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The Life of a Christian — An Introduction

Lewis Willis

Dedicating this special issue of *Truth Magazine* to the memory of my brother, Cecil, was not my idea. As this issue's Northeast Ohio authors met toward the end of this project, one of the preachers suggested it be dedicated to Cecil. They all agreed upon doing this, and I was very pleased!

As I have reflected on those discussions throughout the remainder of this day, I thought first of how Cecil would have said not to do this for some might think he had delusions about his own attempts to live the Life of a Christian. Then, he would have likely said, this material was not his, so why dedicate it to him? I must explain, therefore, why this subject of a dedication even came up.

Shortly after Cecil's death last year, his son, David, and I were going through his office trying to decide what to file or what to discard. His office was in a converted bedroom of his house. When I opened the closet doors, on either end was a 4-drawer filing cabinet, and in between were boxes stacked about two deep on the floor. On the shelf above were about 25 notebooks. As I looked through several of the notebooks, I discovered they contained his sermon outlines and debate notes. I took the outline notebooks to my office, copied the contents, and returned them for his heirs to do with as they will.

I could hardly wait to look into this wealth of material. Early one week, I was leafing through the folders of Cecil's outlines, and I found one entitled: "What Is The Christian Life?" After looking over the brief outline, I decided to prepare a sermon from that material for use the next

Special Issue Dedicated to the Memory of Cecil Willis

edited by Lewis Willis

see "Introduction" on p. 280

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The Value of Being A Christian

Doug Roush

While in the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus made some profound statements regarding the establishment of his church. He declared that his kingdom would be built upon the foundational truth that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. From the time of that declaration, Jesus revealed that he would be killed and resurrected in Jerusalem. Our attention is then directed to Peter's objection to this prophecy of Jesus. However, by removing Peter's objection and focusing on this development of thought, we see a profound ingredient involved in being a citizen of the kingdom of Christ. For the kingdom of the saved to be established, Jesus would need to sacrifice his life on behalf of its citizens. In addition, every citizen of this kingdom is called upon to make the same sacrifice as that of their King. Jesus said unto his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:24-26). So important is this development of thought that it is also recorded in Mark 8:27-37 and Luke 9:18-29.

What Has Genuine Value?

Humanity has always been impressed with the value of those things that are temporal. Jesus often used our misplaced appreciation of that which we deem valuable to focus our attention on that which has genuine value. In the "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus reasoned, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, . . . For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). He went on to say, ". . . take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:31-33). The "Gentiles" (in this context, those who are carnal minded and absent of spirituality) value and strive after earth's treasures. Like Martha, the majority of humanity is, "troubled about many things: but one thing is needful . . ." (Luke 10:41). The "seed" of God's word is "planted" in every heart. However, like seed planted among thorns, it is ". . . choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" in the heart of one who values temporal treasures over godliness (Luke

see "Value" on p. 281

How to Become a Christian

Paul R. Blake

Having learned how valuable is the Christian life, one might now ask: "How do I become a Christian and obtain this wonderful new life?" This is a noble and important question, and it deserves an answer from the word of God.

The process by which one becomes a Christian, when followed by the whole of his being, brings new life through salvation in Jesus Christ. In addition, obedience to the Gospel renews living by setting him free from sin, bringing peace in this life and hope in the everlasting life to come. Furthermore, his whole manner of life is changed by the plan of salvation when it is obeyed in full faith from the heart. By the plan of salvation, one gains the best possible life.

Hear

Before one can follow the Divinely ordained plan of salvation, it naturally follows that he must know it in its original, unchanged form. There are many schemes of redemption taught by religious leaders, but the Lord has given only one valid method of becoming a child of God. There is only "one faith" (Eph. 4:5) given only "once for all" (Jude 3) by the Father to save man from his sins. He who desires salvation must humbly and carefully listen to it. Jesus charged his countrymen with dulling their hearing so that they would not absorb the word of God (Matt. 13:15-16). Clearly, those who listen can be converted, and those who hear will be blessed. Therefore, the first step in becoming a Christian is to *hear*; to listen to what the Lord has said.

Hearing brings enlightenment through the knowledge of God, dispelling the darkness of ignorance. This knowledge has the power to develop responsive faith within the careful listener. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The word of God brightly lights up the way out of sin and into righteousness. David said in praise to God: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). Knowing the truth by means of whole-heartedly hearing the word of God gives one the means whereby he can be set free from his sins. In a prayer, the Savior said to the Father: "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). The reaction of the honest hearer to the preaching of the truth is best demonstrated by Peter's audience at the close of the gospel sermon on Pentecost. The hearers immediately asked what they must do (Acts 2:37). Hearing the word is the first step to becoming a

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Christian and obtaining the best life possible. Hearing is itself a life changing action that provides needed guidance to the lost listener.

Believe

Faith follows hearing the word of God. The careful listener becomes a believer in God. This belief leads him further along the path to becoming a Christian. It is essential that the hearer *believe* in God and in his plan to be saved from his sins. The writer of Hebrews clearly states that faith is vital to anyone who would please God (11:6). Faith provides the motivation necessary to make the changes that will make one a Christian. Strong belief moves him to careful obedience to the Gospel, for without faith, he will not effectively obey and will remain in a lost condition. The apostle Paul spoke of people who fell short of pleasing God through a lack of belief. "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (Rom. 10:16). One must believe before he can become a Christian.

Besides leading unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10), faith also provides purpose and meaning to life. A person no longer needs to wander aimlessly through life, pointlessly living until he dies. Faith gives one an understanding of who he is, why he is here, and where he is going when life is over. All important questions are answered by a well informed faith in God.

Repent

A strong faith will generate a change in the believer's moral purpose in life. The believer must also *repent* of his sins and regret a life lived without God's unchanging word. Repentance becomes the means by which man turns away from sin, changes his direction in life, and embraces right living. The Ephesians were told to put off the old man of sin, change their way of thinking, and to put on the new man (4:22-24). First, one repents by sorrowing over the sins he has committed, sins that made it necessary for Christ to die on the cross for him. Second, he evolves or changes his view of sin and righteousness to conform to God's way of viewing them. Third, he focuses his attention and will on doing only those things that please the Lord. If a believer chooses not to repent, he cannot be saved. In the words of Jesus Christ: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish (Luke 13:3).

By repentance, one steps even closer to becoming a Christian. In turning from sin, he develops a better character . . . a character that will enable him to walk faithfully as a Christian upon completing his obedience to the Gospel. He is changing into a better person, which is one of the blessings of becoming a Christian.

Confess

Besides believing and repenting, God expects the peti-

tioner for salvation to declare his faith unashamedly before others. When one confesses Jesus Christ as the Son of God, he professes the maturity of his faith. He now believes that God took an active role in sending his only begotten Son into the world to pay the price for the sins of humankind. He believes that Jesus Christ is Immanuel (God with us), and that he has the power to save man from his sins. When one confesses his faith in Jesus, all witnesses to that confession know that the speaker is moved by the word of God to obey the Gospel. One who confesses Christ before men prepares the way for Jesus to declare his name before God. "Whosoever therefore shall *confess* me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32).

When the Ethiopian eunuch heard the preaching of the Gospel, he responded by desiring immersion. When Philip asked if he believed, he answered by saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Man will never speak greater or higher words than these. Confessing Jesus as the Son of God is a demonstration of courage and a herald of one's desire to become a Christian.

Be Baptized

Finally, the confessor must be *baptized* to become a Christian. It is only through baptism that he becomes a partaker in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior (Rom. 6:3-4). Only in baptism are sins washed away (Acts 22:16). It is by baptism that one is saved (Mark 16:16). Baptism puts him in Christ (Gal. 3:27). If one is not baptized, he falls short of his goal of becoming a Christian.

When one is baptized, he becomes spiritually clean, free from all of his sins. He enters into the family of God as one of the Father's cherished children. He has access to all the blessings, rights, and privileges of that family. There exists no greater joy than that of the obedient believer who rises from the waters of baptism as a new creature in Christ.

Conclusion

In view of what is written in Scripture, it is evident that the plan of salvation not only saves one from sin and makes him a Christian, but it also changes his life and the way he lives it, making it the best life possible. *Hearing* the word enlightens him (2 Tim. 3:15). *Believing* the word motivates him (Heb. 10:39). *Repenting* changes his direction in life (2 Cor. 7:10). *Confessing* Jesus as the Christ declares his faith and desire to become a Christian (Rom. 10:10). Finally, *being baptized* changes his life, changes his living, and gives him new life (Rom. 6:6-8). By this process, and this alone, one becomes a Christian and gains the best life possible.

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A Changed Life

Jim Walsh

Paul wrote, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*” (2 Cor. 5:17). He also wrote that when one is baptized into Christ’s death, he is resurrected to a new life (Rom. 6:4). Think about what it’s like to get something new — something that doesn’t wear out anytime soon. Having something that’s new makes us feel good. There is even an emotional change. The problem with new things is that they never stay new. All too soon they become old and begin to decay, as does all life. Peter helps us with this problem by reminding the Christian that this new life is to be a changing life. In 1 Peter 4:1-4, he wrote that several things need to happen if this change is to be permanent. (1) Our new life has to be a life that changes in thought by following the mind of Christ (4:1). (2) Our new life must be a life that changes in desire, by obeying the will of God (4:2). (3) Our new life must be a life that changes in activities, by refusing to lust after the flesh (4:3). (4) Our new life must also change in direction, by no longer walking after the world (4:4).

Beginning The Changed Life

First, we must understand what *new* means: it means a new beginning. When we obey the gospel, we start with a clean slate; our sins are forgiven. God promises to remove our sins and our iniquities and “. . . *remember them no more*” (Heb. 8:12). This means that our forgiveness is complete and absolute. God is not holding on to any of our sins. He has removed them and treats us as if they never existed. We need to have the same attitude toward past sins. We need to forget them and not carry the chains of guilt over past sins. Christ died and shed his blood so that we might have the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). Do we believe in the power of Christ’s blood to do as he promised? If so,

then we need to realize that when we become Christians, God removes all of our sins.

Also, we need to see our new relationship with God as an ongoing one. In his first epistle, John mentions that our relationship can continue with God, so long as we continue to do his will. John wrote, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Our relationship with God is conditional upon

our remaining obedient to him. God has given us our start in this new life by removing our sins. We must do our part by keeping away from sin. In so doing, we maintain our fellowship with God, Christ, and other Christians. If we sin, we must repent in order for God to remove our sin and keep us in this new life (1 John 1:9). God’s promise then is that faithfulness and repentance from sin maintain this new relationship.

In addition, we need to appreciate that this is a new relationship only if it is “*in Christ*.” This means that there is no relationship outside of Christ because there is

no forgiveness outside of Christ. When we become Christians by baptism, we are placed “*into Christ*” (Rom. 6:3). Before being in Christ, we are separated from God. We are placed into Christ by baptism. In this act of obedience, our old life is “*crucified*” and “*buried*” (Rom. 6:4). Why resurrect the old and dead when Christ gives me the new and living? It is only “*in Christ*” that we can have freedom from the condemnation that was the consequence of sin (Rom. 8:1). Therefore, God equates our being in Christ with being alive. We are truly *new creatures* because God has created us anew, and put us in a place where he says

We must have the same mind as Christ. We must have the same desires as Christ in obeying the Father’s will. We must have the same activity as Christ, living according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

that everything is good. That place is in Christ.

Maintaining the Changed Life

Change will not be complete if we are not committed to that change. We will not experience the full appreciation of the freedom that is in Christ if we keep trying to leave him and go back to the old way of sins. What are some ways we might fail to realize a complete change?

1. *When one does not continue to purify himself with God's word.* Peter instructs us to “. . . purify your souls . . . not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Pet. 1:22, 23). Too often, people do not treat God's word as the purifying agent it is. He provided it to guard and preserve us. Those who embrace the changed life are to depend fully upon God's word to maintain their new life. There is nothing else that can instruct man in how to purify one's soul because there is nothing else in this world that is free from decay and corruption. God's word comes from him. It comes from *him who is everlasting*. It is everlasting. As Peter wrote, it “. . . liveth and abideth forever” (1 Pet. 1:23). We can only remain free from corruption by continuing to purify ourselves with God's word.

2. *When one does not appreciate the process of removal and replacement.* When we turn from the old, we must discard it to make room for the new. Paul instructed the Philippians to “. . . put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Phil. 4:22-24). Paul said to put off that old man, to get rid of him. Too often we hold onto the old man. We treat the old man of sin like the mad doctors treated vampires in old horror movies; they kept digging them up! God instructs us to be holy as he is holy (1 Pet. 1:16). God considered those under the Old Covenant as

unclean if they came in contact with the dead (Num. 19:11). Why go back to the old man and become unholy by coming in contact with that which is dead? God removed the old man when we were baptized into Christ (Rom. 6: 4). Leave the dead alone and live in Christ as a new man.

3. *The changed life requires regular self-examination.* Paul reminds us that we must examine ourselves to make sure we are staying in Christ (2 Cor. 13:5). We are to examine ourselves against the standard of God's word. If we are not measuring up to what God would have us to be, then we need to complete the change we began. Failure to continue to examine ourselves, and to grow and change to comply with God's word, will cause us to fall (2 Pet. 1:3-12).

This is where Peter's admonition in 1 Peter 4:1-4 applies. We must compare ourselves to Christ in thought, desire, activity, and direction. We must have the same mind as Christ. We must have the same desires as Christ in obeying the Father's will. We must have the same activity as Christ, living according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. Finally, we must set the same course as the Captain of our salvation: the course for Heaven.

Conclusion

A new life has been made available to us in Jesus Christ. We begin this new life without sin being held against us. God recreates us as if we are brand new. He has given us his incorruptible word to help guide us beyond this corruptible world. His plan of redemption places us in his Son, Jesus Christ, so that we can continue to be renewed. He has provided everything. All we need to do is follow him. What a loving Father, and what a wonderful Savior!

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A Life of Faith

Lewis Willis

Defining *the Christian Life* is critical. We must know what God prescribed as the essence of that life, noting especially the defining features and attributes of each aspect of it. In this article we shall focus on *A Life Of Faith*.

Personal Faith

Stay with me for just one moment as I attempt to explain something important on this matter.

The Bible sometimes uses *faith* in the sense of what I *believe*. This is the *faith* of Hebrews 11:6: “But without *faith* it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” One cannot deny that *faith* is an essential part of *the Christian Life*. My faith must be properly placed, but I must have faith! In Hebrews 11:1, the writer explains: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” I need some basis for living my life; I need something upon which to build my life; I need a foundation. That foundation is *my faith in the faith* of the Lord, and this all the evidence I need to make the choices I have to make in Christ. Paul explains, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

The Faith — The Gospel

The word *faith* is used in another sense — to refer to the *doctrine of Christ*. In Galatians 2:19-20, Paul wrote: “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh *I live by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” How did Paul live before? He said he lived by the Law. “How do you live now, Paul?” He said, “*I live by the faith of the Son of God*.” He is not telling us that he lived by what Jesus believed. He is saying he lived by the gospel, the faith of the Son of God.

Now, these two ideas — *personal faith* and *the faith* — are not mutually exclusive; they go together. When saying that *the Christian Life* is a *Life of Faith*, we simply mean

that we must have *personal faith* in the *doctrine of faith*.

Faith-Based

Occasionally we hear someone say that *the Christian Life* is *faith-based*. What this means is that faith is its foundation. You take personal faith out of your life and it is a shell. In like manner, when you take the gospel of faith out of it, it is even more useless. I don’t want that to happen to me because I know without faith I am lost! Thus, I must understand the importance of living *A Life of Faith*. How is this done? What is the nature of that *Life of Faith*?

The Meaning of a Faith-Based Life

The remainder of this article will identify some of the specific aspects of faith in the life of a Christian.

1. *Children of God by Faith*. Paul wrote, “For ye are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). Paul is not writing about what these Galatians believed. He is talking about this *system of faith* that he had preached to them, which came by Jesus Christ. By the direction of that system of faith — as an expression of their personal faith — they were baptized into Christ and became sons of God. Now what does sonship mean? What does it mean when the prayers of God’s children go up to him? Do you realize that there are people all over the world praying to God? But Peter says the eyes and ears of the Lord are only over the righteous (1 Pet. 3:12). Are they praying? Oh yes, they pray. But God only hears the prayers of his children; those who become children *by faith in Christ Jesus*!

2. *The Household of Faith*. In Galatians 6:10, Paul says, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of *the household of faith*.” The gospel and our mutually shared faith bring us together, framing and forming us into the household of faith. Furthermore, Paul explains that the household of faith is: “. . . *the house of God, which is the church of the*

living God . . .” (1 Tim. 3:15). Many people think they are in the household of faith; the church, even though they do not know the truth about the church. They have been told that denominationalism is the household of faith. However, there is not a shred of evidence that the division, confusion, and hostility of denominationalism comprise the household of faith. We must trust the gospel enough to obey it, then God puts us into his family.

3. *Established in Faith.* Paul told the Colossian church of blessings awaiting it, “. . . if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel . . .” (Col. 1:23). He is not telling this church simply to continue in whatever they might *believe*, but to continue in *the faith*, the gospel. Christians must be grounded or settled in *the faith*. We must not allow ourselves to be moved away from the gospel. Perhaps the saddest things we deal with in the church are Christians who fall away from *the faith*. Let’s be honest, there are circumstances that test every ounce of our faith, and we will also be overthrown unless there is depth and root to our faith. We will only be as strong as our faith is strong! Our regard for the gospel of the Lord will determine whether or not we remain faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10).

4. *We Must Stand in the Faith.* Paul exhorted the Philipians to “. . . stand fast in one spirit, . . . striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27). Are you in your place, standing where you are supposed to stand? Does the church stand as a mighty army, ready to take on the forces of evil? Or, are there breaches in the lines caused by wavering Christians with sinking courage?

5. *We Must Contend for the Faith.* Jude said, “. . . earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). I can remember a time in the church when an assault of error against truth would have been met with a ready band of Christians, contending for the faith. Brethren offered no apology when someone preached the truth, exposing false religion that will damn the soul.

Are you in your place, standing where you are supposed to stand? Does the church stand as a mighty army, ready to take on the forces of evil? Or, are there breaches in the lines caused by wavering Christians with sinking courage?

But, today we are too nice for that! Why, we might offend someone! We need to put the *fight* back into faith. Paul told us to fight the good fight of faith; only by doing so will we lay hold on eternal life! (1 Tim. 6:12).

6. *We Must Preach the Faith.* It was said of Paul, “. . . he which persecuted us in times past *now preacheth the faith* which once he destroyed” (Gal. 1:23). Must preachers and Bible-class teachers preach or teach that gospel today? Oh yes! Could there be an obvious reason why we do not baptize people today as we used to? To baptize people, they must be taught (Matt. 28:19). The less teaching we do, the fewer we baptize. Pretty simple, isn’t it?

7. *Faith Saves the Soul.* The Hebrew writer said we must be among those “. . . that *believe to the saving of the soul*” (Heb. 10:39). When *personal faith in the gospel* produces obedience, then we believe to the saving of our soul. It’s that simple, folks!

8. *We are Kept by Faith.* Paul said that he had “. . . *kept the faith*” (2 Tim. 4:7-8). As a result, a crown of life was laid up for him, and for us, if we will also be kept by faith. Peter speaks of an incorruptible inheritance for those “. . . who are *kept by the power of God through faith*” (1 Pet. 1:4-5). What does this mean? The meaning is, we are kept in safety; kept where we are supposed to be; kept in the sense of sustaining us in trial and tribulation. God keeps us! How does he do that? He keeps us through our *personal faith in the faith*, the gospel.

Conclusion

The Christian life is a life of faith; it is faith-based! Make no apology for your faith. You have nothing for which to apologize. Rejoice in your faith; share your faith; keep the faith, and God will keep you. That’s what he promised to do. I like the sound of that! I can pillow my head at night in blessed assurance, because of faith. Do you have that faith?

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A Life Of Love

Keith Storment

What is “this thing called love”? Our society bandies about the word “love” with careless abandon. We hear people speak of loving their dogs, their cars, their husbands or wives, and last night’s meal. Folks fall in love, make love, then fall out of love. Did the Bible writers have this in mind when they stressed the importance of love in our lives as Christians? A current song gets very close to the Bible definition of love when it states: “Love isn’t something we’re in — it’s something that we do . . .”

True Love Is Active Goodwill

To arrive at this definition for Bible love, we need only look at love as the Bible writers use the word. The love that God possessed was not a gushy “butterflies in the stomach” emotion. Rather, God’s great love compelled him to act decisively for our salvation (John 3:16).

The love which God has shown us teaches us how to love each other (1 John 4:10-11). As with the love of God, our love is not to be a mushy sentimentalism expressed in flowery words, but an active force in our day-to-day dealings with others (1 John 3:18). Love would move us literally to give our life on behalf of another (v. 16). On a daily basis, love should compel us to put self on the shelf and open ourselves to the physical and spiritual needs of others (v. 17).

So, looking at both human and divine love, we see that love is not an emotion we fall into and out of. Rather, love makes a conscious decision to do what is best for others without regard for their worthiness or our personal cost. True love, biblical love, sees the needs of others and acts

to meet those needs, if at all possible. As another popular song states, “Love doesn’t count the cost.”

Who Should We Love?

Matthew 22 provides a good outline on whom we are to love. Asked to name the supreme law, Jesus replied with the Old Testament command to “*love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*” (vv. 35-37). Jesus then ranked a second command along with this paramount duty: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (v. 39). According to Jesus, human love knows three primary objects: God, our fellow man, and ourselves. We need to make certain we observe the right priority in loving each of these. Many spiritual problems arise in our lives when we place the interests of self or others ahead of pleasing God.

God: The Object of My Supreme Love

While on earth, Jesus taught that we must love him so strongly and deeply that the fondest of earthly loves becomes hatred by comparison. Otherwise we cannot be his disciples (Luke 14:26). But how can we show our love for God? After all, God does not *need* anything from us in the sense that he will be impoverished if we fail to provide it (Acts 17:24-25).

We demonstrate our love for God by placing *the things of God* supreme in our priorities. When I seek the kingdom of God (his church) and her interests first (Matt. 6:33), I am showing my love for God. When I love the word of God (Ps. 119:97), when I study, meditate, and learn from the Scriptures, when I seek opportunities to teach the gospel

to others, when I am willing to defend the truth against its foes, I am evidencing the deep, supreme love I have for God. If I truly love God, I will seek to learn his will and obey that will in all things (1 John 5:2, 3).

Loving My Neighbor: The Secondary Objects of My Love

Who are my neighbors? Are they just the people who live next door to me? Are they only those people who are just like me, with whom I share a bond of common interests, likes and dislikes? When a certain lawyer asked this question of Jesus, he turned the question around, and in one of his best known illustrations taught us to consider to whom we should be a neighbor in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-36). In the same way, the neighbor we are to love is anyone whose needs we are in a position to meet. Specifically, we are to love *our fellow Christians*. Jesus commands us to “love one another” (John 13:35). Paul strove to show the Corinthians this “more excellent way” (1 Cor. 13:30). Husbands are commanded to love their wives (Eph. 5:25), and wives should be taught to love their husbands (Tit. 2:4). Difficult as it may seem, Jesus even commands us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). This would be almost impossible to do if love were a warm, fuzzy feeling. We all would have a difficult time feeling warm and fuzzy about someone who has inflicted (or sought to inflict) some injury upon us. But if we understand love’s biblical meaning of active goodwill to others, then we all can strive to do good even for those who hate us (Rom. 12:19-21).

Loving Myself: The Final Object of Love

Are we really to love ourselves? Just recently in a letter to the editor of a religious publication, a man said he “found no command in the entire Bible to love myself.” He writes that to teach love of self contradicts Paul’s state-

ment in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 that one of the marks of the last days is those who are “lovers of self.” Certainly this passage presents some difficulties to the concept of loving self, and needs to be dealt with. But first, is there no command to love self in the entire Bible? It depends on how hard one is willing to look.

If one is seeking a specific passage that explicitly says, “You shall love yourself,” I agree. To the best of my knowledge, no such passage exists. But God certainly *implies* that we are to love ourselves. The Lord commands us to “love our neighbor as ourselves” (Matt. 22:39). But if I am not to love myself at all, *how* am I to love my neighbor? Paul commands husbands to “love their own wives as their own bodies” (Eph. 5:28). Again, if self-love is completely forbidden, *how* are husbands to love their wives? The same verse goes on to say “he who loves his own wife loves himself.” So perhaps husbands ought to stop loving their wives since that’s the same as loving themselves, and we all know how bad that is!

So by implication, God *does* command us to love ourselves. Now, have we found a contradiction with 2 Timothy 3:2 that condemns loving self? We find one solution in the lexicons where the word “love” in 2 Timothy 3:2 is not the same word “love” used in Matthew 22. We find the *best* solution in the context. In verse 5, Paul uses the phrase “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” The phrase “lovers of pleasure” is identical in construction to all the other “loves” condemned in this passage. Paul now pinpoints what is wrong with each one of them. We do not sin in just loving money, self, or pleasure. We sin when we love these things *more* than we love God. When we take one or all of these things and make them our substitute god, we fail to observe the proper order in our love: God must rank supreme over all other loves in our lives, including the love of self.

How can I properly love self? I must not allow selfishness and greed to rule my life, but I do need to cherish and protect the life God has given me. Love demands that I sacrifice my life if faithfulness to God demands it. Love asks that I be willing to lose my life in protecting the life of another. But I certainly should not recklessly cast my life away either by suicide or by indulging in those practices that I know will endanger my health.

Love plays a critical role in the life of the Christian. The immeasurable, indescribable love of God has made it possible for us to have this wonderful life. With the thought of serving God ever foremost in our minds, we should reach out in love to those around us, seeking to meet their need for salvation through the gospel, and in all things seek to emulate Jesus in “going about doing good” (Acts 10:38).

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A Life of Sacrifice

Lewis Willis

Sacrifice (*thusia*) denotes the act of offering, as well as that which is offered (Vine, 313). Christians are not only told that offering is a requirement in their lives, they are even told what to offer. This aspect of *the Christian Life* will be explored in this article.

The Bible describes religion throughout the ages. A prominent theme in the religion of each dispensation is *sacrifice*, as we read in the Scriptures of altars, a priesthood, and sacrifices. In the Garden of Eden we are introduced to sacrifice in the sad story of Cain and Abel. The writer of Hebrews, speaking of that time, said: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Heb. 11:4). This tragic incident is one of the first to which children are exposed in their spiritual education. Certainly we all recognize that God had required this sacrifice, otherwise it could not have been offered “*by faith*.” Faith comes by hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17). Abel was obedient to the word of God spoken to him, and he offered an acceptable sacrifice.

Ten generations later, we read of Noah’s exit from the ark following the flood. The Bible tells us: “And Noah builded *an altar* unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen. 8:20). Noah’s gratitude for the deliverance of his family from the deadly flood was expressed in the form of sacrifices.

Altars of the Mosaic age were stained with the blood of thousands of animals. The temple was dedicated with a host of sacrifices: “And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God” (2 Chron. 7:5). This was the sacrifice for a single occasion! Sacrifices were made throughout the Mosaic dispensation.

We of the Christian age are not surprised, therefore, to learn that we must also offer sacrifice unto God. Paul commanded: “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. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2). In the Book of Hebrews we read: “By him therefore *let us offer the sacrifice of praise* to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15). Peter adds, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, *to offer up spiritual sacrifices*, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

The Sacrifice of the Body

The *sacrifice of the Christian Life* exceeds the sacrifices of other ages. We are to offer *our bodies* in sacrifice. One might ask, however, how or why would God require such a sacrifice? Paul answers that question in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Through the price of our redemption, God laid a preeminent claim to our bodies and spirits. We belong to him; we must do as he requires; and he said to present your bodies as living sacrifices to him (Rom. 12:1). To the Christian, this is all the explanation needed to bring forth the sacrifice of the body and spirit unto God.

The *sacrifices* of the Christian are both *spiritual* and *reasonable* (as translated in the KJV). God’s sacrifice in our redemption was his only begotten Son (Rom. 5:8). We do not offer ourselves on a cross or an altar, as physical, bodily sacrifices. Our sacrifices are *spiritual* in nature. Nothing could be more *reasonable* for one who has been redeemed at the high cost of the very blood of God’s Son! Hence,

there is no argument offered; no hesitancy present; and no resentment over the requirement to offer our bodies as *living sacrifices* unto God who has been so gracious to us!

Living Sacrifices

Many people are willing to offer their dead or nearly dead bodies unto the Lord. In old age, nearing the end of life, they are ready to turn to the Lord. But not while they are young! They want to “sow their wild oats” in their youth. There is no time to serve God as these individuals get established in a career, build their dream homes, and travel at their leisure. But when age begins to creep up on them, when irritating and debilitating diseases begin to announce the end of youth and even life itself, their hearts begin to turn to God. We are thankful to God that they came home to him. However, God wants the sacrifice of *youth*! He wants the strength and vigor of our early years, as well as the pain and confinement of age. We must offer our bodies — our lives — to him whom we serve. The great apostle said, “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but *yield yourselves unto God*, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:13, 16).

Christian, have you given yourself in *sacrifice* to God? Have you turned your life over to him? Do you serve him *first*, or must his service be fitted in after you have done everything else you want to do? We *must*, and we *can*, make a choice to yield to God. Sin does not control us unless we allow it; unless we give ourselves over to it. God said his people *are not to sin* (1 John 2:1)! Our *sacrifice* is to be so complete that we walk away from sin and into a righteous, reasonable service and worship to God who loved us so much that he gave Jesus to die for us! And this says nothing at all about what God *continues to do* for us daily in giving us “*life, and breath, and all things*” (Acts 17:25).

Conclusion

Sacrifice is an attitude, a spirit of abject and total surrender to the will of God. When the *attitude* is present, the *service* required will be freely rendered. Another article will address the service of *the Christian Life*. However, absent the *sacrifices of our bodies* to God, we will never find the time to render the *service* God requires. Let every child of God examine himself for the presence of a *life of sacrifice*!

491 E. Woodsdale Ave., Akron, Ohio 44301



The Life of a Christian is . . .

A Life of Service

Larry DeVore

To most of us in the United States, the concept of “service” is “*serve me now!*” We enter a restaurant, and we expect to be seated now. Bring me coffee *now!* Bring our menus *now!* Take our order *now!* Bring our meal promptly! If our meal doesn’t arrive as soon as we think it should, we want to see the manager. Our idea of “service” is a *me-first* concept, based on self-centered desires. This is quite different from what we find taught in the Scriptures about service.

Service Defined

In the New Testament, we find the word “service” 15 times, and the word “serve” 33 times. There are three Greek words translated as service. The word *latreia* is found only five times in the New Testament (John 16:1; Rom. 9:4, 12:1, Heb. 9:1, 6). In every case it refers to Divine service or serving God, and not to serving self. The other two words are *diakonia*, as used in Romans 15:31 referring to Paul’s ministry and service, and the word *leitourgia* which, for instance, is used in 2 Corinthians 9:12 and refers to benevolence for the poor saints (Vines, 1021).

In addition, the concept of service is taught in many places in the New Testament. Jesus taught in Matthew 22:37-39: “. . . You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (NKJV). A dedicated Christian will be committed to these great commandments, and that will involve *service* — first to God, and second to your neighbor (fellow man).

Jesus showed us the example of service in his own life by his sacrificial death on the cross. He taught in Matthew 20:28: “. . . just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” The word “serve” is from the Greek word *diakoneo* (verb form), which means “to serve, wait upon, minister” (Vine, 744). Jesus was willing to serve us in the complete

sense of laying down his life for us. What will we do to serve him in return?

What Is Involved in Serving God?

A life of service is a result of the right attitude. If a Christian will have an attitude of sacrifice, then service is the action that will result. Many things are involved in serving God, such as:

A Pure Heart

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded” (Jas. 4:8). Acceptable service cannot be offered to God from a defiled heart.

Humbleness

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to talk humbly with thy God” (Mic. 6:8). Clearly, this is an Old Testament passage that conveys eternal principles of serving God.

Unselfishness

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4). A Christian must not have a “me-first” selfish attitude.

Sacrificial Attitude

“I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). If we are firmly committed and dedicated to serving God, we will have an attitude that no sacrifice is too great for the God of all creation.

How Will the Christian Serve God?

1. *By glorifying God in worship.* Isaiah wrote that God said, “Even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have

made him” (Isa. 43:7). The apostle Paul wrote, “to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world with end. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

2. *By serving others.* The best way to serve your fellow man is to teach him or her the gospel. “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). This was a characteristic of the early church. “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Paul wrote in Galatians 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” What better way to “do good” to your fellow man than to share the gospel of Christ with him?

What Did the Early Church Do?

- They engaged in worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7).
- They served one another (Acts 4:34-35; Gal. 5:13).
- They evangelized (Acts 4:12-13; 5:42).
- They had fellowship (Acts 2:42; 46-47).
- They edified one another (Acts 9:31; Rom. 14:19).

A faithful Christian’s life will involve *service* to God, his fellow Christians, and to his neighbor. We have the example of the Thessalonians who “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). They engaged in a “*work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope*” in their service to God (1 Thess. 1:3). The Hebrew writer wrote: “. . . let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). Acceptable service to God requires us to surrender our thinking from a “me-first” concept to *God first*, because we love him. We will serve our fellow man (neighbor) on the same basis. Our service must be focused on God and Christ. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24). So we must “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). True greatness in God’s sight requires a life of service. Learn to serve well.

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Committed to Purity

Doug Roush

God expects his contemporary earthly dwellings to be as pure as his earthly dwellings of ancient times.

Imagine that God commissioned you to construct the tabernacle. What material would you deem suitable to use in its construction? Remember, this structure represents God's dwelling among his people (Exod. 29:43-46). I imagine Moses was as thankful as we would be that God did not leave these matters for him to contemplate. Rather, God revealed to Moses every detail concerning the construction of this most important dwelling place.

One of the most consistently striking aspects of God's instructions concerning the construction of the tabernacle was that it was to be constructed of valuable and *pure* raw materials. This is most evident with regard to the furnishings within the holy place and the most holy place. The table of shewbread, the ark of incense, and the ark of the covenant were overlaid with pure gold. The candlestick, the mercy seat, as well as each of the articles that sat on the table of shewbread, were made entirely of pure gold. In addition, the olive oil, myrrh, and frankincense that were used in the tabernacle were to be in their pure form. Only the purest form of these valuable elements was permitted in the representative presence of God. Later, God authorized Solomon to construct the temple. It, like the tabernacle, represented God's presence and needed to be built of pure materials.

We have been reminded of these Old Testament facts to impress upon those who follow Christ that they are now God's representative dwelling place. Peter spoke of the "*tabernacle*" of his body (2 Pet. 1:13-14). Jesus spoke of the "*temple*" of his body (John 2:19-21). The inspired word of God reveals that every Christian is the "*temple of the living God*" (2 Cor. 6:16). Certainly, God expects his contemporary earthly dwellings to be as pure as his earthly dwellings of ancient times. It is the purpose of this article to help us appreciate the importance of purity in the life of the Christian.

The Meaning of Purity

The word "pure" is translated from three different Greek words. A comprehension of the similarities and differences of these three words will help us to appreciate the fullness of the characteristic of purity.

"Pure" is translated from *hagnos* in four New Testament passages (Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 5:22; Jas. 3:17; 1 John. 3:3). The word means, ". . . *pure from: carnality . . . every fault . . .*" (Thayer). Of particular significance is that it shares the same root as the word from which "holy" is translated. That word is *hagios*; which means, "*separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God*" (Vine).

Eilikrines signifies "without alloy."

It is translated “pure” in 2 Peter 3:1, and “sincere” in Philippians 1:10. Thayer’s definition includes, “*to be found pure when unfolded and examined by the sun’s light.*”

The word from which “pure” is most often translated is the Greek word *kathros*, meaning, “clean, pure.” *Kathros* is translated into one of these two English words throughout the New Testament.

Each of these three words conveys the same thought. To be “pure” means to be free of anything foreign. Christians are not to mix God’s righteousness with any “alloy” of sin. Rather, we are to “separate” ourselves from sin. When the deepest folds of our spirit are unfolded and exposed to the light of God’s truth, they are to be found pure.

The Motivation For Purity

All Christians acknowledge that God has called them to purity. Nevertheless, we also realize that we are less than pure. Thankfully, God has furnished us with some things to consider that motivate us to strive for purity.

In his opening remarks of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). Many of the points of this sermon are focused not merely on impure actions, but on the impure heart from which the action proceeds. The desire to “*see God*” should motivate us to be pure in both thought and action.

In 1 John 3:2 our attention is focused on our eternal hope. Verse 3 reads, “. . . every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” Our eternal hope should motivate us to strive to be as pure as the One we claim to follow.

1 Timothy 1:5 reads, “Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience . . .” This passage speaks to the purity of

the selfless characteristic of true love. Yet it is also true that pure love for God is a major motivation to be pure. Our desire to honor and glorify our Savior should motivate us to be pure, “*even as he is pure*” (1 John. 3:3).

The Call To Purity

In 2 Timothy 2:19-22, we read “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet *for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*”

These verses reveal what we confirmed earlier: we are called to purity, yet we are aware of and acknowledge our impurities. We have come to appreciate our true value through God’s revelation and by Christ’s sacrifice. Righteous characteristics are avowed by Christians to be honorable and more valuable than silver and gold. We admit that our dishonorable characteristics of unrighteousness are temporal and corruptible and of no eternal value. Therefore, we are to purge ourselves of those characteristics that are dishonorable, and permeate our character with those things that are righteous and honorable.

This sanctification process makes us suitable vessels for the good works in which God instructs us (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The true Christian must go beyond the mere appearance of righteousness, faith, charity, and peace. The Christian is to display these characteristics from pure motives and a pure heart.

Manifestation Of Purity

In James 3:17, we read, “. . . the wisdom that is from above is first

pure, . . . without hypocrisy.” God’s wisdom calls us to be pure. To respond to God’s call to purity, we must first be committed to purity in the characteristics and manifestations of godliness.

Hebrews 10:22 reads, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Christians are fully assured that their sins are forgiven when they have fully obeyed the gospel, being immersed in water for the remission of their sins. Likewise, the full assurance of our faithfulness is confirmed when we are committed to separating our hearts from an evil conscience that excuses and justifies impurities. A pure conscience has been instructed in God’s pure righteousness and has conformed to its instruction; convicting its owner of unrighteousness while encouraging him in the way that is pure.

Christians are encouraged to be “holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9). The mystery of the faith has been revealed in the gospel (Eph. 3:3-9). Christians are instructed to think on those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; those things that promote spiritual excellence and are praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). Such things confirm the true heart of the faithful Christian.

The souls of Christians have been purified by the blood of Jesus in obeying the Spirit-revealed truth (1 Pet. 1:22). True Christians rejoice in their purification and are committed to the eradication of every impurity from their life. They are committed to purity in the practice of the truth and have a valid reason to trust in God’s promises and the spiritual blessings that are available to them.

The spirit and the deeds of the pure and impure are vividly contrasted in Titus 1:15-16: “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is noth-

A Life of Hope

Larry R. DeVore

HOPE! a word bright with promise! When one has hope, he is buoyant, filled with anticipation and cheerful prospects for the future. A person only has to consider the opposite of hope (hopelessness and despair) to realize how important hope is in his life. Think about this: a family member has been involved in a serious accident. He was taken to the hospital and rushed into surgery. Hours later the doctor comes out to speak to the family. All this time of waiting, the family has been praying and hoping for the best. But the doctor sadly speaks saying he has done all he can do; the injuries were too severe. There is *no hope* for his recovery! The hope that had sustained the family during the time of waiting is now replaced with grief, sorrow, and broken-hearted despair! How sad to have *no hope* with regard to earthly matters and physical life.

Now consider spiritual matters, and what the Bible says about hope for the person who believes in and obeys the will of God. Sometimes Christians use the word “hope” in such a way that it has a wavering, uncertain sound. “I hope I’m a Christian.” “I hope I can live the Christian life.” The Scriptures seldom use the word *hope* in this way. In Acts 24:26, Felix “hoped” Paul might offer him a bribe. He was disappointed. We cannot place hope in uncertainty.

Hope Defined

W. E. Vine defines *hope* as “favorable and confident expectation,” also “the happy anticipation of good” (Vine, 562). The dictionary defines hope as, “to desire with expectation of fulfillment.”

ing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” Like Timothy, every Christian is exhorted to be “. . . an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

Reward For Purity

We began this article by calling attention to the purity of God’s representative earthly dwellings. It comes as no surprise to find God using the imagery of those things that are valuable and pure to describe his eternal dwelling.

In Revelation 21:18, we are told concerning heaven, “the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.” Revelation 21:21 says, “the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” In heaven, we find the source of the spiritual

sustenance that has instructed the conscience of every faithful Christian, the “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1).

God invites everyone who hungers and thirsts after righteousness to drink from this “fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Rev. 21:6-7). “For this ye know, that no . . . unclean person . . . hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:5).

Those who are committed to providing a pure habitation for God’s righteous presence on earth will be rewarded with being in the eternal presence of he who is pure. In the inspired words written to Timothy, Christian, “*keep thyself pure*” (1 Tim. 5:22).

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True Bible hope then is not only something we “desire” to have, but also something that we can expect to come to pass (be fulfilled). In the New Testament, the word “hope” is found 66 times. They are translated from the Greek words *elpizo* (verb form) and *elpis* (noun form). The word “hope” is found three times in the gospels, ten times in the book of Acts, and 53 times in the epistles. It is the apostle Paul who uses the word most often in his writings and develops its meaning for us in the gospel age.

What is the Basis of the Christian’s Hope?

Our hope is first of all relational. The Psalmist said, “O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with Him is full redemption” (Ps. 130:7, NIV). The Christian’s hope is wrapped up in what Jesus has done for us on Calvary. Jesus shed his blood on the cross that we might have the hope of everlasting life, a hope that cannot be shared by those who are yet outside of Christ. Those who are not Christians have “no hope” and are “without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). However, the Christian is looking forward “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” (Tit. 1:2). Because the Christian has faith in Christ and has been baptized into Christ, he sustains a relationship to God as his child. He is a member of the body of Christ. By this sonship, every Christian, by the Word of God, has “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

What is the Source of Our Hope?

You cannot pick up *hope* at the corner grocery. Neither is it available across town at the mega-mall. It comes from God himself. “Now may the God of all hope fill you with joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13). Our Savior is also involved in the Christian’s hope. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1). God’s word also has a part in this. “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope” (Ps. 130:5). “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

The Practical Value of Hope

Hope gives the Christian *assurance*. “And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end” (Heb. 6:11). The Christian is assured by God that if he will live a faithful Christian life then God will keep his part of the agreement, the promise of eternal life (1 John 2:25).

Hope will *anchor* the soul. “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil” (Heb. 6:19). The metaphor of the anchor only occurs here in the New Testament. A ship firmly anchored is safe from drifting. Its position is sure. Hope is the anchoring force to keep the Christian

from drifting. The person with a living hope has a steady-*ing anchor* for his life. The storms and trials of life will not blow him “off course” so long as he remains firmly anchored to Christ.

Hope will motivate one to *live a pure life*. “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). The apostle Paul wrote, “keep yourself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). Again Paul wrote, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). The Christian with a living hope will exert every effort to clean up his life and remove sin from it, that he may be pure and acceptable in God’s sight.

Hope will cause the Christian to *rejoice*. “Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing stedfastly in prayers” (Rom. 12:12). Living in a sin-filled world and seeing the sins of modern man reflected in the daily newspapers and television news gives us little to rejoice about. But the Christian can rejoice precisely because his hope is *not* in any of the things of this world, but in Christ, “through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and *rejoice* in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2, emphasis added, lrd).

And finally, hope *saves*. “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?” (Rom. 8:24). Now, we are no more saved by “hope only” than we are saved by “faith only.” We would not ascribe any more to the concept of hope than the Scriptures teach. But let us not undervalue the importance of hope to the Christian. We will never be disappointed by living a faithful Christian life firmly anchored in hope! “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5).

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A Life Of Joy

Paul R. Blake

“Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). This instruction was written by the apostle Paul who was enduring strong trials while being inspired to write the book of Philippians. He suffered oppression from civil government, interference from his countrymen, and jealousy from some of his brethren. How could this sorely tried saint find cause to rejoice under these circumstances? His answer is in Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Paul found strength in Christ to be joyful in the most difficult of times, because his joy as a Christian was the product of a right relationship with God. True joy cannot be generated and maintained by the purposes and plans of men.

What is Our Joy?

Joy is the resolutely happy, peacefully content condition that comes from knowing and serving God. It is the emotional frame of mind that is excited by gaining what is good and by anticipating better things to come. Joy is not directly related to happiness, for happiness is dependent upon circumstances that are subject to change. On the other hand, the Christian’s joy is rooted in things that do not change, such as God’s promise of a home in heaven for the righteous, the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, and our fellowship with God through his word.

In fact, joy can be experienced during affliction, and it can thrive in the hardest of times. Paul told the Corinthians that from one perspective he had cause to be sorrowful, but instead he found himself rejoicing (2 Cor. 6:10). He further states: “I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation” (2 Cor. 7:4). This is easily understood when we remember that our

joy is based on a right relationship with God. Can suffering separate the devout from God? On the contrary, suffering draws the disciple closer to the Lord. Can a persecutor force himself in between the faithful and the Lord? Under persecution, children of God are refined and strengthened (1 Pet. 1:3-9). As long as our fellowship with God continues, our joy remains steadfast. Remember what Paul said in Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord.”

What is the Source of Our Joy?

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10). We have great joy in God because it is through him that we have obtained *remission of sins*. He made it possible for man to be free from all unrighteousness and its attending consequences. How can one be unhappy who has had all guilt removed? How can one not be joyful who has had the sentence of spiritual death lifted? Paul pronounced a blessing on the Romans by saying, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in

believing . . .” (Rom. 15:13). God gives us joy through the happy condition of sinlessness.

The Father also grants us joy through *anticipation of a home in heaven*. Jesus, because of the joy to which he looked forward, was able to endure the temporary suffering on the cross just by focusing on the promised reward (Heb. 12:2). Likewise, when we anticipate heaven, we are able joyfully to endure the temporary trials in the present life.

God is also the fountain of our joy in daily living. Through him we have joy in our families (Prov. 5:18), joy

in food and things that sustain us (1 Tim. 4:4-5), and joy in our fellowship with other Christians (Phil. 4:1). God, as the giver of all things good, has certainly blessed us with strong cause to be filled with joy.

What is Unique About Our Joy?

First, one's capacity for joy is increased by sorrow and trials. Jesus told his disciples that the sorrow they felt over his departure will make their joy even greater upon his return (John 16:20-22). Just as thirst can make a cool drink taste more refreshing, so present sorrows can help intensify appreciation for future joy. In the world, grief robs us of joy; in Christ, grief becomes an avenue for joy.

Second, true joy helps the Christian to discover profit and advantage in his sufferings. James instructs us to take joy in trials (Jas. 1:2-4), for trials bring patience, a much needed virtue for Christian living. The Hebrews took joy in the robbing of their property by persecutors because it reminded them of their great possessions in heaven (Heb. 10:34). The apostles joyfully viewed persecution as an affirmation that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41). Jesus taught that those who suffer persecution should take joy in the sharing of suffering with himself and the prophets (Matt. 5:11-12). Outside Christ, suffering becomes a cause for anger and despair. Among Christians, burdens are looked upon as welcome opportunities.

Third, joy is shared among Christians. In Luke 15, Jesus relates three parables designed to teach us to rejoice together, especially when the lost are restored to God's favor and to our fellowship. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd calls his neighbors together when he finds the sheep and says "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (v. 6). In the account of the lost coin, the woman, upon finding the coin, summons her neighbors saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which

I had lost" (v. 9). Upon the return of the prodigal son, the father says to the envious older son, "It was right that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (v. 32). Joy begets joy among God's children (Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26); in the world, joy often produces jealousy in the hearts of others.

Lastly, Christian joy is burglar-proof; it cannot be stolen away by anyone or anything. Jesus said in John 16:22 that no man would be able to take away their joy. Grief and suffering do not have the capacity to rob us of joy; no man can steal our joy; no force of nature can diminish our joy. The lost have a joy that is easily taken away; the saved have a joy that cannot be moved. One might ask at this point: "If Christian joy cannot be taken away, then why are some Christians unhappy?" The answer is simple — our own sins diminish our joy. Our sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2). Since our joy is based on a right relationship with God, when that relationship is damaged, our joy is damaged along with it. When David sinned, he acknowledged that he had to be restored to righteousness before he could find joy again (Ps. 51:8, 12).

Conclusion

Joy is not elusive; it is readily found by those who pursue righteousness. Joy is listed as a fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, produced by those who live according to the guidance of the Word. If we walk in fellowship with God, Christian joy will be our companion along the pathway. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

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by Don & Ron Williams

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A Life Of Peace

Keith Storment

“Peace on earth” sang the angels when they announced the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:14). But today, our old world knows so little of peace. Many spend their nights in futile tossing and turning, too worried about the troubles the next day may bring to find the sweet rest of sleep. Families are being torn asunder with bickering and strife. Local churches, intended by God to be a foretaste of Heaven on earth, are often filled with discord as supposed brothers and sisters in the Lord bite and devour one another. And on the international scene, the end of the great Cold War has not produced universal peace. Around the globe, nations stare across their borders with hatred, fear, and envy as the rumbles of tanks, guns, and war planes fill the air.

Is peace just an impossible dream? Perhaps, for many are unwilling to seek and follow the path of peace. Many today follow in the footsteps of doomed Jerusalem and close their eyes to the things that make for peace (Luke 19:44). But as the angels promised on that long ago night, there is a way of peace for those who are willing to strive to live in such a way that God will be pleased with them. Let us seek to learn the way of peace: in our lives, in our homes, in the church, and even in our nation.

The Prince of Peace

Centuries before the Savior was born, Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be “*The Prince of Peace*” and spoke of the wonderful blessings his reign of peace would bring (Isa. 9:6-7). Jesus echoed the pronouncement of the angelic hosts and promised to give peace to his followers (John 14:27; 16:33). He shed his blood to provide peace for mankind (Eph. 2:14-18; Col. 1:20). But only those who are willing to render obedience by faith to Jesus can have access to his peace (Rom. 5:1-2). Today we face the question: Will we surrender our lives to the Prince of Peace or will we close our eyes to the things that make for peace?

The Peace That Jesus Gives

First and foremost, Jesus came to give peace *between*

man and his God. Man by his sin has made himself the enemy of God. His sins have made a separation between himself and God (Isa. 59:1-2). He is dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-2). Through Christ and his death, God seeks to reconcile the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19). If we are willing to come into Christ, he will wash away our sins and restore us to fellowship with God (Acts 22:16; Eph. 2:16).

Those who find peace with God will receive the second great gift of peace: *Peace with themselves*. In the world we will still experience tribulation, but in Christ we can find a peaceful center of rest (John 16:33). If we have found peace with God we can sleep soundly at night, secure in the knowledge that he who sees each sparrow fall is watching over us (Matt. 10:29-31). We should not worry about food, clothing, and shelter because God will provide the necessities of life for those who put him first (Matt. 6:25-34). Rather than being anxious over what shall be tomorrow, Christians should take their worries to the Lord in believing prayer. We will find that the peace of God that passes all human understanding will guard our minds because we are in Christ (Phil. 4:6-7). “*(Cast) all your cares upon him, because he cares for you*” (1 Pet. 5:7). We cannot know what tomorrow holds, but we can know Who holds tomorrow!

The third great area in which Jesus provides peace is *peace with others*. Especially should this peace to be found among the fellow citizens of the kingdom of peace. When we find bickering and strife among those who claim to be God’s children, we must obviously conclude that at least some of those involved have not surrendered their will to the Prince of Peace. In Ephesians 2, Paul described the horrible state of alienation, hostility, and enmity that existed between Jews and Greeks (vv. 11-12). This hatred between Jews and Gentiles ran bone deep and generations old. The current hatred that often exists between the races in our society would only look as mild dislike compared to the hostility these two groups felt and often exhibited

Those who find peace with God will receive the second great gift of peace: *Peace with themselves*. In the world we will still experience tribulation, but in Christ we can find a peaceful center of rest (John 16:33).

towards each other. But God wrought peace between them by providing reconciliation through the cross of Christ in his one body, the church (Eph. 2:14-16). So those who have rendered obedience to the message of peace are now at peace with God and each other (Eph. 2:17).

And we can often be at peace even with those who are enemies of Christ because of our peaceful nature. Paul exhorted us to be at peace with “*all men*” as much as we can (Rom. 12:18). But this peace is not to be purchased at the cost of truth. Jesus himself warned that for some his advent would bring a sword and not peace (Matt. 10:34). Sometimes we must unsheathe the sword of the Spirit and take up spiritual arms to defend the cause of the Prince of Peace. Jude wrote that we need to contend earnestly for the faith that God has once for all time delivered to his people (Jude 3).

An Example of a Peaceful Life

Consider Simon Peter as evidence of the great change that peace with God brings to the life of an individual. The gospels first introduce us to a Simon Peter who is a most un-peaceful man. He lacked peace with himself. While the great storm tosses Galilee’s waves, fearful Peter joins the other disciples in castigating the Lord for sleeping while they face imminent drowning (Mark 4:38). Peter was also violent and unpeaceful towards others. Perhaps Peter’s violence reached its peak the night of Jesus’ arrest when he reached out a sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the high priest named Malchus (John 18:10).

Earlier, Jesus had reached to the heart of Peter’s troubled soul when he told Simon his mind was not set on the interests of God but of men (Matt. 16:23). Later, the Savior warned Peter that the outcome of the apostle’s failure to find lasting peace with God would be a time of severe trial when Satan would sift him like wheat (Luke 21:31). That very night, Jesus’ words were fulfilled. Simon sank to the depths of selfishness, three times denying his Lord, at least once with cursing and swearing (Mark 14:71). But the Father answered the prayer of Jesus: Simon’s faith did not fail. At this point, a look from the Savior pierced his heart

and with bitter tears Simon repented. Ever after, Simon Peter was a changed man — a source of strength to others (Luke 21:32; 61-62).

And for Simon, finding peace with God brought peace with himself. The Peter who had fearfully awakened Jesus that storm-tossed night on the Sea of Galilee now found the peace to sleep very well the night before Herod had purposed his execution. So soundly was he sleeping that the angel sent to deliver Peter had to strike him in the side to awaken him (Acts 12:6, 7). Simon had learned to sleep like Jesus, and we need to learn to sleep like Peter.

But not only did Simon find peace with himself, but he also found peace with others. When for a moment the old, selfish Peter resurfaced at Antioch, the apostle Paul was forced to administer a public rebuke (Gal. 2:12-14). But Simon Peter, the man who once had stretched out a sword in bloody violence against another, later wrote of Paul as his “*beloved brother*” (2 Pet. 3:15).

The life of Peter testifies that those who will submit to the Prince of Peace truly find “*peace on earth*” (Luke 2:14). If you are seeking peace in your life, then seek to live the life that Christians live. By submitting your will to the Lord and striving every day to put God first in your life, you also can experience “*the peace of God that passes all understanding*” (Phil. 4:7).

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At The Feet of the Master Teacher

by Daniel H. King, Sr.

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A Life of Suffering

Jim Walsh

One only needs to be living in this world a short time to understand that suffering is a part of life. Job said, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). But for the Christian, suffering takes on a different aspect.

Isaiah introduces us to the Savior who is portrayed, not as a mighty warrior, but as a suffering servant (Isa. 53:3-10). The Savior suffered at the hands of those who rebelled against God’s will (v. 6). He suffered both physical and mental anguish (vv. 3, 5). He also suffered from perverted judgment (vv. 8, 9).

His suffering also served the purpose of providing for his followers an example. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:20-24 that we are called to follow him that way so that we could not only experience his glory, but also his suffering; and in that suffering, we can learn to rely upon him who “*judgeth righteously*” (v. 23).

How Do We Suffer?

Certainly we understand that suffering can come in a physical way as happened to one like Stephen who suffered death for the sake of the Gospel (Acts 7:57-59). But suffering can come in different forms upon the child of God. Saints mourned the death of Stephen (Acts 8:2). Paul suffered out of concern for the brethren (2 Cor. 11:28). There is anxiety because of false teachers and what they can do to a congregation (Acts 20:27-31).

Beyond the suffering we endure personally, because of

our willingness to stand for the truth, is that which comes from our daily relationships. We have concerns and stress because of family. Possibly, there is no greater fear we can have than that of fearing a loved one will be eternally lost. For example, a spouse becomes unfaithful or a child leaves the home and the Lord at the same time. Loved ones disagree over doctrine. The heartaches from these problems are just as real and painful as any lash upon a broken back.

Suffering can also be economic in nature. Paul told Timothy to warn others about the love of money (1 Tim. 6 5-10). Our proper attitude about money and trust in God to provide will cause us to fall behind the world’s standards. In this, we will be seen as plain and simple, incurring the ridicule of those whose God is mammon. We see then that suffering happens, but it may help to understand *why*.

Why Do We Suffer?

Simply stated, we suffer because of sin. The first sin caused the world to become a cursed place and man to lose his perfect fellowship with God (Gen. 3:15-19). The perfect relationship with God was corrupted, along with the perfect home he provided. Sin caused the perfect to become imperfect and the permanent to become temporal. And with

that imperfection and temporal nature of things, suffering entered. As man advances in years, he will experience illness, loss of ability, fear, pain, and anxiety. Man is not immortal, and death comes to all. However, God provides a remedy. He reminds us that although we will suffer physical death, only those who remain in sin will suffer eternal death (Rom. 6:23).

Peter says that in suffering we can glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16). If we suffer for the cause of Christ, God is glorified. Shall we suffer for God, or complain because of a lack of faith? Shall we not rather endure that suffering, realizing that it is a blessing from the Father?

We also suffer directly as a consequence of other's sins. Stephen's death by the rebellious Jews caused the saints to lament his passing (Acts 8:2). The saints suffered the pain and anguish of seeing a brother and friend die. We also suffer because sin affects more than the sinner. (1) The spouse and children of the alcoholic suffer shame. (2) The spouse and children of an adulterer suffer shame, hurt and anxiety. (3) Children of abusive parents suffer in silent fear, never knowing if any one will help them. (4) Spouses and children suffer because of divorce.

Another reason we suffer is that it is part of God's maturing plan. The writer of Hebrews says that suffering is one way that God shows his love and concern for us (Heb. 12:6-11). It also is a benefit for us in that it helps us to be ". . . *partakers of His holiness*" (Heb. 12:10). James taught that by enduring trials we gain patience and strength (Jas. 1:2-4). Therefore, we can see a purpose in suffering (patience, maturity) and a promise in suffering (to become more like the Father).

Peter mentions another reason why we suffer, and that is to remind the world of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21-24). Sin caused Christ to suffer in order to purchase our redemption. As we live a Christ-like life, the world will treat us as it did him. We then become examples to the world for Christ.

What is the End Result of all This Suffering?

One thing is that we are reminded that it is possible to live and overcome suffering. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that God knows us, and knows that we can overcome our suffering because he provides a way of escape. For each one of us who is tried, there is the knowledge that we can overcome. God has made a promise that we can overcome; therefore, it's up to us to work his will and trust his way to

meet that end. Peter says that in suffering we can glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16). If we suffer for the cause of Christ, God is glorified. Shall we suffer for God, or complain because of a lack of faith? Shall we not rather endure that suffering, realizing that it is a blessing from the Father?

A final thought is that suffering reminds us of what awaits: Heaven. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:1: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The temporary nature of our surroundings and their ongoing decay remind us that all that we see is not eternal. That which is eternal is that which awaits us with the Father and the Son. That which awaits us is the perfect fellowship of the Father (Rev. 21:3) which was lost in the Garden because of sin. That which awaits us is the removal of all fleshly pain and sorrow (Rev. 21:4) which came about because of that first sin.

Conclusion

Why then is suffering different and distinct for the Christian? No one enjoys suffering, but at least we know that God understands. We know he has provided a way to escape, a way to glorify him, a way to help us grow. We know that suffering comes because of sin; and, we have the hope of its final removal because of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. We know that suffering is temporary and Heaven is eternal; and, God uses that suffering now to prepare us for Heaven later. May we ever learn to love him more and live to glorify him now that we may live with him forever.

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“Introduction” continued from front page

Sunday. I prepared an overhead transparency and preached on this subject that morning. However, when my time had expired, I had only covered the introduction and the first point. So, naturally, I announced I would conclude the sermon that evening. However, I only covered the second point that night. Well, to make a long story short, I ended up preaching a series of five sermons from Cecil’s single outline, and to make it work out equally as sermons for three Sundays, I added a sixth point, making it a six-sermon series.

I received an excellent response from our congregation, and the same from another congregation where I used the material as sermons for day services during a meeting. When the preachers of our area decided to meet together to study each week, and as we were looking for a project on which to work, I told them about Cecil’s material and how I thought it could be profitably expanded into an even broader study of an important subject. As we put our heads together, we came up with the twelve titles which make

up this special issue of *Truth Magazine*. The readers will likely think of even more aspects of this vital theme, and if so, your thoughts have been stimulated, and that was a part of our purpose in writing the articles.

Cecil used to say that the art of originality lies in forgetting where you got your material. I rather suspect that his outline was developed from some article he read somewhere; he was especially good at doing that. If his outline changed the original as much as we have expanded upon Cecil’s work, I doubt that the original author would even recognize that these articles came from his work.

Nonetheless, the authors’ hope is that someone who reads this material will gain a better understanding of the Life of a Christian, and be inspired to live that life with even greater dedication and commitment than before. If so, the dedication of this material to the memory of Cecil Willis would bring him special joy. His death has left a gaping emptiness in many hearts; in mine especially!

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8:14). Indeed, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Those who are spiritual value and strive after the eternal treasures found in godliness and righteousness.

To Appreciate Our Value We Must Follow Christ

The value of being a Christian, a follower of Christ, is that when we follow him we "find our life"; that is the true purpose and nature of our life. However, we must realize that following Christ requires that we lose ourselves entirely. It is important to note that in every context where Jesus speaks of the necessity of us losing our life to find our life, he has been speaking of the point that in order to fulfill his earthly mission he would lose his life. In John 12:23-28, we find Jesus speaking of his hour to glorify his Father's name. But in the midst of this statement, he speaks of the universal principle that those who "love their life" must "hate" and "lose their life" and "follow him." Losing our life to follow Christ honors the Father and is rewarded with the Father's honor. A few chapters later, we read of Jesus saying, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus laid down his life for us, proving his friendship toward us while demonstrating God's assessment of our value. But, we are to lay down our life for him if we desire to reciprocate his friendship and demonstrate our appreciation of our own true value. In the next verse he tells us how to "lay down our life for him": "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). Christians "follow Christ" by keeping his commandments. When we keep his commandments, there will be changes in our character and conduct that manifest the conviction that we are living to the praise of his glory.

What Will a Man Give in Exchange for His Soul?

Jesus revealed the value of the soul with the questions, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Though rare, nearly every generation has seen people who seemingly desire to "gain the whole world" for themselves. Much more common are those who "sell short" their souls; "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Most, without giving it serious thought, are "too busy" pursuing minuscule treasures of earth to have time to read, study, and meditate on the Scriptures. Yet God, in the Scriptures, instructs us to be sober; therein are revealed the eternal treasures of godliness and righteousness (Tit. 2:12).

When we "lose" our self-centered will and do the will of Christ, we "find" our life. God designed us to be selfless vessels. Experience teaches us that the pursuit of self-gratification brings emptiness and a sense of unfulfillment. God's revelation teaches us that if we lose our will to the will of God, we find the abundant life he intends each of us to experience and enjoy (John 10:10).

Conclusion

There is genuine value in being a Christian. In fact for us to be of any value to God, we must be Christians — those who have emptied themselves of selfish will in order to follow Christ in the performance of his will. Paul articulated the transformation involved in "losing our life to find our life" with these Spirit-guided words: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The value of his transformation is articulated in these words: ". . . the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-9).

Let us prioritize the treasures of godliness, holiness, and righteousness above the over-inflated "treasures of earth." The particular treasures of Faith, Love, Sacrifice, Service, Purity, Hope, Joy, Peace, and Suffering will be discussed in separate articles that follow. Let us be resolved to be counted among those who, like the apostle Paul, "love His appearing" and realize our true value by following Christ.

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Field Reports



Lordy G. Salunga, P.O. Box 6 Tarlac 2300 Tarlac: Greetings in the most precious name of Jesus Christ! May grace, peace and blessings be multiplied unto you. I continue to enjoy your good magazine and that it has reverted back to its original name of *Truth Magazine*.

Brother Vill P. Sicat is spearheading the effort of preaching the Gospel in Paniqui. The brethren there have asked me to help them every Sunday P.M. He is a former member of the Angeles church. Brother Yap is a beginning preacher. I am training him in the work of preaching. They will certainly be helped if they can receive your magazine.

There is a brother named Winston Sicat, a son of brother Vill, who is working for a firm in Makati, Metro-Manila and is a member of the sound church in Cubao. He is temporarily assigned by his firm in Saipan in the Marianas. These islands are U.S. Territories. He has been trying to locate a sound church there, but he has not found one. Are there faithful saints in Saipan? If you know of a group of Christians meeting in Saipan, please write to brother Winston G. Sicat at the following address: Winston G. Sicat-Unit 202, FTD-LTD Suite 100-A, Flametree Terrace Bldg., P.O. Box 86 CHR 13, Saipan, MP 96950. He will appreciate hearing from you!

Keep up your good work there at the *Truth Magazine*! May God bless and keep you.

David D. Bonner: There will be a religious debate June 8, 9, 11, 12, 1998 at 7:30 each evening at the old school house in Pernell, Oklahoma. (How to get there: Pernell is a very small community, just a few houses, and is about half way between Oklahoma City and the Texas border, just off I-35. From I-35, take Hwy. 29 through Elmore City and Foster, to Hwy. 76. Go four miles south on Hwy. 76 to Pernell. Hwy. 76 will be about 17 miles west of I-35.) Motels are available at Paul's Valley (28 miles), Marlow (30 miles), Duncan (32 miles), Lindsay (23 miles). Lawton would be about 64 miles.

Hoyt Chastain is now retired but taught for years in the Missionary Baptist college in Marlow, Oklahoma. He has debated W. Curtis Porter four times and A.C. Grider at least twice. He lives in the area between Marlow and Pernell.

David D. Bonner has preached the gospel full-time for 45 years and presently preaches for the Fourth & Groesbeck church of Christ in Lufkin, Texas. He preached in Lawton, Oklahoma for over 17 years and left Oklahoma last year. He has had several debates on various subjects.

Both men are gentlemen yet there will be moderators and order will be kept. Come with an honest heart, open mind, and Bible in hand. It will be a good Bible study, contrasting what these two men believe relative to the propositions under discussion.

Proposition #1. Resolved, the church of which I am a member, the church of Christ, is scriptural in origin, name, doctrine, and practice. Affirmed by David D. Bonner and denied by Hoyt Chastain.

Proposition #2. Resolved, the church of which I am a member, the Missionary Baptist Church, is scriptural in origin, name, doctrine, and practice. Affirmed by Hoyt Chastain and denied by David D. Bonner.

James L. Yopp, P. O. Box 799, Umatilla, Florida 32784: A few years ago, I begin collecting material on brother Byron Conley, venerable preacher of the gospel in the state of Florida. Due to obligations as a school district administrator and preaching, I could not always find time to do that work. Now that I am retired from secular work, I am resuming that commitment. My request: If you have anything that would be helpful — material, stories, anecdotes, etc., I would appreciate having such. Many thanks in advance for your assistance. E-mail: yoppj@hotmail.com

The church of Christ in the Golden Triangle of Florida is making progress spiritually and numerically. Property has been purchased within sight of Highway 441, between Tavares and Mt. Dora. The meeting house will be close to the population areas that include Eustis and Umatilla. The brethren are excited about our plans. Please pray that all goes well in our work.

John W. Pitman, P.O. Box 9, Louisa, KY 41230: This is a report of the Church of Christ, Lock Street, Louisa, Kentucky, in eastern Kentucky on the West Virginia border. U.S. 23 is the main highway in this section of Kentucky. Louisa is located between Paintsville and Ashland. The Lock Street congregation started meeting October 5, 1997. The congregation numbers 12 members and has an attendance in the upper teens and lower twenties on Sunday. We are in the process of purchasing the church building we are meeting in. The purchase price is \$36,500. It is worth more than that. The building is in the north end of Louisa, in a very good location. We are glad that we have this unique opportunity to one day own the building. We were able to obtain the down payment from a Trust Fund that was left for struggling churches of Christ by a dear sister in Beckley, West

Virginia. This area of Kentucky has long been neglected as far as the gospel of Christ is concerned. It is plagued with all kinds of radicalism as well as all kinds of false teaching in denominationalism. Churches of Christ are few in number in this area. There is a small congregation in Ashland, Kentucky where Tom Edwards preaches.

We will have a gospel meeting with Jerry Lee Tackett, of Columbus, Ohio. April 19- 24. We have other meetings planned for the rest of the year with Donnie Gains, Carl Hollis, and Jimmy Mickells. Meetings are being set for 1999. In the meantime if you are in this area, please consider meeting with the church of Christ on Lock Street in Louisa. You can write to the address above or call 606-673-4421 or 638-4979 for times of services.

Clarence R. Johnson, 606 S. Queen St., Lancaster, PA 17603: This is to inform you that we met in our newly acquired facilities for the first time on March 22. The congregation was formerly known as the Wrightsville church of Christ. It will henceforth be known as the Susquehanna church of Christ. Our meeting house was once a carriage house, then a dairy store, a hardware storage facility, and more recently a print shop.

The Susquehanna church meets in downtown Marietta, Pennsylvania. Free parking is provided in the public parking lot at 19 W. Walnut Street. From the back of the parking lot, enter our meeting house at 30 Apple Avenue. From the Lancaster area go west on Highway 30 (Lincoln Highway). From the York area, go east on Highway 30. Exit on highway 441 that runs along the east side of the Susquehanna River. Marietta is about three miles north of Highway 30. When you come to highway 772, turn west. You'll be on Waterford Avenue. Turn right on Walnut Street and into the public parking lot. From the Harrisburg area, go south on highway 441 to Marietta, turn east on Waterford Avenue (highway 772), then right on Walnut Street.

We hope that anytime you are in our area during service times, you will visit with us. We have Sunday morning Bible classes at 9 a.m., preaching and communion at 10, Sunday evening service at 6, Wednesday night Bible classes at 7. If you need more information, contact me at 717-481-4982 or by e-mail at CRJinPA@netrax.net. My mailing address is 606 S. Queen St., Lancaster, PA 17603. Another contact is Curt Hart, 717-426-3816. We look forward to your visit.

First Century Preaching Today
 Outlines compiled and edited by Jimmy Tuten.

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Preachers Needed

Alvarado, Texas: The small congregation in Alvarado is looking for a preacher. They are a small group of 25-30 members and can only provide a small amount of financial support. They are located about two miles north of Alvarado, Texas on the east service road of Interstate 35W, 20 miles south of Forth Worth. If interested, write the I-35 church of Christ, P.O. Box 1269, Alvarado, TX 76009, or call Larry E. Long at 817-783-6308 or 817-790-7253.

Garden City, Georgia: The Garden City church is looking for a full-time preacher. This is the only conservative church in the Savannah area. They can provide full support. If interested, send resume and references to Garden City Church of Christ, 4506 Augusta Rd., Garden City, Georgia 31408.



Pastor Found Not Guilty in Lesbian Union Case
 “Kearney, Neb. — In the first case to challenge United Methodist policy on homosexual marriage, a pastor was brought to tears Friday when found not guilty of disobeying church rules for performing a lesbian unity ceremony.

“The jury’s decision could shape how the 9.5 million-member denomination interprets rules governing its treatment of gays.

“Had he been found guilty by the jury of fellow ministers, the Rev. Jimmy Creech could have lost his position as senior pastor of Omaha’s largest United Methodist Church and been stripped of his ministerial credentials.

“. . . The 53-year old Creech conducted the same-sex commitment ceremony in Omaha in September. He was suspended from the leadership of his congregation in Omaha on Nov. 10.

“. . . Some did not like that idea. ‘No longer will I be a Methodist,’ said Helen Howell of Omaha, a member of Creech’s congregation. ‘Now I’m disenfranchised of the church because of the egocentricity of one man’” (*The Indianapolis Star* [March 14, 1998], A13).