

new covenant Voice

*If Jesus Christ
be God and died for
me, then no sacrifice
can be too great for
me to make for Him.*

C. T. Studd

**But ye are come unto mount
Sion, and unto the city of the
living God, the heavenly
Jerusalem, and to an
innumerable company of angels
to the general assembly and
church of the firstborn, which are
written in heaven, and to GOD
the Judge of all, and to the
spirits of just men made perfect
and to JESUS the mediator of the
new covenant, and to the blood
of sprinkling, that speaketh
better things than that of Abel
See that ye refuse not him that
speaketh**

HEBREWS 12:22-25

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SANCTIFICATION

GEORGE W. NORTH

JESUS DELIVERS US FROM ALL SIN ...

In the end there is nothing but love, holy love, reigning, all powerful. In the end the only thing that will keep us from sinning and disappointing God and ruining our testimonies is holy, perfect, sinless, wonderful love to Him. God will not bind anyone to this, He will not restrict or inhibit us in any way; if we want to sin He will allow us to sin and sin, until we can't sin any more in this world. On the other hand, by His Son He has provided a complete redemption from sin, and this He offers to every man; therefore, holiness must be one of the great distinguishing marks all His people bear. There must be clear, unchanging, unflinching, unvarying testimony to the fact that Jesus delivers us from all sin and sinning. This is the fundamental principle of it all. If Jesus Christ's death did not accomplish that, it failed to reach the deepest needs of man.

...TO MAKE US FIT COMPANIONS FOR HIS SON

How glorious it is to move into and live in this great realm of truth. It is my intention to spend time with you on this well loved subject. I do so because as the day has progressed my heart has come to the conviction that I should talk to you about this condition of life. No spiritual progress is possible to any man unless first sanctification be accomplished in a man's experience. New ideas, fresh insights, so-called revelations, new topics, new angles abound, but beloved, the great thing you and I need to get to grips with is our own personal knowledge of deliverance from sin; this is everybody's need. The Gospel is about God making us fit to live with Him for ever, not just about granting to us eternal existence. Regeneration is not just a kind of undeserved bonus, or reward for believing: God's plan and power is to make us fit companions for His Son.

BELIEVING IS NOT ENOUGH ...

If the question was asked, 'Are you fit to live with God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, forever?', how would you answer? A man's conscience should bear him witness in the Holy Ghost on this matter. There is no boasting where this is concerned, with Paul we can make no boast save in the cross of Jesus Christ. God became a man to DEAL with sin, and He HAS dealt with sin. Because this is so, pay no attention to anyone who denies that a man can be delivered from sin. GOD applied Himself to this, if God failed us in this He has failed mankind in everything, for sin is the fundamental reason why men and women go to hell. Men will not go to hell because God did not deal with original sin, but because they will not receive what God has done for them. Every man must believe the truth with all his heart, and believing, pass into the experience of it. To stop at believing is the same as not believing at all, for the end result will be the same. You and I have to move right in on the ground of what God accomplished for us on the cross. When

God deals with sin in a man, He deals with it wholly, not piecemeal, and when a man comes to this properly as he should, he will enter in wholly. From that point on he will progress into glorious consistent holiness, and in that holiness be able to live with God. Everything is by grace, through His everlasting mercy. God applies Himself to this end day and night, and precisely because of this we can know the glory of living free from sin. God grant that this will remain in the forefront of all our ministry for the rest of time.

No man has a pure ministry from God until he himself is free from sin. The tragedy disclosed by Paul in the Corinthian letter is that people can be products of the finest ministry and possess wonderful gifts of the Spirit and yet still live in sin. That is why he wrote to them; oh how we need to be made aware of this message today. The devil was the author of sin, almost unbelievably, sin started in heaven with Lucifer, the son of the morning. An angel of light commenced the life of sinning and it was he who brought it to earth. In the end sin required the descent of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to the earth in order to deal with it; and deal with it He has. A man can do nothing about sin, his own, or anyone else's, not a thing. Freedom from sin is something into which we enter by the grace of God by faith, faith which does not only say 'I believe it', but faith which also says 'I have it'. In things of the Spirit it is no credit to anybody to believe in anything objectively. To say that the sun is going to rise tomorrow is objective believing, but what credit is that to anyone?, the sun is always shining somewhere. A person would be an idiot if he didn't think so, it is a fixed fact. Even the materialist would not benefit from that if he refused to receive benefit from what he believed. Likewise believing becomes beneficial to man when he receives the thing commanded or provided.

... IT'S A MEANS TO AN END ...

No one can accuse the Gospel writers, of teaching specious doctrines. With one accord these men wrote the truth, and recorded facts for the glory of God. Let us then examine what is reported in the Gospel according to John. Without sacrifice of truth, or feeling compelled to believe specific doctrines, every man thereby may come to his own conclusions. John 1:29, 'The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'. No serious man can refuse to believe that it is unequivocal. The question is, what does it mean in practical experience? It is no good saying, 'I believe the Bible', the devil does that, only fools of men refuse to believe the Bible. The devil believes that Jesus has taken away the sin of the world, but no-one expects to find Satan living in heaven with God. Obviously then, for every man there is something more than believing, believing is a means to an end. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God has borne away the sin of the world. Let us also note that the Gospel of John, is the world-wide Gospel. Broadly speaking the difference between the Synoptists and John is that

the Synoptists write with detail of the greatest revival that ISRAEL ever had: John notes these things but does not dwell on them, he wrote for the whole world. The Synoptists tell of Jesus' birth and life, the miracles, the wonders, the teachings, the parables which had their place in the most wonderful revival Israel had ever known. But not so John, he moves away from revival onto regeneration, 'You must be born again', he said, reporting Jesus.

...TO SIN NO MORE ...

Two men whose works are included in the New Testament were caught up to heaven to receive revelation from God. Paul was one, John was the other, consequently their writings are far superior in content to all others; read them and see, read them and re-read them and re-read them. John having been caught up to heaven, came back with a Gospel which far outshines the other Gospels, wonderful as they, are and it is he who records that the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world. None of the synoptists seemed to hear John Baptist say that, John did though and wrote it down, the Lord wants us to enter into the wonderful truth of it. Now if Jesus has taken away the sin of the world, why does a man go on sinning? Every man should ask himself that question, and find the answer. There is no need to sin, sin is not necessary for us, neither does God demand or suggest that we should sin in order for Him to show us grace and mercy.

Taking up the theme again in chapter 5, John tells how Jesus went to the Pool of Bethesda in order to heal just one solitary man. Doing so, He turned and walked away, leaving the rest in their sickness and misery and disappointment. The healed man, full of gratitude went up to the Temple to thank God, there Jesus found him, 'Behold thou art made whole, sin no more ...', He said, it was the most outstanding thing to say to any man surely. Jesus actually said that to a man born in sin. How is it then that men say it is not possible for them to sin no more? This is how the man discovered who was speaking to him; he knew it was Jesus. He recognized Him because He talked about ceasing from sin. It may be reasonable to suppose that such words must often have been in the Lord's mouth, for the man did not know who had healed him till then. Saying that kind of thing must have gained Jesus a reputation, surely, that is only common sense reasoning isn't it? He knew it was Jesus, because only Jesus talked like that. Jesus says, 'Go and sin no more', 'don't ever sin again'. Let us at once agree that if Jesus talks like that, it must be possible to us, otherwise Jesus lied to us by implication. To sin no more must be possible. If it was possible for that man to sin no more, then it must be possible for us not to sin anymore, thank you Jesus. The Lord did not promise him he would not sin again, or that it would not be possible for him to sin ever again, he told him not to. By saying that the Lord was surely saying that it is possible not to sin. If it is not possible for a man to stop sinning, then Jesus should have told him something like this, 'I'll forgive your sins now, come back again some time, and I'll forgive you again for all the sin you are bound to have committed between now and then' - Come to think of it 'Go and sin no more', sounds like God talking, it's just what He would say.

God loves us, He would never think of telling us to do something we could not do, it is monstrous to think that He

would. He only expects of us the things that are possible to us. More fully, the Lord said, 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing should befall you'. He was not trying to restrain the man from sin by threatening him with a worse sickness should he sin any further, nothing is further from the heart of love. He was saying, 'Can you imagine what it would be like to pay the penalty for your sins?'. That would be far worse than thirty eight years of sickness. Sinning no more sounds a glorious message, don't you think? You and I are to know the practical power of living daily free from sin. In the end that is the only thing that counts with God and it should be the only thing that counts with every one of us. Oh what a marvellous thing to be able to claim it; it's no good struggling to attain it, there is no need, we all may enter in, clear with God. This will happen to every man who falls out of love with himself and his sin. Perhaps the thing that is worse than sin in human beings, is the love of it.

As an example of the suggestion that the words, 'sin no more' may often have been in the Lord's mouth, turn to Chapter 8. Here Jesus deals with the precious woman brought to Him by a group of men who said they had taken her in the very act of adultery. The Lord dealt with their accusations and expectations with these words, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her'. It must have fallen on their ears like a thunder clap and could have but one result - they all went out, from the oldest to the youngest. The order of exit was about right perhaps, the oldest was the most conscious of sin, probably. There can scarcely be a greater tragedy. Better not to live to be old unless sin is dealt with, otherwise sins just pile up. Better not to have lived than to have lived in sin. One thing can be said in favour of these men - they were honest when they faced Jesus. Not one man could stand up and say before Him or her, or each other, that he was without sin. The only Man who could have claimed that did not do it, when He bent to the ground, it was to write on it, not to pick up a stone. Instead He said to the woman, 'Where are thine accusers, hath no man condemned thee?' She said, 'No man, Lord'. He said unto her (oh I'd love to have heard Him. I think if I could infuse something of the wonder of His tones into what I say, a lot more people would come to know Him. If only we preachers could reproduce the genuine tones of the living Christ so many more souls would be won). 'Go and sin no more'.

It is surprising how many people put their own words into the Bible, and read it as though Christ said 'Go and commit THIS sin no more', but that is not what Jesus said. He did NOT say, 'Go away and never commit adultery again'. Had He done so it would have provided sinners with the opportunity to opine that He meant; it will be alright for you to go on telling lies and doing lots of other things, such as stealing or fighting, but not this one, no, this one is socially unacceptable and not allowed. The Lord Jesus did not speak like that, He said, 'Woman go and sin no more - in other words stop ALL sinning'. The next verse reads, 'I am the Light of the world'. Why do you think Jesus said that then? And why was the account of this incident placed before this saying? Surely to light up this truth to men and women. We all need to know that Jesus says, 'Don't sin any more'. Men must believe Him and turn a deaf ear to any voice without or within which says 'I've got to sin, I must, I have to because I'm a human being'. As though God is condemning men to sin till the rapture, or guaranteeing sin to man in order to shew the depths of mercy in His heart. What a glorious thing it is for us to know what the Lord is really meaning.

JESUS SAVES TO THE UTTERMOST

When a man is seeking for highest holiness, he may find that he, as I must shut out the things that other people are saying; all too often the devices and preachings of men condemn us to a life of sinning, as though that is what Christianity is. God did not scheme out a way to allow man to keep on sinning and yet call them saints. Man must not entertain such ideas of the Father-heart, it is blasphemous to seriously think such things. Holiness is the supreme state of love, it is man's highest hope and what a glorious hope it is. Unless a man is totally depraved ignorant of God, and bereft of hope, he must aspire to the highest; he must. The tragedy is that instead of exhorting souls to reach out and go on and on and on, so many men are setting the mark for the highest lower down. Beloved, there is total deliverance from sin, there must be. Surely in a man touched by God there is something that aches for it, seeks for it, longs for it, listen to the voice of Jesus. The Lord will always meet a man at the point of his longings for holiness. All the revivals that have ever come about throughout history have come because hearts have caught a vision of the highest and have sought holiness. To believe God should expend Himself and pour out the blood of His Son for any less reason than this is an unthinkable insult to God. God would be a monster if He ordered and engineered the death of His only begotten for any other reason or objective than the uttermost sanctification of men. If all God wanted was to grant men forgiveness, there was neither justification nor need to slay the Son.

God had been granting men forgiveness for centuries before the Son came. He did so in view of Calvary, of course, but they did not know that. We glibly talk from the view point of the second millenium after Christ, but two thousand years before Christ, men did not know that God was looking forward to Calvary. Abel did not know what the blood of his lamb meant, (bearing in mind that God never offered then what He is offering now). Nobody ever said, 'Go and sin no more'. No wonder the Lord said, 'I am the Light of the world'. That is where John started his Gospel, 'In Him was life and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not'. What life and light it was and is. Darkness can never comprehend that light - but has to flee from it. Men who love darkness cannot lay hold of this light, they hate it and run away from it, they dread it. This glorious light of the burning sun of holiness seems hateful and impossible to them. Men must forsake and hate the idea that God wants them to continue in some degree of sin because to do so proves we are human and He is divine (or some such thing). Jesus forbids sin of any kind or degree and delivers from it, He saves to the uttermost, and it is a marvellous thing to know it and to experience it.

COMPROMISE ... OR COMMUNION?

We used to pray and sing that God would burn up every trace of sin and bring the light and glory in. But what now? Many other things, but not that. God sent the Holy Spirit to do just that - and more. We need aggressive preaching, boldness of speech, clarity of truth, determination to announce deliverance from sin, holding back nothing, just because men say the truth is divisive. So it is. What of it? To tone down this truth because we love people and want to link up with them and build bridges, etc., is compromise. There is no love, or communion,

or linkage in the Spirit with anyone except in the truth revealed from heaven. Beloved, if God does not come down from heaven and burn up every trace of sin and bring the light and glory in, there is no uniting with anyone as God counts uniting. Oil and water will not mix, there is a fundamental spiritual, natural, and scientific difference between them which cannot be overcome by wizardry of words or the best of intentions.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO LIVE IN SIN

John was not alone in declaring this Gospel of deliverance from sin and its prohibition from the life. In the sixth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans the same truth is declared. 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin ...?'. The next verse is the answer, 'God forbid!' by no means. Paul was not a theologian by definition: he was not theorizing about God; he knew God. 'Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? That can not possibly be. There is no way and no means by which that can possibly be true either in teaching or in practise, nor is it the intention of God 'How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?' (verse 2) It is not possible to LIVE in sin, men only DIE in sin, they cannot LIVE in it. 'How shall we?' is the question; does anyone know how it is possible to LIVE in sin? To knowingly remain in sin and claim to belong to God is a contradiction in terms, it simply is not possible. By redemption we have been brought right out of the area of sin, completely out of the sin system, out of the world, out of the flesh. We have been translated into another kingdom altogether, the kingdom of the Son of God's love, everything is changed, the laws of life itself are changed, we are different.

The trouble with man is that in the realm of holiness, he is a schizophrenic, he thinks he can retain his sin, be his same old self, and yet laugh and dance in the kingdom. That is not what this Book says. Bible writers proclaim a Gospel of death to the old man (life, nature, habits) and death to sin. 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin'. The word destruction when used of the body of sin or of the devil, should be understood to mean 'rendered powerless', that is, dead to us. Jesus said, 'Whosoever committeth sin, is the slave of sin' (John 8:34). Unless a man is of the same heart as Jesus, some of His sayings are hard to live with. He says if a man commit sin he is the slave of sin, and goes on to add that the slave does not abide in the house. No slave lives in his lord's house, he may enter in and work and serve there, but he cannot abide there, he has to live somewhere else. That is another subject which we will not talk about now. There are thousands, I dare say millions, of people who think they are abiding in God's house and are not.

...EVERY MAN MUST RECKON HIMSELF DEAD TO SIN

The trouble with churches today is that few know their right hand from their left. Under no circumstances and upon no pretext will God match up or yoke sin with anything in His kingdom. This is a devastating Gospel; it goes to the roots of everything and gets hold of the heart. Common sense as well as grace, says, 'Yes Lord, I understand this, I see the logic of it, this is what I would do if I was God'. God always appeals to the rationale of everything; He does not say or do anything that is irrational, grace is not a way of bending righteousness, but of

applying it. If your heart is gasping for life, open it to this, 'he that is dead is freed from sin'. That word freed is the word justified, this is the kind of justification Paul preached to men, it is the only kind God has provided. Justification for man is only offered to him on the grounds of death to sin. No man is fully justified until he is properly dead, before that justification is only imputed to him. Justification is to all upon the ground that God in Christ refuses to impute sin to those who believed in Christ. Everybody must be assured that justification is free for everybody who will come to God on the ground of faith. God will start reckoning it as righteousness to every man who comes trusting Him to do it. In anticipation of this He did it all at once in one historic moment in time a thousand years and more ago. Come on then man, start reckoning on it now; it is eternal, there always has to be a moment when a man starts reckoning on God and not on self. 'Don't look at your rags, don't look at your filth, don't look at your sin, don't look at your inability', says God - 'look at Me'. Come to that place and you will really see the cross. The Man that hung there, hung there till he was dead to the sin He bore; dead, utterly dead to sin. The justification He provides for men is proper justification. Paul is saying that He justifies a man within himself as well as to God. 'He that is dead is justified from sin'. He then goes on to add the fact that Christ only 'died unto sin once' (for all). That is the way every man must reckon himself dead to sin, he is dead to sin by the death of Jesus Christ to it; by any standards that is a very powerful death, an all-powerful death. Glory be to God.

That death is the most powerful thing God ever accomplished on this earth or anywhere else in this universe. The crucifixion was much, much greater than the resurrection. The resurrection was simply the natural corollary to it, the resurrection just had to be. It was that death, not the resurrection that was so incongruous and impossible. The great miracle was that He died, from mans point of view, the greater miracle is that He was purposed to die. Not from His point of view though, He is love - that explains everything. The deed so terrible has been done, the price is paid: Let us declare it, He DIED to sin, He did it once, He did it for us, that is all that was necessary, therefore you and I are not to let sin reign in us or in our mortal bodies either. No man may let sin reign in the desires and impulses of his mortal body, it is forbidden. Here is a great promise, made to us by God 'Sin shall not have dominion over you' with such a clear and definite promise as this, surely no man is going to let sin have dominion over him is he? It may be asked, 'but how can I prevent it?'. Through grace abounding. 'Where sin abounds, there grace doth much more abound, grace to deliver from all sin and its power. This is what God means when He says, 'he that is dead is justified from sin'. Do not become entangled in sin any more, by any means, by any creature - even if she is an Eve, or he is an Adam. Old Adam is dead, so is old Eve; no-one, male or female should be responding or wanting to respond to these old creatures and habits again. What, responding to the dead? In some areas that would be called necromancy!

CHRIST DID IT FOR US

In further support of this marvellous truth, let us call on Peter. Perhaps John, Peter and Paul may be regarded as the three greatest apostolic writers. We should take truth from the mouths and hearts of these men who knew Christ in life and

death and resurrection, rather than from men who have tried or may be trying to excuse sin. 1 Peter 4:1 - 'Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh let us arm ourselves with the same mind, for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin'. We are being instructed in how to think. We are to arm our minds both defensively and offensively with that which emerges from the death of Christ and the truth. Whatever He did in that death He accomplished for us as us CHRIST DID IT FOR US BECAUSE WE COULD NOT DO IT OURSELVES or for ourselves. We say He is our substitute and make that mean that we need not do it, and it is partly true. The greater truth, which comprehends the former, is that He did it for you and in your name, so that that death could be reckoned as yours. It is as though the Lord says, 'Look I am you, my death is your death, Me dying is you dying'. He suffered for us in the flesh: instead of us, say 'me'. He suffered for me. FOR us He ceased from all our sin, we could not cease from sin so He ceased from it FOR us not instead of us, thus allowing us not to go on sinning. We should no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men, our own or anybody elses. We must live to the will of God. The unnecessary question which must be asked now is, Is it the will of God that men should sin? The question need not be answered. A man should never go against the will of God, and it is His stated will that we should be free from sin. 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour'. That is His expressed will for men - they should be concerned about little else.

SANCTIFICATION ... MORE THAN SUBJECTIVE HOLINESS

The name and work of Rees Howell is treasured among saints. He founded a Bible training college, but in his younger days he was a missionary. Upon one occasion, when home on furlough, he was invited to preach at a vast missionary meeting. Lots of young people gathered to hear him speak, expecting the usual kind of missionary emphasis and appeal. Instead, Rees Howells stood up and preached the holiness of God, and the entire sanctification He provided for and expected of His people. There was a great sense of the Lord's presence in the meeting. Upon completing his message, Rees Howells sat down without making any kind of open appeal to the congregation. Those around him on the platform urged him to test the meeting and at their request he did so. There was more response for the mission field that day than they had ever known before. He never appealed for missionaries - he preached entire sanctification. Properly understood and experienced, sanctification is much more than a man's subjective holiness, as a result of God's grace and power in him, it is also submission to the will of God for the rest of life. The experience of entire sanctification can be gained in a moment by faith - it is a gift from God, but life is a succession of moments, what about those? In the sanctifying act God comes to fill and indwell a man, spirit, soul and body entirely. 'You are Mine now, because I've dealt with sin in you', He says, 'I have also taken away the desire for it out of your heart, no man need sin any more'. Some people say they need their sin, they make provision for it also, but that is only because they want to sin. As soon as there is a toning down of the message - there is an acceptance of sin and things which once were unacceptable become accepted. When the fire really comes, all the base desires of the soul are burned out of a man, he loathes them and wants rid of them.

SANCTIFICATION ... FREEDOM FROM SIN, SELF AND SATAN

In the beginnings of Pentecostal and Holiness movements in England, they talked about power (the word charisma was then generally unused and sadly enough, present knowledge of it has not advanced the truth of holiness in the world) and it is said that the leaders of the Apostolic movement in this country, in the beginning, would not lay hands on people to receive the gifts of the Spirit unless they sought purity of heart. The churches have moved away from their moorings, they have moved off their foundations, and purity of heart is seldom preached among us. Because of failure in their own life men lower the standard and tone down the message because they do not wish to preach something they are not living. When a man preaches his own experience as a substitute for the pure word of God, there is always a loss of power. This cannot be helped, because it is based on and proceeds from man.

1 Thessalonians 5:19/24 is a passage of very simple information. In it Paul states his fervent desire for the whole church. Verse 23 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Spirit, soul, body. It is possible to think of them separately, but Paul is not doing so here; he is regarding them as a whole - the entire human being. Sanctification, by intention and provision of God, embraces the whole man. God has committed Himself to this and He is faithful to do it. John Wesley used to ask the question, 'if it is by faith, why not now?' God makes a man holy in a moment of time and if that man is co-operative will keep him holy through the successive moments of time till the Lord comes. To use a scriptural term, and apply it to the present theme, entire sanctification is that pearl of greatest price, for which every man should sell all he has to purchase just this; and for this reason. Holiness is both the inward state and outward expression of God. Holy, holy, holy, is the eternal confession of

those who surround the throne and gaze upon God in heaven, they feel His holiness. It is this holiness that is applied to sin and given to men, it is fire. No man is either committed or condemned by God to sin. The good news is that you and I can now be free from sin and self and satan. These three are linked; all the time there is a sin problem, there is a self problem, sin is the satanic nature in man by which satan either controls or interferes with all humanity outside of Christ.

The great General Booth married a woman who probably became greater than he. It is recorded of them that one day William discovered her weeping. Knowing her trouble, and the deep desire of her heart for holiness (she was having great struggles with her powerful self), he asked 'Does the gift sanctify the altar, or the altar the gift?' 'The altar sanctifies the gift', she answered, and he left her and walked out of the room. It was the word of God to her heart, it dawned on her, all she had to do was to get on the altar and she would be holy, the altar would sanctify the gift of herself to God. God cannot sanctify the gift of self to God until a man is willing to get on the altar. God does not sanctify anybody to go their own way or to do their own will.

Men and women are sanctified to do the will of God, that is the only way holiness can be experientially maintained. A man has to walk in the light in fellowship with God and his fellow saints, in order to keep clean from all sin. Holiness sets a person apart unto God, but it does not place him in isolation. Isolation is, like exclusiveness, self-centredness, an extreme form of sin; it breeds all sorts of conditions and expressions of iniquity and creates just the right sort of ground for satan to do his work. Walking in the light in fellowship with God and man hearing, seeing, and handling the word of life is the only way a man can dispose and keep himself in holiness of life, free from sin and sinning. The blood will not cleanse anyone who will not come to the light and walk in it, but everyone who will walk in the light in the fellowship of God shall know freedom from sin. GWN

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

BERNARD HULL

'A SIMPLE LOOK AT ...'

...THE SEED

Much of the earth is clothed with fruitfulness. Trees, plants, living things in infinite variety are evident everywhere. Paradise must have teemed with the verdant riches of God's handiwork. All of this came originally by His word: He spoke, and it was so. Even now, all exists by His word, for He has not withdrawn it nor ceased to speak it, and so all is upheld and continues.

We know that the continuity of the creation depends upon the seed. Here in Australia, we hear reports which bring foreboding. Seed-banks are being created, held by large corporations, and there is a concentration of seed for wheat and other crops in the hands of a few. Apparently, though they may have a rich yield, these particular seeds cannot reproduce

themselves; they have had the power of reproduction screened out of them. Today in Australia there is only one company selling strains of seed which can reproduce themselves. It is evident that everything depends on the quality of the seed.

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus speaks of the seed as the 'word', according to Mark's account (4:14). In Matthew's it is the 'word of the kingdom' (13:19), and in Luke's account it is called 'the word of God' (8:11). Consistently the seed is described as 'word', the logos. The logos is that which fountains out of the mind of God. When that logos became flesh, what a mystery it is, His Name was, and is, Jesus. Without this Everlasting Word nothing was made that is made. Thus there is an unending variety, an immeasurable vastness, in the Eternal Word through Whom the incredible plenitude of created things come and continues.

The word is sown in human hearts by the Sower. It is the Logos, it is God's Logos, it is the Logos of the kingdom, of

the reign and realm of God. The Sovereign sower puts the seeds of His will into our hearts, and we receive the end of the beginning, the essence of completion, and the seeds of our future, imparted at conception! His words are of His Word, they are commands, promises and prophecies concerning what we are and shall be, declaring what shall take place in the unfolding years of our lives, and in ages to come. They command, promise and prophesy that we are to bear fruit to Him who is the Sovereign. He sows the seeds of His realm in our hearts, intimating what He will do with us - the direction our lives will take.

KINDS OF SEED

The first mention of the word 'seed' lies in Genesis chapter one. Closely linked with it is the word 'kind'. 'Every herb yielding seed after its kind'. The mingling of seeds was clearly not envisaged by God the Creator. It is an invention of men following upon the work of the devil, who mingled his evil seed in the hearts of Adam and Eve, thus forming a mutant. In God's intention all was to relate and cohabit and multiply, within its kind. We know that God made cattle after its kind, creeping things and beasts of the earth, all after their kind. When God made man He made him a 'kind' also. Perhaps we would say reverently that man was made of the 'god kind' for man was made in God's image and likeness. Man was not made to mingle with angels, fallen or innocent, (and remember that satan is a fallen angel!) neither was he made to mingle with creatures lower than himself, those of the 'beast' kinds. Each was to mingle, abiding within its kind, every seed with its fellow. But satan sowed into the heart of man another seed; it took deep root and has borne awful fruits. In another parable and another context the graphic phrase is used 'an enemy has done this' (Matt. 13:28). Yet God has not left it to be that way, but has sent another seed, the True Seed, the Word of God Himself to dwell in hearts and bear fruit there. He is Sovereign and sows that which He intends His field to bring forth.

THOUGHT, WORD, DEED

'The Sower soweth the Word' (Mark 4:14). This is the Lord at work, definite and to the point. He accomplishes His ends in lives by this means. A heart will lie barren and devoid of that which pleases God, unless it hears and receives the word from the mouth of God. Words come from thought, and words must accomplish themselves in action. Thus we have thought, word and deed, a trinity, a wheel of life. All three must be present in order for there to be fruitfulness in a life. God the Father could be related to thought, God the Son to the Word, and God the Holy Spirit, who acts and enables, to the deed. The Sower sows the word but where did the word come from? The fact of a word implies that there is thought at the back of it. The word is the expression of that which has already been thought out and arranged.

Words come to our heart from God, and are the expression of invisible thought. They are the issuing forth in a timely, relevant form, of a plan and purpose of God, thought out with its inexpressible love. In speaking His word, He is sharing that purpose with those who hear His call, commanding and drawing them to become what He has intended. Paul writes the mind of God most wonderfully in Romans chapter eleven, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of

God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out!'. It is plain that now we are only capable of seeing part of these great purposes of God. Doubtless as we mature in spiritual life we shall increase in understanding of them. Our minds shall be renewed and thus shall be mingling intelligently with the mind of God, but this can only take place if we present our bodies, consistently, as living sacrifices to God.

Is it a strange thing that Paul should conclude Romans II with the wonderful statement concerning God's mind, and then speak of the renewing of the mind in chapter twelve? We shall be transformed by the renewing of the mind but that renewal is contingent upon the constant presentation of our bodies (which includes all that is in them) to the doing of His will. There must be co-operation, then, between God and man if the field of man's heart is to bring fruit unto God. How frequently the breakdown occurs at this point. People hear the word and do not co-operate with God the Holy Spirit that it might be done in them and through them. There is no translation into action, which is why there is no genuine transformation in the life and no renewal of the mind, with the result that they become unfruitful. The issue of a true spiritual life is a whole series of good works. The glorious power of God working in a life is to make a man 'fruitful unto every good work' (Col. 1:9).

DIFFICULTY IN DOING

The difficulty is in the doing. It is here that the cycle breaks down, but the power of God is available to us for the doing. Some people are prone to drifting around in the thought realm and there is much danger in that. The building of castles in the mind leads to terrible deception. Paul, when speaking of every thought being brought into captivity, speaks of it in the context of 'your obedience being fulfilled' (2 Cor. 10:5/6). There is a drift of life in the meditative kind of soul that can only be broken by doing the word spoken; a new habit must be formed.

THE PROCESSES OF SIN

The trinity of thought, word and deed pertains in the workings of temptation and sin. Temptations normally come as presentations to the mind. At that point the issue is whether these suggestions will be entertained by the mind, whether the imagination will enthrone them and thereby become gripped by them. If this takes place then it is only a matter of time before those thoughts will begin to be vocalised, insinuated in speech, if not spoken explicitly. Later it is likely that the thing spoken shall issue in action. The deed is the fruit of the thought, and the ground of the heart shall bear fruit in the end, either to God or to satan's philosophy. God sows His word, His philosophy into our hearts and central in it is that we must die to live, whereas satan's philosophy says the opposite: 'Claim your rights, please yourself now, and you shall live'. When the heart yields up its ground to the satanic philosophy the sense of God becomes diminished. As that wicked one gains ascendancy, man receives in himself the awful reward of enjoying self. However, when the heart yields its self-rights up to God and accepts His way, becoming fruitful in every good work, then that heart shall increase in the knowledge of God.

DO WHAT HE SAYS

Another area of conflict can be that we must reach out and do those one or two things that God has said to us to do,

rather than stretch out after the thing we wish He had said to us to do! Jesus gently rebuked Peter when his native powers reasserted themselves saying 'What shall this man do?'. 'What is that to thee, walk with me yourself' was Jesus' literal answer. 'Walk with me YOURSELF'. Each soul must grasp this, for it is vital. There is an unholy discontent that can grip the heart and lead to a complaining spirit. When hearts strive after something that is not for them, it can only produce strain and tensions leading to breakdown. Do the one thing He has shown you and cease grasping after the ten things others seem to have been told to do!

All begins in the heart of God. He brings us to Himself to share with us His intentions and catch us up in the doing of them. We all have our part whether great or small, and God's standards of measurement are different to man's. Man is not to be an initiator, and innovator. A vision does not begin with man but with God. Man receives the intimation from God of what He is wanted to do and then that man must see that vision outworked in the context of continuing fellowship with God at every step: it is not enough to get the 'vision' and get on and do it as you see fit. Here is a point of much failure. 'Walk with me' said Jesus to Peter. We must walk with Him in the vision, in its detailed outworking, paying close attention at all times to His witness in our hearts, and there is certain deliverance from pride of heart if this principle is obeyed. God carried the children of Israel through the deliverance from Egypt to Canaan, He used Moses and Joshua but they knew it was God.

IN EVERY LEVEL OF LIFE

God will instruct our hearts as to His will concerning every level of life. To learn to discern His inward speakings is a wonderful thing. He will speak into us concerning the large issues of life, of moving house, jobs, marriage and having children, for He is our God and Father. We are not people at the mercy of 'fate', unable to avoid things. He will direct the yielded life, imparting to the inward ground of our hearts the sure seeds of His will in specific matters. Blessed are they who wait for Him, they shall know of a certainty the way to take. The obstinate heart is not good ground, it makes heavy weather of almost everything. The softened, yielded heart finds the way much easier.

It is amazing the way that God's great eternal purpose is outworked within the context of intensely practical, ordinary issues of life. Buildings, houses, jobs, cities, villages, travellings, the common things which belong to basic life become aflame with the supernatural ways of God. He works the eternal in the context of the temporal. We must not despise the temporal then. God will begin to impart to us the twin view, the ability to see things microscopically and also panoramically. God working in the tiny details of our lives, and yet setting those insignificant things against the backcloth of a breathtaking panorama of His eternal purpose. God arranges the steps of His chosen and shares with them of His will, that they might co-operate with Him in it.

God gives attention to the minutest detail of our lives and His word to our hearts concerning specific things is but the vocalisation of that which He thought and, before time, began. One of the signs of the inner man being made alive by God's

Spirit in new birth is the ability to perceive the doings of God in the affairs of your life. Looking back retrospectively you are able to discern the numerous ways His hand was upon you in preserving grace, and such a view of the past gives courage for the future. The pattern emerging to our inward eye as regards our past encourages us to move forward into that which is to come. The sense of God's will and word is conveyed to our heart, sown with the element of life lying hid in it. If our heart provides the atmosphere of faith, and not of unbelief, then that seed shall inevitably bear fruit in our lives.

The Great Eternal Logos, which God speaks to us, is His Son. We all know that before Adam was, this Logos was. Before I was in Adam, I was in Christ, and to be like Christ by being of Him, from Him, through Him, and to Him, is my destiny. It was all arranged that I should shine in the image of God's Son, that I should share His nature and His Name: but I did not know this as I grew up in early years, being inwardly dead to such things, and thoroughly hoodwinked by the Adam nature. God spoke His Logos word and so sowed in me His original intention. Against a background of teeming littlenesses, God works out His predestinating purpose, that in the end I should appear in glory before His throne.

The ramifications of this truth are several. God will never sow into our hearts a word we cannot obey, nor will He send a call that we cannot respond and rise to. With the word comes the faith and the Holy Spirit attends upon every word sown, that He may nourish to fulfilment the will of God revealed. The Spirit of God cannot accomplish in us something God has not spoken to us. The Lord and the Spirit are utterly compatible. The wise-hearted have learned the secret of both hearing the word sown in their hearts and working to the fulfilment of that word under the firm supervision and strengthening of the Holy Spirit.

THE SPECIFIC WORD

'Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God'. Paul tells us this and it is surely true. The faith which we receive is in direct proportion to, and intimately linked with, that specific word which we hear. If we hear the word of God concerning freedom from sin and it is brought to our heart from God, then with that word comes the faith by which we can become that word!

There is another trinity in this matter. It is simply revealed in John's Gospel, chapter eleven. There, Jesus speaking to Martha says, 'Said I not unto thee, that if thou would'st believe then thou should'st see the glory of God?' (John 11:39). There are three things here. The last one is 'You shall see the glory of God' - that is the accomplishing of His purpose actually worked out in the matter. This result is contingent upon two things which must come first, each in their order. Firstly, you must hear what He says to you, and secondly you must believe it. This trinity begins in God speaking to our hearts His specific word on the matter, which word we must believingly receive and thereby allow it to work in us unto its fulfilment. In the matter of Jesus' word to Martha it is plain that at some earlier time He had spoken to her of specific things concerning Lazarus although it is unlikely that He spoke plainly of him being raised up, but the fact of glory to be revealed was plain enough.

The Greek word used to express the word of God being brought out of general application to the specific is the word 'rhema'. Jesus used this word when addressing the devil during the season of temptation in the wilderness, 'Men shall not live by bread alone, but by every rhema (specific word) which proceeds from the mouth of God'. Note the mention of God's mouth, not His book! He must Himself whisper it, witness it, show it and reveal it to each heart. Rhema is Logos expressed in a specific and personal way. 'Said I not unto THEE' Jesus reminded Martha. He spoke that word specifically to her, it was not a casual utterance or a general one.

NO GRAFTED ADDITIONS

When a seed is sown, it contains within itself all the promise of that which is to come. This is a wonder indeed, that such vastness and beauty as seen in a mighty Californian Redwood, lies hid in quite a small seed. Everything must come forth from within that seed according to the appropriate sequence of growth. There are not new grafted additions, or appendages fitted in at a later date. First the blade, then the ear and finally the full corn, each developing out of the former. There is the law of living things as they came from God originally, and this is a vital principle in discerning the voice of God. The sequence of things pertaining to spiritual life will rise from within, from that Divine 'original' planted in our heart's. If a word from some outside source, purporting to be the word of God, comes to us, then it must be carefully weighted; does it corroborate and witness with that which is already sown in our hearts and known to be from God? If it does not it must be either discarded or 'placed on the shelf'. In the end it will probably be proven to be spurious and need to be rejected as being an impression, a dart of the enemy. The story of the disobedient prophet, found in the first book of Kings and chapter thirteen, illustrates this truth poignantly. This poor man entertained another word, another gospel, which contradicted that which had been sown in his heart of God in the beginning. Death begins to work whenever some other word or impression is given credence in our hearts. We must ask, does it agree with that which we have already received and know to be of God? How strong John makes this point in his first epistle; where he tells us to abide in that 'word of the beginning', and to let that word abide in us and that all subsequent words must confirm this saving thesis!

THE UNFORGETTABLE WORD

Let us look into Acts chapter twenty six, where Paul is recounting the events of his meetings with the Lord on the Damascus Road. It is twenty five years after the event, yet how graphic is Paul's description: it was unforgettable and lived with him yet, because Paul heard the eternal rhema that day, those many years earlier. On that day he had given up the ground of his life to that word, he knew that Jesus was the Logos and that He had become the specific rhema to him. Paul did not separate the words spoken from He who spoke them. Not that only Paul heard THE voice, others heard A voice. Paul was blinded by THE light, others saw A light. Only Paul heard Jesus speaking specifically - calling him by name. Within that first call was the promise of further appearances, revelations and knowings: the promise was inherent in the original revelations.

THE MINISTERING HOLY SPIRIT

We first come across the Holy Spirit in Genesis chapter one. He is spoken of as 'Brooding'. He was obviously tarrying, expectantly waiting for something. He was present in the regions where all was 'without form and void'. Suddenly (we assume), the word was spoken. It was specific. Immediately, the Holy Spirit acted, He 'did' the Word spoken, He made light. At that point He did not 'do' suns and moons and stars, for that word was not yet spoken.

Consider Abraham, who erred in this matter. God had spoken 'thou shalt have a son'. Dear Abraham acted precipitously, according to the common sense practices of his day, in order to accomplish this word of God, and Ishmael was produced and was destined to be an outcast. Abraham erred in thinking that the word was sufficient and in not waiting for the activity of the Spirit of God. Perhaps we all err along this line and complicate things as a result, but God's ultimate purpose is not thwarted by such spiritual ineptitude. He is faithful.

The Holy Spirit brings forth everything concerning the word spoken, but each in its appropriate order. God is entirely consistent with Himself in all His ways. Again in Genesis chapter one, we find that living things were created on the third day, the day of resurrection. How orderly are the unfoldings of God's utterances and the Spirit's doings, each building upon the other. Nothing out of place, no backtracking to seal up some leakage where something was omitted. True spiritual growth among the Lord's people will bear these marks, and go from strength to strength according to the orderings of the Lord, which are right.

EACH ACCORDING TO HIS KIND

I was looking at some land the other day and was told that the ground was good for vegetables, but no good for citrus trees. There is a spiritual parallel here. When the Lord spoke to Paul of that which he would fulfil, that calling contained within it that which differed from others of the apostles. With Peter for instance, different things were specifically spoken to him, which he had to become and fulfil and, doubtless, as in things natural, so in the spirits of men and women, some seeds grow better in one ground than in another. The ground of Paul's heart was good for that which HE was to do in the Lord's will, whilst the land of Peter's heart would be able to produce a good crop to that specific seed sown in HIM of the Lord. 'Let every man abide in their own calling'. We are told that the wise Lord distributed to every man severally, according to each man's ability (power). Individual spirits (hearts) have differing qualities which God takes into full account when dispensing His specific callings and giftings.

ALWAYS THE SAME

Whilst accenting the variety let us not forget that which is common to all. Think of Peter, known first as 'Simon'. In John chapter one we are told that his brother brought him to Jesus, who, seeing him, 'beheld him'. The Greek word means to 'look very steadily and intently'. Perhaps we would say Jesus fixed him with His eye. Simon, who was to become Peter - a stone, solid and stable and precious - was now locked in the

calling of the Lord. There is always this sense when the call of the Lord comes to our hearts, this sense of being fixed, grouped, laid hold of. Paul certainly knew it that day on the road. All things are not predestinated in a man's life: there is human error. However, the overall purpose of God in a life is predestinated. He has arranged our steps, He has ordered our way. When His word is sown in our hearts it comes with magnetic might, laying hold of our wayward hearts and seeking to lock us into His kind ordinations.

Now a process begins, whereby all things of our lives are brought into line with that ordination of God. When God spoke in Genesis, the elements, having no independent will of their own, shifted, they moved instantaneously, and were shaped by the Word and the Spirit. They did not fight His orderings. However, we are not as those impersonal, inanimate elements. We have power to choose, limited though it is, and we can resist

these orderings and insist on remaining our original shape. If we do this it shall make for battles, which are unpleasant and unnecessary. To be quick to obey the speakings of the Lord is wisdom.

Thank God for His calling upon us. He bids us plunge into the main stream of His will and remain midstream. It is possible to remain in the water at the edges of the river and get into a side eddy or even go up a little creek. Momentum will be lost, and a real aimlessness will ensue. Perhaps this is what marks out those who succeed in fulfilling their spiritual destiny; they see to it that everything is brought to the bar of judgement and judged out if it does not facilitate their continuance in the midstream of God's life. They are saved from quiet little backwater Christianity. We have changed the metaphor but not the principle: that would be impossible. May the Lord have abundant fruit from our lives. **BH**

FAMILY QUESTIONS

GEORGE W. NORTH

It is purposed to include in the next three issues of the magazine, a series of edited comments made by Mr. North during a meeting held in Warrington in November 1983. The pamphlet 'AIDS - A CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT' was also part of this period of ministry. This tract can be obtained from Emmaus Print Ministries, on request.

Question: *'What happens if the believing partner dies, or leaves the home because the marriage breaks down?'*

Answer: First of all, let it be understood that no woman is compelled to live with a man who is for ever threatening to cut her throat or give her a black eye, or otherwise generally abusing her. The law of the land does not expect anyone to do that, and neither does God. Perhaps a story about a little woman who lived in a rundown property in the North of England may help. She was a precious soul, she came to the service one Sunday night, heard the Gospel for the first time, responded to the Lord, and was saved. Jumping off her chair in the middle of the message, she stood up, stopped the flow, and called out for salvation. The preacher was almost aghast - it was not quite the first time he had been interrupted by someone in the congregation, but it was unusual. He was even more astounded than that one day, some time later, when he learned that this precious little sister lived with a man who slept with a gun under the mattress! He used to threaten her with death: 'You get out of the bed at all in the night, for any reason, and I'll shoot you'. Imagine that. There are all kinds of reasons why a person may want to get out of bed in the night - but what about that twelve-bore shotgun? How would you like to live with a man like that? He was a beast. The circumstances under which she lived were appalling: the home was awful, her son (who has since responded to the gospel) was in prison, but she never complained once. She did not run away, never once did she speak of leaving her husband, she had married him, she stayed with him, to use the phrase, she stuck it out. Her husband died without Christ, but her boy got saved. Why?

Another woman, also in the same city, came along to hear the Gospel. She heard the little lady's testimony (delivered to a company of housewives around a bread van one morning) and what she heard sounded real to her. Just as the first lady, this second lady responded wholeheartedly to the Lord and was saved. Soon after, she had to go to hospital for an internal operation, not knowing she had only six months to live. In hospital they examined her, and after the examination, having seen the inhuman condition she was in, they said to her, 'Do you live with a man or a beast?'. She was another of the women, honoured in heaven, that did not run away. Sometimes her husband used to lock her out of the house at night, and she would take refuge, like a dog, in the little outhouse that was built for unsalubrious uses in former days. If ever a woman had every reason or excuse in the world to leave her husband, it was she, and if ever there was a beast of a man, it was he. But did she leave him or ask counsel with this in view? No, not once, she stayed with him till Jesus took her home.

Yes, you can leave your husband, but do you know why Moses was suffered by God to say that a man could write a bill of divorcement? It was because of the hardness of men's hearts. 'In the beginning it was not so'. Of course, if a man is a brutal hatchet man intent on doing murder or inflicting torture, a woman is not in bondage to stay with him. This is as valid for men also, if the roles are reversed. In the same city mentioned previously, there lived a man who often had to run from his wife. She had such a vile temper and did such violent things. One night she picked up a knife and threw it at her husband. He was standing by the door, and only just managed to whip through it in time! The blade struck the panel with such force that it stuck in and remained fixed. She would have killed him. That was only one episode, a spectacular one, but he stayed with her till she died. Those two women stayed with their husbands when neither of them were saved, that man stayed with his wife after he was saved. There is grace from on high to endure to the end; God gives power to live under all conditions.

Question: *'If the child dies, does it go to be with the Lord?'*

Answer: 2 Samuel 12. First, let it be clear that sprinkling a baby does not ensure that it will go to heaven. That idea is born of superstition. Just as though God is that kind of God! As a result of David's illicit union with Bathsheba, a baby was born, but they were not suffered to keep it, God took it. For seven days, David, loath to lose his son, fasted and prayed that they should keep the child, but it died. When it was dead, David 'changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped; then he came to his own house, and when he required, they set bread before him and he did eat'. The reason he gave for his unusual behaviour was 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me'. There is our answer. The Lord took the baby to Himself. Whatever David and Bathsheba had done, the baby had not done anything wrong, it hadn't sinned. David was quite sure the child was with the Lord and that he would go on to join it one day. That seems to be the only conclusive statement on the subject in the Scriptures. It could be elaborated upon, but beyond that all is conjecture.

Question: *'What place should family worship, or the children's daily readings take in the family life?'*

Answer: In Christian homes a child should be born into worship. The first thing to remember is that worship is primarily a spiritual exercise. Spiritual understanding is the thing to be aimed at, mental grasp must follow, but must not be the ruling passion or dominant purpose in view when training a child in worship. Before a child has mental intelligence it has spiritual awareness. It is this that has to be developed. God help us, but it is true that so many millions are damned in their cradles, by their own parents! It is impossible to start too early to train a baby. Right from the beginning, the child should enter into an atmosphere of worship and praise and prayer and Bible reading. It should have been conceived in it, born in it, bred and brought up in it. As soon as it can read, the child should become familiarized with Bible reading, and until it can read, it should be told Bible stories.

Question: *'What part ought the husband to play in the domestic side of running the house?'*

Answer: This may be a loaded question! It is not easy to give a categorical answer to this question, because of differing circumstances. Husbands and wives should be able to work out the practical answer to this between themselves, so that they please God with their arrangements. Domestication is as good for a man as it is for a woman, but a man should not be expected to de-man himself in order to attain to some woman's interpretation of his duties. If these things are worked out in love and understanding, there should be no trouble. No man should be expected to come home from work and change the babies' napkins and cook his own dinner as a matter of course. Unless there is some valid reason for it, for a woman to expect her

husband to do that is downright lazy. A woman once said to her husband, 'Here, I've had it all day, now you have it', and promptly placed the baby in her husband's arms. As an isolated incident that would be quite in order, but it was usual. Woman, you were made to bear children and to look after them. Men were not. If a woman does not wish to take the responsibilities of motherhood, she should not marry. This does not mean a man should walk out of his responsibilities, he is equally bad if he sees her in need and will not help her. What kind of a heart has he if he does a thing like that? The changing of babies' napkins and the like is not a man's job by nature, and there is no moral, spiritual, or natural law that says it should be so. The man has to do his work and he is doing it for his wife and family, he does not expect his wife to do that. Marriage is as much about having children as anything else; wives are the ones who bear them, husbands are the ones who provide for both.

That man should help in his home is a spiritual necessity, for a man can rise no higher in public than he is in private.

Question: *'What advice would you give to the couples of the church in the light of the fellowship seeking the Lord to bring forth qualities of leadership?'*

Answer: Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 9 seems to connect with the question. If a man cannot be the head of his wife and children, and lead them, plainly he is not a leader: he cannot therefore be a leader. It is as simple as that. A man must be the leader as well as the head of his wife and family; if he is not, he is disqualified from Church leadership. Now he may have a rebellious wife who is not the Lord's; if this is so and she will not follow him in the Lord, he must prove himself to be clear in the matter.

Now a word to you ladies: You have the power to make or break your husband with regard to office-bearing in the Church. Someone once said 'Behind every good man, there's a better woman'. A man can never be all God wants him to be unless his wife is with him in spirit, and sets him free to do the work to which he is called. Her calling is to stand by her husband through thick and thin. A call to a man is also a call to the wife if he is married. She is not called to the office, but he cannot abdicate his marriage to fill the office. She must therefore SUPPORT him and the office, knowing that although he may not have been in that office when they were married, it was in God's mind when she married the man. That call must take precedence over everything. If both hearts respond to it properly, all other things will be made to work together for good, and fall into line with it; that which will not must be eliminated.

Neither he nor she must scheme for office. It is ruinous to a man and a Church if his woman is constantly trying to push him or her claims in this matter. If he is destined for office and leadership, it is plain to everybody. God does not make mistakes. Pride and ambition are twins, eschew both; God elects His own leaders, He also equips them and places them. **GWN**

... Bible Study continued from Page 18:

God has given us the privilege and power of helping such into the Kingdom 'Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them'. Such promises must be used in the confidence of faith.

Some come simply seeking deliverance from sin, but

we must claim through the blood of the Lord Jesus, the pardon of all his transgressions. He thought he needed only deliverance, but you know that he needs a Saviour.

Such, then, is the minimum of truth we need to present to the awakened soul.

DH

SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY

BERNARD HULL

It is easy to see how various doctrines, which sometimes seem to conflict with one another, developed. In particular I am thinking of things related to God's dealings with us as individuals, the way He begins, continues and brings to completion His great purpose in us. Let us call this our spiritual biography, for so it is. Perhaps we could sum up our biography in four or five Bible words. Some of these have been long argued over! In some people's experience it seems that some of them happen simultaneously, instantaneously, in others there appears to be long gaps between each and each happening separately. However, let us be sure of at least one thing, true spiritual biography must contain all!

CHOSEN

There can be no doubt that all begins with God, not with us - an obvious statement, easily forgotten particularly in early spiritual life. Our God, in the tender and loving purposings of His heart decided that He would have a family which were of Him, of His nature, in His image and likeness. Not angelic, not bestial (in the best use of that word) but of His essence, of His very Spirit and life. Here is love's plan, settled as soon as it is begun because God is its originator. He does not change His mind. So it is that He chose us in His Son before the foundation of the world. We know that He called us into being (fathered our spirits) out of the depths of non-existence. I was born. God saw to it. He decided that I should be. It is true that He used my earthly mother and father, He had to, but it was of His will that I came into being, and He had thought upon it in infinite kindness.

CALLED

I have neglected to mention the awful fact of sin which had entered in. An enemy had risen up to withstand and dethrone God, and thereby ruin His benevolent purposes too. God was not altered in His resolve by this enemy though, He knew anyway. He purposed that even this enemy and his devices should be used to perfect His plan and make His own nature fully known, so that never again would rebellion surface from any created being. Love would triumph in the end and the enemy would serve.

When I came into the world I came perverted, inwardly torn, fractured. There lay within a sense of destiny, that I was meant for something great in nature, and yet I could not see that purpose. My heart was darkened, my mind charged with self-love, my best deeds were all tainted and nothing lastingly satisfied me. But to this muddled, aching heart came, at a time appointed, a Voice and a Call. It was God and it was not so much what was said as He who said it, that mattered.

That call revealed within it two main qualities of the One who called. First I knew that He was Lord, the One who commands, He who is greater than I, He who must be served

utterly without questioning. The second quality was wonderful, I knew that unworthy as I was, He who called me did so in love - He loved me. It was the call of a tender lover. Right at the beginning I knew these two qualities, but might not then have been able to define them. They were there alright though, and as I have responded to that command and wooing love-call, He has become ever clearer to my sight. His calling came through the gloom and mire of my muddled life as though they were not. It came from the realm of perfect light as though He would call me to become what already I was, in His mind's eye. It seemed that He winked at the impossibilities of ever making me what He wanted me to be, He knew that if I responded then nothing was too hard for Him.

JUSTIFICATION

As soon as I responded to His calling voice, I was enlightened somewhat about His Son Jesus' death on the cross. I knew that He bore my sins. At that time my sins were principally the things which I had done wrong and which brought such guilt to my soul. They were a weight I bore all the time. I did not then think of sin as what I was, that I was a wrong being, that understanding began to come later - perhaps I could not have borne it earlier. To know that my sins, my wrong doings, were all forgiven through faith in Jesus' blood was most wonderful. Guilt rolled away, I was accepted of God through faith in His Son, the people helping me told me I was 'justified'. I felt so too, because I had accepted the truth told me concerning His Son. I felt as if I was no longer under my inescapable sin and that now I could live. The results of my sense of acceptance with God, was a very real peace which at times issued in joyfulness. I had peace with God, and a change had been wrought in me. Light had come to me and continued to do so. With all this though, there was a sense of more to come, there must be more. This awareness was inexplicable. Within there appeared to be an incompleteness which at times surfaced and cried in my consciousness.

SANCTIFICATION

It is at this point that possibly the greatest controversies rage concerning the subject of spiritual biography. Some would say that sanctification is accomplished when we are justified, when we accept Jesus as Lord and His taking of our sins. Others would say that the only truly justified person is the one who has accepted the sentence of death upon themselves, as well as receiving the cross for their sins! Others would say that there must be a 'second' experience - it is named by different names: 'the baptism of the Spirit', 'getting a new heart', 'being entirely sanctified', and other such terms. There can be no doubt that looking seriously into the biography of men and women who have gone before us, there appears to be a common denominator. At some point after the calling of the Lord, they definitely met the Lord at a

deeper level, involving an instantaneous revelation and transformation within. It certainly relates to their inward spiritual nature rather than to the fact of their sins. It somehow settled the issue of forgiveness. It was the imparting of power to live consistently as a new being, having a new nature, with the old one dead and buried. This experience (call it by what name you will) dealt with the very citadel of self in the inward nature - self died and the wicked seed within was impaled, slain and buried out of sight. It is this which changes the inward nature. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus becomes the law of life in the heart of such a person, and the old law of sin and death that worked within was slain by that new law!

That there is an experience which corresponds to this is certain. That it is a basic part of true spiritual biography is also true. That it ought to take place very early on in our spiritual walk is also clear. God does not want us to delay from obtaining all He has for us. It is also clear that many have not obtained because they have not asked, and many have not asked because they were never told. Ignorance is not bliss in this matter, rather, it results in a half-baked Christian life.

TRIBULATION

It is probably true to say that multitudes who are blessed with being set free from the power of sin within and who begin to live unto God in power, think that all is now done! Now they shall sail through life, free from temptation, overcoming always, no trials or testings at all. Some have even gone so far as to say that they are sinlessly perfect. This is usually a temporary doctrine as pressures come that call for an adjustment of belief. Instead the phrase 'Christian Perfection' is used. 'I have been given power within and have a changed nature, and need not sin anymore. The possibility of sin remains with me though', 'He has made me perfect as a babe is perfect but I must grow on through various tasks and trials, from perfection to perfection, into His likeness'.

It always seems to me a shame that we must talk of experiences which do this and that in us. All can seem almost

mechanical and wordy but all is Him. It is the Person of the Lord who becomes nearer, clearer, more perfectly loved as we pass on. May we be saved from resting in an experience rather than in His love. Perhaps we all have erred in this matter. 'I am now the recipient of a new heart, now I'm alright'. All flows and functions properly in the context of a deepening love for Him.

Sanctification deals with the very seed of sin in our natures - it slays the old man. Tribulation, pressures, trials and testings have a ministry to perform in us under God. They deal with the weaknesses and frailties of our human nature, the misshaping which sin brought to our human nature: the hardness, the courseness, the dullness, the bluntness. This multitude of things which are not Him, in bringing about His likeness in us, have to be changed. God employs the flail of circumstances to thresh out from us these elements which mar and despoil the beauty of His likeness emerging clearly in our humanity. Tribulation does not deal with sin in us, it deals with the fibrous things in us, the twists of thought and feeling which are the results of sin. He orchestrates all, and He employs many tools in His love. By these means we are made fine bread for Him and others to eat. Sorrow is one of His tools. She waits in the wings until her time and then He moves her in for a season to do her refining work of ridding the heart of many superficial things. Suffering is another tool God uses, it too works at times opportune, to tenderise the hard hearts - no human nature becomes truly tender without suffering. Great losses, bereavements, disappointments and long delays, patience and much waiting, these and many other things have their ministry under God, that His image and likeness may be perfected in us.

This gives some measure of explanation to our lives, doesn't it? How perfectly God works. The heart taught of Him increasingly sees the ordering of His ways, the tenderness of His timings. All is decided upon and executed throughout in utter love. But oh! There are times of such joy and times when it hurts! Sorrow and joy seem to intermingle in a life going on with God. But come what may, let us let Him finish what He has begun, co-operate with Him in His wonderful design, that we might be His friends. **BH**

CALL OR COMMAND

GEORGE W. NORTH

A GREAT GULF

Concerned and careful observation leads to the conviction that there is a great and growing difference between the church as it was in the beginning, and the church as it is today. So great is this difference that it is now almost a deep and wide gulf which seems impossible to cross. Modern churches need to rediscover and embrace the things which made the early church great, and discovering them, with all speed repent, and return with all their hearts to the first things.

Churches have become so insensitive to Christ that they are largely insensible of His commands. This is bad

enough, but to worsen it, man-made ideas, seemingly scriptural and very plausible, and therefore all the more dangerous, have been substituted for God's word. Goals have been set and states foreign to Christ's heart have been blessed of men, encouraging the belief that all is right, when much is so obviously wrong. The effect of this is devastating. When the heart is set toward ends undesired by God, in the belief that, those achieved, it has done well in Christ, it damages itself: worse perhaps than that, it is also bidding fair to wreck the overall plan of Christ by misleading others. This is being done with such subtlety that the churches in general have no inkling of what is happening or that the serpent is at large in Eden.

A GREAT CRUSADING ARMY

There is no area in which this erroneous and destructive idea is more manifest than with regard to the commandment the Lord gave to His Church for the world; He said, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature - make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. That commandment is His heart laid bare for all to see, it is also a commandment never rescinded by Him. The result of such a commandment upon the early Church was dynamic, phenomenal even. Everyone that was added to the Church in those days was made to realize he or she was expected to adopt this approach to life; they saw that the Church was a crusading Church and that each one born into it was on mission. They all understood that the Churches' responsibility was everyone's personal responsibility, and that no-one should settle down in the little patch of earth where they were saved.

Before He gave the commandment for world evangelization, the Lord had shown the founding fathers of the Church exactly what they were to understand by it when it came. First He set the example himself and then by commandment sent them out all over their own country into every district and every town or village to preach the gospel to every creature. They were therefore under no misapprehension about the commandment they received from their Lord when He was risen from the dead. In His name they were to go throughout the world as they had earlier done throughout their own country and do exactly the same thing for all mankind. They understood perfectly that there was to be no settling down when their Lord left the earth; far from that they were to travel more extensively than ever before into the whole world. History testifies how wonderfully those people fulfilled their commission, the Church was a great crusading army of world conquerors and soul winners, they kept the commandment - everyone was expected by Him to do so.

Behold then this great gulf fixed between those people and the modern Church. What church among us these days is preaching that it is on a great crusade and that every other church is expected to be also. How many preachers tell their congregations that the Lord expects them to go and preach and teach throughout the world? Is it not true that the general run of teaching leaves men and women thinking their job is just to settle down and live and work in their own neighbourhood only? How many people are told from the beginning of their conversion that if they are going to follow Christ they must be prepared to leave all? Christ not only taught that men must leave sin and the world, He also said they were literally to leave home and wife and children for His sake and go out crusading. Time was, in our country, when men did that; they left home, family, occupation, everything, and embarked on crusades to the so-called holy land, following kings or causes for months and years in pursuit of an ideal. Some, indeed many of those, never returned, they laid down their lives for lost causes, in vain hope; their leaving had been final. They were taught these things, and from reading history, it appears that everyone thought it was quite right to do so. Various emotions and ideals have moved men to do this, they have joined armies, or navies, or have enlisted in right or wrong causes from time immemorial. Whether or not we may think them to be wrong or right, these people have been prepared to leave everything for the sake of the cause. It seems to be an instinctive urge in human beings to do this for men still do it to this day.

COMMANDMENTS AND PROMISES

Yet, it appears that the Church has failed to recognize this natural trait in man - on the contrary it would appear that this instinct is being stifled. The sense of crusade is gone and the cry of battle and the song of the reaper is seldom heard; have they left us? If so, let us pray it shall not be for ever. Meanwhile is it true that men are being trained to ignore the commandment of the Lord to go with Him to the battle or to the field? With notable exceptions, men are generally being taught to be good citizens and nice neighbours and to build up the fellowship and join in the church activities and come to the meetings - all these and a host of other things, all legitimate enough things in themselves, are being preached, but there are distinctly not crusade. Thinking has changed and so has ministry. The commandment has been turned into an option or dropped altogether in favour of others, such as: 'little children let us love one another', or 'building up one another in your most holy faith'. These exhortations are so true of course and vitally necessary, but they must not be allowed to replace or negate the original command. God loves the world and is very concerned about it. His resurrection orders to go into all the world and preach the gospel must not be countermanded or its power diminished. Safe jobs, nice homes, comfortable hours, giving regularly out of a nice income or surplus money, being a good husband and loving father, bringing up the children properly, becoming an elder or a deacon (all of them worthy enough motives, or harmless enough practices, and scripturally sound ideals) have become the substance of sermons and the themes of many books. These might all be called 'orders of the day', and men listen to them while the clarion call of Christ is tacitly ignored or wilfully disobeyed. Discharge of duty is not a welcome idea any more, it demands obedience: people in churches just LOVE the promises of God - see what they hold and see what they have! - but find His commandments distasteful. But God's commandments are as much linked with His purposes as are His promises - duty is a virtue, as Hebrews 2 makes clear. Perhaps we are needing to be reminded that many of God's promises were only made subject to the fulfilment of a prior command and are not

FOLLOW ME - COMMAND OR CALL?

One of the sad features of this whole situation is that by the abuse of scripture, good things are turned to bad ends. Whenever a scripture is taken up and used to disprove or deny or tone down the force of another, the end can only be bad. This is precisely what has happened in the matter of Christ's commandment to go into all the world with His gospel. Well-meaning folk, having seen the ill-effect of people running unsent, speak mostly of being called and only view the command in relationship to the call. This is a good and necessary emphasis, but if it is made in preference to insisting on obeying the command it becomes very bad indeed, the result of such preaching will always blunt the power of the command in the hearts of the hearers. It is therefore important to keep in mind when preaching on the theme of the call that it must be linked with the command. These two must never be separated, for really they cannot be, and time and care must be given to emphasizing the command above the call. That this is so is never more plainly obvious than when reading about the call of the disciples in the beginning. The Lord later called these men apostles. Each one of these men knew they had been called by Christ, and they also understood exactly what that name apostle meant and what was going to happen to them: sent one.

Who, if asked to do so, would care to distinguish between command and call in the words 'follow me'? Is it a command or a call, or is it both? It is most instructive to note that the word call is only used once in connection with the recruitment of the disciples. It is an assumption to state that they were all called, usually the phrase employed is, 'He saith unto them, follow Me'. Is that a call or a command? Undoubtedly it was both. But which was first, the call or the command? Neither the call or the command, they are delivered at one and the same time, and must be regarded as one. If it is true that what is generally believed to be a call and preached that way ought really to be considered primarily, if not completely, as a command, then in many hearts the whole concept of Christian life must be immediately placed on an entirely different footing.

GOD'S CALL = A COMMAND NOT AN INVITATION

The idea of a call - if it is right to consider the Lord's word to His disciples as a call - introduces the idea of invitation: in which case preaching should be an extension to mankind of God's desire. There are a variety of ideas in the words 'call' - 'calling'. A call can be made without words in a whole range of voices, with varying emotions in different degrees of power, all of which can convey a message to the hearer, but none of these need be an invitation. A call can also be directed to one person only, simply by mentioning just that one name and excluding all others. Samuel and Saul of Tarsus are examples of this kind of call, yet to neither of those persons was the call addressed as an invitation, neither did God have the letters RSVP in mind. To no man or woman did God ever extend an invitation to follow Him or do anything for Him, He never said at any time to anyone, 'please will you follow me?' or 'would you like to do something for me?'. Always He gave command to follow Him or to serve Him as befits His position. He has never acted in any other way but as God, nor does He give any man any other ground than this on which to think of or respond to Him.

Whether it be Adam in the beginning or any other man named in scripture since, be it Noah or Abraham or Moses or David, among the many patriarchal figures of Israel's history, each was commanded by God. Not one of them was given an invitation, God spoke to them with the authority befitting His majesty and they obeyed. Our attention is not drawn to their response to love, but to their obedience to authority - theirs was the obedience of faith to a command, not the answer to a call or an invitation. God never approached anyone with the air of a suppliant - 'will you please?'. Even His 'Come unto Me', though mostly preached as an invitation is no such thing, it is a command leaving man with no alternative but to either obey or disobey Him. Men love to be asked or invited, it suits their ideas of their own self-importance, they do not like to be commanded, commands offend their vanity. Invitations are extended primarily to desire, commandments are given directly to the will.

Paul was a man very conscious of being called and he frequently uses the idea of calling in his epistles. Of himself he says he was called an apostle. It should be noted that the words 'to be' are inserted in the text, which reads, 'called to be an apostle', but those words are not in the Greek. The words 'to be' have been added by those who think they should be there,

but sometimes added words hinder as much as they help. Surely the truth is that Paul was not called to be made an apostle, but because in the heart of God he already was an apostle. Speaking to others, this man tells them that they were called saints, and Peter adds his word to this, saying we are to make our calling and election sure. So we see that the idea of being a called-one is general throughout apostolic writings and must therefore be considered vital to God's plan as well as to human experience. That is not in question; nor is it the point - the point is whether the call of God comes to us as an invitation or a command. In view of the person who is making the call, the importance of the difference between these two positions is greater than may at first be thought, so is our response to it - it is not such a serious matter to refuse an invitation as to disobey a command. Normally an invitation is extended with the supposition or tacit understanding in mind that it may be refused with a polite excuse or because of extenuating or unforeseen circumstances. Commandment on the other hand allows no such permission, it may only be disobeyed.

GOD'S CALL = A SUMMONS TO OBEY

All callings must be considered in respect of who God is and how His relationship to men should be regarded. What He surely demands is that His slightest wish should be regarded as His command. God always approaches men and gives them commandments with the express purpose of taking command of a man's life. The factor governing everything to do with every man's personal salvation is the call of God. He chose within Himself to do certain things, He asked no-one to agree with Him, and He did all without our knowledge or aid. The gospel is news of this; it comes to us first as information of what God in Christ has accomplished for us in history, but it is also information of what He accomplished for us in Christ pre-historically. From this great factual background of pre-historic and historic truth, Paul selects certain lines of information, and in one place groups his selections together and informs us about them in these words: 'saints according to the will of God: called according to purpose: He did foreknow, He predestinated, He conformed to the image of His Son: He called, He justified, He glorified'. Before He called anyone, Paul tells us, God predestinated and conformed that one to His purpose, and that purpose could not be jeopardised. For this reason He could not leave anything to the chance behaviour of man's will and desire by poisoning everything upon his response to a call. His purposes had to be more secure than that; so He therefore determined that those who are the called should also be the commanded ones. Man could not be allowed to prejudice pre-historic determinations, he must be under command, the call is a summons to obey, not an invitation awarded to fancy.

'Abraham when he was called obeyed', with those words the writer to the Hebrews reveals the nature of the call, it was a command, and with this, Moses, in his record of the event, thoroughly agrees; God had said to Abraham 'get thee out' and he went. Abraham was not under the law of Moses to God, but he was not without law: being pre-Moses, he was pre-law, Abraham was under grace. Unlike Abraham, Paul was under the law of Moses originally, but he saw and wrote that this was unto Christ. Being saved by Christ, he passed from law to grace and received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith. Paul was under no illusion about his call, he was summoned to obey, and he knew it and says that by the

commandment of God the gospel is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. Peter it seems could not have agreed more, 'we ought to obey God rather than men', he told his examiners. So saying he testified to the power and authority under which he had lived and laboured since he had obeyed the final 'follow me' commanded him in the boat and on the shore. Calls become commands whenever the caller is God. Everything turns on apprehension of greatness and recognitions of authority as well as on acknowledgement of personages. Who is this that speaks to me? That is the key to Paul's greatness - 'Who are thou Lord?'. That is the question that marked his precipitation into salvation and apostleship; 'I am apprehended', he cried, he felt it, he knew it and with

CALLED ... COMMANDED ... CHOSEN

From that moment the discipline of obedience shaped all his life. His call took effect in him from that very day, the all-commanding power became everything in turn within him, he called it his calling. What else could he call it? What other name could he give it? Knowing these things within, he lays it all out for his beloved Corinthians in the beginning of the first epistle he wrote to them, 'ye see your calling brethren - God hath chosen, He hath chosen, God hath chosen'. Smoothly, with correctness he moves from the calling of God to the choice of God, finishing the chapter by telling them how this God that calls and chooses accomplishes His desire and purpose - 'Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption'. What glorious blending of call and choice and command is the Christ of God, even on His human side as a man it was His heredity. His mother of blessed memory was entirely commandeered for His birth by God. She consented to it wholeheartedly, feeling it to be the greatest privilege of her life, but there is no indication that she was asked or given an invitation to respond to a call. She was told what was going to happen to her and with her full consent was taken over by God. He had chosen and according to His own will and purpose He commanded her. God foreknew her, conformed her and predestinated her, He also called her (by name) and justified her by His Spirit (from the stigma of pre-marital conception, that is, from any hint of fornication), He also glorified her in the eyes of Joseph, Elizabeth and Zacharias locally, and in all generations since. Men call this the annunciation, God announced to her His intention and Mary thought 'What an unspeakable privilege'. Nowhere is it called the invitation, by no stretch of the imagination can it be called that, who will doubt it was received by Mary at first and by Joseph later as a command?

The thought of having to submit to commands is not usually accepted with relish by any free man, it is obnoxious to him. This is why we naturally prefer the word call to command, it allows us dignity; the right to choose and to exercise our inborn desires and pretentious hopes of self-government. We like to decide things according to our own personal preferences, not by giving in to devious obediences. When we obey commands we lay ourselves open to further demands, the commandeering of the whole personality, the possession of our beings - slavery - and we don't like it. But should it not be that? God makes no secret of the fact that He bought us completely, spirit, soul and body at the cross, we are not our own any more, neither can we belong to ourselves again for all eternity, we are His. That is why He comes to us with commands and not with invitations lest He feed the egotism of us.

LOVE ... LORDSHIP

We do Him ill when we present the loving side of His nature and approach men with His desires without revealing to them His Lordship and exalt His majesty and present His commands. There is no conflict between these in God and it is a sad thing when one is preferred to the other, all men must be told that independence in our relationship to God is sin. Too often 'messages' in churches are prefaced with such words as 'My children I would have you to know', or 'I desire to say to you' - uttered in gentle voice - when they ought perhaps to be prefaced with a sense of God's august presence and the tones of command. Yet God forbid that we should be left to the mercy of men and women who regard themselves to be New Testament reproductions of Old Testament prophets breathing out judgements and threatenings and slaughter. Our prayer in these days might well be, 'O God save us from fanatical extremes and wrong spirits, save us from the banalities and baubles of sentimentalists and the blows and buffetings of the censorious'. Here let us pause and invoke the words of Paul, 'I speak unto wise men, judge ye what I say'. Through all these things, Lord, lead us on a right path and bring thy people safely home. Surely the efforts of the authoritarians and the weaknesses of sentimentalists ought to cease from among us and a return to truth be initiated which shall rid the churches of beliefs and practices which Christ would disown were He in the midst, as we are told He is.

Perhaps these things would the more rapidly disappear if every one of us so saw the difference between his or her own concept of calling and Christ's, and that going and spreading should take the place of staying and settling. If we really grasped the significance of what it means to be commanded and allowed ourselves to be commandeered by God, all would change. Obedience is the important virtue, submission is its aim; John says 'this is the (churches') love of God that we keep His commandments'. Command upon command is laid up in the heart of Christ for His people, each of whom must be so related to Him that he or she hears His word to the heart. God's plan is to so lay hold of the life right from the beginning and bring it under His control that whatever He shall later say shall be taken as orders and not suggestions. This is the idea underlying James' question and command, 'hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God'. How many have hidden behind the shameful pretence of words like these, 'the Lord has not told me to go', or 'He has not called me to do that', when all the time the scriptures hold the commands - 'lift up your eyes and look on the fields', and 'pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he shall thrust forth labourers into His harvest', and 'go ye into all the world and preach the gospel ...'. The command to come and the command to follow must be eclipsed by the command to go. The words 'thrust forth' should not be overlooked nor their suggestiveness lost upon us. 'Thrust forth'? Why? Wouldn't a word do? No, the Lord knows the proneness of the human heart to resist His commandments, it is He who said 'thrust forth'. Again let it be noted that He did not say, 'request labourers to go', He knew that would be no good, some degree of force is needed to make people go. It ought not to be so of course, but all the time companies of God's people extol the virtues of answering an invitation above obeying a command and thereby make missionary service a selective calling instead of a universal command, God will have to do a lot of thrusting. Still we hear of the missionary call and sermons are preached on Isaiah 6 or Romans 12 or the call of the disciples and with

some degree of justification, but oh how we need to learn that God's calls are His claims to command and direct His servants.

CALLING = OCCUPATION NOT INVITATION

We all ought to accept the word calling as referring to an occupation or pursuit rather than being an invitation. This is why in scripture the calling and the election are so often associated, the call is the instrument of the choice and reveals the power of the will that made the choice and issued the call. In the whole realm of human activity there are some occupations in which men and women labour, which are described as callings or professions, such as medicine or surgery or portrait painting or music. These are seldom regarded or spoken of as work, or as a job, but are known as vocations, or callings, or practices. People who engage in these are usually men and women who from a very early age seem to be drawn, sometimes almost driven, by powers within themselves to become doctors or artists or architects or musicians. These persons are usually highly skilled and very gifted or talented, they seem to have inward equipment and aptitude as well as a yearning to devote themselves to their chosen life-work. They need to train themselves and be trained by others for their calling, and to do this, they give themselves willingly; those who know and observe this feel them to be under a power that seems to take command over their whole being, so that their training, though often arduous, is their delight. Although these things are entirely human and natural, such people are an ensample to us of what God means us to understand by being the called of the Lord.

JESUS WAS UNDER COMMAND

God has granted us an illuminating insight into His ways with man by having His dealings with His Son put on record. We are informed by scripture that God called His Son

out of Egypt. It is a singularly cryptic statement, possible of many interpretations, but one thing is certain, being of such tender age it is highly unlikely that Jesus either answered a call to go into Egypt or to come up out of it - he was taken there and brought out again by Joseph. Whatever the will and wishes of a child under two He was given no choice, He was taken, and if He asked 'why?' He would have been told some such thing as 'God said so'. If it be allowed that when He returned to Nazareth He could have been of an age to make His own decisions and consented with His mother and foster-father to obey the call, then it must also be allowed that when he went down to Egypt He was entirely under command and given no choice at all. Indeed the whole idea of a baby boy responding to such a call or even a command is preposterous. Jesus was under command, He did as he was told through others. He obeyed.

'LET US GO'

'Obedience', says Samuel the prophet, 'is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams'. Jesus was obedient all His life from birth to death; obedience is one of the choicest virtues, apart from which salvation is impossible for men. It commences by obedience and can only continue by the same, without obedience it can neither be had nor consummated.

Being saved, everyone's duty is to face up to the commandments of Christ and take instruction from those who have done so: John, for instance, who said 'His commandments are not grievous'. Jesus Himself also, who said, 'I know that His (Father's) commandment is everlasting life', and, 'as My Father gave Me commandment, arise let us go hence'. He left the earth with this word still on His life, 'Go ye'. It was to those who received that commandment that He said, 'Lo I am with you', He never said that to anyone else. 'Go ye', and 'lo I am with you', is another way of saying, 'Let us go'. GWN

A - Z

SMALL BIBLE WORDS

H = HELL

W. E. Vine says:

GEENNA represents the Hebrew Gê-Hinnom (the valley of Tophet) and a corresponding Aramaic word; it is found twelve times in the New Testament, eleven of which are in the Synoptists, in every instance as uttered by the Lord Himself. He who says to his brother, Thou fool, will be in danger of the 'hell of fire', (Matt. 5:22); it is better to pluck out (a metaphorical description of irrevocable law) an eye that causes its possessor to stumble, than that his 'whole body be cast into hell' (v29); similarly with the hand (v30); in Matt. 18:8,9, the admonitions are repeated, with an additional mention of the foot; here, too, the warning concerns the person himself (for which obviously the 'body' stands in Ch.5); in v8, 'the eternal fire' is mentioned as the doom, the character of the region standing for the region itself, the two being combined in the phrase 'the hell of fire' (v9). To the passage in Matt. 18, that in Mark 9:43-47, is parallel; here to the word 'hell' are applied the extended descriptions 'the unquenchable fire' and 'where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched'.

That God, 'after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell', is assigned as a reason why he should be feared with the fear that keeps from evil doing, (Luke 12:5); the parallel passage to this in Matt. 10:28 declares, not the casting in, but the doom which follows, namely, the destruction (not the loss of being, but of well-being) of 'both soul and body'.

In Matt.23 the Lord denounces the Scribes and Pharisees, who in proselytizing a person, 'make him two-fold more a son of hell' than themselves (v15), the phrase here being expressive of moral characteristics, and declares the impossibility of their escaping 'the judgement of hell' (v33). In Jas.3:6 hell is described as the source of the evil done by misuse of the tongue; here the word stands for the powers of darkness, whose characteristics and destiny are those of hell.

For terms descriptive of hell, see eg. Matt.13:42; 25:46; Phil.3:19; 2 Thess.1:9; Heb.10:39; 2 Pet.2:17; Jude 13; Rev.2:11; 19:20; 20:6,10,14; 21:8.

Note: The verb tartaroō, translated 'cast down to hell' in 2 Pet.2:4, signifies to consign to Tartarus, which is neither Sheol nor Hades nor Hell, but the place where those angels whose special sin is referred to in that passage are confined 'to be reserved unto judgement', the region is described as 'pits of darkness', RV. Editor

BIBLE STUDY (5) THE DYNAMIC OF SERVICE

DERRICK HARRISON

DIAGNOSIS OF MAN

THE SENSE OF SIN

Rom. 1:29/31

Emphasis of Charles Finney in 'Lectures on Revival' is not on the winsomeness of the Gospel, but his emphasis is upon the sin of rebellion and rejection of God's offer of mercy.

The presentation of the Gospel, which awakens a sense of need, leads to conviction of sin.

To produce conviction of sin it is imperative that we speak in definite terms of moral corruption, and of evil in its forms. We must particularise and deal faithfully with these things and yet that must never be our main objective. Sin consists in man's violated relationship to God. We are to preach not repentance but repentance towards Him

The essence of rebellion is man's hatred of God. This is THE SIN of the world.

1. There can be no true conviction of sin in its deepest sense without an understanding of God. A presentation of His character and claims is essential.

2. The main objective in all our presentation is to produce conviction of sin.

Rom. 1 - Paul reveals a dreadful picture of the unregenerate - a darkened mind; vile, unspeakable lust, unnatural passions and every form of evil in action. The apostle tells us that these are effects and not causes.

The causes are:

1. 'Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful'.

2. 'They changed the glory of God into corruption'.

3. 'They changed the truth of God into a lie'.

4. 'They did not like to retain God in their knowledge'.

Conviction of sin, therefore, will be an unveiling of the causes of things rather than an exposure of the results, however shameful they may be. We see this in the story of the Prodigal Son. His sins are dismissed in a sentence, only the cause is portrayed - the sin against the Father

The one word used in the Scripture to denote sin is unbelief. It means the rejection of God - His love, His claims, His truth. It utterly denies that He lives and loves and cares and seeks and saves. It is a total rejection of all. It is of this that in the hands of the Holy Ghost, we are commissioned to convict men and women.

Most men, when they come to God, have some sense of need. Certainly, it is not sin against God, nor could they say that it was a sense of sin against themselves or others. They seem merely to realize that they have done things which instinctively they perceive to be evil. The laws of God were written on their heart, perhaps almost effaced, but a standing witness against the violation of their conscience.

We need not be discouraged if, at the beginning, the seeker has little spiritual conception of sin. The cry 'Father, I have sinned against Thee', will come later. As Martin Luther says, 'I never knew repentance until I learned it from the wounds of Jesus'.

How shall we present the subject of sin in such a way as

to produce a genuine conviction of sin?

I. SIN AS IT AFFECTS OURSELVES

(Prov. 8:36)

Generally, man's first understanding of sin is through its effects upon himself. Men see the evil consequences of sin rather than the sin itself. 'The wages of sin is death' is a sharp arrow into the heart of the one who is keenly aware of his own condition. Sin often brings a man to the precipice and hearing the Word of God may well turn him to God.

We must emphasize the terrible effects of sin. Such sin only pays its wages in the currency of death, but causes an eternal separation from God. The deeper aspect of sin is against a Holy God, separating Him from us, and needing a sacrifice.

2. SIN AS IT AFFECTS OTHERS (Hab. 2:12:6,15)

Many a man has become a seeker of salvation because of its evil effect upon others. Scriptures abound with illustrations. All the main manifestations of sin are thus. By its fruits the evil tree can be known. We need therefore to express in incisive language, the devastating cruelties caused by the wickedness of men, ie effect of a vile temper, or a lustful heart.

Here we have a stepping-stone to a higher truth. When a man has been thus convicted of sin's effect on others, it is not difficult to discover to him its awful and terrible meaning. Let us not lose such an opportunity.

3. SIN AS A TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW (Luke 15:18)

The previous two points are stepping-stones to something higher and more thorough. Sin, as declared by the Word of God, declares it a transgression of His Law as written upon the heart and conscience of mankind. The Holy Ghost can swiftly convict the most ignorant person of breaking the laws of God written upon his darkened heart.

4. SIN AGAINST THE FATHER'S LOVE (Luke 15:18)

Sin is not only breaking of God's laws, but of the heart of God. In the story of the Prodigal Son - take the fact of the Father out of it, and the picture collapses. If the boy had no father to return to, where would he go? The fact of the son proves the fact of the father. To demand a proof of the Father's existence is something akin to sacrilege.

'Knowing God, they glorified Him not as God' - as with the story here. Men desire not God. Men are not thankful; greedy, but not grateful.

If the story is true in its sinister details, it is also true in its most beautiful one - the existence of a loving Father in Heaven.

Despising love is the most cruel thing on earth; it is the most unpardonable thing; it is brutal beyond reckoning. Love rejected is the acme of evil. This is the sin of humanity.

Consider further on the subject of the nature of the love of God.

Titus 3:4 and Eph. 2:4 - four words - 'kindness', 'love', 'mercy', 'grace', speak of the four aspects of love:

a. **Forbearing Love (Rom. 2:4)** - Love that hesitates to punish, waits to be gracious, hopes against hope, lingers with the sword of justice.

b. **Sacrificial Love (John 3:16)** - The Love which gives its best for the salvation of the worst and most uncomely.

c. **Practical Love (Titus 3:5)** - The Love that provides a mighty regenerating power and gives the Holy Ghost to sanctify and renew.

d. **Righteous Love (Titus 3:7)** - The Love which, rather than be false to justice will suffer and bleed and die, and so make all its promises forever secure.

Perhaps the Prodigal, as he returned home, thought of the prophets' words - Isaiah 1:2/3 - and yet again - Jeremiah 2:12/13.

It is possible for a man, who hitherto knew nothing about the gospel, to understand, believe, and to feel the sense of sin, having been exposed to the truth of the Gospel. It does not take long for a heart prepared of the Holy Ghost to be truly

THE MINIMUM OF TRUTH

Rom. 10:6/8

Ignorance concerning God and the facts of the Gospel. The use of such words as Atonement, Redemption, Reconciliation, Regeneration, Holy Spirit, and indeed all the great words of Scripture are almost unintelligible. The hearer will have little or no knowledge of the Bible. The mention of Abel, Noah, Abraham, or indeed Christ Himself, convey little to the mind.

There is no subject that needs more reflection, study, prayer and painstaking enquiry than this.

We will assume that the inquirer is a genuine seeker, with a vague deliverance from sin, and salvation in the life to come.

1. TO PRESENT, IN THE WORDS OF SCRIPTURE, THAT ASPECT OF SALVATION WHICH EXACTLY ANSWERS TO THE EXACT NEED OF THE SEEKER (John 14:10)

We must state the truth of the nature of salvation. At the same time, we should take great care to follow upon the lines along which the inquirer has been awakened. If he is burdened about judgement to come, this is the line we should take him in the Scriptures. If some person comes deeply concerned about deliverance from the chains of lust, we must deal with that matter. Let our presentation be simple and definite, and presented in such a way that the penitent sees clearly the possibility of immediately receiving salvation as a gift.

The tendency of almost every seeker is to think that through a gradual experience he will drift into a gradual experience of a very gradual salvation. Salvation is something to be had now.

In presenting this truth it is well to make the seeker read it as expressed in the words of Scripture and, if possible, memorise the passage.

2. A CLEAR AND SIMPLE INSTRUCTION OF GOD AS FATHER AND ANSWERED BY PRAYER (Matt. 7:11)

We pass naturally from the gift to the Giver. Here is the second aspect of truth to present to the inquirer - His existence, power, and above all, the willingness to hear and answer prayer.

To present instructions as to God's existence, nature

and claims to one who has not known such things, care must be taken to eliminate all truth not necessary for the immediate matter in hand. If there is such a personal God, He surely MUST answer prayer. Put the matter to the test. Read and carefully explain Matthew 7:11: direct the heart solely to the truth contained there. Insist that the inquirer test the matter.

Keep to the simple, single idea that God will hear and answer and give what we ask Him for.

3. INTELLIGENT INSTRUCTION ON THE SUBJECT OF SIN (John 9:31)

There is a blessed gift to be had. There is a blessed God to give to him that asketh. Is there any reason why we cannot receive? When questioned, most will see no reason at all, if a man asks sincerely and with good intentions, why God should not answer him. We must now show them the separating power of sin.

Isa. 59:1/2

We must now find along which lines there is a sense of sin, if at all. Use the Word of God freely and fearlessly. Do not be afraid they will not understand it but go back to the point that sin is a separating thing. God cannot hear until this is remedied. Insist upon it.

We use the word sin in a four-fold sense - denoting its guilt, its acts, its habits and its in-being or nature. A seeker, though having no understanding of sin, yet may realize it as either something damaging to himself or to others. Never rest until a man has a conception of sin against God. Sin is not merely a disease, it is an alienating thing. It excludes all communion with a holy God, until it has been recognized, confessed, self-judged and dealt with by the great Sin-bearer.

All consciousness of sin in habit, act and in-being should be observed and used at once to convict of guilt.

4. INSTRUCTION AS TO THE CROSS OF CHRIST (Heb. 9:27/28; Isa. 53:6)

We need to remember that it is not necessary to tell all the details of Christ's life, death and resurrection. The fact of Christ's atoning death and its intrinsic purpose and value are all that is necessary for our purpose.

Faith in the Saviour's blood is the mighty secret of our salvation. Awakening, enlightening, repentance are only steps to this consummating step - faith in a crucified Saviour.

On this point, the enemy of souls seeks to deceive and delude. We need to present the truth by means of simple illustrations. To one, we may speak of the blood as removing stains of condemnation; to others, we may present the cross as a vicarious sacrifice; to another, Christ hearing our sins like the scapegoat; to another, the healing of the wounds and poison of sin; to another, redemption through the blood.

Take nothing for granted, never rest until assured that the penitent is resting in the blood of Christ.

'I am convinced that a simple and lucid presentation of these four facts - God and His Gifts, Sin and its Remedy - are all that are required to enlighten unto salvation any soul whose heart has been prepared by the Holy Ghost in places of sin, suffering and woe'.

We should not be discouraged if, in the case of those who have never heard before, there seems almost no sense of sin, and if they apprehend no more than the first two truths - God and His Gift. Above all, do not let us say 'tomorrow'. Salvation is always 'today'.

Continued at the bottom of Page 10 . . .

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