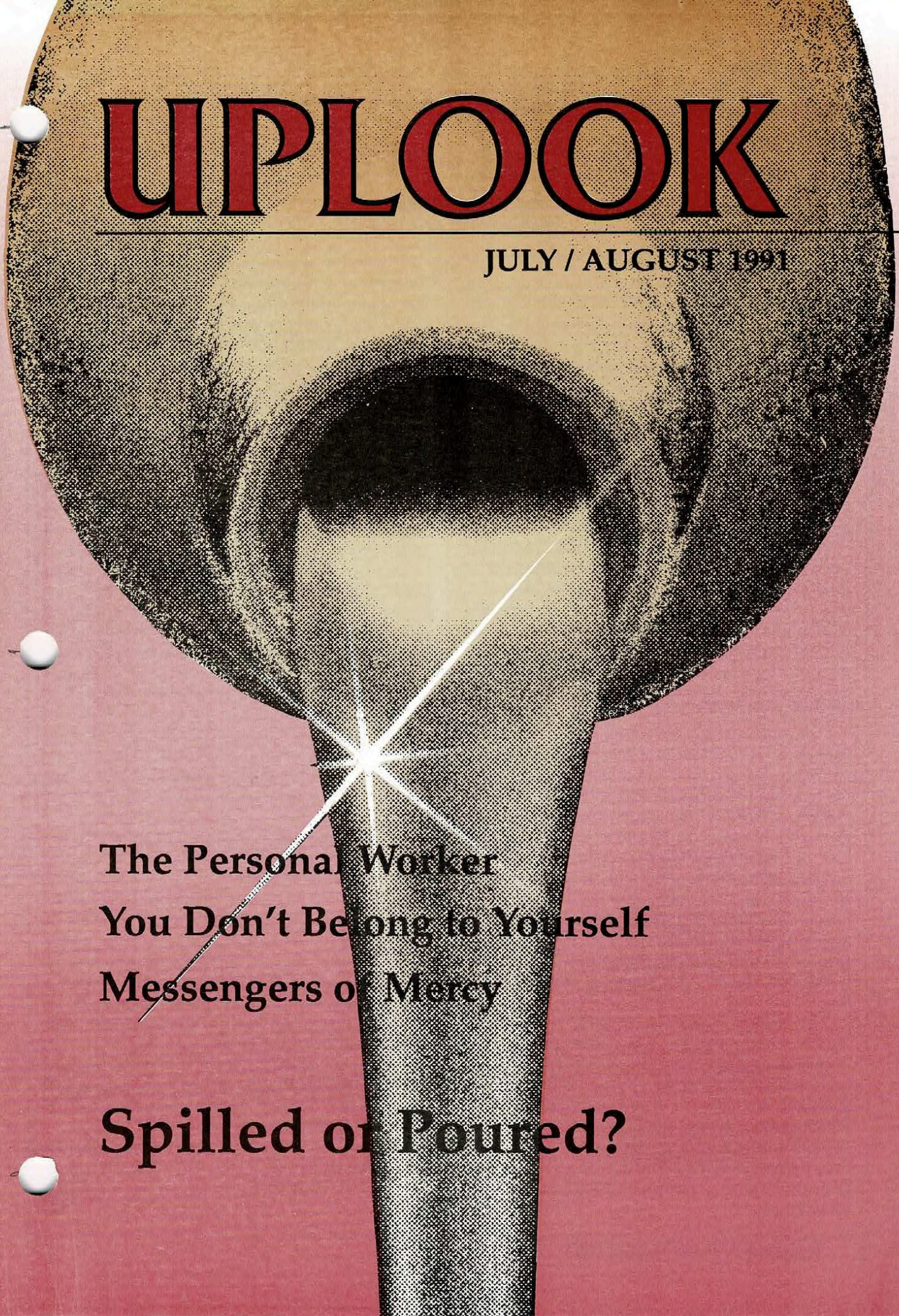
UPLOOK

JULY / AUGUST 1991



The Personal Worker

You Don't Belong to Yourself

Messengers of Mercy

Spilled or Poured?

EDITORIAL

Spilled or Poured?

J. B. Nicholson, Jr.

If you leave Jerusalem by the Jaffa Gate and head south, you will first descend steeply into the head of the Hinnom Valley before rising to the Plain of Rephaim. You may not hear "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" but, on a springtime morning or just as evening falls, you'll hear the breeze playing through the almond leaves and hawthorn blossoms and rustling the "tender green" of the fig. The ridge route brings you along the backbone of the Judean high country, five miles southwest to a little town cascading down a double hill. Its inhabitants call it *Beit Lahm;* we know it better as Bethlehem.

At Bethlehem, the road branches. The main trade route made its way southwest toward Hebron and Beersheba on the edge of the Negev. A less-traveled road heads straight south and then cuts southeast into the mountains and eventually through the Judean wilderness to the oasis of Engedi on the shores of the Dead Sea. Five miles along that road from Bethlehem is Tekoa or *Khirbet Teku* as it is referred to today.

Circumstances would link these two little Judean towns in the days of David. When the youngest son of Jesse had become the bold chieftan of a band of outlaws and was besieged by the Philistines in the stronghold of Adullam, his heart grew thirsty for a drink from the sweet-watered well of Bethlehem. It was no command he gave, but the outbreathing of his soul. It was, however, enough for three of his mighty men. Slipping out into the darkness, they broke through the enemy lines (you can be sure the water source was "well" protected!) and brought David a dripping skin, filled with the happy memories of a shepherd boy.

The man who would be king was deeply moved. Taking the water bag from the men, he poured it out on the ground. He what? How thoughtless! How wasteful! No, I didn't say he spilled it; he poured it. Knowingly, thoughtfully, worshipfully, David offered it as an irrevocable sacrifice to the Lord. I do not deserve such devotion, he was declaring. But He does. For in that skin, David knew, was the lifeblood of his three valiant men.

Thirty-five years roll their course. David, no longer in a cave, lives in a palace. His wayward boys have brought him nothing but grief. He is harvesting a bitter crop from his dark deeds with Bathsheba. His army commander, Joab, privy to the conspiracy against Uriah, now has leverage in the palace. He has found a kindred spirit in Absalom, the wild-hearted son of a Bedouin, whose grandfather was king of Geshur.

Joab has a problem. His compatriot, Absalom, in vengeance for his sister, slays Amnon, his half-brother and flees to Geshur. Joab wants him back to strengthen his own hand. In the nearby town of Tekoa there is a "wise woman" who agrees to be Joab's accomplice.

Diguised in mourning apparel, she approaches the king with the sad tale of two sons. With her husband already dead, she says, her one son had killed the other in a fight. As if that wasn't bad enough, now the townspeople want to execute the guilty son for murder. She would have no one left. The climax of her argument is a classic: *"For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again"* (2 Sam. 14:14). In other words, Amnon is gone. No use crying over spilled milk, or spilled blood either. Get on with living; we'll all be spilled soon enough.

So who was right? Is it poured or spilled? Is the believer's life haphazardly splashed across the hard ground of circumstance, to be absorbed or evaporated and forgotten? Or are our lives to be a drink offering, poured out as a purposeful act of worship to God?

Paul would side with David, and so would Timothy and Epaphroditus and David's greater Son Himself (Phil. 2). Following the example of the Lord Jesus, the faithful of every age have poured out their lives as servants of Jehovah. We are not to be spilled by some cosmic accident, to be absorbed by the planet we mistakenly call "Home." May we add our voices to Paul's as he writes to his brothers and sisters:

"If I be offered (poured out as a drink offering) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Phil. 2:17).

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Messengers of Mercy

W. Ross Rainey

In his book, *Abraham; or, the Obedience of Faith,* F. B. Meyer entitled his comments on Genesis 19, "Angel Work in a Bad Town." It might seem strange to think of the presence of holy angels in sinful Sodom, but it is infinitely more strange to think of the holy, sinless Son of God in this wicked world! In addition to the two angels, the main persons in this account are Lot, his wife and two daughters, and the men of Sodom. Furthermore, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is the second of two Old Testament incidents referred to by the Lord Jesus Christ as illustrations of the day of judgment at the time of His Second Advent to the earth (Luke 17:28-30). The first is the flood of Noah's day.

Abraham is seen in the background of Genesis 19 (see v. 29), yet not even the fervent prayer of the godly and faithful Abraham could avert the righteous judgment and doom of Sodom, although his persevering intercession was by no means in vain. The two angels who had visited Abraham with their Divine Master arrived in Sodom (19:1), and the history of events is continued from 18:22 concerning the movements of these messengers of mercy amid the impending judgment of both Sodom and Gomorrah.

In our consideration of this particular passage, we note two main themes which sum up the major subject matter of these verses: the licentiousness of Sodom, and the lingering of Lot.

THE LICENTIOUSNESS OF SODOM (19:1-11)

Though Peter calls Lot "just" and "righteous" (2 Peter 2:7–8), he was a wayward believer. The sad account of his prodigal path is readily traced step by step and serves as a permanent warning to every child of God (cf. 13:10, 12; 14:12; 19:1). In the first two steps of his backsliding, Lot is typical of the worldling — looking, choosing, separating, journeying, pitching, and dwelling where he should not have been. And even though he had been warned, he still went back to wicked Sodom. Yet, in His infinite mercy, the Lord delivered Lot from the overthrow of the city.

Lot became so deeply entrenched in the world that at the opening of this chapter he is observed sitting "in the gate of Sodom." He had become a citizen of that wicked city, probably after the deliverance from the Elamite invasion, when, as a relative of Abraham, he would have been treated with great honor. "The gate" was the public place of the city where the business of the community was transacted (see Ruth 4:1). Lot courteously received the two angels, extending hospitality to them, but it was their desire to remain all night in the "street," this having been an open space with-

in the city walls where those, unable to find hospitality, would quite naturally spend the night. Knowing all about this custom, Lot was also aware of the extreme licentiousness of vile Sodom, and with no little persuasion the heavenly messengers accepted his hospitality.

It is significant that Lot baked his guests "unleavened bread," possibly recognizing that they were angels or, as some have suggested, because they could be baked quickly (see 1 Sam. 28:24). However, they were not even settled down for the night when the inhabitants of Sodom were at Lot's door. The deterioration of Lot's character is revealed in the words of 19:8, though his proposal was not then viewed with the horror which it deserves (see Judges 19:24). Though bound by the laws of hospitality to protect his guests, he was also bound by the laws of fathership to protect his daughters, and his act can only be viewed as one of cowardice to save his own skin. Observe that he called these wicked people "brethren" (19:7), but his feeble protest and debase proposal had no effect except to exasperate the Sodomites. The worldly believer will always be regarded by the world as a stranger and, while Lot may have tried to clean up Sodom, this only infuriates the man of the world.

Midst the seriousness of the situation, the angels acted, using their supernatural power to cast "blindness" (19:11) on the Sodomites. However, this was no ordinary blindness, but a confusing of the vision in such a way that the brain deceived the eye (the only other instance of the word is in 2 Kings 6:18).

The contrasts between Abraham and Lot are both interesting and significant: [1] "tent" (18:1) — "gate" (19:1); [2] the heavenly visitors readily accepted Abraham's hospitality (18:5) — Lot had to strongly urge his heavenly guests to accept his hospitality, virtually pressuring them into it (19:2-3); and [3] Sarah baked cakes for Abraham and their visitors (18:6) — Lot apparently baked bread himself (19:3).

THE LINGERING OF LOT (19:12-16)

As revealed in verse 12, the angels were seeking, no doubt, to make up the contingent of Abraham's ten righteous (see 18:32). Lot had at least two sons-in-law, two sons, and four daughters, two of whom lived with him, the other two having married men of Sodom (19:12–15). It appears that Lot did not even think it worthwhile to warn his sons, but he did warn his sons-in-law. What a tremendous price he had paid for his carnal ambitions!

"Whatsoever" in 19:12 is best rendered "whomsoever" (R.V.). The believer can take no property with him out of this world (1 Tim. 6:7), but he can take his family safely out — by God's grace — if they consent to come (see Josh. 2:13; 6:23). However, Lot's warning to his sons-in-law had no effect. They simply laughed at him, and so will the world laugh and mock at the compromising believer. Lot probably spent the night feverishly trying to persuade his loved ones to leave Sodom in view of its impending doom. One thing is certain, he did not spend the night in sleep or in peacefulness of heart and mind.

Literally taking Lot, his wife, and his two daughters by the hand, the angels led them out of the city, and this, because the Lord was merciful unto them, in particular to Lot (19:16). What a picture is presented here of Jude 23!

There are many practical lessons in this passage, among them the following:

1. Like the angels, we should be willing to go wherever the Lord directs us, even for just one soul (see Acts 8:26ff).

2. As we go in the Lord's will and strength, even into the Sodoms of our day, we can trust Him to care for us (Isa. 54:17; Matt. 8:3; Luke 15:4).

3. The angels plainly told Lot of his grave danger (Gen. 19:12-13). There was no "watering down" of the message.

4. "The angels hastened Lot" (Gen. 19:15). There is an urgency about receiving the gospel message now (Isa. 1:18; 2 Cor. 6:2).

5. Lot's deliverance was because of Abraham's intercessory prayer. Let us not give up praying for the unsaved or for backsliding believers.

6. To refuse the Word of God and the one way of escape is to suffer judgment (Heb. 10:26–27 with 2:3).

7. Sodom is a picture of the world, while the angels and their message picture the going forth of the Gospel through the Lord's heavenly citizens (Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:20; Titus 2:14; Heb. 6:18). The world will one day be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10, 12).

8. The mercy of God is behind our salvation (Rom. 9:16). He will never forsake His own no matter how wayward they become. Lot is an example of 1 Corinthians 3:15.

The Pastor-Teacher?

Donald L. Norbie

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers . . ." (Eph. 4:11 NKJV)

A current popular term in evangelical circles is the word "pastor-teacher." A preacher may describe himself as a "pastor-teacher." Churches may advertise for a "pastor-teacher" to lead their congregations. Although the term has been changed, the office is the same as that of the "pastor," an office well established for centuries in most Protestant churches. Some assemblies which have followed the simplicity of the early Church are now drifting in this direction.

Ephesians 4:11 is not describing offices in the Church but speaks of men who are spiritually gifted in different areas. Two of these gifts, apostles and prophets, were foundational (Eph. 2:20) and were not permanent in the Church. Although their ministries — apostolic authority and prophetic utterance — are preserved for us in Scripture. The other gifts of evangelists, pastors and teachers continue. Today, as in every age, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are desperately needed by churches for spiritual growth and health. What, then, is wrong with calling one man in a church the "pastor-teacher"?

The word "pastor" originally meant a "shepherd." It no longer means that today, although we still speak of a "pasture" or a "pastoral scene." However, we do not call shepherds caring for sheep "pastors." The word has developed a technical meaning: "a clergyman or priest in charge of a church or congregation" (Webster's Dictionary). Usually such men are called "Reverend" or "Pastor." In most churches, they alone perform baptisms, officiate at the Lord's Supper and do all or most of the preaching.

If a church has elders or deacons, the "pastor" is in a separate class. He is the chief executive officer of the church. The Presbyterian Church did this by calling one man the "teaching elder." The others were simply "ruling elders." But the clergy-laity distinction was perpetuated, a concept absolutely foreign to the early Church. All believers then were viewed as priests (1 Peter 2:5); all should exercise their gifts (Rom. 12:3–8).

In New Testament churches, "elders" (a term describing their experience and maturity) were recognized and appointed (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). They were also called "overseers" (1 Tim. 3:1); they were to superintend the work of the church. This work was described as "shepherding." "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

"What is wrong with calling one man in a church the 'pastor-teacher'?"

Peter uses the same language, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers . . ." (1 Peter 5:2). This would include teaching (feeding), giving leadership, direction, discipline and encouragement.

This charge was given equally to all of the elders. All were to be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9); all were to shepherd. Some might excel in this work (1 Tim. 5:17). They should be given greater respect for "their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:12, 13). But no separate office was created for such. They were all equally "elders," shepherds of the flock.

The language we use reflects our thinking. The term "pastor" has become a word for the clergyman heading up the congregation. The Lord Himself warned the disciples about the ostentatious use of titles (Matt. 23:6–11).

All elders should be teachers of the Word and all should be shepherds of the flock. They need no special titles. The flock will recognize their distinctive gifts and appreciate their loving service. And finally the Chief Shepherd Himself will abundantly reward them. Is this not enough?

Front Lines

FREE PAMPHLET ON 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2–15

A six-page pamphlet, written by our esteemed brother David Gooding, entitled, *Symbols of Headship and Glory,* is available to you for the cost of an envelope and an appropriate stamp. Originally published by Operation O.F.F.E.R. of Belfast, it is now available by sending a No. 10 (business size) envelope and $.50 to:

Timely Topics
P. O. Box 908
Stouffville, ON L4A 7Z9

ST. KITTS, WEST INDIES

Brother Tom Morrell distributes back issues of Gospel Folio Press Sunday School material in St. Kitts of the Leeward Islands in the West Indies. He has recently had surgery, spending a month in the hospital. He is grateful to have made a good recovery.

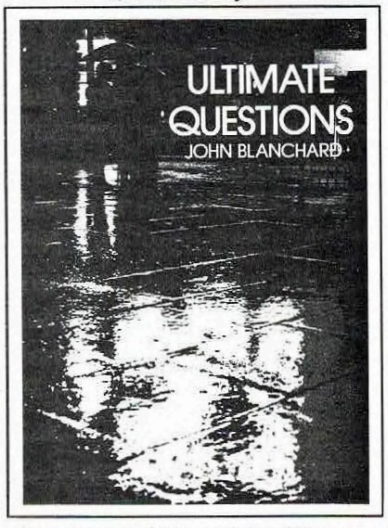
ECHOES OF GRACE

Almost five years ago, Ludo Muntz and Cathie Cretney began taping organ and piano duets of the well-loved hymns of the faith. There are now five audio tapes available. Each tape contains 60 minutes of refreshing and worshipful music. Volumes I and II are from *Hymns of Truth and Praise;* Volume III has hymns from the *Believers' Hymnbook;* Volume IV records melodies from *Choice Hymns of the Faith;* and Volume V has a selection of well-known favorites from various sources. Tapes are $5.00 each, with proceeds going to the *Counsel* magazine fund. About one quarter of *Counsel* magazines are sent to Third World recipients who are unable to financially support the publication. This is one way the work is assisted in this missionary project. Write:

Echoes of Grace
77 Village Road
St. Catharines, ON L2T 3B9

GOOD SEED FOR SOWING

Looking for some good literature for neighborhood outreach? *Ultimate Questions* by John Blanchard is a full-color, 32-page book of top-quality production. There are twelve questions answered in short, well-written chapters full of appropriate Scriptures. A sample copy is available by writing:



Mr. Don Robertson
401 MacArthur Blvd.,
San Leandro, CA 94577
Phone (415) 562–5697

BRITISH COLUMBIA INTERIOR

Brother Craig Funston, who, with his wife, has labored for some time at Hundred Mile House, BC, is now moving his base of operation to Kamloops. This is a more central location from which to reach the scattered assemblies in the interior of the province. Their new address is:

Mr. and Mrs. Craig Funston
C-71, Site 11, RR #3
Kamloops, BC V2C 5K1
Phone (604) 578-7707

HELP FOR OVERSEAS TRAVELERS.

For travelers, especially to Europe, there is an address book you should find helpful. Called simply *"The Assemblies Address Book,"* it includes addresses of some assemblies of the Lord's people in Britain, the Republic of Ireland, some countries in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Cyprus, Gibraltar and Israel, Greenland and Iceland, the West Indies, and a handful in North America. As well as these addresses, the book also includes information on assembly publishers, book stores, retirement (eventide) homes, Christian hotels and guest houses, magazines and other publications, cassette tapes, missionary telephone and other information services, and various Christian trusts (foundations). The paperback has 224 pages and is available for $10.95 (plus $1.40 postage & handling) from:

Walterick Publishers
P. O. Box 2216
Kansas City, KS 66110

A CHANGE OF POLICY

Recent conditions in Third World countries have been reflected at Everyday Publications by a dramatic decrease in the number of books ordered.

Today most Third World countries are in a state of economic chaos or collapse. Christians still want and need books to help them learn most about the God of the Bible, but they cannot pay more than a fraction of what it costs to print the book. Literature also helps the busy missionary by building up the saints as well as New Testament assemblies.

At their last meeting, the directors of EPI agreed to a change of policy. Effective October 1, 1991, books will be sent free of charge (upon request) to CMML missionaries working in Third World countries as the Lord supplies and until further notice. Everyday Publications will pay the postage unless air mail is required. The missionary may sell the books at local prices, or give them away at his own discretion. It is hoped that this will prove to be a blessing to many nationals and an encouragement and help to the missionaries. The prayers of the Lord's people are greatly valued for this step of faith.

Everyday Publications books are available in the homelands at low market prices and are widely used for new Christians, prison ministries, work among ethnics, etc. All proceeds go to help with the overseas ministry. Books, catalogs, or price lists may be requested from:

Everyday Publications, Inc.
421 Nugget Ave., #2
Scarborough, ON, M1S 4L8
Canada

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH IN MEXICO CITY

For seven days in June, Steve Burson, from Hutchinson, KS and Stan Engle, from Oklahoma City, OK were privileged to work with Christians from the assemblies in Mexico City in an outreach to the international Rotary convention being held there. Over twenty thousand businessmen were gathered for the annual convention from three hundred countries. More than ten thousand trilingual tracts were distributed with the help of twenty people from the assemblies in Mexico City. Gospel tracts were also presented to the mayor of Mexico City as well as the President Carlos Salinas de Gortari and his wife. There were also conversations with Rotarians from many countries who commended the tract and the clear gospel message contained in it. Open-air evangelism was also used in outlying villages of Mexico City with some clear opposition from staunch Roman Catholics in these areas. One elderly woman stated that these "evangelicals should be lynched." Praise the Lord for His blessing and protections as the Word goes out.

MISSION OPEN HOUSE

The 24th Annual Banquet and Open House of the Yonkers Gospel Mission Home will be held, D.V., on Saturday, September 28, 1991 at 5:00 P.M. The guest speaker expected is Mr. Chris Schroeder and the video, *"Mission Possible: Changed Lives"* will be presented. For further information, contact:

Mr. George B. Sealey
Yonkers Gospel Mission
P. O. Box 1491
Yonkers, NY 10702
Phone (914) 968–6577

DON'T FORGET

This is a reminder to take note of upcoming events already announced in previous issues of UPLOOK.

• The Minneapolis / St. Paul Labor Day Conference at Irondale High School, 2425 Long Lake Road, New Brighton, MN on August 30–September 2. Contact:

Mr. Glen C. Ellis
4549 5th St. NE
Columbia Heights, MN 55421
Phone (612) 572–1379

• The Rest Haven Homes 50th Anniversary Open House to be held on September 7 at Rest Haven, 1424 Union NE, Grand Rapids, MI. Contact:

Rest Haven Homes, Inc.
P. O. Box 2051
Grand Rapids, MI 49501
Phone (616) 454–6248

• The Hartford, CT Fall Conference to be held on September 20–22 at the Prospect Bible Chapel, 576 Prospect Avenue, Hartford, CT. Contact:

Mr. Thomas E. Woods
31 Strickland Street
Manchester, CT 06040
Phone (203) 643–4477

• The Toronto Ladies' Missionary Conference at Martingrove Collegiate, corner of Martingrove Road and Eglinton Avenue in Toronto's west end on September 28. Contact:

Mrs. Eunice Kay
1523 Silver Spruce Drive
Pickering, ON L1V 5G9
Phone (416) 831–5335

• The Mount Hermon, CA Bible Conference, seven miles south of San Francisco, to be held October 7–11. Contact:

Mr. Henry Kamena
1400 W. 13th St. Sp. 91
Upland, CA 91786
Phone (714) 985–0437

You Asked For It!

line upon line
MODULAR BIBLE LESSONS

For the last several years, we have noticed a growing desire among the Lord's people for a series of solid Bible lessons for use in Sunday Schools, Bible camps, and other ministries where the "three C's" are essential: the Word taught must be clear, concise, and consecutive.

The market is flooded today with beautifully-produced curricula, but generally something is lacking. It may be an inappropriate emphasis on character development instead of conviction of sin and conversion as the first step to a right relationship with God. It may be a lack of teaching on the New Testament Church, baptism, or the priesthood of all believers. Whatever it is, those who have looked for materials to satisfy their requirements have been disappointed in their search.

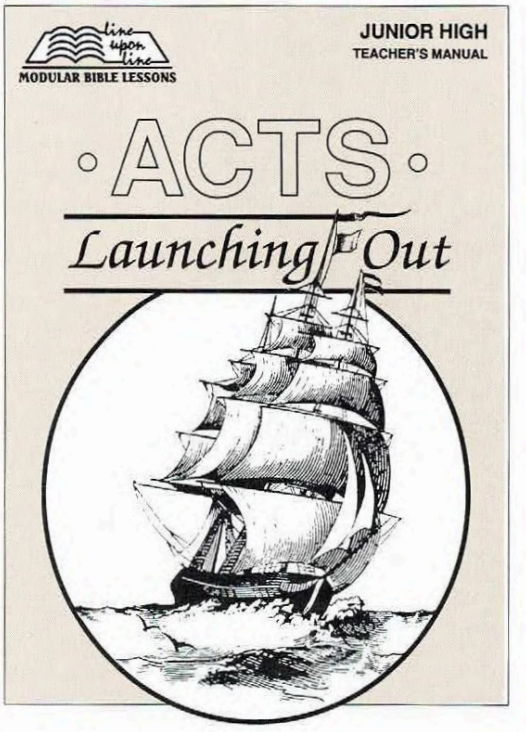
Regularly, when speaking to us about the pressing need for such literature, we have seen a wistful look come across Sunday School teachers' faces as they told us they appreciated Gospel Folio material. In fact, many of them had their early Bible training as children from it; others had used it as teachers for years. "It's solid and Bible-based," they would say. "If only . . ."

Yes, we know. If only there was more handwork for the little ones. Better graphics on the papers. A more orderly layout in the teachers' manuals. Another paper at the Junior High level. A more interesting activity book for the Intermediates. A handout suitable for the Family Bible Hour attendees. If only the material was undated and could be adapted to home Bible studies and summer camps.

We *were* listening! And we've been working! We know that some of you have been praying. So now we are happy to announce our new *Modular Bible Lessons*, beginning in September, Lord willing.

The title of the series, *"Line upon Line,"* is taken from Isaiah 28:9–10. "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk . . . For precept must be upon precept . . . line upon line; here a little, and there a little." The Bible is a book of thought ("precept"), order ("line"), progression ("upon"), and simplicity ("a little"). Bible teaching materials should be marked by the same characteristics. So here's what we have planned:

• Twenty 13-week modules (a five-year cycle) except Pre-School, will give a comprehensive Bible overview. The first module offered, beginning in September, will be *Acts, Part 1: Launching Out.*



• Six departments:

1) PRE-SCHOOL, using a reintroduction of Mervyn Paul's classic, *Teaching Principles for Beginners.* Completely updated and renamed *Building Blocks for Beginners,* the large-format edition includes four Teacher's Manuals with 48 lessons (designed for a 2–3 year cycle), plus a Pre-Schooler's Handwork Book. It teaches basic Bible con-

cepts — God, man, sin, heaven, hell, salvation, and so on — at the simplest level.

2) PRIMARY (Grades 1–3) includes a completely revised Teacher's Manual with: a Teacher Development Page written by various respected authors; a Module Overview written by Dr. Gerald Stover; a Teacher's Personal Study Page including the *Chapter at a Glance, Digging Deeper* (a short exposition), and *A Helping Hand* (definitions, explanations, and illustrations); and a Lesson Preparation Page with a section for *Lesson Objectives, Applying the Lesson,* and the *Memory Verse.* The Intermediate, Junior High, and Advanced Studies/Adult Teacher's Manuals will have different material but the same format. The Primary Department will also have a large-size Coloring Book and a weekly take-home paper called *Childhood Days.*

3) INTERMEDIATE (Grades 4–6), as well as the Teacher's Manual already described, provides an Activity Book with puzzles, pictures, and Bible quizzes which are keyed to the lesson. There is also a weekly paper called *Words of Life.*

4) JUNIOR HIGH (Grades 7–9), in addition to the Teacher's Manual, also includes the weekly paper, completely revised, called *Truth for Youth.* Most modules will also include a supplemental map, chart, or poster.

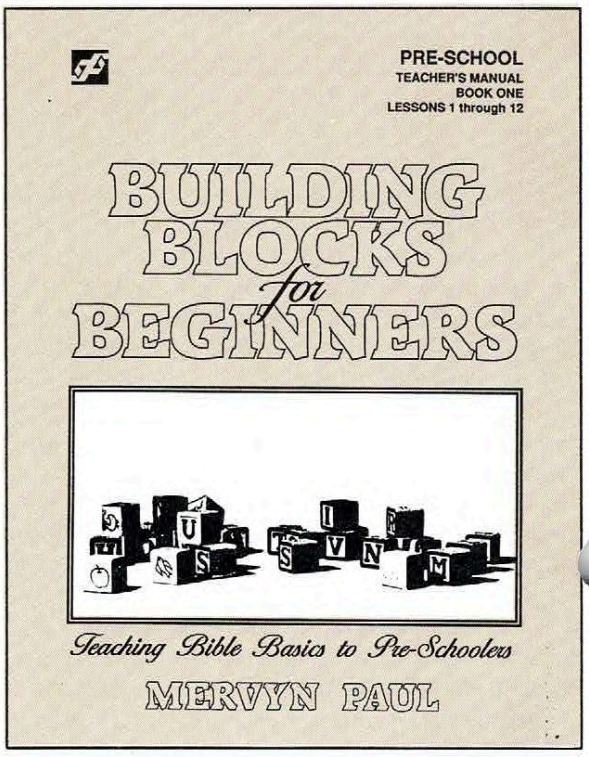
5) ADVANCED STUDIES (Senior High and College) will have a Teacher's Manual, and a Study Guide for the students. This level will be suitable for most home Bible studies. There will also be a take-home paper called *Onward!* The supplemental material will also be useful for both the Advanced Studies and Adult curriculum.

6) ADULT will share the Teacher's Manual, Study Guide and supplemental material with the Advanced Studies Department. In addition, however, there will be a weekly adult paper, *Words of Faith,* suitable for distribution to mixed audiences of believers and unbelievers. It will include a gospel story, a Bible exposition, a personal study page and an "issues" article (the first two modules on Acts have a series called *"What is the Church?"*)

Here are our three main objectives for these *Modular Bible Lessons.* If you share them, perhaps this material is just what you've been looking for:

1) To teach the whole counsel of God to the whole family, but at the appropriate level and with the appropriate emphasis for each stage of life.

2) To preach and teach Christ as the only answer to man's sinful state, and as the grand object and principle of the believer's life, with the goal that the Spirit of God will use it to the salvation and sanctification of both young people and adults.



3) To not only reach the students through the teacher, but to encourage and equip the teachers themselves to be better Christians and therefore better teachers.

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Peace In Belfast

Billy Stevenson

In the minds of most people, the last two words they would link together are "peace" and "Belfast." I was born there on June 13, 1941, in the country of Northern Ireland. My parents trusted the Lord when I was nine years of age. But it would be many long years before I would find peace in Belfast.

When I was fourteen, I started work as an apprentice fitter in Mackie's Foundry. Here I was introduced to the captivating pleasures of this world. I began to smoke, not so much out of enjoyment, but for acceptance with my newfound friends. Soon it was horse races with its attendant gambling, and finally I turned to drink.

At eighteen I was deep in sin, and yet I wanted more. I decided to get away from home. Without my parents' knowledge, I signed up at the Royal Air Force recruiting office. The following week I was due to board the boat for England, but my girlfriend, Mary, who is now my dear wife, told my parents. They were terribly upset about it and promptly showed the recruiting officer samples of the pills and medicine I was required to take and ruined my plans.

Though foiled, I was determined to get my own way. My parents must not win, so I headed off to the Navy recruiting office. A delay of six weeks, the soonest they could ship me out, was too long for me to wait, so I proceeded to the Army. I was really desperate to get "free" and anxious to enjoy myself in the world as much as possible. The Army Recruiting Officer was delighted to see me.

Within an hour, I had completed an examination, been sworn in, and been detailed about reporting for duty. Everything was just great! I had my way at last. My poor parents, knowing that they could do nothing, accompanied me to the boat. As we parted, my dad said sadly, "We've done our best for you, Billy, but if this is the life you want, I wish you all the best."

Six weeks later I was in Germany, for, bent on pleasure, I had chosen the minimum training course. I was to be there for fifteen months. Often under arrest for brawling, most of my spare time was spent washing dishes, and scrubbing floors, which was *certainly* not my idea of a good time.

Under all circumstances I wrote to Mary, and one day I asked her to arrange our marriage. I came home on leave from Germany and was married. However, my honeymoon lasted longer than the army had suggested! One night the military police arrested me, under the influence as usual, as I left a pub on Peter's Hill. Back in Germany, trouble and disappointment were afoot. The Berlin Wall was built and war threat-

ened. I asked my wife to come over and live with me, but the answer from my mother-in-law was firm: "No, if she's going to die, she'll die at home!"

That decided it. I would get out of the Army. It was no good to have my wife living in Belfast while I was living in Germany. So I devised a plan to get my own way. I feigned illness and acted the part brilliantly (or so I thought at the time) with the desired result. I was discharged and sent home.

Back in Belfast, it was no success story. I was unemployed for over a year, and was enslaved to sin. Things were very bad. My home was ruined. My wife was sick of me. Yielding to the control of alcohol had been largely responsible for the ruin of my home.

One afternoon, while my two children were playing in an area where old condemned houses were being demolished, they discovered a box full of coins. Not knowing what they were, they brought them into the house where my wife and her sister were having a chat over a cup of tea. Not wanting to be disturbed, Mary sent them outdoors again to play. The children wanted to play in the living room, but mother would have none of this so out they went, the coins with them! Soon a crowd had gathered; the coins disappeared, and when my wife went to investigate, she was shocked to discover that the coins were no less than gold sovereigns. I'll never forget the local newspaper headlines: GOLD FIND — £10,000 WORTH.

I was ready to choke my wife. The money had actually been *in* the house and she had thrown them out! The story made national news. My family appeared on television; there were photographs and stories in all the papers. In my despondency, I drank even more. But it was one of the best things that ever happened to me. I thank God for my wife's action then. He knew it would have been disastrous for me, for my ambition was to own a pub. The Lord in His mercy had overruled for my good. Today I would rather have Jesus than all the money this world can offer.

Not long after this, the political violence in Ulster started and I was in the thick of it. Again I'm convinced that the prayers of God's people were answered, for on a number of occasions I narrowly missed death or serious injury. It was only after I had trusted the Lord Jesus, however, that I realized how near I had often been to eternity.

Toward the end of 1970, although I was still deep in sin, I spoke one night to Mary of the importance of believing on the Lord Jesus so that sinners like ourselves could be saved.

But the Devil had control. "Billy," he urged, "don't worry about those things just now; have another good time. Maybe when you're older you can come to Jesus." So I forgot about God once more and continued on my empty chase. Seven days a week, morning, noon and night, I lived for alcohol.

"So I forgot about God once more and continued on my empty chase."

On the last day of 1970, God put me on my back in White Abbey Hospital. There I lay, unable to eat food of any kind, my only request being for cigarettes. After only a few days on my back, I began to look up. How ashamed I was that I had been so involved in everything else that I had had no time to pray. My life seemed so senseless. I cried out to God to at least deliver me from the craving for cigarettes. I believe He answered me.

One night, as I lay there, the Lord sent one of His children to see me. It was visiting time and in walked a well-dressed gentleman.

"Hello, Billy," he said. "How are you?"

I looked up at him in amazement. I had never seen him before.

"I'm Mr. Leckie," he continued, smiling at my surprise. Then I remembered my sister having spoken of him being in the same local church.

On his frequent visits, he told me of God's way of salvation. It wasn't that I didn't know about that; I just didn't want to come face to face with God and yield myself to Him.

Many Christians were praying for me, and, as far as my physical recovery was concerned, their prayers were answered. After two weeks, I was out of the hospital but getting ready to throw myself back into the bottle. I knew in my heart that it was sheer madness.

One day, as my wife and I were arriving home, we saw Mr. Leckie knocking on the door. Not one to give up, he gave us an invitation to a testimony meeting in Glenburn Gospel Hall at Castlereagh. Mr. Ben Sutton, the speaker, told us how he had come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. He had been delivered from the powerful grip of sin, which included alcohol. As we listened, our hearts were troubled. At the end, everyone rose to leave, but Mr. Leckie asked us if we would like to have a talk with Mr. Sutton. I was about to say, "No, not tonight," when my wife beat me to it. "Yes, Billy would like to see him!" she replied. On the way to the back of the hall, I whispered in Mary's ear vehemently, "I don't *want* to speak with the preacher."

Ben Sutton "almost" persuaded me to be a Christian that night, but I wouldn't accept Christ as my Saviour; I felt I could not give up the pleasures of the world just yet. To my amazement, my wife replied, "I would like to be saved." There, before my eyes, she put her trust in Christ.

I was happy with Mary in her new life. As to myself, I figured if I could hang on until I was retiring age, I would get saved — yet deep inside me was the awful thought, "What if I were to die in my sins?" I felt I was the most unhappy man in the city of Belfast.

My Saturdays were spent in a bar. One afternoon, an old friend came in and had a drink with us. John, however, was in trouble and very upset. I tried to help him (drunk men *do think* they can help each other), and, believe it or not, I spoke to him about the importance of knowing Christ as his Saviour. All I got out of him was, "Nobody, nobody can help me." I thought of Mr. Leckie, that godly man, and said, "John, I know a gentleman who can help you." It took a bit of persuasion before he said, "Go ahead, phone your friend, but it's stupid. No one can help."

Careless of my own condition, I tried to care for someone else. On hearing the problem over the phone, Mr. Leckie said, "Don't move. I'll be there in twenty minutes." Soon the bar door swung open and in he walked. I spotted him past a swarm of revellers. "Mr. Leckie, here we are." "Take your time," he said. "Don't choke," as he watched us hurriedly finish our glasses.

He took us to my house and prayed with us before we got out of the car. Had I known where I was going to end up that night, I might not have telephoned Mr. Leckie. But sitting at tea, he asked, "Would you two gentlemen come to a meeting in Newcastle tonight?" Well, I couldn't even eat my meal because of the desire for more alcohol. I told my friend, "I have mates waiting down the Shankhill Road for me." But John stated, "I'll go with you." My eyes stood out in my head. "You're going to a meeting? You must be joking!"

"No, I'm not joking, and I want you to come with me," replied John. So I had to go to the meeting that Saturday night.

"My eyes stood out in my head. 'You're going to a meeting? You must be joking!'"

Afterwards John asked if he could go to a Gospel meeting every night the following week. Not one night did they miss for the next two or three weeks. I accompanied them on odd nights.

The fight was really going on at this stage in my life. I wanted salvation. I wanted Christ as my Saviour. I knew that to die as I was would have been the lake of fire for ever and ever — never again to see my father and mother, my wife and children, nor that gracious friend again. I tried to avoid the thought.

One Friday night Mr. Leckie and his wife sat up with me all night, right through until daybreak, trying to point me to Christ but without success, for I *wanted* the world. How patient he was and, though really exhausted at times, he kept up the good work.

I was a member of the Linfield Supporters Club. It was Easter, and time for the annual weekend in Blackpool. I arrived back in Belfast a miserable sinner. I was really depressed. I wanted Christ. The world no longer gave me pleasure. I was sick of trying to hide my sorrows and fears with alcohol. That Thursday I met my mate outside a public bar on the Shankhill Road. He gave me my wages. I thanked him and returned home without one sip of alcohol. That Friday I stayed with Mary. So unusual was this that she knew

something was happening to me.

On Sunday, April 18, that persistent servant of God, Mr. Leckie, took us to Newtownards to hear Mr. Derick Bingham preach the Gospel. On our way back to Belfast, my wife spoke with me. She opened my son's New Testament and said, "Billy, read these few verses." "It's no good," I replied. I was so heartbroken, confused and worried. "Go on, read it anyway," she said. I began to read these words from John 14:1–6:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me . . ." Immediately I felt relief. I read them repeatedly from the opened Book until we reached home. My wife put the children to bed. I still had the book open at John 14. I asked Mr. Leckie, "Is this our Lord Jesus Christ speaking to His disciples?" "That's right," he said.

I rose and headed to my bedroom, convinced that there was no point in speaking further to Mr. Leckie. He had spent hours and hours, day and night, to tell me God's way of salvation, and here I was no further on. For the first time, I felt that I had missed my chance of salvation.

As I ascended the stairs, I noticed my little boy's bedroom door was open, and he was kneeling at his bedside praying. I stopped outside his room, my heart breaking. Tears streamed from my eyes as I stood helpless before God. My son arose and came toward me. Looking up into my face, he said, "Daddy, I was praying to God to save you and make you happy. Would you get saved now?" I bent down, put my arms around my boy and cried like a child. Finally I managed to say, "Son, I *will* ask God to save me now. Just stay here and I'll go into my bedroom."

I went in and closed the door, fell to my knees and cried out, "Lord, ease my troubled heart. Please, Lord, let not my heart be troubled. Lord, save me."

At once I felt peace flowing through my heart and mind, and I uttered, "Thank you, Lord, for saving me and for dying on the cross that I might live." Then I ran into my son's bedroom and threw my arms around him.

"I noticed my little boy's bedroom door open, and he was kneeling by his bedside praying."

"Billy, my son, I'm saved!" I said. We both fell on to the bed, crying with happiness. My wife took the stairs by storm. I will never forget the look on her face as she threw her arms around me. "You got saved? *Wonderful!*" And my faithful friend, Mr. Leckie, what joy filled his heart; it showed all over his face. "Praise God. Hallelujah!" he said.

We went straight to where Derick Bingham was preaching at the Nurses' Home to tell him the news. Then my parents' home in Belvoir Park was the next call. Well, it was like giving my parents the whole world. They had prayed so hard and long for me as had multitudes of others. Now those prayers had been answered.

The news spread quickly. Everyone was talking about "Billy Stevenson getting God's salvation." The children of God rejoiced and such happiness it brought to my own heart and soul, and into my home, thanks be to God.

The Devil was still trying to get me, so first the old bookie docket was burned. As to the other swindles in which I was involved, I just told the boys, "I got saved on Sunday night, so cut me out." They didn't believe me; they thought it was a joke, but they soon realized that it was not.

Then came the clubs. Mr. Leckie waited in the car while I went in to hand over my membership cards and resignation. Again they marveled, "The drunkard's got saved."

Yes, by the grace of God, it was true. I had put my trust in the Lord Jesus who died for me that I might have everlasting life! Have you? I can assure you that what God did with the vile, sinful, hell-bound life and troubled heart of Billy Stevenson, he can do with yours as well. He gives victory. He gives purpose in life. He gives hope for eternity. And He gives peace, even in Belfast!

I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad,
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.

Servanthood

A Christian servant is, at the same time, the most free and the most duty-bound of all men. Servants of God, they are liberated from the slavish fear of men; servants for God, they seek to minister to everyone in need. No yoke fits better and no burden is lighter than the one placed on our hearts by the Master who was Servant of all.

A bondslave in New Testament times had only one task: obedience to his master. The master was to look after everything else. If we set about to please our Master, we will need to take little thought of anything else. The equation of life is a simple one. We do His business; he looks after ours.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day to the Lord?" (1 Chron. 29:5).

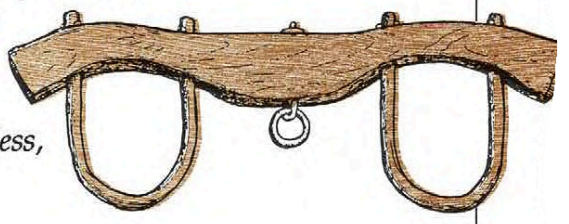
"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:13).

No service in itself is small,
Nor great, though earth it fill;
But that is small that seeks its own,
And great that seeks God's will.

"Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:22).

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan was called by the Lord from school teaching to the ministry. When he first heard this call, he fell on his knees to pray. As if a voice were in the room with him, he heard the Lord say: "Which do you want to be — a servant of Mine or a great preacher?" Morgan wanted to be a great preacher, of course! But why could he not be both? A spiritual struggle ensued until it was impressed on him that God might want him to minister unknown and in an obscure place. Then he cried to God that his greatest desire was to be a servant of His. The Lord made him a great preacher as well as a humble servant.

O hearts are bruised and dead,
And homes are bare and cold,
And lambs for whom the Shepherd bled
Are straying from the fold!



To comfort and to bless,
To find a balm for woe,
To tend the lone and fatherless,
Is saintly work below.

The captive to release,
To God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace —
It is a Christlike thing.

And we believe Thy Word,
Though dim our faith may be;
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord,
We do it unto Thee. — William W. How

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

In the early years of the twentieth century, Donald McIntosh, a blind evangelist, made his mark in Scotland as a gifted preacher. Whatever his text, whatever his theme might be, he never failed in his preaching to impress upon his hearers the claims of Christ. Mr. Asquith, at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer, heard Mr. McIntosh preach repeatedly and remarked with true discernment: "That man is always preaching for a verdict."

You Don't Belong to Yourself

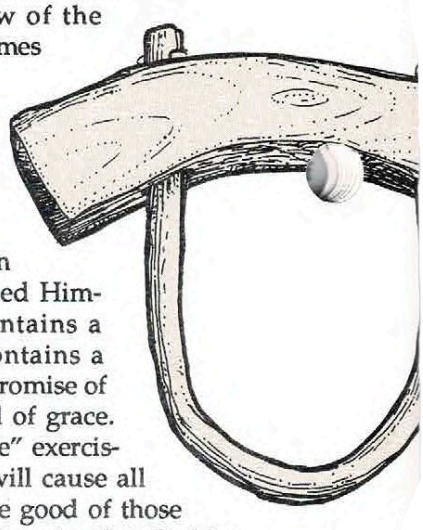
Henry Groves

Slowly, very slowly, does this mighty truth grip us. "Redeemed," "bought," "ransomed," are words familiar to us all, but how little we sometimes appreciate what flows out of them! In eternity we shall come to know and happily acknowledge what redemption means, and what it is to be "bought with a price." In the meantime, it is a wise thing to lay the matter deeply to heart, and to seek special help from God, that, with spirit, soul and body redeemed, we may love and serve Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

In Psalm 100, we have this subject beautifully alluded to in connection with our creation: "Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." Sin severed the connection but could not destroy the obligation; and now infinite grace restores the connection and doubles the obligation, thus giving to us "double" for all our sin. This double tie of creation and redemption binds us to God as those restored to Him and created anew in His image. But it is the redemption tie only that Paul contemplates, as if the creation link were swallowed up in it, when he says, "Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God . . ." (1 Cor. 6:19–20).

It is this truth that will maintain the lowliness of saints in the midst of eternal glories such as angels never knew, and will preclude all possibility of pride, even in the very precincts of the Throne of God. There can be no pride where redemption is clearly apprehended, and there can be no self-will when the ransom price of our atonement is fully realized. Pentecost brought the power of the cross so to bear on everyone and on everything, that no one then said that anything he possessed was his own. Person, possessions, time, talents, all were seen as belonging to Another. Thus also did Paul fully surrender himself after he was brought into the light as he went to Damascus. He then began the fight, he commenced his course, he laid hold on the faith; and when his martyr's crown was in view he was able to say, "I have fought the fight," and gained the victory; "I have finished the course," abiding by the rules; "I have kept the faith," and not given up anything that was committed to my charge.

Redemption of the person involves all belonging to it, and a redeemed life means redeemed years and redeemed moments. Let the blood and its claims mark all, and the object constantly before our minds will no longer be self, but God. God's claim will then be recognized, rejoiced in, gloried in; and the soul's highest liberty will be found in doing the will of God. In proportion as Christ is known, and the mighty work He has accomplished in us is understood, so shall we realize what this liberty is. Made free by the Son, we shall be "free indeed." This is the law of liberty, the law of the new life spoken of in James 2:12.



But "ye are not your own" contains not only a reminder of the position we stand in towards God, but also of the relation in which God has placed Himself towards us. It contains a precept, but it also contains a promise — an infinite promise of help, of protection, and of grace. The One "whose we are" exercises almighty love and will cause all to work together for the good of those who are His. The infinite price that God has paid for us attaches an infinite value to that which He has purchased. If this were more appreciated by us, our unbelieving doubts would give way to a firmer and bolder faith. In the consciousness of the betrothal of divine love, we would know what it is to say, "My God," and what it is to hear Him say, "My people." The object of life here would then be that which it shall be through eternity, to "glorify God," and to fulfill His desire in redeeming us — that we should be unto Him "for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory" (Jer. 13:11). Then we would understand our Lord's words, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are" (John 17:22). U

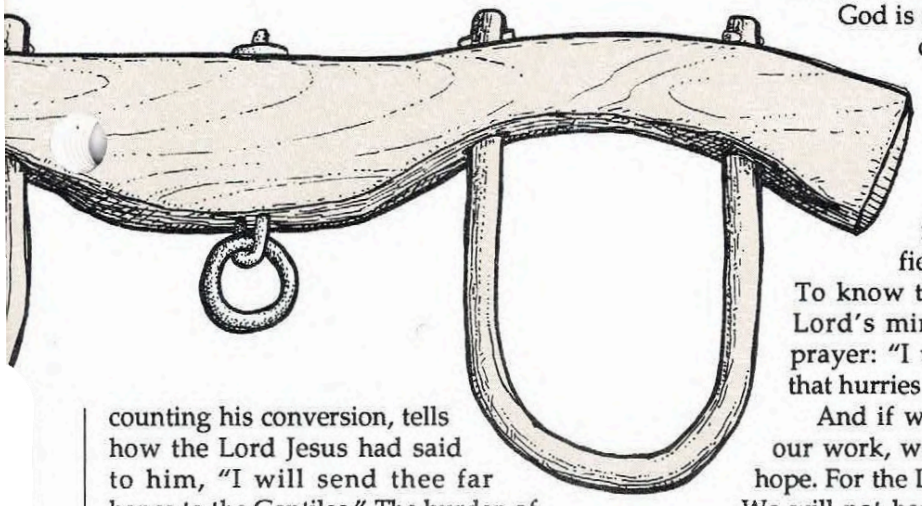
The Christian's Commission

"As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

This commission relates primarily to the apostles, who were first in privilege as they were in suffering, but it applies to every believer today. Each Christian has been sent into the world for a definite object.

The words "as" and "so" suggest some parallels between our Lord being sent by the Father and our being sent by Christ.

In John's Gospel, the Lord Jesus often refers to His being sent by the Father: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me"; "My doctrine is not Mine but His that sent Me"; "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." And Paul, in recounting his conversion, tells how the Lord Jesus had said to him, "I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." The burden of the Lord's commission lay heavy upon him: "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." One of the two great motives that actuated Paul's ministry was a sense of responsibility to the One who had sent him. On the other hand, our Lord came willingly. He "on wings of love came down." Paul could never forget the wonder of Christ's amazing love to him: "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Thus Paul's other great motive in service was the sense of Christ's love: "The love of Christ constraineth us." Every believer therefore is both a pressed man and a volunteer. In actual experience this involves no contradiction. We are sent and yet we go willingly.

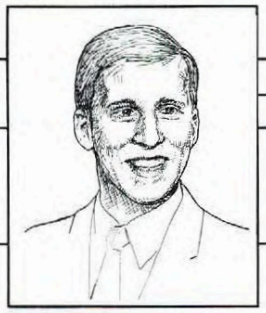


The Lord Jesus was sent to glorify the Father: "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." And Paul's deep ambition was to fulfill the ministry which he had received from Christ, to the glory of His Name. This ambition should be ours too. Nothing satisfies so fully as to know that we are here for the glory of the Lord. "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." We can go no higher than that; it is the *"summum bonum"* of life here and hereafter.

What will be the effect on our souls if gripped by the fact that we have been sent into the world with a definite purpose? There will be a deeper humility, rest and serenity. We shall not fret against His will and purpose that has not accorded us five talents, but shall seek to use what we have, in the fear of the Lord. To do the will of God is success. Moses was the "meekest" of men. The heart that bends will never break. John Newton's notion of the two angels is well known: if one were commissioned to govern a kingdom, and the other to sweep a crossing, each would be equally satisfied with his God-appointed task. To know that we are in the current of the Lord's mind furnishes the answer to the prayer: "I would not have the restless will that hurries to and fro."

And if we are sent to live our life and do our work, we shall have holy confidence and hope. For the Lord's authority will be behind us. We will not have gone on a warfare at our own charges. As His instrument and His voice, our work and our witness must accomplish something for His Kingdom.

If it is thrust home upon us that our life is a mission, our impetus will come from God. There will be a driving force in our lives. We shall not be like so much flotsam and jetsam floating aimlessly on the waves, but rather as ships urged forward by a mighty inward force, following a definite course, bound for a definite destination, and fulfilling a definite service in the King's business. Our lives will not be a patchwork of effort today and apathy tomorrow, but will be continually charged with the energy of concentration and the force of unity. — *E. A.*



HEROES

Celio Secundo Curioni

John Bjorlie

The musty smell of a room too long away from sunlight gagged in Curioni's throat. It reminded him that he too, had been a long time hidden from the reaches of the sun. It must have been two months now that he had been held captive in the castle of Capranio. He wondered if he'd ever get out.

An iron gate clanged shut in the distance. Footsteps echoed down the hallway. Curioni had a visitor. Perhaps he was to be set free!

Hardly. The guard informed him that his new home, until he forgot his foolishness, was to be a neighboring priory, the convent of San Venigno. His new home offered some improvement from the last. He had freedom to move within the premises and liberty to continue his studies — but no more talk of free salvation, mind you!

This convent was the neighborhood stronghold of superstition. From miles around, crowds came to look at the relics. On the altar there was a shrine containing the skulls and some of the bones of St. Agapetus and St. Tibur, the martyr. These were presented for adoration on holy days. Celio Curioni could not stand by. There was something about this man that abhorred the darkness of error. It was the same "something" that loved the sunshine of truth. So Curioni devised a plan.

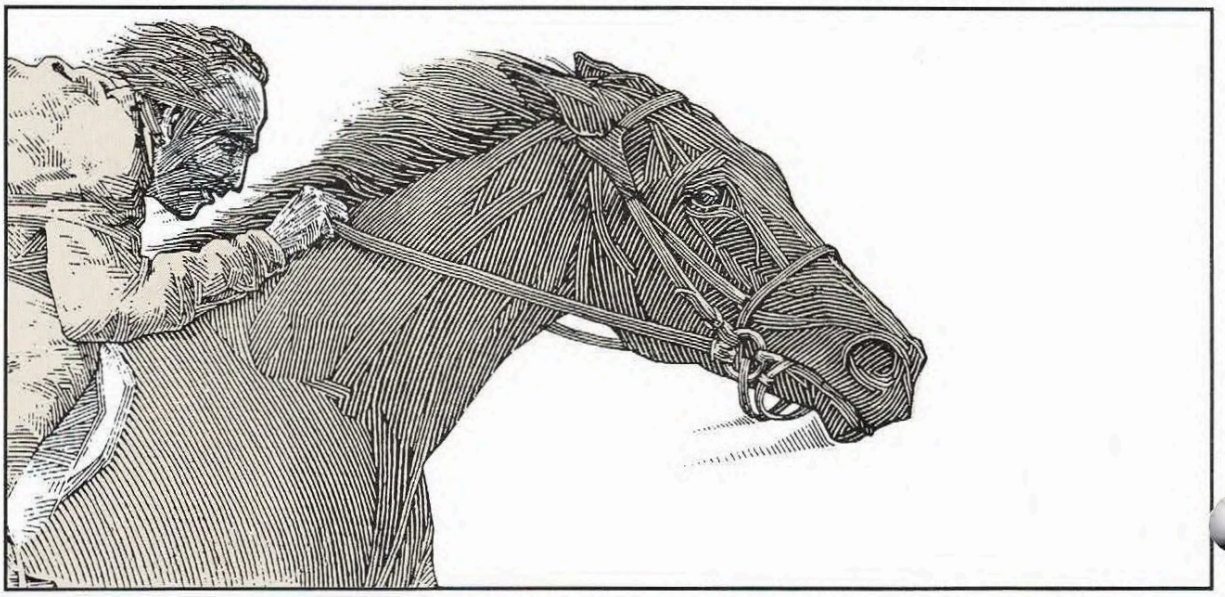
In the monastery library lay an old dust-covered Bible. No one troubled to read it. Curioni located the key to the shrine where the relics lay. Then one day, in 1530, when the monks were occupied elsewhere, he took the Bible from the library and exchanged it for the bones in the box. With chalk, he had written the following words on the Bible's cover: "This is the Ark of the Covenant, wherein a man can inquire of the true oracles of God, and in which are contained the true relics of the saints."

Carefully he closed the lid and locked it. He left the building, carrying the relics with him, which he buried. The key was replaced where he found it. No one had seen him. The shrine continued to be adored.

A saints' day arrived. The monks went to the shrine to carry the relics in the usual procession past a thousand eager faces. The worshipers had assembled but, when the box was opened, the relics had been replaced by the Living Oracles of God.

No words can describe the fury of the crowd. All thoughts turned to Celio Curioni. But the neighborhood was searched in vain for the fugitive. He had disappeared as effectively as the remains of Agapetus and Tibur.

Returning to Milan, Celio found his world in a state of disarray. War was raging in Italy between



Charles V and Francis I of France. Taxes crushed the already poverty-stricken inhabitants. Famines came. Then pestilence. Those who could leave, did so. That is, all except Curioni. He went about helping the poor, whispering consolation to the dying, and with his own hands burying the dead. He gave away everything he had to spare.

When prosperity returned to Milan, the populace overwhelmed him with gratitude. A Milanese noble named Isacchi, invited him to live in his villa and some time afterward Curioni was wed to the beautiful and talented Margarita Bianca, daughter of Curioni's benefactor. Curioni was content, accepted and duly affluent. He was prepared to spend his remaining days in the enjoyment of family and home.

Not far from the quiet precinct of his happy home was the town of Castiglione. To this town, a fiery, Dominican friar arrived from Turin. Curioni slipped Luther's *"Commentary upon the Epistle to the Galatians"* into his pocket as he set out to hear the friar.

A large and disorderly crowd had gathered. They were not disappointed. With vehement outbursts, the friar yelled to the crowd, "Why does Luther please the Germans? Because he allows them to live in sin and calls that Christian liberty!" The crowd jostled one another as they watched the overfed friar dealing his hatred. The fellow continued, "He says that our Lord was only a man, and that He was never born of a virgin." The preacher raved on until the audience was inflamed against the reformers and the simple Gospel they dared to preach.

Curioni could not stand by. He asked for permission to speak. The hushed audience gazed in amazement on this mild man from the countryside.

"You have brought many serious charges against Luther," he said, addressing the monk. "Will you show us the book or the page wherein he has taught these heresies?"

"No, not now," replied the flustered monk, "but come with me to Turin and I will then find you the passages."

"Then," said Curioni, "I will tell *you* the page and the book where Martin Luther has taught the very opposite."

With Luther's treatise in hand, he read aloud to the people a series of extracts which effectively demolished every one of the friar's charges. The effect on the crowd was sudden. Hooting and swinging, they struck the friar. Had a superior officer not intervened, he likely would not have escaped.

The monk hurried to Turin, and lost no time in letting the Board of Inquisition know about it. Bishop Abentino Cirica had Curioni, the truthful heretic, in his power. Curioni slept that night in prison. But he slept well. He had been faithful to his Lord and to the Gospel.

Celio Secundo was a victim of the spiritual darkness that shrouded sixteenth-century Italy. He had been rigorously interrogated by the bishop and many accusations had been leveled at the modest scholar. The bishop threatened him with a death of agony at the stake. But since Curioni had friends in Turin, the bishop didn't dare carry out his threats without a decree from the Pope.

So the bishop set off for Rome and left Curioni in a filthy dungeon. With his feet chained to the thick walls, and with sentries in the building, it looked like Celio Curioni was trapped for the last time, that he was going to pay the ultimate price for his love to God and His truth.

His feet began to swell and caused him intense suffering. The pain would have been unbearable but for his remembrance of the sufferings of Christ. When Curioni recalled the agony of the cross, he said later, "By comparison, my bodily pain was as nothing beside the suffering of His soul for me."

Curioni entreated the jailer to release one foot at a time that it might heal. Then the process would be reversed and his chain changed to the other foot. And so he passed his days with pain and relief, pain and relief.

The soon return of the bishop was inevitable and then nothing, it seemed, could save him from being burned alive. Day followed lonely day. Curioni sat and thought in his little cell. And as he did, he remembered that he had, in happier times, visited this fortress before. By daylight he examined every part of the room, or at least as far as his chains would allow. Hour after hour, day after day, he tried to remember the layout of the building. Slowly the details came. But what good was it to him with that chain holding his foot? A daring idea dawned on his tired brain, an idea that would exceed in audacity and ingenuity any previous act of his life.

First Curioni removed the boot from the free leg and filled it with the tattered remains of his shirt. There was a stool in the room within reach.

One stool leg was broken off and the stool was propped against the wall. Then the false foot was attached to the wooden leg from the stool. This, in turn, was fastened to his knee. As best he could, he covered his three legs with the large Spanish cloak that reached to his heels. Then with a prayer in his heart, he sat back and waited.

Doubtless the waning twilight aided him when the jailer arrived. With an inarticulate grumble, his captor fastened the chain on the sham leg instead of the real one. Both legs were free! Curioni breathed his thanksgiving to the Lord.

The jailers, never suspecting danger, had left the door unlocked. They were confident because he was chained.

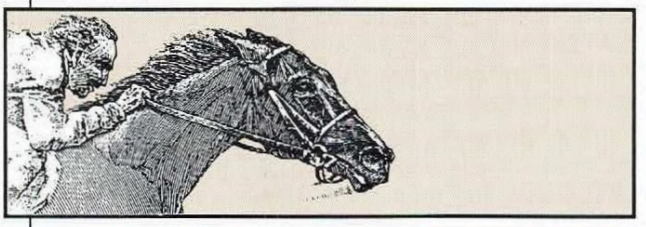
As he opened the door, it creaked. He held his breath and waited. But no footsteps came to steal his hopes away. Carefully he crept down the stairway and along the corridors to the outer entrance. It was locked! Ruin stared him in the face. To break down the door, if he could, would alarm the guards. To remain there would be madness. Any moment footsteps might be heard.

With one supreme effort, in his weakened condition, Curioni scaled the wall to a window, and fell unharmed into the deserted street. Curioni was saved! He had, with the Lord's help, escaped from the jaws of the lion.

When morning dawned and the keepers entered the cell, they stood amazed. It was perfectly inexplicable. The little man with a thirst for truth had flown away. Curioni was free once more to spread the message of hope that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

The heretic escaped! From mouth to mouth the message ran through the streets of Turin. And as it went, the wilder it became. In fact, the escapades of Celio Secundo Curioni were so well known that the church hierarchy decided to take an official stand on his latest escape from the walled fortress.

The Devil himself had come, they said, to the heretic's aid and, assisted him in extricating himself from the just resentment of the church. Curioni, they said, was in league with Satan himself.



It was an interesting story they told but Curioni didn't allow them to cherish such opinions for long. Soon after, there appeared a printed pamphlet, written by himself, explaining everything.

The Inquisition raged. Curioni moved from town to town. He would be awarded a seat at some university, for he was a renowned scholar, only to leave it and flee for his life.

He moved from Pavia to Ferrara and then to Lucca. Again and again he escaped by a hairsbreadth. But Curioni saw that his native land was closed to him forever. After running many desperate risks, he arrived in Zurich, Switzerland, leaving his wife Margarita, and his children behind. He sought employment there. Soon after, he became the rector of a college in Berne. But before he could begin this new employment, he had one perilous journey before him that would cause the boldest to hesitate. He had to return secretly to Lucca and bring his wife and children to the safety of Switzerland.

Friends in Lucca agreed to make arrangements for his family while he waited in the nearby town of Pescia where he was not as well known. There he stabled his horse at an inn, ordered some refreshments and sat down to dinner. But he had been reported on. A group of local thugs, led by a *barisello* (a captain of the Papal Guard) surrounded the inn. Suddenly the door was flung open and the soldiers burst into the room.

More than once Celio had been near martyrdom but never nearer than at that moment. In utter despair, he sprang from the table, clutching in his hand the knife he had been using to cut his meat. The Inquisitors, as cowardly as they were cruel, drew back. It was the moment he needed. Curioni rushed to the door. The ruffians seemed paralyzed. They let him cross the courtyard to the stable and he had already mounted his horse before the spell was broken. In mad pursuit, the bullies determined he would not get away. The chase was becoming desperate when God reminded them that He was still over all.

A furious thunderstorm broke over Lucca that night. In the noise and confusion, Curioni vanished. His friends spirited his family to a rendezvous and, from that time on, his native land, shrouded by the shadow of spiritual death, would know him no more. But not before this "Martin Luther of Italy" had raised the gospel banner over a score of towns and, through it, had seen some of his countrymen brought to the light. **u**

The Almighty Servant

F. W. Grant

The ways in which the Lord is presented to us in Scripture show how near to dual personality we have to come in any simple apprehension of its statements. Their very boldness (when we realize who it is that is spoken of) exhibits a characteristic feature of inspiration, which does not concern itself with mere mental perplexities, in matters that are so evidently beyond us. We cannot fathom the Christ of God. We can realize how perfectly — divinely — on both sides He suits us; though we may be quite unable to put the two sides together. Dual personality would not suit us; but we want One who is both perfectly human and truly Divine — One who can sleep in the storm on the sea, and then rise and still it. Such a Saviour we have — how good to know it! — if we can see nothing beside His heart of love that unites the two together.

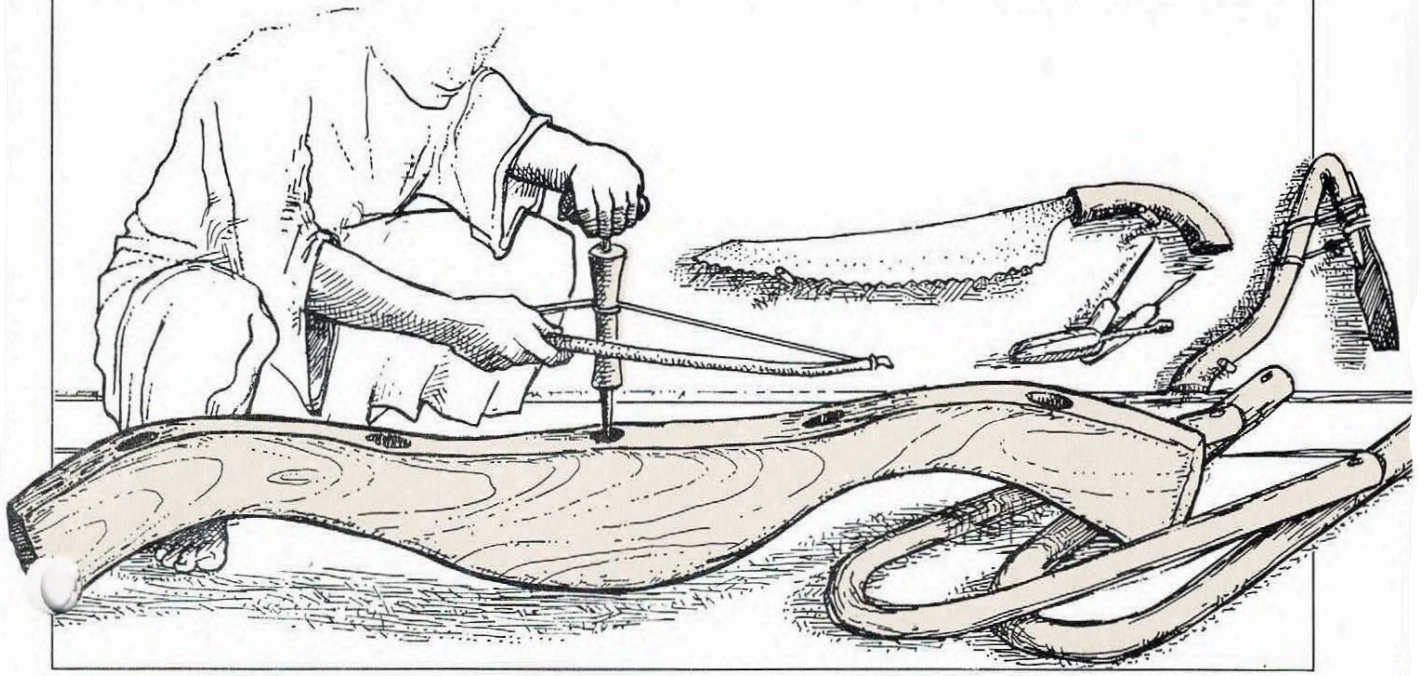
THE LORD IN HIS CHILDHOOD

Think of His waxing strong in spirit, growing in wisdom as in stature, in favor with God and man (Luke 2:40, 52). How perfectly is He man; how really within human limits; a marvelous Child, yet a Child, as He is plainly called. Who shall adjust the divine to the human here, omniscience to growing knowledge? Shall we attempt it? What would it be but to exercise ourselves in things too high for us, and prove but the pride of our hearts? Would heart or conscience find deeper rest or satisfaction in Him if we were able to comprehend what, for all these centuries, has been inquired into and speculated upon, with no more knowledge achieved at the end than at the beginning?

But assuredly it is the Son of Man I find here — the Divine Person in all the truth of humanity; and who shall deny me the happiness of drinking in the grace that has here stooped down to the condition of a child, so that a child may realize His sympathy and adore Him for His love? Thank God that none can deny me: it is as open to one as to another; and the love is as unfathomable in it as is the Person.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD TO ISRAEL

In the Old Testament, there is a passage to which we naturally turn in such a connection as this, to admire afresh its sublimity and beauty. It brings together in sharpest contrast such oppositions as these. It is the voice of the Lord to Israel that we hear in it, but we soon recognize it as fa-



miliar to us. It asks: "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" (Isa. 50:1). Nay, the Lord is not so poor: "Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves; and for your transgressions is your mother put away" (Isa. 50:1).

And now comes out the controversy that He has with them: "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?" (Isa. 50:2). Here is Jehovah Himself come as a Saviour to them, but there is no response; He is not recognized, or credited with power to redeem. And we know well when this was: when One came to His own, and His own received Him not; and though the power of God was in His hand, and He used it for them without stint, yet they would not believe in His gracious visitation.

Now He openly declares Himself: "Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, and make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering" (Isa. 50:2–3).

But it was not in this guise He had come; and the voice becomes strangely altered. It drops into a softer key, and is now appealingly human: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isa. 50:4).

"We are again beyond the limit of comprehension . . . but we are not beyond the limit of enjoyment or of faith."

CHRIST IN HIS SUFFERING AND REJECTION

We need not, for our purpose, go further. The prophet does, and shows us plainly enough. Here, however, we have already the contrast we are seeking. It is the Almighty who is come in servant's form: it is He who is strangely taking the place of obedience and acquiring the tongue of the learned for the ministry of grace to individual need, if the nation at large rejects Him. For this He becomes Himself a learner, and is wakened morning by morning to "hear" as that. Yet it is the One who dries up the sea and makes the rivers a wilderness. Who shall put these things together? For satisfaction to the intellect, no one can. Yet even the intellect may be satisfied another way: namely, in the assured conviction of its inability to understand one's own being — to know how "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thess. 5:23) make up one man. Is it so wonderful, then, that there should be modes of the Infinite that baffle us altogether? Or that "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father"? (Matt. 11:27).

Let us turn reverently to another scene in which we find Him whose Name is "Wonderful" — to the awful scene of Gethsemane. Here the "cup," which He took upon the Cross, is causing Him agony in the anticipation of it. Three times He prays that, if it were possible, it might pass from Him; and to this He adds the words so familiar to us, "Not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

The cup could not pass. He must drink it. But when we realize it as that which, expressed outwardly by the three hours of darkness, has its inner meaning in the agonizing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46), we can understand that it was the very necessity of His holy nature that He shrank from it and could not take it as of His own will, but only as the Divine will for Him. Here, surely, we have a perfect and therefore a real, human will. He is as true man as any man can be; and personally man, as such a will must prove Him. We are again beyond the limit of comprehension here, if we say, as we must say, "Yes, but He is nonetheless Divine"; but we are not beyond the limit of enjoyment or of faith.

At the Cross we find the cup itself — the awful abandonment; but who shall explain it? Or who shall tell us how He is, all through, the Man of faith, yea, the Pattern of faith? Shall we not rather drop all such questioning, and believe, where alone belief finds its opportunity, where we cannot see? **u**

The Personal Worker

J. B. Hewitt

Andrew was a very ordinary man. His name is only mentioned thirteen times in the New Testament, but each reference to him unfolds something of his character. He lived to introduce others to the Lord Jesus. He was the first home missionary (John 1:41), the first children's missionary (John 6:9), and the first foreign missionary (John 12:22) of the apostolic band. Musing over the references to this disciple, we learn of his definite conversion (John 1:37–40), his happy communion (John 1:39), his personal devotion (John 1:41), his helpful suggestion (John 6:8-9), his spiritual illumination (John 12:21–23), his inquiring spirit (Mark 13:3), his complete consecration (Matt. 4:18–20), and his joy in prayer (Acts 1:13).

His name means "manly," and this was characteristic of him throughout his service for the Master. Manliness was seen in his character in six ways.

(1) In the step he took (John 1:37). The testimony of the Baptist influenced John and Andrew to leave their old teacher and to follow the Lord Jesus. John directed them to Christ (v. 36). His theme was His atoning death and they were attracted to Him (v. 37). Happy the hearer who finds his attraction in, and his attention drawn to, the Lord of Glory. Andrew's interest is expressed in the inquiry: "Master, where dwellest Thou?" The spirit of inquiry marked this new convert and his interest is heightened by the reply made by the Lord (v. 39). Well might the Lord ask them (and us), "What seek ye?" The invitation was accepted; "They came, they saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day." Thus we are introduced to the secret of all Christian life and service; "Abide in Me." What impressions were made on these two disciples as they abode with Him that day.

(2) In the service he rendered (John 1:41–42). Abiding leads to service and enables us to witness for our Lord in the most difficult place — the home circle.

You will notice his *difficult task* (v. 41a). "He first findeth his own brother." What enthusiasm — "first" — it was the first thing he did. He became deeply concerned about others and began his work in the home circle. Surely this is divine order and pleasing to the Lord (Acts 1:8). Reaching others should always be regarded as a matter of first importance. What enterprise — "he findeth!" Does that not suggest patient search for Peter? Andrew realized Peter's need and yearned for his blessing. Clear vision leads to holy passion which compels to dynamic mission, finding others for the Lord. What evangelism! "His own brother." Andrew's first find was a great one; he began his missionary work at home, not abroad. Here is a wonderful lesson on soul winning, for a good thing is worth telling and sharing.

Out of his heart came this *delightful testimony* (v. 42). What are the marks of this soul-thrilling, saving testimony? First, it was beautiful in its simplicity: "We have found the Messiah." There was no argument, no elaborate reasoning, but a simple witness based on personal experience (3:11). Every word was easy to understand and carried conviction to the heart of Peter. There was also sincerity: "We have found . . ." Andrew wanted Peter to share in the discovery that was so precious to him. Here was a new-found interest and joy thrilling his soul. And there was certainty and brevity. Andrew was absolutely certain of his message and was not ashamed to speak for his Lord. Only eleven words, yet what wealth of meaning, fullness of truth and convincing testimony they convey! The world is still waiting for personal conviction and public witness. May we

go, tell, and bring others to the Lord.

(3) *The sacrifice he made* (Mark 1:16-18). Almost a year has passed and Andrew, having begun at the center, works his way out to the circumference and the Lord directs him to his life-work. "We being delivered . . . might serve" (Luke 1:74). Now Andrew is called to definite work. Discipleship leads him to a specific ministry and apostleship (Mark 3:14-19). The Lord was looking for helpers then, and is looking for them now, and He usually calls those who are already occupied (1:16). Theirs will be the same task, only in another realm. They were to catch men alive and this has been rightly called "the greatest work in the world." They responded immediately to the call and were informed of their new ministry. It would be difficult work but they had the promise of the Lord's enabling. "I will make you to become," implies progress in a process. In the school of Christ, we are fashioned for our life-work and our response should be whole-hearted: "They left all," and warm-hearted: "They followed Him."

He equips us for every task; He trains us, teaches us and bestows upon us all the wisdom and grace required in this delightful work. Andrew, like his brother and fellow fisherman, was willing to trust the Lord and went on to victory over fear and over the flesh.

His manliness is seen again later in:

(4) *The suggestion he offered* (John 6:8-9). Further training is given the disciples by the Lord and now He tests them. It was not to perplex or humble him that the Lord proved Philip as He did; it was to teach him. Here Andrew comes forward to help, but with doubts and fears. His suggestion was helpful, not critical; it was well-meant although weak and it was adopted by the Lord to the blessing of the hungry multitude. The Lord took counsel with them, regarding them as His fellow-workers and taught them to lean hard upon Him and do His bidding. The lad surrendered all willingly to the Lord and, in His hand, the impossible became possible. In our service, all that the Lord requires is complete surrender (v. 11), perfect trust (v. 6), and loyal obedience (v. 10). He will bless our resources.

"He trains us, teaches us and bestows upon us all the wisdom and grace required for this delightful work."

(5) *The sympathy he showed* (John 12:21–22). These Greeks knew that the Jews have rejected the Lord (Matt. 21:23; 23:29), yet they intimated their desire to see Him. Andrew made the introduction along with Philip. Andrew readily cooperated in the grand work of introducing these Greeks to the Saviour. Faith and courage are strengthened by companionship. They were helpful to one another and cooperated in bringing men to the Master. The fulfillment of the desire, "We would see Jesus," is only possible for us through the cross. What a great yet brief sermon the Lord preached that day. A single grain of wheat is His text, the cross His theme. Nature is an expression of the thoughts of God, a part of His revelation, and a parable of better things. His self-sacrifice calls us to follow Him in the service of love and personal attachment.

(6) *The company he sought* (Acts 1:3–9). Andrew finds himself at the Master's feet, drinking in revealed truth which balanced His outlook on life years later (Mark 13:3–4). The last glimpse we have of him is in the happy company of kindred souls waiting upon God in prayer (1:13–14). Their hearts have been fused as one; petty problems have been settled, and now, in joyful obedience and prayerful expectation, they wait the fulfillment of the Master's promise: "Ye shall receive power." These saints were interdependent. They were a real brotherhood and their interest in prayer was amply rewarded by divine blessing at Pentecost.

Thus Andrew found in the Lord Jesus one who met his needs, solved his problems, and satisfied his heart's deepest longings. For him, the sin question was settled (John 1:29); the social question — he enjoyed the warmth of the friendship of the Lord (John 1), and the companionship of fellow saints (Acts 1:13). He also discovered that the Lord could solve the self question, so he gladly surrendered the management of his life to Him (Mark 1:18), and later the service question was disposed of, for Andrew found lasting joy in working for His glorious Lord (Mark 3:14–15).

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Every Day Reading Plan

Section 8: Joshua — Possessing Your Possession

August 1	Joshua 1:1–18	Joshua and the people prepare to enter Canaan
August 2	Joshua 2:1–24	Rahab and the two spies
August 3	Joshua 3:1–17	Crossing over the Jordan
August 4	Joshua 4:1–24	Two memorials — twelve stones in and out of Jordan
August 5	Joshua 5:1–12	Two cuttings off — circumcision and no more manna
August 6	Joshua 5:13–15	A Man with a sword — the Unseen Captain
August 7	Joshua 6:1–27	The conquest of Jericho
August 8	Joshua 7:1–26	Failure at Ai — Achan's deceit
August 9	Joshua 8:1–29	Achan's death — success at Ai
August 10	Joshua 8:30–35	The commemoration of the covenant
August 11	Joshua 9:1–27	The non-aggression pact with Gibeon
August 12	Joshua 10:1–27	The southern confederacy routed
August 13	Joshua 10:28–43	Mopping-up operations in the south
August 14	Joshua 11:1–15	The northern confederacy defeated at Merom
August 15	Joshua 11:16–23	An overview of the victories
August 16	Joshua 12:1–24	A roster of the kings of Canaan
August 17	Joshua 13:1–7	The task unfinished — much land to be possessed
August 18	Joshua 13:8–33	The land for Reuben, Gad and Manasseh
August 19	Joshua 14:1–15	The land for Caleb
August 20	Joshua 15:1–63	The land for Judah
August 21	Joshua 16:1–10	Joseph's double portion: Ephraim
August 22	Joshua 17:1–18	Joseph's double portion: Manasseh
August 23	Joshua 18:1–28	The portion of the other seven tribes
August 24	Joshua 19:1–51	The portion of the other seven tribes
August 25	Joshua 20:1–9	The cities of refuge
August 26	Joshua 21:1–45	The cities of the Levites
August 27	Joshua 22:1–34	The trouble with two altars
August 28	Joshua 23:1–16	Joshua's last counsels to Israel
August 29	Joshua 24:1–13	Joshua's historical overview to Israel
August 30	Joshua 24:14–23	Joshua's farewell charge to Israel
August 31	Joshua 24:24–33	The covenant renewed and Joshua's death

Every Day Reading Plan

Section 9: Judges and Ruth — No King in Israel

September 1	Judges 1:1–36	Judah and Simeon lead the invasion: incomplete victory
September 2	Judges 2:1–9	Review of the conquest and death of Joshua
September 3	Judges 2:10–3:4	The sin-cycle and its results
September 4	Judges 3:5–11	The first judge: Othniel
September 5	Judges 3:12–31	The second and third judges: Ehud and Shamgar
September 6	Judges 4:1–24	The fourth: Deborah and Barak
September 7	Judges 5:1–31	The victory duet
September 8	Judges 6:1–40	The fifth judge: Gideon's call
September 9	Judges 7:1–25	The victory over Midian
September 10	Judges 8:1–32	Gideon has problems and becomes a problem
September 11	Judges 8:33–9:57	A judge becomes a tyrant: Abimelech
September 12	Judges 10:1–18	Judges seven and eight: Tola and Jair
September 13	Judges 11:1–12:7	The ninth judge: Jephthah
September 14	Judges 12:8–15	Three minor judges: Ibzan, Elon and Abdon
September 15	Judges 13:1–25	The thirteenth judge: Samson
September 16	Judges 14:1–20	Samson's marriage and riddle
September 17	Judges 15:1–20	Samson's revenge
September 18	Judges 16:1–22	Samson and Delilah
September 19	Judges 16:23–31	Samson's death and final victory
September 20	Judges 17:1–13	Confusion: Micah's man-made religion
September 21	Judges 18:1–31	Confusion: the Danites' invasion
September 22	Judges 19:1–30	Confusion: the Levite's concubine
September 23	Judges 20:1–48	Confusion: the Benjamites' intransigence
September 24	Judges 21:1–25	The Benjamites' second chance
September 25	Ruth 1:1–22	A chapter of choices — Elimelech's, Naomi's, Orpah's and Ruth's
September 26	Ruth 2:1–16	The kindness of Boaz
September 27	Ruth 2:17–3:4	The concern of Naomi
September 28	Ruth 3:5–18	The obedience of Ruth
September 29	Ruth 4:1–12	The kinsman redeemer
September 30	Ruth 4:13–22	Wedding bells and a baby boy

Joshua

The book of Joshua, evidently named after the central figure in the book, covers about twenty-five years during the fourteenth century B.C. It is the transition book between the Pentateuch and the historical section of the Old Testament. It answers *historically* to the Acts, giving an account of the establishment of Israel in Canaan as Acts describes the establishment of the Church. It answers *experientially* to Ephesians, both explaining how war is waged against the enemy in order to possess your possession. It also answers *typically* to Hebrews, showing the superiority of our Jehoshua (Jehovah is Saviour) in leading His people into rest.

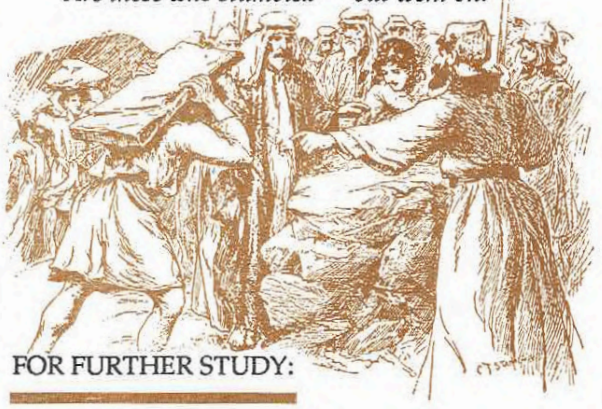
Joshua, the man, was an Ephraimite (Num. 13:8) who was Moses' personal servant. He attended faithfully in the tabernacle (Ex. 33:11), was one of only two believing spies who reconnoitered Canaan (Num. 14:6–10), and was Israel's commanding officer against Amalek (Ex. 17). He was over ninety years of age at the beginning of the conquest of the Promised Land. As Moses' symbol was the rod, Joshua's was a spear.

There are, in fact, three great Joshuas in Scripture. Joshua, the son of Nun, led Israel into Canaan at the beginning of their history as a nation. Joshua, the son of Jozadak (Ezra 3:2) led an Israelitish remnant back to Canaan at the end of Old Testament history. The first Joshua, a soldier, led the people to fight for God. The second Joshua, a high priest, led the people to fellowship with God. Of course, the third Joshua (the Hebrew form of *Jesus*) fulfills both of these pictures and more. He is the great Ruler-Priest.

Joshua, the book, may be simply divided into three sections. In Part I, we see Israel *entering the land* (ch. 1–5). In Part II, they are *engaging the enemy* (ch. 6–12). In Part III, they are *establishing their territories* (ch. 13–24). Or we might say: they are going in, battling through, and settling down, in the land of Israel. These three divisions answer to the three charges of Joshua to the people. At the beginning (3:1–6), he calls them to sanctify themselves for entering in. In the midst of the battles (8:30–35; see also Deut. 27), he calls them to recognize the real battle between blessing and cursing, between good and evil, between obedience and disobedience. So the middle charge was to stand for God and continue in His Word. At the end of the book (ch. 23–24), Joshua calls Israel together again to Shechem. There he calls the people to serve the Lord (24:14–25) all their days. In fact the word "serve" occurs fourteen times in this passage.

Joshua is an invigorating book, as encouraging as the man who lent it his name. It is not, however, without its warnings. At the very threshold of the conquest, after the triumph at Jericho, there is humiliating defeat at Ai. And the four reasons for failure there are the same for it today. They i) asked not counsel of the Lord, ii) underestimated the enemy, iii) had unjudged sin in the camp, and iv) were not united in their efforts. But, thank the Lord, the book does not end there! Ours is a restoring God:

They on the heights are not the souls
Who never erred nor went astray,
Who trod unswerving to their goals
Along a smooth, rose-bordered way.
No, those who stand where first comes dawn
Are those who stumbled — but went on.



FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Notes on Joshua, J. G. Bellett
Winning and Losing, R. E. Harlow
Joshua: Rest-Land Won, I. Jensen
The Land of Life and Rest, W. G. Scroggie
Addresses on the Book of Joshua, H. A. Ironside
Joshua to Solomon, G. C. Morgan
Meditations on Joshua, H. L. Rossier
Judges and Ruth, F. C. Jennings
Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, C. A. Coates
Meditations on the Book of Judges, H. L. Rossier
Lectures on Judges and Ruth, S. Ridout
Amidst Alien Corn, D. Bingham
How to Overcome, J. T. Mawson

Judges & Ruth

The story of Judges is the story of the human race. It is a downward spiral: *departure* from the way of truth, *domination* by the enemy, and the need for, and provision of, *deliverance* by God. The span covered by the period of these judges (including the book of Ruth) is not easy to calculate because it would seem that some of the stories overlap in time. Probably it covers about 300 years. But see what happens when we calculate the totals for the years of bondage and the years of peace under the various judges, as displayed in the table below.

Even considering that there must be some overlap, the years of peace are almost three times the number of the years of oppression. This is not to excuse the declension in Israel; in fact, one could wonder how they often waited for eighteen years or more until they cried to the Lord. One could wonder, that is, were it not for our own wayward hearts. It is good to see, however, that the victory that Jehovah gave Israel through these judges was not a superficial thing. In most cases, it seems to have lasted for the lifetime of that generation (40 years or so) and, in the days of Ehud, well into the lives of the next generation also.

These judges (the total varies, depending on whether you include Abimelech, Eli and Samuel and if Deborah and Barak are listed as one) are also called deliverers, or saviours. That is, they did not simply tell the Israelites what they should do, as *the law did*, but actively led them in victory against their enemies, as *the Lord does*.

In spite of the encouraging victories at times, we see deterioration throughout the book. Othniel, at the beginning is an example of what married life ought to be; Samson, at the end, is a solemn warning against the unequal yoke. Sisera, an enemy general, is slain by a woman with a blow to the head; Abimelech, supposedly a king in Israel, must be stopped from destroying his own people by a blow to the head by another woman. Gideon took the fords of Jordan and slaughtered the enemy; Jephthah took the fords of Jordan and slaughtered his brethren because they didn't speak the way he did. Hardly a ray of light is left when we come to the end of the book.

Thus the little vignette painted in Ruth is such a relief. As Graham Scroggie writes: *"Ruth is like a lovely lily in a stagnant pool. Here, instead of unfaithfulness, is loyalty, and instead of immorality, is purity. Here, instead of battlefields, are harvest fields, and instead of the warrior's shout is the harvester's song."*

While Judges brings before us the longsuffering grace of God to Israel and His insistent purpose in restoring her — which He ultimately will do — in Ruth we also have His willingness to save sinners of the Gentiles and bring them into intimate association with the Messiah Himself! Naomi, the Jewess comes back to her kinsman; Ruth comes too and finds a redeemer.

The little book of Ruth presents Boaz as the Mighty man with the resources necessary to help as in Matthew; the Working man who "will not rest until he has finished the thing" as in Mark; the Kinsman who is willing to pay the redemption price as in Luke; and the Loving man who "moreover" wants this Gentile to be his bride. It is one of the richest pictures of redemption in the Word.

ENEMIES	BONDAGE	JUDGES	PEACE
Mesopotamia	8 years	Othniel	40 years
Moabites, etc.	18 years	Ehud	80 years
Canaanites	20 years	Deborah & Barak	40 years
Midianites	7 years	Gideon	40 years
Israelites	3 years	Abimelech	45 years*
Amonites	18 years	Jephthah	31 years
Philistines	40 years	Samson	20 years
TOTALS	**114 years**		**296 years**

*under Tola and Jair

Fighting Without & Within

Defeat through disobedience; victory through faith

JOSHUA

① FINAL PREPARATIONS
On the Plains of Moab (ch. 1–2)

② THE CENTRAL CAMPAIGN
At Gilgal, Jericho, and Ai
(ch. 3 to 8:29)

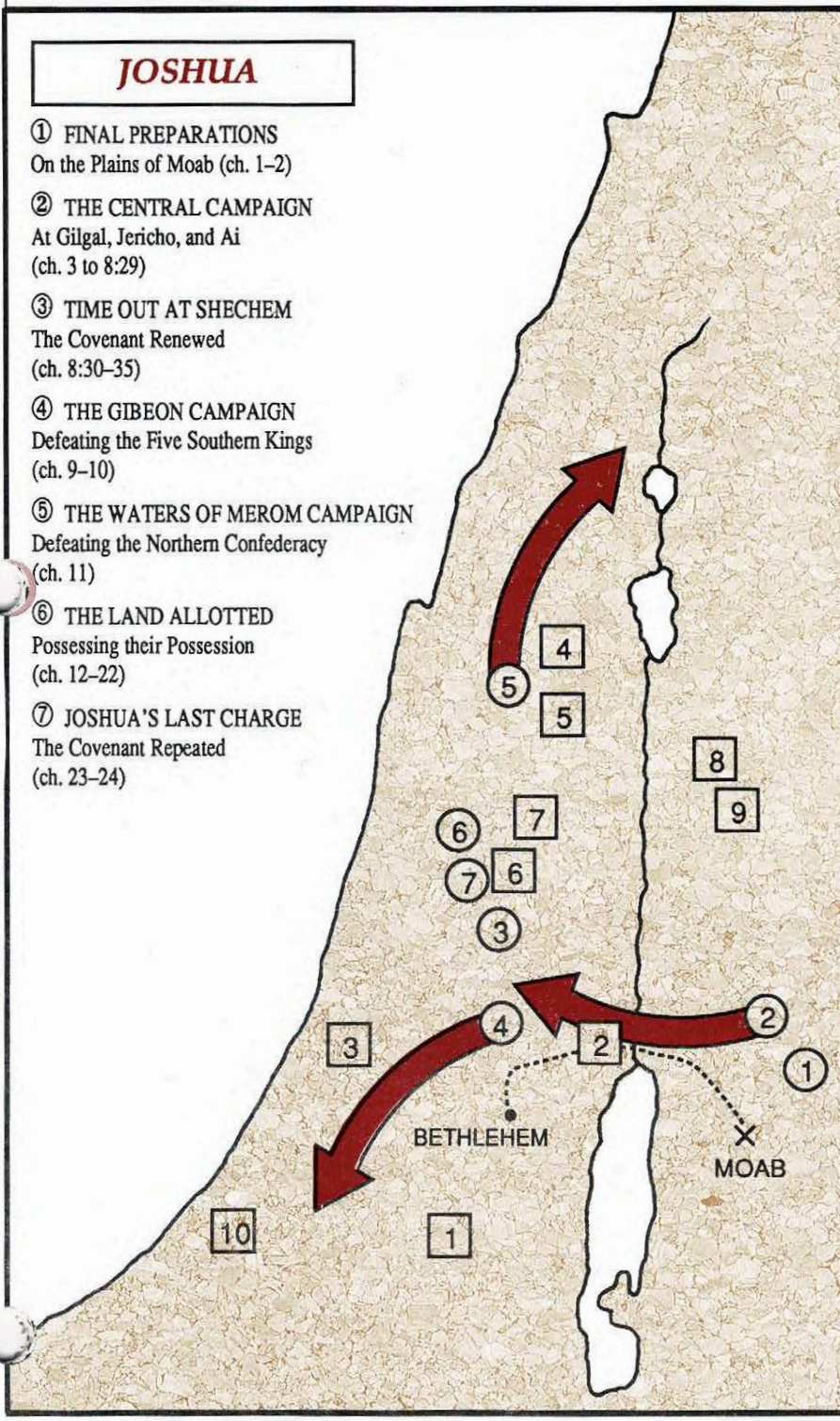
③ TIME OUT AT SHECHEM
The Covenant Renewed
(ch. 8:30–35)

④ THE GIBEON CAMPAIGN
Defeating the Five Southern Kings
(ch. 9–10)

⑤ THE WATERS OF MEROM CAMPAIGN
Defeating the Northern Confederacy
(ch. 11)

⑥ THE LAND ALLOTTED
Possessing their Possession
(ch. 12–22)

⑦ JOSHUA'S LAST CHARGE
The Covenant Repeated
(ch. 23–24)



JUDGES

1 Othniel, Caleb's nephew and son-in-law, defeats the Anakim and takes Hebron (1:9–15); defeats Chushan of Mesopotamia (3:7–11)

2 Ehud, a left-handed Benjamite, slays Eglon the Moabite king at Jericho (3:12–30)

3 Shamgar kills 600 Philistines with an ox goad and so delivers Israel (3:31)

4 Deborah and Barak defeat the forces of Jabin under Sisera at Mount Tabor (4:1–5:31)

5 Gideon (Jerub-baal) defeats the Midianites at the Hill of Moreh with 300 men (6:1–8:35)

6 Abimelech, Gideon's son, an oppressor instead of a deliverer, is crowned king at Shechem (9:1–57)

7 Tola judges Israel 23 years from the Mountains of Ephraim (10:1–2)

8 Jair, with his 30 sons, judges for 22 years from Gilead (10:3-5)

9 Jephthah defeats the Amorites at Mizpah and is included in Hebrews 11 (11:1–12:7)

10 After Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, Samson wars against the Philistines until he dies, restored by a gracious God, at Gaza (13:1–16:31)

RUTH

- from Moab to Bethlehem
- from idols to Jehovah
- from hopelessness to redemption
- from widowhood to the Messianic line

LOOK AT BOOKS

A Good Foundation

Jim McKendrick

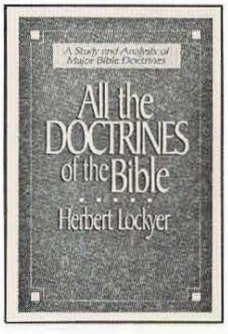
In Acts 2:42 we read, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine . . . " All would agree that this should be one of our goals. But what is the apostles' doctrine? You might answer that it is what was taught by the apostles as recorded in the New Testament. But is that right? Much of what was taught in the New Testament had its basis in the Old Testament. Stephen, for instance, preached the Gospel and many were won to Christ. And yet to the Sanhedrin he demonstrated that Israel's real problem was that they neither believed nor obeyed the Old Testament. Paul consistently denied that he had in any way overturned or disobeyed any of the Hebrew Scriptures. The apostles' doctrine is Old Testament doctrine blazoned forth in the person of Christ, the complete revelation of the Father (Heb. 1:1-3). The doctrine of the Church is the only exclusively New Testament revelation. The whole Bible is the revelation of God to man about Himself, His glory, and His purposes in mankind. We need to study the whole Bible in order to understand doctrine.

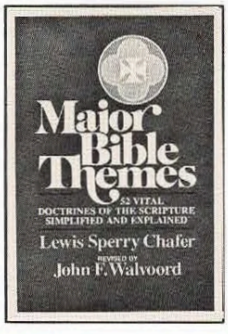
That is a tall order. For the Bible is not a Systematic Theology book. It is a collection of biography, poetry, prophecy, and exposition in which God is revealed in the crucible of history. But there is help along these lines. One way is to arrange what the Bible says about any one subject in topical form. Thus we can see the scriptural unfolding of any particular doctrine.

Two men who have done a great service in this direction are Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer and Dr. Herbert Lockyer. I have in my library fifteen volumes by Dr. Lockyer called the *"All"* series. One of those volumes is *"All the Doctrines of the Bible."* In thirty-one short chapters, he has given a brief outline of what the Bible teaches on thirty-one doctrinal topics. Leading you through each of these doctrines, he gives good definitions, logical presentations of each subject and short synopses of what great theologians have to say on each subject. This book gives good overviews of these doctrines and will cause you to want to study each of them further. He includes Scripture passages that will help get you started on a study of your own.

Dr. Chafer was a prolific writer. One of his books that is excellent for those beginning a study of Bible doctrine is *Major Bible Themes.* As in Dr. Lockyer's book, the chapters are short, but in this book there are forty-nine chapters. There is good reason to have both books because the books each cover some areas that the other doesn't. One of the things I appreciate about Dr. Chafer's book is the multitude of Scripture references. While Dr. Lockyer seems to synthesize a great deal of material for you, Dr. Chafer directs you to the passages that will give you a solid biblical basis for your beliefs. The other feature that I like about Dr. Chafer's book is the question section at the end of each chapter; not just two or three, but fourteen questions relating to each doctrine. This makes it a valuable study tool and a good book for classroom situations. If you are able to answer each of the questions, basing your response on Scripture, you would have a fundamental grasp of Bible doctrine.

I'm afraid that many of us would be unable to answer most of the questions posed. If you think you would fail a test on basic Bible doctrine, you would do well to pick up a copy of each of these books to help you understand the Scriptures' foundational truths.





FOR FURTHER STUDY

Great Doctrines of the Bible (3 volumes), W. A. Criswell; Zondervan
Things Which Become Sound Doctrine, J. D. Pentecost; Revell
A Survey of Bible Doctrine, C. C. Ryrie; Moody
Lectures in Systematic Theology, H. C. Thiessen, Revised by V. D. Doerksen; Eerdman.

Do Sheep Become Shepherds?

Colin F. Anderson

They never do in natural life. But the spiritual life is different. It is desirable that those who once were led should, in turn, become leaders. Some sheep should become shepherds. Of course, those who do must still be fed and directed by the Lord, the Chief Shepherd; they continue as His sheep even while they shepherd others. In fact, only those who are characteristically submissive to His will are fit to lead. King Saul presents a sad picture of a leader who lost his authority because he refused to be directed by God's Word. "You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king . . ." Samuel told him (1 Sam. 15:26). That is an abiding principle (It applies to the authority of a father and mother in a home as well as to the authority of elders in local churches).

For all of us, progress in God's school demands obedience springing from a heart that loves to obey. "I made haste and delayed not to keep Thy commandments" (Ps. 119:60) should be the motto of every Christian — but especially of the elders, for they are to be "examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).

DO ALL GOOD SHEEP BECOME SHEPHERDS?

No, for though all Christians should model themselves after the example of the elders, each one should build his life around the special work the Lord has designed him to do (Rom. 12:6-8; Col. 4:17).

One of the earmarks of elders is that "they have spoken to you the word of God" (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Tim. 3:2). This is not necessarily preaching from the pulpit, but indicates that, privately, as well as publicly, they can open God's Word and encourage or correct others effectively.

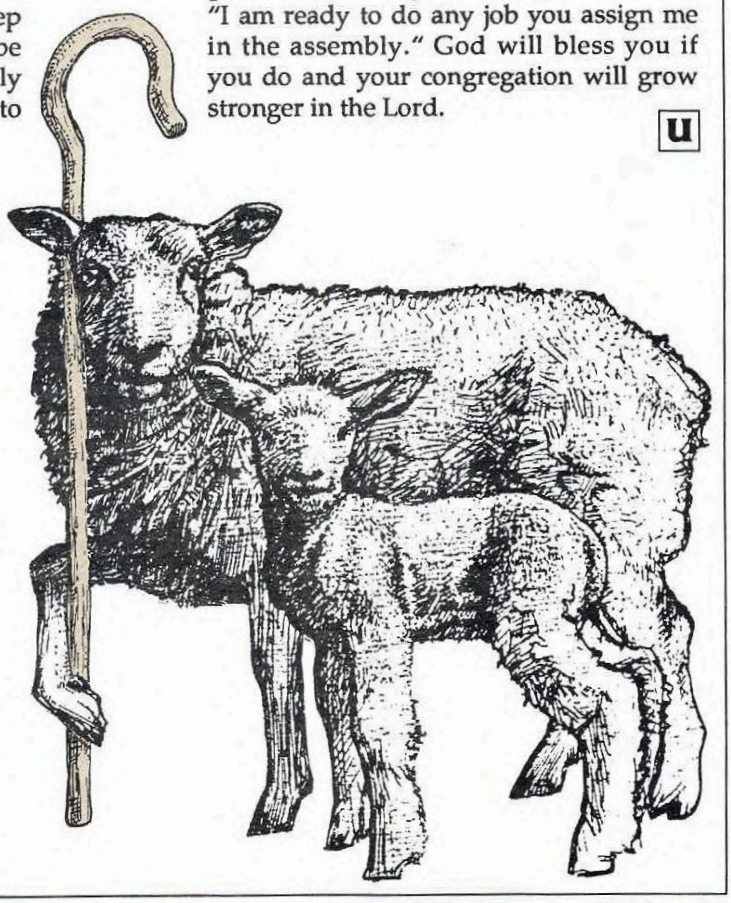
It should be the earnest and prayerful desire of existing elders that God would raise up from the local fellowship men and women to lead others in the right way. Yes, women have a responsibility here (Titus 2:3,4), but it is to qualified men exclusively that the shepherding of the whole flock is committed. The standards are high, but the reward is great (1 Peter 5:4).

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN SHEEP ARE BECOMING SHEPHERDS?

We will know that budding elders are among us when we see our younger men developing the characteristics outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Those who are potential elders will show a genuine concern for the needs of others, and will overcome natural fear in order to share with the assembly what God has taught them from His Word. Fellow-believers will seek their advice.

WHAT CAN I DO?

You can make yourself familiar with the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7. You can pray that God will stir the hearts of His people so that they will pattern their lives after the character-traits given there. And you can say to the Lord, "I am ready to do any job you assign me in the assembly." God will bless you if you do and your congregation will grow stronger in the Lord.



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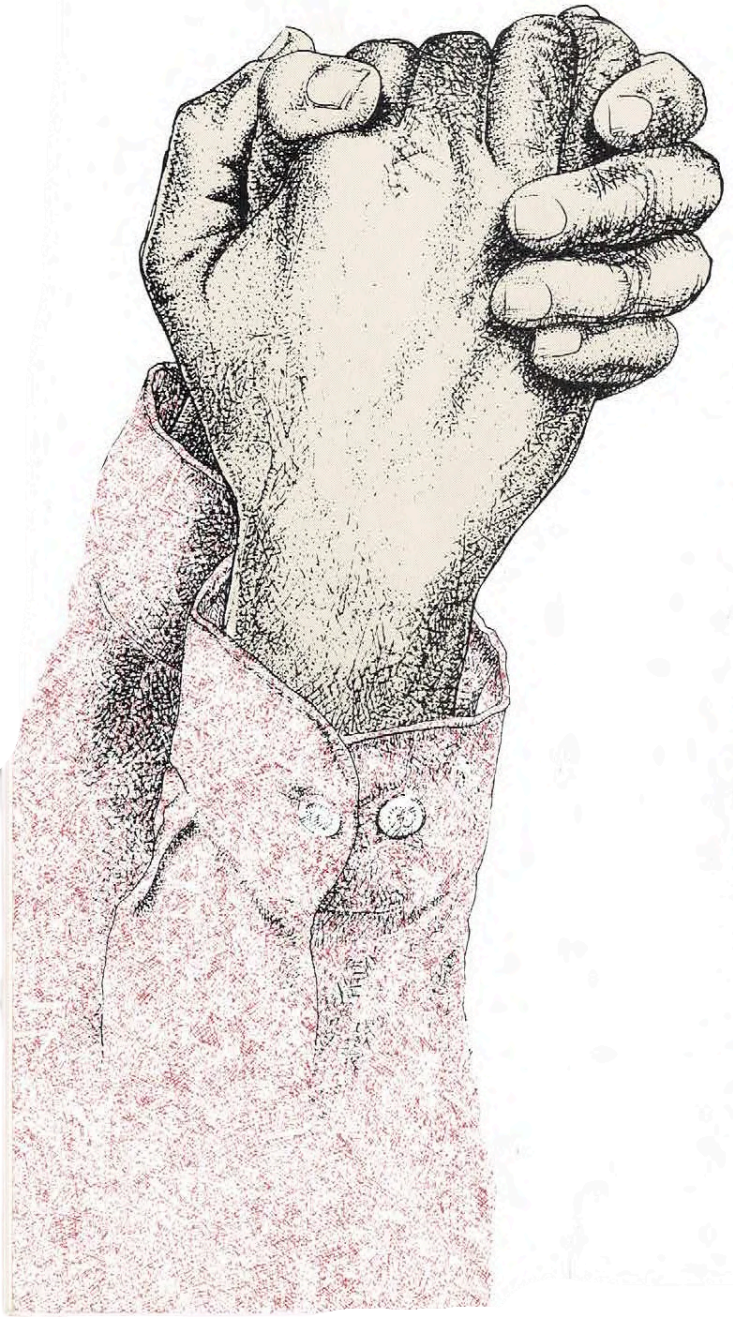

Be Often There

What various hindrances we meet
In coming to the Mercy Seat!
Yet who, that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?

Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings ev'ry blessing from above.

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight,
Prayer makes the Chirstian's armor bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

While Moses stood with arms spread wide
Success was found on Israel's side;
But when through weariness they failed,
That moment Amalek prevailed.

Have you no words? ah! think again,
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow creature's ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
"Hear what the Lord has done for me!"