

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

February, 2003

M-O-R-E Holiness Give Me

*"Christianity comes with
the Batteries Included."*

"It is time for us to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are 'defeated' by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient! When I say I am defeated by some sin, I am unconsciously slipping out from under my responsibility. I am saying something outside of me has defeated me. But when I say I am disobedient, that places the responsibility for my sin squarely on me."

--Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*

HEART-STIMULATORS

about Pursuing Holiness Wholeheartedly

"It is time for us to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are 'defeated' by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient! ...When I say I am defeated by some sin, I am unconsciously slipping out from under my responsibility. I am saying something outside of me has defeated me. But when I say I am disobedient, that places the responsibility for my sin squarely on me. We may, in fact, be defeated, but the reason... is because we have chosen to disobey. We have chosen to entertain lustful thoughts, or to harbor resentment, or to shade the truth a little.

--Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*

"The fight of the Christian is with the world, the flesh and the devil.... With a corrupt heart, a busy devil, and an ensnaring world he must either 'fight' or be lost.

"He must fight *the flesh*. Even after conversion he carries within him a nature prone to evil, and a heart unstable as water. To keep that heart from going astray, the Lord Jesus bids us 'watch and pray.' He must fight *the world*. The love of the world's good things, the fear of the world's laughter or blame, the secret wish to do as others in the world do--all these are spiritual foes which beset the Christian continually on his way to heaven, and must be conquered. He must fight *the devil*. Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve he has been 'going to and fro in the earth' striving to achieve one great end--the ruin of man's soul. An unseen enemy, he is always near us, spying out all our ways...

"We may take comfort about our souls if we know anything of an inward fight and conflict. It is the invariable companion of genuine Christian holiness. The child of God has two great marks about him: **he may be known by his inward warfare, as well as by his inward peace.**" (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3; Eph. 6:11-13; Lk. 13:24; Matt. 10:34; 1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Tim. 1: 18-19)

--J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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are these matters **URGENT?**

Alex V. Wilson

This is our second issue in a row about holiness. Some of us may find little here that we don't know already, but we should ask -- Am I *living* these truths? Are most of the members in my congregation living them? My prayer for myself and for us all is that the Lord may impart to His people not merely theories but reality, not merely knowledge but experience. "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20).

Holiness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Jim Carter of Atlanta made a thrilling declaration: "*Christianity comes with the batteries included.*" Yes! But then he adds a serious reminder: "If there is a power loss problem, it is not in the provision but in the faulty hookup and most probably in our pride." James Packer also warns us, "There is nothing so Spirit quenching as to study the Spirit's work without being willing to be touched, humbled, convicted, and changed as you go along."

Available to All, Needed by All

In the book, *The Holy Spirit in the Latter Days*, Harold Lindsell underscores an important fact.

Unfortunately, many of today's books about the Holy Spirit have high-lighted the experience of the Spirit's filling by centering their attention on evangelists, ministers, and other highly placed leaders in the churches. This leaves the impression that the filling of the Spirit is only for the few and mighty -- not for the everyday believer. This was true, to a degree, in the Old Testament, but not the New. The Spirit's filling is available to the housewife, the businessman, the truck driver, the secretary, the physician, the college student, and the men and women on the assembly lines of the factories. One does not have to be a specially-called servant of God to qualify. No one is excluded from this blessing, and every life can be a better one when it is lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. (p. 98)

"Serious Business"

An article by that title deeply stirred my heart. David Bryant wrote it in *World Christian* magazine. His main ministry is seeking to arouse believers to pray for revival and missionary outreach. If anyone fears what he says is unbalanced or even heretical, listen to what our Lord said in Luke 11:13. "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father

in heaven *give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*" Though that statement preceded the birthday of the church, it certainly has a continuing application throughout this age too.

Consider, then, in the following excerpts, David Bryant's challenge to seek the Spirit's empowering, and his emphasis on the Spirit's Christ-centeredness.

[At church] a friend from Bangladesh spoke of many doors opening for ministry [around the world]. But then he made it all so personally disturbing.

"The doors are opening," he warned, "but will the Church -- will *our* church -- have the strength to go through them? I fear not . . . not unless we all experience -- everyone here this morning included -- a powerful new engagement with the Holy Spirit."

A few of us were shaken that morning. But, I regret to report, too few. All of us, senders and goers, share responsibility for a generation without the gospel, because *we have been willing too often to settle for spiritual powerlessness . . .*

Not long ago, thirteen of us, scattered geographically, convened a one-day retreat to appeal to our Father for a fresh invasion of spiritual vitality. We came concerned with world evangelization. We also realized that it is the height of folly to think of finishing the task without a drastic change in the spiritual climate of the Church. And since we happen to be "insiders," we knew the Church's paralysis begins with us. So, throughout the day we each took turns confessing to one another the many evidences of powerlessness in our service to Christ. As each confessed, we recorded in our notebooks the areas for which the others desired the Spirit's filling. Then one by one, each of us declared bold, compelling prayers that we be "clothed with power from on High" (Luke 24).

It was serious business. What we were facing that day was the clear teaching of Scripture that *our relationship with the Holy Spirit can never be static*. The Bible says that, on the negative side, we may grieve, quench, resist, lie to, struggle against, reject and even blaspheme God's Spirit. Or, in positive response, we can receive, wait on, seek, hear, walk with, be led by, obey, sow to please and even drink of God's Spirit. As the New English Bible puts Eph. 5:18, "*Let the Spirit fill you.*" That's precisely what we were doing on our retreat . . .

Again and again we must give ourselves whole-heartedly to the person of Christ himself. The Spirit is called the *Holy Spirit* because he is. He's the *consecrating* (holy) Spirit, sent not to focus us on himself but to bring us into an exclusive allegiance to Christ. So, the more we love Christ, worship Christ, think on Christ, speak of Christ, obey Christ, live and die (daily) for Christ, desiring everything for Christ -- the more powerfully the Spirit can carry out his own commission among us. (End of quote)

Friends, may each of us renew our vows to the Lord Christ. And may we echo the prayer of Daniel Iverson's chorus that says, "Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me!"

HOLINESS according to PETER, #3

Why is it so *HARD* to be Holy?

Because of *our Enemies*. Last month's second article concentrated on **(1) the flesh**, our sinful self-centeredness. Peter warned us about "selfish passions that attack our souls" from within (1 Pet. 2:11). But he also mentions two other foes:

(2) Satan the Evil One: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." (1 Pet.5:8-9.)

Woe to us if we forget the Fiend and his hate and power. Peter cautions us to be sober and watchful, on guard against his cunning tricks and sneaky attacks. (I imagine Satan usually doesn't roar till *after* he mauls his victim.) We need not cower before his power to devour, for "greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Satan's roar is scary, and he can indeed consume those who give in to his temptations or cave in to his attacks. But we need not do so. We can obey Peter's inspired commands to stand firm, trusting our Lord and resisting the devil. James says that if we do resist him, he will flee from us (4:7).

Peter provides yet another incentive to stand firm: The trials we face are no worse than our fellow-believers around the globe are facing. If we are under attack, so are they (usually to a far greater extreme), so don't have a pity party. The Lord never promised us a rose

garden in this life, but forewarned us of hardships. As Leroy Garrett often says, "Soldier on!"

(3) "**The World**" is our third adversary. By "the world" Scripture often means not our physical planet but our social environment, the evil society we live in. Ungodly people around us either tempt us to conform to their evil ways in order to win their friendship, or -- if we refuse, they taunt or even torture us. Tempting, taunting and torturing are favorite weapons of the Fiend as he stirs up his people to oppose us.

Peter uses the term "world" in this sense, just as John and Paul do. Two times he reminds us that we are "*strangers in the world*" (1 Pet. 1:1, 2:11). As the old song says, "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passin' thru...." But often we forget that. Also two times he writes about "the *corruption in the world*" caused by evil desires (2 Pet.1: 4), which we may escape "by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 2:20).

But even when Peter does not use the *word* "world," he presents over and over the *idea* of the world-system's opposition to God's people. Notice these direct quotes from his pen:

"The pagans think it strange that you do not plunge with them into their wild and reckless living, and they heap abuse on you." "...insulted because of the name of Christ." "...their slander." "They accuse you of doing wrong." "...those who speak maliciously against your good behavior." "...the pain of unjust suffering." "...suffer for doing good." "...suffer for what is right." "...suffer for doing good." "...suffer as a Christian." "...suffer according to God's will." Wow - 11 times he mentions it!

Such persecution **continued** down through the centuries. And it still **continues** in our world today, at an increasing pace. *There were more Christian martyrs during the 20th century than during all the 19 preceding centuries of church history put together!* Think of North Korea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, India, Indonesia, China, etc. We should pray for our suffering brothers and sisters around the world.

Well, how can we defend ourselves amid the pressures of ungodly society? How overcome the lure of its temptations and the fear of its persecutions? How can we keep from giving up? Peter tells us, **By focusing on the invisible but permanent and perfect world-to-come.** A songwriter put it this way, "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ." We must look ahead and see the holy glory He has prepared for us, and thus take heart.

In 2 Pet. 3:10-14 the apostle writes, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare [or burned up --NASV]. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? *You ought to live holy and godly lives* 12 *as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.* That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a New heaven and a New earth, the home of righteousness. 14 So then, dear friends, *since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*" NIV

This world with its selfish prestige, power, pleasures, possessions and perversions, is gonna **burn!** Look forward eagerly to the new and everlasting world and its holy, righteous and loving society of God's redeemed people. And practice that righteousness, holiness, and love -
- *Now!*

The next logical question is, How?

HOLINESS according to PETER, #4

What does God do? What must I do?

For the next few minutes you might think, "Hey, you're repeating what you said in an article last month. Same song, same verse." No, not really. There are obvious similarities, for both times we look at two errors to avoid, each of which is an extreme. But, *last month* we dealt with the question, "**How Holy Can We Be?**" We saw that one extreme is sinless perfectionism, believing we can have our sinful selfish nature suddenly and totally eradicated right now. And the other extreme is careless imperfectionism, believing we can't really overcome sin in this life -- so just accept it and "don't worry -- be happy." We saw the solutions to these errors: *Don't be surprised* at the inner war; *don't be defeated* in the inner war.

Now, however, we deal with the question, How can we win the victory? "**HOW Can We Be Holy?** What part does *God* play and what part do *we disciples* play in the process of growing more sanctified?

We should avoid two errors at this point also. They both appeared in a class I taught years ago at the School of Biblical Studies. After we studied about the Holy Spirit and obedient living, a student wrote me a note telling of lessons she had learned.

“After I received Christ I remember being quite *surprised to find out that I was not automatically perfect in my conduct.* Our recent studies about holiness helped me realize that being a victorious Christian is a growing process that’s never really finished in this life.”

So her first mistake as a new convert had been to expect too much, because she **believed God Does It All.** She had thought that God would suddenly transform her into a sinless person, just as you can convert your cassette-player from using electricity to using batteries -- by turning a knob. Becoming a mature disciple is not that simple nor quick.

Her note continued: “The class helped me realize more that the Holy Spirit is a person, and what that means. I have never really thought of Him as One who helps me in the growing process; therefore, *I have often considered the task hopeless.*” So her second error was to expect too little and thus feel depressed about overcoming sin and being holy. Why? Because she **believed Holiness Was Entirely Up To Her,** and she had found that she was too weak to make it on her own.

Such mistakes seem common. On the one hand, many believers feel that Christian living and service depend entirely on their own efforts. “If I can only try harder and put forth greater effort, surely I’ll become a better Christian.” So they grit their teeth, clench their hands and try harder to do their duty -- at least for a while.

But there is little growth and less joy, and it all seems useless in the end. Often they give up. This kind of Christian living is very sad.

On the other hand, some good Christian teachers who realize the total inadequacy of such a self-dependent attitude tend to go too far in the opposite direction. Here are some typical quotations from three different writers, all of whom are usually helpful teachers:

1. “Christ is living the victorious life today, and Christ is your life. Therefore **stop trying.** Let Him do it all. Your effort and trying can have nothing to do with victory.” 2. “In your sanctification and service, God must do all, and **you will take no part in it but to accept what He will do for you.**” 3. “True New Testament living is **effortless.** Why must you try? Because you are not abiding.”

Well, we’ll see if Peter agrees, especially when we get to his fourth point. Now we turn to a passage that just overflows with treasures, **2 Peter 1:3-15.** As we search for those treasures we’ll find at least four main thrusts Peter makes.

Four Guidelines for Holy Living

First he lays his foundation, in verses 3-4 (NIV).

“3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

1. RECOGNIZE GOD'S RESOURCES.

Note well His **Divine Power** (3). Also note **Divine Nature** -- both His *and ours!* (4). Divinity or Godhood is *His* nature eternally; it becomes *our* nature as a gift from Him. We “partake” or “share in the divine nature.” Not that we become fully God, to the same degree that He is -- as Mormons, New Age gurus and some “name it and claim it” preachers say. No, Rev. 22:3 & 6, describing the eternal state, still clearly distinguish between God and us “His servants.” But by our new birth, we do become new creatures and receive a new nature. (John 1:12-13; 3:3; 2 Cor.5:17). We crucified the sinful nature and live by God's Spirit (Gal.5:24-25). We took off our old self and put on the new self (Col.3:9-10). Along with all true believers, we are begotten of God (1 John 5:1, ASV). So not only are we adopted, but the genes of God are in us! And when God's divine Son returns, “we shall be like him” fully, in character (1 John 3:2). Our gracious Lord's awesome power guarantees all this.

And that power is available now, not just in the future. Read it again: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.” With His resources we can indeed live holy lives. But to benefit fully from His power we must *know* it's available to us, and choose to *use* it.

Craig Larson tells how one New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered to a halt. It had run out of gas! The whole parade was held up till someone could get some. The incident was ironic, for that float represented the Standard Oil Company, one of the world's major distributors of gas. But all the company's vast resources didn't move its float till someone put some of that gas in its tank. In a similar way, the divine power made available to us by the Holy Spirit doesn't help us personally if we are not “filled with the Spirit” through trusting and obeying.

Also observe in verses 3-4 above **2 things God has “Given” us:** 1st, **Promises** -- very great and precious (4). And the Greek word *given* which Peter uses here is not the usual word for *give*, but a richer

word. It means "to give bountifully, to endow, to furnish with an estate." His 2nd gift mentioned here is *Everything!* ALL that we need for life and godliness He has imparted to us as a present, a free gift.

Divine power! The divine nature! Great and precious promises! Everything we need to live a Jesus-like life! Wow -- our minds can't begin to grasp all that is involved here. But we'll be blessed as we try. How shall we *respond* to all of this? For starters, we should r-e-m-e-m-b-e-r.

2. REMEMBER God's Power and Provisions.

Sometimes we recognize His resources for a while. But then it all sort of fades away and seems unreal, and its impact dwindles. Peter realizes that danger, so he emphasizes that another key to holiness is *MEMORY*. Look what he writes in verses 12-15 (NIV; emphasis added).

"12 So I will **always remind you** of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13 I think it is right to **refresh your memory** as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to **remember these things**." Also in verse 9 Peter warns us of the *error of forgetting* that we have been cleansed from our past sins.

Memory is a means of grace. That's why the Lord's Supper is important. And meeting regularly on the Lord's Day with His people. Also Bible reading in our homes, holding regular *family* devotions. Also a *personal* "quiet time" when you meet with the Lord. (Is your quiet time too quiet - zzzzzzz?) Fellowship weeks and church revival meetings refresh our memories regarding what we already know but may need to rekindle. And we can really benefit from times for testimonies -- during Sunday School class, fellowship-groups and other times. Another way to benefit from remembering is to study the history of the Church through the ages, and of the Stone/Campbell movement, and of your own congregation.

Peter tells us, *Don't Forget to Remember the great mercies and mighty acts of our God!*

3. TRUST Him to Keep His Promises.

Because of God's power and provisions, trust Him. The motto of William Carey, the great pioneer missionary to India, fits right in here. He urged Christians to expect things from God. No, he said more than that: "Expect Great Things From God!" If we don't, we'll venture nothing and gain nothing.

A visitor asked an old farmer, "How's your cotton crop this year?" He replied, "Didn't plant no cotton; 'fraid of the boll weevil." "Well, how are your potatoes?" "Didn't plant none; 'fraid of the 'tater bugs." "Well, what *did* you plant?" "Didn't plant *nothin'*. *Just playin' it safe.*" He took no risks. He reaped no harvest, either. Too often we're that way.

Public Enemy #1 in Christian living and service may be *forgetting God's power and provisions, and thus being depressed, discouraged and fearful -- due to unbelief.* We look at our problems, difficulties, decline, enemies ... and then at ourselves with our weaknesses and failures. As a result, we are tempted to **give up in despair.** Using satire, missionary leader Horace Fenton once wrote "*3 Easy Steps to Giving Up on Missionary Work*": #1. Consider the Immense Needs. #2. Consider our Meager Resources. #3. Leave GOD out!

What's the cure? *Don't* leave God out. Take time to recall His greatness ... His power ... His promises. Remember the great, faith-building truths which we saw in 2 Peter 1: 3-4.

But **Public Enemy #2** in Christian living and service is probably **Laziness due to Apathy.** Did you hear of the wife who asked her husband, "This article says all human problems are due either to *ignorance or apathy.* Do you agree?" And he replied, "*I don't know, and I don't care.*" Hmmm. Well, Peter *would* care. He would react sharply to apathy, ignorance, and resulting inactivity. This is strongly emphasized in **verses 5-11**, where he gives his next guideline for holiness.

4. Give DILIGENCE to Make Every EFFORT to be HOLY

"5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

"10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling & election sure.

For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (NIV)

Peter here emphasizes our need to **exert ourselves spiritually**. That is, to *make every effort*. Or, as other versions put it -- *apply all diligence -- do your utmost -- do your best -- try your hardest*. Of course Peter believed in trusting the Lord, abiding in Him, relying on His resources, counting on His Spirit to bear His fruit through us. But he would clearly disagree with those preachers who write that "True New Testament living is *effortless*."

To the contrary, Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:15, *I will make every effort* to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things." And again, in 3:14, "*Make every effort* to be found spotless, blameless and at peace." And once more, as we just read in verse 5, "For this very reason, *make every effort* to add to your faith...." (In the NT, Jesus also used this expression once, Paul twice, and the book of Hebrews twice. Check it out.)

Without doubt, the Bible teaches that lazy people will not be holy people! Prayerfully trusting our Lord for His enabling power, we must exercise self-control and exert ourselves in forming godly habits. Now let me quit preaching and go to **meddling**: If we regularly *erupt in temper-tantrums*, we should confess this sin to those we mess up by our lava, ask their forgiveness and prayers, and seek counsel from some godly believer. If we are secretly hooked on *gambling*, or plagued by cravings for *porn*, we must find a mature Christian friend or fellowship-group who can partner with us in prayer and hold us accountable to holiness. If *credit-cards* are wrecking our personal finances, do the same. If we are *couch-potatoes*, we should set strict time-limits (as well as decency-limits) on *tv-watching*. If *email-addiction* is keeping us from fulfilling important obligations, we should keep records of time spent in this, & request Christian friends to ask us regularly how we are doing (maybe they can help by not emailing us so often, too.) If we constantly have *pity-parties*, we must cultivate the habit of joyful thanksgiving. If we habitually *eat more than we ought*, we should put a knife to our throat (Proverbs 23:2, 20-21).

If our *praying and church-attendance are spasmodic*, we should ask our church leaders for advice. If we are consistently *too afraid of what others think of us*, and so we *never in any way share the good news* of Hope and Life through Christ Jesus, we should discuss this problem with other disciples and ask the Lord to help us at least start taking baby-steps in this area. Unless we get specific and practical in *making every effort -- applying all diligence -- doing our utmost* to be holy in every-day living, all our lofty ideals and pious talk will only be a fog that soon dissipates and amounts to nothing.

I strongly believe Peter would endorse the applications made in that preceding paragraph. He would agree with both parts of William

Carey's motto. For Carey not only said "Expect great things from God," but also "**Attempt Great Things For God.**" Together, that's a perfect summary of 2 Pet.1:1-15.

The Main Points of this Rich Passage

We should, 1st, Recognize God's vast resources. (1:3-4). 2nd, Remember not to forget all His power and provisions. (1:12-15). 3rd, Trust Him to do for us what we can't do for ourselves. Tell Him, "Lord, I can't do this, but You can. So, trusting You, I will do it!" (1:3-4 again). 4th, Give diligence to make every effort to live holy lives in practical ways. (1:5-11).

Now may we turn our knowing into doing. [The exposition of this passage continues in the next article.]

Virtues We should Practice, Rewards God has Promised

Let's do some more detailed study of 2 Peter 1: 5-11. Using various versions and commentators, we'll examine the virtues we should practice. After that we'll analyze the results and rewards which spring from the virtues.

In verses 5-7 Peter writes, To your **(1) faith**, add...

(2) goodness, which means moral vigor; virtue; good character; excellence (a word used to describe the person who diligently practices the demands and implications of his calling).

(3) knowledge, in other words, insight; spiritual understanding; growth in awareness through study and experience.

(4) self-control, that is, mastery of desires; alert discipline; soldier-like discipline.

(5) perseverance, meaning patient endurance; the ability to see beyond current pressures in view of known resources. (Wow!)

(6) godliness, that is, reverent wonder; a spirit of reverence and deference to God in all matters.

(7) brotherly kindness, which means warm friendliness; kindness to friends, family, and/or fellow-Christians.

(8) love (Greek: *agape*), meaning divine love, as at Calvary; self-giving love even for sinners, and even for enemies, as in 1 Cor. 13.

It's obvious that Peter does *not* mean that we must cultivate these virtues one at a time, and only in the order presented here! He's just saying that we should manifest all these traits. These Jesus-like virtues should be the marks of His disciples. And if we are weak or even lacking in some of these qualities, we should make every effort to add them to our character. How? By prayer, looking to Jesus. By persistent practice. And by contrite confession when we fail.

Results of this Holiness

Such character will produce splendid results, set forth in verses 8-11:

"If you possess these qualities in increasing measure..." or "in abundance..." 1) You won't be ineffective -- that is, "idle, inactive or useless." 2) You won't be unproductive -- that is, "unfruitful or barren." 3) You will *know* our Lord Jesus Christ: This stirring privilege is stressed four times in the three chapters of 2 Peter. 4) You won't be nearsighted or even blind -- but have clear vision and insight. 5) You won't forget Christ has cleansed you from sins -- thus you'll be humble and amazed, yet confident and grateful.

6) You'll make your calling and election sure, or "confirm God's invitation to you, His choice of you." In other words, you will "put God's call and selection of you beyond all doubt." What a joy to have an *assured relationship* with God, to *know* (not just wish or guess) that you have eternal life, which is in God's Son: "He who has the Son has life" (1 Jn.5:11-12). 7) You won't fall -- won't be a down and up and down and up and down Christian. Or, as another version puts it, "...you will never fall away."

8) You'll receive a *rich welcome* into the eternal kingdom of our Lord. In other words, there will be "*richly* provided for you" -- or "*abundantly* supplied to you" -- an entrance into His kingdom. All real Christians will enter and share in Christ's glorious kingdom-to-come, but not all will enter richly, abundantly, *triumphantly*. If you add those virtues to your life *now* (v. 5), God will add (same Greek word) to you a glorious entrance to His Kingdom *then*. It seems that Peter's teaching here resembles Paul's in 1 Cor.3:11-15, about the various "building-materials" God's people use in serving the Lord, and the resulting differences in rewards when we will give account of ourselves to Him.

Do We Really Lean on God's Grace?

We see that Peter exhorts us to practice eight virtues or duties, and tells of eight possible rewards. But it is obvious that he does *not* want us to think we *earn salvation* by performing these virtues. But he is

writing to those who are saved, and we must warn the unsaved not to get the cart before the horse. To become holy one must start by coming to Christ to receive His free, unearned gift of salvation. Holiness starts with salvation, not vice versa.

Here's a sad-but-true story from Manila. Once when I visited a hardline church of a certain non-denomination there, I picked up one of their pamphlets entitled, "*Are We Saved by Faith Alone?*" The opening sentence said, "Yes, we are saved by faith, but not by faith alone." Then came this astounding statement: "**Actually the New Testament mentions 22 things we must do or have to be saved....**"

Twenty-two?? What kind of new math is that? It turns out that you start with the "5 steps" commonly used in the "how to be saved" formula. But then what? Well, the argument developed like this: Gal. 5:22-23 lists 9 "fruit of the Holy Spirit." And the preceding verses list the "works of the flesh" of which Paul says, "Those who live like this will *not* inherit the kingdom of God." If the works of the flesh keep you out of heaven, then the fruit of the Spirit must make you eligible to enter there. (If you also meet the 13 other requirements, of course.)

Well, then what? The 5 steps + the 9 fruit = 14, which leaves 8 *more to go* to reach 22. Aha! The passage we're studying in 2 Pet. 1:5-7 lists 8 *virtues* required to "receive a rich welcome into God's kingdom" (v.11). So there you have it: "22 things we must do or have to be saved."

I really don't mean to be flippant about this matter. That outright **works-based self-dependence** is obviously a giant tragedy, which bars those who rely on it from entering the heaven they seek. Let us thank God that numerous Churches of Christ have forsaken such all-out legalism. And let's weep and pray for those who haven't.

Peter takes a view totally opposite to such self-righteous attitudes. In the 8 chapters of his 2 letters, *he writes 9 times of God's grace*. He calls our Father "the God of all grace." He reminds us to "set [our] hope fully on the grace to be given [us] when Jesus Christ is revealed." And the very last words we have from his pen are, "Grow in the **grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be **glory** both now and forever! Amen." (1 Pet. 5:10 & 1:13; 2 Pet. 3:18.)

Yes! **FROM Christ, grace. TO Christ, glory.** This is the A and the Z of the apostle's message, to which we heartily say "Amen!" But let's never forget that in between Peter shows over and over that God's grace obligates, motivates and empowers us to *be holy in all we do* (1 Pet.1:15).

PUTTING SIN TO DEATH

(That is, "Mortification")

James I. Packer

"By the Spirit... PUT TO DEATH the misdeeds of the body..."

--Rom. 8:13b

"Since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

"PUT TO DEATH, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." Col. 3:1-10

I remember my first evening meal in theological college. We were all strangers to each other, and conversation was exploratory. The man opposite me turned out to share an obsession of mine: the teaching of the Puritans.

God had taught him that sin is not rooted out of us nor rendered impotent in us at any stage in this life. Thus watching, praying, suspecting yourself and often examining your heart and actions are vital disciplines lest you enter into temptation without realizing what you are doing. "Mortifying sin" is what the old Bible versions called it. My new friend went on to successfully pastor two difficult congregations for over 20 years. He was one of the most cheerful men I have known. He spoke regularly of mortification to the end of his days, the only evangelical pastor I know to have done so. He thought the subject was important. So do I.

The above passages tell us that Christian privilege makes mortification obligatory. Paul argues thus: "As people who now share Christ's risen life, whose citizenship and prospects are in the heavenly realm, you must behave as befits your status. You are no longer children of wrath, but sons of God and heirs of glory. You must be what you are, and not what you were. Therefore you must mortify sin--put it to death."

More About Our Warfare Against Sin

1. **Our Struggles:** We fight not merely sins, but sin, that hereditary impulse, rooted deep in our nature, which lusts for self-assertion in defiance of God. Sin is the root of all actual sins. Now at conversion the new believer takes Christ as his master and model, and resolves that he will no longer be the self-asserting, God-resisting person he was. This is his repentance, or "change of mind." He renounces sin; he wills its death in him; and thus in intention he has "crucified the flesh" and its desires (Gal. 5:24).

But sin does not die. The Christian still finds it active within him, resisting and to a greater or less degree thwarting all his attempts to do the will of God. The Christian thus finds himself in conflict with a part of himself: "the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh . . . to prevent you from doing what you would" (Gal. 5:17). Sin is already at war with us (Rom. 7:23; 1 Pet. 2:11). It seeks our ruin, and the only way to preserve ourselves is to fight back.

2. **Our Resources:** Nobody has much heart for a fight he thinks he cannot win. To expect defeat is thus to ensure defeat. If I imagine that, try as I might, I am bound to fail, I shall not even try as I might. But the Christian is forbidden to have such disastrous pessimism. God obliges him to expect success when he meets sin. "Sin will have no dominion over you" (Rom. 6:14). Its reign has ended; it is a dethroned and doomed enemy. For the believer has put off the old self and put on the new self (Col. 3:9,10); he is born of God and God's seed remains in him (1 John 3:9). It is no longer his nature to sin. Insofar as he does so, he acts out of character, and his heart is not in it. He can never sin with all his heart again.

More than that, the Holy Spirit is present in person to oppose indwelling sin. He strengthens the Christian to "put to death the misdeeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13).

3 **Our Responsibility:** We must use our resources. We cannot mortify sin by our own unaided efforts; but it is also true that the Spirit will not mortify sin in us without our cooperation. He will prosper our striving, but he will not bless our sloth. We ourselves must attack sin. We should practice and develop the qualities most contrary to the sins we have to get rid of--generosity if the problem is greed, a habit of praise if it is self-pity, patience if it is bad temper, planned living if it is laziness. Careless, half-hearted, double-minded Christians can never mortify sin.

[Condensed by author's permission from GOD'S WORDS.]

Repent of Sin, Or Grow Out of It?

Carl Kitzmiller

In becoming Christians do people repent of sin or grow out of sin?

My initial answer to this question is: "Both." But it is an answer that needs an explanation.

The one asking the question is concerned that some people in coming to Christ seem to have the idea that they can hold on to certain wrong things in their lives with the thought that they will eventually grow out of them. Certainly there are those who treat conversion very superficially who often leave repentance out of the "what-to-do" teaching given to inquirers. It is popular in some quarters to call for a commitment to Christ which seems to ask for or expect little more than a signature on a card or a confession that "I want to be recognized as a Christian." There are those asking for decisions for Christ who do not seem to realize that this also involves a decision against sin.

Let it be said very clearly that repentance toward God is a necessary part of our response to the gospel of Christ if we are to be saved. And our repentance is not of some sins, part of our sins, or even most of our sins--it is repentance of sin, whatever is wrong in our lives, whatever misses the mark and is not in the will of God. The very moment we begin to reserve some corner of our life and want to be rid of all sin except such-and-such, we show that we are trying to repent selectively and that is not repentance of sin. What wife wants to hear that her husband has decided to stop committing adultery with six different women, that he has "repented" and now only intends to do so with just one other woman? True repentance is not selective but covers every known area of sinning.

Moreover, repentance is a prerequisite of the new birth. New Testament messengers included repentance in their message (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21). From the beginning to the end of the Bible repentance precedes the forgiveness of sins. It is not something added to faith as a work of merit; it is one of the activities of true faith in a God who abominates sin. But it is there. There is not even a hint that God forgives known sin in responsible persons without repentance.

Now, without retracting even one iota of the above, let us understand that prospective Christians and new Christians do not always recognize some things to be sin which are sin. New Christians are babes in Christ and immature in their thinking. Every Christian in his growth becomes more aware of the terribleness of sin and likely

comes to see things as sin which he may not have earlier understood to be so. In this sense he might be said to grow out of sin.

Let us illustrate. A young man believes that Jesus is the Christ and, repenting of his sinful life, confesses Christ and is baptized into Christ. It is a genuine conversion to Christ. Let us say however that he has not had much pre-Christian training as to what the Bible teaches and so he does not as readily recognize specific sins as others might. In spite of his immature state, such a one is a genuine Christian. Now let us say that this young man in his life has picked up some language which is not wholesome. He continues to use that language. That proves, does it not, that he never repented of sin? No, it does not. He may have repented of sin as a principle, but his understanding may not have caught up with his principles. He does not intend to do wrong, but he does, without being aware that it is wrong. Now, as a further development, someone declares his language to be wrong without giving a solid basis for it in God's word. He may be deterred a bit, but does that person know what he is talking about? Let us not confuse faith in an individual's judgment with faith in Christ. Finally, he is shown from the word of God that his words are wrong. Now he must repent of this sin. He has not grown out of it, but he has grown in his understanding so that he now includes it in those works of darkness he wants out of his life. Suppose we even go a step further. His words have been spoken by habit, and a habit is not easily broken. He no longer intends to use those words, but he slips. It was not that he had not repented. He temporarily lost a battle with the flesh. But now that he knows this to be sin he cannot shrug it off. Repentance is called for. And if he is living in touch with Christ as he ought to be, it will be done.

There is a sense, then, in which repentance is primarily a matter of the heart. We do not say there is not also a practical side. Some wrongs are so evident that it is foolish in any normal case to talk about repentance while one continues in the acts. Nor are we talking about playing games with God, pretending an ignorance which we do not have. God knows our heart. What we are saying is that it is possible for a person who has repented of sin in his heart to continue doing some things because of ignorance or immaturity which will be recognized as sin by the more discerning. Now we know that when there is a willingness to do the Lord's will (John 7:17), darkness does not persist. We must be fair, however, and recognize that sins of ignorance can only be repented of in the sense of ceasing from them when we come to know them to be sins. And this is often a process of growth.

Another danger to be avoided is this--confusing a human standard with God's. Some there are who are ready to pronounce a cup of coffee or a glass of Coke sin. Nevertheless, that person who drinks these

refreshments is not necessarily an unrepenting sinner; he may simply see that there is no solid ground on which such an interpretation stands. I have some neighbors and friends for whom holiness is a particular style of clothing and hair style. Am I unrepenting in rejecting this arbitrary standard which they have adopted? I do not like to see Christians using tobacco. I think it hinders their testimony. I can even make the possible connection that it harms the temple of God. I'd like to see no Christians ever using the stuff in any form. But I have known and know some Christians for whom I have a high regard who use it. It is just not an issue with them. They reject my application of scripture which makes it a sin. They reject my standard, but they do not believe God has made it an issue. Preachers, elders, teachers and others have been known to be wrong in what they declare to be sin before God. Those persons are not necessarily wicked sinners before God who reject human judgments and applications. Even when the judgments and applications are right, it may involve growth in spiritual understanding to recognize it.

Now for a statement or two in closing. We are not saying that only that is sin which a person recognizes to be sin. God's word, in specific declaration and in principle determines sin. We are saying that there can only be an active repentance of that specific sin when it is known. Surely this is one area where the continual cleansing of sin for the one abiding in Christ is such a precious truth (1 John 1:7). Again, we are not suggesting that one can deal with known sin by growing out of it and that it is to be tolerated until such is achieved. We may grow in strength to overcome (or in our awareness of the provision for strength in Christ), but known sin must be repented of or else our whole outlook on sin is defective.

CAN I LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?

R. H. Boll

When he reads the lofty concept of the Christian life as set forth in Rom. 12-15, in Eph. 4-5, in Col. 3-4 and elsewhere in the N.T., the Christian is apt to lay his book down with a sigh saying; "Ah, if a man could only live like that!" And what, my brother, do you think a man would need in order to live like that? Likely he will reply: "It would require strength of character and tremendous will power: and that is more than I have. I can try, and do try, but I fail all the time."

If this is the true answer, then (I say it with all respect) the gospel is a failure. It is inadequate to meet the actual condition of human life. It is not applicable to the majority of mankind--nay, not even to the strongest and best, much less to the utterly lost and ruined whom espe-

cially Christ came to seek and to save. For that "strength of character" and that "tremendous will power" is exceeding rare. The common man neither has it, nor has he the stamina to build it up.

If Christ came to save only a few phenomenal characters, then faith is made void and the promise made of none effect. The grace of God in that case means nothing. If the gospel does not actually extend a practical and practicable salvation, not only from past sins, but from a sinful life, and that available to the poorest and weakest of our race who are willing to accept it, then the gospel is not what it is represented to be. The only alternative is that which is generally urged, that the life described in Romans 12, etc., is "ideal"--a "standard for us to work up to." With other words, that the Lord never expected us to come up to that, but we should only "try" and "do the best we can."

What dishonoring of God's word is implied in this view! What actual lowering of the standard, what nullifying of God's teaching, what winking at sin and making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof, God forbid!! This is not the solution of the problem. What then is the solution? It is summed up in one word, in one name--Christ.

What Christ Stands For

The life set forth in the New Testament is not such as can be lived by human nature. Figs do not grow on thistles. It is a divine life, growing out of the divine nature. The Son of God lived such a life as that. No one but a child of God can live it. It is indeed high, and no average man, nor any man, can attain unto it. It is not natural, but supernatural. Nevertheless, God expects us to live it. Yet again God expects nothing of us as human beings--no natural goodness, virtue, character, will-power--nothing but faith and willingness. The rest comes from Him. He counts that we are dead, but that our life is hid in Christ. He counts that we are weak; that we are without wisdom or righteousness of our own; but that we are "of God" and that Christ is "made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." Whatever glorious results follow this fact, the praise is due not unto us, but to the Lord (1 Cor. 1:30,31). Our power to live the Christian life lies not in us, but in Christ.

The Source of All Power

This fact is illustrated in the incident of Peter's walking on the water (Matt. 14). When Christ came to the disciples as they were rowing across the lake in the night, and said, "It is I, be not afraid," Peter requested that Jesus bid him come to Him on the water. Jesus said "Come." Peter boldly stepped out upon the water, and --lo!--the water sustained him. It was a miracle. Yet Peter did nothing miraculous. He

simply walked by Christ's command, using his feet just as one would on firm land. In Peter there was not anything marvelous nor any supernatural ability. He simply heard, believed, obeyed, just as you and I might have done. That was his part. The wonderful part was all on Christ's side, for it was Christ that sustained Peter's feet upon the water. Note, then, this fact, that Peter's power to walk on the water did not lie in himself, but in Christ. So likewise, my ability to live that transcendent life required in the Bible lies not in myself, but in the Son of God, who bade me come. It matters not how weak or strong I am by nature, as the question was not whether Peter was a skilled water walker. The power is in Christ, comes from Christ, that every man may take advantage of it, and that all the glory may be the Lord's.

Looking Unto Jesus

So long as Peter looked to his Lord, he stood and walked safely on the waters of Galilee. But why does he now look at the winds and waves and begin to be afraid? Has he forgotten that it was only by the Lord's power that he could stand on the water in the first place? Does he now turn his eye from the Lord to the dangers and difficulties of the situation? Does he now abandon his thought of the Lord and begin to study about his own utter inability and weakness? That is why he sinks. For if he puts it on this basis, if he shoulders the danger and difficulty of his position and looks to himself for his own safety and success, then Christ is counted out. The result is inevitable: Peter goes down. Happily, in the last moment he remembers the Source of his strength and cries out: "Lord, save me!" And Jesus promptly stretches out His hand and takes hold of him, "and saith unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" It is not little character, little strength, little power, my brother, that accounts for your failures in living the Christian life: it is little faith.

"The life that I now live," says Paul, "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). It is not because the standard of Christianity is too high, my brother, but because you are looking to yourself for the power to live it, instead of looking unto Jesus. Not in you, not in you are the resources necessary, but in Christ. Your power to live pure and upright, to deal lovingly and justly with your fellows, to overcome sin in the world, is in Christ. If you run your race, you must run looking unto Jesus (Heb. 12:1). In yourself is only weakness and discouragement. But in God, in Christ--"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. ..Only in Jehovah, it is said of me, is righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come" (Isa. 45:22-25).

Book Review

by Brad Smith,
a Bible teacher at the Bible Institute of Hawaii

The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God, by Dallas Willard, ISBN: 0060693339; Harper San Francisco, 1998.

Dallas Willard brings together a pastor's heart (he served as a Southern Baptist minister) and a rigorous academic mind (he teaches philosophy at the University of Southern California). His book **The Divine Conspiracy** completes a trilogy. **In Search of Guidance** focuses on the intimate quality of life with God, **The Spirit of the Disciplines** is intended to help disciples to interact with the grace of God, and **The Divine Conspiracy** presents discipleship as the heart of the Gospel.

Willard claims that in most churches today, the heart of the Gospel is seen to be believing the right things about Jesus so that one can be sure of going to heaven. Jesus' emphasis was quite different. He was calling people into the Kingdom of God immediately, to begin a transformation of relationships, thoughts, habits, and every other area of life, so that they would become like Him. Willard comments,

"How life-giving it would be if [Christians'] understanding of the gospel allowed them simply to reply, 'I will do them [the words of Jesus]! I will find out how. I will devote my life to it! This is the best life strategy I ever heard of' and then go off to their fellowship and its teachers, and into their daily life, and learn how to live in his kingdom as Jesus indicated was best" (xvi).

How can Christians come to such an attitude toward life? In Chapter 9, entitled "Curriculum for Christlikeness," Willard lays out two primary objectives for discipleship. The first is to love and constantly delight in God, and to be absolutely certain that there is no 'catch,' no limit, to the goodness of his will or his power to carry it out. Reaching this objective will include coming to trust that God had nothing but good for us when he gave us the particular body, emotional makeup, social status, family, etc. that he did.

The second objective is to subdue what Paul called "the sin that dwells within me" (Romans 7), or what Willard calls patterns of wrongdoing and evil that govern our lives--in other words, bad habits that we got from the world. Willard offers practical counsel on the

imitation of Jesus and of mature Christians, and the practice of spiritual disciplines that the Holy Spirit will use to form new habits in us.

Reading Willard has caused me to rethink my whole approach to teaching Christian basics. I believe that anyone who has responsibility for the spiritual care of others will be richly rewarded by mining the gold in **The Divine Conspiracy**.

(I personally have not read these books. But I have read articles by Willard with great profit. He is outstanding. —avw)

OTHER Good Books on Holiness

Last month we recommended 4 books on this topic, books W&W has in stock: *The Calvary Road*; *The Pursuit of Holiness*; *The Way of Holiness*; and *Knowing God*.

Here are other excellent books which we do **not** carry. Consult your local Christian bookstore. Read with discretion, of course.

1. *Men Made New*, by John Stott. 108 pages. A clear and exciting exposition of Romans 5-8, the heart of Paul's teaching on holiness.

2. *Holiness*, by J. C. Ryle. "Since its first publication in 1879, Ryle's treatment of the nature and means of personal sanctification has been a recognized classic." 405 pages, paperback. Splendid for readers with a good vocabulary. (Years ago this book changed my life. --avw) Costs \$14.95, but at present you may order it @ \$9.95 + shipping from Trinity Book Service, 160 Change Bridge Rd, Montville, NJ 07045; 1-800-722-3584.

3. *He Died to Make Men Holy*, by Norman Bales. 354 pages. This was quoted extensively in last month's *W&W*. Published by College Press; \$14.99.

"The new Christian is like a man who has learned to drive a car in a country where traffic moves on the left side of the highway and suddenly finds himself in another country and forced to drive on the right. He must unlearn his old habit and must learn a new one and, more serious of all, he must learn in heavy traffic. He must fight his old acquired reflexes and learn new ones, and he has no time or place to practice."

—A. W. Tozer, *Of God and Men*

Voices From The Fields

Karen (& James) Ashley Solomon Islands Feb. 15, 2003

One of the benefits of working in Bible translation is that every once in a while in the midst of consulting various versions and commentaries, you run across a particular turn of phrase that just blesses the socks off of you. James encountered one of those this week in J.B. Phillips' translation of Romans 8:23, "The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own."

The better known versions translate the phrase as simply "waiting," or "waiting eagerly," but in the original Greek, the words carry the image of one "stretching his head out" to see better, like one waiting for a friend at an airport terminal. Phillips' translation of that phrase as "standing on tiptoe" somehow communicates that same mood of excitement and longing; it bypasses the brain and goes straight to the emotions. The phrase is aptly used for Paul's statement about receiving our full status as God's children, but it also describes where we are in the road to the completion of the translation of the Sa'a New Testament. We're standing on tiptoe.

We're not there yet, but the final stages are in sight.... We will be doing our part during these final months to get the New Testament itself ready. Here's what we have left to do.

The biggest hurdle is the exegetical checking of the last half of Romans and the book of Hebrews. This is the part of the job that James spends the most time on. Using our co-translators' first draft translation, James checks for accuracy, often re-writing much of it as he tries to ensure the meaning is communicated in natural Sa'a speech. This will be James' highest priority task in the next two months.

After the exegetical check comes the reviewer check. This is done by a committee of local men who read through the book and make sure it is understandable and uses words that are common in everyday speech. Unfortunately the chairman of our review committee (who was also the village chief) died very unexpectedly a few days before Christmas.

Please pray for God to send another man capable to head up this part of the process.

After the reviewers make any adjustments for naturalness, then we have to prepare a back translation so a consultant can check our work.

The rough draft of the back translation is done by David's son Fox, a young man who has been a good friend since our first weeks out in the village in spite of his being a rascal who is in and out of trouble on a regular basis. We have seen recent signs that God's word has been working on him as he has been back translating it, so **pray for him to truly surrender his life to God.** When Fox finishes translating a book from Sa'a back into English, I then type it into the computer, noting some technical grammatical things and getting it in good shape to pass on to the consultant. I only have Philemon and Jude to do before I catch up to all the books James has ready for me.... [Karen then mentions 3 other steps, such as weeding out misunderstandings due to cultural differences; checking the spelling and punctuation; finalizing the glossary and also introductions to the biblical books; and typesetting.]

Wow, this sounds like a huge amount of work left to do. So how can we say we are standing on tiptoe? We are working hard to have the exegetical checking finished by April, and the consultant checking finished by the end of June. At that point we are scheduled to come back to the US for furlough. Once we get settled, probably in the Dallas area, we will keep working on the pre-publication checks and then move into typesetting at the Wycliffe/ SIL center there in Dallas, probably in the first months of 2004. So the end is definitely in sight.

As we stand on tiptoe, Satan is watching and devising schemes to interfere. Last year it was power and computer problems. At Christmastime it was health, with our review committee chairman dying and James waking up Christmas Day writhing in pain from kidney stones. Many other things could happen to slow us down, and more than ever we need your prayers for our protection and enablement in the coming months.

Robert & Joy Garrett Ruwa, Zimbabwe March, 2003

You know the old saying, "It never rains but what it pours". That seems to be true about our need for church sites. Many congregations have to suffer along worshipping in small cramped quarters or under trees for years while applications for church site are delayed by the authorities - then suddenly several come in almost at once. We have four I am assisting with building plans. We have employed Bro. Zilawe full-time to (1.) work on procurement and delivery of food for the famine relief program and (2.) Assist me in fabrication and erection of the steel frameworks for these four church buildings. He should be able to complete these while we are away on our furlough: Lupani and Bulawayo in Matebeleland which are a great distance from here and Monera and Shekedi in Mhondoro which are closer. Joy writes the following:

In January, Bob spent three weeks in Bulawayo working on grading and leveling and removing large rocks from where the church will stand. There are huge stones in the way of the foundation trenches which are proving a problem.

While he is away I am alone here. As I do not have any help in the house, it gets pretty lonely. Because I do not drive and there is no car here anyway, Sister Maria of Arcadia used her precious fuel to come out to Rockwood and pick me up for our ladies Bible study and prayer meeting. Folks spend hours in long lines at the few gas stations that have any fuel. Pray that the Lord will provide us fuel as well as food.

As we had several burglaries at the end of last year, Bob has had burglar bars reinforced with angle iron in all Rockwood buildings. Security is a national problem.

Inflation runs about 200 % and the list of scarce items grows. Long lines for fuel and food items is a common sight. On our monthly trips south we bring back as much food items as we can. The Dunlop factory departed and we have to purchase tires and motor spares in South Africa also. We are trying to lay up food for our coming camps in April.

The Harare Sisters have been collecting to purchase foam mattresses for camp. We have no beds here so each person brings their bedding. For people from out of town this is a big problem. From the time the ladies started collecting till now the price has more than doubled. However, they have just bought ten mattresses. Last years ladies camp meeting had 365 women!

Bob has so much to do before we leave May 5 for our furlough. We are looking forward to seeing our friends, children and grandchildren. The Lord is Good.

Our address in the USA will be 16111 Plum Creek Trail, Louisville, KY 40299. Phone (502) 267-7759. e-mail: ejbroad-dus@juno.com. Bro. Nathan Burks has kindly agreed to take care of my appointment calendar. Contact Nathan Burks at (502) 491-9375 or nburks1931@netzero.net

A Vision Starting to Come True

W&W readers may remember that in Sept. 2001 we issued a special call for prayer for India's untouchables (Dalits), and special opportunities to lead many to Christ. As events turned out, the number of them estimated at that time to be ready to become Christians was quite exaggerated. But many at least became open to the Gospel, especially

as a result of Christian centers which were established in Dalit communities to teach literacy, help the sick, and preach the Gospel. So now reports like the following are coming in. --avw

Christ Receives "Untouchables"; Untouchables Turn to Christ

Imagine what today would be like if you were not allowed to wear shoes on the same road with everyone else. Imagine not being able to drink from the same fountain as your co-workers. Imagine being forced to clean up the local park latrines on a daily basis with little or no pay. Imagine it being a major offense and even a crime if you touched people of a higher class than you in public. Imagine today if you were a Dalit ("untouchable" or "outcaste") living in Asia.

This is just a small sample of what daily life is like for the 300 million Dalits or "untouchables" of Asia. For literally thousands of years, these precious people that Jesus died for have experienced a misery we cannot begin to understand.

However, there is hope! Recently, God has begun doing amazing things among these people. A "Dalit Awakening" is truly taking place.

Entire Dalit Village Turns to Christ! (01/21/03)

Imagine a village full of people all wanting to receive Christ at the same time. This is exactly what happened this month in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu when 500 people gathered together to receive Christ.

This follows on the heels of a recently passed anti-conversion law in Tamil Nadu, which makes it illegal to convert someone to another religion through the use of "force, fraud or allurement." Under this law, a Dalit leaving his caste-based faith (Hinduism) for another religion could receive a 4-year prison sentence and a 100,000-rupee fine (\$2,000). Many Dalits in India are nevertheless boldly stepping forward to embrace Christianity.

"The Lord Jesus gave us the most encouraging promise when He said that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church," said K.P. Yohannan, president and founder of Gospel for Asia. "The history of Christianity proves that no matter how hard the pressures and difficulties, the Church will continue to grow because it belongs to the Lord."

What happened in this village in Tamil Nadu is just a snapshot of the many ways in which God is working as this Dalit awakening takes place throughout India. Gospel For Asia native missionaries and pas-

tors disciple new Christians and establish church fellowships where they can worship. To learn more about the Dalit Awakening, please visit <http://www.gfa.org/cgi-bin/pl.cgi?emlupd35>

The Stirring Testimony of Astronaut Rick Husband

[Sent by Dick Lewis, who explains: "A Precept student, Lorie Wiley, tells of remarks by Steve Green at his concert 12 hours after Columbia crashed."]

I had the privilege of attending a Steve Green concert on the night of Feb.1, just 12 hours after the loss of Columbia and her crew of seven. What a surprise to learn that Steve Green (a Christian singer) was a close friend of Rick Husband, the astronaut who was selected to be captain for this mission. Their friendship began a number of years ago when Rick and his wife stood in line to meet Steve after a concert in Houston. As Rick told Steve how much he enjoyed his music, Rick's wife whispered to Steve that Rick was an astronaut. Steve said he (Steve) made a big deal about that and soon the people were lined up to ask Rick for an autograph instead of Steve! Thus, their friendship began.

Steve was in attendance for Rick's first shuttle launch several years ago and was also in attendance for this launch. He sang both times at pre-launch receptions. The reception for the Columbia launch was very Christ-honoring, and many unbelievers attended. Steve described Rick as a quiet, unassuming man who was, however, very vocal about his faith. Rick did not miss an opportunity to give glory to God. When Mission Control said it was a beautiful day for a launch, Rick responded with, "The Lord has given us a perfect day!" A suit technician shared the following story. He said that after the astronauts suit up they walk down a hallway and then open a door to "face the press!" Rick stopped the crew before they opened the door and said he wanted to pray for them. Later the technicians talked about this and one said that in all his years he had never heard of a captain praying for and with his crew.

The spouses of the crew each get to pick a song for them to wake up to one of the mornings they're in space. Rick's wife selected "God of Wonders" by Steve Green. Steve played a tape for us of Rick communicating with Mission Control after the song was played. The conversation went something like this: Mission Control - "Good morning. That song was for Rick. It was 'God of Wonders' by Steve Green." Rick - "Good morning. Thank you. We can really appreciate the lyrics of that song up here. We look out the window and see that God truly is a God of wonders!" (Unfortunately, we probably won't hear that one on the news.) Steve also shared part of an e-mail he received from

Rick, transmitted from outer space! Did you know that was possible? Anyway, Rick wrote about how overwhelming it was to see God's vast creation from space. He said he had never cried while exercising before, but peddling on the bike and looking out the window at God's incredible creation brought tears to his eyes.

Steve had been in Texas for a concert about a week earlier. While there, Steve and his "crew" spent the day with Rick's wife, Evelyn, and their two children and also Mike Anderson's family. Mike was also aboard Columbia. During the concert that evening, Steve had the two women stand and he asked the audience to pray with him for these women while their husbands were in space. He said there were at least three astronauts (including Rick and Mike) aboard the Columbia who were believers in Jesus. Steve did not name the third person or mention if there was a family left behind. But two of the families, at least, will be relying on God to carry them through this and will have opportunity to share God's love with families/friends of the other astronauts. Before President Bush talked to the families, they had formed a circle and were praying.

Steve also gave us all a challenge from Rick's life. He said that astronauts lead extremely busy lives, and he (Steve) had been impressed with Rick's commitment to discipling his two children. Steve asked us to think about if our lives were to end tomorrow and there would be no more opportunity for us to disciple our kids. Would we be happy with what we had done, or would we have regrets?

I'm guessing, from the pictures Steve showed, that Rick's son was around 5 years old and his daughter 10. Rick made 34 devotionals, by video, before he left on the Columbia. There were 17 for his daughter and 17 for his son, one for each day he was to be gone. So each day his daughter and son had their own "devotion with Dad" by video. What treasures they will be to his children! Thank you, God, for leading Rick to do that! It was certainly an encouragement and comfort to hear these things. Pray for these families in the days ahead. God IS at work in His world! To Him belongs all glory!

What are YOU thankful for?

Joyce Broyles

[Editor's note: This column was sent to W&W some time ago, so the events portrayed as recent are not, actually. But they did happen, and the lesson is profitable regardless.]

Rubel Shelly sent out an article that had special application for me this week. I've had to spend lots of extra time cleaning books for the library. [A fire broke out in the school library of which she is librarian. -avw]

Mattie Stepanek, author of a collection of poems called *Journey Through Heartsongs*, has been on several television talk shows. His literary credibility is growing.

One poem, "On Being Thankful," is short but profound. Shelly informs us, "Written as a prayer, Stepanek begins by thanking God that evening for a beautiful sunrise, a wonderful rainbow, and a sunset that 'sparkled orange across the water.' Wonderful images, worthy of gratitude."

The rest of the poem continues with:

I was going to thank You tonight
For all of these special gifts,
Except that none of them happened.
But do You know what?
I still love You, God.
And I have lots of other things
That I can thank you for tonight,
Even if You didn't give those
Very special gifts to me today.
It's okay, God,
Because I'll look for them all again,
When my tomorrow comes.

Shelly explains that "our human tendency is to give God an agenda for selfish consumption and personal joy. When those items fail to materialize, we whine and blame and indict God for His injustice or lack of concern. Sometimes we turn away in angry unbelief. But God is God, and we are not! Prayer is not a license to demand. Faith clings to Him in dark times, finding lots of other things to give thanks for."

His final zinger is this. "By the way, you should know this about Mattie Stepanek. He is twelve and dying of a rare form of muscular dystrophy."

As I sit here on my stool, wiping soot off books and getting a lot of it on me and my clothes, I wonder along with Mattie. Circumstances are not always what I ask for. Things happen in life that I cannot understand; however, some day I will, and then I am certain that I will be grateful for them.

Meanwhile, I will thank God for all good things that happen, and thank Him for all the bad things that did not! There is much to be thankful for today. And thankful attitudes will show through our personal expressions.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Lilly Dale (Ind) No Debt No Sweat Seminar scheduled for the weekend of February 21st - 22nd. Friday night session begins at 7:00 p.m. Included will be: "Failure, the first step to success"; "A,B,C's of Christian money management"; "Getting out of debt and dealing with credit cards"; "What I wish they'd told me about investing and retiring with dignity."

Some Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza are saying: "God punished the space shuttle Columbia because its crew which included an Israeli was on an espionage mission against the Arab & Muslim nation."

Iraq - With a US war against Saddam Hussein seeming imminent, Christians in Iraq are in need of our prayers. The ancient Assyrian Christian community, which still speaks the language of Christ, numbers about 1.2 million. There are also various Christian denominations operating in relative freedom throughout Iraq. Pray that President Bush would act with wisdom regarding a possible war with Iraq. Pray that the Christian community of Iraq would not be singled out for persecution because of attacks from the "Christian" West. (International Christian Concern)

Pray Before It Starts. In the Old Testament times, God's armies were always led by the priests. When the waters parted in the Jordan, it was the priests' feet which first hit the turbulent river. In the New Testament, Christians are

also referred to as priests...all Christians. Let us therefore, go first. (Memorial Drive Church of Christ in Tulsa)

Ralph Ave (Louisville) is planning a 50th Homecoming day in July with special services. This was the "first regular work as preacher" by the late H.N. Rutherford. This church started (1913) as a mission with about 25 members and continues today by the grace of God with Bro. Bill Smallwood serving as their minister.

KY-IND FELLOWSHIP... is being planned for the week of August 4-7, 2003. Theme this year is: "The Name" based on Acts 4:12. Join with others as we rally together in "the Name"

Ladies Inspiration Day... is Saturday, March 29th at the Cramer & Hanover Church of Christ (199 North Hanover Ave.) Lexington, Kentucky. Theme: "For Such a Time as This" (Esther 4:4) Speakers include: Ragen Mullins, Mae Broaddus, Wilma Garrett, Rebecca Heid, and Peggy Carter; also Julie (Hill) Mateyoké will have a special teen session. Special singing: Vickie Schuler & Sheila Tapp. Contact person: Adele Hill (859) 299-9358. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. with closing ceremony at 2:30 p.m.

Additional Notes from avv:

Don't Blame Bennie Hill for My Mistake! (He has enough troubles as it is :) Do you ever say "left" when you mean "right"? Or write "Bill" when you're sure what you

wrote was "Bob"? Then join the avw-errors-club. The first item in Jan.'s news/notes said the minister at **Mountain View Church** in Johnson City, TN died suddenly and unexpectedly. Actually it was the **Locust Street Church's** minister. (They're in the same city, & I did get his name right!) "Sorry" to Locust St. congregation & to Billy Jack Smith, the still-living minister at Mountain View. --avw (Bennie is N/N editor, but I add items of which he is unaware or which we learn about after he's sent his news.)

Keep on Remembering the AFRICAN FAMINE affecting Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, & other lands. If you are led to help Robert Garrett distribute relief goods, write checks to: Portland Ave. Church of Christ. Mark them: "Zimbabwe famine relief" & send to **JoAnn Wiese, 3508 Evergreen Circle, Jeffersonville, IN 47130**. (Do not send direct to the church, as that will slow down the process.) If you plan to give to this, probably you should act soon, for Robert will be coming to the U.S. for a furlough in May.

Sellersburg, Ind. Church of Christ will host the next singspiration meeting for the Greater-Louisville-area churches: Sun. March 30 at 6:00.

Promoted to Glory: *George Collins* went home to heaven. Apparently it was not very long after he sent us the letter we quoted in our Jan. issue, in which at 90 he said, "I enjoy life." Now he is with his Lord, which is "better by far" (Phil.1). And in mid-Feb. *Wesley Jones* too was called home. He had an article in last Oct.'s WW, regarding Muslims. He was formerly a missionary to Muslims in

Indonesia, as well as ministering in Russia and other overseas fields and working for years with World Christian Broadcasting. Outgrowing a legalistic upbringing, brother Jones became a grace-centered bridge-builder. --avw

Harry Robert Fox is another veteran disciple. He was a missionary in Japan for some years. Now, at an advanced age he still ministers every month in 7 churches in southern California! He wrote, "This is to let you know how much I appreciate your devoting the January issue to the theme of Holiness." He sent a good article on that topic which we hope to use later.

The Matchless Grace of Jesus: "I would like to subscribe to the W & W if I may. I am glad to know that there are still grace-loving people in the Restoration Movement." --A Church of Christ preacher in Tenn. who is distressed at the legalism he encounters. We had sent him copies of W&W.

Good Tidings Quartet: Many WW readers were blessed by the ministry of the Good Tidings Quartet back in the 1950s. Mac & Lowell LeDoux, Neal Philips, and Stan (sometimes) or Mason (sometimes) Broussard sang beautiful songs beautifully. For some time they accompanied Robert Boyd as a team, preaching the gospel. Now 94 of their songs have been produced on 4 CDs by Donald R. Stump. To order or learn more about this, contact Brother Don at 1720 Plum Creek Rd., Taylorsville, KY 40071; Phone 502-477-2252; Fax 502 477-2250; email ddrspas@aol.com. Price: \$25.00, postage included.

In case you've forgotten, remember to pray for these upcoming ministry-trips (which brother Bennie reported last month): **Earl Mullins Sr. & Paul Kitzmiller** plan to visit the Ivanovo region of **Russia in April**. Pray about the sending and response to letters which are to be sent during January to some 375 Russians in that area, inviting them to Bible studies & discussions during that visit. These Russians have already responded positively to programs of World Christian Broadcasting, but need follow-up

Trip to Greece. Tentative plans are for David & Betsy Harding, Mike Harding, J.R. & Pie Satterfield, and Bennie and Adele Hill to journey to Athens Greece **April** of 2003. Plans are to spend several days with George & Sophia Galanis and the Coridallas congregation and then with coworker Nick Tsagarikis and family who are laboring for the Lord on the island of Crete. The Satterfields and Hills will spend the second week-end on Crete conducting workshops to encourage the believers there.

"A farmer plows his field, sows the seed, and fertilizes and cultivates--all the while knowing that in the final analysis he is utterly dependent on forces outside of himself. He knows he cannot cause the seed to germinate, nor can he produce the rain and sunshine for growing the crop. For a successful harvest, he is dependent on these things from God.

"Yet the farmer knows that unless he diligently pursues his responsibilities to plow, plant, fertilize, and cultivate, he cannot expect a harvest at the end of the season. In a sense he is in a partnership with God, and he will reap its benefits only when he has fulfilled his own responsibilities. Farming is a joint venture between God and the farmer. *The farmer cannot do what God must do, and God will not do what the farmer should do.*

"We can say just as accurately that the pursuit of holiness is a joint venture between God and the Christian. No one can attain any degree of holiness without God working in his life, but just as surely no one will attain it without effort on his own part. God has made it possible for us to walk in holiness. But He has given to us the responsibility of doing the walking; He does not do that for us.

--Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*

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