

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

November-December, 2003

*Jesus "would rather
go to hell for you,
than go to heaven
without you."*

-- Max Lucado

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

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For Our Sakes HE BECAME POOR

Alex V. Wilson

Listen to a great verse for this "Christmas season," and the coming year, and every year. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9, NIV).

Let's ask some questions about that meaty statement. *When* did Christ become poor? *How* did He become poor? *Why* did He become poor? *What kind* of poverty did He experience? *What difference* does it make?

I must admit that the first half of this article is taken from another man's sermon. The late Frank Mullins, Sr. preached on this verse at the Thanksgiving Day meeting of the Louisville area churches. It was sometime in the 1950s, and I was a teenager. I had never heard a sermon on this text before. I didn't even remember *hearing* the verse till that day! But that Thanksgiving morning the glorious truths he presented from God's Word made an indelible impression on me, so that fifty years later I share them with you. May our Heavenly Father write them deeply on our hearts now in the same way.

Let's repeat and then ponder the priceless-but-little-known text: "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that *though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor*, so that you through his poverty might become rich."

WHEN did Christ Become Poor?

Was it at His birth?

He left the radiant splendors of Heaven to come to earth, this humble planet infected by sin. In Heaven He shared the glory of His Father -- but on earth He disguised His glory and appeared as an ordinary baby boy. In Heaven He ruled from the Throne of the Universe -- here He was born in a barn.

In Heaven He was worshipped by Millions of Angels -- here He was honored only by a handful of humble sheep-herders, and a few foreign star-gazers, and a small number of elderly saints in Jerusalem. In Heaven the wealth and grandeur of all creation was His -- here He had poor parents who when they went to God's temple could not afford to give the usual offering, but only the lesser one provided for indigent people.

Yet, in spite of all that, Jesus was not really poor at birth -- for His Heavenly Father, the Most High God of gods, was with Him. That's not poverty!

Well then, when *did* Christ become poor?

Was it during His childhood, youth, and young manhood?

He was just a carpenter's son, who later became a carpenter himself. He earned his living and supported his family by the sweat of his brow. He probably seemed poor to those who knew Him -- though there were many such folks then. Oh, He did not live in grinding poverty, never knowing where the next meal would come from. But doubtless there were times when He had trouble paying some of the bills. By today's standards He was neither upper-class nor middle-class, but a peasant.

And He lived in a hick-town in a back-water area of a second-class land where a minor-league people lived! At least that's how the sophisticated people of that day would esteem it.

But I don't think he was really poor during those years either. For still His Heavenly Father was with Him. And how can you be called poor when the God of the Universe is *your Father*, and is *with you* and *cares* for you?

Well then, when *did* Jesus become poor?

Was it during his Public Ministry, when He became a traveling rabbi with a band of poor disciples tagging along with Him?

After all, during that time He himself said, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." [Luke 9:58.] He didn't own a home.

And yet He enjoyed unbroken fellowship with His Father, as He had experienced through the ages of eternity. And could such a Son of such a Father be called poor? True, He did not have much in material goods, and He lacked many things we consider to be not luxuries but necessities. And yet His divine Father was with Him ...so He was still rich!

Then did Jesus "become poor" at the end of His ministry, when He was deserted by even His closest followers and friends?

They forsook Him, ran away, abandoned Him! When your friends leave you high and dry in your neediest hour, how lonely it feels. If

Judas was the only disciple who actually betrayed Him, nonetheless the others deserted Him. We are poor indeed when our loved ones leave us stranded to face our fears and foes alone.

And yet even then He was not poor. For earlier that very evening, before they all fled, He had told them, "A time is coming, and has [now] come, when *you ... will leave me all alone. Yet I am NOT alone, for my Father is with me.*" (John 16:32.)

Yes, during the betrayal, the arrest, and the various stages of His unjust trial -- including the tortures He endured -- it was still true, and He knew it: His Father was with Him. He was not alone, and so He was not poor.

BUT, during His Crucifixion, "Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"

THAT is when He became poor -- poverty-stricken indeed. During those moments, during those hours, during that eternity, the sinless Son, the only perfect person who ever lived, was *abandoned by His Father-God, the Judge of the Universe.*

But WHY did Christ Become Poor?

Why? -- Why? -- WHY would the Father desert Him like that? Because of the fact which Paul wrote 3 chapters earlier (2 Cor. 5:21):

"God made him who had no sin to BE SIN for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

And Isaiah had prophesied this too, 700 years before:

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on HIM the Iniquity of US ALL.

My father-in-love, Jesse Wood, used to say, "*The Most Sinful Person who ever lived was Jesus on the cross!*" There and then my sins and your sins were laid upon Him. Then and there the sins of the entire human race were laid upon Him. There and then He became sin for us. He assumed the responsibility for the awful evils I have committed.

The Most Sinful Person who ever lived was Jesus on the cross!

There He endured the hell my sins deserved and your sins deserved: Separation from His holy God and Father. Abandonment by the just Judge. Wrath from the righteous Ruler of the planets, stars and universes. His loving co-creator and co-ruler of all that exists poured

out on Jesus His holy fury against wickedness. At Calvary the Lord punished *all the sins of all the people of all the ages* -- in Christ!

The mean, slimy evils and warped wickednesses and deliberate, foul, stinking pains and tortures which humans have gleefully inflicted on each other --

Jesus died for them there,

Jesus paid for them there.

Each kidnapping, every child-abuse, each stabbing, every wife-beating, and all the robberies and arsons and lies and lusts throughout the ages and throughout the planet -- the guilt of them all was laid on Him. Every sneak-attack on innocent and defenceless people, wiping out multitudes of lives and destroying families and wrecking economies -- Jesus at Calvary was counted guilty for those atrocities.

And each time we feel smug, and gloat that we are better than others; every time we act in self-centeredness, exalting ourselves and putting others down -- we add to the total guilt of mankind that was placed upon Jesus at the cross. Our bitter words, hateful thoughts, broken promises and deceiving lies -- each of them drove those spikes through His hands and feet, and the spear into His side.

It wasn't the Roman soldiers who stapled Him to the cross. It was my selfishness, and your laziness, and his beating his wife, and her cheating her husband, and their temper tantrums with the kids, and that boss exploiting his staff, and those workers stealing from the boss, and the judge twisting judgment because of bribes, and the ruler tyrannizing his citizens and enriching himself by impoverishing them --these sins and all sins, our sins and my sins, nailed Jesus to the cross.

These evils, and all others, impoverished Him of His fellowship with the Father.

He who was Rich became Poor, He who was Righteous became Sin --that we might be saved. Jesus was pierced for my transgressions, he was crushed for your iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

The Father was willing to do that because He loves us so much. The Son carried out that plan of love because He yearns for our love in return. For our sakes He became poor, so that we might become rich. As Max Lucado wrote, Jesus "would rather go to hell for you, than go to heaven without you."

Let us conclude with a review, that we might *See the Logic* of this, and *Feel the Love* of this: 1. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." Learn what *True Love* is: He loves us so much He impoverished Himself to enrich us forever.

2. "A time is coming, and has come, when you ... will leave me all alone. Yet *I am not alone, for my Father is with me*" (John 16:32.) Let's define accurately the meaning of *Spiritual Wealth*: The presence of our God is more valuable than the presents given us by anyone else. And through Christ we have been enriched with this greatest prize of all: the presence of the High God who will never leave us but always love us, extravagantly.

3. During His Crucifixion, "Jesus cried out in a loud voice, '*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*'" (Matt. 27:46). Let's understand the *Staggering Price* He paid that we might be thus enriched -- reconciled to God. Jesus endured our Hell for us.

4. "He who had no sin God made to *Be Sin* for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). This demonstrates the height and depth and length and width of our Lord's *Un-measurable Love* for us, for you and me -- each day, each hour, each minute, each second. O bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me -- bless His Holy Name!

HEROD *The Great?*

Will Varner

History has bestowed on him the descriptive title, "the Great." The primary Jewish chronicler of his period, Josephus, was the first to use the actual phrase "Herod the Great" in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. He used the phrase to distinguish Herod from his sons and grandsons of the same name. In other words, he used the title in the sense of "the Greater" or "the Older." Whatever the original reason, the name has stuck on the one who ruled as the "king of the Jews" from 37 to 4 B.C.

Although Herod died soon after Jesus' birth, his shadow continued to loom over the New Testament through his huge building projects and his descendants, who continued to rule over the Jewish people in Israel throughout the first century A.D. We could question whether Herod deserved to have "the Great" added to his name. As we shall see, his personal and family life was such that he deserved more

the title of "the Terrible." On the other hand, he certainly left a "great" mark on history and well deserves the three books it took Josephus to describe his life and exploits (*Antiquities*, Books 15-17).

His Background

Herod was not born of direct Israelite ancestry. Josephus calls him an "Idumean," the Roman "term for the descendants of the Old Testament Edomites," who dwelt in the mountainous region below the Dead Sea. Around 128 B.C., John Hyrcanus, a zealous Hasmonean Jewish king, conquered the Idumeans and forcibly converted them to Judaism. Herod's forebears appear to have been from those forced converts.

Josephus once called Herod a "half-Jew" (*Antiquities*, xiv.15.2), indicating not only his ancestry but possibly his half-hearted identification with the Jewish people. One church father also mentioned that Herod's father was from Ashkelon in Philistia and had been carried off to Idumea, where he had grown up as one of them. Therefore, it seems that Herod had a mixed Philistine-Edomite background, while also identifying with Judaism as a descendant of forced converts.

His father, Antipater, had become a supporter of the new Roman rulers following their conquest of the Middle East in 63 B.C. As the appointed governor of Judea, Antipater maneuvered constantly to ensure a future for his two sons, Phasaël and Herod. Antipater and his sons knew that currying the favor of the Romans was the only way to do this. As a young man, Herod built a reputation by apprehending some Jewish brigands in the Galilee. He flushed them out of the Arbel caves, where they were hiding, by lowering his men in baskets from the precipitous cliffs above the caves. It was the first of many wily maneuvers that characterized and endeared him to his Roman patrons.

His Rise to Power

After the violent deaths of his father and brother, Herod began his rise to kingship in 40 B.C. Antigonus, a descendant of the Hasmonean kings, was pressing for a restoration of that monarchy. Herod desperately needed assistance, so he scurried off to Rome, where he convinced Mark Antony and Octavius (the future Caesar Augustus) that supporting his cause was in the best interest of Rome. He was so convincing that the Senate of Rome confirmed on him the title "King of the Jews" in 40 B.C.

Three years later, Herod became king in fact as well as in name. Antigonus was executed by the Romans, and Herod began his bloody rule by executing 45 wealthy and prominent supporters of the Has-

moneans. Herod had finally arrived, but his new position was one that he constantly had to protect.

His Accomplishments

Herod indeed committed some monstrous acts. Because of those foul deeds, it is easy to overlook his truly amazing accomplishments. Although experiencing constant conflict within his own household, he maintained the outward peace of the nation remarkably well. His kingdom expanded to the boundaries it had known during the reign of Solomon, the days of its most distant frontiers.

It is in the area of his vast building projects that Herod left a legacy for all to behold that is evident even today. He took a sleepy little fishing port on the Mediterranean coast called Strato's Tower and transformed it into a major port and mercantile center. He renamed it Caesarea after his patron, Emperor Caesar Augustus. He also adorned the Old Testament city of Samaria with magnificent architecture and called it Sebaste, the Greek word for Augustus.

It was in Jerusalem, however, that Herod left his most magnificent edifices. Next to the western Jaffa Gate of the city he constructed three huge towers that, because of their size and beauty, the Romans left standing when they destroyed the city in 70 A.D. In addition to the towers, he built his own magnificent palace, which rivaled those of kings and emperors worldwide. A theater, a hippodrome, an aqueduct, a fortress named for Mark Antony--the list goes on. The remarkable fact is that the huge stones in many of these structures are still visible today.

His largest and most significant Jerusalem building project was his reconstruction and vast embellishment of the old Zerubbabel Temple, which had stood for nearly 400 years. Herod spared no expense or effort in this project. He employed and trained priests for the construction of restricted areas, so that the daily service could continue unabated. He constructed a huge rectangular platform with a perimeter of nearly a half mile, supporting it with huge arches and vaults on the sloping sides of Mount Moriah. Pillars nearly 50 feet high adorned the porticoes, while limestone ashlar weighing nearly 50 tons comprised the 100-foot-high retaining walls. Archaeological labors to the south and west of these walls have revealed magnificent staircases, ritual purification baths, shops, and elaborate water systems. The debris from the 70 A.D. destruction and the "fill" of subsequent ages have been removed to unveil to visitors the utter wonder of this biggest and best of all Herod's construction projects. Even the rabbis, who were not always Herod's biggest fans, often remarked, "He who has not seen Herod's Temple has never seen a beautiful building."

Another type of Herodian construction reveals the darker side of the king's character. Throughout Judea, Herod constructed huge fortresses--places not only for "getting away from the office" in Jerusalem, but retreats to which he could flee if rebellion to his autocratic rule ever erupted. Next to a magnificent winter palace in Jericho was the fortress of Cyrpos, named for his mother. On the other side of the Dead Sea, near his beloved hot springs, he built Machaerus, which later became a prison for the condemned John the Baptist. On the western shore of the Dead Sea, he surrounded a 1,200-foot-high rock with a wall boasting 72 towers, plus palaces, swimming pools, and huge storehouses--the virtually inaccessible stronghold called Masada. This remote fortress became the last stand of the Zealot warriors against the Romans in 73 A.D.

Herod's "fortress mentality" is illustrated by the way he treated those who he thought had designs on his throne.

His Crimes

It is a strange irony that someone so personally powerful should be so insanely fearful of those around him. No one whom he suspected of treason was safe--not even his family members. Herod married ten wives. In 29 B.C., he executed Mariamme, the one he loved most, due to his insane jealousy. His guilty conscience over this act tormented him for the next 20 years. Soon after he came to the throne, Herod ordered the "accidental" drowning of the young high priest, Aristobulus III, because he feared that the Hasmonean teen's potential might lead to an uprising. The harmless 80-year-old Hasmonean priest Hyrcanus II was also executed for the unjustifiable crime of treason.

The last years of Herod's life were marked by further executions resulting from his extreme paranoia and the intrigues of his vast household. In 7 B.C., he strangled Alexander and Aristubulus, the twin sons of Mariamme, on trumped-up charges from their court rivals. Again and again he altered his will, alternately including and then excluding some of his many sons. As his illnesses increased and his mental state deteriorated, he executed his son, Antipater, a few days before his death, altering his will one final time. His patron Augustus remarked at that time, "It is safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son."

Knowing that there would be certain jubilation in the land at the news of his demise, Herod ordered that hundreds of Jewish leaders be imprisoned and executed immediately after he died. This was to ensure that there would be mourning after his death, rather than rejoicing. Mercifully, that last order was not carried out.

His Legacy

Herod the Great is mentioned directly in the New Testament only in the account of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, in conjunction with the visit of the wise men and his subsequent slaughter of the young children (Mt. 2:1- 16). (The Herod of the later Gospel accounts was Herod Antipas, his son. The Herod in Acts 12 was Agrippa I, his grandson.) Josephus did not mention this heinous crime, causing some critics to question the reliability of the account. The event, however, fits perfectly in the context of Herod's mental state and his insane fear that someone would take over his throne. "What Matthew briefly narrates appears to be entirely consistent with all that we know of Herod, especially in his last days" (Paul Barnett, *Behind the Scenes of the New Testament*, p. 25).

The question of the magi, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (Mt. 2:2), comes alive when we recall that this is the exact title bestowed on Herod by the Roman Senate more than 30 years earlier. Herod had been made "king of the Jews"; the magi were seeking one who had been born "King of the Jews." No wonder Herod was eager to meet this "King." He would then do to Him what he had done to his own sons.

Soon after the Messiah's birth and Herod's failure to eliminate Him, the sick and miserable old man finally expired. He was buried following a royal funeral procession in another of his fortresses, named after himself--the Herodium. This artificial, cone-shaped hill stands silently today just a few miles from Bethlehem. As a matter of fact, the soldiers who carried out the crime on the innocent children of that tiny town may have been dispatched from this fortress. Today the fortress is a shell--recovered by the archaeologists. Herod's kingdom is no more and has no continuing influence. The kingdom of Israel's Messiah, however, continues. The king by might is gone--the King by right lives forever!

--Reprinted by permission from *Israel My Glory*. Dec. 1996

IT IS MORE BLESSED . . .

By Kenneth Gipson

A friend of mine named Paul received a new automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve, when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. "Is this your car, Mister?" he asked.

Paul nodded, "My brother gave it to me for Christmas." The boy was astounded. "You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing? Boy, I wish..." he hesitated.

And Paul knew what he was going to wish. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels.

"I wish," the boy went on, "that I could be a brother like that."

Paul looked at the boy in astonishment. Then impulsively he added, "Would you like to ride in my automobile?"

"Oh, yes, I'd love that."

After a short ride, the urchin turned and with eyes aglow, said, "Mister, would you mind driving in front of my house?"

Paul smiled a little. He thought he knew what the lad wanted. He wanted to show his neighbors that he could ride home in a big automobile. But Paul was wrong again.

"Will you stop where those steps are?" the boy asked.

He ran up the steps. Then in a little while Paul heard him coming back, but he was not coming fast. He was carrying his little polio-crippled brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car.

"There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn't cost him a cent. And **some day I'm gonna give you one just like it.** Then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been trying to tell you about."

Paul got out and lifted the little lad to the front seat of his car. The shining-eyed older brother climbed in beside him and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.

That Christmas Eve Paul learned what Jesus meant when He said,
"IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE..."

Love for MORE F-O-O-D can SNARE us!!

-- An Unwanted Warning for the Christmas Season --

In the Aug. 30 **World** magazine (which I recommend), Gene Edward Veith writes:

"America is facing a weighty problem. 64.5% of Americans are overweight. Nearly 1/2 of these -- 30.5% -- are so overweight as to be classified as obese. This is a huge increase from just a few years ago. In 1980, a mere 46% were overweight, with only 14.4% considered obese. To state the obvious, weighing too much is not healthy, being a major factor in diabetes, heart problems, various cancers, and other physical woes.

Restaurant portion sizes across the board have been growing. In the 1950s, the average soft drink contained just 7 ounces. Today, 20 ounces. Fries used to sell in packets of a mere 2 ounces. Today, that has tripled. Muffins have ballooned. Meat takes up the whole plate. And according to one study, Americans eat nearly 30% of their meals away from home. As restaurants portions become larger, so do Americans.

There are warnings [in the Bible] to those whose "god is their belly" (Phil. 3:19). The early church ranked gluttony as one of the 7 deadly sins. The moral problem is not so much girth but an unrestrained appetite. Americans' problem is that they increasingly cannot deny themselves any pleasure, but must indulge every appetite -- not just for food and sex but for money, status, possessions, and every other pleasurable sensation, licit or illicit."

[This was only about 1/3 of the article. He quotes various authorities to back up his statistics and claims. You can subscribe to **World** c/o Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142.]

Love for MORE *S-T-U-F-F* can Snare us, Too!!

From the Internet: Author Unknown

In 1900, if a father put a roof over his family's head, he was a success. **Today**, it takes a roof, deck, pool, and 4-car garage. And that's just the vacation home.

In 1900, a father waited for the doctor to tell him when the baby arrived. **Today**, a father must wear a smock, know how to breathe, and make sure film is in the video camera.

In 1900, fathers passed on clothing to their sons. **Today**, kids wouldn't touch Dad's clothes if they were sliding naked down an icicle.

In 1900, fathers could count on children to join the family business. **Today**, fathers pray their kids will soon come home from college long enough to teach them how to work the computer and set the VCR.

In 1900, fathers shook their children gently & whispered, "Wake up, it's time for school." **Today**, kids shake their fathers violently at 4 a.m., shouting: "Wake up, it's time for hockey practice."

In 1900, a father came home from work to find his wife and children at the supper table. **Today**, a father comes home to a note: "Jimmy's at baseball, Cindy's at gymnastics, I'm at gym, Pizza in fridge."

In 1900, fathers and sons would have heart-to-heart conversations while fishing in a stream. **Today**, fathers pluck the headphones off their sons' ears and shout, "WHEN YOU HAVE A MINUTE...!"

In 1900, a father gave a pencil box for Christmas, and the kid was all smiles. **Today**, a father spends \$800 at Toys 'R' Us, and the kid screams: "I wanted Sega!"

Weeding out the Stuff

JOYce Broyles

Until I married and moved to Tennessee, I worked in the family garden during all the seasons every year. In the early spring, we planted seeds in the furrows Dad had prepared. When the sprouts came up, he could tell if we had dropped the seeds properly or if we had spilled them hurriedly to finish the job more quickly. As soon as the sprouts were tall enough, we had to "thin them out." Even if a plant looked healthy, if it were too close to another one, it would crowd it and neither of them would grow to its full potential.

After we completed the thinning process, we had to check for weeds and grass every day or so to keep them from choking the young plants. If done correctly, the plants produced many vegetables that we were able to sell or preserve for our family.

The weeding process is also one I do in my work place. At this time every year, I systematically pull and discard outdated books from a selected section of the library. Guidelines for discarding say that books more than five years old should be thrown out. With my limited budget, I cannot do that. Adapting the rules to fit our library, I chose books with copyright dates that preceded 1970!

When I came to Lake Arthur in 1984, the annual budget for the library was \$2,000 and books cost an average of \$9.00 each. The budget is still the same, but book costs have escalated to \$15.00 each. For that reason, I must make judicious selections when I order new books and when I weed out the old ones.

Another place for weeding is the contents of my house. For weeks now, I have been tossing items into boxes to get rid of them. By the time this article is printed, my yard sale will be history. I hope that I will have made my trash someone else's treasure! It is really time to weed out my "stuff."

Probably the most important place for weeding is my heart. Although I try to keep only pure thoughts and good attitudes, I have to fight those ugly ones every day when they raise their heads.

For me, the best way to discard the bad is to stay in touch with God daily. That way, I can weed out those bad ideas and keep only the characteristics that reflect Christ.

If we work at weeding out all of the unnecessary "stuff" from our chores, careers, children, and concerns, we will all have healthier personal expressions.

“The Lord has done great things for us, And we are filled with joy”

Psalm 126:3

Dear Friends,

My name is Lisa Nethery and I am Director of Finance for Portland Christian School. I am writing to share with you a wonderfully faith-enriching experience I had. Sometimes we ask God for blessings but then, as nine of the ten lepers did, we fail to return to give the Lord the thanks and praise of which He alone is worthy.

PCS is a faith-based operation. Even though we operate under a tuition system, we depend on the Lord's providing much of our support through His people's gifts and donations. God not only provided for PCS this year, He did “**great things for us.**”

In June 2002 the Portland Christian School Board approved a budget for the 2002-03 school year that was essentially a \$200,000 deficit budget. Our need for gifts for the school year increased to \$430,000 to balance the budget - **\$200,000** more than PCS historically receives each year. To write such a deficit budget took a lot of faith and courage.

Why would we write a deficit budget? The PCS Board felt that God was leading us to approve this budget. Although none of us knew from where the dollars would come, **we did know these things:**

* For months we had been praying about expansion and God gave us the opportunity to open a third campus at North Bullitt Christian Church. Even though this would be a stretch financially, we felt the leading of the Lord to move forward.

* We wanted to give our staff modest raises (the average teacher salary after this increase was \$17,750). We also felt led to continue to offer discounts to large families and to minister and seminary students -- AND to do this without substantially raising tuition fees.

* We also felt led by the Lord to establish the Christian Education Assistance Fund with a part of our budget allocated to assist families in financial need. We felt this was consistent with the history of PCS of wanting to provide a Christian education to **any student** who desired to attend, regardless of their financial situation. As a student who had personally benefited from this philosophy, I was very pleased to see PCS start this program. I knew God had shown the PCS Board the way to make a tuition assistance fund a reality by stepping out in faith.

January 23, 2003 was a snow day when our students did not report to school. An empty schoolhouse has such a hollow feeling about it. Houston Cockrell, Director of Development, and I were preparing for a Finance Committee meeting that afternoon. The gifts to PCS had remained stable and historically what they had been in recent years. No “extra” had come in. We still did not know how we were going to meet our budget for the 2002-03 school year. And we needed to begin to make plans for 2003-04!

This was a very uncomfortable situation. We questioned:

* Had we done the right thing in approving the current budget?

* Were we doing what God wanted us to do?

* Did He really lead us in the decisions we made the previous June?

* Was there anything more we could do to help raise funds?

The more we questioned, the gloomier the situation seemed. How could we even discuss having a “next school year” with such a deficit looming? But, as always, the Lord was way ahead of us.

In the midst of this faithless questioning, the mail came. **Delivered that very day was a gift to PCS for over \$200,000! We sat at my desk and cried. Yes, we had been listening to the Lord!** He just verified all the decisions we had made through His leading. To say that we were “**filled with joy**” by this gift is an understatement. Our faith was strengthened and we were encouraged. The 2002-03 school year actually ended without a deficit. We had stepped out in faith and “**the Lord had done great things for us.**” We praise Him for His faithfulness and His goodness. Surely He is a great and wonderful God.

It is only through the faithful giving of so many that PCS begins her 80th year. Now we **are looking forward** to the 2003-04 school year. God has given us the opportunity of teaching His Word and His ways to over three hundred young people on three campuses. It is an awesome task! One we consider as an honor and a privilege. We know we are in His will and that He will provide. Our board-approved budget again will require more than \$200,000 in additional gifts. We believe God will honor our faith as He did before and we wait on Him. Regardless of size **every gift is important** to this ministry. Perhaps God is calling you to be a part of the “**great things**” He is doing through PCS. Are you one of the stewards God has chosen to help in this PCS ministry? Please remember us in your prayers.

SHAMGAR --

GOD'S BIG SURPRISE

Billy Ray Lewter

After Ehud came Shamgar son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel. (Judges 3:31, NIV)

The people of Israel had cried out to God and He had raised up Ehud, who killed the king of Moab, and the land was quiet for 80 years (3:15,30). Then the Philistines came.

Shamgar, the son of Anath, was not a Hebrew. God sometimes does things totally unexpected. God is reliable but not predictable. Shamgar means "the name of a stranger." We don't know anything about him. He had no title, no degrees, he was not a celebrity, or a warrior, and he became no ruler. The book of Judges gives Gideon over 100 verses, and a couple of chapters to Deborah; Shamgar gets one verse. But it isn't the length of your biography, it's what God says about you that matters. True greatness lies in character.

Who was Anath, Shamgar's father? There was an Anath that was a sea captain and son-in-law of Pharaoh Ramses II of Egypt. But more likely Shamgar was from a Canaanite village in Philistine territory named after the fertility goddess, Anath, the sister of Baal. If Shamgar was a Philistine, and fought to save Israel, it would be like a member of Israel's secret service today fighting for Yasser Arafat. The Philistines would have been surprised to see him fighting for Israel. It would have been just as surprising to Israel. Nations, past and present, that have historically been disadvantaged, oppressed, and victimized by other nations tend to blame foreigners for their existing problems.

According to Judges 5:6 in the Song of Deborah, in Shamgar's time caravans ceased and travelers kept to the by-ways because the marauding Philistines made regular travel too dangerous. The situation was like that described in Psalm 44: Israel was put to shame, hated enemies took what they wanted, Israel was a reproach, a scorn, a derision, a by-word among the heathen, and their soul was bowed down.

Deliverance came from a most unlikely source, a non-Hebrew. Under the impulse of a sudden, sacred motivation, he seized, as the first weapon he could find, an ox-goad, a cattle prod. An ox-goad is formidable enough, about eight feet long, two inches thick, with a

handle six inches around, a horn at one end to loosen dirt off the plow, and at the other end an iron spike to prod the animal. There was no military training, however, in the use of ox-goads in war. But Shamgar, with his unusual weapon, destroyed an entire Philistine Brigade (600 was the number of a full military unit).

Shamgar's surprising courage, and willingness to lay down his life for others, came straight from the Spirit of God since he was listed among those God used to save Israel. The Lord had need of Shamgar, and the Holy Spirit made one of His miraculous Old Testament appearances.

We read no more of Shamgar, but, for a time the danger of Philistine invasion was averted. Shamgar showed us what courage looks like, faith in action.

The Person God Can Use

(1)As He did with the stranger, Shamgar, God can use any of us, in whatever way He likes. Balaam's donkey (I believe Hotee was his name, Donkey Hotee) was used by God to rebuke a prophet. It would seem, then, that God does not require perfection in the instrument He uses. He wants us to be available. He desires our willing co-operation with His plan.

(2)God creates a divine discontent within us. Shamgar was sick at heart over the state of Israel, and the fear, weakness, and inaction of the people. A righteous indignation arose within him and he was willing to give his life to bring some change. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German resistance pastor, hanged by Hitler three weeks before the end of WWII, wrote from prison, "When God calls a man, He says 'Come, and die!'" Similarly, Martin Luther, on trial, said, "Here I stand, I can do no other." Jesus says to us, "Die daily, take up your cross."

Like Israel, we are in spiritual warfare with a deadly foe every minute of every day. The earth is still a disaster area. Christians have serious conflicts in a sinful society that is shaking the very foundations on which America was built. We can't live as though things were "normal", or passively wait for things to get better. Moral choices face us every day and they reveal what is inside us.

(3)If you don't know where to start, start right where you are. Shamgar didn't know the end result, that he would save Israel. If you don't know what to use to serve God, use what you have, an ox-goad, your education, training, financial resources, natural abilities, your spiritual gifts, as weapons God has given you.

David used stones from the small brook he crossed as he went to face Goliath. Notice the numbers mentioned in 1 Samuel 17 about Goliath. He was six cubits tall, the iron point of his spear shaft weighed 600 shekels, and his armor weighed 60 pounds: $600+6+60=666$! The real battle is between God and Satan.

Do you feel sent by God to where you are? Make a difference. What can you do for God where you are, with the people you are around, that nobody expects you to do? Surprise them, be salt and light. But don't expect much recognition. The more like Christ you are the less likely that a newspaper reporter will be seeking you out. Maybe, however, someday the people who know you will say something similar to what was said of Shamgar -- "He, too, saved Israel."

Proleptic Saints!

Harry Robert Fox

During the sixty-two years that I have served as a gospel preacher in congregations all over America and Japan I have noticed a reluctance of members of those churches to think of themselves as "saints." This reluctance is largely based on an impression that no Christian should be called a saint - that it would be arrogant for anyone to so regard himself or herself - that we should always be characterized by humility and a sense of unworthiness.

So, the question arises, how can we be aware of ourselves as saints without arrogance and with a healthy humility? The answer lies in the title of this sermon, namely, that we are saints "prolep-tically." Such an awareness is what the Apostle Paul expresses when he calls our attention to the fact that Christians are "righteous" only by being "reckoned" to be so by God in spite of their not being so actually. That is to say, God unilaterally *declares* us to be *what we are not*.

Paul first introduces us to this amazing truth in the fourth chapter of Romans. There he speaks of Abraham as an example of a man who was reckoned by God to be righteous even though in actuality he was "ungodly." In verse five of chapter four, Paul boldly says that Abraham accepted this truth about himself and "trusted God who justifies the *ungodly*" (emphasis mine). This truth is so shocking to the conventional mind (both in and out of the church) that it is almost impossible for such a mind to believe or accept it to be true. But Abraham did accept it to be true and experienced the tremendous blessedness of proleptic, *reckoned* righteousness - and thereby became what Paul called the "father of the faithful" (Romans 4:11). That is, he became

the “father” of all who accept God’s reckoning of them to be righteous *even though they know themselves to be otherwise.*

This paradoxical truth is articulated by the author of 1 John 1:8-10 in conjunction with what he says in verse 9 of chapter three. In 1:8 John says that “if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But then in 3:9 he says, “No one born of God commits sins; for God’s seed (KJV) or nature (RSV) abides in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” When the paradoxical nature of the reality articulated in these two apparently unreconcilable quotations is seen “proleptically” it can be rightly understood and appreciated. Webster’s Third International Unabridged Dictionary defines the word *proleptic* as “**the representation or assumption of a future act or development as being presently existing or accomplished**”; also as “prevision and apprehension of holiness which we call faith.”

Now back to 1 John 3:9. What does it mean to have God’s “seed” in a person so that it can be said he or she “cannot sin”? In the parable of the sower in Matt. 13:18 Jesus says that the “seed” sown by the farmer is “the word of the kingdom.” When we proceed to seek what Jesus means by God’s “word of the kingdom” and consider it in the total New Testament context in which Jesus speaks, we discern that it means the “good news” of God’s unconditional prevenient love and mercy for an undeserving world of sinners. When a person accepts this Gospel deep into the very core of his being he will have accepted God’s proleptic pronouncement of himself as righteous – even though he is not yet *actually* sinless. Such a person will continuously live in this consciousness of God’s gracious acceptance and will not have to choose only one or the other half of the paradox it involves. Thus we can affirm *both* our righteousness and our sinfulness *simultaneously*. This was the glorious rediscovery of Paul’s gospel made by the 16th century reformers who formulated the truth in the phrase, “The Christian is both righteous and sinful.”

When this is applied to our daily walk as Christians we will be more conscious of our being right with God than otherwise. (Compare 2 Cor. 1:18-20 where Paul implies that God’s ultimate word in Christ is **Yes!**) Thus we will not be burdened with the unnecessary load of guilt that is felt by those who do not yet have their eyes opened to the proleptic gospel. *We will confidently live in the sunshine of God’s continuing, ongoing daily forgiveness* and not dwell in the dark shadows of guilt and fear. We see this again in 1 John 4:17-18, where we are told that those who dwell in God’s love are freed from fear of punishment since perfect love casts out fear. Then we will feel no need to deny our sins but will freely confess them to God and to each other per James 5:16, and experience the “rest” that God offers in Matt.

11:28-30 and in the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews. So, dear saints, let us all avail ourselves of said rest!

RECONCILIATION

By: David Johnson, Minister

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was a gifted English poet. Her marriage to Robert, another poet was so strongly disapproved by her parents that they disowned her. Almost weekly, Elizabeth wrote tender, love letters to her mother and father, asking for reconciliation. They never replied. After ten years of letter writing, Elizabeth received a huge box in the mail. She opened it, only to find to her heartbreak that the box contained all of her love letters to her parents. And not one of the letters had ever been opened!

Today those same love letters have been published and are among the most beautiful in classic English literature. Whereas two un-reconcilable hard hearts could not forgive, thousands of others have had their hearts melt by the tenderness that flowed from the heart of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Had her parents opened and read even but a few of the letters, a reconciliation might have been ignited.

The Bible is God's collection of love letters to us for the purpose of reconciliation. The Bible has been a bestseller for generation after generation. Only God knows the number of people who have been reconciled to Himself by the conviction of the Holy Spirit through His Word to us.

Sadly far too many people never open God's letters to us. It is, as it were, God's attempt to communicate has been returned unopened. And it breaks the heart of God. Today, God's letters have been published and are available for all to reach reconciliation with Him.

In God's letter to the Romans 5:10-11, it is written: "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

The World

Mike Cantrell

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. *James 1:27*

I've recently been thinking about this scripture. As I work in Russia, I am called to minister the love of God especially to orphans and widows in their distress. So, I know that this is part of the pure faith that God has called me to.

But, there is more to being spiritually pure than serving the most needy among us; God wants us to avoid the pollution of the world. To please God and live by His Spirit, to be the people God has created us to be, it is necessary that we keep ourselves from being stained by the world. Other translations say that we are to avoid the pollution of the world. We are to actively turn from the ungodliness of the world. God does not want us to be defiled.

I think we all know some elements of what it means to be stained by the world, but we are often blind to the cultural pressures that are exerting force on our souls.

As I get a little distance from America, I can see that American culture presses people toward *self-gratification and impatience*. I was quite blind to it for many years, and now I'm seeing a little more clearly how that terrible, ungodly, force affects people in America -- and many are not aware of how strong that force is. When we live in a culture, we can become inured to the cultural forces around us--they feel very "natural," and we think that they are neutral. So to you Americans (and myself) I say, begin to fight against self-gratification, make choices based on self-control and stewardship. Pray for understanding and strength to fight against it.

How else does the world pollute a person? What should you avoid so that your spirit will be able to abide with Christ in purity? Here's a list that comes to my mind; yours may be different.

Television: TV is so ever-present that we often don't judge the content of the programming. Most TV programming is completely Godless -- it does not help us grow closer to Christ. Many TV shows will at best distract us from our spiritual walk; at worst they will lead us into impurity. I tend to dissipate my life when a TV is around. O, how many hours have I completely wasted while sitting in front of the

TV? This is part of what the Bible calls dissipation--our lives just dissipate without having any effect or growth as we sit mindlessly in front of the tube. Avoid the pollution of TV. "If your eye (cathode) causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away." An entertaining TV show is not worth the purity of your heart.

Gossip: Gossip pollutes the soul. Don't talk about people behind their back. Don't revel in, and be entertained by, the troubles of others. Don't judge them by speaking badly or carelessly of them. Gossip pollutes relationships at the heart level. Bless everyone, speak well of everyone, pray for and bless even your enemies. The world loves a gossip, and many people make their living by gossiping (TV shows, magazines, newspapers columns, etc.)

Advertising: This can be one of the most pure forms of worldly pollution I can think of. Most advertising is designed to appeal to your passions/vices/weakness/lusts so that someone can profit from your desire for gratification/love/fame/respect. Avoid the lies of advertising. Don't let its temptations grip your soul. Advertising is often entertaining, but it does not have your soul's interest at heart. It's there to get your money.

Certain styles of music may pollute your soul. Radio programs and talk show hosts can stain us. Greed for better cars/houses/possessions will pollute us. Conversations, websites, and careers can also stain us. The list goes on. People will be affected differently, so it's not a matter of being legalistic -- God knows the heart, and we cannot judge other people's hearts. At the same time, some things are not profitable for anyone to embrace -- they are not of God and will lead to sin; they are polluted and they will defile us.

What is on your list? What is the Lord calling you to lay down so that you can have pure and undefiled religion? Do it. Avoid the pleasant pollution of the world and live to Christ. His ways will bring you true peace, purity and joy.

Mike Cantrell and his wife Olga are missionaries in Russia, and friends of Dan Wilson.

THE HURT THAT DARES NOT SPEAK

Edward Fudge; GracEmail

The following was sent to me by a gracEmail subscriber in a distant state. I believe this brother states an important message which is fundamental to the gospel. Please give it careful attention.

* * *

"The couple sitting across from me were obviously nervous. As students in a well respected Christian seminary they were struggling with a fairly common situation -- trying to make a wise decision about sharing an apartment. Financial need made sharing a necessity, but fear of sexual involvement made it questionable. So far this story sounds pretty common. But this couple were both men. Christian men struggling with homosexual tendencies, pasts, and futures. They had heard that I had also come from a gay lifestyle but now was successfully dealing with living straight.' They knew that I could understand and would not judge them harshly in their dilemma.

"If this couple were in your church, would they feel the freedom to come to talk with you about their situation? They were very regular' guys. No one knew of their inner struggles. Unlike other friends who have been struggling for years with being overweight, addiction to alcohol or drugs, or inability to find work, this particular struggle doesn't show. In fact, this is one of the things that made struggling with homosexuality even more difficult. It doesn't show and seemingly most Christians don't even want to hear of it. One pastor, upon hearing my testimony, advised me not to share it with anyone in the church, for fear that they wouldn't understand.' Yet this same pastor welcomed testimony from recovered drug addicts and others.

"Of course not everyone is equipped with the knowledge of how to deal with addiction, whether it be drug, alcohol, or sexual addiction. This is not wrong. But some subtle things that turn people away may need to be looked at. In our racially diverse culture we are sensitive to telling racial or ethnic jokes. Do you enjoy telling homosexual jokes? Could it be that the person politely laughing at your joke is actually dying inside, and reaffirming their belief that there is no one that they can share their struggle with?

"The gay agenda, gay theology, gay rights, gay pride, and all the other issues of interest to many of us are vital and need to be discussed -- in a right spirit. This is not 'we' vs. 'them.' Some of 'us' are struggling and need to feel the freedom to talk and seek help. Just as my

two acquaintances in seminary came to me to talk, there may be someone waiting, watching you for the openness of spirit to let them know that you will listen, accept them, and pray with them for healing that only the Lord delivers."

A PRAYER for GOD'S MERCY and OUR SANITY -- regarding HOMOSEXUALITY

a.v.w. at an anti-"fairness" rally

O GOD of GOODNESS and MERCY:

We pray that You will help our community to do what is wise, loving and righteous.

We pray that our leaders will establish policies and laws which are fair to all.

HAVE MERCY ON...

Homosexuals who have been treated with cruel contempt and hateful rejection by heterosexuals;

Parents who are filled with anxiety because they believe homosexual practice is wrong, but they love their child who has embraced this practice;

Young people who are perplexed about their sexuality because of the depraved teaching which is widespread in our culture and even many churches today.

Heterosexuals who have been treated with cruel contempt and hateful rejection by homosexuals.

WE PRAY FOR...

Those whose homosexual practices expose them to dangerous and deadly **diseases** -- to syphilis, hepatitis-B, AIDS and other plagues which strike at homosexuals far more than heterosexuals. Wake them up, so they may escape!

Those who by choosing a homosexual lifestyle are **reducing their life expectancy** by over 1/3 . . . by more than 30 years. Wake them up, so they may escape!

We pray for homosexuals who have been told **LIES--**

the Lie that Jesus Christ does not love them and will not accept them as they are;

the Lie that Jesus Christ approves of their lifestyle;

the Lie that once they come to Him they can be good Christians while continuing to live in this way which He disapproves and forbids;

the Lie that they cannot escape the practice of homosexuality;

the Lie that Jesus, the powerful Creator and loving Savior, cannot give them victory over their desires--and even change their desires if He so chooses.

Father, expose these lies so those who feel trapped may escape!

LORD, rebuke and convict any heterosexuals who are hypocrites - - engaging in adulteries or pre-marital sex while proudly looking down on homosexuals because they are 'immoral.'

Rebuke and convict those people who are misleading our youth by calling good evil and evil good; who say homosexual practice is natural and good when Your Word calls it wrong.

LORD, give us strong, godly, loving homes and families.

LORD CHRIST, help us to follow You by hating sin while loving sinners, and pointing them to You -- the One who loves us all so much You died for us while we were still lonely and lost.

AMEN.

Does Suicide equal Damnation?

Dennis Kaufman

QUESTION: Do you think it is possible for a Christian to commit suicide and go to heaven?

Response: This is one of those questions in which I wish I knew your circumstances before I set out to provide some guidance. I wonder if you may be someone who is contemplating suicide, and the only thing holding you back is the fear of losing eternal life. If that is the case, far be it from me to take away the final guard rail that is keeping you from hurting yourself.

But, perhaps you are in a totally different situation. Maybe you have just come from the funeral home where you have seen the body of a relative or close friend who has taken his or her own life. The bewilderment of how God would view this has prompted your question. In this case, far be it from me to dash your hopes that God could be merciful in such a tragic situation.

The Bible records a few accounts of suicide. Saul in 1 Samuel 31:4; Ahithophel in 2 Samuel 17:23; Zimri in 1 Kings 16:18 and Judas in Matthew 27:5. All of these stories are permeated with a sense of failure and resignation. However, only in case of Judas is there an allusion to eternal destiny (Acts 1:25). This judgment seems more connected to Judas' betrayal than his suicide.

Historically, the church has placed a strong stigma on suicide. It is seen as a violation of the commandment not to murder. It is also presumptuous to assume the right to determine when one's own life should end. Some have also raised the issue of forgiveness when the sin of suicide is so final.

Research studies have indicated 25 percent of people who commit suicide are dealing with a significant level of mental illness. Another 40 percent take their lives as an impulsive event, which may not reflect their true heart's desire.

There is no way for us to know the human heart, thus the biblical warnings that we should not judge. The Creator is the only one with a perspective to be able to interpret an act such as suicide.

So is it possible for a person to take his own life and go to heaven? I believe it may be possible, but I cannot imagine anything more unsettling than standing before God and trying to explain such a

decision. I am not sure any defense would sound reasonable on that day, especially when God has promised a way of escape in all circumstances (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Someone once said that suicide is a permanent choice in the face of temporary problems. I would personally never give a person permission or encouragement to take their own life, and would fight hard to convince someone considering that option to have the courage to hold on in Christ.

VOICES From The FIELDS

From Dennis Allen, Quanzhou, China Late Sept. 2003

We have been here more than 4 months now. Fall is here by the calendar, but the thermometer says it's still summer. We're still thankful for our air conditioner. October should see some moderation.

September 1, three people from Hong Kong came to see us. The first day we showed them around a few places of interest in Quanzhou. They stayed with relatives who live not far away. Then we were invited to go there for two nights. They live in a small city which is near the sea coast. We were royally treated and saw a number of interesting things. There is a large new 3-Self church (government approved) there that seats 1,000. We also went through a shoe factory where they make good quality shoes which are sold here in China. Those friends from Hong Kong brought several medications for my hip which I appreciated very much.

I have the responsibility for choosing the topics for the English Corner each week, preparing bulletin board displays, and handouts for the students and teachers. Those sessions are some of our best times. One university student asked me this week, "What is the purpose of life?"

September 17 we met a university student. He invited us to go with him to visit an orphanage here. We took some milk powder and other things for the children. The staff took the things we brought. Hope they finally got to the children. They are on the 6th floor of a nice building. The children were in an empty room - no furniture or toys. There was an iron gate with a padlock. The children, most of whom are mentally or physically handicapped, stuck their hands through the bars to be touched. Later they were brought out of the room and served supper. They each had a big bowl of rice with cabbage and several round slices of sausage. It was adequate but not very

nutritious. We were told this is the best run orphanage run by the government in Quanzhou and the only one that allows visitors. Some of the children get adopted out.

Four students from one of the universities came to see us last week. We hope to have further contact with them.

Blessings to you and yours, Dennis (and Betty)

Oct. 11th. We just found out this letter was not sent due to computer difficulties, so will give a little update. I have been introduced to an acupuncturist who is supposed to be the best here. I have to go to the hospital for treatments. They did a CT scan first. I have had 10 treatments thus far, but they are not finished. We often have to wait an hour to get treated. The Dr. feels he can help relieve this hip pain. I feel it has already helped. The Dr. is restricting my walking and even sitting. He is pleased to have me as a patient and asked to have his picture made with me. Maybe I'm his first western patient.

You wouldn't believe the traffic flow here. If they miss another car or bike or motor bike by inches, nobody worries. They come at each other from all directions.

THE TERROR OF THE LORD!

A. W. Tozer

"For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity; but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness: otherwise you also will be cut off." Romans 11:21,22

A truth fully taught in the Scriptures and verified in personal experience by countless numbers of holy men and women through the centuries might be condensed thus into a religious axiom: No one can know the true grace of God who has not first known the fear of God.

The first announcement of God's redemptive intention toward mankind was made to a man and a woman hiding in mortal fear from the presence of the Lord. The Law of God was given to a man trembling in terror amid fire and smoke, and quaking at the voice of thunder and the sound of the divine trumpet. When Zacharias' tongue was loosened by the mysterious operation of God "fear came on all that dwelled round about." Even the famous annunciation, "On earth, peace, good will toward men," was given to shepherds who were "sore afraid" by reason of the sudden overwhelming presence of the heavenly host...

I do not believe that any lasting good can come from religious activities that do not root in this quality of creature-fear. The animal in us is very strong and altogether self-confident. Until it has been defeated God will not show Himself to the eyes of our faith. Until we have been gripped by that nameless terror which results when an unholy creature is suddenly confronted by that One who is the holiest of all, we are not likely to be much affected by the doctrine of love and grace as it is declared by the New Testament evangel. The love of God affects a carnal hart not at all; or if at all, then adversely, for the knowledge that God loves us may simply confirm us in our self-righteousness....

A congregation will feel this mysterious terror of God when the minister and the leaders of the church are filled with the Spirit. When Moses came down from the mount with his face shining the children of Israel were afraid with a fear born out of that supernatural sight. Moses did not need to threaten them. He had only to appear before them with that light on face.

The CHRISTIAN and How He THINKS

A.W. Tozer

We all live in two environments, the one being the world around us, the other our thoughts about that world. The larger world cannot affect us directly; it must be mediated to us by our thoughts, and will be to us at last only what we allow it to be.

Three men walking side by side may yet be inhabiting three different worlds. Imagine a poet, a naturalist and a lumberman traveling together through a forest. The poet's mind races back over the centuries to the time when the mighty trees now towering above him were but beginning to appear as tiny green shoots out of the gray earth. He dreams of the mighty of the world who then wore crowns and swayed empires, but who have long ago passed from this earthly scene and been forgotten by everyone but a few historians.

The naturalist's world is smaller and more detailed. He hears the sweet, hardly audible bird song that floats among the branches and seeks to discover the hidden singer; he knows what kind of moss it is that clings to the base of the centuries-old trees; he sees what the others miss, the fresh claw marks on the bark of a tree, and knows that a bear has recently passed that way.

The lumberman's world is smaller still. He is concerned neither with history nor nature but with lumber. He judges the diameter and height of the tree and by quick calculation determines how much it

will bring on the market. His world is the dull world of commerce. He sees nothing beyond it.

It is obvious that one external world has been turned into three internal worlds by the thinking of the three men. Judas the traitor and John the apostle lived in the same world, but how differently they interpreted it. The same may be said of Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Saul and David. From these we learn that circumstances do not make men: it is their reaction to circumstances that determines what kinds of men they will be.

What then can we Christians do? The answer is, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" The mental stuff of the Christian can be and should be modified and conditioned by the Spirit of Christ which indwells his nature. God wills that we think His thoughts after Him. The Spirit-filled prayerful Christian actually possesses the mind of Christ, so that his reactions to the external world are the same as Christ's. He thinks about people and things just as Christ does. All life becomes to him the raw nectar which the Spirit within him turns into the honey of paradise.

Yet this is not automatic. To do His gracious work God must have the intelligent cooperation of His people. If we would think God's thoughts we must learn to think continually of God. "God thinks continuously of each one of us as if He had no one but ourselves," said Francois Malaval; "it is therefore no more than just if we think continuously of Him, as if we had no one but Himself."

We must think of the surrounding world of people and things against the background of our thoughts of God. The experienced Christian will never think of anything directly; his thoughts go first to God and from God out to His creation. His thoughts, like the angels of Jacob's ladder, ascend and descend, but ever God stands above them presiding over all.

To be heavenly-minded we must think heavenly thoughts. "So let us return to ourselves, brothers, ... for it is impossible for us to be reconciled and united with God if we do not first return to ourselves, ... striving constantly to keep attention on the kingdom of heaven which is within us."

So wrote Nicephorus, a father of the Greek Orthodox Church, in the fourteenth century, and nothing since has changed. God must have all our thoughts if we would experience the sanctification of our minds.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Dayton, Tenn. - Dr. Stephen D. Livesay was inaugurated as the seventh president of Bryan College during ceremonies Friday, Oct. 3. In his inaugural address, Dr. Livesay paid tribute to the contributions of his predecessors at Bryan, and pledged to build on their efforts and the college's heritage as a Christian liberal arts institution.

"It is (the) authority of the word of God that for the past 73 years has instructed the curriculum and teaching of this college," he said. We exist as a Christian liberal arts college not for our own sake nor our reputation, but that we would make our Savior known, educating students to become servants of Christ to make a difference in today's world - understanding, engaging, and redeeming our culture."

Bryan College is a four-year Christian liberal arts college offering bachelor's degrees in 15 areas. The college has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* for nine consecutive years as being among the Top Tier of Southern liberal arts colleges.

PRAYER/PRAISE...booklets of both foreign & home missions will be available by Thanksgiving. Pick up your copy by attending the Louisville area Thanksgiving service at Atherton High School or at the Glenmora Fellowship in Louisiana. Copies are available by writing:

Church of Christ Worldwide
P.O. Box 54842
Lexington, KY 40555
Att: Bennie Hill

Cramer & Hanover (Lexington) Sis. Mae Broaddus will be leaving in November to spend the winter & spring months with her daughter Vicki and family in Washington State. We will miss her as she is such a vital part of our church family here at Cramer. Her strong soprano voice, her helping hands, her working feet, her encouraging laugh, and her loving heart will be missed. Her new address will be:

Mae Broaddus
4301 N. Bartimoor
Tacoma, Washington, 98401

Woodland Bible Camp...board of directors has hired Alan Borders to serve as camp administrator beginning in December 2003. If you would like to have Alan come and speak to your church / youth group, contact him at

R R 3 Box 649,
Linton, IN 47441
(812) 847-7385
Aborders56@aol.com

In The News...Kenneth Locklear had no idea when he enrolled his daughter at a Middle School in West Palm Beach, Florida for its math, science, and technology magnet program that the school was also the home of the devils. Locklear was horrified when his daughter showed him a band T-shirt depicting a devil mascot complete with horns, pointy ears and a thick mustache. Locklear wants the School Board to establish a ban on devil symbols. -

His appeal is a matter of separating church and state and will sue if the school district doesn't give in.

"What if this was a cross?" he asked. "Because it is the devil it doesn't seem to be recognized as a religious symbol." He's got a point!

Boston, Mass. "highest" court ruled Tuesday (11/18/2003) that the state cannot deny gay couples the right to marry. Jesus in Luke 17:26-30 compares the days of Lot with how it will be prior to His return: "even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Jesus is coming soon!!!

Revivals for 2004: can be announced and promoted in the News & Notes when received early in advance. Please notify

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Pray for Persecuted Fellow-Disciples: In Nov. the Portland Ave. Church joined over 200,000 churches internationally which prayed for persecuted believers on International Day of Prayer Sunday. (This is now held annually during Nov.) Here is one example of answers to such praying in 2002:

"Despite the harsh crackdown against China's Christians by the communist government, in 2002 Open Doors was able to train 25,518 pastors and church leaders and distribute more than 1.6 million Bibles, Study Bibles, Children's Bibles, and other Christian materials. All this was done through our underground network of couriers and contacts." - Open Doors

Help Mormons Escape: Steve Watson, a W&W subscriber in Cal., writes: "Here is an interesting website, focused on the evangelization of those who are caught in the deception of the LDS Church..." [Mormonism]:

www.livinghopeministries.info/index.html

Guess Who Did & Said This? He was a U.S. President who at the same time served as president of the Washington, D.C. school board. The latter office required him to select the textbooks to be used by the students. He selected the Bible as the primary text, for this reason: "I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make us better citizens."

Who was he? Thomas Jefferson, a deist. [He sometimes called himself a Christian. But when he had the Bible translated into an Indian language (for their moral improvement), he carefully deleted all passages about Jesus' deity, atonement, and claims about His being the only way to the Father.] Yet, based on his statement quoted above, what would Jefferson say to folks today who want to keep the Bible out of the schools? Such folks often quote his statement (in a letter) about "separation of church and state." But he would disagree with their interpretation of his view.

A REMINDER: New Address / Phone No. for S.B.S. It was announced a few months ago that the School of Biblical Studies moved from its Portland "campus" to the Buechel Church of Christ. Its mailing address is 2105 Buechel Bank Rd., Louisville KY 40218. It's phone no. (& answering machine) is 502: 499-2702. Moving there has provided more space and classrooms for SBS, & also for PCS. (SBS is still run under PCS' auspices.) And we're thankful to say that SBS' enrollment has increased slightly this semester.

Please pray for these schools, and encourage folks (even yourself!) to take some subjects at SBS. Our students range from a young man fresh out of high school to a veteran disciple in her 80s. See elsewhere in this issue for the SBS schedule for the semester beginning in January.

A Statement we badly MIS-quoted

(The error twisted the thought and made good news bad. I meant for this correction to go in the next issue, but it got "bumped" and then got lost!)

In March we ran this quote on our back cover: "Grace is not God's reward for the faithful, it's His gift for the faithful, it's His gift for the empty and the feeble and the failing." *N-O-T!* I have no idea how those extra 6 words (underlined) got in there! Here's the real truth (and what the author really said):

“Grace is not God’s reward for the faithful, it’s His gift for the empty and the feeble and the failing.”

-- Roy Hession in *The Calvary Road*