.

Not everyone enjoyed the conclusions that Foxe came to, but no one seriously accused him of inflating the known data. Indeed, the conclusions that Foxe arrived at have been hotly disputed between Catholics and Protestants, but the factual basis of Foxe's reporting stands unanswered. And whatever incidental mistakes have been discovered have not discredited Foxe's scholarship. This established the Protestant church on the moral high ground, and convinced generations since that the compromised and compromising established institutional church is not to be trusted.

After Mary died, her Protestant sister, Elizabeth, came to the throne, and Foxe cautiously returned to England. His former pupil, Cecil, now Duke of Norfolk, gave him a pension for his support, and in 1563 Foxe was appointed prebendary, or occasional preacher in Shipton at the Cathedral of Salisbury by the efforts of his friend, Bishop Parkhurst. For the first time since he was expelled for heresy, he was not living in extreme poverty. Also in 1563, an expanded English edition of 1700 page (besides indexes, prefaces, etc.) was published at London.

A Timeline of John Foxe's Career

- 1509 Henry VIII ascends to the English throne
- 1517 Foxe born in Boston, in Lancashire, England, the same year Luther published his 95 theses
- 1525 Tyndale's translation
- 1527 Henry VIII resolves on his divorce
- 1530 Henry VIII establishes Greek and Hebrew professorships at Oxford
- 1533 Foxe enters Oxford at age 16; the king of England is declared head of English church
- 1535 Coverdale's Bible, Calvin's *Institutes*
- 1536 Royal injunction that clergy provide a Bible in every English church
- 1538 Foxe earns Bachelor's degree
- 1539 Cranmer's Bible, Taverner's Bible
- 1543 Foxe is converted. Tyndale's translation banned. Other versions allowed with no annotations or preambles. Bible banned from working class; one cannot read Bible in church without a license
- 1544 Pearson, Testwood, and Filmer are burned at Windsor for denying transubstantiation
- 1545 Foxe expelled from Magdalen for heresy and cut off financially by his father-in-law
- 1543-47 Somewhere in this time period, Foxe is tutor in the family of Sir Thomas Lucy. Foxe marries the daughter of a gentleman from Coventry
- 1547 Edward VI ascends the throne
- 1547-53 While tutoring to the grandchildren of the Duke of Norfolk, Foxe begins his *Acts and Monuments*
- 1550 Ordained by Bishop Ridley
- 1553 Bloody Mary ascends the throne & prisons fill
- 1554 The Foxe family arrives safely in Nieuport
- 1555 Rogers and Hooper martyred in Feb., Bradford in July, and Latimer and Cranmer on Oct. 16
- 1556 Archbishop Cranmer martyred on Mar. 21
- 1558 Elizabeth I takes the throne
- 1559 First enlarged edition published in Basil in Latin and in Geneva in French.
- 1559 Foxe returns to England
- 1563 New and enlarged edition, and first edition in English. Contains more than seventeen hundred pages, excluding indexes, prefaces, etc.
- 1563 Receives canonry and prebend of Shipton in the cathedral in Salisbury
- 1587 Foxe falls asleep in Jesus

—PREPARED BY LEE BRAINARD

Each of the many new editions Foxe prepared was improved and enlarged. Most current editions of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* are condensations of condensations. These modern versions only encompass about 1/4 of the original text, and this in a very abridged form. They focus on the martyrs' sufferings but largely omit the evangelical truths for which these martyrs perished. According to Foxe, the spirit of the martyrs has always been the sufficiency and authority of the Bible and the right of private judgment.

There is a full set available. It is a recent reprint of the 1843 edition published in London in eight volumes. The first volume includes a 230-page biography of Foxe, plus appendices, by George Townsend. The text of the martyrology runs some 5800 pages, with over 600 pages of appendices, a 120-page general index, an 11-page index of martyrs, and a 9-page glossarial index. It is available at a discounted price to *Uplook* readers from Still Waters Revival Books, 4710-37A Ave, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6L 3T5. Phone: (780) 450-3730.

Though an Episcopalian, John Foxe steadfastly refused higher preferments because he objected to various ceremonies and vestments. When urged by Archbishop Parker to subscribe, he said, "To this will I subscribe" and pulled a Greek New Testament out of his pocket.

He is renowned for his diligence, perseverance, and servant's spirit. Few literary contributions have had such impact or have endeared themselves to believers as has *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. It came to North America with the earliest settlers alongside the Bible and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Foxe paid scrupulous attention to the facts, and labored to show the kinship of the Reformation and Protestant cause with the persecuted church of the catacombs and the martyrs of the Dark Ages. His book eloquently answered the sarcastic Papist query, "Where were you before Luther?"

In 1587, John Foxe fell asleep in Jesus. He was buried in the church cemetery of St. Giles, Cripplegate, London.

MATERIAL FOR THIS ARTICLE TAKEN FROM:

Neal's *History of the Puritans*, Harper and Bros., 1843
George Townsend, *The Life of John Foxe*, 1843.
Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, Oxford UK, 1992



Dislocated saints

It ought to be obvious that you can't grow with the church (Eph. 4:15-16) if you're not with the church.

WILLIAM H. GUSTAFSON

One of the most common sports-related injuries today is dislocated joints. Though I've never experienced such an injury, those who have tell me it is very painful and that it renders the affected limb useless until the dislocation can be corrected. The repair is usually rather quick, though not painless. It can be made tolerable by the appropriate use of pain-killers, following which is a brief healing process, and then the body begins to function normally again.

Even the Scriptures equate bones being out of joint with pain and uselessness. *"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like...a foot out of joint"* (Prov. 25:19). Jacob limped because his thigh was *"out of joint"* (or *"dislocated,"* Darby, Gen. 32:25); and we have described one aspect of the agony of crucifixion in the statement, *"all My bones are out of joint"* (Ps. 22:14).

Just as a shoulder or elbow can become dislocated, believers can absent themselves from the local body of the Lord's people. It often is over some inconsequential detail such as the setting of the thermostat, the failure of some brother or sister to properly greet the offended party, some personality clash with another believer, or the momentary attraction of some outside interest (sports being near the top of the list). May I suggest that this type of believer is a dislocated saint: of no value or use to the local church, sitting in misery, alone

spiritually, when the remedy could be applied rather quickly and the "dislocated member" returned to usefulness again.

God's Word uses terms such as: *"gathering together unto Him," "when ye come together," "unto Him shall the gathering of the people be," "gathered together in My name,"* etc., to describe the essence of the local church. There is no place in Scripture for a "Lone Ranger" Christian. We all need each other! We are assembled together, builded together, followers together, gathered together, helping together, joined together, knit together, laborers together, planted together. We strive together and are workers together. Do you get the picture? He has made us one in Christ; we are simply asked to keep that unity (Eph. 4:3). There is to be a oneness, a unity, a togetherness that should character-

ize God's people in a totally unique way. *"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love"* (Eph. 4:16).

The writer to the Hebrews admonished: *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another..."* (10:25). Remember Thomas was not with the little company of eleven cowering behind locked doors when Jesus appeared in their midst. As a result, Thomas missed seeing the Saviour and hearing His *"peace be unto you"*—the very things Thomas needed the most. *"Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty"* (1 Sam. 20:18).

If your spiritual life seems a bit disjointed, your usefulness can be restored very quickly and easily. The remedy for dislocated saints? *"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"* (Jude 21).



**Every cog must
be in its rightful
place for the
gears to
mesh**

A hard lesson to learn

*Sin is a fact; nothing could be more obvious.
But what does the Bible say of its extent and nature?*

JOHN LAIDLAW

Ihe Bible does not need to reveal the *fact* that man is a sinner. But it discloses just how grim is the prognosis. Observe the names of sins. In Numbers 15, a distinction is given between “*sins of ignorance*” and “*sins of presumption*.” The Psalmist prays (Ps. 19) that he may be “*cleansed*” from the first kind, and “*kept back*” from the last.

In Psalm 32, he looks at it from different sides. As *sin*, it is failure, a missing of man’s true end; as *transgression*, it is departure from, or offense against God’s law; as *iniquity*, it is wrong done to God and man. In 1 John 3:4, it is a departure from law—*lawlessness*. In other places of that epistle it is declared to be the opposite of light—*darkness*; the opposite of love—*hatred*; the opposite of God—it is *of the wicked one*.

Thus the Bible takes the strongest views of sin. And it has the right to do so because it tells us how sin may be overcome. It would be mere cruelty to enlarge to the sick man on his maladies if you had no cure. But when you do it to rouse his attention to the infallible remedy, and to the Great Physician, that is the kindest course.

The main lines of Bible teaching about the state of sin are these three: universal guilt, heart-corruption, and inherited sinfulness (original sin).

UNIVERSAL GUILT

Apart from the Bible, people know that everybody goes wrong. But the Bible teaches it with a thor-

oughness which the unassisted human conscience does not attain. Follow Paul’s demonstration in Romans 1 to the middle of chapter 3.

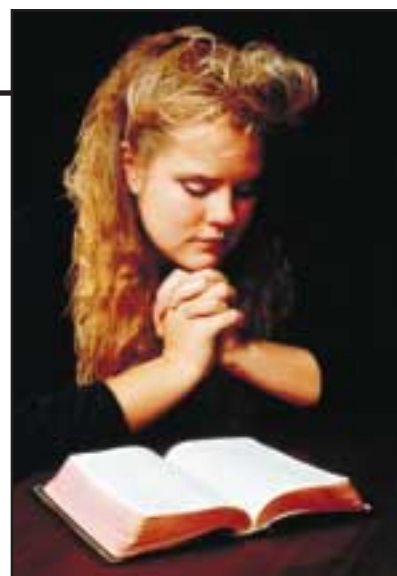
Notice the truth he is teaching there. All men, capable of conscious moral action on their own account, transgress God’s law. He works this out, step by step. The Jews who have the law do it one way; the Gentiles who don’t have the law do it another way. So he reaches his conclusion (3:9): “*they are all under sin*,” that all have actually sinned and in their own life and character “*and come short of the glory of God*.”

Why does he take such pains to prove this? That “*every mouth may be stopped*,” and that “*all the world may be guilty before God*,” that all may be convinced “*there is no difference*.”

The aim of this universal verdict is one of deepest kindness. It is to show that as there is “*no difference*,” no exception to the fact that in the sight of God every conscious human life is under guilt on account of its own sin. So also there is no difference of merit or worth before God respecting salvation. In every case, salvation is grounded in the righteousness of God in Christ, received by faith.

Thus we are taught how to use this truth rightly. To harp on this string, “*all men are sinners, so you are a sinner*,” may be of little use. The truth “*there is no difference*” can rouse the sinner *against* our message if we don’t understand that there *is* a difference in sins and sinners.

Jesus Himself said, “*He that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin*.” There is a five hundred pence



debtor and a fifty pence debtor. Let us make allowance for degrees of guilt and hardening. But, then come back to the point where there is “*no difference*,” in that all of us, without exception, “*have come short of the glory of God*.”

We have failed in our chief end. Only in this way will we reach the conscience about sin. For, after all, sin has no meaning to us until we see that it is denying God His due, putting something before or instead of Him. “*Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned*” (Ps. 51:4).

The right use of this verdict—the condemning sentence of God’s law against every human life—is to shut us up to Christ and His grace. It beats down that foolish hope which the unconvinced heart builds on its own fancied betterness, or not-so-badness, compared with other people. God’s holy standard disallows the plea. In this matter of acceptance with Him there are no exceptions. When the debtor has nothing to pay, a debt of fifty pence is as fatal as one of five hundred. But, then, God’s glorious grace has the same motto: “*no difference*”—a full and free salvation to everyone that believes.

HEART CORRUPTION

As the former was a statement of the breadth, this is of the depth to which the evil of sin has affected our



Ears to hear

It's bad enough when we ignore each other. But ignoring God? Is it possible?

MICHAEL FITZHUGH

The following story is true. Only the name has been changed—to protect the guilty!

Harold is an avid reader. Whether the Bible, a newspaper or book, you could always find him in his favorite chair in the living room reading. In the early years of their marriage, his wife would often make the mistake of talking to him while his eyes, like a laser-guided missile, were aimed at the printed page. She would inform him of things like the day's activities, or the children's needs, or a neighbor who had passed away. As he repeatedly responded with "Uh-huhs," "Ohs," and "Reallys?" she would wrongfully assume that he could listen and read at the same time! However, if she were to ask him later for clarification about the earlier conversation, he wouldn't have a clue as to what she was talking about.

But didn't he hear what his wife said? Yes, physically he heard the words. However, because he was not "tuned in," not truly "listening," he did not get the message. It simply did not register. This leads us to the conclusion that it is possible to have good hearing, but be hard of listening—in Bible terms, to hear words, but not heed them.

INATTENTIVE BUT APATHETIC

As mentioned, these people hear the words, but are not really paying attention to what is being said. In Job 33:14, we read, *"Indeed God speaks*

once, or twice, yet no one notices it" (NASV). That is, no one perceives what God is saying because no one is paying attention to Him or His wisdom (see Prov. 5:1; 7:24). Generally, this occurs because people don't care. Often, they have heard the message so many times that they have grown apathetic to the truth.

When we meet with the Lord's people on the Lord's Day to hear the Lord's Word, are we consciously attentive to what God has to say? Or do we insist that the message from God be over in 30 minutes or less? May we, with Jeremiah, say, *"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart"* (Jer. 15:16). Be a focused and attentive listener.

The story is told that President Franklin D. Roosevelt got tired of smiling that big smile and saying the usual things at all those fancy White House receptions. So, one evening he decided to find out whether anybody was really paying attention. As each person came up to him with extended hand, he flashed that big toothy grin and said, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." Keeping right in step, people would automatically respond with comments such as "How lovely!" or "That's wonderful, Mr. President; keep up the good work!" Though people heard the president say he had murdered his grandmother, nobody was listening! Finally the president made the shocking statement to a foreign diplomat. The man responded softly, "Well, sir, I'm sure she had it coming."

We may chuckle at the story, but it causes us to face a sobering question

when it comes to our relationship with God. Are we listening? Are we *really* listening? And if so, are we obeying and doing what He tells us?

ATTENTIVE BUT DISOBEDIENT

We all love to hear a good message from a dynamic preacher. But this type of listener has his/her favorite speakers, and when one of them is in town they will rush to hear him—with absolutely no intention of obeying what the speaker says as he proclaims God's message.

Ezekiel 33 provides us with an example of this situation. As Ezekiel spoke to the exiles in Babylon, the people loved to listen to him. In fact, people everywhere were talking about that great preacher, Ezekiel. But, they had no intention of doing what he said. Why? The Lord says, *"They hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness"* (33:31). Though they paid lip service to Ezekiel, their hearts were full of greed. His message never penetrated their hearts. Yet one day, when his prophecy would come to pass, they would *"know that a prophet"* had been in their midst (v. 33).

Many who have preached the Word of God have heard their listeners say, "That was a fine message," as they exit the building. How much better to hear something like, "God spoke to me today; I have some changing to do!"

STUBBORN AND REBELLIOUS

There are also some who, week after week, will attend a local church

nature. Not only all men, but the whole man is under its blight. Across the whole of Scripture there extends a chain of passages on this topic. Sin is something deeper than actions, or even thoughts. These are merely the fruit or outcome of it. Since its seat is in the heart, it taints the very springs of human nature. It is seated where God ought to dwell. No wonder that the work of God alone can deliver us from it.

What does “heart” in the Bible mean? It doesn’t mean that man has wholly lost the image of God and is made after the image of the devil. If so, redemption would be impossible. The heart is not the being or person of the man, but his principles of action. Being or person cannot be changed, but principles can. In conversion I don’t become another person; I get a “new heart.”

It does *not* mean merely the feelings as contrasted with mind or understanding. In modern language we speak of head and heart and contrast them. The Bible (especially the Old Testament) never so speaks. It puts “heart” for the whole inward nature—knowledge, feeling, imagination, will. All through the Bible, “heart” means the centerpoint of man’s moral activity.

See how this exposes the mistakes men have made about sin and its cure. They begin by confining sin to some part of man’s nature. Some say it is only his understanding that is dark. Educate, and people will all do right. Or, starve the body, humble the flesh, and so we shall get rid of sin. No! It is at the “heart” that man is wrong. That goes all through his nature and makes the rest wrong in the sight of God who “looks on the heart.”

Such is the truth of this misunderstood doctrine of “total depravity,” and the idea of the entire corruption of our nature under sin. It does *not* mean that every man is as bad as every other man, or as bad as he could be, or that he is unable to make a moral judgment. It means that in the heart of man are the seeds of all sorts of sins, and that this disposition affects the entire standing of man before God. What results from understanding this?

i) **It leads to renouncing of human merit.** If we consider the sinfulness—not of particular actions and words—but of our prevailing dispositions by nature, we see why the Bible says that, in this state, man “cannot please God.” That does not exclude man’s power (in God’s providence) to do good in natural things, in family affection and earthly government, nor even that these good doings are not acceptable to God in their own way (see Acts 10:2). But for man as he is, gaining God’s favor or deserving God’s mercy by his own merit is impossible.

ii) **It is meant to lead to accepting divine grace.** Since the evil is so central, the remedy lies only in the gift of a new heart. The change is not one which nature can effect on itself. It is “impossible with man.” But it is possible

with God—more than possible. He has promised it and we must ask Him for it. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezek. 36:26).

INHERITED SINFULNESS

Usually called original sin, it precedes, underlies, or occasions all transgression. The Bible takes the view that sin has its rise in a principle inborn with us—an evil bias, a bent which begins where we begin, grows with our growth and strengthens with our strength, unless God’s grace counterworks it. It is a propensity to evil.


A man might say, “I’ve done this one bad thing, but I mustn’t be judged by that. I’m not such a bad person. I have a good heart.” “On the contrary,” says David, “it is my nature that is bad; out of it has come this evil deed.”

Another man, untaught in the evil of sin and its mystery, may admit his evil disposition but argues, “I have sinned, but my inherited sinfulness is my excuse. I was born damaged. What else could you expect me to do?”

Paul in Romans 1 declares that while it is true some sins captivate us, men are worse than they have to be. We go looking for sin. Some sins do not entangle us, we embrace them and enjoy them, for a time at least. We need to be saved from ourselves as well as from our sins.

How does this propensity to evil relate to what the New Testament calls “the flesh”? “In me (that is in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). One thing is certain: It cannot mean that all sin is from the body, for the worst sins are those of the soul. Nor can it mean that all sin is owing to having a body, for Scripture claims our bodies as the temples of the Spirit. If sin were owing to the body, salvation would be deliverance from bodily being, not the climax of it being redemption of our body.

Our Lord explains: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (Jn. 3:6). The sinfulness is seated neither exclusively in the body, nor in the soul. It is called “the flesh” because it comes to us by our first birth. It can only be counteracted by a second birth—a birth again from above—“that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

It is this new birth that deals with all aspects of sin at one time. The heart-corruption and guilt which I share with all sinners finds its answer for me individually in this blessed transaction: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). This is solved with the introduction of a new life principle: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). The indwelling Spirit oversees the repair of the damage done by sin in our lives, and we have the guarantee that the work will not be thwarted until it is completed when “we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” 

EARS TO HEAR

and hear the Word of God preached and expounded, but because of a stubborn and rebellious heart, they are closed to the truth. That is, they refuse to allow the Word into their hearts and minds to the point where it will do them some good. We often see these types of “listeners” in the Old Testament.

Zechariah described Israel’s rebellious listeners this way: *“They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.”* (Zech. 7:11-12. Also see Isa. 48:8; Jer. 6:10; 7:1-34; Ezek. 3:6-11; Ezek. 12:1-2).

These become the I-Love-My-Sin-More-Than-God Listeners of which Paul warned Timothy: *“The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* (2 Tim. 4:3-4; see also Jn. 3:19; 10:6; 9:41).

Proverbs 29:1 tells us, *“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”* The opposite of being stubborn and rebellious is to be compliant and submissive. How much better it is for one to have the attitude of Samuel who, when God spoke to him in the night, responded, *“Speak, for Thy servant heareth.”*

SATANICALLY CONTROLLED LISTENERS

Believe it or not, some who “listen” to God’s Word are controlled by Satan himself. Paul spoke in Ephesians 2:2 of *“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh [lit., energizes] in the children of disobedience.”*

In addressing the Jews in John 8, the Lord Jesus said, *“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not.”* (vv. 43-45). Jesus went on to say, *“he that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God”* (v. 47).

When the characteristics of the devil (murder, lying, untruth, etc.) fill a person’s mind and heart, they are in a position where they cannot hear Christ’s Word (v. 43) in terms of understanding it and taking it to heart. Only the power of God can overcome the grip that Satan has on that person’s life and enable them to truly “hear.” They




are warned that unless they repent quickly they will become Self-Hardened Listeners, eventually moving beyond all hope of recovery (see Jn. 12:40; Mk. 6:52; 2 Cor. 3:14).

THE DULL-OF-HEARING

Once again, it’s not that these people don’t hear the physical sounds of the words being spoken, but rather, that they “just don’t get it”! They are “dull” in their thinking, that is, in their spiritual and intellectual receptivity of God’s truth.

In Acts 28:27, the Apostle Paul (quoting Isaiah) spoke of the Jews who had rejected their Messiah, saying, *“For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them”*

However, it is not only the unbeliever who can be “dull” when it comes to hearing, receiving, and believing the Word of God. Jesus also rebuked His disciples for the same thing. In Luke 24:25, the Lord said to the two discouraged disciples who had been on the road to Emmaus, *“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken”* The phrase “slow of heart” metaphorically means “dull, inactive in mind, stupid, sluggish to apprehend or believe.” Also, in Hebrews 5:11, the writer is forced to digress in his discussion of the Melchizedekian priesthood and rebuke his readers for their immaturity. In so doing, he says that the truth he wants to share with them is *“hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing”* (Heb. 5:11).

As listeners, we must realize that our apprehension of divine truth is directly affected by our own spiritual condition. Often we, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, cannot bear the many things the Lord has to say to us (Jn. 16:12) because we too have become “dull of hearing.” As someone once said, “A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after awhile he knows something.” May we as Christians be “sharp in our hearing,” that is, mentally and spiritually ready, having minds that are fully yielded to God’s Spirit, anxious to receive His truth. Then we will be Obedient, Believing, and Blessed Listeners (Prov. 8:32-36; Mk. 4:20; Lk. 8:15; 1 Thess. 2:13). 

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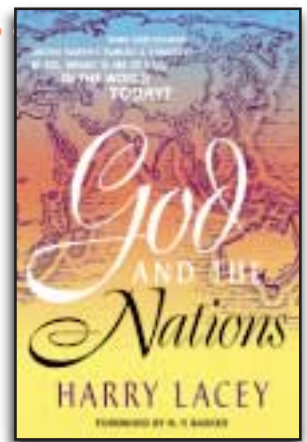
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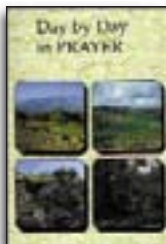
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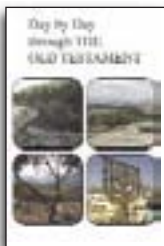
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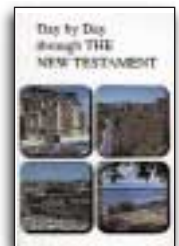
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I'm Extremely Optimistic

December 27-30, 1999, DV
Cincinnati, Ohio

 have been accused of being overly optimistic about New Testament church life in North America. But is it possible to be too optimistic when we read verses like the following?

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

Of course our optimism is not placed in ourselves; we gave up on ourselves when we came to the Cross. With no confidence in the flesh, our trust resides safely in the Champion who sits in glory, victorious over all our foes. We carry on down here in much weakness, often failing—but HE does not fail. In fact, it is our very weakness that puts us in the place where He can use us. You see your calling, brethren:

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and...weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things...and things which are despised...that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

Yet one of the secrets of perseverance in the battle is standing together in the face of the foe. This is one of the great benefits of attending these biennial conferences. After RISE UP & BUILD '97, Mihai Nedelcu wrote, "I'm back home after being transported out of my daily grind, and lifted up to a Spirit-filled place, where 1400 and more believers gathered together for a short time to RISE UP & BUILD and become better laborers for the work of God. The walls of the hotel trembled as the hymns sung by passionate voices penetrated the ceiling and took flight to the Throne of Grace. There were seminars of diverse subjects where attendees, accompanied by rhythmic clicks of wisdom-filled binders penned down particles of eternal truth. The beauty of the Bride shone adorned by lovely smiles as...young and old alike revealed love for their Lord and for each other, making instant friendships that would last forever. What an experience to be part of this!"

So don't miss it!