

THE BANNER OF TRUTH

“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth” (Ps. 60:4)

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The Holy Spirit and Christ's Indwelling

By Given O. Blakely

The Text under Consideration

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Eph. 3:16-19).

A Brief Overview of the Matter. The emphasis placed upon Deity in this passage is arresting. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all involved. “That (1) *He* [the Father, v. 14] would grant you, according to the riches of (2) *His Glory*, to be strengthened with might by (3) *His Spirit* in the inner man; that (4) *Christ* may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of (5) *Christ*, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of (6) *God*.”

Our text also contains the language of copiousness, extensiveness, and adequacy: “. . . the *riches* of His glory . . . with *might* . . . *rooted* and *grounded* in love . . . *able* to . . . *breadth*, and *length*, and *depth*, and *height* . . . the love of Christ, which *passeth* knowledge . . . *filled* . . . all the *fullness* of God.”

Here is a text far removed, in any every sense of the word, from mediocrity. The realm of wealth is not the world, but *God's glory*. The means of fortification is not psychological or physical, but *divine might*. A mere token of stability is not achieved, but *rooting* and *grounding*. It is not a challenge or exhortation that is offered, but *ability*. We will not be shown the mere surface or edge of Divine love, but its *breadth* and *length* and *height* and *depth*. Our familiarity with Christ's love will go *beyond* the perimeter of human knowledge. A mere token of Divine favor is not the portion offered, but rather a *filling*. The substance with which we are filled is not some fleeting imagination, but the *fullness of God*. See what a large text now looms before us!

Those who associate salvation with mere intellectual attainment, life disciplines, and religious liturgy, have “stumbled at that Stumblingstone” (Rom. 9:32-33). Salvation, in all of its aspects, leaps beyond the restricting borders of nature. There is a height, depth, length, and breadth to salvation that challenges the mind and ravishes the heart (cf. Eph. 3:18). It is all realized through the indwelling Christ, who makes His abode with us and manifests Himself to us. A person is dead toward

God where Jesus Christ is *not* dwelling within. Conversely, the individual is alive to God to the degree Jesus dwells within. God will have no personal dealings with us apart from Jesus Christ. Everything has been placed into His hand including you!

Those for Whom this Prayer was Made. It is essential to consider the individuals for whom this prayer was expressed. They are described as “the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus” (1:1). They had “trusted” in Christ after hearing “the Gospel” of their salvation, and were “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13). Their “faith in the Lord Jesus” and “love unto all the saints” had been noised abroad (1:15). God had raised them from death “in trespasses and sins,” and “made” them sit “together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (2:1-2,6). They were saved “by grace” and “through faith,” and were God's “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (2:5-10).

They had been “made nigh by the blood of Christ,” had “access by one Spirit unto the Father,” and were “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (2:13,18-19). They were “built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets,” made suitable to be a “habitation of God through the Spirit” (2:20-22).

Those who imagine that getting into Christ is all there is to it, or that being delivered from sin is the place of ultimate arrival, have surely missed the point! There is a fullness to which believers have been appointed that is rarely the subject of proclamation or extended thought. Many a believer has never heard of the greatness of salvation. Most of what they hear relates to their duty, not what God has provided. That provision is the theme of our text.

There is unquestionable jeopardy in remaining on the outskirts of the circumference of redemption. The closer we are to the heart of it, the safer we are. The closer we come to the periphery, the closer we are to the devil, his snares, and his condemnation. Our text is a fervent prayer for believers to be brought into the holiest place where heaven becomes clearer than earth.

The Present-day Blight. In this connection let us consider the blight of western-world Christianity. While I do not mean to be critical, much of supposed conservative religion leaves the people at the threshold of Kingdom life. There is too much entertainment and carnal motivation in nominal Christendom. It is a miserable substitute for spiritual perception and life. Careers are too easily promoted, and worldly fame too readily advanced by the average church agenda.

An ambiance of Old Covenant manners hovers over the church like a dark and foreboding cloud. Religious involvements are largely seasonal and cyclical, like the feasts of old. Assemblies are as abrupt in their ending as they are in their beginning. The constancy of spiritual vitality and adequacy is rarely known. Spiritual death is at home in most churches. The absence of truly spiritual religion is a matter of great concern.

(Christ's Indwelling, Continued on Page 4)

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Three Landmarks from Ages Past

"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Prov. 22:28).

The Landmarks of Reference. "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved **the people (Israel)** out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And **the angels which kept not their first estate**, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as **Sodom and Gomorrah**, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"

(Jude 5-7).

The average churchman of our day would most likely classify the things contained in the paragraph above as nothing more than *stories* that were learned in Bible school, if, in fact, they were learned. But, quite to the contrary, what Jude is summoning to our remembrance here are *very real occurrences from ages past*, which, when duly considered by men, will have a decisive bearing upon their manner of living in "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). These words of the Apostle Jude ought to be a wake-up call to all people who are living in ignorance of the God that made them for His own pleasure (Rev. 4:11)!

The multiplied delusions (i.e., misrepresentations of God, Christ, the Spirit, and salvation) which Satan has sown in the world (the "once-saved-always-saved" and deterministic doctrines being two notable examples of them) have had the subtle effect of fostering carelessness among men and women in their relation Godward, and even persuading them that the God of Heaven really is not as severe as the representations given here by Jude. Today the Devil is still spreading the same lie (now garbed in a variety of forms) that he spoke to Eve: "You shall not surely die!" "particularly if you ignore and disobey the One to whom you owe your very being."

Men and women *must* learn this lesson well (in spite of all the satanic deception in the world designed to neutralize, and even impeach, this sobering consideration from men's thinking) that *persistent willful sinning* on the part of *any of God's creatures* is an extremely dangerous practice, and it will not, and can not, go unpunished. It matters not whether the creatures are a people in covenant relation to God (old or new covenant, it matters not, cf. Heb. 10:26), an uncovenanted people (the Gentiles), or angels. God's response to *deliberate persistent sinning* is consistent! His own righteous Character demands that sin be punished *severely, more severely than most are willing to consider!*

These three unforgettable outpourings of Divine displeasure, recorded in the opening paragraph above, stand forever as *monumental landmarks from time and memorial*, ever witnessing faithfully, to whomsoever will hear, of God's mind regarding rebellious creaturely behavior. --Editor

Can These Bones Live??

"The church of Christ is not a denomination founded by man nor a part of any religious organization founded by man," so began an article in a periodical that recently crossed our desk.

The particular writing goes on to say: "The membership of the church is made up of all those who hear the gospel of Christ, believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son, repent of all their past sins, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and are baptized (buried) in water for the remission of sins (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 8:24; Acts 17:30, 31; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4). Members who remain faithful unto death will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10; Gal. 6:7-9)."

(The writer, however, neglected to add the membership stipulation of not using the musical instrument "in worship," which is actually *the primary rallying point and mainstay of this particular sect*. While they are grievously *divided and denominated* over petty little issues like the number of cups used at the Lord's table, the propriety of Sunday schools, the support of missionaries, etc., at least they have found complete agreement in their adoption of the hoary reformation tradition of refraining from the use of musical instruments "in worship".)

Their self-acclaimed separateness from denominations and religious organizations of any sort really amounts to a sectarianism of the baser sort. But many (not all) from this group have avidly made this self-acclamation of exclusiveness for such a

Divers Musings for the Times

"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him" (Ezra 8:22).

*Sow a thought, reap a deed.
Sow some deeds, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny.*

About Joy and Happiness. For the believer in Christ, joy and happiness are two different things. It is entirely possible for such ones to have joy when they don't feel happy. As a matter of fact, it is very possible for them to be weighed down with great heaviness and yet to have joy (cf. I Pet. 1:6-8). Happiness is like the choppy surface waters of the sea, which is continually subject to change. By way of contrast, the joy which proceeds from believing (I Pet. 1:8) is more akin to the undercurrents of the sea which are not easily affected by the ocean's surface activity. --*Expanded from Given O. Blakely*

The Request of Jabez. "And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested" (I Chron. 4:9-10). Let us, likewise, seek after the blessing of God with the same earnestness that Jabez did, that God's hand may be with us, and that we may be kept from evil, that it may not grieve us. --*William Parsons*

The Veil Not Yet Taken Away. A news clip from *The Times* of Munster, Indiana (Monday, September, 13, 1999) reads as follows under the heading *A New Dawn*: "Israelis pray the Jewish New Year's traditional Tashlich, or 'casting of sins' prayer Sunday at the Tel Aviv beach. During the Tashlich prayer, Jews rid themselves of the previous year's sins by emptying their pockets, which contain pebbles to symbolize their sins, into a body of water so they can begin the new year without sin."

From one perspective it is certainly encouraging to see that these Jews (mentioned in the news clip) feel somewhat of a need for personal sins to be dealt with. But this consideration is greatly overshadowed by the fact that it is evident the veil of unbelief, of which Paul spoke, has *not yet* been taken away from their hearts (cf. II Cor. 3:13-16). Their minds are yet blinded to the blessed reality of Christ, the suffering Servant of Jehovah (prophesied by Isaiah), upon whom has *already* been laid both their iniquities and the sins "of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

The *Tashlich* ritual is a gross departure even from the divinely-appointed offerings of the "blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean" (Heb. 9:13), which were "offered according to the law" (10:8, RSV). These were all foreshadowing the infinitely-worthy sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for "the sins of the whole world" (I Jn. 2:2).

Finally, if "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4), which were only "a shadow of good things to come" (cf. 10:1), how foolish is it to imagine that the casting of pebbles into a body of water could take sins away? Let us continue to pray that the veil of unbelief will soon be removed from their hearts. --*Editor*

long time, that they have convinced themselves, at least for the time, that this is so. However, if a man or woman "that believeth not, or one unlearned," would "come in" to a *typical* assembly of theirs, he or she would most likely not be "convinced of all" "that God is in" them "of a truth" (cf. I Cor. 14:24-25). And when confronted with many of the written communications that proceed from this particular group, one might be compelled to ask the question that the Lord directed to His Prophet Ezekiel: "Can these bones live?" (Ezek. 37:3).

The leaders, who are in the forefront of this sect, seem to have all of their I's dotted, and T's crossed when it comes to what they *profess* to believe, as can be seen in the paragraph above, but they, as a group, are typically characterized by spiritual deadness. As a sect, with exceptions here and there to be sure, they are strangers, experientially, to the good news of the gospel and to "powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5). They have failed to comprehend the glorious nature of the new covenant, where God's laws are now written upon the heart, and where people delight to do God's will, *with this being the norm!*

Such ones are heard to boast that they are called "the church of Christ," yet they, as a sect, are typically estranged from the risen and glorified Christ and do not give evidence of their being conversant, by faith, with the unseen realm to which the Savior has gone. The focus of their religious practices is really on this present world: "touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using" (Col. 2:21-22).

A Humanly-devised Concept. Their humanly-devised concept of *authorization*, regarding what *they* have determined to be lawful or unlawful for men to do, is a subtle melding of Scripture and man's traditions. It is an approach to the Scriptures that is "not authorized" by the Holy Spirit. One would never arrive at this "procedure" of interpreting God's Word from merely reading the Scripture. You would have to have one of their "priests" poison you with their secret formula of interpretation.

The Lawfulness of All Things. Incidentally, Paul declared, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not" (I Cor. 10:23). Thus, we could *technically and more correctly affirm* that *all things* are "authorized," borrowing the terminology of this particular group. But Paul could say that *all things are lawful*, because he is speaking to those who have been "delivered from the law" (Rom. 7:6) and have been "translated" "into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13), where a fundamental change has, *in fact*, occurred in the hearts and minds of those reconciled to God. For such ones, the *foremost* consideration for engaging in some things and abstaining from other things is *not* the constraint or prohibition of law, but rather it is whether or not the particular things at hand are profitable to their faith.

People that are "born of God" (I Jn. 5:1, 4) reason this way: if a particular activity or involvement in this world serves to bring "the substance of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1) into their firmer grasp, then that activity is one that *must* be regarded as not only *lawful* in the sense spoken of by Paul, but also *exceedingly wise!* But if things that we do have the effect of neutralizing our faith (our heart grasp upon heavenly things), then those, by all means, are things that *must* be zealously avoided! And if there are legitimate things that we *must* engage in, periodically, that do not serve to increase our faith, then we must do them quickly, and get ourselves back to the things which edify, as those who are starving for nourishment from the Word of God.

And, finally, to all of our sectarian brothers and sisters let us say in conclusion, that *men must be ruled by law* wherever hearts and consciences are unconstrained by the love of Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:14) to do the will of God. We pray that God will infuse His life once again into all such sectarian *bones*. --*Editor*

(Christ's Indwelling, Continued from Page 1)

This deficiency is what we are purposing to address in this writing.

The Grant of which We are Speaking. "That He would grant you . . ." The marvelous provisions now addressed will be *granted* to believers. The concept of "granting" is a God-glorifying one. It accentuates the Divine nature. The word itself is rich with meaning, distinguishing the New Covenant from the Old Covenant. It includes the ideas of giving, appointing, assigning, bestowing, placing, presenting, and investing. What God "grants" cannot be originated or appropriated by human ingenuity. It is not the outcome of the development of natural abilities. Rather, it is something that has its sole origin with God Himself. Further, it is granted in strict accord with His good pleasure and purpose. A "grant" is something *obtained, not attained* (cf. Rom. 15:5; Eph. 1:17; II Th. 3:16; II Tim. 2:7).

The concept of "grant" assumes the need of the one receiving the grant, and willingness on the part of the One granting. If either of these is missing, the very idea of a "grant" withers and falls to the ground. What is granted *can* be received, else it would not be a grant.

This "grant" depends upon the grace of God as its impetus. It springs from Divine benevolence, and is rooted in the goodness of God. It can only be appropriated by faith, and is never forced upon the individual. Christ will not dwell where He is not welcome. When all of the people from a Gadarene city besought Jesus to leave their region, "He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city" (Mk. 8:34-9:1). A "grant" assumes not only the need of the individual, but a fervent desire for what is given. Where that is lacking, there is no commitment to Divine blessing. The insensitive and lukewarm will never receive the blessing of the Lord.

The Opulent Resources for Men. ". . . according to the riches of His glory . . ." The "riches of His glory" refer to the opulent resources that are found in the Presence of the Lord. His "glory" is the manifestation, or revelation, of His Presence. It is what emanates from His Presence or more precisely, from the cognizance of His Presence. The particular emphasis of this text is the awareness brought to the heart by faith. That consciousness is elsewhere called "the knowledge of God" (I Cor. 15:34; II Cor. 10:5; Col. 1:10; II Pet. 1:2), "the knowledge of Him" (II Pet. 1:3), and "the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 2:20). This personal affiliation with the Almighty is good soil.

The "knowledge of God" is a covenantal benefit in which all of the saved participate. As it is written, "they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them" (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:11). This "knowledge," or personal involvement and acquaintance with God and Christ, is nothing less than eternal life. As it is written, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn. 17:3, NKJV). And again, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (I Jn. 5:20). Eternal life, then, is not something impersonal, but is a vital association with the Living God Himself.

The "riches of His glory" are uncovered in this intimacy with the living God. It is then, as He becomes dominant in our thoughts, that we become more aware of Who He is. It is in that sweet fellowship that the "riches" become accessible to the believer. As this world recedes into the shadows because of the more excellent glory, God Himself is seen as our Resource. He does not merely place some spiritual trinkets within our reach, but offers Himself as the Repository of everything we need.

The "grant" of which we speak will be given within the framework of familiarity with God through Jesus Christ. The blessing will be conferred within the circumference of Divine fellowship. Let there be no mistake about the sufficiency of Divine glory. "God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). What is more, the Lord is favorably inclined to make these riches available, having raised up Apostles to make them known. As it is written, "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory" (Rom. 9:23).

What follows, therefore, is a spiritual experience proceeding from intimate involvement with God. That experience is granted in strict accord with the Nature of God, and in harmony with His "eternal purpose." There will be no advance in the faith without this involvement.

Strengthened with Might. ". . . to be strengthened with might by His Spirit . . ." Sin has so debilitated humanity, that Divine strength is required for Christ to dwell within the individual. This fortification of the human spirit cannot be achieved by men, but is granted by God Himself. Without the required strength, there is no hope of Christ dwelling within—that is, of permanently residing in the believer.

The Means of Strengthening. The word "strengthened" comes from a word meaning to become strong, grow strong, be strengthened. This strength is not imposed upon the individual apart from his own involvement in the process. It is not produced by the one being granted strength, although the individual is aware of the process. Further, it is the person himself that is strengthened, not just an aspect of his person. As the believer "walks in the light," "lives by faith," and walks "in the Spirit," the strength will be granted. It will *not* occur if the person insists on being conformed to this world, embracing its mind and manners.

We will *not* be strengthened with ideas, philosophical goals, or motivational speeches. Rather, we will be "strengthened with *might*." This is Divine might, and not the accentuation of natural faculties. It is the "might" referred to in Ephesians 6:10. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." It is not possible to be spiritually strong in fleshly or natural power.

This "might" is transcendent to any power of this world. It requires the opening of the eyes of our understanding to discern its greatness. As it is written, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe" (Eph. 1:18-19). This is the power that is required in order for Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith! Because this power was primarily exhibited in the resurrection of Christ, it is also called "the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10).

The Source of This Strength. This strength required for Christ to dwell in our hearts will be brought to us by the Holy Spirit Himself: "strengthened with might by His Spirit." If the Holy Spirit is quenched, grieved, or resisted, the strength will *not* be realized, and the objective will *not* be fulfilled. The necessity of this strengthening cannot be overstated. The Ephesians had believed the Gospel, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (1:13). A fervent prayer had been expressed concerning their enlightenment (1:18-20). Their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and love to all saints had been made known (1:15). Yet, they had by no means reached the apex of spiritual life, nor was Christ dwelling as fully in them as redemption provides. At this point, Paul does not urge them to run with more vigor, or fight with more energy. Rather, he prays for them to be strengthened

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The Irrationality of Premillennialism

By Michael Blakely
Part 4

Who is "Taken" and Who is "Left"

Continuing from last month's issue, another glaringly obvious error of the premillennial system is the assertion that, when our Lord returns, the righteous will be the ones "taken" from the earth, and the wicked will be "left." But we need only to pay attention to the scriptural accounts laid down for us to come to the conclusion that this assertion is both false and unjust.

The texts from which these words are taken are Matthew 24:37-41 and Luke 17:26-36. In these texts Jesus points out the shadows of what is to happen at His return by referring to Noah's flood and the deliverance of Lot from Sodom. He is pointing out that the day of His return will be a surprise to the wicked, just as the flood was and the destruction of Sodom was. In this context He urges His hearers to be ready for His return and uses the terms "taken" and "left."

Again, we need only to refer to the biblical accounts of which Jesus is speaking and employ some common sense to figure out who is "taken" and who is "left." In the account of Noah's flood it was the wicked who were "taken," not Noah and his family (Gen. 6-9). After the flood had wiped out everything on earth except for the inhabitants of the ark, and after the waters receded, who was "left?" Noah and his family. The wicked were "taken" out of the way and the righteous were "left" to inherit the earth. It is a beautiful and accurate shadow of what is yet to come.

"For as in the days that were before the flood they [the wicked] were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and [the wicked] knew not until the flood came, and took them [the wicked] all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Mt. 24:38-39). The New Century version reads this way, "They knew nothing about what was happening until the flood came and destroyed them." The Revised Standard Version reads, "until the flood came and swept them all away." Clearly, in this text it was the wicked who were "taken," "destroyed," and "swept away," and the righteous were "left."

Luke's account says that "the flood came and destroyed them all" in nearly every translation (Lk. 17:27). Therefore, those who were "taken" were "destroyed" in both Matthew and Luke. The same is true for Jesus' reference to the account of Lot's deliverance from the destruction of Sodom. "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all" (Lk. 17:29). When the fires died down it was the wicked that had been removed, or "taken," and the "just" man (II Pet. 2:7), Lot, was "left" on the earth.

Obviously, the premillennial claim that the righteous will be the ones "taken," or secretly "raptured," is precisely the opposite of the assertion made by Jesus Christ Himself. Did He not say that "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 25:13; 37:9,11,22; Mt. 5:5)? Why then do the premillennialists say that the righteous will be secretly removed from the earth and the inheritance be left to the wicked? Since it is obvious that those who will be "taken" will also be "destroyed" the premillennial notion of the "rapture" is an exceptionally foolish position to attempt to defend.

In addition to the above texts, we see this principle of the removal of the wicked many times in the Scriptures. At the crossing of the Red Sea the wicked were removed (Exod. 14:15-31). At the giving of the law it was the wicked that were removed (Exod. 32:25-29). When Korah and the others rebelled against Moses and Aaron the wicked were removed (Num. 16:31-35).

Israel was promised that God would drive the Canaanites out of the promised land (Exod. 23:28-31; 33:2,11; Num. 22:6,11). The reason for this is obvious; the land of Canaan was promised to Abraham's seed and the heathen were inhabiting it. Once again, the wicked were to be removed. Likewise, the earth has been promised to the saints, but the wicked are inhabiting it now. It is the wicked who will be "taken" out of the way, not the righteous.

When Jesus saw the moneychangers sitting in the temple He drove them out (Jn. 2:13-1). He did not secretly gather all of the other people out of the temple. The wicked are the intruders! The wicked will be "taken!" Not only is this fair and sensible, but God has shown us over and over again in the Scriptures that this is what He intends to do.

In an unmistakably clear declaration, Jesus told us the order of things in His parable of the wheat and the tares. "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together *first* the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Mt. 13:30).

Any doctrine that teaches that the righteous will be secretly removed and the earth left to the heathen cannot be of God. It is not just (i.e., equitable) to remove the heirs from the inheritance and leave it to the rebels. Little wonder that there is no Scriptural precedent for such an unjust action by God. It should be abundantly clear that the premillennial system does not measure up to biblical standards, nor even the standard of common sense. --*DESMODROME@aol.com*

O Jesus, King Most Wonderful

By Bernard of Clairvaux
(Edward Caswall, Tr.)

O Jesus, King most wonderful,
Thou Conqueror renowned;
Thou Sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found.

When once Thou visitest the heart,
The truth begins to shine;
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine.

Jesus! Thy mercies are untold,
Through each returning day;
Thy love exceeds a thousandfold
Whatever we can say.

May every heart confess Thy Name,
And ever Thee adore;
And, seeking Thee, itself inflame
And seek Thee more and more.

Thee may our tongues for ever bless;
Thee may we love alone:
And ever in our lives express

Three Questions, Three Answers

By Terry Wellsand

As Jesus taught the people and they began to follow Him, the Pharisees saw Him as a threat to their leadership. In Matthew 22 we read of the Pharisees and Sadducees questioning Jesus in hopes of finding fault with His teachings.

Three questions are asked in this passage starting in Matthew 22:15 where the Pharisees themselves do not go to question Jesus, but rather they send some of their disciples and the Herodians. The first question is, "What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar or not?"

In verse 18 we are told that Jesus perceived their wickedness and asked them to bring Him a coin. Jesus asked them whose image and superscription was on the coin and they respond that it was Caesar. Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."

The response to Jesus' answer is found in verse 22: "When they had heard these words, they marvelled and left Him and went their way."

The Sadducees, on the same day, questioned Jesus with (vs. 24-28) a death and marriage situation, and when Jesus answered them in verse 33 we are told: "when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine."

Two questions, two answers and the people "marvelled" and "were astonished!"

The Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence and they went to question Him personally this time. Their question is in verse 36: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The response to Jesus' answer (v. 46) was: "And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions."

The word of God is powerful and able to silence men's mouths. "But the king shall rejoice in God . . . but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped" (Ps. 63:11).

And in this connection it is also written, "the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

Let us then speak God's Word with confidence so that His truth may silence the foolishness of man. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19).

Glowing in the Darkness

By Terry Wellsand

The next time you are in a major retail store take notice of the number of items that feature "glow-in-the-dark" parts. From key chains to clothing, you can see this is being used by many as a convenient light source, or just as a novelty.

It is interesting that the only way these items can emit light is if they are exposed to another source of light. The longer the item is exposed to light the longer it will emit light on its own.

Likewise it is with our walk in Christ; the closer we are to

Jesus and to His Word and the longer we spend time with Him, the more light we can shed in this dark world. John declared: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." This Word and this Light was, and is, Jesus Christ.

Psalms 119:105 also reminds us, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Isaiah 60:19 tells us: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

Thus, in conclusion, if it seems that our lives are not lighting our little part of the world, then the reason is very evident. We must devote our hearts more to Him, who is the source of all truth and light. In John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world, he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

The Bread of Life

By Michael Lohrman

A Communion Mediation

We eat and every four to six hours we are hungry again. Our physical bodies have a basic need of food for energy. So much the more our spiritual health demands that our souls have periodic feeding. Prayer, assembling with God's people, the reading and study of God's Word, are all ways that we may keep our spiritual health in a state where it is growing, healthy, and maturing.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (Jn. 6:35, 48). Through Him and by Him are all things given that are necessary for life Godward. Later on (v. 58) Christ said, "he who eats this bread shall live forever." The bread symbolizes Christ's body broken for our sins. The cup represents His shed blood for our iniquities. The cup and the loaf are a regular reminder to us of the spiritual life that Jesus provides, and of His promise of eternal life.

We should look forward to the time of the Lord's table much more than we do to a regular meal. Our spiritual life and health are of much greater importance than that which pertains to the body. We are speaking here of life and death matters.

Let me encourage you now at this time of communion to partake, and be spiritually nourished, and then to give thanks for the bread which has come down from Heaven, "so that one may eat of it and not die" (Jn. 6:50, NASB). Let us give thanks for Jesus, the bread of life! --*Brother Lohrman is an elder at First Christian*

The Earning of Indulgences??

"It is not so easy for some to give up smoking for a day." This was Roman Catholic archbishop Crescenzo Sepe's comment regarding "Pope John Paul II's announcement that Roman Catholic penitents who do a charitable deed or give up cigarettes or alcohol for a day can earn an 'indulgence' to eliminate punishment on earth or in purgatory." --*Newsweek, September 27, 1999, p. 17.* If the pope is here granting Catholics indulgences to sin (permission to indulge the sinful flesh), then we would like to point out that, in this, he is grossly recreant, yea, he is worse than apostate, in his professed representation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Neither the Lord nor the Apostles make any allowance for men to be willfully involved with sin (cf. I Jn. 2:1), or to "fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). --*Editor*

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by the Holy Spirit.

How is it that such a prayer is uttered? Why does not the Spirit do this work automatically? Believers receive the Holy Spirit when they are baptized (Acts 2:38), and because they are sons (Gal. 4:6). Can they not simply expect the Spirit to make them adequate as a dwelling place for Jesus? It is evident that some are persuaded this is the case. I have rarely, if ever, heard such a petition in the churches, or been aware of a prevailing sense of its need. (In fact, in most of the churches with which I have been identified, the Holy Spirit is not even viewed as critical to life in the Son. Many have chosen to debate about Him, more than to seek His indispensable ministry.)

Let there be no mistake about this. Only the Holy Spirit can strengthen us with Divine might. He alone can take the power that is "toward us that believe," applying it to us. This essential ministry is performed within the framework of the character of the Holy Spirit. He is the HOLY Spirit, and functions within the framework of Divine purpose and revealed truth. He does not accomplish this ministry according to man's ability, but in accord with Divine glory, and there is a vast difference between the two.

Every spiritual quality that is found in us, as well as required strength, comes from the Holy Spirit. It is His "fruit," and cannot be experienced independently of Him. Therefore, to quench the Spirit results in the certain deprivation of the fruit He bears. The outcome of resisting the Spirit is the cessation of His work within. The Spirit "searches all things, yea the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:10) in order to give them to the sons of God. He is the heavenly Administrator of Divine resources, dispensing them in accord with the purpose of God and the Mediatorial ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a sort of protocol involved here. Sin has created such a vast gulf between God and man, that an Intercessor and Administrator are required. God cannot grant strength except through Jesus Christ, and Jesus will not give it apart from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Fountain of Divine energy, placed within the believer (Jn. 4:14).

Every aspect of spiritual life depends upon His ministry. Because we ourselves possess a spirit (I Th. 5:23), the Holy Spirit effectively bears witness with our spirit (Rom. 8:16). He is the experiential Link between us and God. If God did not purpose it, you cannot have it. If Jesus is not mediating it, you cannot possess it. Thus, when we read of being strengthened with might "by His Spirit," we know at once that is the will of God, and the objective of Christ's mediation. Were this not the case, such a prayer could not be prayed, nor could its intention be realized. It is not possible to be more in the will of God than when the objective of this prayer is realized. How glorious is this supplication, and how common it ought to be in our churches! The benefits of seeking this blessing are wonderful. May there be a renewed interest in these things.

In the Inner Man. ". . . in the inner man . . ." The strength to be ministered is localized in our "inner man"--our unseen part. Contrary to the doctrines of many, it is not deposited in the flesh, or outward man. While I do not doubt the existence of physical sensations and feelings of exhilaration, this is not a proper view of the glorious work of the Holy Spirit. Those who seek such things are pointed in the wrong direction, and will be subjected to deceptive influences. The sensual realm is one in which one comes closer to Satan than to God.

The "inner man" is the "inward parts" in which the law of God is placed (Jer. 31:33). It is where thoughts, motives, loves, and hatreds exist. It is where the Divine imagery is found, par-

ticular as renewed in Christ Jesus (Col. 3:10). Here is where the individual is a real Jew, and where genuine circumcision is experienced (Rom. 2:29). It is the "inward man," where we "delight in the Law of God" (Rom. 7:22). Additionally, Peter referred to it as "the hidden man of the heart" (I Pet. 3:4).

Because we live in a hostile world, and are clothed with a frail tent, this part of our persons must be "renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:16). Should a person choose to neglect this part of their person, spirituality cannot be sustained. This is an alarming consideration! Scarcely can one find a Christian body where this is perceived and embraced. There is an appalling neglect of the inner man among the churches. I recognize it is not fashionable to make such an observation.

When our "inner man" is strengthened with resurrection power, our thoughts are spiritually stabilized and our manners made acceptable. In such strength we can draw close to the Lord, hear from Him, and walk with Him. Our capacity to receive from God thus enlarges, and our tolerance of the world diminishes.

When we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, we become "strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20). Hope becomes dominant, and we set about to purify ourselves in the energy of that Divine strength. The ability to continue running the race and fighting the fight is granted, so that circumstance cannot thrust us from the course to glory.

The Appointed Objective. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . ." Here is the grand objective of being strong within. Observe, it is not taken for granted that Christ dwells within. Right here we come into sharp conflict with much contemporary teaching. For literally centuries believers have disputed about whether those in Christ can ever be lost, lose their salvation, fall away, or be excluded from glory. Strong and persuasive arguments have been developed on both sides of the issue, as believers wage war against each other instead of against principalities and powers (Eph. 6:12). The answer to the question is found right here in this marvelous text.

The indwelling of Christ is here described as conditional. It is not taken for granted. Nor, indeed, is it assumed that once Jesus is received, He remains. The word "dwell" means to house permanently--to reside, dwell, inhabit, or settle down in. It does not reflect a temporary situation.

There are two indispensable requisites for this indwelling, or permanency of Presence: (1) Strength in the inner man, and (2) Faith. Neither of these can be achieved without the consent and hearty involvement of the one in whom Christ dwells. If our inner man is not strong, Christ cannot remain with us. If our faith fails, He can no longer stay with us. That may seem harsh, but it is true, and must be eagerly and determinedly embraced.

Let no soul be deluded at this point. God will not receive a person in whom His Son does not dwell. There is no hope for any individual in whom Jesus does not take up residency. Knowing the inherent weakness of man--even redeemed man--Paul prays for the appointed means of the Divine indwelling to be accomplished. He not only prays for this, he announces it to those for whom he prayed. This is in order to alert their spirits, and awaken anticipation within them.

Christ dwelling within our hearts contradicts all merely human perceptions. Unless we are *made* adequate as a housing place for Jesus, He will not be able to live within us. Far ahead of his time, David sensed the principle here declared. "I will run the course of Your commandments, For You shall enlarge my heart" (Ps. 119:32, NKJV). The Psalmist knew he could not do this himself. If his heart was to be made larger, God must do it.

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He sought a greater capacity, a firmer grasp, and more adequate competency. Living prior to "the day of salvation," he sought such grace so that he could stay within the perimeter of God's commandments, keeping them and never forgetting them.

What must be the requirement, then, for Christ to take up permanent residency in us? Will He be able to remain within those whose hearts are faint and spirits are weak? Can Jesus permanently reside in those who vacillate between the flesh and the Spirit, attempting to jump back and forth between this world and the world to come? Is there a living soul presumptuous enough to imagine this is a fair representation of life in Christ Jesus?

Jesus spoke of this dwelling while yet with His disciples, and before He was betrayed. "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (Jn. 14:21,23, NKJV). This is precisely the same dwelling referenced in our text. You will notice Jesus also attached conditions to the experience of Divine love, personal manifestation, the Father and Son coming into the individual, and making Their abode there. Those who imagine this is unconditional are simply wrong.

If Jesus could do no mighty work in His own country because of their unbelief (Mt. 13:58; Mk. 6:5), what would lead anyone to believe He could so work in a divided and weakened heart? If you have any vestige of confidence in the flesh, throw it overboard immediately! If you imagine your intellectual powers and personal discipline are adequate to prepare your inner man for a remaining Jesus, abandon such a delusion with haste! If you are resting upon a profession of faith you made years ago, and have not nourished your soul and kept the faith, "awake, rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light!" (Eph. 5:14). We are not speaking of mere options here, but of the indwelling Christ, without which there is no hope of heaven--not a solitary, frail, or a fragile wisp! Redemption has fully provided for the saints individually and collectively to become the residence of Jesus Christ. That indwelling brings both satisfaction and adequacy. It equips the child of God to live triumphantly and appropriate the blessings to which he has been appointed. This is involved in the blessing Paul himself fervently sought (Phil. 3:7-14).

The Glorious Result. ". . . That ye, being rooted and grounded in love. . ." Now we come to the grand objective of this indispensable ministry of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Christ does not occupy a rocking chair, remaining idle within the heart. In the Kingdom of God, an inactive believer can very well indicate an absent Christ! It is no wonder the Spirit admonishes us, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (II Cor. 13:5). Professed believers who identify, and blend in with, assemblies where such a spirit is stifled are tottering on the precipice of eternal ruin.

There is a spiritual progression in this text that is virtually unknown in the nominal church. Unless we are strengthened with Divine might by the Spirit, Christ cannot dwell within us. Further, if Christ is not dwelling within, we cannot be "rooted and grounded," an absolute requisite in spiritual life. Jesus told us of those who heard and gladly received the Word, yet were not rooted. "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Lk. 8:13).

Unrooted and ungrounded believers are like "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness" (Eph. 4:14). They cannot stand under the assaults of the wicked one, or the craftiness of deceptive men. They are not stable. Their confidence is fragile, and they do not have the "full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22). Because of this tenuous condition, they cannot draw near to God, reach deep into the well of life, or effectively resist the Devil.

Notice the spiritual substance in which the rooting and grounding takes place: "love." This is Divine love, and speaks of a comprehension of both its reality and accessibility. That very love is "shed abroad in our hearts" by the Spirit of God (Rom. 5:5). He makes us aware of the magnitude of that love, as well as its effectiveness for our fallen condition.

The prevalence of professed believers that are *not* "rooted and grounded" in the average church is mind-boggling. It is not uncommon to find such individuals in the pulpits, functioning as leaders, and having official, yet imagined, charge of the people of God.

Let me be clear on this matter, for it is critical. If a person is *not* rooted and grounded in love, it is because Jesus is not dwelling in that individual by faith. If Jesus is not dwelling in such by faith, it is because they have not been strengthened with might. If they have not been strengthened with might, it is because the Spirit has not ministered the required strength. It makes little difference what else may be claimed, if these things are not resident in the person, a spiritual condition of unspeakable jeopardy exists. Like Lot ran from Sodom, so must such people leave that condition with resolution and dispatch. Such people are actually sinking in the treacherous storm like Peter, and need to cry out for help.

Spiritual stability is necessary because of our circumstance. Faith has put us in the middle of a fierce and unrelenting war. The forces aligned against us are not flesh and blood. They are superior to flesh and blood in both strength and thought. Unless our roots go deep into the love of God, these forces will get the best of us.

Praise God, salvation has provided resources for this situation. We can become "steadfast and unmoveable" unable to be "moved from the hope of the Gospel" (I Cor. 15:58; Col. 1:23). We can be in a state where the things of God do not confound us, life does not baffle us, and the foe does not overcome us. The people of God *can* be the head instead of the tail (Deut. 28:13). There is a spiritual condition called "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37). It is to be experienced by all believers, and is fully accessible to them in Christ Jesus.

The Resultant Comprehension. The Spirit strengthens us so Christ can dwell in our hearts through faith. That indwelling is in order that we might be rooted and grounded. Still, this is not the end of the matter. The goal has not yet been reached even when we are rooted and grounded. Stability in the faith is in order that we "may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." There is a greatness to salvation that must be perceived. Its vastness far transcends the conceptions entertained by the average Christian. Many cannot think beyond their family and circumstance. Their minds, like Sisera's head, is nailed to the earth, and they cannot rise above it.

Christ has wrought a "great salvation." It is not merely adequate, but is laden with abundant provision, blessing, and satisfaction. All of this has been procured for us at great expense. If, prior to Jesus' death and resurrection, David could say God

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"daily loadeth us with benefits" (Ps. 68:19), what can be said now that Satan has been "destroyed" (Heb. 2:14), principalities and powers plundered (Col. 2:15), and we have been reconciled to God (Col. 1:21)?

It is revealed in Scripture that men cannot escape the consequences of neglecting this salvation. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3). Is there any who thinks they can escape Divine recompense if they neglect this salvation? The question is an oratorical one. It does not mean escape is possible, but that it is *not* possible. The question stops the mouths of the vain philosopher and religious pretender. Herein is the secret to spiritual growth: comprehending "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." No person will devote himself to a small and inconsequential salvation. A salvation that does not challenge our abilities of comprehension will not require the involvement of all of our persons. And, if our persons are not involved--"heart, soul, mind, and strength"--there is no promise of forever being with the Lord.

This is something that is for "all saints." That is, this is a provision of salvation itself. Most people associate salvation with deliverance from sin alone. But that is just the beginning. The same salvation that washed away your sins and purges your conscience from dead works, enables you to see the extent of that salvation--"the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."

Holy men of old knew something of the greatness of Divine provision. David said, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room" (Ps. 31:8). Again he said, "He brought me forth also into a large place" (Ps. 18:19). Paul spoke of "the exceeding greatness of His power toward us" (Eph. 1:19), the "exceeding riches of His grace" (Eph. 2:7), and "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). In Christ, God has graciously made provision for our vision and comprehension of this vastness to be perceived, explored, and enjoyed.

If a person is unable to perceive the greatness of this salvation, it is because Christ is not dwelling in their hearts by faith. If Christ is not dwelling in their hearts by faith, it is because they have not been strengthened with might in the inner man. If they have not been strengthened with might in the inner man, it is because the Holy Spirit has not done so. If He has not done so, it is because of some hindrance found within the person, for that is what the Spirit was given to do.

Knowing the Love of Christ. The intent of strengthening of the Holy Spirit is that we may ultimately be able to comprehend the marvelous extent of salvation--its breadth, and length, and depth, and height. Now we even mount higher in this grand spiritual crescendo. The targeted comprehension will yield a still greater benefit. "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

Our hearts are capable of perceiving more than our minds. Faith, although involving reason is itself superior to reason. Faith has a sort of logic of its own. It brings the individual to lay hold of something that contradicts human reasoning. Thus it is written of Abraham, "who, contrary to hope, in hope believed" (Rom. 4:18, NKJV). By this, the Spirit means the promise given to Abraham contradicted the laws and logic of nature. If Abraham and Sarah could have consulted with the wisest and most proficient of the medical profession, they would have denied the possibility of the promise being fulfilled. For a man whose body, from the standpoint of reproduction, was "now dead," through a woman noted for the "deadness" of her womb, to have a child nay, become the "father of many nations" was an absurd fantasy! No person on earth would have admitted to the

possibility of such a thing. But Abraham did not even consider those otherwise disqualifying factors. He was "strong in faith, giving glory to God." He took hold of the promise, even though it could not be contained in the meager and flawed vessel of human wisdom.

There is a love that is so grand, so effective, so abundant with Divine resources, that it must be unveiled to us. It extends beyond the capacity of human knowledge. It cannot be discovered, it must be revealed! It "passes knowledge." Yet, this love can be known--experientially known. It can be appreciated, and yield satisfaction to those knowing it. It becomes a resource for comfort, encouragement, and strength. It has a powerful constraining influence upon those discerning it. As it is written, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (II Cor. 5:14-15, NIV).

If people do not know this love, it is because they have not seen the extent of salvation. If they have not seen the extent of salvation, it is because they are not rooted and grounded in love. If they are not rooted and grounded in love, it is because Christ is not dwelling in their hearts by faith. If Christ is not dwelling in their hearts, it is because they have not been strengthened with might in their inner man. If they have not been strengthened with might in the inner man, it is because the Holy Spirit has not done so.

Being Filled with God's Fullness. Now we come to the grand objective for the ministration of the Holy Spirit. It should not surprise us that it is exceedingly large. The Holy Spirit of God is not engaged in minuscule and inconsequential activities. Knowing the love of Christ is in order "that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." What a staggering consideration! This is a "filling," not a mere addition to other possessed qualities. It is not a blessing of which a mere portion is to be possessed "ALL the fullness." This prayer is not for the expansion of human capabilities, but for the reception of "the *fullness* of God."

In this blessing, there is no room for any vestige of Adam, nature, or earth. The objective is to divest the believer of everything that is contaminated, and fill him with the Divine nature--"the fullness of GOD."

The word "fullness" refers to the filling itself. "Measure" refers to the capacity of the strengthened heart. "God" refers to the Substance with which we are filled. The objective, then, is for God Himself to pervade the entire person, to fill up what had formerly been dominated by sin, and to do so to a greater degree. Although there are varying capacities found in believers, the Substance that fills them is the same.

An Illustration. A profound illustration of this truth is found in an incident involving the mighty prophet Elisha (cf. II Kgs. 4:1-7). On this occasion, "a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets" came to Elisha with a serious difficulty. Her husband, a servant who feared God, had died, leaving a significant debt behind. "The creditor," the woman reported, "is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen," thereby ensuring the debt owed to him would be paid. What could be done for this poor woman?

The prophet asked what was available to her: "What do you have in the house?" Alas, the poor widow was in bad straits. She replied, "Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil." By faith, seeing the potential of the situation, Elisha said, "Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come

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About the “Discipling” Mania

By Michael Blakely

“And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (Jn. 10:4-5).

Just as there are many fads that sweep across the secular world, there are also fads that seem to take the churches by storm from time to time. One of the latest fads that has affected many churches is the phenomenon of “discipling,” or “mentoring.” The words themselves are suspect both in concept and in propriety. “Disciple” and “mentor” are nouns, not verbs. Although some modern dictionaries list the words as verbs also, we believe them to be corruptions of the language. Strictly speaking, one can be a disciple or be a mentor, but one cannot be “discipled” or “mentored.” However, the caution that we issue here has not so much to do with the English language as it does with the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

No one in the Scriptures was ever “discipled,” as the term is being used today. Jesus did not ask the Twelve if they wanted Him to “disciple” them, nor did the disciples ask Jesus to be their mentor. In fact, He did not ask them anything, He commanded them to “follow Me” (Mt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Jn. 1:43; 12:26; 21:19).

As we read through the gospel accounts we do not see Jesus using an elaborate program to teach His disciples. There were no planned meetings, no written tests, and no curriculum. In fact, if the disciples did not ask questions or present some other problem to our Lord, He generally was busy going about His “Father’s business” (Lk. 2:49), not focusing so much on them. The same can be said for Paul’s relationship to Timothy and others. There is no mention of any formalized program that was used.

The root problem with the discipling phenomenon is that it is another attempt by man to reproduce, by his own means, the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Going through a discipling or mentoring program cannot accomplish what is done through God’s “program.” There are no substitutes for gospel preaching and teaching, for brothers and sisters whose faith can be followed, and for belief of the truth. That is the only environment that is conducive to discipleship. As each member of the body of Christ contributes what has been given them for the body, the body will be complete, equipped for ministry, unified in the faith and in the knowledge of Christ, mature, and protected against false doctrine (Eph. 4:11-14).

Each person who commits himself to following Christ becomes a disciple. Maturity will be attained by the individual’s belief of the truth and submission to the working of the Holy Spirit. We cannot accomplish the desired affect by setting out with intentions of mentoring someone. We simply submit ourselves to God through Jesus Christ. Those who desire to grow up into Christ (Eph. 4:15) will follow the good examples that are provided.

In summary of the main text printed above, Jesus Christ is the Shepherd. He calls His sheep and leads them to pasture. Those who follow Him are His disciples. Those who do not follow Him are not His disciples. That is God’s program for discipleship.

We believe that there are many of our brethren that have good hearts and good intentions who have gotten involved in the popular *discipling* movement. However, we must caution our brethren against trying to systematize the ministry of the Holy

Spirit. We cannot replace the Holy Spirit’s ministry with our own humanly devised, organized, pre-planned program. If we try to imitate that Divine ministry we will certainly fall short of it.

As each of us considers our own advancement in the kingdom of God we will think of many of our brethren who have contributed greatly to our faith. Their contribution to us is due to the fact that they follow the great Shepherd, not because they made a conscious effort to be mentors. Individual and corporate increase in the kingdom of God is actually a bi-product of the faith of the individuals.

As each of us focuses intently on Jesus Christ we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (II Cor. 3:18). As we are being changed into His image, our brethren who are joined to us are built up by the manifold grace of God made manifest through us. So it is written, “From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:16).

So then, let’s not worry so much about making disciples that we forget to be disciples, and God will give the increase (I Cor. 3:6-7; Col. 2:19). --*DESMODROME@aol.com*

At Even, Ere the Sun Was Set

By Henry Twells

(see Mk. 1:32-34)

At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;
Oh, in what divers pains they met!
Oh, with what joy they went away!

Once more, ‘tis eventide, and we
Oppressed with various ills draw near:
What if Thy form we cannot see?
We know and feel that Thou art here.

O Saviour Christ, our woes dispel;
For some are sick, and some are sad,
And some have never loved Thee well,
And some have lost the love they had.

And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free,
And some have friends who give them pain,
Yet have not sought a friend in Thee.

And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,
For none are wholly free from sin;
And they who fain would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within.

O Saviour Christ, Thou too art man;
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried;
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide.

Thy touch has still its ancient power;
No word from Thee can fruitless fall;
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all.

(Christ's Indwelling, Concluded from Page 9)

in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full."

You remember the occasion, I am sure. The woman did as the prophet commanded. When she had filled the house with vessels, she shut the door, and began pouring from her single jar of oil. She filled every vessel with oil from the jar--vessels of differing sizes. When the last vessel was filled, the oil stopped increasing, yet her original jar of oil remained as it was in the beginning.

Thus it is with the blessing of our text. In salvation, the Lord is filling the house with vessels. They are all of varying sizes and capacities, but they are brought into his house. The jar of oil is like "the fullness of God." When the conditions described earlier in our text are met, each believer is filled up with that fullness, according to their ordained capacity. All believers are filled with the same fullness, and yet that fullness has not been diminished one whit. It is no wonder John wrote, "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (Jn. 1:16).

The Grand Objective of the Spirit's Work. This is the grand objective of the Spirit's work, that we might become "partakers of the Divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). No amount of religious activity can compensate for lack in this matter. If we are not filled with all the fullness of God, it is because we have not known the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. If we do not know the love of Christ, it is because we do not comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth. If we do not comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, it is because we are not rooted and grounded in love. If we are not rooted and grounded in love, it is because Christ does not dwell in our hearts by faith. If Christ does not dwell in our hearts by faith, it is because we have not been strengthened in the inner man. If we are not strengthened with might in the inner man, it is because the Spirit has not done so. If He has not done so, it is because He has been quenched, grieved, or resisted.

Let the saints of God occupy themselves with possessing their inheritance. They are well able to possess it, and must be encouraged to do so. Every conscientious effort will be supported by omnipotence. Seek the things that are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God (Col. 3:1-3). Strive to enter the strait gate (Lk. 13:24). Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12-13). Run the race that is set before you with patience, looking to Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2).

If you are a preacher or a teacher, give yourself to making these things known to the people of God. Do not assume they are aware of them. Do not count on them stumbling across them in a casual reading of the Scriptures, or exposure to the Christian literature of the day. Faith still comes by hearing. Give the people something to hear! Tell them what the Lord has promised! --406 S. Sergeant, Joplin, MO 64801

[Editor's note: This message was ministered by brother Blakely at the Refreshing Waters Renewal, held this past July in Crown Point, Indiana. With no inordinate attachment to men's persons we commend these words and thoughts to our readers as being, in our judgment, extremely vital for their consideration. The importance of men and women taking hold of the things spoken of here by Paul in this Ephesian text is highlighted by the fact that this appears to be the very point at which "the church of Ephesus" failed at a later date (cf. Rev. 2:1-7). This failure did not involve a departure from orthodoxy, but rather it was an abandonment of love and devotion for the Savior Himself, which love proceeds from comprehending, with the heart, the greatness

Christ, the Appointed Heir of All Things

"God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things . . . Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 1:1-2, 2:1).

Here is one of many compelling reasons given here in chapter one of Hebrews for paying close attention to what the Savior has said, and is yet speaking from Heaven to men (cf. Heb. 12:25). Christ Jesus is the appointed Heir of all things. He is the predetermined Possessor and Owner of all created things. He is the One who shall be inheriting the stars with their orbits, along with the light and the heat which they impart. He, who has "purged our sins," shall be taking possession of all the created habitations with their inhabitants, all the tenancies and their tenants, all servants along with their servitudes, whether in Heaven or in earth. He shall be inheriting all nations and their peoples, as well as the cities and the citizens. The Gentiles and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be His possession (cf. Ps. 2:6).

As appointed Heir of all things, He, who "once suffered for sins" (I Pet. 3:18), has absolute sway over all things and all personalities. And as Heir, Christ Jesus, more than anyone else, is the One that created beings must heed and pay attention to. Oh, how ought men to cleave unto every word which proceeds from His mouth! The words of His mouth *are life*, and wherever they are ignored, consistently and without exception, there go the ways of death and of alienation from the living God.

God has appointed His Son to be *Heir* of all things. It appears that one of the reasons that *Heir* is the proper word here, and *not owner*, is that the heavens and the earth, and all that in them are, are presently defiled by sin. The Savior will take full possession of all things, once the defiling things and all that offends have been completely banished. As Peter declared, there shall be new heavens and a new earth, in which only righteousness dwells (cf. II Pet. 3:13).

(Incidentally, men ought to be greatly humbled that sin has defiled *both* the heavens and the earth, which comprise what men today call the universe. As far removed from the earth as stars, and planets, and distant galaxies appear to be, yet they are all slated for destruction at God's appointed time. They are all part of the *kosmos* which sin has defiled.)

In being *appointed* Heir by the Father, we see that the Lord Jesus did not take this honor of heirship to Himself, but rather it was rightfully given to Him. In connection with being Heir of all things, Christ Jesus was made subject to a promise from the Father (cf. Ps. 2:8; Isa. 49:5-6, etc.). This was one of the incentives that enabled Christ to endure the Cross and to despise the shame associated therewith (cf. Heb. 12:2). The Savior was constrained by God's promise in much the same way that we are constrained by the exceeding great and precious promises, which have been given to us (II Pet. 1:4). Being made Heir of all things was, perhaps, a much greater incentive to the Lord Jesus Christ for overcoming the world (cf. Jn. 16:33) than we have before considered!

Heir of All Things. These are obviously *not things as they presently are*. The heavens and the earth as we presently know them shall soon pass away. As we have indicated above, the Savior would find no constraint at all in things that are defiled and contaminated by sin. As a matter of fact, He would be greatly repulsed by them. The "all things" here speaks of *things as they shall be*; it speaks of all created things that are in heaven above, in the earth beneath, and in things under the earth as they shall be "in the regeneration" (cf. Mt. 19:28). --Editor

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The Overall Picture regarding Evolution

Evolution, as it is being taught today from the overall perspective, has four distinct phases: 1) *chemical and material evolution*, dealing with such things as *the big bang theory* and the development of simple matter into that which is more complex, and finally into a living organism. 2) *Biological evolution*, which involves the progressive advance from a lower or simple living form to that which is higher and more complex. 3) *Social evolution*, which supposedly teaches that men are gradually learning to more intelligently get along with each other. 4) "*Spiritual evolution*, such as that which is promoted by the *New Age* movement, where men ultimately are said to become gods.

The teaching of evolution is a godless acknowledgement of man's lowly beginnings and condition. But it teaches that progress and advance to perfection are things that, by mere chance have happened, or are yet happening, and possibly also include *things that men must make happen* when it comes to the so-called final phases of evolution. In this view of things, the God of heaven is out of the picture entirely, and therefore men are left to give account to no one, except to themselves.

Many in our day have gone after this strange, and even bizarre, perspective of life and of all things, because they have been cut loose from the moorings of truth. Evolution is a very seductive teaching with a diversity of tentacles reaching out after men's minds to captivate them. Consequently, without a "love of the truth" (II Th. 2:10), men are in serious jeopardy of falling prey to it. But let us also be quick to add that wherever the Scriptures are believed, and truth is heartily received and loved by men, the matter of evolution is clearly seen by such ones for what it *really* is: unreasonable, inconsistent, and even utter foolishness! --Adapted from *June Blakely, 406 S. Sergeant, Joplin, MO 64801*

About the Removal of Transgressions. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12). What a marvelous word and declaration this is! This was, of course, "the Spirit of Christ" which was in David, testifying "beforehand" of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (I Pet. 1:11). We know enough about the God of Heaven from Scripture, to know that *He could not* take away men's sins and transgressions *apart from His appointed Sinbearer*, who has justly and equitably removed our iniquities from us by His death on the Cross.

When reasoning with our own souls, other men, and particularly with unconverted Jews, let us focus on texts like this from Moses and the Prophets, which point to the absolute necessity of a Sinbearer to take away men's sins. If Christ is taken out of the picture, all affirmations, such as the one mentioned above in Psalm 103, fall to the ground, and even put God in the position of being a respecter of persons, *which He is certainly not*.

Let us, therefore, boast in the Cross of Christ (cf. Gal. 6:14, NASB) and rejoice greatly that our transgressions have, in fact, been removed far from us, "as far as the east is from the west!" Let us then seek grace to demonstrate, before men and angels, the resultant gratitude and gladness in living. --Editor

Miscellaneous Observations and Reflections

Christ the Wisdom of God. "A search for truth in any area will ultimately lead to God. A search for wisdom will ultimately lead to Christ, in whom are all the treasures of God. 'For indeed,' said Paul, 'Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God'" (I Cor. 1:22-24). --Jay Wilson, *Christ's Church in Bozeman, Montana*

Year 2000 Renewal at Desoto, Missouri. We would again put our readers in mind of the Refreshing Waters Renewal #11 meetings, scheduled to be held in Desoto, Missouri (close to St. Louis). The dates for this gathering will be August 1-3 (Tuesday through Thursday) in the year 2000. The Renewal's theme will be *Heavenly Mindedness*. For more information, you may contact Michael Blakely, 443 Chatham Drive, Brownsburg, IN 46112. Michael's telephone number is 317-293-9745. His e-mail address is: (DESMODROME@aol.com). We encourage our readers to make plans now to be present there. --Editor

An Oversimplistic View of First Century Practices. "An Apostle said it, therefore that settled the matter!" Such seems to be the oversimplistic view of first century practices that many in the church hold today. While this certainly ought to be an abundantly sufficient reason *for us* to receive that which is written as the truth, yet, in those early times of the church's beginning, the words of Apostles were sometimes closely examined to see, for example, whether or not what Paul was saying was true (cf. Acts 17:10-11). And Paul's Apostleship was even held in question (I Cor. 9:1-2; see II Cor. 11:4-5), by some in the church, so that he had to defend it.

The Jerusalem conference, recorded in Acts 15, is yet another example where "apostles and elders came together" (v. 6) to consider the very critical matter of Gentile converts being received into the church. The meeting began with "much disputing" (v. 7), but ended with all being in agreement regarding this issue, the Lord being present there with them, and directing their thoughts, as they reasoned one with another.

Let us, in the present day, seek to have the same mind as the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11), who received what was being declared, even by the Apostle Paul, "with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things" (NASB) are so. Let us not carelessly assume that something that is preached or taught is according to truth, simply because someone we greatly respect said it. Let us not be as those who "refused to love the truth and so be saved" (II Th. 2:10 RSV). Our love for *the truth itself* must *far exceed* our love for those who speak it. We are not saved by a love for God's faithful servants, but rather by our love for the truth! --Expanded by the Banner editor from David Maddack