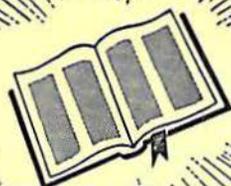
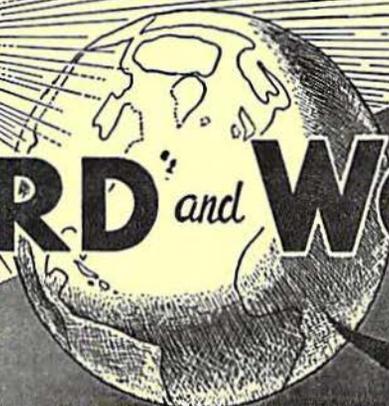


*"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."*



# The **WORD** and **WORK**



*"Holding forth the Word of life."*

MAY, 1992

## TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES

### Are You a Victim or a Victor?

*Oh, do not pray for easy lives,  
Pray to be stronger men.  
Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers,  
but for powers equal to your tasks.  
Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle,  
but you will be the miracle.  
Everyday you shall wonder at yourself and  
the richness of life which has come to you  
by the grace of God.*

*Phillips Brooks*

## One Day at a Time

One day at a time, with its failures and fears,  
With its hurts and mistakes, with its weakness and tears,  
With its portion of pain and its burden of care;  
One day at a time we must meet and must bear.

One day at a time to be patient and strong;  
To be calm under trial and sweet under wrong;  
Then its toiling shall pass and its sorrow shall cease;  
It shall darken and die, and the night shall bring peace.

One day at a time—but the day is so long,  
And the heart is not brave, and the soul is not strong,  
O Thou pitiful Christ, be Thou near all the way;  
Give courage and patience and strength for the day.

Not yesterday's loads are we called on to bear,  
Nor the morrow's uncertain and shadowy care;  
Why should we look forward or back with dismay?  
Our needs, as our mercies, are but for the day.

One day at a time, and the day is His day;  
He hath numbered its hours, though they haste or delay.  
His grace is sufficient; we walk not alone;  
As the day, so the strength that He giveth His own.

—ANNIE JOHNSON FLINT

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

The Word and Work (USPS 691-460) is published monthly except December under the auspices of the Portland Ave. Church of Christ, Inc., Louisville, Ky. Subscription: \$6.00 per year; bundles of 10 or more to one address = \$5.50 per subscription. Address correspondence to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Avenue, Louisville, KY 40212. Second class postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Word and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212.

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Vol. LXXXVI

MAY, 1992

No. 5

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## **THEME:**

# **TOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES**

## **Are You a Victim or a Victor?**

Alex V. Wilson

Are you taking hard knocks these days? Do you feel like a boxer whose opponent has pounded to a pulp? Are you just hanging on the ropes ready to go down for the full count? Then this issue is for you!

So many people face staggering blows, and I believe some of *Word and Work's* best ministry has been to bring comfort and strength from our Heavenly Father to such folks. Various readers have testified of help received from issues like "Problems" (Jan. '88), "Dealing with Depression and Despair" (Feb.'90), and "When Life Falls Apart" (Mar. '91). So may the Lord use this month's emphasis to preserve those who are presently in the furnace of affliction. Here's a good word from Warren Wiersbe to start with: "When God permits His children to go through the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat."

For the rest of this editorial, let me share a condensed version of a paper I prepared for our church members. We'll include the Old Testament verses but omit writing out the better known New Testament passages. Note: This is not so much an article to be read straight through as it is a collection of sayings and verses to meditate upon—a few at a time, regularly but also in times of special need. Save it for that use.

**CHRISTIAN, TRUST IN THE LORD!**

**REMEMBER WHO HE IS, AND RELY ON HIM.**

**ALSO REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE, IN CHRIST, AND BE BOLD.**

When attacked by worries and anxiety, or fears and panic, or sadness and depression...take your stand on *Christ the Victorious Lord*.

Also, by faith remember *your identity "in Christ."* Remind yourself afresh about who you really are by the grace of the Father above—your privileges, your resources, your relationships, your responsibilities, your destiny.

**AFFIRM** these great truths! Take hold of them. **REST** and **RELAX** from your tensions by means of them. But also **FIGHT** the good fight of faith by means of them.

When you first awake in the morning, and also just before you go to bed at night (and at other times too), renew your mind and spirit by repeating some of the following prayers or affirmations of faith:

I believe in the Son of God, therefore I am in Him, having redemption through His blood and life in His Spirit. He is in me, and all fullness is in Him. To Him I belong by creation, purchase, conquest and self-surrender. To me He belongs for all my hourly need.

There is no cloud between my Lord and me. There is no difficulty inward or outward which He is not ready to meet in me today.

I believe I have received not the spirit of fearfulness, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

The Lord is my Keeper. Amen.

(—Handley Moule)

A Morning Prayer, by Thomas Ken:

Lord, I to Thee my vows renew;  
Disperse my sins as morning dew.  
Guard my first springs of thought and will,  
And with Thyself my spirit fill.  
Direct, control, suggest this day  
All I design, or do, or say,  
That all my powers, with all their might,  
In Thy sole glory may unite.

#### *TRUTHS FROM GOD THAT COMFORT AND STRENGTHEN:*

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Deut. 31:8

The joy of the Lord is your strength. Neh. 8:10d

I love you, O Lord, my strength.

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. Psalms 18:1-2

I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul. Psalms 31:7

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way. . . . The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress. Psalms 46:1-2, 7

Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall. Psalms 55:22

When I said, "My foot is slipping," your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul. Psalms 94:18-19

Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always. Remember the wonders He has done. Psalms 105:3-5

I love the Lord, for he has heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. Psalms 116:1-2

I was pushed back and about to fall, but the Lord helped me. . . . This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalms 118:13, 24

When I was six weeks old, my father looked into my crib and said, "If things don't go well, I'll never see you again." He had planned to rob a store to pay gambling debts. He began to cry, then to pray. On Sunday he went to church with my mother and gave his life to God. His life completely changed.

In spite of only attending two years in a one-room school, and much trouble reading, he memorized thousands of Bible verses. Every night he went to hospitals, jails, prisons, bed-to-bed or cell-to-cell, sharing God's Word and the transforming power of Jesus Christ. He helped hundreds of others experience life changes, once even arranging a governor's release of a repentant prisoner from death row.

3. *You can see the hand of God in both success and failure.* The issue is not whether we think we are succeeding or think we are failing, but are we fully committed to do God's will. Our evaluations are not accurate anyway. We often over-estimate our failures and underestimate our success.

God has promised that all things work out for good in our commitment to Him (Romans 8:28). Compare this with a ship. Not all parts of a ship will float, such as the heavy engines or the propeller. But when these are added to a structure that does float, they provide force and direction. When the experiences of life are taken as a whole, the insight gained and lessons learned from our failures provide a meaning, force and direction that would not be there otherwise.

Henry Brandt said, "Sometimes I think it doesn't matter to the Lord what happens. It's my response He's concerned about. I've become more or less disinterested in how things work out." He continued, "Over my 72 years I've become very relaxed about money, possessions, what people think; that includes pain and death. I just try to pay attention to what manner of person I am."

4. *God has used ordinary people, unrecognized by the world, to do extraordinary things.* Moses was an 80 year old shepherd broken in spirit, when God called him. David was a shepherd. Amos was a shepherd and dresser of sycamore trees, neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. Peter was a boastful, impulsive fisherman. Jeremiah was an emotional person with deep inner conflicts, who felt he was a failure because he couldn't see results. Yet Jeremiah was God's spokesman in one of Israel's darkest hours.

As a teacher in Hong Kong, several times I heard Gladys Aylward tell her story. She had heard of an old missionary in China's interior and believed God wanted her to leave England to help. But she was rejected by the mission board for not meeting its standards.

She worked as a maid until she could buy a ticket to China on the Trans-Siberian railway. After a long, uncomfortable, cold and dangerous trip, she arrived without notice. Her mail had never gotten through.

As Gladys helped run an inn, she ached over the plight of children. Her care for them won so much respect and trust, she was used to stop a prison riot.

Eventually she had 200 children. As the war with Japan progressed, Gladys and her children were forced to flee. With little food, they marched by night and hid by day. They crossed 2,000 mountainous miles and the huge Yellow River. A book, *The Small Woman*, and a movie, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, were made from her adventures.

5. *Express pain honestly.* Job said, "I cry to thee and thou dost not answer." David cried out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Jesus quoted that question on the cross. Jeremiah said, "I have labored in vain." Habakkuk looked at injustice and asked, "Where is God?" Gideon asked, "If the Lord is with us, then why has all this befallen us?" John the Baptist sent from prison and asked, "Art thou he that should come, or do we wait for another?" Turning discouragement to encouragement comes from facing, not suppressing, painful feelings.

When Dr. Brandt's wife Eva was dying of inoperable cancer of the pancreas, he said, "I have a lot of questions to ask the Lord, but He doesn't answer. My prayers are just sounds. I don't see any good in it, but when I asked God about it, I got silence. I've never heard a word from God." He went on to say, however, "If through the years you have learned to walk with the Lord, at times like this you find strength." He also said, "*The longer I live the less I understand the Lord but the more I've learned to trust Him.*" He believes that because he has chosen to live for the Lord, he is an example to others, and he can expect unusual things. Instead of "Why me?" it is "Why not me?"

6. *Encourage each other.* Most people are discouraged and lonely. If the truth were known their hearts are probably breaking. They have a deep sense of insignificance and a yearning for security. They hunger and thirst for deeper relationships.

The church is a natural support system. It offers redemptive fellowship, supportive encouragement, loving exhortation, and caring concern. It can be a laboratory for emotional and spiritual maturity. Isaiah said, "Learn to sustain with words him that is weary" (50:4)

Henry Brandt learned that he is no better at comforting those facing death, even after the Lord took two wonderful wives from him by death. He said, "Biblical words shared by a non-experienced person are just as effective as from an experienced person. It is not one's experience that helps another. It is God's word that helps."

Dr. Brandt's procedures for counseling are these: (1) listen to a person's story until Biblical principles emerge that have been violated, (2) share that with them, (3) leave the results with God.

It is no easier to remodel thinking, behavior, and feelings, than it is to make a comeback in a rugged football game. Life, like the game, is complex, uncertain, brief, and reveals glaring weaknesses.

Yet these six spiritual and psychological insights make an inner curriculum for renewed purpose. They keep you in touch with God's incredible forgiveness, and sustaining grace. They enable you to experience pain and hope simultaneously. Even when you think you're about to lose, as they have worked for others, they will work for you.

# Faith Triumphs Over Troubles

Richard Ramsey

Eighty long years and more the children of Israel prayed for relief from Egyptian bondage. Eighty long years they prayed while nothing happened.

Abraham waited many long years for the fulfilment of God's promise that he would have a son. Long after natural forces had subsided so that it would be impossible for him or Sarah to have a child, Abraham kept praying and waiting.

Joseph was tried by adversity of various sorts: sold by his brethren into slavery, accused falsely by an evil woman, imprisoned, forgotten by friends.

Job had to endure a long period of physical suffering, plus the scorn of his friends. Even his wife left him, urging him to curse God and die.

David was a fugitive for years hiding out from King Saul, who was determined to kill him. After the death of Saul there were long years of civil war before David was fully established as king.

*Faith is the victory that overcomes the world, the Bible assures us. But where is that victory?* The men of God through the ages have suffered and died at the hands of their enemies. "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Heb. 11:36-38)

The height of this disgrace and shame came when the Son of God himself was seized by sinful men, scourged, spit upon, laughed at and then crucified. Even his dead body was savagely pierced by the soldier's spear.

Did not the disciples pray for Jesus? Surely they must have, although the Bible does not tell us about it. Were they not standing nearby, praying God to deliver Jesus from the cross, expecting every moment to see angels descend to set him free? Yet, He went on to die.

You and I want immediate answers to our prayers. We want visible success right now. We pray believing, and we expect results.

Could we have persevered year after year under the trials these men endured? Could we have held on to our dreams in prison, as Joseph did? Could we have still believed in God's promise to take us to the promised land as the Israelites did, when year after year we felt the sting of the taskmaster's lash and saw our children put to death? Could we have held fast to our hope, as Job did when day after day he suffered terribly? Could we have held on to our faith that Jesus was God's Son if we were standing by watching Him die?

*Maybe today you are struggling along under a massive load of troubles: sickness, poverty, failure, disgrace. You pray and nothing seems to happen. Just remember that you stand where mighty warriors of old have stood. Jeremiah endured the bitterness of seeing his city, Jerusalem, burned with fire, his friends slain by the enemy. The faith that triumphs is the faith that holds fast to God come what may.*

“No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Heb. 12:11)

A faith that lasts only as long as immediate, visible results are evident is a weak faith. The strong faith is that which holds fast to God when all the visible evidence seems to deny God or His goodness. A faith that endures chastening is stronger than ever.

• • • • •

[Editor's Note: Tough circumstances often strike hardest in our FAMILIES. The following articles deal with a grown son's sudden death, a newborn handicapped child, and a father whose life included lots of struggles. Yet in each case, faith in God was the victory that overcame.]

## A Story of Unexpected THANKFULNESS

The author's son was a young Bible translator. The Colombian guerrillas who took him hostage issued a deadly ultimatum—and meant every word of it.

Chet Bitterman Jr.

The clearing in the Amazon jungle was hot and bright.

“I'm thankful it's not raining!” I said to my wife Mary.

“And thankful we've got these few minutes alone,” I added as Mary and I stood hand in hand before the grave. There was writing on the headstone but it was in Spanish. “It's a beautiful setting, Mary. I'm thankful for that.”

Then I heard the word I'd been repeating. *Thankful*. How could a man travel 3000 miles to the graveside of his murdered 28-year-old son and find reasons to give thanks?

For me, the lesson in thanksgiving didn't start until I was 47 years old and facing the greatest crisis of my life. Up to that time, my reaction to things was often impatience. For example, a lot of Amish people travel the roads around our hometown of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. To get stuck behind one of these farm families in their slow-moving, horse-drawn buggy would set me fuming. Waiting was always the hardest thing in the world for me. When our first child was born, Mary was in labor 19 endless hours, while I raced up and down corridors and charged through doors marked “no admittance.” Not being able to *do* anything—that was the worst. And then suddenly there he was, red, bruised with instruments, but healthy and howling. We named him Chet Bitterman III.

And it was soon apparent that the third Chet was going to be just like the second, a guy who couldn't sit still. I think he broke his first bone at age five, jumping out a window. Or maybe the first was the cracked collarbone when he hit the ceiling bouncing on his bunk bed. If he remembered to take his glasses off before playing in a neighborhood football game, he'd sit on them afterward. At 20 he drove his motorcycle into an embankment, mauling his right foot, leaving permanent scars where the doctors pinned the pieces together.

He wasn't a wild youngster, he just threw himself all-out into everything he did. He brought the same kind of total involvement to the church groups he belonged to. Church was central to us all. In fact, when Chet was eight I had offered myself for the mission field. But I had too little education, too many children (by now Chet had four younger brothers and sisters).

"Why not go into business," someone said, "and support the missionaries?"

This was how I came to open my own shop, installing and servicing the 60-foot long scales used to weigh trucks along the highway, and the big industrial scales used by feed mills and stone quarries. It's supported a good many missionaries over the years, even while our family grew to include eight children. My shop is in our basement and that's where Chet started learning the business. ("There's only one way to verify a scale, son: Place a known weight on it.") Before long he was out on the truck with me, lugging those 50-pound standard weights from job to job. By the end of an average day he and I would each have lifted 32,000 pounds.

By his early 20s Chet knew he wanted to go to the mission field in person. He married a beautiful girl named Brenda Gardner whose parents were with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, an organization extending literacy all over the world, translating the Bible into hundreds of languages never before written down. Brenda and Chet too joined Wycliffe and, after three years of linguistic training were assigned to Colombia, where Brenda's folks were.

In May 1979, Mary and I saw them off from the International Departures area of the Miami airport. We were all a little subdued, realizing it would be two years before we saw one another again.

"Anna Ruth will be so big we won't know her!" Our little granddaughter was just two. "And the new baby!" Mary went on. "We won't know for days if it's a boy or a girl."

"Nonsense, Mother! We'll be in touch by radio from the base."

"And maybe," said Brenda, "when we reach our tribal area and get our house built, you can come and visit us in the jungle!" But that wouldn't be for at least a year and a half. First there would be more training at the Wycliffe base in Lomalinda, adjustment to the climate, food and lifestyle of the Amazon rain forest.

In October the radio call came with the good news of the birth of another granddaughter.

The following month, November 1979, news from another part of the world was ominous. A group of Americans were taken hostage by revolutionaries in Iran. I fretted at reports of similar groups at work in Columbia.

"Don't worry, Dad," Chet wrote. "Our work has nothing to do with politics."

But I didn't stop worrying. Then, a year after Chet and his family left, a nagging pain in my chest erupted in a heart attack. "You've got to calm down!" Chet told me in a radio call. "You're too worked up over this Iranian thing."

Worked up! The whole problem was that Americans weren't worked up enough! Months passed, and the politicians were still talking, talking, talking.

Saturday, January 17, 1981, I got home late because of the icy roads. "I just had a wonderful long talk with Chet!" Mary greeted me. "He and Brenda and the girls are in Bogota for a week." They had flown up to the Colombian capital for a final medical check before going into their tribal area far to the south.

It was a good weekend all around. On Sunday came the news that the Iranian hostages would be released.

Monday morning Mary and I drove over to see her mother who had not been well. We got back to find my office manager, John Williams, waiting with an ash-gray face: "Wycliffe called. The guerrillas have kidnapped Chet."

Guerillas? Chet? I heard the words but could make no sense of them. We spent the next hour on the phone, piecing together as much of the story as anyone knew. Before dawn that morning, January 19, a group of heavily armed, masked gunmen—members of a revolutionary faction known as "M-19"—had broken into the house Wycliffe rented in Bogota.

Seventeen people were spending the night there, five of them children. All were herded sleepy-eyed into the living room. Mothers and children were permitted to sit on the sofa, the others made to lie face down on the floor. Eventually the intruders departed taking a single hostage—Chet—along with them. Why Chet? No one knew. Maybe because his Spanish was better than the others'. Maybe for no special reason.

Before leaving they allowed him to kiss his little girls, and go back to the bedroom for his contact lenses. Then they put him into a station wagon and drove away. Their price for his return: the withdrawal of all 200 Wycliffe workers currently in Colombia.

"You pretend to be missionaries, but we know you are spies for the Central Intelligence Agency." If Wycliffe was not out of the country in exactly one month, Chet would be shot.

The pointlessness of it, the pig-headed stupidity, made me want to pick up those 50-pound weights and start smashing something. Apparently the Colombian government was powerless, the American government equally so. "But there's got to be something we can do!" I cried.

"We can pray," Mary said. "And we can get others to pray."

Mary spent the rest of the day and night on the telephone, calling churches, prayer groups, missionary societies, Christian radio stations—every religious resource we knew of. Meanwhile I paced—down to the basement, up to the kitchen for tea, back to the basement. This inaction, this standing helplessly by—suddenly I knew what it was like. It was like those awful hours in the hospital, waiting for Chet to be born.

I wasn't going to sit twiddling my thumbs this time! I was going to do something! I'd get some guns and a bunch of buddies and fly to Bogota and take that place apart brick by brick until I found where they were holding my son.

I knew it was a fantasy. I also knew that if I couldn't find some outlet for the rage inside me I was going to have another heart attack or kill someone or do both. "Lord," I begged, "there's got to be something I can do!"

*There is. Give thanks.*

The thought couldn't have come from me. It was a million miles from where my head was just then. But neither would it go away. *Give thanks.* It just stayed there, facing down my own thoughts. I even recognized where it came from—and that was unusual too. I wasn't like Chet, who knew hundreds of Bible verses by heart. I'd never been able to sit still long enough to memorize much. But I knew this one—chapter and verse. First Thessalonians 5:18: *In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God...*

But... why think of it now? "Every thing" couldn't possibly mean *this* situation. Not the kidnapping of a husband and father on the threshold of his life's work. You couldn't give thanks for *that*.

*Give thanks.* I couldn't! It wasn't human. I felt shocked, angry, frustrated—anything but thankful. Then I noticed that the verse didn't say anything about the way I felt. "Give thanks" was God's command, not "feel thankful." Thanksgiving was apparently—to start with anyhow—not a matter of the emotions but the will.

Was I *willing*, then, to give thanks? No! I wanted justice. I wanted revenge. I didn't want to give up my righteous wrath. In my pacing I passed the weights, saw Chet lugging them out to the truck, sweat beading his forehead. "The way to check out a scale, son, is to place a known weight on it."

The Bible was that known weight to me, the standard that had proved itself trustworthy. And so at last, grudgingly, without an

ounce of positive emotion to back it up, I mumbled, "Okay, I'll give thanks."

There's another thing that working with scales impresses on you: the importance of accuracy. My thanks would have to be honest thanks. Was there anything in this mess I could *truly* be grateful for?

Well... what about all those Bible verses Chet could recite? They must be a help to him right now. I could be thankful for his memorizing so much Scripture.

And... these weights! These thousands of pounds Chet had hoisted daily had given him a physique that could take just about any kind of strain. Thank God for Chet's strength.

*Your strength, too, of course, Lord! Because You are with him—his whereabouts are no mystery to You. Thank You for Your presence with him. With Brenda and the children. With Mary and me.*

The items were coming so fast now that I seized a piece of paper. Thank God we could be proud of Chet. Thank God he spoke Spanish... and made friends easily. Thank God he and Mary had that great talk two days ago. Soon I had filled a page with things for which—in the very midst of this situation with all its dangers and unknowns—I could be genuinely thankful.

Something even stranger was happening. As I wrote, the tension and rage and anguish drained away. I felt light, I felt free, I felt—thankful! Feelings I could never have drummed up by straining for them had followed effortlessly this act of obedience.

And thankful feelings, I was to learn during the next 48 days, are not just more agreeable than angry, vengeful ones (though they certainly are that!). Thanksgiving thrusts us into a posture of acceptance. It brings us, faster or slower, to the place where we can say, "Okay, God. You are in this. You could have prevented it but You didn't, so You must have a purpose in it. Show me how I can cooperate with Your purpose." From a kicking, screaming rebel, thanksgiving can fashion a servant of God.

As I say, Mary had turned to God naturally and gracefully in this crisis, praying and asking others to pray. Now, together, we asked God to help us show our trust in Him. And so He did. He used us with the reporters who descended on our house, with people who wrote and called from all over the country and beyond.

The deadline for the missionaries to leave Colombia was February 19. At no time did Brenda or Mary or I suggest that the organization capitulate. Not only would it negate 19 years of effort in Colombia, where Wycliffe translators were working in 35 previously unwritten languages, it would endanger thousands of Wycliffe workers all over the world.

And anyhow Mary and I and many of those praying for Chet had received again and again the assurance that he would be released. When February 19 came and went and the M-19 issued a new, extended ultimatum we all breathed easier. It was going to be Iran all over again. For the next few weeks rumors sped between Bogota and Washington. Chet was free. He was not free. The deadline had been extended two weeks. It had been re-extended 24 hours. Chet had been killed. Chet was alive.

On March 7, a local newspaper phoned. Was it true that Chet's body had been found in an abandoned bus on a side street in Bogota? Mary put them off. "There've been so many rumors." And yet with her incredible sensitivity Mary knew at once that this was not just another rumor. Our boy was dead.

Wycliffe called us to confirm the report. Chet had been shot once through the heart. I refused to believe it. I had God's word! At last I got Bogota on the telephone. George Gardner, Brenda's father, had been to the morgue.

"It's him, Chet."

"George, are you positive? Couldn't there be a mistake?"

"I even pulled off his sock to check that scar on his foot."

I grasped at the last remaining straw. "Which foot, George?"

"The right one."

The right foot...that old motorcycle injury...there was no mistake.

I moved through the next few days in a blur. Church next morning. People shaking hands. "We're so sorry." A letter from President Reagan delivered by an envoy. They flew Chet's body to Lomalinda and buried him in a jungle clearing there on the Wycliffe base. Afterward Brenda and her parents and the two little girls came up to the States. Mary and I joined them for a few days of solitude in North Carolina. And it was there that life started coming back into focus for me.

But it was a focus from a different angle, a new one for me, the view from forever. I hadn't heard God wrong, Chet *had* been released, released into freedom and joy and service we could only dimly imagine. To wean us from an earthly perspective to a heavenly one, that's God's purpose from the day we are born. Chet sees that way now; I'm still working on it. And the secret is the one I started to learn on a January day nearly two years ago. The key to seeing as God does is to give thanks in everything...

The nearest town to the Wycliffe base had a hospital, but no ambulance. Our neighbors in Lancaster raised money for one as a memorial to Chet. In April of this year we went down to present it to the people of Villavicencio from the people of Lancaster.

After the presentation ceremony Mary and I were flown farther into that sea of green trees, 15 minutes by small plane, to the Wycliffe base where Chet is buried. Which is how we came to be standing in that little jungle clearing.

Earlier, the words of the hospital administrator who accepted the ambulance had been repeated to us by a translator. Now they echoed in my ears. "You came with love instead of anger..."

*Thank You, Lord, for doing this.*

*"Love never dies..."*

*Thank You for setting our sights on the eternal.*

"Gracias," said Mary suddenly, pointing to the word on the headstone. "Doesn't that mean 'thank you'?"

*Gracias a Dios...*

I don't know many Spanish words, but in any language these are all I need:

*Thanks be to God...*

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Note: The full inscription on Chet Bitterman's headstone is 2 Corinthians 2:14: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place."

Unknown to Chet's parents, it had been selected by his wife Brenda and engraved in Spanish so that if the Wycliffe Bible Translators should someday be forced to leave Colombia, "Chet's grave can go on speaking for us."

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## When Life Hits You HARD

Dr. Sandy Zensen

Steve Largent has caught more passes in the NFL than any other player in the history of professional football, compiling more than 7 miles in his 13 years in the League. Largent has proved himself to be an extraordinary athlete, knowing the joys of victory and the bitterness of defeat!

On November 15, 1985, Steve faced his toughest challenge. His fourth child, Kramer, was born with spina bifida. In an interview with reporters from *People Magazine* (Winter 1989), Steve said, "I was crushed. I broke down, went into a corner and wept."

Life can get rough at times and emotionally knock you hard to the ground. Somehow we must find the inner strength and the guts to get up and go on to meet the stresses and uncertainties of another day or face the prospects of living daily in defeat and despondency.

Terry, Largent's wife, knew how to keep her composure and gain a "peace" which the world does not know, cannot give, and cannot explain. As Steve stood by her bedside in the hospital, Terry said, "Steve, God planned Kramer. Having him in our lives will be one of the greatest things that ever happened to us."

Simply, God knows what He's doing and knows what He's about. The Sovereign God of the universe is ultimately in charge, working all things to His good pleasure and purpose, and we must learn to trust His perfect wisdom in every circumstance. It is the only way to gain victory while facing some of life's toughest challenges.

[Steve and Terry both are dedicated Christians. He now works for Focus on the Family, Dr. James Dobson's outstanding organization.]

## MY DAD

[Written by Tooger Smith shortly after his father died last year. Condensed.]

Even in financial poverty, my dad was rich, for he knew God loved him. We ate the food of kings even though the bank account was low. Cash flow was from the huge garden. There was gardening most of the year in Southern Louisiana. Each year he would borrow from the Production Credit Association, live off of that and the garden and then hopefully pay the loan in the fall from the rice harvest. The process began anew each January. I was born on his 39th birthday, the last of his and Mom's six children.

All of my eighteen years at home, he was a rice farmer. We lived in the same house. He rented 160 acres. One-fifth of the crop went to the land owner. One-fifth went to the irrigation company. Most of the ground was highly erodible.

Dad never paid income tax while I was home. He was not opposed, he just never made enough. There were always cows, pigs, chickens, ducks and geese. There were also the horses and the old mule for gardening. Electricity finally got to our house about when I started school. Indoor plumbing never did make it. Neither did a phone or a TV. (Praise God for no TV!!)

Now, the first and last letter I have ever written to my dad:

Dear Dad,

After 85 years of hard work, your body died last month. But I wanted to write to you for Father's Day anyway, because this is the first letter I have written to you personally. Let me explain what I mean.

Years ago I heard this story. I suppose it is true, for I can identify with it. There was a high school football star who played for a team in a small southern Mississippi town. The team was successful the year he was a senior.

Naturally, his dad came to each of the games. The Monday of the week of the championship game, his dad's body died. The coaches, the student body, and the whole town were concerned about whether the boy would play or not. If he did play, would he be any good that evening, since he and his dad had been very close. He said he would play. That game turned out to be his best game ever.

In the celebration that followed, someone voiced that it was his best game. They wondered why and how he could play so well considering the circumstances. He replied, "I played the best I ever had, because this was the first game my dad ever saw. Some of you know, he had been blind all of his life."

Dad, you were not blind, but this is my first letter to you because this is the first one you can read. Though it wasn't your fault, you never had a chance to go to school and learn to read and write. I don't know exactly what happened when you went to be with Jesus last month, but now that you can see clearly, I'm sure you are reading or learning to read the books that are there. Maybe you are reading this even as I write. Over the 25 years or so I've lived away from home, I've written to you many times, but someone else always had to read the letter to you.

Dad, thank you especially for being a Christian. You lived it. Every Sunday, morning and evening, you and Mom and all the children went to Sunday school and worship. Every Wednesday night we were also there. I know now how difficult that is, but you took the time. You knew the value. I will never forget the prayer circles at home after Bible reading. I always knelt next to a big sister, because she would scratch my back. I went to sleep sometimes when I was younger.

When I was growing up, you set a tremendous example as a man of spirituality, which resulted in peace and patience and no profanity. Well, there was that one time I was out in the field "helping" you fix a plow (I probably was five or so. I can just imagine the help I was at that age.) You said a bad word and I went home and reported you to Mom. But now as a man with a family, I am overwhelmed by your ability to speak and live like a Christian should. You did not yell at humans when I was there. There were the old mules, which I remember you yelled at occasionally!

Talking about spirituality reminds me of the many many times I would go into your bedroom when I was little... and it seemed that every time you were praying. Now I know how valuable that praying was for the family. I also know how hard that was to do. Praying has got to be the most difficult exercise in Christianity. Thank you for praying.

You showed us that fathers worked to provide. You did that, all those years as a sharecropper. But it was raising that enormous garden all year around that taught me tenacity. I went back there as an adult, and that garden spot is still enormous! I am glad that you only planted five acres of cucumbers that one year. After some thirty plus years I can still see that enormous field of cucumbers that had to be picked every morning.

You were a man of subtle humor and never vengeful. For your funeral, you requested a certain preacher. You said it was in honor of his dad, but I think you had another purpose also. You knew that

Kenneth would just have to include humor even at a funeral. It was a neat story, for it illustrated your quiet unassuming life style. I don't know what you were doing during the funeral, so I'll relate the story in case you missed it. A long distance truck driver pulled into a truck stop along an interstate. He went into the restaurant, sat on a stool and ordered a hamburger, French fries, and a Coke. His food was delivered along with the check. Immediately upon being served, three tattooed, mean looking bikers came into the restaurant. They proceeded to each take one of the items and eat it. The man offered no resistance, not even verbally. He then picked up the check, paid for the food and left. Since his coolness impressed the waitress, she went to the door out of curiosity and wonder. During that time the bikers were laughing and discussing how he was not much of a man. She then spoke up, "He's not much of a driver either. He just ran over three cycles." You never did get revenge. You had learned to leave that in God's hands. God took care of the "bikers" that came into your life.

But the special thing you taught me was that of being a servant. You served God and the Lord Jesus Christ. You were an Elder for many years. I remember your prayers in French and English at the worship times. I also realize now that serving God meant serving the family too. For all those sixty plus years, you got up every morning early and made some coffee and took a cup to Mom while she was still in bed. This is especially interesting since you never drank coffee. Someone said that the best thing you can do for your children is to love their mother. That you did. You were the ultimate lover. Her body was sick the last ten years of her life, but you cared for her. The last six of those she was an invalid and finally her mind also was gone. You were her nurse, twenty-four hours a day, three hundred sixty-five days a year. I don't know if I can be the man you were! Thank you for such a demonstration of love. Your body died a few months after hers. You had literally given your life to serve Mom. There is not much of that attitude left in marriages today. I hope to be a servant like you.

One of the simple things you did to encourage me in school was to give me a dollar if I made all A's on my report card that six weeks. It became a tradition, and we continued it even into college. That became a symbolic dollar. We both knew the value of being able to read.

You were not perfect of course. In the 50's you suffered a mental breakdown and spent some time in a hospital. At the time, I could not understand how a real Christian could suffer a mental breakdown. In my mind, I wondered where your faith was. Could you not have believed that God would work it out? I now apologize to you again. I now understand the pressure. It was an incredible task to be raising six children. We ranged in age from about seven to twenty-one. Our lives and needs were just as diverse...from grade school to college to marriage to rebellion to the Korean War. Throw in the pressure of farming on borrowed money and now I understand.

But we survived!! And we all came out stronger, wiser, and more committed than ever to the value of Jesus in our lives.

I could go on and on, but one last thing. People always look back and ask about success. Were you successful, Dad? Joyce and Brother-in-law Doug tell me that after your bills are paid, your estate will distribute only a few dollars to the six children. We don't need your money, you have already distributed your estate to your children for you gave us Jesus. Your success shows in the lives of your children. All of us are Christians, with Jesus being our Savior and Lord. He's an integral part of our lives. We all have stayed married to our first spouse. . . from about twenty-five to forty years. All of your twenty-one grandchildren have also accepted Jesus as Savior. And your first great-grandchild accepted Jesus before your body died. Dad, that is success! Eternal success. Few families will have such a complete family reunion in heaven as we will have one day. You and Mom showed that Jesus is the answer to successful living—not secular education, or a lot of money, but Jesus.

## The Handicapped Child— Helping Parents to Grieve

God uses Christians to help grieving parents deal with  
and accept their circumstances.

Marion Duckworth

Parents of a handicapped child often mourn the child they'd been expecting—the healthy baby who would fulfill their dreams. Grieving is God's way of promoting healing.

The stages of grief through which many parents go are similar to the ones described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying*. Not every person experiences every stage. Some pass through one stage quickly and linger in other stages.

In addition to the initial shock in these situations, parents frequently experience the following five stages.

### 1. DISBELIEF, DENIAL, ISOLATION

One mother described her denial stage like this: "Accepting the fact that my daughter is deaf has been very hard, especially since she had normal hearing until she had meningitis. In the beginning, I wouldn't even use the word 'deaf.'"

Betty, mother of two boys with cerebral palsy, pushed doctors to evaluate her older son's condition because she knew something was wrong. "Finally when they say, 'You're right' and give a diagnosis, you slip back into denial. I wanted them to say, 'Nothing's wrong.'"

Show parents from Scripture—that Job mourned his former state of health, wealth, and family; that Jeremiah grieved, and so did David—in order to give them permission to grieve as well, to let them know that it's okay to feel this way.

They may have to experience grief many times. "Every month, you find out something new," Betty said.

The father of a handicapped child added, "It's as though you stand up and , wham, they knock you down. You may get up faster each time, but you drop farther."

As parents receive accurate information about their child's condition, help them learn to focus on the child as a person and not merely on the disability. As they have physical contact with the child and establish a relationship, they will make the greatest strides through this stage.

## 2. FEELINGS OF ANGER

During this stage, it is not uncommon for parents to rage at themselves, their mate, a physician, or any person who might have prevented a disabling accident or illness.

A father wrote after he discovered his son was born blind: "God, You seem very far from me right now. Today I'm very angry, the angriest I've ever been at you. You know how much I wanted a baby. I've prayed the baby would be born healthy. Well, God, he's blind. It isn't fair, God. I do blame you for this loss."

Angry parents ask questions. How could this happen to me? How can a loving God permit a child to be born in this condition?

The angry parent needs to see that anger isn't wrong—it's a response to a real or perceived injustice. But unchecked, the angry person may lash out and cause deep, sometimes permanent wounds in family relationships.

Anger can motivate parents to search out ways to help their disabled children. One mother's anger, when she realized there were no group homes for children with head injuries, spearheaded plans that culminated four years later in the dedication of a residence in her city for the head-injured.

## 3. BARGAINING

Usually this means bargaining with God. "I'll accept my child as deaf—if she learns to read lips and speaks so she appears normal." "I'll accept my retarded son—if he achieves a higher level of ability than people predict."

Three steps that can help parents in the bargaining stage can also be helpful in the other four stages. The parent (a) tells Christ how he or she feels; (b) finds in Scripture times when Christ faced a situation that could have aroused the same kinds of reactions; (c) finally, learns to live out Christ's reactions.

#### 4. DEPRESSION

Nearly a year and a half after Heidi's seizure disorder began, her mother confessed that both she and her husband had slipped into depression. "It finally hit us that she may be this way all her life." They were in debt; and they were exhausted from caring for their children around the clock in addition to their other responsibilities.

Depressed people may act passively. They may need to be gently urged to take action and then be encouraged when they do so.

The primary care giver, the person who has the most responsibility for caring for the disabled person, may need a good physical checkup. If the family hasn't contacted a support group yet, urge them to do so.

Perhaps the parents are so swamped with things to do that they feel overwhelmed. Here, the church can help by providing teams to babysit, do housework, shop, etc. If the parents have been so busy caring for the child, making a living, traveling to the facility where he or she is housed, and keeping the family together, they may not have found time for prayer and Bible study.

Parenting the exceptional child can crush the self-esteem of some. At first they may see only the disability and lose sight of the fact that the child was created in the image of God and that his or her soul is intact and important to Him.

#### 5. ACCEPTANCE

The last stage of the grieving process is to receive the circumstances willingly, not merely become resigned to the inevitable. It is unrealistic to think that most people will embrace their difficult situation wholeheartedly daily. But acceptance comes slowly, only after parents have grieved and explored their fears and anxieties.

Family members need to verbalize their decision to accept the circumstance. By thanking God for their child's condition, the parents are not saying that God deliberately engineers disabled bodies, but that God can use for His own good even that which He did not directly cause. For this, each one of us can be grateful.

Acceptance isn't necessarily a once-and-for-all event. It is an attitude that grows day by day. Parents demonstrate acceptance by nurturing their children in heart felt love and by reaching out to others in similar situations.

[Marion Duckworth is the author of several books including *Families of Handicapped Children* (Cook). This article used by permission of David C. Cook Publishing Co., 850 N. Grove, Elgin, IL 60120.]

# Facing Problems and Pressures

Alex V. Wilson

Do you ever feel absolutely floored by your problems? Do you ever feel like a spiritual weakling—*anemic*, washed-out, “too pooped to pop?” Are you tempted to give up serving the Lord, or maybe even following Him? Then you are probably about average! A college friend of mine used to say, “If at first you don’t succeed, you’re about average.”

But did you know that even the apostle Paul sometimes felt crushed, fearful, restless? Take a close look at the picture of this man that emerges from 2 Corinthians, which is perhaps his most self-revealing letter.

## PAUL’S OUTER PROBLEMS

First, we see his *physical weakness*. Speaking of mankind in general, he says, “Our outer nature is wasting away.” Speaking of himself in particular (and perhaps Timothy), he says, “When we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest.” He mentions an agonizing “thorn in the flesh” which he suffered. He does not tell us specifically what the “thorn” was, so we don’t know; but the context reiterates “weakness . . . weaknesses . . . weaknesses.” In addition to bodily problems, a certain lack of poise or glitter of personality seems to be implied, for his critics sneered, “His letters are impressive and moving but his actual presence is feeble.” (References for this paragraph: 2 Corinthians 4:16; 7:5; 12:7-10; 10:10.)

Second, Paul faced staggering *outward trials and tribulations*. At the letter’s opening in less than six verses Paul mentions “afflictions” four times and “sufferings” four times. He summarizes, “We experienced affliction in Asia; we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.” And on throughout the letter the term “affliction” sounds like a phonograph record stuck in a groove: “I wrote you out of much affliction . . . We are afflicted in every way . . . All our affliction . . . We were afflicted at every turn.” (1:3-8; 2:4; 4:8; 7:4-5; etc.) Talk about troubles!

Third, more demoralizing than the persecutions from outside the church were the *criticisms from within the churches*, especially in Corinth. To that church had come men who opposed Paul’s ministry and authority as an apostle of Christ. They too claimed to be apostles, and boasted of their impressive abilities and spectacular experiences. They felt Paul could not measure up to them—why, just look at his many troubles and constant problems! His weaknesses made them suspect that he was not a Spirit-filled man at all, and thus not a true apostle. Their belittling of Paul and exalting of themselves may be seen in 10:9-18; 11:4-6, 12-21. They claimed to be super-Christians, “superlative apostles” (11:5; 12:11) but Paul concludes that they were “false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (11:13). Yet their hostility to Paul

seemed to affect at least some of the Corinthian church members, whose attitudes towards Paul were beginning to sour.

#### PAUL'S INNER STRAINS AND STRESSES

These weaknesses, persecutions, and criticisms beat upon Paul like blows from a sledgehammer. The Corinthian letters reveal the resulting tensions and turmoil in his mind and heart. Even in 1st Corinthians he had reminded them, "I was with you in *weakness* and *fear* and *trembling*" (2:3). But 2nd Corinthians paints a more detailed picture: "I wrote you out of much affliction and *anguish of heart* and with many tears... At Troas *my mind could not rest* because I did not find Titus there... We are *perplexed*..." (Say—this doesn't sound like the victorious life, does it?) "Here in this body we *groan*, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling (i.e., our resurrection-body)... While we are still in this tent, we *sigh with anxiety*... We had fighting without and *fear within*... Apart from all external trials, there is the *daily pressure* upon me of *my anxiety for all the churches*." (2:4; 2:12-13; 4:8; 5:2-4; 7:5; 11:28-29)

Wait! What's going on here? Those reactions and feelings of Paul don't sound like anything I've ever heard or read about the deeper Christian life. That preceding paragraph sounds like just the opposite of "We are more than conquerors through Christ." Was Paul not such a great Christian, after all? Or do we have some distorted ideas about what a "great Christian" is? Could Paul sing with us, "And now I am happy all the day"?

Those are important questions, and well worth pondering. What, for example, about the *anxiety* which Paul says he experienced daily (11:28)? Our Lord Jesus repeatedly warned us against anxiety (Matt. 6:24-34 alone has five warnings; also Matt. 13:22; Luke 10:41 and 21:34). And Paul himself later wrote, "In nothing be anxious." How do we reconcile these directives with Paul's admission, "My anxious concern for all our congregations" is a "responsibility that weighs on me every day" (NEB)?

There seem to be two possible solutions to this apparent contradiction. (1) We might conclude that anxiety (which Webster defines as "painful uneasiness of mind") is forbidden only if it is selfish in nature. That is, it is wrong to worry about yourself and personal problems (because such worry springs from self-centeredness and/or lack of faith), but it is all right to have painful uneasiness of mind about the unsaved, and the problems of other people, and the needs of the church. Support for this view may perhaps be found in Phil. 2:20, where Paul *commends* Timothy for being "genuinely *anxious* for your welfare" (RSV). Then two chapters later he *forbids* all anxiety! (4:6). The same Greek word-base is used in 2:20 and 4:6. Yet because Paul praises Timothy for having this attitude, most translators consider that anxiety has a commendable aspect as well as a blameworthy one. Thus Phil. 2:20 is variously rendered: Timothy "will *care* truly for your state" (ASV); he "takes a genuine *interest* in your welfare" (NIV).

But there is another possibility: (2) Perhaps anxiety is always wrong, even if it is concern with the problems of other people or the glory of the Lord. Perhaps when Paul wrote, "In nothing be anxious" he really did mean NOTHING... no-thing at all! If that is so, and all anxiety, worry and fretting are prohibited for believers, then we must conclude that Paul was often guilty of this sin. That fact should not shake us up too much, however. After all, he never claimed to be sinless or to have reached perfection. In Phil. 4:11 (written about five years after 2 Cor.) he says, "I have *learned* to be content" in all circumstances. It was something he had to learn, as his faith grew during the years. He did not discover any slick spiritual trick or have any pushbutton experience by which he reached instant maturity. He had to keep learning and growing, as you and I do.

### HUMBLE HONESTY NEEDED

Whatever be the correct answer to the contradiction just noted, let's return to Paul as presented in his self-portrait, 2nd Corinthians. Here he is: Saddled with physical weaknesses. Confronted with endless afflictions, troubles and persecutions. Counterfeit apostles accusing him of being an inferior apostle if even an apostle at all. In fact, they hinted, because of his weakness and humiliation, maybe he is just a second rate Christian. They imply that his message, while true, is incomplete. He does not know or experience the *full* gospel they preach. Here is Paul: Sometimes with fears. Sometimes in tears. Often in weakness and anxiety. *Where then is the victory?*

Here it is: *He never quit!* He kept trusting... and going... and growing. And God used him (and how!). As he kept trusting, he found God's comfort amid afflictions (1:3-7); God's sufficiency amid anxieties (3:5). He received boldness (3:12) and courage (5:6,8) to counteract his fears. He did not faint or lose heart (4:1,16) in spite of his tears. Knocked down, he was never knocked out (4:9b, Phillips trans.). Sorrowful, he was always rejoicing (6:10). Such is the paradox of Christian living and serving in this world.

But before we turn our attention from Paul's problems to God's provisions, let's notice his humility in revealing his weaknesses and tensions. He does not hide his trembling fears and anguished tears and restlessness and pressures. Sometimes, if we have testimony meetings at all, we share only the glowing victories and successes and statistics. Is our church fellowship realistic enough and are we individually humble enough so that we feel free to share our needs, weaknesses, sins and defeats as well as victories and blessings?

Speaking in Manila, John Stott emphasized this need for realism in Christian service:

There are some Christians in leadership roles who think they must give the impression to the people they are serving that they never do anything wrong and never sin. And if sometime it becomes known that they are not perfect and they

make mistakes and commit sins, they fear their ministry will be despised. I suggest that the very opposite is true. Nothing discourages people more than the image we present if we pretend that we are really exceptional. They will think, "My pastor just isn't human. I could never attain that level." We need to be willing to be known for what we are.

Holy Father, help us to be humble and honest. Sustain us, so our faith won't fail and we won't give up. May we experience Your divine sufficiency amid the pressures of life. For Jesus Christ's sake, Amen.

[To be concluded in July]

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## Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller

*Our preacher makes reference occasionally to "the Restoration Movement." What is the Restoration Movement?*

Before giving answer to the above question we wish to lay a bit of foundation. Because of the amount of material, our answer will be continued in next month's article. The survey of what we know as "church history" will have to be very general but we can touch on the high points.

One can be saved and be a faithful Christian without a knowledge of the history of the church since N.T. times, but a knowledge of some outstanding events and issues that have taken place in the church age can be very helpful in keeping one's feet on the ground. One of the benefits that can come from a study of history—whether secular or religious—is the observing of the mistakes of the past and avoiding them. Perhaps we have not done very well at this in either area, but who knows what might have been the case without the record of the past. We must be careful in our Christianity to seek out the will of God as it has been revealed in the Bible and not establish our beliefs and practices on what our religious fathers have believed and done. At the same time, each generation cannot afford to start out anew, rejecting the truths hammered out in the experience of the past generations. Bible truth does not change with the seasons nor with the generations. There may be new applications of that truth which will need to be made in new areas of learning and experience, but the learning of the past can be most valuable. A knowledge of our spiritual "roots" is a knowledge that enables us to recognize the dangers in the various trends of the day. It is to be feared that many Christians today have little concern for a knowledge of these roots and that many of the trends are embraced without proper examination.

The history of the true church of Christ since N.T. times has never been written. Other than in general outline, only the Lord

knows that history. What is called church history is often more an account of the corruptions that have developed over the centuries than an accurate record of what has happened with the true church. So-called church history is more accurately religious history, being an account of much that has become apostate Christianity. Even so, if we are solidly grounded in the teachings of the N.T., we will be able to discern some of the evidence of God's work and will recognize those occasions when great movements have been made to purge out the error, reform the church, and get back to N.T. truth and practice.

In Rev. 2:1-7 we have the Lord's letter to the church at Ephesus. In it He threatened to remove their "candlestick out of its place." This is a reference to the vision of chapter 1, in which the Lord is seen in the midst of the golden candlesticks. This, then, was a threat that if they did not repent they would lose their place as one of His churches. Other letters (e.g., Rev. 3:1-6) reveal segments of churches which were unfaithful and near to rejection. In the light of the continued drift into unfaithfulness and failure to repent, it is evident that some churches in the early centuries did lose their places as one of His. This does not mean they ceased to meet or carry on religious activity. Like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, corrupted religion can become all the more dedicated and zealous in some ways. The further we move from the apostolic period, the more the corruptions and digressions from the truth prevailed. Since only the Lord knows when He no longer claims a church or Christians as His own, only He could give us a true history of His church.

Jesus promised that the gates of Hades should not prevail against the church and saw it as continuing all throughout the present age. We know therefore, that it did continue down through the centuries, even when we cannot trace its history. Many of the churches drifted toward a centralized type of control, and the stronger churches began to dominate the weaker ones. The organization that came to be known as the Catholic Church developed. It should be pointed out that this was a development from the corruption and digression of the churches. It can be safely assumed that there were churches and pockets of Christians, probably in small communities and isolated situations, which maintained a faithfulness to the N.T. teaching and pattern, but we have no record of these. Most of the churches moved toward the centralized control of Rome. Unfortunately it is this drift from scripture and decline of true Christianity of which we have the best accounts and which accounts passed into history.

The Roman Empire was overrun by the Germanic tribes from the north and there came on the world what is known as the Dark Ages. This was a time when learning was in a great decline. Many of the secular and religious leaders could not read or write. Printing was not yet invented. Copies of the Bible were few, mostly in monasteries, and for all practical purposes the Bible was "lost." Religion went on, of course, but it was greatly influenced by oral instruction and by superstition and ignorance. What was recognized as the

church and that to which Catholic historians must point in their claims was a combination of corrupted Christianity, religious ritual, superstition and ignorance, and secular power. It bore little resemblance to the church of Christ of the N. T. For several centuries during that period about the only accounts of "church history" are the accounts of this organization. Unless we realize that this was a great perversion of Christianity, the claims of the Catholic Church to be successors to the apostles will seem to be legitimate.

About the beginning of the 16th century, there began what has come to be known as the Reformation Movement (Note that this is not the Restoration Movement with which our question is concerned and with which we will deal later). Several factors were at work in bringing about the reformation. There had come a revival of interest in learning, and the Bible had come in for renewed attention. Certain men began to translate the Bible into the various languages of the people. The invention of printing had recently taken place and this led to multiplication of the copies of the Bible. Devout men began to study the Bible and it became evident to them that the church as they knew it had drifted far from the practice and teaching of the Bible. These men therefore set out to reform the church. Even they did realize how far the drift had gone in all areas, but they did recognize certain key issues and began to try to change the Roman Catholic Church. The result was very little reform in the Catholic Church. The would-be reformers were cast out—excommunicated—as heretics. These were pious men, however, and the excommunication did not end their religious activity. From them and their teaching grew up several religious bodies that have developed into some of the major denominations of our day.

The Reformers, as some of these key men have come to be known, were for the most part good men seeking to follow truth as far as they understood it. In view of the Bible ignorance and the background from which they came, they showed remarkable achievement. We owe these men a debt of gratitude for many of the changes they brought. These men, however, were in disagreement over certain issues and the disagreements resulted in several different bodies with different teachings rather than a unified return to the teachings and practice of the N.T. Much of the religious division among those professing Christianity today is due in great measure to the kind of dissention that arose with the Reformation. Division was not their intention, but it has been the result.

Somewhere in all the religious corruption and confusion we believe Christians and therefore the true church has continued to exist, but any attempt to trace it accurately is next to impossible. Along with the wheat has grown the tares.

This abbreviated survey of "church history" through the Reformation Period provides a background for our discussion next month of the Restoration Movement. Readers may wish to keep these pages handy for a review next month.

[To be concluded in June]

# Missionary Work in Japan

## CENTENNIAL REFLECTIONS No. 3

Harry Robert Fox

The 100-year history of mission work in Japan by members of American Churches of Christ falls into three periods: (1) 1892 to the end of World War I in 1918, (2) 1918 to the end of World War II and (3) 1945 to the present. In our two previous articles we recalled the predominant service of Brother J.M. McCaleb during the first of these three periods. We then introduced the names of the missionaries who served during the second period. Now I would like to sketch who served where during that period before proceeding to look at the third period.

While Brother McCaleb continued his work with the Zoshigaya church in Tokyo and Japanese brethren served the Kamitomizaka church (also in Tokyo) most of the other missionaries moved out of Tokyo to two locations: (1) Sisters Andrews and Ewing to Shizuoka (about 70 miles southwest of Tokyo) and (2) the E. A. Rhodes, O. D. Bixler, Harry Fox, Herman Fox and B. D. Morehead families to five towns and villages in the Kuji River Valley area of Ibaraki prefecture or state (about 90 miles northeast of Tokyo). Each of these families established a small church where each resided. The Rhodes and Morehead families also operated a kindergarten in their church buildings. Brother Bixler established a health food manufacturing company through which to support his evangelistic efforts while Brother Morehead operated a Battle Creek Health Foods franchise to help support his efforts. Brother Morehead also founded King Bible School to train Japanese preachers and workers. The Carl Eppers moved all the way to Sapporo, the largest city on Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido.

What I remember most about the missionaries of the second period is (1) the difficulty of their work and (2) the wonderful way in which they worked harmoniously together. Even though they had come to Japan from diverse backgrounds, they never allowed their diversity to create tensions or divisions. If they had not, by the grace of God, been blessed by such unity their work would have been much more difficult—for Japan was, and still remains, one of the most difficult places on earth in which to convert anyone to Christ.

By the time Brother McCaleb left Japan in 1941, fewer than 20 small congregations existed with a total active membership of about 400. Only one missionary remained in Japan for the duration of World War II, namely, Sister Sarah Andrews. Sister Lillie Cypert stayed until the midpoint of the war when she left on the Swedish repatriation ship *Gripsholm*.

From all of the foregoing it is easy to see how American brethren were concerned to know if any of the small churches could survive

the war. My father was the first of the pre-war missionaries to be given the opportunity to find out, when he was assigned by the U.S. Government in October 1945 to interview survivors of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. During the three months he served on that assignment he made contact with most of our congregations and was thankful to find how many of them had survived. When he returned in January 1948 to the Cornell Avenue Church in Chicago where he was the preacher he made a full report to the elders and to Brother Bixler and the elders of the nearby Brookfield, Illinois church where Brother Bixler was the preacher. The elders of the two churches then cooperated in making plans for resuming missionary work in Japan and recruiting as many missionaries as possible to enter the door which had opened wide. Brother Bixler was selected to go in the spring of 1946 to serve as Representative Missionary for Churches of Christ (as required by the Commander of the Allied Forces in Japan, Gen. Douglas MacArthur.)

About the same time, Brother and Sister E. A. Rhodes returned to Japan as dependants of their son, Robert, who was stationed in Yokohama as a member of the U. S. Army of Occupation.

When Brother Bixler returned to the U. S. in 1947 he and my dad contacted Brother George Benson, President of Harding College and former missionary to China, to obtain his help in recruiting new missionaries among the students. They also contacted the Elders of the Union Avenue Church in Memphis, Tennessee to request the help of their preacher, Brother E. W. McMillan, to head up a team of missionaries in establishing a Christian College in Japan modeled after Harding, Lipscomb, Abilene and Pepperdine colleges.

Brother McMillan readily agreed to go, and did go in November 1947 shortly after my wife and I accompanied Brother Bixler to Japan in October. By April 1948 enough other missionaries had arrived so that we could open the doors to a Christian school which was soon to become Ibaraki Christian College in the city of Hitachi where God had blessed us with 35 acres of land for \$6,000 on which to build such a school. The establishing of the college was a joint effort of American missionaries, Japanese Christians and financial assistance from interested friends in America and businesses in Ibaraki.

The original group of missionaries who assisted Brother McMillan in establishing the college were: Brother O. D. Bixler, the Virgil Lawyers, Joe Cannons, Charles Doyles, R. C. Cannons, Logan Foxes, Harry Robert Foxes, Harold Hollands, Max Mowrers and Frances Campbell. We began with just 60 first-year high school students. Today the enrollment is 3,700 in four divisions: Junior High, Senior High, Junior College and Senior College. Since its founding an additional 17 missionary couples and 7 single persons have served the school—Joe and Ruth Betts having served longest with 36 years.

The overwhelming majority of those who served the school also served tirelessly in evangelistic outreach and in establishing new churches. In our next and final installment I would like to look back over the past 100 years to see some of what has been learned.

# VOICES from the FIELDS

James and Karen Ashley

On Furlough from the Solomon Islands

A phone call from James in early April told of several answers to prayer. He called from Arizona, where his family is staying as their furlough draws to a close.

First, the police in the Solomon Islands cleared them of the charges trumped up against them for allegedly "engaging in business without a license." The charges have now been dropped, and the way is clear for them to return. They plan to leave on May 10.

Second, there had been a strong possibility that James would have to assume leadership of all the Wycliffe Bible Translator missionaries in the Solomon Islands for the next term (starting right away). He did not want that position, since it would necessitate cutting down on their own time spent in translating the Bible into Sa'a by at least half. Thankfully, someone else was chosen for the administrative job, and the Ashleys may give full time to the Sa'a ministry.

Third, the Lord has upheld their two main Sa'a translators, David and Timotheus, despite some hard times. Pray much for these two men, as well as the Ashley family.

—Alex Wilson

Robert and Joy Garrett

On Furlough from Zimbabwe Late March, 1992

Two weeks before we left Zimbabwe, disaster struck. Our pick-up was stolen. Thieves had pushed it out of the carport after somehow forcing the locks, pushed it about a hundred yards away before starting it. We later learned that thieves had stolen several vehicles that same week from farms in our area. Because of the extremely high cost of insurance we were only able to carry insurance for one-sixth of the market value. About four months ago thieves cut the pipes and stole the pump off the well. Then more recently one broke into the store room and stole a wheelbarrow and some picks and shovels. There is a very high rate of unemployment in the land and the number of thieves is multiplying. Obviously we shall have to take more stringent precautions.

However, the churches are growing and opportunities for Gospel abound. We especially rejoice to see the Lord's working the youth of the churches as they show evidence of growth and zeal for their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The moral state of Zimbabwe follows that of the rest of the world—sinking deeper into the morass of corruption and immorality. The Zimbabwe press reported that 1 in every 4 young mothers who attend the clinics for pre-natal care are testing HIV positive. AIDS has now surpassed malaria as the chief cause of death in young children. But the GOSPEL is still the power of God unto salvation, and we must make it shine more brightly in this dark age.

Joy and I are enjoying our visit to the USA. As I write this we are in Louisiana visiting among the churches and reporting on the

Lord's work back in Zimbabwe. Their hospitality is wonderful and we especially appreciate the goodness of Doug and Joyce Broyles of Jennings who opened their home to us during our time here (as they had done before back in 1988). In April we will be back in Louisville at 2047 So. Shelby Street, Louisville, KY 40217. From there as the Lord enables, we will be visiting the churches in the Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee areas, up until our return to Zimbabwe in November.

Dan Wilson

231 S. Galt, Louisville, KY 40206

April 27, 1992

It has been a long and strenuous year for me as a first year teacher, but the thought of being able to look back on this year as a memory keeps me going and even excites me. God has been tremendously faithful in keeping me energized day by day. These cable-TV-fed, rich, third-world upper-class kids have been a tough crowd to work with. There are several sharp Christians in the bunch but the majority of them suffer from the same rich-in-possessions but poor-emotionally-and-spiritually condition as their American counterparts. Please pray for Roy, a sophomore whose parents just filed for divorce, and for Anthony, a senior who is a vibrant Christian who has been a virtual outcast because he is Chinese. Please continue to pray for a softening of hearts and spiritual understanding.

I am planning on returning to Pinares for at least one more year. From June 5 to August 17 I will be back home in Louisville with my family and girlfriend, Taffy, enjoying the benefits of teaching—summer vacation! A heartfelt THANK YOU! to each of you who have had a prayerful part in this incredible year. Please continue to pray for me as Paul asked the believers to pray for him in Colossians 4:3-4:

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ. . .  
Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

## In Appreciation

It was with much regret that I read the note by Brother Ernest Lyon in the April issue of the Word and Work, saying that he would no longer be writing articles on a regular basis. His writings are a wellspring of spiritual nourishment. His studies in Romans were both scholarly and encouraging. I wish they were available in booklet form. But, I am thankful that he will continue to write, even though occasionally. I'll look forward to the writings of his that you publish in the future. His by-line is the first thing I look for in the Table of Contents.

—Helen B. Glover

## Lilly Dale Church, Ind.

During March and April ten people were buried with Christ in baptism. Two were adult ladies, two were young men in their late teens, and six were young people.

Our attendance at Wed. night mid-week meetings has increased by 50% since the first of this year.

15 people took the S.B.S. extension class on "The New Testament Church" taught by Nick Marsh here at Lilly Dale. I would encourage other churches to have this class taught at your congregation. It was very helpful to us.

—Sam Marsh

### Highland Church of Christ, Louisville.

About two years ago, Brother Dwight Thomas underwent colon surgery. It was malignant and had spread to the liver. The surgeon told Judy, his wife, than he could see no more than eight months for Dwight to live. Prayer was made earnestly by the church, and Dwight has lived in apparent good health for these two years.

Just about a month ago he required surgery to remove the gall bladder. Scans had shown no spread of the cancer anywhere else, and a careful examination of the liver during this recent surgery revealed that the tumor has not grown. The same surgeon who two years ago was pessimistic about Dwight's chances to live, is very optimistic about them now. The church continues to pray.

### —CAMP OPPORTUNITIES—

#### Woodland Bible Camp

110 B St. N.E., Linton, IN 47441  
Phone: (812) 847-9248

- May 1-June 13.....Spring Work
- June 14-20.....Jr. Wk. #1
- June 21-27.....Int. Wk. #1  
(Sr. Wk. #1 cancelled-lack of interest)
- July 12-18.....Jr. Wk. #2
- July 19-25.....Int. Wk. #2
- Aug. 8-15.....Sr. Wk. #2
- Sept. 4-7.....Young Adult Retreat
- Sept. 13-18.....Sr. Citizen's Wk.
- Sept. 18-20.....Jr. and Int. Retreat
- Sept. 25-27.....Jr. High-Sr. Retreat
- Oct. 24.....Annual Meeting

#### Antioch Christian Camp

355 Bark Branch Road, Frankfort, KY  
40801 Phone:(502) 223-7056

- June 7-13.....Teen Week
- June 21-26.....Junior Girls
- June 28-30.....First Chance
- July 12-17.....Junior Boys
- July 19-26.....Music Week
- Sept. 11-13.....Teen Retreat

### Tell City, IN

Prayer of THANKS: We are thankful that brother Ray Naugle passed his test for administration at the Maple Manor Home! Give thanks to the Lord for this great blessing.

—Jerry Carmichael

### Turkey Creek, La.

David Johnson did a splendid work with us during our Gospel meeting. His messages were Biblical, well delivered and accepted. He indeed is

a great "advertisement" for the School of Biblical Studies. (One brother commented such to me.)

We commend you and all who teach at SBS. Please tell them we appreciate them. I hear from Jon and Jeff Mayeux and they both seem to be enjoying their studies. We expect fine things from them also.

—Glenn Baber

### Summerville Church of Christ, IN

Baty Terhune, well-known in the Dugger, Linton, Switz City, Ind. area, will be having his 90th birthday July 7th. The churches of Christ members are joining together at the Woodland Bible Camp to honor Brother Baty and to celebrate the happy occasion along with members of his family. Since he served for a long while on the Board of Directors at Maple Manor and also as an elder at the Dugger Church of Christ, we wish to invite any and all to come and be with us. Gifts are omitted but cards would be appreciated. If you cannot attend, please mail to Baty Terhune, R. 1, Switz City, IN 47465.

—Eugene Pound

### Joint Chapel Service

College of the Scriptures, Louisville Bible College, and Portland Christian School of Biblical Studies held a joint Chapel and Baccalaureate Service on May 15, at the Louisville Bible College Chapel, 6915 Beulah Church Road. This was the final KCRC chapel service of the school year. The Kentuckiana Consortium of Restoration Colleges (KRCR) is a cooperative effort between the three schools to provide greater educational opportunities for their students as well as the area churches and Christians.

The Baccalaureate Speaker was Dr. Walter M. Maxey, Missionary in Kagoshima, Japan. Prior to beginning his missionary service in 1971, he held ministries in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. In Japan, he serves as minister of two churches, is active as a prison chaplain, and works with young people through Bible classes and camps.

### Mackville, KY Church of Christ

Brother Earl Mullins, Sr. was here April 5 to share with us about the missionary work he and his wife have been doing in the Philippines and the impact God's word is having in that country.

—Harry K. Coultas

## Ben D. Rake, Sr.

by Ben Rake Jr.

On May 1, 1910, a baby boy was born in the Portland area of Louisville, Ky. During his first four years of life, Ben Rake lost his father, mother, grandfather, and little brother from this life. Little Ben moved in with an aunt who also departed this life within a relatively short time. He lived with at least seven different families of aunts and uncles. No doubt because of the insecurity of his early years, Dad was a very shy but very sincere individual.

When he was about 17, he was graciously taken into the home of Paul and J. L. Addams, and there he was introduced to the Lord Who had loved and taken care of him for the previous years and Who was to take care of him for 65 additional years.

Before long he entered into the Bible Training School taught by R. H. Boll at Portland Church of Christ in Louisville. J. L. Addams and Dad taught and preached at the Baird Street Mission, which later became 18th Street Church of Christ. They were assisted by a couple of young ladies then known as the Micou girls, of the Highlands area of Louisville. Virginia Micou became the wife of J. L. Addams, and not long after, Dad married Sarah Louise Micou, his wonderful wife of 57 years.

Often in psychology and sociology classes as I was growing up I would hear of the relationship between poor, difficult environment and insecurity—bringing on inevitable rebellion, bitterness, and eventual lawlessness. We called it then Juvenile Delinquency. When our Heavenly Father is left out of the equation, I suppose that can be true. But my Dad knew the Father of the fatherless. Dad's life was a life that always, if you took time to notice, gave evidence of the Hand of God.

Dad was not so much a reader. But he was a meditator, and was often thinking about the Word of God that he had heard, read, and studied. In his later years, he was amazingly open to ideas that were very scriptural but new, not traditional. He became more open with each year of his later life.

I am so thankful to the Lord that he and I have had the opportunity to be close geographically and, in the last ten years, were able to get a lot closer in more important ways, too!

Dad was always very physically capable. Parkinson's Disease was difficult for him, as his once quick, strong run (almost) of a walk became the struggle of a shuffle and the need to use a walker. Still, there was no bitterness or self-pity.

Nearly at Christmastime, we got the dreaded news that no one wants to hear—that cancer was a very big factor in his life. The prognosis was not at all good: "Almost definite total disorientation, difficult behavior, extreme pain, and probably death by the end of February."

We called on those angels of mercy, Hospice, who are such a great blessing to so many, and we cannot thank them enough! The Lord freed him from any notable disorientation, and Dad had absolutely no pain throughout his illness. At 1:45 Sunday afternoon, May 3, he took a deep breath and was quietly promoted.

God has been good to the point of almost overwhelming us. If He can take a little street-kid, an orphan, and bless him as He has blessed Dad, what does He want to do with you?

• • • • •

Brother Rake ministered in various locations for over fifty years. Churches where he served include Baird Street (Louisville); Fisherville; Greenville, S.C.; Cynthia; Bohon; Winchester (Main St.); Melrose (Lexington); Johnson City, Tenn.; and Winchester again (Belmont). He also served as business manager of Southeastern Christian College. A long and faithful ministry for his Lord.

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