

The Sword AND Staff

“Preach the Word” (II Timothy 4:2) • “Feed the Flock” (I Peter 5:2)

“A MORE EXCELLENT WAY” (A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13)

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THE CHURCH at Corinth was a church grievously beset by sin and many problems. The apostle Paul in the epistles of 1 and 2 Corinthians (as well as in another epistle the Holy Spirit has not chosen to preserve for us, 1 Corinthians 5:9) confronts the problems. The problems are more particularly highlighted in 1 Corinthians. In writing to churches, it was Paul’s custom usually to start by saying something personal and complimentary about the intended recipients. In writing to the Corinthians, he was hard pressed in doing this. There were too many bad things that glaringly obstructed his view. However, he was able to go behind the unlovely picture and come up with something good to say. “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that you come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:4-7).

“Puffed Up” About Spiritual Gifts (and Other Things)

He compliments them in reference to the things of God, grace—grace in reference to salvation and grace in reference to spiritual gifts (not for anything personally emanating from them). Instead of being humble and thankful, the Corinthians were “puffed up” about many things; yes, even “puffed up” about spiritual gifts (thinking that having certain spiritual gifts made them superior to others, among them being the ability to speak in “tongues”—other languages). In chapter 4, verse 7, Paul “proddingly” asked, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not re-

ceive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

Love (1 Corinthians 13), The “More Excellent Way”

After dealing with some problems the house of Chloe had told him about as they visited him in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 1:11ff; 16:8), Paul responds to some matters the church had written him about (1 Corinthians 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; etc.). First Corinthians 13, the chapter that is the focus of our study in this article, is sandwiched in between chapters dealing with questions involving spiritual gifts. In fact, 1 Corinthians 13 is itself about spiritual gifts and more in particular about the gift of the Spirit Himself and the predominate fruit He produces in the surrendered life (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Galatians 5:22, 23), love (1 John 4:12,13). After listing nine different spiritual gifts in chapter 12 and giving a wide overview of the spectrum of gifts, Paul says, “But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” There was something more wonderful than their inordinate preoccupation with spiritual gifts, even being “puffed up” about them, and that was love. It is the “more excellent way.”

Agapao (**agape**), the love of devotion, and *phileo*, the love of emotion, are the words for love found in the New Testament. **Agape** (noun) is the word used in this 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians. We don’t fully understand why the King James scholars translated **agape** with the word “charity” here (and 28 times altogether in the New Testament). However, they seem to always use it in speaking about human beings and never translate it “charity” when referring to God.

Now let us take a look at this great and wonderful chapter on love.

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially *SPEAKING...*

IN CHRISTIANITY we must hear before we are able to see.

Non-moral issues become moral issues if they destroy our fellowship with Christ and fellow-Christians.

Joy is happiness intensified and overflowing.

If you begin your day with a quiet time with God, your day is more likely to be tranquil.

Practice makes perfect that which is practiced.

If truth is not looked upon as absolute and unique, it actually means no more to us than error.

A lot of kneeling keeps us in good standing with God.

We must have love to appreciate and further comprehend and appreciate love (Ephesians 3:17-19).

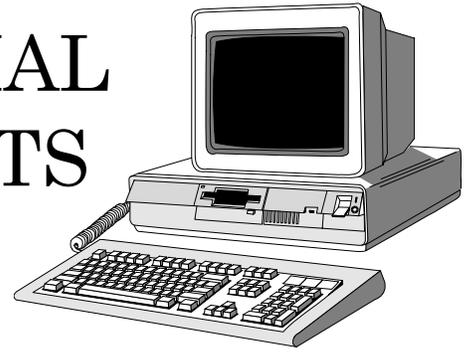
People who are the most unloving need love more than anyone else.

Read the Bible every day, and pray, to keep the devil away.

You cannot lead others where you will not go.

Indifference to sin is a sin.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



PAUL'S PUNGENT WAY OF MAKING A POINT

WITH THE WORD “finally,” the apostle Paul seems ready to conclude his epistle to the Philippians (Philippians 3:1). Then thoughts of other matters that needed to be written enter his mind, and he puts closing the letter on “hold.” Judaizers were a constant problem facing the early church. They were professed Christians who sought to bring the church back under the Law of Moses. What Paul says in Philippians 3:2-8 has them, and other Jews, as a backdrop to his thoughts. The church needed to be warned about them. Read this section.

In Paul's digression, he warns, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.” It seems that dogs for the most part were not of good repute among the Jews. “Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whole [harlot], or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God” (Deuteronomy 23:18). Even in the New Testament they are used to illustrate that which is bad (Matthew 7:6; 2 Peter 2:22; Revelation 22:15). The Jews commonly called Gentiles “dogs.” Here the apostle turns the table on the Jews and calls them “dogs.” As far as Paul was concerned, that's what they were in disrupting the unity and purity of the church.

In contrast with the Jews, Paul asserts, “For we [Christians] are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” In God's sight, the church is the Israel of God today (Galatians 6:16; 1 Corinthians 10:18), and a Jew is not one who is one outwardly, but one whose circumcision is of the heart (Romans 2:28, 29; Romans 9:8). Physical circumcision (Galatians 5:6; 6:15) and emphasis on the physical characterized much of the Old Testament and what the Judaizers had to say. If Paul had wanted to go that route, and trust in the flesh, he certainly had a prestigious pedigree to put on display. What he wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:12 would have been impressive to the fleshly mind Judaizers, but he said that they should listen to him as a “fool” speaking. Read what he had to say about his background here in Philippians 3:4-6, too. However, he cuts short what he is saying with, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”

Then he further rejoins with this emphatic statement, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but *dung*, that I may win Christ.” Christ was everything to Paul. He strongly declares this in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in

the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” And anything that competed with this was regarded by him as “dung” (and especially in this context talking about the Judaizers).

The meaning of the word “dung” is quite interesting, as Paul pungently makes use of it. The etymology of the word, we are told, has its roots containing the word “dog” and “throw” (or an off scouring). A wide range of uncomely associations are brought to mind in the use of this word. The most gross is that represented in the King James translation, “dung,” or more exactly, excrement, dog manure. Others see in it an off scouring from dogs or that which has been thrown from the table to dogs; while others

If Jesus Came to Your House

If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two,
If he came unexpectedly, I wonder what You'd do.

Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room to such an honored Guest,
And all the food you'd serve to Him would be the very best,

And you would keep assuring Him you're glad to have him there.
That serving Him in your own home was joy beyond compare.

But when you saw Him coming, would you meet Him at the door
With arms outstretched in welcome to your Heavenly Visitor?

Or would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in,
Or hide some magazines and put the Bible where they'd been?

Would you turn off the radio and hope He hadn't heard
And wish you hadn't uttered that last, loud, hasty word,

Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?

And I wonder, If the Savior spent a day or two with you,
Would you go right on doing the things you always do?

Would you keep right on saying the things you always say?
Would life for you continue as it does from day to day?

Would your family conversation keep up its usual pace,
And would you find it hard each meal to say a table grace?

Would you sing the songs you always sing and read the books you read
And let Him know the things on which your mind and spirit feed?

Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you'd planned to go,
Or would you maybe change your plans for just a day or so?

Would you be glad to have Him meet your very closest friends,
Or would you hope they'd stay away until His visit ends?

Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on.
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?

It might be interesting to know the things that you would do
If Jesus Christ in person came to spend some time with you.

—By Lois Blanchard Eades

think of the word as simply representing garbage or refuse. Then many modern translations have settled for a more sanitized word, “rubbish.” Regardless how we literally look at the word, the idea is that of utter worthlessness and disgust. And since this word translated “dung” involves dogs, we wonder if it could in some way refer back to the first of this chapter, Philippians 3:2, where Paul says, “Beware of dogs.”

Paul's surrender and commitment to Christ is most impressive. He did not hesitate to give up all for him. There was salvation in no other. Likewise, let us not hesitate to follow his example, looking upon that which we have left behind as being no better than “dung” that we might know Christ and the power of his resurrection in our lives. □



What If God...

What if God wouldn't take the time to bless us today because we didn't take the time to thank Him yesterday?

What if God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we didn't follow Him today?

What if we never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when God sent the rain?

What if God took away the Bible tomorrow because we would not read it today?

What if God took away His message because we failed to listen to His messenger?

What if God hadn't sent His only begotten Son because He wanted us to pay the price of sin?

What if the door of the church was closed because we didn't open the door to our hearts?

What if God stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to live and care for others?

What if God would not hear us today because we would not listen to Him?

What if God answered our prayers the way we answer His call to service?

What if God met our needs the way we give Him of our lives?—*Selected*



EDITORIAL

Byways

“ADVICE I WOULD GIVE A NEW CHRISTIAN”

RECENTLY this writer was involved in an informal series of group discussions on “advice I would give a new Christian.” He led the discussions and received the feedback from the others, which proved very interesting and helpful. We would like to share some of the thoughts we gathered and gleaned from these discussions. It is our conviction that many new Christians fail to get off to a good start in their new life and consequently are stunted and dwarfed in their development. They never realize their potential and don’t become the people that Christ intended for them to be, although they wear his name.

What is a Christian?

Before we get into the advice proper, perhaps it would be good to ask, “What is a Christian?” To simply put it in a “nutshell,” a Christian is one who believes Christ was God incarnate and has unconditionally surrendered himself to His will. Galatians 3:27 tells us exactly when we can be identified as a Christian through faith, “For as many of you as have been baptized [immersed] into Christ have put on Christ.” We therewith know forgiveness (Acts 2:38), have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ and now can be called a Christian. With Paul we should be able to say, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

And the word “Christian” means Christlike. With the imputed righteousness of Christ we have been forgiven (2 Corinthians 5:21). Now this righteousness, or Christlikeness, is to be lived out in our lives as we become and are like him. We are Christlike when we are like Christ.

But what was Christ like? What is involved here? Perhaps the following Scriptures will be helpful in understanding this.

- **Walk as he walked:** “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6).
- **Follow his steps:** “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again...” (1 Peter 2:21-23).
- **Walk in love:** “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us...” (Ephesians 5:2).
- **Purifying oneself as he is pure:** “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure...And ye know that he was manifested to take

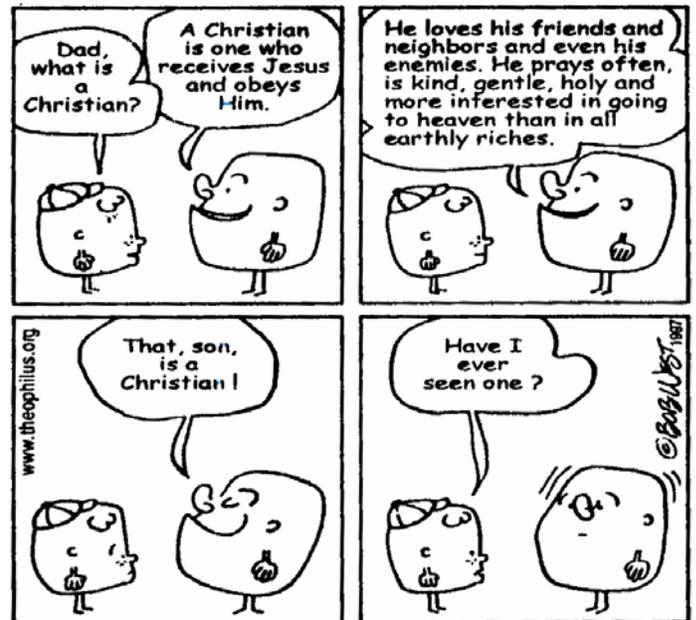
away our sins; and in him is no sin” (1 John 3:3,5).

● **Meek and lowly, gentle:** “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart...” (Matthew 11:29; Read 2 Corinthians 10:1 also).

● **Having the mind of Christ; humility, being a servant:** “Look not every man on his own things [selfish interests], but every man also on the things of others [concern for others]. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...But [he] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in the fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:4-8). “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Also read John 13:1-17.

● **He went about doing good:** “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost [Spirit] and with power: who went about doing good...” (Acts 10:38).

● **Love others as Christ has loved us:** “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35).



Have a Quiet Time

First, we highly recommend that the new Christian, and every Christian, have a “quiet time” to be alone with the Lord every day. Psalms 46:10 says, “Be still, and know that I am God...” The Lord Jesus Christ saw the need and desirableness of this. Repeatedly we read of him withdrawing from others to be by himself alone with the Heavenly Father. Mark 1:35 reads, “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” Another verse says, “And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up

into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone” (Matthew 14:23). Other verses could be cited. Jesus taught, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet...” (a closed place, away from the crowd), Matthew 6:6.

During this quiet time, read the Bible, meditate and pray. In reading the Bible, God speaks to us. In praying, we talk to God. This quiet time will be an anchor for your soul every day that you live to help you be focused, steadfast and faithful to the Lord. You will derive spiritual strength that otherwise you would not have.

The Public Assembly and Worship

Hebrews 10:25 admonishes us, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Faithfulness in attending the public assembly of the church and really worshipping is not optional in being a Christian. It is a “must” for the able-bodied, as well as being a very special privilege. Here we have fellowship with those of like precious faith while engaged in worship and learning more from God’s Word. It is encouraging to know that we are not alone and that there are others who are really striving to do what is right and please the Lord.

And in this assembly each Lord’s day we partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32). This really should be an unparalleled experience, and should be entered into as such with the utmost respect and discernment. It is a time of the most serious contemplation, self-examination and resolve. It is a communion. We draw near to the “old rugged cross.” Our minds are focused upon the one upon the cross, as we discern his body and his blood. It is a very sobering experience, and consequently we go forth renewed in spirit to serve Him. It is a memorial, and more than a memorial, as we are made to never forget the price paid for our salvation. Therefore, let us never forsake the Lord’s Table. In doing so, we will never forsake the Lord.

Attitude toward the World

The apostle John wrote, “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). He also wrote earlier in this same epistle, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17). In the same vein of thought, the apostle Paul admonished, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). Further implementing this thought, the writer James questions his readers with the prodding words, “Know ye not that the

friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Let us never forget the truths taught in these verses of Scripture. If we do, we are in trouble. The people of the world march to a different drum beat than that of Christians. For the most part, they do not think and act the way we do. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are mirrored in their “value” system. They are children of this world, largely living for the flesh and just for today. A person’s goal in life, his aspirations, his entertainment, his music, or even the way he (or she) dresses are all indicative of where he is “coming from.” And we should always be aware that even community standards are not necessarily the standards of Christ. Don’t be afraid to stand on your own two feet. Be an independent thinker. Remember. God has “delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13).

Giving and Alms Deeds

Dear fellow-Christian, from the very beginning in your Christian walk you should practice liberality in giving, and consciously and continually be on the alert for opportunities for good works. You are the object of God’s grace. You have freely received and you should freely give. The early church laid aside on the first day of the week as God had prospered them (1 Corinthians 16:2). The Jews under the law gave a tenth, but Christianity is more wondrous and glorious. We look to the cross for our motivation in giving, and that goes beyond the basement level of a tithe. Regardless, God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). There is nothing stingy about Christianity and we shouldn’t be stingy. Jesus in a beatitude, surprisingly not recorded in the gospels, said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Jesus “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). This vividly characterized his life while here, and it is understood that this will be our driving motivation in life, too. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord repeatedly spoke about “*when* thou doest thine alms” (Matthew 6:1-4), not “*if*” you do them, but “*when*” you do them. Paul exhorted the Galatian Christians, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). Matthew 25:31-46, with the Great Day of Judgment in view, graphically illustrates that this is a very important part of a Christian’s life. Yes, to be a Christian, we must be Christlike. Therefore, let us always consciously be on the lookout for opportunities to do “good.”

Your Friends and Associates

In “advice I would give a new Christian” the matter of friends and associates was brought up as something that should be considered. This is very important. It is made emphatic in the words highlighted by the apostle

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EDITORIAL *Byways*

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Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Be not deceived: evil-communications [companionships] corrupt good manners [morals].” In the verse right before this one, he spoke of the “let us eat and drink” and be merry philosophy of life. To be close associates of people whose “value” system (or lack of one) is like this, is to have their views rub off on us. It has been said that water seeks its own level and that birds of a feather flock together. So choose your friends and associates wisely. May they be the kind who will build you up and not tear you down, or be a stumbling block in any way.

Psalms 1:1-3 reads, “Blessed is the man that *walketh* not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor *standeth* in the way of sinners, nor *sitteth* in the seat of the scornful [the wayward impact and downward spiral experienced in associating with such people]; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

Yes, we should always have a pleasant and cordial disposition toward all people, but our primary friendships should be with those of like precious faith (moral and decent people). We can avoid pitfalls and help one another on the way to heaven.

Don't Ever Give Up

All parents have gone through similar experiences with their children. As babies and toddlers making their first efforts at learning to walk, they unceremoniously fall on their faces. But do they despair, and just lie there, thinking they will never learn how to walk? It never enters their minds. They are up and “at it” again. Likewise, as new Christians you will have similar experiences spiritually. The devil will trip you and you will mess up, even fall. But just don't lie there. Don't give up, thinking you will never make a go of it in being a Christian. Get up. The Lord will be there. He will give you a hand and walk with you as you learn how to walk. You can make a “go” of it and be a real Christian. If we don't “give up,” the Lord will never “give up” on us.

Remember that John said, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8, 9). Remember these assuring words found in Hebrews 4:14-16 and press on: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to

help in time of need.” Then Hebrews 7:25 reads, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Closing Comments

These are just some of the several things that entered into our discussion on “advice I would give to a new Christian.” As a new Christian you have entered into the greatest and most wonderful life that can be lived, “having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8). Yes, Christ came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), and that we “might have life” and that we “might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Consequently “all the promises in him [in Christ] are yea, and in him Amen...” (2 Corinthians 1:20). And with the blessed assurance of Acts 2:38 having been made our very own, we know that our past sins have been forgiven and that with the gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us, we are on our way to heaven (Ephesians 3:15-21). Therefore, let us faithfully press onward and upward. We trust this “advice” we have given has been helpful. We look forward to seeing you in heaven someday. □



“A MORE EXCELLENT WAY” *(A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13)*

(Continued from Page 1)

I. THE FUTILITY OF RELIGION WITHOUT LOVE (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

- A. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (verse 1)**

Tongues Means Languages

Paul deals with tongues to start with. It seems the Corinthians were putting a lot of emphasis on the gift of speaking in tongues. They could ostentatiously make a display of such a gift, speaking in a language they had never learned before. By saying, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,” Paul is showing that indeed an intelligent spoken language is in mind, and not some jargon or emotional jibber-jabber. The phenomenon on the Day of Pentecost very clearly shows that “tongues” has reference to human languages (Acts 2:4-12). In 1 Corinthians 14:21, Paul likewise makes clear that he is talking about a human language when he quotes from Isaiah 28:11 and 12, “In the law [O. T., Isaiah] it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.” Here Isaiah has the Chaldean language (the language of Babylon) in mind, as the Jews would hear this language as the judgment of God was coming down upon them.

The Futility of Tongues without Love

Though a person spoke in all of the languages of the world and heaven, even eloquently, and had not love, it would amount to nothing more than “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” The “sounding brass” refers to two pieces of unwrought metal being hit together. “Tinkling cymbal” refers to two pieces of hollowed out metal being banged together. In other words, speaking in tongues would be no more meaningful and pleasant to hear, than the clanging and banging of rough and untempered metal together. Without love, speaking in another language would be just so much noise. Love is the important thing.

B. “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [love], I am nothing” (verse 2).

Even with More Valuable Spiritual Gifts, Without Love We Are Nothing

Having hit head-on their frivolous preoccupation with tongues, Paul now includes other spiritual gifts to get his point across. He expands his illustration to include gifts that would benefit the church more than tongues. The gift of “prophecy” is highlighted. Tongues and prophesying are put in contrast one with the other in chapter 14, with prophesying presented as being the more desirable gift (the word “unknown” is not in the Greek New Testament). “Prophecy” means to foretell and forthtell. And for the purposes of his argument here, his reference to “prophecy” becomes even more impressive when he lists “understand all mysteries, and all knowledge.” Corresponding with the twofold meaning of prophecy, this could point to (1) foretell (“understand all mysteries”) and (2) forthtell (“understand...all knowledge”), or this could mean two more distinct gifts of the Spirit. Either way, his conclusion is the same about love. Then he tops it all off with “faith.” This can refer to spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3, 6), or to faith in the regular sense of the word (Hebrews 11:6). Regardless, even if we had all of these gifts that exceed tongues in value (and had them combined), topped by faith, and didn’t have love, he emphatically says we “are nothing.” Our religion is futile.

C. “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing” (verse 3).

Bestowing All of Ones Possessions Of No Value Without Love

According to 1 John 3:17, if we don’t respond to a glaring need there is a question mark about our love. Thus John admonishes, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (3:18). Giving is normally an act of love. But Christianity demands that our motives be right (Matthew 6:1,2), and consequently John adds “in truth.” The gift without the giver is bare. Even “though I be-

stow [distribute, dole out bit by bit until all is gone] all my goods to feed the poor,” and it is not done in love, religiously “it profiteth me nothing” as far as God is concerned.

The Ultimate Gift of Self in Martyrdom

The “goods” have all been given, all that a person has, and now Paul takes his illustration a step further, the ultimate giving of self, and the giving of self in martyrdom; not just any martyrdom, but “though I give my body to be burned.” Certainly the giving of Christ to be crucified was the ultimate expression of love, whether from the viewpoint of God (John 3:16) or the Son of God. Jesus said to His disciples, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). This is beyond question in what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us. But conceivably and hypothetically, a person could go through all of this to die and it not be motivated by love. In that case, it would be of no profit to him in the sight of God. Love is what really matters.

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Love Personified

Having established the absolute necessity of love, Paul now lays out the characteristics of love before us. Here love is personified (spoken of as if it were a person). This shouldn’t be hard for us to grasp for John said, “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). Likewise we could fittingly replace the word “love” with “Christ” and it would beautifully impact us and get Paul’s point across. Or even better, fitting in with the apostle’s purpose in writing, how nice it would be to be able to put the name of the Corinthians (or our name) every where the word “love” is found; that they (we) would be an embodiment or reflection of each and every one of these characteristics in their (our) lives.

A. Positive Characteristics: “Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind...” (verse 4a)

“Suffereth Long”

This word translated “suffereth long” is elsewhere rendered “be patient,” “is longsuffering,” and “patiently endured” (KJV). Where there is no love, it is easy to become impatient. The Corinthians surely needed a little more of this characteristic in their personal relationships, considering the problems disrupting the church.

“Is Kind”

Our English word “kind” in its origin seems to be related to our word “kin.” Perhaps we could say that in being kind, we treat others like they are our kin (kindred). We are cordial and friendly disposed toward one another. This would harmonize with the meaning here, being considerate with a benevolent attitude toward others. Ephesians 4:32 reads, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Yes,

(Continued on Next Page)

“A MORE EXCELLENT WAY” (A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13)

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Romans 12:10 says “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” Someone has said that if you are not kind, you are the wrong kind.

B. Negative Characteristics: “Charity [love] envieth not; charity [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity...” (verses 4b-6a)

“Envieth Not”

Now beginning a series of what love is not, or does not do, Paul states, “Love envieth not.” In other words, love is not jealous. It is not jealous of other’s spiritual gifts (as was the case at Corinth) or other’s good fortune, well-being or blessings. As Paul said in the chapter right before, “...that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (12:25, 26). There is no room for jealousy here.

“Vaunteth Not Itself”

Then from the position of those who might have a “coveted” spiritual gift, viewed by some as being superior and making them superior, they are reminded that love “vaunteth not itself.” It is not arrogant, vain-glorious or boastful. As Paul said earlier in 1 Corinthians 4:7, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” They should have remembered and we should always remember that God is the author of “every good and perfect gift” (James 1:17). Humility and thanksgiving are always in order.

“Is Not Puffed Up”

Overlapping and further extending the thought of vaunting itself, Paul says that love “is not puffed up.” Four times the expression “puffed up” is found in 1 Corinthians (4:18, 19; 5:2; 13:4). Among other things, they were “puffed up” in connection with religious factions surrounding the personalities of men and supposed superior spiritual gifts. But what we read in Philippians 2:3 should eliminate once and for all attitudes like those besetting the church at Corinth. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” And as Paul says later in 1 Corinthians 16:14, “Let all your things be done with charity [love].” In following these noble admonitions, problems like those at Corinth become non-existent.

“Doth Not Behave Itself Unseemly”

Love “doth not behave itself unseemly.” Here he seems to be saying that love is not rude or impolite.

This is not the way love acts, responds or reacts. It ever wants to be, and seeks to be, respectful and courteous to all men (1 Timothy 5:1, 2; Titus 3:2). It stays within the bounds of propriety. There is the display of good manners. It is civil.

“Seeketh Not Her Own”

Here the direct opposite of love is dealt with, selfishness. Love does not insist on having its own way about everything. It neutralizes selfishness, and self interests, turning such inordinate feelings away from self to the well-being of others. This fits right in with what Paul earlier admonished in this epistle, “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth” (10:24). This Old English rendering, “wealth,” highlights *weal* as opposed to *woe*, i.e. *weal*-th. We seek another’s well-being before our own. This truth is

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BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. What place in the Bible is described as “a land flowing with milk and honey”?
2. Where are three songs in the Bible written by Moses?
3. Who were the first people to confront the children of Israel in battle after they left the land of Egypt?
4. Who were the original inhabitants of Jerusalem before it became an Israelite city?
5. The city of Jerusalem was in the bounds of the land given to which tribe of Israel?
6. Although David intensely desired to build a temple for God, why was he not allowed to do this?
7. Which psalm is regarded as David’s prayer of repentance after committing the sin of adultery with Bathsheba?
8. How much did Solomon have to pay for each chariot and horse that he got out of Egypt?
9. Nahum prophesied of God’s judgment coming upon what city and people?
10. Which is the shortest book in the Old Testament?
11. What did Jairus’ daughter and the woman with an issue of blood have in common?
12. Out of whom did Jesus cast seven devils (demons)?
13. What happening moved the Sanhedrin to decisively conclude that Jesus must be put to death?
14. In the week that Jesus taught daily in the temple leading up to his crucifixion, where did he spend the nights?
15. Who was this man Malchus mentioned in the New Testament Scriptures?
16. What is the only book in the New Testament wherein the word “love” is not found?
17. Of whom did Paul say that every time he remembered them he thanked God for them?
18. What law does James in his epistle call a “royal law”?
19. What is said in the book of Hebrews that indicates that this book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D.?
20. The apostle John in his epistles wrote that he had “no greater joy than to hear” what?

(NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper)

READERS'

...Response

APOLOGY: Please accept our humble apology for slowness in getting correspondence answered. "We" have no staff of secretaries, etc. to handle such, and this is done by the "editor" as time allows. Be it known that you are sincerely appreciated. □

SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ *"Please send me another book, NOBODY LEFT BEHIND. Thanks. This is one of the greatest books I've ever read—very informative and Scriptural."*

■ *"Thank you so much for sending us our previous order of the wonderful book, NOBODY LEFT BEHIND. After reading it, we decided that each family in our small congregation would be well served to have it's own copy...So, if you will, please send us six (6) more. We assure you they will be put to good use..."*

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"Thanks for your warm felt words, writing the articles so simple, even a small child will understand..."

VIRGINIA:

■ *"I enjoy your paper so much because it is truth..."*

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READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

■ "I enjoy reading your articles in *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Keep up the good work. I would like to order the book *NOBODY LEFT BEHIND*. I would like to have 5 copies..."

"Thank you again for writing articles that will help us grow in the Lord. Keep it up..."

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■ "I would love to receive your publication. I have read several of your past issues that were given to me by a dear brother in Christ. Please send..." (E-mail)

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■ "Take us off your mailing list. Thank you."

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■ "Thank you so much for your publication, *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I am impressed with the Bible-based teaching! May God bless your ministry through its use throughout the world.

I wish to ask for a copy of *NOBODY LEFT BEHIND* by Brother Elliott. Enclosed find a check...(wish it could be more!).

NEBRASKA:

■ "Thank you for all your hard work."

■ "I should have written sooner and haven't. I really enjoy your paper. Please keep it coming. Please continue to do the Lord's work.

"I also want to order the book *NOBODY LEFT BEHIND*..."

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■ "I know this isn't enough. I know that it's long overdue. I appreciate your paper more than I can tell you."

■ "We've enjoyed receiving *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for many years. There's probably never been a time when the truth was needed more than today.

"We congratulate you and encourage all involved in this important work.

"Thanks again!"

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MEXICO:

■ "May God continue to bless you, dear brother! Before anything else, I want to tell you that I have a great respect and admiration for you and the ministry that you carry out. I have received your publication directly on two occasions, but now I have been getting it when they give it to me in the Bible College...Yesterday, when my wife gave me the paper I felt that in the midst of my problems there is someone who remembers us and it is God through you. I would like to receive 10 copies of your paper to hand out in my congregation, for now I have made some copies for coworkers and they have liked it a lot..." (Translated, E-mail).

JAPAN:

■ "Thank you for the book you sent me [*NOBODY LEFT BEHIND*]. It came into my hand in a perfect condition.

Unless You Let It In

All of the water in the world,
However hard it tried,
Could never ever sink a ship
Unless it got inside.

All of the evil in the world
The blackest kind of sin
Can never hurt you one least bit
Unless you let it in.

—Selected

“My wife and I both noticed how neatly you packed it, indicating what a serious and conscientious minded person you must be, for usually as we receive a package from our friends in North America, we have noticed that our average American friends are very poor with their hands to pack a package.

“So, we were greatly impressed how neatly you packed it and mailed it to us, a wonderful Christian testimony we felt the package represented. Thank you...

“Yes, we need to go back to simple NT way to serve HIM. The current event in Rome with clergies in colorful gowns and caps make me wonder what Jesus our Lord or His disciples would say if they were with us today.

“As an amateur Church History student I can not understand how the well wishers in Rome today saw a movie Passion with tears and yet stand in the plaza looking at the newly appointed Pope with big smiles. The simple NT Church pattern and our Christian daily life are so important.

“Thank you for your faithfulness in serving Him and His people/churches.” (E-mail) □



“A MORE EXCELLENT WAY” *(A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13)*

(Continued from Page 8)

emphasized again in Philippians 2:4, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” This has to do with the attitude of unselfishness. We cease to be all wrapped up in self. Someone has said that a person all wrapped up in himself makes a mighty small package.

“Is Not Easily Provoked”

The word “easily” is not in the original language and was supplied by the translators. Simply stated, he is saying that love is not irritable, does not yield to provocation, and does not fly into a rage. We would say in a colloquial expression, “Love does not wear its feelings on its sleeves.” This would correspond well with what is said about the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22 and 23, which includes “temperance” or in more of a modern vernacular, “self-control.” Certainly the Lord Jesus Christ has set us an example here.

“Thinketh No Evil”

Several thoughts could be involved in this statement. Love should not be judgmental, questioning the motives and actions of others. It should not be hasty to condemn. Love does not keep an account book and take inventory, perhaps with the idea of eventually getting even (or at least bringing the matter up at a future date). Love does not hold a grudge. All of these thoughts could be involved in what Paul is saying here.

“Rejoiceth Not in Iniquity”

In Romans 1:18-32 after dealing with Gentile sins and perversions, Paul concludes the chapter by saying, “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which

commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (verse 32). In Ephesians 5:3 and 4 he likewise exhorts, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient [not fitting, proper]: but rather giving of thanks.” The “foolish talking” and “jesting,” among other things, would include off-color jokes a person would laugh at. Love would have no pleasure in the off-color humor, accompanied by the canned laughter, on television. It does not laugh at that which is vulgar. The scope of this injunction could include many things. A Christian can never be happy about that which is wrong.

C. Positive Characteristics: “But rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (verses 6b-7).

“But Rejoiceth in the Truth”

Love does not rejoice in vice, but in that which is virtuous. It does not rejoice in irreligion or that which is false in any sense of the word, but that which is true. Love is not a wishy-washy, doting sentimentality that overlooks flagrant error, even false teaching and religious error; it rejoices in the truth. The conversion of the Gentiles from idolatry was an occasion of “great joy” in the early church (Acts 11:18, 22, 23; 15:3). The apostle John wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John, verse 4). Let us love, appreciate and rejoice in the truth. Love rejoices in (and with) the truth. It does make a difference what we believe.

“Beareth All Things”

Most modern translations render this as bearing all things, although the idea of covering is in the word. Love will “put up” with a lot of things. It will hold fast. It will endure. There is no limit to its endurance. In one sense, what is said here seems to be parallel with verse 4 where he said that love “suffereth long.” It is patient.

“Believeth...Hopeth All Things”

Believe and hope are so closely related in what Paul is talking about here, we have grouped these two words together. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that “faith is the substance of things hoped for...”

The apostle is not saying that love is gullible and will believe any and everything that comes along (Ephesians 4:14, 15). Contrariwise, Proverbs 14:15 says, “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.” In believing all things, evidently he means that love puts the best construction on the conduct of others. It wants to believe the best about them and what they say. And, coupled with hope, it means that love is optimistic in doing this. It doesn’t want to give up. With a positive outlook, it wants to keep on thinking and looking forward in optimism. It hopes for the best.

(Continued on Next Page)

“A MORE EXCELLENT WAY” *(A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13)*

(Continued from Previous Page)

“Endureth All Things”

So many of these noble characteristics of love overlap (yet are different). Paul started with love “suffereth long.” He said that love “beareth all things.” Now he says that love “endureth all things.” The end results are the same. Love perseveres. It is persistent. Hatred and ill-will will burn themselves out, eventually bringing destruction to those who harbor such feelings, but love continues on. It endures. It outlasts all things. How fitting to bring the description of the characteristics of love to a close with these words.

III. THE ENDURANCE OF LOVE AND THE PASSING OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 13:8-13)

A. “Charity [love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (verses 8-10).

Spiritual Gifts to “Fail,” “Cease,” and “Vanish Away”

Having highlighted love and its qualities as the “more excellent way,” Paul now gets back to the matter of spiritual gifts and the permanency of love. Love will continue. It is here to stay. It is what Christianity is all about, whether from the viewpoint of God or man. It will never fail, but the gifts will come to an end. They are looked upon as a passing phenomenon in the church. Paul has already talked about them, as here represented by “prophecies,” “tongues,” and supernatural “knowledge,” compared to love. He now tells us that the time is coming when they will “fail,” “cease,” and “vanish away.” The carnal Corinthians who were “puffed up” had fastened their fleshly fancies to a “fading star.” But the “more excellent way” is here to stay. Its endurance in God’s plan is established and for certain.

Knowing “in Part” And Prophesying “in Part”

Paul speaks of knowing in part and prophesying in part until that which was “perfect” came, and then the “in part” situation would be done away. What is he talking about? What does this mean?

The gift of prophecy involved the revelation of God’s truth by the Holy Spirit directly to the person possessing the gift. Then he would teach and preach it. According to Ephesians 3:2-5, this is how the New Testament was given. The knowing in part and prophesying in part was controlled and regulated by when God chose to reveal His truth. Jesus promised that when the Holy Spirit came, He would “guide” the disciples into all truth (John 16:13) and bring all things to their

remembrance (John 14:26). Following Pentecost, this was not done all at once. Their break with the law and carrying out the Great Commission didn’t happen all at once, but was carried out step by step. Although Peter had heard the Great Commission and said what he did on the Day of Pentecost (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:39), they were a few years getting around to preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 10 and 11). They still had close associations with the temple (Acts 3:1) and things Jewish (Acts 18:18; 21:23-27). Jewish holy days were still respected (Acts 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8). They had to work through many Jewish hang-ups. So they literally knew in part (parts) and prophesied in part (parts) as the Holy Spirit led them by stages into all of the truth.

The Coming of “That Which Is Perfect Is Come”

However, they are informed and reassured by Paul that “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” According to Greek lexicons, the word that is translated “perfect” is defined as “complete, entire, as opposed to what is partial and limited.” It stands over against knowing in part (or parts) and prophesying in part. That which was “perfect,” or complete, represents the entire revelation of God. When God’s revelation finally was completed, and it was with the giving of all the truths contained in the New Testament, the spiritual gifts would be done away. This was the “in part” situation that would no longer be needed. We no longer have the supernatural spiritual gifts in the church today.

B. The Situation Illustrated: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know as also I am known” (verses 11-12).

“When I Was a Child”

Different people upon pondering this Scripture have come to different conclusions as to its possible meaning. However, in the immediate context, and in the understanding we have derived from this study, it could well have reference to the church and spiritual gifts. The church in its childhood stage very much needed the gifts. They did not have the completed revelation of God to guide them. Truth needed to be confirmed by the miraculous. But with the coming of “that which is perfect [complete],” the purpose of the supernatural would no longer be necessary. Truth would be revealed and confirmed. The adult stage would be reached, and they would “put away childish things.” Also, undertones referring to their childish ways in being “puffed up” about spiritual gifts could be hinted at. These are reasonable possibilities as to the meaning.

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Christ Suffered All Wounds

SURGERY HAS five classifications of wounds, according to a Detroit physician.

Jesus was wounded in all five of these ways:

Contused wounds, when they smote Him and buffeted Him;

Lacerated wounds, when they scourged Him.

Penetrating wounds, from the crown of sharp thorns.

Perforating wounds, when they crucified Him;

Incised wounds, from the spear thrust in His side.—*Author Unknown* □



BARBS

...with a POINT

I AM “DOWN” on sin because it has gotten me down so many times.

It is hard to walk with the Lord if we are always dragging our feet.

When once you truly experience a vision of God and the things of God, the glitter of this world loses its luster and even becomes boring.

Grace does not compromise and bend the rules, but forgives and gives a new start.

About all that we can say about the lavish coverage by the media of the pope is that the world recognizes its own (John 15:19; 17:14-16; 1 John 3:1; 4:5).

If you claim to be a Christian and smoke, nicotine has a greater claim on you than Christ does.

All of the hullabaloo about the pope and his successor is “much to do about nothing” (as far as the teachings of the Bible are concerned).

Those who try to sugarcoat sin and diminish its enormity will find the consequences of sin are not sugarcoated.

If you think happiness comes in a bottle, what happens when the bottle gets broken (or you become broken because of the bottle)?

If you make a mountain out of a molehill, you will find the terrain very hazardous.

The denominational way of looking at things prompts us to ask, “Who is right?” but the undenominational way prompts us to ask, “What is right?”

If you have a warm heart, you are not as likely to get “cold feet.”

We are told that we should have more tolerance and understanding, but when you understand some things you can't tolerate them (Psalms 119:104,128).

If you pride yourself in saying what you think, you better think before you say it.

If you are a “dyed in the wool” denominationalist, the devil really has the wool pulled over your eyes.

If truth is not looked upon as absolute and unique, it means no more to us than error.

If you smoke pot, and continue to smoke it, it will only be a matter of time until your life “goes to pot.”

When you stretch the truth, it gets all bent out of shape and becomes useless.

The more we are obsessed in filling our lives with material things, the more they appear as empty in the sight of God.

In some religions the word love doesn't seem to be in their religious vocabulary.

The cross of Christ is to be borne spiritually, not cheaply worn as gaudy jewelry that cheapens the message of the cross.

It is wrong to deify your emotions and then to call your feelings the Holy Spirit.

Too many eat at the Lord's table and the table of the devil (1 Corinthians 10:21) and mistakenly expect to have their pie in the sky by and by.

When the influence of humanism impacts a society, subhuman behavior soon abounds.

Much of modern “music” could be best described as noise pollution (as well as moral pollution).

The person who talks to you about others will talk to others about you.

When we show partiality with our love, we are actually being selfish with our love (strange as that may sound).

If you believe everybody and everything is right, you are not right.

We must first find Christ before we can be found in Christ (John 1:41, 45; Philippians 3:9).

If you “overdo it,” sometimes you have to do it over.

People who are “good” at criticizing many times are not “good” at accepting criticism.

The best way to break a bad habit is to drop it. □



An Instrument of Peace

LORD, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; not so much to be understood as to understand; not so much to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we awake to eternal life.—*Francis of Assisi* □

“A MORE EXCELLENT WAY” (A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 13)

(Continued from Page 12)

Seeing into a Glass Darkly

And the illustration of seeing “through a glass darkly” fits in with the same line of thought. James writes of a person “beholding his natural face in a glass,” when he hears God’s Word, then going his way and forgetting what he looked like (James 1:22-25). Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Yes, with “that which is perfect,” the completed revelation of God, this is accomplished in its fullest. The Word is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:12b, 13). We no longer see “through a glass darkly” with the completed revelation of God. We can know as we are known (13:12).

C. The Concluding Statement: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love]” (verses 13).

These Three Abide

As Paul has used triplets of words to represent the spiritual gifts, he now makes use of the word “now” to throw them over against what he is about to say. In what he has told us, the spiritual gifts have failed, have ceased, and have vanished away. But “now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three...” These three are the great and cardinal truths of Christianity. As that, they “abide” after the spiritual gifts have faded into history.

Love, the Greatest of These

Now that which seems to have eluded many of the Corinthians is presented as the greatest of the great. Faith is of the utmost importance. We cannot please God, be justified or saved without it (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 5:1; Acts 16:31). Likewise, hope is important, “for we are saved by hope” (Romans 8:24). But love is presented as being even greater than faith and hope. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for” (Hebrews 11:1). When we get to heaven, faith and hope will be no more. Faith will be replaced by knowledge. That which we have hoped for will then be ours. Hope will no longer be a factor. What remains is love. It will go on throughout eternity. “God is love.” □

I Am Most Richly Blessed

I ASKED GOD for strength, that I might achieve; I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health, that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy; I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life; I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing I asked for—but everything I had hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

—Anonymous

Marriage, Divorce, And the Home

By Donald G. Hunt

IN THIS STUDY, we are confining ourselves to marriage, divorce, and the home from the standpoint of a Christian. Please keep this in mind particularly when considering the subject of marriage in this lesson.

I. CHRISTIANS ARE NOT TO MARRY NON-CHRISTIANS

It has always been true that God’s people are not to marry those who are not His, for marriage is such a close relationship and so influencing that there is a grave danger in God’s child being led away from God sooner or later.

1. Mixed marriages brought on the sinful condition before the flood.

The descendents of Seth and Enos are said to have begun “calling on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:25, 26). When we turn to Genesis 6:1ff and read, we find that the sinful condition that brought on the flood followed the marrying of the “sons of God” to the “daughters of men.” Who were the sons of God and the daughters of men? It is generally accepted opinion that the sons of God were descendents of Seth, and the daughters of men were descendents of Cain. Whether this be true or not, the fact that there were mixed marriages in Genesis 6:1ff cannot be denied.

2. God forbade Israel to marry outsiders (Deuteronomy 7:1-4).

3. Marrying pagan wives caused Solomon’s downfall, they caused him to forget God (1 Kings 11:1-4).

4. After their return from captivity, Ezra had Judah put away the wives that they had married in heathendom (Ezra 10:10,11).

5. Christian widows are permitted to marry only “in the Lord,” not outside (1 Corinthians 7:39).

6. II Corinthians 6:14-16 forbids Christians to be “unequally yoked with unbelievers.”

No Christian can marry a non-Christians without transgressing this prohibition.

From the above, it can be seen that God's children are to marry within the family of God, not without. But, what if one is already married to a non-Christian? What is to be done? If that be the case, and the unbeliever is pleased to dwell with the Christian, Paul instructs the Christian to be faithful to the marriage bond, not to sever it (I Corinthians 7:12-16). The reason given is: Who knows but what the believer will save (win to Christ) the non-believer? If the home is broken, the children in all probability will grow up non-Christian. By abiding together they are apt to grow up in a holy manner rather than an unholy one. Preachers should preach these things and refuse to marry Christians to non-Christians.

II. "WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER"

When God created a wife for Adam, He created only one. And He didn't make any arrangements that he should ever have any other as long as she lived. Repeatedly does the Bible speak of husband and wife being "one flesh." And what God hath joined together (made one flesh), let not man put asunder. This is the plain law of God. And divorce is directly in opposition to that divine law. When divorce enters, man is putting asunder what God hath joined together. In this day of laxity as regards faithfulness to the marriage bond, too much emphasis cannot be placed upon this sovereign law of God.

Jesus taught that whoever put away his wife and married another committed adultery (Matthew 19:9), for husband and wife are bound together as long as both are alive (I Corinthians 7:39). The only exception to the above is the exception that Jesus made, fornication (Matthew 19:9). If fornication has severed the bond of the former marriage, then for the innocent party the exception stands. However, no other grounds are allowable as exceptions.

III. GOD GIVEN TEACHING ABOUT THE HOME

1. To the husband and father

As husband, he is to love and honor his wife, not being bitter toward her (Ephesians 5:25; I Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19). As father, he is to bring up his children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord, being careful not to provoke them to wrath or discouragement (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

2. To the wife and mother

As wife, she is to reverence and submit to her own husband, being ornamented with a meek and quiet spirit rather than gold and silver and costly array (Ephesians 5:22-24; I Peter 3:1-6). As mother, she is to teach the younger women to grow up to be the right kind of wives and mothers (Titus 2:3-5).

3. To the children

The children are not to "bring up father," as is often the case today. The Bible teaches the children to be in subjection to their parents, to be obedient to them (Co-

lossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1-3).

This is God's plain teaching. If every church home observed these instructions, what a difference it would make!

Concluding Admonitions

If you as a Christian are not married, by all means never marry one who is not a Christian. If you do, you are plainly disobeying God's Word, and you will ever live with a stricken conscience. If you are married, do all that you can to ward off the attack of divorce so rampant today. Remember that if you are the one guilty of breaking your home, you are guilty of putting asunder what God has joined together. The way to happiness and success as a marriage and a home is to observe to do those things that God has instructed. □



It Takes Courage

To refrain from gossip when others about you delight in it.

To stand up for the absent person who is being abused.

To live honestly within your means and not dishonestly on the means of others.

To be a real man, a true woman, by holding fast to your ideals when it causes you to be looked upon as strange and peculiar.

To be talked about and remain silent when a word would justify you in the eyes of others but which you can not speak without injury to another.

To refuse to do a thing which is wrong though others do it.

To live according to your own convictions.

To dress according to your income and to deny yourself what you cannot afford to buy.—*Selected* □



You must be crucified with Christ, if you would be raised with him; you must be raised with him, if you would walk in newness of life; you must walk in newness of life, if you would go to heaven (Romans 6; Colossians 2:12; 3:1-4).

Answers to: BIBLE QUESTIONS

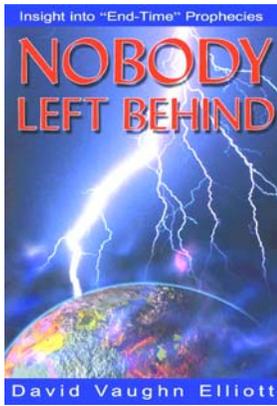
1. Exodus 3:8; 13:5; Leviticus 20:24; Deuteronomy 26:9; 2. (1) Exodus 15:1-19; (2) Deuteronomy 32:1-43; Psalms 90; 3. Exodus 17:8-13; 4. Joshua 15:63; 1 Chronicles 11:4-9; 5. Joshua 18:28; Judges 1:21; 6. 1 Chronicles 22:7-13; 7. Psalms 51; 8. 1 Kings 10:28,29; 9. Nineveh and the Assyrians (read all 3 chapters of Nahum); 10. Obadiah (21 verses, 602 words); 11. Luke 8:41-56; 12. Mark 16:9; 13. John 11:43-54; 14. Luke 21:37; Mark 11:11,12; 15. John 18:10; 16. Acts; 17. Philippians 1:3; 18. James 2:8; 19. Hebrews 8:4; 20. 3 John, verse 4. □

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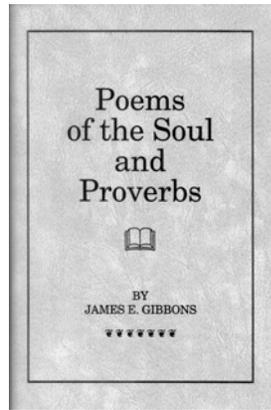
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