

"Holding fast the faithful Word . . ."



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



"Holding forth the Word of life."

OCTOBER, 1988

RESCUE THE PERISHING

SET US AFIRE, LORD

by Ralph Spaulding Cushman

SET US AFIRE, LORD,
STIR US, WE PRAY!
WHILE THE WORLD PERISHES
WE GO OUR WAY,
PURPOSELESS, PASSIONLESS,
DAY AFTER DAY.
SET US AFIRE, LORD,
STIR US, WE PRAY!
SET US AFIRE, LORD,
THAT WE MAY BE
THY WORD TO THE MILLIONS
WHO HUNGER FOR THEE;
STIR US, EMPOWER US
BY CALVARY;
GIVE US THE PASSION
TO SET THE WORLD FREE!

RESCUE THE PERISHING

GREENLESS CHILD

I watched her go uncelebrated into the second grade,
A greenless child,
Gray among the orange and yellow.
Attached too much to corners and to other people's sunshine,
She colors the rainbow brown
And leaves balloons unopened in their packages.
Oh, who will touch this greenless child?
Who will plant alleluias in her heart
And send her dancing into all the colors of God?
Or will she be left like an unwrapped package on the
kitchen table—
Too dull for anyone to take the trouble?
Does God think we're her keeper?

(From Ann Weems' book **Reaching for Rainbows**)

CENTRAL LOUISIANA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

NOVEMBER 14 - 17, 1988

Theme: The Joy Set Before Us

Monday Evening Session

7:00 p.m. Lay Aside . . . and Run Nathan Burks

Tuesday Sessions

9:30 - 10:00 Prayer Time
10:00 - 10:50 Love Not This Present World Robert Garrett
11:10 - 12:00 Bible Exposition: Philippians Julius Hovan
1:30 - 2:20 Trials of Our Christian Ministry Ben Rake, Jr.
7:00 p.m. Without Vision We Perish Jack Harris

Wednesday Sessions

9:30 - 10:00 Prayer Time
10:00 - 10:50 The Hope of His Calling Vernon Lawyer
11:10 - 12:00 Bible Exposition: Philippians Julius Hovan
1:30 - 2:20 Dying To Live Stan Broussard
7:00 p.m. Israel . . . Leader Among Nations Kenneth Istre

Thursday Sessions

9:30 - 10:00 Prayer Time
10:00 - 10:50 Sacrifice of Praise to God Harry Coultas
11:10 - 12:00 Bible Exposition: Philippians Julius Hovan
1:30 - 2:00 My Reward Is With Me Alex Wilson
7:00 p.m. Joy of Things to Come T. Y. Clark

For housing contact Dennis and Melva LeDoux, Glenmora Church of Christ,
P. O. Box 314, Glenmora, Louisiana 71433. Phone (318) 748-4243.

THE WORD AND WORK

"A monthly magazine set to declare the whole counsel of God."

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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THEME:

RESCUE THE PERISHING

Duty Demands It, Love Constrains It

Alex V. Wilson

This month's theme follows naturally our themes of the past two months. Since "Life is short, death is sure," and since it is very probable that our Lord's second coming and God's outpoured judgments will occur very soon, then "To the work! Rescue the perishing! Care for the Dying!" Or as Paul put it in his last epistle, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, *who will judge* the living and the dead, and *in view of his appearing and his kingdom*, I give you this charge: *Preach the word!*" (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Duty demands it; love constrains it; the signs of the times call for it; the speedy decline and moral rottenness of our country urge it upon us all.

We must evangelize. Yet there are deeper demands which we also must seek to meet, lest our converts brought in through the front door continue to leave through the back door. Someone recently wrote that in general you must baptize 100 converts to add 25 lasting members to your congregation. And years ago A. W. Tozer warned,

"The task of the church is twofold: to spread Christianity . . . and to make sure that the Christianity she spreads is the pure New Testament kind. . . . Everything must bring forth after its kind. The popular notion that the first obligation of the church is to spread the gospel is false. *Her first obligation is to be spiritually worthy to spread it. . . . To spread a degenerate brand of Christianity is not to discharge our obligation. . . .*

"Evangelical Christianity is now tragically below the New Testament standard. Worldliness is an accepted part of our way of life. We have lost the art of worship. Our homes have been turned into theaters. Our literature is shallow and our hymnody borders on sacrilege. And scarcely anyone appears to care. Increased numbers of demi-Christians is not enough. We must have a reformation." (From *Of God and Men*).

Richard Halverson's article this month emphasizes this vital truth in greater detail, and leads naturally to David Reagan's study on spiritual renewal. While renewal is not the same as evangelism, it is its prerequisite.

O Lord, make us Your witnesses. Make us your *usable, fruitful* witnesses!

People Around Us Are Lost!

by Denny Boultinghouse

How is your congregation doing?

It is fine that you meet twice on Sunday. It is fine that you have a large contribution. It is great that you support a missionary somewhere far away. It is fine that you have many church works going on during the week. It is good that you have a ladies' Bible class. It is fine that you had a VBS last summer or that your people went on a "mission trip."

How many new births are going on in your congregation? Is it more or less than last year? What specific plans do you have to increase the number? Does every member of your congregation understand that it is their personal responsibility to share the gospel? There is no single method taught in Scripture. But the Scripture does teach that every Christian must be concerned about the lost. No one is suggesting people share what they do not know. But surely, each person can share what they do know.

One study suggested that the average congregation among us was baptizing seven people a year, with four of those being our own children (of course, their souls are as valuable as any other). But that means that the average congregation among us baptizes only three people a year from our community. Many, many more die and are lost in our community. That status quo must change.

There is a correlation between the amount of fruit and the amount of seed which is sown. If you want more fruit, you must have more seed planting. That part is pretty simple. Every elder among us should be concerned that more seed be sown by the flock he oversees. He will give an account.

I would like to make two suggestions. First, we must ingrain in every Christian the importance of evangelism. There are many important concerns we need to have as Christians, but surely evangelism must be a high priority. It may mean we will have to do some things differently (actually, that should be obvious: the present activities surely are not getting the job done).

We might need to slay some sacred cows. We might have to work more on being friendly at our assemblies. We might have to use translations which can be understood by a lost person. We might have to sing songs that don't sound like they belong in a funeral service. We might have to sit near the front or get to the assemblies early or stay late. We might have to have some group Bible studies in our homes. We might even decide to dismiss the Sunday evening service. We will have to remind our people to encourage and support every effort to evangelize. People have different talents, and each needs to use whatever talent he has to reach out to the lost.

Secondly, we need to learn from whoever we can how to be more effective. Of course, we are not suggesting we do anything unbiblical or unethical. We are simply suggesting that we look around us for ideas and methods which do work. It may surprise some to learn that

“we” did not first come up with the idea of Bible classes or even the invitation song. We borrowed these from other groups years ago. Let’s keep learning from others. We must learn from those who are effective. We all want our physician to learn from other effective physicians. We want our teachers to learn from other teachers. So let us commit to learn from those who are being effective in reaching the outsiders.

While we strive to learn from others, we must remember that growth must come from the power of God and not merely from an effective method. Many groups are effective in increasing their numbers and yet have nothing to do with God. We should use what is good and right and reject that which is not. Let us be discerning and let us never allow fear to prevent us from being more effective. We as a brotherhood must do a better job of taking the message of the Cross to our world.

—Condensed from **IMAGE**, October, 1987.

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Win The Game You Are Playing!

by Larry West

The little team didn’t have but one really good pitcher. And according to the league’s rules, no boy could pitch more than seven innings in any given week. This week, they were scheduled to play two games, and it was the second game that they were to play the tougher team. So, the coach, trying to save his good pitcher for the second game, used a substitute pitcher on the mound, then another, then another. And the runs mounted up against them, one by one. It was nearing the end of that first game and his team was losing. They were losing bad!

It was then that I heard someone shout these profound words: “Win the game you are playing!”

WIN THE GAME YOU ARE PLAYING!

Here we are, trying to get people in touch with the gospel, knowing they need to hear it, understand it, obey it if they are to be saved. We sit with a neighbor, drinking coffee. We want to approach him. We want to get into a spiritual discussion with him. Our passion is to get him into a Bible study, one on one. But, as we sit, we talk about something else. We talk about everything else! The children. Politics. The weather. And it doesn’t seem the time ever gets right.

So, we listen.

And we wonder, “Where in this conversation can I bring up the gospel? HOW can I bring it up. What can I say?” We hardly listen because our minds run wild.

We smile. We nod.

But inside we analyze. “Should I confront? Should I say something about my Lord? How will he take it? Will he still be my friend? Should I wait for a better opportunity?” Then, because we

waited so long, he must go, and we take it as providence: "Surely, it was the wrong time." And we excuse ourselves, saying inside, "I'll wait for a better day."

WIN THE GAME YOU ARE PLAYING!

There may never be another day! There may never be a better time. What will change? What is going to make next time a better time? What is going to be different?

I sat at a leadership banquet not long ago. Area preachers, elders, leaders stood up one at a time to tell of upcoming or current activities at their congregations. One dear brother stood up, holding a miniature bear in his hand. "This bear is number 800," he said excitedly. "Our ladies have now made 800 bears to take to hospital patients." And he talked feverishly about those bears.

Now, we need to praise God for all the Dorcases we have in our congregations; we need more of them. For, you see, *people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!* And giving away little home-made bears to hospital patients is a wonderful way, is a precious way, to show how much we care.

But, I couldn't help but to notice, that was all he reported. That was all! WHEN are we going to confront? When are we going to preach the gospel to those lost people? When are we going to try to win the game we are playing?

Brethren, *we will not convert until we confront!* We will not!

At another such gathering recently in one of our mideastern states, each leader stood to report on current events at his congregation. Each talked about singings, quiltings, retreats and the like. Out of all the more than one dozen churches in attendance, only one, the one known for its growing among them—JUST THAT ONE—reported on Bible classes going on in town and about that congregation's local evangelizing episodes.

Now, let me make it clear: Singings, quiltings, retreats are wonderful! We need them. But my urgent question is, do we use them as substitutes for the real thing? Substitutes! Do we do everything except that which Jesus told us to do? He told us to CONFRONT! (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20).

Brethren, people will not learn the gospel through osmosis! It does not come oozing through our pores. People will not learn what they must do to be saved just by watching our moral lives, even our spiritual lives. God gave us a message to proclaim. A message!

You know what we do. We wait! We wait for another to confront us on religion. Now we don't know what his question might be. But, we wait. He might ask something about the thief on the cross. It might be "once saved, always saved." Who knows... it might even be that most challenging question of all. You know the one: "Who was Cain's wife?"

We wait. We don't know where such a discussion would take us. We don't know how long we would sit and talk about it. But we wait anyway. We wait for him to bring up a subject from the Bible.

We sit. We watch. We laugh with him, cry with him, eat

lunch with him, watch TV with him. We play golf with him. We doodle our relationship away, knowing if the Lord were to come any moment, he would burn in a living hell.

And we wait!

But God thunders, "Don't wait!" He commands, "Go!" God says we are to do the confronting. WE are! Win the game you are playing!

When are we to confront? When? God says, "Today is the day of salvation." Tomorrow may not come! The game could well be rained out! The fellow could be dead tomorrow! The Lord might come before then. And... think about this: Secretly, your friend could very well be waiting for you to bring up the subject! You! You see, he probably doesn't know how to initiate such a discussion either. And he's waiting on you to do it. He may really want to talk to you about eternal matters. And he waits, too!

WIN THE GAME YOU ARE PLAYING!

Don't chance losing the game today, expecting to use your better pitch tomorrow. There is urgency in soul winning! Why tarriest thou? Say to him, "John, I want to ask you something: What if the Lord were to come right now, would you know for sure, nothing doubting, you would go to heaven? Would you?" Ask him! Ask him that most important question! Confront him! Bring up the subject yourself! Don't throw in the towel! He needs the gospel! Invite him to church. Urge him to come to a Bible study. Now is the time to make your play! NOW is the time!

—WORLD RADIO NEWS (3201 N. 7th St., West Monroe, LA 71291)

* * * * *

GRACE OR EVANGELISM?

Can We Have Both?

Milton Jones

"Evangelistic churches tend to become legalistic, and churches that allow a lot of freedom tend to lack commitment."

What does that mean? I'm not sure, but I'm sure I don't like it.

When we are evangelistic, it forces us to draw lines. We have to decide who is on God's side and who is not. But where do we draw the lines? It's easy to draw very tight lines that only include ourselves because in that way it is most obvious who is with us and who is not. But doesn't this produce an exclusivism that in the long run will only backfire on evangelism? Doesn't it produce a sectarian, judgmental spirit that ultimately will turn people away rather than bring them to the Lord?

Why is it that when we become very evangelistic we want to enforce gray areas and impose rules that aren't necessarily in the Bible? I guess it's because there are so many new people that just don't know how to live and act as new Christians. But does that really

justify a legal system? I think that what it boils down to is that *it is a lot easier telling people what to do than teaching them how to think*. There's also the possibility that if I teach someone how to think, he might not always agree with me. Then, how would we function together?

On the other side, why is it that people with great amounts of freedom tend to abuse it? Why have people who have heard great doses of God's grace done so little with it? Shouldn't a message of unmerited salvation and a law of love provoke an unyielding commitment? You would think that after hearing about the freedom that we have in Christ, one would never miss an assembly to hear more and would use every opportunity to tell someone else about God's grace. It should be that way, but normally it isn't. Freedom in Christ has too often been practiced as freedom to do whatever I want to do. When it doesn't appear that a resident policeman is on our case to keep us in line, we take great liberties to run beyond where some limits certainly must be.

Why do we take grace as a license to do what we please? Why don't we do what should be the obvious response to forgiveness? Why do churches that preach against legalism not grow more than they do? Maybe it's because we are too independent. I think independent churches often produce independent people. Maybe it's because we are so tired of people telling us what to do that we determine to make choices ourselves. That sounds pretty good on the surface. But *when we are rejecting legalism, it is often simply a rebellion to get away from the rules rather than to move toward true spiritual discernment*. Our motivation is not as much to do what's right out of a deep debt of gratitude as it is to escape commitment or possible burnout.

What am I saying? *I'm looking for grace-centered evangelism*. I want freedom in Christ where there is some commitment. I want to be a part of a group of people who want to share Jesus because they want to share Jesus. I want to be a part of a group who want to have the highest moral character simply because they have personally decided to be like Jesus. I want to be part of a group where everyone makes their own decisions, and they decide to go to all the assemblies. Some have referred to what I'm looking for as balance. Jesus called it a narrow way. Few have found it. I hope I do.

—from IMAGE, October, 1987

* * * * *

Evangelism—Natural and Supernatural

Richard Halverson

Evangelism never seemed to be an "issue" in the New Testament. That is to say, one does not find the apostles urging, exhorting, scolding, planning and organizing for evangelistic programs. In the apostolic church, evangelism was somehow "assumed," and it functioned without special techniques or special programs. Evangelism

happened! Issuing effortlessly from the community of believers as light from the sun, it was automatic, spontaneous, continuous, contagious.

Roland Allen contrasts the contemporary with the New Testament evangelistic approach as follows:

When we turn from the restless entreaties and exhortations which fill the pages of our modern missionary magazines to the pages of the New Testament, we are astonished at the change in the atmosphere. St. Paul does not repeatedly exhort his churches to subscribe money for the propagation of the faith; he is far more concerned to explain to them what the faith is, and how they ought to practice it. The same is true of all the apostolic writers; they do not seem to feel any necessity to repeat the Great Commission, and to urge that it is the duty of their converts to make disciples of all nations. What we read in the New Testament is not anxious appeal to Christians to spread the Gospel, but a note here and there which suggests how the Gospel was being spread abroad. (*Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, p. 6).

Four statements recorded by Luke show this spontaneous expansion of the apostolic church by virtue of its inner health. "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied." "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily." (Acts 2:46f.; 6:7; 9:31; 16:5)

Because of their spiritual health, those churches experienced exciting and effective evangelistic results with continuous regularity. It is a safe assumption that *evangelism is inevitable in a spiritually robust congregation*. Failure to be evangelistic betrays a poor spiritual condition. The way to evangelistic vigor is not some special emphasis or program, but rather repentance, healing and nurture. *One might as well exhort a woman with a barren womb to have children as to exhort a sterile church to evangelize.*

Inescapable Witness!

Evangelism was neither optional nor coercive in the New Testament. Jesus did not say, "You *may* be witnesses unto me . . ." nor did He say, "You *must* be witnesses unto me." Rather, evangelism was inescapable! He said, "You *shall* be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth." They witnessed because they could not help it. "We cannot help but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:23).

Griffith Thomas said,

It is a fact, perhaps a significant fact, that throughout the epistles of the New Testament, where naturally we find full instruction for Christians, there is only one exhortation to do the work of evangelism (2 Tim. 4:5); while appeals to carry out the duty of foreign missions are equally conspicuous by their absence. On the other hand, the Christian life—its provisions and pos-

sibilities, its duties and responsibilities, will be found emphasized everywhere. Is there any connection between the silence and the emphasis? May it not be a reminder that when the Christian life is what it should be, the duty of evangelization at home and abroad will be the natural outcome, as effect to cause, as stream to source?

Fellowship—Essential to Witness

Despite their weak and sinful humanity, the early Christians were often found exhorting and encouraging one another, confessing their faults one to another, praying for one another and bearing one another's burdens. Fellowship was essential to their witness. Witnessing proceeded *out of* fellowship and forward *into* fellowship. "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

Methods of evangelism can be perilous. Methods wrongly born may attract and indoctrinate certain zealous persons in a way that produces self-conscious "spiritually elite" individuals preoccupied with "results," who tend to think of themselves as superior to those not so inclined. This kind of situation fights against fellowship and hence *defeats* witness! Moreover it tends to suggest to the rest of the Christian community the false view that apart from a special course in personal work and in mastering evangelistic methods, one is not qualified to bear witness to an outsider. We do not discredit methods properly taught and practiced (the Holy Spirit uses means); rather, we insist that they always be kept in the context of the total life of the church.

Biblical evangelism is the calling of every believer. For this calling the Holy Spirit will equip him through the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. Any methodology which produces a kind of semiprofessional class of evangelists within the Christian community, implying that personal evangelism is limited to those who have the time and inclination to take special courses and learn special methods, militates against total involvement. It also justifies those who default and discourages those unable to enroll for and master certain evangelistic techniques.

God doesn't make Carbon Copies

Each Christian is unique and should bear his personal influence for Christ to those among whom he is placed and to whom he is peculiarly fitted. Instead, if a regimented system is used, he tends to become like the one whose methods he is learning. The implication is that what works for one person will work for everyone in the same way.

Jesus employed a different approach for each person—Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the rich young ruler, the questioning lawyer, the blind men. The more one studies the Bible the less one can deduce from it a system of personal evangelistic methods. Diversity of gift and call is insisted upon, repeatedly.

Each believer is to be a witness within his own place and sphere of influence. To quote Roland Allen again:

Spontaneous expansion of the church begins with the effort of the individual Christian to assist his fellow, where common experience, common difficulties, common toils have first brought the two together. It is this equality and community of experience which makes the one deliver his message in terms which the other can understand. It makes the hearer approach the subject with sympathy and confidence—with sympathy because the common experience makes approach easy and natural; with confidence because the one is accustomed to understand what the other says and expects to understand him now.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Christian becomes a witness for Christ in everything he does, wherever he may be, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Even the trivial, mundane things of life he does to the glory of God. He believes that he is where he is, not by the accident of circumstance but by the sovereign placement of God. His *witness begins where he is, in what he is doing, among those with whom he associates.*

How can it Happen?

How may we bring Christians to this place of positive, natural (and supernatural) witness? First, we must stress that every believer is a witness—not just a few specially trained semi-professionals. Second, churches must provide thorough, regular Bible teaching, so that our members have both a bright hope and reasons for that hope.

Third, we must teach them to “lead from weakness,” as Paul did. “I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling,” he frankly admitted (1 Cor. 2:3). We must depend on the Spirit and the Word of God. Here again the inclination to lean upon methods in themselves can be a peril. Learning “surefire techniques” gives the impression that one must lead from strength, or somehow be stronger than those to whom he speaks. As if potential converts must be “conquered” by our superior ability, reasoning, or whatever! If not guarded against, the trainee gets the idea that not to get a decision means failure, a result which the techniques are supposed to eliminate. But Jesus often did not get a positive response; remember the rich young ruler? Smug self-confidence is a snare in Christian service, while weakness can be a positive asset. “When I am weak, then I am strong,” was Paul’s approach (2 Cor. 12:10).

Fourth, Christians must join with others in groups for genuine fellowship. Sharing our burdens, victories and defeats, hopes and fears, questions and joys—such fellowship is essential for strong witness, as we saw in Acts.

Fifth, all Christians must think of their lives as being planned by God. What they do is a sacred calling for them. Where they are is God’s place for them. Their ordinary daily tasks, done for Christ’s sake, are as productive for eternity as those of their preacher. God has placed them where they are as His contact, His agent through whom He speaks, loves, works. This all presupposes, of course, a full surrender to Him of their life.

Sixth, the basic *personal* strategy for maximum Christian effectiveness is, of course, the abiding life of John 15. Christ is not only

savior and lord, but the source of constant life and fruitfulness. Let's confidently allow Him to bear fruit through us.

Richard Halverson for many years pastored and taught in churches that wielded strong influence, in California and in Washington, D.C. He now is chaplain of the U.S. Senate. This article is condensed and adapted from a conference message.

* * * * *

Keys To Spiritual Renewal

David R. Reagan

In Psalm 85:6 the psalmist cries out to God to "revive us again." He says the reason for his cry is so that the people might "rejoice in the Lord" once more.

We all need spiritual renewal and revival from time to time. The reason is that we are leaky vessels. We can't seem to stay full of the Spirit of God. Our natural tendency is to stifle and quench the Spirit. The result is that we all experience dry periods from time to time—periods of spiritual lethargy. It happens to individuals, to families, to churches and to nations.

We drift away from God. We grow cold in our commitment. We lapse into a spiritual coma. Our growth in the Lord shifts into neutral. We find ourselves needing spiritual revival.

But how do we get the fire going again? What are the keys to spiritual renewal?

THE EXAMPLE OF JOSIAH

Let's look to an Old Testament example to see if we can find some clues. The story I have in mind is that of King Josiah of Judah, recorded in 2 Chronicles 34 & 35.

Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh, had been the most evil king in all the history of Judah. He had ruled the land for 55 years, and by the end of his reign, Judah was in moral and spiritual chaos. According to 2 Chronicles 33, Manasseh had built altars all over the land to foreign gods. He had even placed such altars in the Jerusalem Temple! He led his people into the practice of occultic abominations like witchcraft, sorcery, divination, and trafficking in spirits. He even instituted the horrible pagan practice of sacrificing babies by burning them alive.

By the end of Manasseh's reign, there seemed to be no hope for Judah. God's wrath was hanging over the nation. The true prophets were warning of impending doom, warning that Judah, like Israel, would be conquered and carried away into captivity if the people did not repent.

Manasseh's son, Amon, was no improvement. Like his father, he practiced public idolatry and "did evil in the sight of the Lord." In the second year of his reign, he was assassinated by his own servants.

A TEENAGER'S REVIVAL

Amon's son, Josiah, was only eight years old when he became

king. Can you imagine how the power brokers in the king's court must have licked their chops over the prospect of a boy king? They surely must have delighted over the opportunity to turn the boy into a puppet king whom they would manipulate behind the scenes. The future for Judah appeared very bleak indeed.

But everyone was in for a big surprise. For the Bible says that in the eighth year of Josiah's reign, when he was only 16, he "began to seek the God of his father David." He evidently found the one and only true God, for in the twelfth year of his reign, at age 20, he suddenly began "to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places." In other words, he started destroying all the idols in the land. So fierce was his zeal in this project that he had the pagan priests killed and ordered that their bones be burned on their own altars!

Six years later, at age 26, Josiah decided to cleanse and repair the Temple in Jerusalem. As the workmen were cleaning out the Temple, something remarkable happened. They found "the law of the Lord given by Moses." Isn't that incredible? Think of it, they had even lost the Word of God! Of course, that was the real reason for their apostasy in the first place.

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

When God's Word was discovered, the priests brought it to the king and read it to him. The reaction of the king must have astounded his whole court. We are told that when the king heard the words of the law, "he tore his clothes." That's an Old Testament colloquial expression for repentance. Isn't that remarkable? Josiah was the most righteous man in all the land. He was the leader of a spiritual renewal campaign. Yet, when he was confronted with God's Word, it was so convicting that the king felt compelled "to tear his clothes" in repentance.

The king then decided that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem also needed to hear the Word. They were assembled, the law was read, and Josiah renewed the covenant with the Lord, pledging that he and his people would walk after the Lord, keeping all His commandments.

That left only one more essential thing to be done. The people had rediscovered the Lord and His Word. They had repented before the Lord and renewed their covenant with Him. Now that their relationship with God was restored, they needed to celebrate. So Josiah decided to turn the upcoming Feast of Passover into an unprecedented celebration of worship. Thousands of animals were gathered to offer as sacrifices. Singers were prepared for the re-institution of Davidic praise worship. The result was a service of praise and worship that was unparalleled in all the history of Judah "since the days of Samuel."

What a story! Spiritual renewal brought to a whole nation through the leadership of one teenage boy who sought God.

Now, how does this story relate to you and me? What can we learn from it about bringing spiritual renewal to our own lives?

1) SEEKING GOD

Let's apply it point by point. The first thing Josiah did was seek God. In like manner, we must begin our pursuit of spiritual revival by seeking God. We must have a heart for God—a yearning to know Him better. We must be willing to spend time in prayer reaching out to God and calling upon Him to give us a fresh anointing of His Spirit. One of the psalmists provided the model for this God-seeking attitude when he wrote: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul *pants* for Thee, O God. My soul *thirsts* for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1-2).

An inspiring modern day example of renewal resulting from such a God-seeking attitude is the story of the great Hatfield Christian Church in South Africa, located in the city of Pretoria. Originally called the Hatfield Baptist Church, it had only about 100 active members in the early 60's when the church called a new pastor by the name of Ed Roebert. Roebert arrived full of enthusiasm and worked long and hard to build the church—but all to no avail. Nothing he did seemed to click. The church appeared stuck in a rut. There was no growth.

In his frustration and desperation, Roebert decided to seek God. He recruited one of his members to aid him in the pursuit. They agreed to meet each morning on a hill outside the city and pray together for one hour—and to continue doing so until the Lord sent revival to their church. For two years they climbed that hill every morning and prayed, even in the worst of weather. They thirsted after God as the deer pants for water.

After two years of praying, God began to send people to the church who shared new insights with the pastor and his people about the Holy Spirit. The church started reaching out to people's deepest needs, ministering to them in the power of God's Spirit. The church began to grow. Soon their building was overflowing, and people had to sit in the yard and listen to the services over loud speakers. They started multiple services. They moved to a movie theater. They started constructing a large building which they outgrew before it was finished. They moved to a huge circus tent.

When I visited the church in 1986 they had just moved into a mammoth rectangular building with a flat floor that contained 5,000 folding chairs. They were holding multiple services in this facility. When I asked why they had built such an odd building, I was informed that it was designed to be the *foyer* to their new sanctuary that would seat 15,000!

As the Hatfield Church has grown, it has reached out to all of South Africa, establishing almost 100 satellite churches all over the country. All are multi-racial. All preach the simple, unvarnished Gospel of Jesus. All are manifesting the power of God in signs and wonders. Like the days of Josiah, the Hatfield story is another example of a nationwide revival originating out of a decision to seek God.

Are you a God-seeker? Do you hunger and thirst for God? If God were to grant you one request, what would it be? Power? Riches? Fame? We all remember what Solomon asked for—wisdom. But do you remember what his father, King David, requested? David asked for something far more significant, and because he did, he was judged to have been far more righteous than his son, Solomon (1 Kings 11:6). David revealed his request in Psalm 27:4—

“One thing I have asked from the Lord,
that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to meditate in His temple.”

David was a God-seeker. It is no wonder that the Bible refers to him as “the man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13-14).

2) PURGING IDOLS

The second thing Josiah did was to purge the land of idols. We must do likewise with our own lives. The key here is repentance. As we turn toward God, seeking renewed fellowship with Him, we must turn away from the idols of our lives.

We don’t tend to pay much attention to the Bible’s repeated warnings against idolatry. We think of ourselves as sophisticated, cultured people who would never be so primitive as to worship an idol. In this regard we are self-deceived. The truth of the matter is that we are just as guilty of idolatry today as were the people who lived in Josiah’s time—600 years before Christ.

Our idols are different, but they are still idols. We don’t worship totem poles and graven images. No, we worship chrome plated automobiles, mansions, designer clothes, and electronic gadgets. If we aren’t bowing down to material possessions, then we are worshipping career, family, education, sex, pleasure—the list goes on and on. Our idols are the things that obsess us and ultimately possess us and thus separate us from God.

Twenty-five hundred years ago Isaiah surveyed the nation of Judah and proclaimed, “The land is filled with idols; men worship the work of their hands” (Isa. 2:8). It is still true today. It has always been true. That’s why the Apostle John wrote, “Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

What are the idols in your life? What are the things you love more than God? Are you willing to surrender them in repentance in order to deepen your relationship with God?

Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. (James 4:8-10)

(To be concluded)

Questions Asked of Us

Carl Kitzmiller



Do you believe in a "call" for preachers?

Likely the answer to this question turns around the definition one might give to "a call." If a call is defined as a dream, a vision, some supernatural experience, or such like, I do not believe any of these are necessary or even normally to be expected. It may be that God uses these on occasion. He is a God of limitless means and He deals with all manner of mankind in doing His work. Unless He has limited Himself in any matter, we must beware of putting limits on Him. But that also includes our exercising care not to standardize the unusual.

There is a grave danger, among those expecting some miraculous or direct type of call, that somewhat prosaic events get turned into "experiences." This was evident in an earlier-day Calvinism when conversion experiences were required for all (not just preachers) for church membership. Most of us are familiar with the old story of the fellow who saw the letters "G P C" formed by the clouds one day. He concluded this was a call to "go preach Christ." But those who heard his ignorant and awkward efforts finally decided he should have understood it to say, "Go plow corn." Of course, if a man gets to watching the clouds expecting a message therein, there is a good chance that he will, sooner or later, see something that seems significant. If a miraculous call is expected, there is a good chance that something will sooner or later arise which will take on that appearance.

If we define "call" in a broader sense of an awareness of being in the will of God, then I believe in a call for preachers. I also believe in a call (in that sense) for elders, teachers, deacons, and every other member of the Body of Christ. The Lord sets us in the Body as it pleases Him. (See this principle in 1 Cor. 12, esp. vs. 11, 18, 28.) He confers the abilities and gifts to enable us to do what it is His will for us to do. In some cases, this is not a life-time work. As we grow and develop, He has something else for us. In other cases it may be a life-time work.

It is evident that God knows how to put a Christian in the position where He wants him without any conscious decision on the individual's part. But it is also evident that He prefers to allow man to know His will and to exercise a choice whether or not to do it. Surely He will convey to every one of us in some way just what place He wants us to occupy in the Body of Christ if we will but

honestly seek His leading. The ways in which the Lord leads are many. To name a few, He may work through events, the evaluations of others, a deep impression planted on our hearts by the Spirit, or by exposing us to a need we can supply. I am inclined to believe He usually appeals to our higher nature. For example, I would be prone to doubt the Lord's leading when a man says, "I needed a job, and a congregation was willing to hire me as a preacher, so I began preaching."

A number of young men have begun as preachers, only to turn to some other pursuit after a few years. There is no way of knowing how many of these were following the Lord's will and that will for them changed; how many were probing for the Lord's will, possibly persuaded by men to preach, but in doing so discovered this was not their work; or how many yielded to the lure of a more agreeable work or a more promising income and walked away from the Lord's will. We must not assume in every case the Lord's call to the preacher is a life-time matter or that it always involves what we may call full-time work. On the other hand, we need to avoid the approach to preaching which treats it as just another job or "profession" to enter if it happens to please us and to remain in unless something better turns up.

Some of the older men in Christian colleges have been known to advise young men: "Don't preach if you can keep from it." The purpose was not to discourage preachers and preaching but to discourage self-appointed preachers. They obviously believed the Lord would somehow convey a "can't keep from it" conviction to those He called for this work. In my own case there has been a deep and abiding impression that preaching is what the Lord wants me doing. I cannot really say how this came to me, but unless this changes, I cannot believe the Lord would be happy with my doing anything else. I have been thankful for this assurance, because otherwise there have been many times I would have given up and quit. It is the conviction that you are where God wants you to be that makes any calling in the Body of Christ worthwhile and satisfying.



THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS

Ernest E. Lyon

"Don't Judge Other Christians"

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only veg-

etables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:1-4, NIV).

From the very beginning of the church, as this passage shows, there have been wide differences in backgrounds, growth in faith, cultural background, and every kind of thing that can make Christians different from each other. The early church had the Jew-Gentile problem, the Greek-Barbarian problem, the differences in the way the sexes were treated from country to country, and probably more problems than we have today to separate us. In some parts of this country spiritual Christians consider smoking (or they did before the surgeon-general's report!) as harmless while in other parts to smoke immediately labeled one as being out of God's will. The white-black problem has never been settled in many places, though I am glad to see that it has decreased greatly. And so we could go on through many other things that different Christians apparently of equal status disagree on. Let us look at Romans 14:1 - 15:7 as settling most of these problems by type and by actual commands from the Word.

The general statement of verse one is very important. We come across a brother who is a true believer, has faith, but his faith is weak and we think he is wrong in some disputable matter ("scruples" in ASV). The first feeling is that we should decide for him what is wrong and lay down the path he should tread from now on. But through Paul, the Lord tells us that that is not what He has in mind. Simply acknowledge him by the discernment of the Spirit to be a man of faith and let it stand there. I still remember from nearly 50 years ago something told me by a man who had a great deal of influence in turning me to a more dedicated life for the Lord. He was a member of a fine fundamental church in the suburbs of Rochester, New York, where I was in school. A man of German background started coming to the church and soon asked to be baptized into Christ. After he was baptized he took out his pipe, filled it with tobacco and started smoking. To members of that congregation that was a wrong thing (even though never mentioned directly in the Bible, naturally), so some of them thought they ought to tell him to quit. Bro. Allen, who was a very strict person in such matters himself, advised against it. "Let him alone, set him a good example, and let the Holy Spirit show him," was his advice. Surely enough, in a few months the pipe disappeared and the man went on to be one of the strong faithful members of that independent congregation.

The first example Paul gives us is one that does not bother most of us today, the matter of eating or not eating certain foods. Jesus had "declared all foods 'clean'" (Mark 7:19), but many Christians accustomed all their lives to looking upon certain animals as "unclean" (especially Jews, of course, but others are included) did not take that truth in and many even went to the extreme of not eating any kind of meat. Obviously Paul is not saying that every vegetarian is weak

in faith, but he is saying that those who are vegetarians because of “religious” objections are weak. Many fine Christians have no objection to anyone eating meat, but they just don’t like meat or feel that their health is better without meat. So Paul makes the obvious conclusion to us in verse three—neither the eater or the non-eater should look down on the other and judge him. Or, rather, the eater should not look down on the non-eater and the non-eater should not feel the eater is condemned for what he does.

The concluding verse of our section this month is one of great importance to us. Maybe all of us ought to memorize the first statement in it—“Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?” Every Christian is a servant of Christ and it is to Him we are responsible. That means also, as Paul says, that Christ is the One who judges us. We are not judges of each other. If I had enough money to hire a servant, would you come into my house and criticize that servant? You certainly should leave that to me (Maybe I would need to be told what to tell the servant, but Christ has no such need!). One of the many great assurances we have is found at the end of this verse. Not only will the “eater” stand, but if he has any weakness that might make him fall, the Lord will not be found lacking in ability to “make him stand.” Let us leave the judging to Him.

In the next article we will take up the other examples Paul gives us. In the meanwhile I hope you not only will practice what is recommended in the first four verses but will read on and see what “serious” things are still considered in this category of things we should not judge our fellow servants in. And learn to apply this to nearly every thing in which the church is torn apart by judging.



Robert & Joy Garrett

September 8, 1988

GOOD NEWS: Earlier this year we made an appeal for funds to purchase our church sites in Harare. Of our eight church buildings in the city of Harare, four are on leased land. We own the buildings but not the land! The Municipality recently offered to sell these sites to us for a combined total of approximately \$10,000.00. To date we are past the half-way mark with a total of \$6,581.00 received. For this we praise our Lord.

MORE GOOD NEWS: We have received encouraging reports from Zimbabwe of on-going work. They held a senior Youth Camp in April and then a Junior Camp in August 7-11. They had 66 children grades 4 through 7. Immediately following the Junior Camp was a Women’s Camp Meeting from August 11-14 with 102 women from 18 congregations in attendance.

To date, on our visit to the U.S.A., we have visited 43 congrega-

tions reporting the mission work in Zimbabwe, and I have held four meetings. We are scheduled for another 12 congregations in the remaining time up to our departure Nov. 29. Lord willing, we arrive back in Zimbabwe December 1st.

One of the urgent jobs awaiting will be the overseeing of the completion of the All-Purpose building for camp. Next we need to construct a camp dormitory for girls and one for boys. Funds are still needed for this project. We have exhausted most of the money that has been contributed for the camp. I would like to emphasize that all *operating* expenses are borne by the churches in Zimbabwe. We are here only appealing for Building Funds.

(Contributions for Harare Church Sites, or Rockwood Camp, may be made out to Church of Christ World Wide (and designated in lower left of check) and mailed to P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555.)

[Robert & Joy are staying at 2047 S. Shelby Street, Louisville, KY 40217. After Nov. 29 their address will be: P.O. Box 30, Ruwa, Zimbabwe, Africa.]

Crystal Hardin

September 18, 1988

Academia Los Pinares
Apartado 143-C
Tegucigalpa, D. C.
Honduras, C. A.

(Ted and Crystal Hardin—and Tabitha, Hope, and John—have just arrived in Honduras, where they serve in a Christian school. See our “News & Notes” in July’s issue for more details. Here are excerpts from their first letter from the field.)

Greetings from Honduras! We are doing very well, and are seeing the Lord’s provision for us in this very beautiful place.

The border crossing into Mexico took about eight hours. Most of the time was spent waiting for officials, who were waiting for us to offer them money. Crossing Mexico, the scenery was beyond words. Most of the trip was along the coast or through mountains—some of which we climbed all the way in first gear. Most of the coast was rural, and cows grazed right up to the white sand beaches. In the U.S. there would have been motels every 50 feet. The truck thermostat went out but Ted took it out and we had no more trouble with the truck, except for bad gas.

At the Honduran border we were told to unload the truck’s contents for inspection, but as Ted got about 4 ft. into the truck, it began to rain, and the official said we could stop. As it was we had to put some things on the bus, which had had to unload completely again.

What a joy on Saturday afternoon as we topped a hill and finally looked down on our new home! The long trip made the kids so glad to arrive that a mud hut would have seemed like a mansion. We drove through Tegucigalpa in the valley, and then up a steep winding road for about 15 minutes to the hill where Los Pinares is located. Most of the way we were treated to a panoramic view of the city which is about 2,000 ft. below the school. The high school principal

helped us unload at our house, and gave us much helpful advice on how to adjust to the culture.

Our home is much nicer than we had expected. The rooms are large and we even have hot water and a telephone. We boil our drinking water now, but will try to get a filter soon.

Orientation for school began on Monday morning. There were several speakers on culture, food preparation, and health, and some times of worshipping and sharing. The teachers and staff are a wonderful group. Although we miss Portland, our kinship in the Lord and common desire to reach Hondurans for Christ have made us feel that we really belong here at this time. The kids miss their friends, Christian radio, and TV, but there are several faculty members who have children they can relate to, and they seem to be adjusting well.

The weeks are quite hectic. Since canned goods are high, (\$2 for pork and beans!) we cook from fresh vegetables and fruits, so food preparation takes more time. Teaching sixth grade is quite a switch for me, so preparations and paper grading leave no spare time. The students are exceptionally well-behaved and respectful. Discipline is much stricter than in the states. Kids are quite studious and many use every spare minute to work.

All in all, we are rejoicing in the way God has smoothed our transition. We had only a few days of stomach trouble, and tiredness because of the altitude (around 5,000 ft.). There are times when we long for the familiar, but God comforts us. We have so many blessings that we are overcome with thanks for the loving provision of God.

Myrna Auxtero

Bohol, Philippines

August 8, 1988

The Lord met our needs for the big summer undertakings: 4 camps and 7 DVBS. Though a very demanding task, our 51 workers faithfully played their part.

There have been only a few dropouts from the 96 enrollees of the Bible School. Praise Him for 3 more new teachers. Praise Him for the 25 students who live in the dorms and take a full load.

Pray for our students, many of whom are married and have big families. Some have dropped out and others yet struggling, due to financial difficulty. (Fishermen without boat & net, farmers without working animals and fertilizers, plus effect of drought). Many students are unemployed. Satan can use poverty to hinder a gifted servant from being trained and used of God.

During May, June and July there have been 31 baptisms, as compared to January to April's 23.

Praise the Lord for the birth of our 9th congregation, at Ubay, about 25 miles from our place. The members were summoned by the religious leaders and police. A Catholic member allegedly got a revelation in a dream that the Christians were the ones who stole their patron image from their chapel. The atmosphere was tense, and people threatened to ban the Christians. Nemesio was called by the town official and charged to explain to the people.

On Sag island our members held a parade to announce VBS.

But we were blocked by church pews piled in the street. At the first blockade we stopped and decided to just sing and set the banners up. With their religious banners against ours, and many images, big and small, lined in front of us, about a couple of hundred of adults and little children yelled, mocked, spat, teased and ridiculed us, dancing to the tune of our songs. We decided to pray, but they took a big sound system and competed against us with their rosary, after which they played rock songs and danced with mockery. We felt great pity for the little children hired to make fun of us. Some religious leaders rushed to the mainland to get the police to arrest us for "violence". After an hour of singing and praying, we stepped back to our assembly place. But despite all threats we trusted the Lord, and kept going back. The devil was not triumphant. The incident led to the conversion of 4 more people. The battle is His! Praise the Lord!

Pray for my health. I have had heart troubles lately. The result of ECG examination shows some abnormalities. But nothing is impossible with God.

Israel: God's Firepot in a Woodpile

Robert Shank

Poor little Israel—only forty years a nation again, she has had to fight five wars for survival, the first one beginning the day after her Declaration of Statehood in May 1948.

Poor little Israel—a tiny nation surrounded by hostile nations which five times have attacked her with the declared intention to "drive Israel into the sea and destroy her."

Poor little Israel—shamefully treated by the nations of the world as no other nation in history has been treated—now told by the nations to give back land captured in five wars for survival and return to borders impossible to defend.

Poor little Israel—left almost without a friend in the world, except for a friend who, long ago foreseeing little Israel's present peril, has said, "Fear not, O little Israel, for I myself will help you." Little Israel's friend calls himself "the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 41:14).

A Prophetic Psalm

Little Israel's present end-of-the-age dire circumstance is addressed precisely in Psalm 83, a prophetic prayer of Asaph. Asaph prays, and the faithful of Israel pray with him,

O God, do not keep silent; be not quiet, O God, be not still. See how your enemies are astir, how your foes rear their heads. [Enemies of Israel, nations and individuals, make themselves enemies of God.] With cunning they conspire against your people; they plot against those you cherish. "Come," they say, "let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more." (vv. 1-4, NIV)

Who are these conspirators, these enemies of God who plot the

annihilation of little Israel?—who “with one mind plot together [and] form an alliance against you,” God, and against Israel? (v. 5) Asaph identifies them as

the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the descendants of Hagar, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, with the people of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them to lend strength to the descendants of Lot. (vv. 6-8)

All the peoples named fought against Israel at various times long ago. But they were not contemporaneous belligerents, as portrayed by Asaph. At no time in the past did all these people join in a united conspiracy against Israel as contemporaries—the situation portrayed in Psalm 83. The Psalm is prophetic, and the conspiracy in view is the end-time conspiracy of the descendants of the ancient peoples named, united in hatred of the little nation Israel, back in the Land again after long exile. Together they plot Israel’s annihilation, saying, “Come, let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.” This is precisely the situation today. Asaph prays to God,

Do to them as you did to Midian, as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, who perished at Endor and became like refuse on the ground. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, “Let us take possession of the pasturelands of God.” (vv. 9-12)

God will answer the prayer of Asaph and the faithful of Israel, and will destroy the last-days enemies of Israel who seek to “take possession of the pasturelands of God” which God gave to Israel, as their ancient ancestors sought to do long ago. (Among pertinent passages see Jdg. 6:1-6, 2 Chron. 20:10-12, Ezek. 35:10 - 36:12, note 36:5, 6 God says “*my* land, the land of *Israel*”; Jer. 12:14-17, note God’s reference to “all my wicked neighbors who seize the inheritance I gave my people Israel”; note also the promise of mercy and “establishment among my people” Israel for nations that learn to worship God in truth, and destruction for nations that refuse to listen and learn, cf. Ezek. 47:21-23, Isa. 19:16-25.) The many instances of contention against Israel for possession of the Land in days of old were prophetic prototypes of the final furious contention against Israel for the Land in these last days of the age.

In accordance with his land distribution plan for the nations (Deut. 32:8, 9) God gave his special “my land” to Israel. But God drove Israel and Judah out of the Land into exile among the nations, through agents of his choosing (Assyrians 722 B.C., Chaldeans 605-587, Romans A.D. 70). Through Moses and the prophets, God had warned that such would be the penalty for unfaithfulness and impotence. But the right to expel Israel from the Land is God’s alone, and as Moses and the prophets declared, God did so for discipline, with the promise of eventual permanent restoration to the Land. (This promise is for those of Israel who learn true penitence and believe God for the covenants and promise of Messiah as their only hope and Savior; the unbelieving and unfaithful, both in the Land and among the nations, will be dispatched as rebels in the Day of Messiah, Zech. 13:8, 9, Ezek. 20:34-38). Nations have no right to

drive Israel from the Land nor to “take possession of the pasturelands of God” and seize for themselves “the inheritance I gave my people Israel,” and God has said he will destroy all nations that attempt to do so—including all his “my enemies” who at the end of the age say, “Come, let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.”

Asaph prays God to

Make them like tumbleweed, O my God, like chaff before the wind.
As fire consumes the forest or a flame sets the mountain ablaze, so
pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your storm. (vv.
13-15)

Asaph concludes the prayer with a petition that, because of the destruction of God’s enemies (and Israel’s), “men will seek your name, O Lord,” and “know that you, whose name is the Lord [Yahweh], that you alone are the Most High over all the earth” (vv. 15-18). That Day will come, and soon.

The destruction of the nations that come against Israel in the final attack will be spectacular and terrifying. Isaiah declares (30:30, 31), “The Lord will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his Arm [Messiah, Isa. 53:1; 51:5, 9; 52:10; Rev. 1:7] coming down with raging anger [“the wrath of the Lamb,” Rev. 6:16, 17] and consuming fire [cf. Isa. 24:6; 66:15, 16 ;Ezek. 39:1; 1 Thess. 5:3; 2 Thess. 2:7-10; Isa. 30:27, 28]... The voice of the Lord will shatter Assyria [Gog and his hordes, the end-time “Assyria” from “the far north”]; with his sceptre he will strike them down [cf. Rev. 19:15].” The final destruction of nations attacking Israel, to be accomplished by the personal intervention of Messiah, is the subject of numerous passages, including Zechariah 14:1-9, which we considered in the concluding portion of our previous article, “Gorbachev’s Game plan.”

An Earlier Invasion

However, as I indicated at the close of the previous article, there will occur another invasion of Israel prior to Gog’s, the outcome of which will shock the world. The prior attack, a sixth war of survival for Israel, is the subject of Zechariah 12:1-9, a passage similar to Zechariah 14:1-9, but with notable differences. In chapter 14 Jerusalem will be captured, with disastrous consequences for the people, and deliverance for helpless Israel will occur through the coming of Messiah “and all the holy ones with him” (v. 5, cf. Rev. 19:15; Mt. 25:31). In chapter 12 Jerusalem will not be captured, but instead will be “an immovable rock” and “remain intact in her place” (vv. 3, 6). Deliverance will occur, not through the visible appearing of Messiah, but through little Israel herself, made invincible and overpowering for the destruction of the enemy nations (vv. 5-10). Obviously Zech. 12 and Zech. 14 are two different events. The event of Zech. 12 can be prior to the events of Zech. 14. Zechariah 12 contains one of four spectacular and dramatic passages related to Psalm 83:13-15 which we will observe next month. Study them first on your own: Isaiah 41:8-16; Micah 4:11-13; Obadiah 15-21; and Zech. 12:1-9. Compare

them all to Asaph's words in Psa. 83:13-15, especially about *chaff* and *fire*.

(To be concluded next month, D.V.)

[Brother Shank regrets that due to severe limitations on his time, he is unable to correspond with the readers of these articles. Our announcement to that effect in last month's W & W was made without consulting him, for which we apologize. However, for further study we recommend his book UNTIL—The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom. It is 517 pages long, and may be ordered through W & W @ \$11.95 plus postage.]

The Things That Are Caesar's

Dr. D. James Kennedy

Some weeks ago I preached a message on "The Spiritual State of the Union" in which I described the perilous situation in which we find ourselves today as a nation. Then I began a trilogy of messages on what we as Christians can do about this situation. The first was on the need to pray that the sovereign God of the universe may send a spiritual quickening, an awakening, a revival, to this land as He has been pleased to do in times past in this nation and in other nations around the world.

Last week I preached a message on the need to become obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and to proclaim the Gospel of Christ throughout this land and throughout the world. Without this there is no life, nations cannot flourish but they wither and die.

At this time I want to speak to you about our responsibility as Christian citizens and what we can do in the realm of citizenship to help solve the serious problems that we face in our time. Unfortunately, there are many Christians who feel that politics or citizenship is something they are not interested in; it is really not for them, or it is a dirty business and they just do not seem to be particularly concerned about it.

What is the Christian's relationship to government, to politics and to the state? Should he be involved, or should he not? Our text makes our responsibilities very clear. You will remember that Jesus was often being tested by the Pharisees and the Herodians who were trying to entrap Him in His words that they might accuse Him. They said to Him, "What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" They did not particularly care how Jesus answered this question, because if He said that it was right to give tribute unto Caesar, then He would no doubt lose the popular support that made Him, in their opinion, a threat to them. The yoke of Rome was galling upon the shoulders of the people of Israel and the name of Caesar was indeed a cursed word. On the other hand, if He said that it was not right to give the tribute to Caesar, then He no doubt would find Himself ensnared with the authorities because they would immediately pounce upon Him as a revolutionary teaching insurrection. Jesus was accustomed to their feeble attempts and asked for a coin. He said, "*Whose is the image and superscription?*" They said, "Caesar's," acknowledging already that what they gave they were

giving to Caesar. He then said to them, "*Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*" They were amazed at His answer and went their way.

Jesus not only foiled their attempt to trap Him, but He also laid down a very vital principle. When He said, "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's,*" He left it unquestioned that it is the responsibility of Christian citizens to render unto the state those things which properly belong to the state; that we are to fulfill our duties as citizens of our nation.

The state has a legitimate claim upon us and the Christian citizen must respond to that claim. But He also makes it plain that that claim is not absolute because God is ultimately sovereign. God has established three basic institutions in the world, like the primary colors of the rainbow from which all others come. There is the institution of the home, the institution of the church, and the institution of the state. The Bible makes it very clear that each one of these spheres has its own laws, and each one is under God who is sovereign over all three. God is not simply the God of the church, but He is the God of the home, and the God of the state.

Let us beware lest we fall into the trap that the Soviets would have us fall into. They permit the activity of the church in any of the areas which are not the responsibility of the state, where the state is not active. But the state is active everywhere and so the church is finally limited simply to people sitting in their pews and worshipping. The only thing left for the church is the soul and the future life, neither of which the Communists believe exists. But this life here below, in all of its various relationships and aspects belongs to the state according to the Soviet view. Let us not fall into that trap.

God is sovereign over the home and the state, as well as the church. He has His laws that apply to the home; He has His laws that apply to the church; He has His laws that apply to the state. Every true minister of God must proclaim the laws and instructions and mandates of God, not only for the church but also for the home and for the state. If we fail to declare God's teaching concerning the state we have failed to proclaim the whole counsel of God.

The state grew out of the fall of man. When man rebelled against God and was plunged into sin, it necessitated the formation of the civil state. Because of man's nature and his propensity for sin, he must be governed and these evil propensities must somehow be checked. So the state was formed in order to protect the life and property of its citizens against the evil acts of neighbors. The state has now been frequently twisted and distorted into many other things but that is what it was founded to be, according to the Word of God.

Morals—Christian or Humanist?

In America we are presently engaged in a great battle for this nation. In the 1890's the Supreme Court declared that America was a Christian land. It is without controversy that the roots of America go back to Jesus Christ and to His Word. It was to worship God in truth and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ that people came to these shores. This was a Christian land. But today there is a great

movement abroad to make this nation into a humanist nation. In fact, these forces are well advanced toward their goal of changing this into a completely humanist nation.

One of the tragedies is that many people do not even know what humanism is. The term "humanism" basically denotes a system where man is central, where man is the measure of all things, where man is the source of all authority. Humanism is simply the American version of atheism, given a positive twist. Atheism is obviously a negative term, *a-theos* meaning "no God." "I do not believe in any God," says the atheist, and that is negative. The humanist believes the same thing but he wants to make it positive, so he turns it around and says that he believes in man. Up with man, but down with God, is always the inevitable result.

A similar example is seen in the great debate over abortion today. There is, on the one hand, the "pro-life" group who believe that People have a right to live, and should not be killed, either in or out of the womb. The other group has decided not to take for their title the "anti-life" group, because that would not be a very good banner under which to march. They would not gather much support. So they have turned that around and have called themselves "pro-choice." Now that stands for something; it is positive. The "pro-choice" people are still anti-life, whether or not they come out and say it in their title, and the humanist is still anti-God even though he does not make it his banner. Most people in America believe in God but humanism is rampant in the public life and institutions of our country. Sadly, when God comes down, man does not go up; man always comes down too. They thought that they could dethrone God in the French Revolution but they found that man was the ultimate loser.

We have heard many time the cliché that "you cannot legislate morality." I am quite confident that there is hardly anyone who has not heard that. I am equally confident that there are probably few people who, having been told this by someone, have seriously challenged it. But I would like to do so, and I would like to ask you this: Pray tell me, if you cannot legislate morality then what *can* you legislate? Immorality? Every law is an enactment of morality. The only question is: Whose morality is being enacted in legislation? It is either the morality of God as revealed in His Word, or it is the morality of humanism. The morality of humanism is sociological law. People sit down and decide what *they* think is right. "Oh, I think that this is right," or "I don't think that there is anything wrong with that"—and so they decide what is right and what is wrong. Perhaps they'll do it by a vote, "We'll take a consensus." They decide by what the majority of people think is right and wrong in any given time. Since this is a shifting thing it is going to be something that changes from time to time and there is, therefore, no absolute morality. When you hear people crying out, "You can't legislate morality," keep in mind that what they mean is: We cannot legislate *your* view of morality. We are going to legislate mine. Or more accurately, what they are saying is that we cannot legislate God's morality; we are going to

legislate the devil's morality. That is what is happening in America today, and is, indeed, a very serious situation.

Let me give you an example. I was in the Senate a few weeks ago when the Family Protection Act was introduced as legislation. This is a rather long bill that has quite a few articles in it. It is designed to protect the integrity of the family which is under great attack in our time from all sorts of different forces. Each of the various articles in this bill is based on some moral view of what the family should be. This bill will be viciously attacked by people who are really anti-family because it puts them in a very difficult position. They, no doubt, will sit up far into the night trying to think of a positive term to describe themselves instead of calling themselves "anti-family," because that is not exactly the most popular term or banner under which to operate. But that is what they will be and what they will be doing is trying to legislate their own moral view of the family or rather the disintegration of the family. So we see that some morality concerning the family, as in everything else, is going to be legislated and the question always comes down to simply this: Whose? God's or man's? Are we going to have a Christian nation—a nation under God—or a humanist nation—a nation under man?

The frightening thing about a humanist state is that there is nothing beyond man to which one can make an appeal. The founders of this country said that men have been created equal and have been endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Therefore, our rights are not given to us by the state, which can extend or withhold them as it pleases, but rather they have been unalienably given to us by God. We have an appeal beyond man, beyond the state, to God Himself, whereas in the humanist state there is nothing but man. The humanist state inevitably leads to tyranny and despotism.

Defeat by Default?

It is tragic that one of the reasons Christianity does not make more of an impact and that so many laws are passed which are contrary to what the Bible says, is because Christians by default have not done what they should do. We need to realize that what God says is ultimately for the benefit of man.

One third of the evangelical Christians in America are not even registered to vote! One half of the evangelical Christians in America did not even vote in the last presidential election! And ninety-nine percent of them never get involved in any other political activity. They do not work in the precincts; they do not determine the policies of the party; they do not select the candidates. It is no wonder that by default this country is falling into the hands of unbelieving people. My friends, the outcome of that will be very unpleasant, so we had better get busy.

What can you do? For one thing you can find out what the issues are, become informed, understand what the principles are that God has taught. I am amazed at how often I hear of people supporting candidates favoring issues that are diametrically opposed to what God has said in His Word. We should find out what the issues are and what the candidates believe about them. We should check

their records to see how they have voted in the past if they are in Congress and where they have stood on them. Very few Christians ever determine that they are going to do anything to help the candidates. We are to get behind them and help them, give out literature, financially support them, work in the precincts. We are to see that the proper people are nominated as well as selected. We should make sure that we are registered to vote. Keep in mind that we are commanded by God to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

Having registered—VOTE! Half of the Christians do not even vote in presidential elections, much less in the smaller elections. Having elected your candidates, watch and see what they do. Many candidates will say one thing and when they get into office, do something else. If they do, let them hear from you! You might find that they are more responsive to what you say than you think. We are to pray for them. God commands us to pray for those that are in authority over us and we need to do that whether we agree with their policies or not. If we do not agree with them, we should pray all the more for them that God would open their eyes so that they might see the truth. I believe that if Christians become concerned and active in this country we can see this nation change. But so often we become lethargic, we coast along and let the rest of the people do it. My friends, God expects us to get out there and work or we will not enjoy the fruits of a free nation. We Christians need to repent of the fact that we, as much or perhaps more than many others, have been neglectful of our responsibilities as Christian citizens. Remember the words of Jesus: "*Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.*" That covers all the responsibilities that we have and the privileges which are ours in a free nation.

In closing may I remind you of Jesus' concluding words: "*and unto God the things that are God's.*" Have you surrendered yourself to Christ? Do you belong to Him? Have you received Him as Lord and Savior of your life? Have you trusted in His Cross? Have you received the gift of everlasting life? Have you repented of your sins? Unless you have, then everything else I have said means nothing to you. We must begin by rendering to God all that we are. Then we can serve Him in the respective spheres of the home, the church, and the state. "*Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*"

[We realize that some Christians believe that the Bible infers we should not vote or hold office. "Let each be persuaded in his own mind."—Editor]

BOOK REPORT by Alex Wilson:

ANOTHER CHANCE

By Dean Merrill; 164 pages, paperback;
published by Zondervan; \$6.95.

The subtitle of this moving book is, "How God Overrides Our Big Mistakes." If you know someone who has terribly messed up his life by rebelling against God's commands, or just by careless

neglect of His will, this might be just what he needs. The writer skillfully blends Bible teaching with present-day case studies to call rebels to repentance and to give penitents hope and practical guidance.

The nine chapter-length case studies are very valuable. They put modern flesh and blood on the Biblical principles. They tell of an unmarried teacher who gets pregnant, a policeman sent to jail for illegal wiretapping, a preacher whose affair is discovered by his church's leaders, a church-member caught embezzling from the bank where she worked, a young woman who during a time of backsliding entered a disastrous marriage, and so on. You may not agree with all details of some of the conversion-stories, yet the main thrust of the book may be invaluable for someone trapped in deep despair.

EXCERPTS

No doubt the best way to continue this review is to share with you some excerpts. The book begins, after a moving poem, with these words: "I believe in the God of the second chance. I believe in the God who has an uncanny ability to bring good out of disaster. I believe in the God who puts Humpty Dumpties back together again. He is the God, in fact, whose 'mercy endureth forever.'"

On facing up to our responsibility and guilt:

This is not a case of "It happened to me." This is a case of "I did it." We cannot sidestep the fact that the present predicament is of our own making, and to blame anyone else is but to prolong the self-deception. We do not come to such an admission easily. It hurts too much. In fact, we often don't come to the ugly truth at all; we are dragged to it by outside forces. Circumstances gang up on us to such a degree that no other conclusion is possible. . . . Behind the scenes, God is at work, quietly but irresistibly bringing us to his mirror. . . . God is wise enough to know that pain is the greatest motivator to change. It is a sad fact, but a true one. People change faster when they hurt than under almost any other condition. (53-55)

Exposure comes, not for the sake of punishment, but for the sake of salvation. Fortunate is the man who is exposed early in life. Pity the man who is smart enough to hide his sin until the judgment. (59)

On receiving God's stunning, full, free forgiveness: Guilt and fear had festered in the heart of a Christian woman for over twenty years after her pregnancy led to a forced marriage. A counselor repeatedly tried to help her.

Her husband had told her a hundred times or more that he had married her because of love. But the emotional blockage just would not let the message come through.

(One) day she began to weep convulsively in my office, and I said to her, "Evelyn, have you asked the Lord to forgive you of this?"

"Ho!" she said. "Have I asked the Lord to forgive me? I've asked him a hundred times!"

"Well. . . do you believe he has?"

"Oh, yes. I believe the Lord has forgiven me—but how can I forgive myself?"

And then I said quietly and slowly, "Oh. . . are you holier than God is?" I paused. "Must God sacrifice another Son just for the sake of your conscience?" Another pause. "If the death of Christ was good enough for God, isn't it good enough for you?"

It is hard for me to describe the beautiful scene that transpired as the Holy Spirit pressed that truth to her heart. She broke down and wept for

ten minutes or more. The expression on her countenance when she finished weeping was obviously changed. She said, "This is the first time in over twenty years that I feel no condemnation." (108-9)

In other words, as Merrill says elsewhere, "We are more than just *tolerable* in God's sight; we are *valuable*," even if we fail Him miserably. Here's another good quote—a string of definitions: "Justice: We get what we deserve. Mercy: We do not get what we deserve. Grace: We get what we do not deserve." (133)

And finally, a real challenge to us to be grace-centered congregations, open and accepting to all contrite sinners. Merrill asked a minister whose inner-city church works with many prisoners and ex-cons, "What gives a person hope that his life could be different in the future?" "It takes two things," he replied. The proclamation of the gospel—that Jesus forgives and changes, making new creatures—*linked with the evidence of acceptance by a Christian community*. The second proves that the first was more than just talk." (137) May we be such communities.

WHY PREACHERS KEEP GOING

Carl Kitzmiller

If there is a preacher anywhere who is not "down in the dumps" at times, I have not seen him. In spite of all he can do he sees those who have claimed to be children of God slip backward, forsake the worship services, embrace the spirit of the age. He sees others who just never seem to be aroused by the gospel as they plunge on unheedingly down the road to hell. No thinking Christian can be very happy about that! An even more discouraging thing, however, is the fact that brethren often disappoint. Almost every church has a good number of people who just do not seem to care whether the work goes on in a good way or not.

I suspect that nearly every preacher has given serious thought at times to quitting full-time preaching. A few have quit because of inadequate financial support, but many more have stepped down due to faulty moral support and the lack of spiritual encouragement. Many bulletins, church papers, etc., carry items on the theme, "Why Preachers Quit." One that recently came to our attention carried a different heading, "Why Preachers Keep Going." Below we give several of the reasons that were listed, along with some of our own.

1. Preachers keep going because the words of 1 Cor. 9:16 keep ringing in their ears—"Woe is me if I preach not the gospel..." They know no other calling would ever be satisfactory with the Lord for them.

2. Preachers keep going because they owe a debt that can best be paid by proclaiming the Gospel—"I am debtor..." (Rom. 1:14).

3. They keep going because, relatively speaking, there are so few who do preach the word publicly.

4. They keep going because of godly elders, faithful Christians, devout teachers who help hold up their hands. They can always remember that some *do* care as much as they do. The faithful some-

times seem to be no more than a handful, but one seldom is in the place where that handful does not exist.

5. Preachers keep going because they remember that heaven is too good to miss and they are willing to endure much to try to take some with them.

6. They look about in the world and discover that every calling has its disappointments which must be endured. In this, God's work is no exception.

7. They remember that the Lord did not really picture general acceptance and world-wide pleasure in the message they bear. Christians, whatever their tasks, share the stigma of their Lord.

8. They keep going because of the thrill that comes from spiritual victories—prodigals restored; sinners snatched from the snare of the devil; Christians who grow and mature, worship and serve, all as they ought.

9. They keep going in order to help preserve a decent society for the present. "Righteousness exalteth a nation..." (Prov. 14:34).

10. They keep going because their Lord said: "Go... make disciples... baptizing... teaching."

NEWS AND NOTES

"They rehearsed all that God had done with them..."

LaGrange, Ky.:

Robert Shank will teach on prophecy at the LaGrange Church of Christ, from Oct. 23-26 (Sun. - Wed.).

2 of our articles this month are reprinted from **Image Magazine**. We are grateful to managing editor Denny Boultinghouse for permission to use them. Reuel Lemmons is editor, and the magazine's address is 115 Warren Drive, Suite D, West Monroe, LA 71291-7256.

The **Buechel Congregation** sends a very special "Thank You" to Bro. Joe Blansett for being with us yesterday in the Morning Worship. He brought us a wonderful message and we appreciate his filling in for Bro. Larry. [Now that Bro. Joe is retired from Maple Manor, he is available for fill-in preaching. —Editor]

Linton Church of Christ, Ind.:

First Senior Citizens Week at Woodland: There were 95 senior citizens who attended their week of Woodland September 11-16. The speakers, the singing, the fellowship, special activities and guest speakers on hobbies for Sr. citizens all proved to be a great

blessing to those who attended. Many who were present were from Greene and Sullivan counties and did not stay overnight at the camp. Thanks to Bro. Pound for his good work as director of this week. The dates for 1989 camping season (including Sr. Citizen Week) will be announced soon.

Lilly Dale Church of Christ:

I know this is a few months off yet, but please keep it in your prayers: The Tell City-Lilly Dale Workshop will be held the last weekend in February. Please mark these dates down, February 24 & 25, 1989.

A group of us went to the nursing home, sang and had a short service. It was enjoyed by all.

Our teenagers went on a camping trip to Kentucky for a weekend this summer. We are really blessed to have the adult leadership for our teens.

—Sharle Sutcliffe, reporter

Jennings, La.:

SENIOR SAINTS BANQUET: Last night those among our number 65 and over were honored with a lovely meal and musical entertainment. We love and appreciate these leaders of our church family so much, as we also do

the young ladies who prepared the food, decorated, and served the meal. You are all jewels! Thanks to Bro. Val for speaking, and to the Crowley singers who shared their message in song.

Letter from Belmont Church of Christ, Winchester, Ky.:

As you probably know by now, our faithful fellow worker, Bro. Shichiro Nakahara, was promoted to the presence of our Lord and Savior. Many of us deeply appreciate the dedication and work of our brother, having known him either during his studies at Kentucky Bible College/Southeastern Christian College.... Therefore the elders and other leaders at Belmont Church thought it very appropriate for Victor Broaddus to represent all of us at the memorial service scheduled for September 15 in Shizuoka City. The Nakahara family has, in fact, asked Bro. Victor to speak at the service.

Travel to Japan on such a short notice is very expensive. Victor was able to make reservations at wholesale cost, but the round-trip air fare is \$1066.75. About \$100 has been spent on phone calls to the Nakahara family and to Motoyuki Nomura concerning necessary plans. Transportation within Japan is extremely expensive, estimated to cost at least \$300.

Victor will also have an opportunity to participate in a minister's/missionary's conference September 19. This will be a great encouragement to Bro. Moto, and will add very little to the expenses of the trip.

[Please send any financial help to defray the costs of the trip to Church of Christ Worldwide, P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, Ky. 40555. Indicate your donation is for "Japan Trip."]

From Henryville Church Bulletin:

"A National survey of 500,000 children in grades 4-6 revealed that 50% feel pressured to drink alcohol and over 30% actually do."—copied

"A recent report revealed that the rate of teenage suicide in the U.S. has doubled since 1972. Four hundred thousand teens try to kill themselves each year. Every day, over 15 succeed."—copied.

"WHEN WIVES WORK, DIVORCES INCREASE": "In a study newly published in *Psychological Reports*, researchers examined data from across

the country. They found that "the higher the percentage of wives working full-time, the higher the divorce rates." "A working wife," they observed, "encounters a wider variety of men than a housewife and may increase her chances of finding an alternate mate. Entering the labor market also gives a wife another source of gratification, making her less dependent upon her marriage for happiness. Traditionally, wedding vows were expected to survive 'for richer or poorer.' The tougher contemporary test turns out to be a wife's full time employment."

—from American Family Association, via Tell City Church Bulletin

Gallatin Bulletin:

Let's all strive to be on time for Sunday school. This is vital for our outreach and growth. It shows others that we care and we consider that time very important! Those of us who teach need to heed this call.

We need to be on time because:

(1) It is a testimony to our visitors—if they see us straggle in late and begin late, will they not be turned off?

(2) It provides encouragement for a fuller class—more time to discuss and minister to each other.

(3) We are on time (and early in many cases) to work, school, ballgames, and other events—shouldn't God be first on our list?

Consider this prayerfully and let's reach and grow in our Sunday school.

A CALL TO PRAY:

(The following call to prayer comes from the bulletin of one of our congregations. Much more prayer is needed among us all. Let us urgently seek the face of God.—A.V.W.)

A SPECIAL PRAYER SERVICE

At the last business meeting a good portion of the time was spent in discussing what needs to be done to promote growth in the church here. Many of us are concerned about the slow decline of our numbers, the very few children in our Sunday school work and our failure in reaching the lost. What can be done? What should be done? The result was the planning of a SPECIAL PRAYER SERVICE for this coming Wednesday evening in which to seek the Lord's face, to ask for wisdom from Him, and simply to

pray about the various facets of this need. We hope that every member of the church who can possibly attend will be here and will join in the praying.

We are not unmindful of our blessings as a church. We hope to note some of the positive good things we enjoy.

We are concerned about solid growth, not a flash in the pan that does not count with God. We wish to avoid the cancerous growth which might be gained by error or promotion

which appeals to and is empowered by the flesh.

We may well be living in the last of the last days, when "the faith" is going to be scarce, but we don't want to use this as an excuse if failure lies elsewhere.

It may be that we need to do more than pray, but it is certainly right that we should begin thus.

"Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it: Except Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." (Ps. 127:1)

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I Certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(Signed) Alex V. Wilson

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