

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)

Volume 37

September 1999

Number 8

Forgiveness Makes Men Alive

By Fred O. Blakely

Due perception of the nature of sin and the result of its forgiveness by God will dispel the mystery and confusion with which a false theology has heavily shrouded the subject of divine quickening of dead sinners.

Fundamental to such perception is the understanding that *both death and life*, as contemplated in connection with man's states before and after his acceptance of Christ, are not to be taken in one exclusive sense. They are employed by Scripture to depict those states in one of their several aspects. Thus, to think of death solely in terms of a dead body and life as to be likened only to physical animation, is to obscure the Word's representations of the process and experience of becoming personally reconciled to God.

The Diversity of Portrayal. Just as man is a complex being, his relationship to God is a complex one, God Himself being the acme of complexity, whether man is regarded in a condition of death or life Godward. The Bible fully recognizes this, and sets forth something of the complexity of the situation by the several contrasting expressions used to denote it. Unless due cognizance is taken of this circumstance, hopeless confusion in the study of the salvation doctrine of Scripture will continue. A few examples of the diversity of terminology used to depict the human situation will serve to demonstrate our point.

1. Man is regarded as lost to God by sin; in Christ, he is said to be saved. That is the most familiar view of the matter.

2. By nature, man is represented as God's enemy; through Christ, he is reconciled to God.

3. In Adam, man is pictured as an alien from God's family, separated from the Father's house; in Christ, he is adopted into the family, or commonwealth of Israel.

4. In dissociation from Christ, man is not a person as spiritually reckoned by God; in Christ, he is one of God's "elect," or chosen ones.

5. In the pollution and guilt of his sins, man is portrayed as condemned; in Christ, he is pardoned, forgiven, or justified.

6. In his sins, or separation from God, man is said to be dead; in Christ, he is brought to God, or made alive. If one is to have a full-orbed view of sin and salvation, he must come to look at them in all these, and the other, aspects in which Scripture represents them. To fail to do this is to assure a warped, severely-restricted concept of the subject, which cannot but seriously confuse its possessor and those to whom he seeks to minister.

The Contemplation Here. In development of our theme of God's quickening of dead sinners to life in Christ, we shall concentrate on the regard of man's condition out of Christ as death and his circumstance in Christ as life. Great impediment to the right understanding of Scripture has resulted from men's pressing too far these two terms, as used in this connection, as we have said.

By death in this sense, the Bible simply means separation; by life, it means the opposite of separation, or unitedness, togetherness—a state of unity as contrasted with one of alienation. Thus, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Rom. 5:12), since "the wages of sin is death" (ch. 6:23; cf. Gen. 2:15-17). That is to say, man's sin separated him from fellowship with His Creator and God, with whom he had previously been in communion. Life, in the context of that situation, would, no less simply, be the restoration of the disrupted fellowship. If to be separated is death, to be reunited is life. Thus Jesus defined spiritual life as the knowledge of Himself and the Father (Jn. 17:2-3), which knowledge is dependent on man's restoration to God's company, or fellowship (Heb. 7:19; I Pet. 3:18).

The Means of this Effecting. The question then is, How are dead sinners brought to life in Christ?, and it is a big and baffling one, indeed, if you heed much of the teaching of the day. It is men, however, that have confused the subject, not God, who "is not the author of confusion" (I Cor. 14:33). Scripture's answer to the question is quite simple. Life from death in trespasses and sins is produced by the removal of that which did the separating, or caused the death. And that is sin. The removal of sin was by the death of Christ, which put it "away" (Heb. 9:26). So it is written that God sent the Son into the world, "that we might live through Him" (I Jn. 4:9-10). "He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin" (ch. 3:5). Thus, "in Him" is life (Jn. 1:4), for the conferment of which He came to earth (Jn. 10:10).

The Bible's representation of spiritual life is, therefore, plain and consistent. It, like redemption, consists in the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). He who has been pardoned by God is "alive" toward Him, as Paul indicates in Romans 6:11 and context, whereas he who is not forgiven of his sins is dead (Eph. 2:1). To be justified by the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9), is to be quickened, or made alive—to have life Godward—as opposed to being condemned because of sin, which is death toward Him. Thus, Paul repeatedly equates justification and life (Rom. 5:18; Gal. 3:8, 11, 21-24; cf. Jn. 20:30-31).

It is, of course, the same with reconciliation, which regards separated sinners as being brought into fellowship with God. Hence, "when we were enemies [in our minds and lives by wicked works (Col. 1:21-22)], we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10), and, "being reconciled," we live toward God.

Perception of this situation will dispel the darkness and confusion of a popular theory concerning regeneration. That insistence says that God's quickening, or making alive, of dead sinners, is done by a special thrust of His original creative power to every individual that is brought from death to life in Christ. Suffice it to say here that is simply not true.

The Word's Testimony. Let us look more fully into the Scriptures, to see whether the way of God's making sinners alive in His Son is as we have represented it. In doing so, we shall find, as has been anticipated, that this is the situation set forth:

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THE BANNER OF TRUTH

(ISSN 1089024)

Published monthly by
First Christian Church
495 S. Indiana, Crown Point, IN 46307

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Requested donation to pay for actual cost of publication,
\$7.50 per year

(Send all contributions to: The Banner of Truth,
c/o First Christian Church,
495 S. Indiana, Crown Point, IN 46307)

Sent Free for Three Months upon Request

Periodicals, Gary, IN 464

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About the Matter of Lostness

Religious people are heard to speak of "the lost," most of the time meaning well, it seems, and even evidencing great concern. Frequently, however, it is evident that such ones are merely parroting what others have said, as there seems to be a definite unclarity and uncertainty as to this word's actual significance: *lost, in reference to whom or what? lost, in what sense?* Our purpose here will be to clarify this matter. Let us consider the following references in the Word of God to lostness.

Our Entire Race Has Strayed. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). The Prophet Isaiah is here confessing this most grievous sin of the entire nation of Israel, (and even of the whole world), to God. By transgression men have grievously walked away from the One who made them for His own good pleasure, and they have

turned to their own foolish ways and devisings. This abandonment of God is actually the root and the cause of all other sins (Rom. 5:12; cf. Rom. 1:28-32; Job 21:14; Hos. 4:6).

We Have Gone Astray. By nature, men are now no longer where they once were (in God's Presence and favor). Because of sin, they are no longer where they are supposed to be, and where they were made to be. As a race of men, they have woefully departed from "the paths of the LORD" (Ps. 25:10), and are straying down a host of paths of their own selfish choosing. We, as those created in God's image, have lost our way from the Presence of the Lord and, consequently, our spiritual sensibility. *We, as a race, have gone astray!*

We Have Turned to Our Own Way. All sin and transgression are the direct result of men *turning to their own way*: doing their own thing, living in their own little world, doing things *their way*. How immensely impoverished we are because we have turned away from the One who made us for Himself! It ought to be evident to "honest and good" hearts (cf. Lk. 8:15) that, in so turning, our race has made a grievously *wrong turn*, an unmistakable *turn for the worse*, and, but for the grace of God, it was a turn with irremediable consequences. Sinful men may search high and low, using their own benighted contrivances, for a way back into the favor of the Holy One, but there is absolutely none, other than that which God Himself has provided through His only begotten Son. Apart from Christ, men are hopelessly lost (cf. Eph. 2:12)!

The Ninety and Nine. "How think ye? if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the mountains, and seek that which is gone astray?" (Mt. 18:12).

Luke's Account. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Lk. 15:4-6).

This parable of the Lord Jesus, recorded by both Matthew and Luke, highlights the very personal and individual nature of being lost, and then found. There is a sense in which multitudes of men may be contemplated as being lost from the purpose and fellowship of the One who made them. But there is also another very important sense in which men and women are either lost or found as *individuals* before God. And especially with regard to being found, as in the case of the one lost sheep in the parable, this is *solely an individual phenomenon*. Every last person who believes on the Son of God must eventually "wake up" and come to the realization (cf. Lk. 15:17) that he or she was just like that one sheep that was lost, and that the Savior, in a very real sense, left "the ninety and nine" and went "into the mountains," in a manner of speaking, to seek after each one of them!

The Words of David. As will be seen here, the lost are *not necessarily* limited to the unconverted and to those who have never believed. It is very possible for men and women that are in covenant relation with the God of Heaven to *go astray* from a conscious fellowship with Him. They sense within themselves that, at least for the moment, *they are lost*: lost from a lively awareness by faith that God is with them and they He is for them.

Consider the words of David, the man after God's own heart (cf. Acts 13:22). "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments" (Ps. 119:176). Here is an instance where the one that was lost *himself* perceived that he was *presently* in such a condition (though not always so), and upon this realization, he acknowledged his going

astray to the Lord. Here David was *experientially lost* from the Presence and fellowship of the Lord; He perceived this, and responded accordingly.

It should also be considered here that the issues of being lost and found are sometimes issues that summon the involvements of *both* God and men into action. "Seek Thy servant," David earnestly petitioned, for he perceived that he would not be "found" again, in the sense spoken of here, apart from God experientially "seeking" and "finding" him. Let us also seek to have this same kind of tenderness regarding God's Presence, and our being present, by faith, in His Presence. May the least distance from His Presence always be a source of discomfort and unrest to us. Hardness of heart and unbelief will certainly neutralize this kind of tenderness.

The Gospel and Lostness. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (II Cor. 4:3). From this perspective, the lost are those to whom the gospel is hidden, because Satan, who is "the god of this world," has "blinded the minds of them which believe not" (v. 4). The gospel of Christ is as a bright and glorious light that shines throughout the world, wherever it is preached. However, there is "gross darkness" covering "the earth" and "the people" (Isa. 60:2), wherever this gospel is not believed.

The light rays of the glorious gospel of Christ are unlike those of the sun, in that unbelief is able to block them out entirely, with the Devil blinding the minds of those who do not believe. And these blinded persons are the ones who are lost; they are lost from God's fellowship and from participation in His eternal purpose. They are lost from the glorious benefits of His great salvation in Christ. They are lost from the beneficent and glorious destiny unto which they were created.

Men's Deep-seated Sense of Unfulfillment. Experientially, men, who are unreconciled to God, generally perceive themselves to be incomplete, without purpose, unfulfilled, fundamentally unsatisfied and unhappy. Thus, they attempt to satisfy this deep sense of unfulfillment by seeking after a host of things which are of this present world, and which shall soon pass away. But the very realization of unfulfillment and basic dissatisfaction is actually owing to the fact that men are lost from the fellowship and Presence of the Lord, whom to know is life, and in whose image (cf. Gen. 1:26), and for whose pleasure (cf. Rev. 4:11), they were created.

A State of Irretrievable Lostness. As a final thought, we must consider well that there is state of lostness from which men are *not* able to return. In the sacred record there are names of persons, whose transgressions and final states we must avoid with reverence and godly fear: Cain, Korah, Balaam, etc. (cf. II Pet. 2:15-16; I Jn. 3:12; Jude 11). And it will be remembered that the Lord Jesus prayed to His Father, before He was offered up, "Those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (Jn. 17:12). Judas, the infamous "traitor" (Lk. 6:16), was another such person that became irretrievably lost.

No doubt, there are individuals in the world today whose persons and characters match the ones mentioned in the paragraph above to some measure. (However, it is certainly to our benefit that we do not know who these persons are.) Suffice it to say, however, that there is such a thing as a "great transgression" (Ps. 19:13), of which men can find themselves to be guilty *without remedy*, and a condition, into which men may come, where "it is impossible" . . . "to renew them again unto repentance" (Heb. 6:4-6; cf. II Pet. 2:20-22). Let us, therefore, "pass the time of" our "sojourning here in fear" (I Pet. 1:17) that our hearts may be kept *far back* (cf. Ps. 19:13) from such a state of irretrievable lostness. --*Editor*

Divers Musings for the Times

There is something in every man that yearns for immortality. --*June Blakely*

Man cannot achieve the excellency of the glory of God on his own. We must be saved! --*June Blakely*

"A Victim of infinite worth satisfied the claims of the law of God upon me." --*Leon Bates*

For those in Christ Jesus, all of their liabilities are in the flesh; there are none in the Spirit. --*Aaron Hutchcraft*

The Lord Jesus Christ is good news to those who typically have led a bad life in this world (for example, publicans and sinners), and bad news to those who characteristically have enjoyed the best that this world has to offer. --*David Maddack*

From Satan's perspective, the teaching of evolution to the sons of men has been very successful in seducing them away from the God of Heaven. If it had not been successful, he would have, no doubt long ago, switched to some more effective means of seduction. --*June Blakely*

If Adam and Eve (as they were prior to the entrance of sin into the world) were able to walk into our presence now, we would be greatly impressed. They would, no doubt, dwarf us in every way, and in virtually every aspect of manhood. We, because of the curse, have suffered a very significant fall from the state of our first parents. --*June Blakely*

The Ugliness of the Time. Commenting on "the days of Claudius Caesar" (Acts 11:28) while preaching through Acts, David Maddack observed that Claudius was preceded by Caligula and followed by Nero (both notoriously wicked Roman emperors that persecuted the church). "This will give you an idea of the ugliness of that time (mentioned in Acts) for the saints of God." --*David Maddack*

About the Spirit's Unobtrusive Nature. The Holy Spirit has been properly called the unobtrusive Member of the Godhead, meaning that, as He works in men's hearts, He draws attention, not to Himself, but to the Person of the Son. He has come forth "from the Father" to testify, primarily, of the Son. "He shall not speak of Himself," declared the Savior, "but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come" (Jn. 16:13). And again, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (v. 14) "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" (Jn. 15:26).

In this connection, it ought to be noted as well that those who are walking *in the Spirit* will find themselves to be a living demonstration of the Holy Spirit's unobtrusive character. Such Spirit-filled (cf. Eph. 5:8) personalities are those individuals who are continually looking to the Savior, and who also are pointing their fellow men to Christ Jesus, in whom alone is salvation (cf. Acts 4:12). They are not drawing undo attention to the Holy Spirit, although they reverence Him and love Him (cf. Rom. 15:30) for who He is and for the work He has done, and is yet doing, in them. --*Editor*

(Forgiveness, Continued from Page One)

He that is unjustified from his sins is condemned and dead, as God reckons his case, and so is a child of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3; cf. Jn. 3:18, 36). On the other hand, he that is justified is free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18, 22; cf. Jn. 8:34-36), which alone separated him from God, and so is alive Godward. The conclusion, thus, is: justification, or the forgiveness of sins, brings life to the dead sinner, and that justification, or forgiveness, constitutes God's quickening of him.

The Pauline Doctrine. Paul's classic statement of the case in Romans 5:18 is foundational. "As by the offense of one Judgment came upon all men to condemnation [or death (cf. v. 12)1; even so by the righteousness of One [act of righteousness (ASV), i.e., His obedience to the Father unto "the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8)] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life [acquittal and life (RSV)]."

"That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident," wrote the Apostle to the Galatians: "for the just justified] shall live [or have his justification, which is life] by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them [the things required by the law] shall live in them" [i.e., by virtue of his having done them] (Gal. 3:11-12). Because of the condemnation which the law, as a means of justification, thus brought [because no one kept it], the law is called "the ministration of death," or "condemnation" (II Cor. 3:7, 9). On the other hand, the gospel is denominated "the ministration of righteousness," or justification, which is life (v. 9).

In Galatians 3:21, with this situation in mind, Paul equates justification with life. "If there had been a law given which could have given life [or could have justified], verily righteousness [or justification, or life] should have been by the law." He then concludes, in verse 24: "Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" [and so live toward God]. Compare Romans 3:19-28 for a like development of the subject.

The Point of Quickening. The point of God's quickening of sinners is, thus, made plain, as we have said. It is that of our response to God's grace which procures for us the efficacy of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice. Colossians 2:13 sets forth what this response is. "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened [did He make alive (ASV)] together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses. " The reference is to one's submission to baptism (vv. 11-12), to which his faith led him, by which submission he was "made free from sin" (Rom. 6:17-18; cf. v. 4). And in the Colossians text the quickening, or making alive, is equated with the forgiveness obtained by baptism.

Thus, when Peter on the Day of Pentecost promised the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit to believing, baptized penitents, he was promising life through the Name and Person of Christ (Acts 2:38; cf. Jn. 20:31). This was that which was promised through Abraham (Gal. 3:13-14), whose spiritual seed all who are Christ's are reckoned to be (vv. 26-29).

The Situation's Logicity. The scriptural logicity of this situation is apparent, as we have noted. Sin is all that separated man from God, or placed him in a state of spiritual death (Isa. 59:1-2). When, therefore, sin is removed, nothing remains between him and God, and he is reckoned to live. That is how the inception of spiritual life is typically presented in the celebrated passage of Ezekiel 16:1-13, where Israel was made to "live" by God's "washing" of it from the pollution of its sins (v. 9); cf. Isa. 6:1-8; Zech. 3:1-5).

In light of this state of the case, the situation which Scripture portrays, and we have described, is clearly manifested, though it is not generally perceived by the church. Everyone who has received Christ upon the terms which God has imposed

(and that is, of course, the only way He can be received) has been quickened by God, and so is spiritually alive. That is fully implicit in the promise of Acts 2:38.

It may be objected by some that they have no "sense" or "feeling" of spiritual life. But that life is not an object of physical sense or feeling; it is apprehended solely by faith, i.e., it is spiritually discerned. The justified, it must be remembered, live by faith. If we are in Christ, we know that we have been made alive toward God because God's Word says so, which is the best assurance that man can have.

A Parallel Case. There is a parallel situation with reference to one's possession of the Holy Spirit, who is "the Spirit of life" (Rev. 11:11). We know that we possess Him on the authority of God's Word (Acts 2:38; 5:32). In Titus 3:6, the Apostle says that God has shed the Spirit on us "abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." We do not need to speculate or conjecture as to whether we have Him, if we have obeyed the gospel. We know upon the Word of Him who cannot lie that we do. What is needed is for us to fully yield to the Spirit's leadership through the Word, and cease quenching and resisting Him.

And so it is with the life begotten in us by God through the gospel (all God's workings on and in people in their redemption and sanctification are through the gospel, not independently of it). Our responsibility is to give that life full sway, and cease stifling it. It is in light of this possession of the Divine life (cf. I Jn. 1:1-4; 5:11-13) that Paul's exhortations to the Ephesians and Romans take on their full significance.

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" [not life—they already had that], was his urge to the former brethren (Eph. 5:14). That admonition postulates their possession of spiritual life, and calls upon them to wake up and give it free course in their daily walk. It was similar with the Romans. "It is high time to awake out of sleep," he sharply remarked to them: "for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11).

The Relation to Misused Texts. When God's making alive of spiritually-dead people through the gospel, His means for that purpose, is understood, that perception drives away the fog with which false doctrine has covered some key texts of Scripture.

"The Son quickeneth whom He will," asserted Jesus (Jn. 5:2 1). That is, of course, unalterably true, as are all of our Lord's words. But whom does He will to quicken? or whom does He desire to live? He Himself said He came to "save the world" (Jn. 12:47), and John says that is the purpose for which the Father sent Him (I Jn. 4:14). His reconciling death is potentially efficacious for "the whole world" on the condition of its acceptance by the individual (I Jn. 2:2; cf. Jn. 3:14-18; Heb. 2:9).

It is, thus, inescapable that our Lord "would have all men to be saved," or quickened unto life Godward (I Tim. 2:4), just as He would have gathered the inhabitants of Jerusalem unto Himself (Mt. 23:37). But, since man is made in the image of God, and neither the Father nor the Son will destroy that image by violating the human capacity to will and choose, the effectual willing of Both concerning man is a two-way street. That is, man must will to be made alive by accepting the pardon for his sins provided for Him by Christ.

The text in John 1:11-13, and others of like tenor, much used and perverted by unconditional electionists to prop up their error, is to be understood the same way. Both God and Christ have willed to quicken men through the gospel; that is the foreordained means of human salvation. But, in the implementation of that will, they operate through the gospel, not in ignorance of it, or in contradiction of it.

(Forgiveness, Continued on Page Eleven)

Premillennialism's Irrationality

By Michael Blakely
Part 3

The Fallacy of a Secret Rapture (Cont'd.)

The coming of our Lord will be both a deliverance for the godly and a great marriage between Christ and His bride, the Church. We have already seen that there is no precedent in the Scriptures of a secret deliverance of God's people, nor is there any precedent for a secret wedding. While these are two obvious arguments that have not been seriously considered by those who embrace premillennialism, there is also much more doctrine in the Scriptures that one would have to ignore or corrupt in order to make the idea of a secret "rapture" appear to be sound.

It is not our intention to cover every single point of the premillennial system and disprove it because it is so vast and confusing that it would take volumes. However, we intend to shake its flimsy foundation and expose its real source. We will affirm once more from another scriptural viewpoint that a secret "rapture" is an absurd notion.

The word of God tells us, and we know, that all of creation has been corrupted by man's sin and that it, too, waits to be changed into an incorruptible state (Gen. 3:14-19; Rom. 8:19-22). We are apprised in Scripture that this changing—both of mortals and of nature—will take place when He appears. The concept that is to be grasped here is that the transformation of the natural order will occur because He appears. It is the appearing of Christ that will cause the change.

When discussing or debating eschatology few have given consideration to this vital point. The premillennial system is big on laying out specific periods of time, or "dispensations," in which they allege that God is going to do certain things. They assume that it is impossible for God to deviate from their preconceived notions of what He will do and when He will do it. Those who have embraced this system have gotten so entrenched in reading their own interpretations into the Scriptures and trying to determine what will happen and when it will happen that they have actually depreciated and minimized the One who is coming.

It is not the predetermined time on God's calendar that will commence the burning of this present evil world. It is Christ's glory that will ignite the flames. It is His appearance that will cause the transformation of all corruptible and corrupted things. This has not even been a consideration by the premillennialists.

The word of the Lord confirms this truth to us. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (II Th. 2:8). Young's Literal translation reads "and shall destroy with the manifestation of his presence." The NIV reads "destroy by the splendor of his coming," and the New Century version reads "destroy him with the glory of his coming." The thought being conveyed by the Spirit here is that the "wicked" one will not be able to survive the manifestation of the glorified Christ. Christ's mere presence will "destroy" him.

A staunch premillennialist will no doubt argue that the above text is not speaking of His coming "for His saints" (the secret "rapture"), but of His coming "with His saints," i.e., that the "wicked" one will be destroyed at a different coming than the "rapture." But such groundless doctrine is precisely the point of this article. It is impossible for sin or corruption—including the first creation—to abide the presence of the glorified Christ. It is impossible for Him to return in secret. It is impossible for Him

to return more than one more time because at His appearance the "heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10).

The underlying issue at stake here is the glorified Christ. The premillennial position allows that the now corrupted heavens and earth will remain intact in their corrupted state in the very presence of the glorified Christ. They attest that when He comes for the secret "rapture" He will hover above the earth in the clouds, unseen by the inhabitants of the earth, and the saints will go to meet Him in the air. According to this system, the corrupted heavens and the earth will not be affected at all by His glory. Not only will the clouds not pass away, but they will actually be able to conceal Him (in all His glory) so that men cannot see Him, according to the premillennialists.

That anyone would espouse such doctrine reveals a gross depravity of Christ-centered preaching and teaching. It is not possible for us to overstate the brightness and power of Christ's glory, but God forgive us and help us if we underestimate it! Premillennialism is the result of men thinking too little of Jesus Christ and of His glorious gospel. Let us not think so little of the glorified Christ that we believe that sin and corruption can abide His appearance! "But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap" (Mal. 3:2), and "Our God is a consuming fire" (Deut. 4:24; Heb 12:29)!

This alone should be sufficient to show the villainy of the premillennial system, however, let us look at some more of what the Spirit has to say on this matter for good measure. Those of us who find a secret "rapture" to be irrational may rest in the fact that the prophets and apostles did not think much of it either.

The prophet Isaiah knows that the natural order cannot survive the presence of God and he spoke of it. "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence . . . that the nations may tremble at Thy presence" (Isa. 64:1-2)!

The prophet Micah also shared this glorious view. "For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of His place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place" (Mic. 1:3-4).

Nahum also spoke of the creation burning up in the light of God's glory. "The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him" (Nah. 1:5-6).

"Scholars" might argue that applying the above texts to the coming of the Lord is not a proper exegesis of the texts. Such arguments reveal that some people do not believe that the word of God is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12). The prophets may not have realized all of the implications of what they said "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:21), however, the Holy Ghost does. Isaiah, Micah and Nahum might have been praying for vengeance and not thinking about Christ's second coming when they wrote, but regardless of context, they knew that the natural order would not remain intact at the appearance of God. And when Christ comes, He "shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels" (Mt. 16:27; cf. Mt. 24:30; 25:31; Mk. 8:38; 13:26; Lk. 9:26; 21:27).

The truth of the passing away of the corrupted heavens and earth in the light of Christ's glory is not found in these texts

alone. The apostles also fully embraced the obvious implications of the glorified Christ confronting the corrupted natural order. They too spoke of the cosmic changes that will take place "at His appearing."

Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, the apostle Paul says that "even so in Christ shall all be made alive . . . But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (I Cor. 15:22-23). To Timothy Paul wrote, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom" (II Tim. 4:1).

The apostle Peter summed the matter up in one tidy sentence, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10).

In John's first epistle he testified by the Spirit of when and why our transformation will occur. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (I Jn. 3:2). It is the appearance of the glorified Christ that will cause our transformation! While there may not be a scientific explanation for this, we may embrace it joyfully by faith!

Indeed, we speak mysteries. "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Cor. 15:51-52).

We would do well to consider the great glory that the Father has bestowed upon His only begotten Son. There are no mortal expressions for the great love that the Father has for the Son and for the glory that is now His. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). When He comes again He will come "with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:30; Lk. 21:27).

It is certain that the natural order cannot hide His glory and will not survive His coming. The prophets, apostles, and Christ Himself attested to this fact. If there is no secret "rapture" the entire premillennial system crumbles into nothingness. We have sufficiently shown here that it is completely groundless, unscriptural, and degrades the glorified Christ. Let us see Him as He really is, now, with the eye of faith and be ready and looking for Him, "that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I Pet. 4:13). --4437 Chatham Drive, Brownsburg, IN 46112-8531

The Circumference of Divine Influence

By Given O. Blakely

" . . . and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (KJV).

Without doubt, this is one of the most marvelous promises pertaining to life and godliness. Admittedly, it contradicts much historical and contemporary theologies, but that is its strength. The personal aspect of salvation may be seen in this text, as well as its dependability and certainty. The NIV reads, "And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you." "Anything," or "some point," in this case, means any view of life that conflicts with the frame of mind described in verses 10-14. It would involve not considering everything loss, not counting them dung, or not pressing toward the mark. Perhaps the individual does not see there is infinitely more to be had than what they possess, or that Christ can be more fully known.

In other words, spiritual maturity is lacking.

In this expression the Spirit acknowledges there are stages of spiritual life in which a sort of fog hangs over the soul. The condition, while not ideal, is not a hopeless one. Salvation graciously addresses the matter of spiritual infancy and lack of maturity.

Notice the manner of the text. The Spirit does NOT say "If in anything anyone is mature." Rather, the condition is "IF in anything" anyone thinks differently. Spiritual immaturity is thus viewed as the exception, and not the rule. Looking at the contemporary church, one would think that spiritual juvenility is the standard and spiritual maturity the exception. But that is not the case at all! A mode of thinking that is not like that expressed in 3:10-14 is variant and unacceptable in every way. Those so described are "otherwise minded," thinking differently than the kingdom standard or norm.

Faith, however small it may be, puts us within the circumference of Divine influence! Knowing this, the Apostle has great confidence in what will happen. Those who do not yet see the real objective of life have this promise, "God shall reveal even this unto you." Those who deny that God reveals things to people can derive no comfort from this promise. Paul does not say he would make the matter known to the struggling believer, but that God Himself would. The Lord would clarify the matter for them. This is the same procedure Paul mentioned to the Ephesians. "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:20-21).

Paul had confidence in this Divine provision, and often expressed the same to the churches (II Cor. 2:3; 7:16; Gal. 5:10; II Th. 3:4; Phile. 21). He knew that a person living by faith, no matter how young and immature, will be directed by the Lord. Even though their spiritual lives may appear erratic and inconsistent, yet in those loftier times, when their spirits are wafted into the heavenlies, remarkable insights can be bestowed upon them. How we must learn to count on this---to believe that God reveals the truth of what we teach to young and unstable souls. Our gatherings must be tailored for this to happen, providing spiritual heights and perspectives within which the Lord can work. Is not this a marvelous promise? "God will make [it] clear to you." Every child of God can rest his soul on that promise, believing it will come to pass. --GivenB@aol.com

The Spirit's Ministry to Jesus. The Holy Spirit ministered to Jesus at His birth (Mt. 1:18), His baptism (Mt. 3:16), His temptation in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1; Lk. 4:1), during His earthly ministry (Lk. 4:14, 18-19; cf. 10:21, NASB), at His death (Mk. 15:37, implied, KJV), crucifixion (Heb. 9:14), and resurrection (Rom. 1:4). --David Maddack

Totally Depraved? "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Gen. 4:7), said the Lord God to Cain, after He rejected his offering. God told Cain that he *did* have a choice, and that he *would* be accepted *if* he did well. This is just one of many proofs that men are not totally depraved (that is, unable to do anything right or anything good), as some theologies teach. To imply *in the least* that the Word of the Lord, spoken to Cain here, contained some secret intention or counsel to the contrary, would be to make God an arch-deceiver. Cain chose not to do well, and he suffered the unspeakably grievous consequences of that choice. --Expanded from Wilbur Fields

"It is Written"

By Dave Hunt

This world is rampant with spiritual confusion, which steadily grows worse. There are thousands of denominations, cults and rival religions. In the clamor of conflicting voices, each claiming to speak for God and to lead to God, how is anyone to know the truth? It is reasonable to believe that having placed the desire to know the truth within us, God will fully satisfy that desire---and in a manner that will provide certainty to every sincere seeker (Jer. 19:13). Such has been His way from the very beginning.

The One who created Adam and Eve, and the universe in which they found themselves, personally conversed with them (Gen. 2:16,3:3,8). They knew His voice and understood the one commandment He had given them: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). But influenced by Satan, they doubted God's Word and disobeyed the One who had given them their being. The tragic result is recorded in the lamentable history of man, from the murder of Abel by his brother Cain to the multiplied murders, crimes and wars of our day.

Satan, "a liar, and the father of it [that is, of lying]" (Jn. 8:44), is the ultimate self-deceived egomaniac. He boasted, "I will be like the most High" (Isa. 14:14). Obviously, there can only be one "most High." In one stroke, of madness, Satan had rejected monotheism (belief in one true God) and introduced polytheism (belief in many gods). Bringing this lie to planet Earth through his first human convert, Eve, Satan became "the god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4), the author and high priest of every cult and false religion.

"Hath God said?" was Satan's subtle pretense at respect for God's Word. Then he posed as the religious expert and sold Eve on his false interpretation. She was pleased at finding a guru who explained away God's clear Word and told her what she wanted to hear. Ever since, Satan's lies have been more popular on this earth than God's truth---and following guru, prophet, pastor, priest or pope has been preferred to following God and His Word.

When it comes to knowing and pleasing God, multitudes who think for themselves in every other area of life, check their minds at the door and gullibly follow professionals.

Eden's pattern is repeated in every cult and false religion. Each has a leader who claims that he or she alone can interpret God's Word and must be followed unquestioningly. To this day, 89 years after Mary Baker Eddy's death, no Christian Science church dares to deviate from her interpretation of Scripture and each Christian Scientist still believes her satanic lie ("ye shall not surely die") that death is an illusion! Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be Bereans, checking the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society against the Bible for themselves. They must parrot whatever that body of proven false prophets declares. Mormons must follow implicitly the hierarchy in Salt Lake City.

Likewise Roman Catholics are taught that only the Church can interpret the Bible, and Catholicism's highest authority declares:

"... the faithful are obliged to submit to their bishops' decision ... in matters of faith and morals ... This loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given ... [to] the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* ... For the Roman Pontiff ... has full, supreme and universal power over the whole

Church . . ." (Vatican 11, Lumen Gentium, III, 22., 24.)

This inequality between leaders and followers is another mark of a cult. Notice that Satan didn't offer Eve what he himself desired--to be "like the most High." Instead, he promised that she could be one of the gods: "ye shall be as gods [not as God]" (Gen. 3:5). Satan would be the god ruling her. Both the Old and New Testaments declare that there are many gods and they are all false: "against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment" (Exod. 12:12); "there be gods many . . . there is but one God" (I Cor. 8:5-6).

Who are these false gods---and who worships them? Perhaps one third of the angels followed Satan (Rev. 12:4) in his rebellion. These devils (underlings of the Devil) are paganism's gods: "...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice [in their religious rituals], they sacrifice to devils [demons], and not to God" (I Cor. 10: 19-20). Behind every idol is a demon deceiving and enslaving pagan worshippers. Likewise, behind every false prophet is a demon: "try [test] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I Jn. 4: 1). It is a solemn truth that God allows evil spirits to inspire false prophets in order to deceive those who want to believe Satan's lies (I Kgs. 22:19-23).

That the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden is not myth but history is proved by the fact that all of Eve's descendants are obsessed with the very lie she embraced. Eve passed on to her descendants the passion to become a god. It seems to be in mankind's very bloodstream.

For example, the driving force behind the world of science and technology is godlike mastery of the universe through conquest of the atom and space. That theme dominates science fiction, space movies and cartoons. The New Age/Human Potential movement (paganism/occultism in modern garb) seeks the same goal through spiritual/mystical practices which promise to awaken the alleged unlimited potential of godlike powers supposedly dormant within us.

So it is in Hinduism. The goal of yoga, now practiced in virtually every YMCA, is self-realization (to achieve godhood). The Mind Science cults (Christian Science, Science of Mind, Religious Science, Unity, et al.) are very New Age, as is Mormonism. I once formally debated at Boise State University two Mormons who insisted that Joseph Smith was "the first prophet of the New Age." I explained that Smith was far from the first; that distinction belonged to the serpent in the Garden.

Mormonism is founded upon the belief that the lie Satan told Eve is God's truth. Whereas Jesus called Satan "a liar," Brigham Young declared, "The devil told the truth." A more recent Mormon president, Spencer W. Kimball, said, "In each of us is the potentiality to become a god . . . Mormonism's God was once a man on another planet who developed his full potential --and that is the goal of every Mormon male. "The essence of Mormonism is found in its most famous statement: "As man is God once was, as God is man may become."

The serpent's lie is everywhere, "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan . . .deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). The Eastern Orthodox Church declares, "Keeping the commandments . . . make a man god . . . the deification for which we were created." Pope John Paul II says, "The divinization of man comes from God." Positive confession leaders such as Hagin, Copeland, Price, et al, go the serpent one better: we *already are gods*. Many have seen Benny Hinn and Paul Crouch on TBN insisting, "We are little gods!"

So sure is Crouch that Satan's lie is God's truth that in his *Praise the Lord* newsletter for March 1993 he stated, "If we are not 'little Gods,' we will apologize to you in front of ten thousand times ten thousand before the Crystal Sea!" If Crouch and those

of like mind whom he has popularized on TBN insist upon being "little gods" they won't even be with the saints before the crystal sea. God has pronounced the doom of all who claim to be gods:

But the LORD is the true God . . . The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth . . . shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens (Jer. 10:10-11).

Interestingly, the Jehovah's Witnesses have made Christ into a little god. Unwilling to accept what the Bible says, "and the Word was God," the JW's corrupted New World Translation says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god (Jn. 1:1). They will tell you that "God in this verse is, of course, Jehovah, and "a god" refers to Jesus. So JW's have one big God and one little god. But, as the Bible plainly declares, there is only one God and *all gods* are usurpers doomed to destruction.

Back to Adam and Eve: As God had declared, they died *spiritually* at the moment of disobedience. Physical death took a bit longer to conquer their bodies. It takes much less time today. The Spirit of God departed from within these two rebels and Self had its awful birth. The connection is clear to selfist psychology's self-love, self-assertion, positive self-image, glorying in one's self-worth, etc. Once Adam and Eve had lived for God, after the Fall they lived for self. All of their offspring are born spiritually dead slaves of self, Pascal's "God-shaped vacuum" gnawing within them.

After the Fall all of the rest of the Bible is the account of God, in love, through His true prophets and the gift of His Son, calling man back to Himself and making that reconciliation possible---and Satan attempting, through deceit, to keep man in the darkness and death of that horrible separation. Nor have Satan's tactics changed. He still questions, attacks, and reinterprets God's Word through his false prophets. Moreover, Satan can only offer the same three enticements with which he tempted Eve, for these are "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (II Jn. 2,16).

When Eve "saw that the tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of the fruit . . ." (Gen. 3:6). Jesus faced the same three temptations. Eve was well fed; Jesus had just gone 40 days without food, or drink. Eve rejected God's Word; Jesus used it to defeat Satan, responding to each temptation with: "It is written!" (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk.4:1-13).

Satan tempted Christ in His hunger to "command that these stones be made bread" [the lust of the flesh]. Our Lord replied: "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Satan then "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world" [the lust of the eyes], and promised to give all the "power . . . and the glory of them" to Christ if He would bow down and worship him. Christ's response again was, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Satan then tempted Him to jump from the pinnacle of the temple so the people would admire Him when they saw the angels catch Him and lower Him safely to the ground, as Psalms 91:11-12 promised [the pride of life]. But Jesus again replied, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

It is written! Knowing, trusting and obeying God's Word is the antidote to Satan's lies and temptations. Christ quoted the Bible as the ultimate authority and guide to living. The Bible, according to the way Christ used it, sets the standard, makes the rules, provides guidance and causes Satan to flee. What has been written are the very words of God Himself to mankind.

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," and it is sufficient to make us "perfect [mature, complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3. 16-17). But Christian psychology, as we have documented, denies the sufficiency of Scripture and supplements and integrates it with Satan's lies contained in humanist theories.

The great tragedy in the church today is that many top leaders, instead of standing firm upon "It is written," doubt what God has unequivocally declared. The Pope, Christianity Today, Promise Keepers, Billy Graham, and many other leaders, Christian universities and seminaries have all agreed that God may have used evolution to create man. Yet that theory, as we have shown, contradicts God's Word. Graham is surely the most honored evangelical alive, yet he also doubts that the flood was worldwide, even though God's Word declares in the clearest language that it was. Last Christmas on "Larry King Live," Billy said concerning heaven, "if sex is necessary for our happiness and fulfillment, it'll be there." Again, the Bible was contradicted.

Jesus said, "It is written!" Satan can quote the Bible, too, and did so, but his application was false and Christ countered it with another scripture which refuted the perversion. Satan's ministers also quote and pervert Scripture. The antidote to such perversion is bringing the rest of the Bible to bear: man lives not by one favorite verse twisted out of context, but "by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

If we misuse the Bible to support our pet theories and agendas, we will fall victim to the lies of Satan and become the followers of false gods. If we seek with our whole heart to know the true God He will reveal Himself to us (Jer. 29:13); and if we will to do God's will, we will know sound doctrine (Jn 7:17) and not be led astray.

"It is written" is our anchor in the storm of false doctrine, humanistic theories, and worldly temptations raging around us. We stand secure and unmovable upon God's unchangeable, infallible and sufficient Word. May God help us to help others to do the same. --*From The Berean Call, P.O. Box 7019, Bend, OR, 97708, February 1999, Submitted to The Banner of Truth by Joan Hemmerick*

An Interpretation of Today's Violence

We include here our perspective on the horrific tragedy which have occurred in the High School at Littleton, Colorado and elsewhere. Perceptive individuals can readily see that violence is, in our day, filling the earth with increasing measure, and perhaps, in similar measure to the days and years preceding the universal deluge of Noah's day (Gen. 6:11; cf. Lk. 17:26). It seems that almost every daily newscast has a murder, or multiple murder, or some act of brutality as its feature story. Because of *the increasing incidents of violence*, people are subtly becoming accustomed to it, even to the point of regarding violent acts as being normal and entertaining. However, violence and wickedness are *not in the least normal* "in the sight of God" (I Tim. 6:13). It appears that what we are witnessing today is simply the harvest of a confirmed rejection of the knowledge of God (cf. Rom. 1:28-32) which has steadily been sown by men over the past several decades. And if the presence of increasing violence in the earth "provoked the most high God" (Ps. 78:56) to send a worldwide judgment upon the earth in Noah's day, men must consider well that it is the same God that is presently "beholding" the violence and sinful corruption (cf. Gen. 6:11-12; cf. Prov. 15:3) "in every place" in the world today. --*Editor*

The Spirit's Ministry of Conviction

"And when He (the Comforter) is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn. 16:8). "And when He (the Counselor) comes, He will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (RSV). "And He (the Comforter), when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (ASV).

We would here draw your attention to the words of the Lord Jesus regarding the Holy Spirit. This is one of the many places where so very much is said in just a few words.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (Jn. 16:7).

The Matter of Expediency. "It is expedient for you." In other words, it is better for you, it is more advantageous for you, "that I go away." The expediency was certainly for the Apostles, first of all, as they powerfully proclaimed the Word of God after Christ's resurrection and ascension. It was more advantageous for them, in a very real sense, that the Savior had gone away into Heaven. For it was then that the Holy Spirit was given in such great measure unto them. They, as it were, stood in the Savior's stead, empowered from on high, as they went into all the world to preach the gospel.

But the Holy Spirit is given to us, as well, who have received the Savior. As Peter declared on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And it is more advantageous for us, and for the kingdom of God's sake, that Christ has ascended up on high, "that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10)..

A Definite Advantage. Let us ask ourselves if we are able to concur in our hearts with this statement of our Lord. He said that the expediency was for our sakes, and that the advantage, spoken of here, was for our benefit. Are we able to perceive that it is better and more spiritually advantageous, that the Savior has, at least for the time, gone away into Heaven? Is the advantage, of which He was speaking, an integral part of your thought and reasoning processes? Or would you prefer that He would still be with us, as "in the days of His flesh" (Heb. 5:7), and as He was in Galilee? Do you perceive that it has been an advantage to you, personally, that the Savior has gone back into Heaven?

Let us state this yet another way: the Savior has gone away into Heaven and this circumstance has created a singular advantage for those who are living by faith. It is really better for us, it is more spiritually advantageous for us, it is more profitable for us, it is that which gives believing men the "spiritual edge" on things.. "It is to your advantage that I go away" (RSV, NASB, Weymouth). "It is profitable for you that I depart" (Rhm).

The fact, however, that our Lord prefaced this affirmation with the words "Nevertheless I tell you the truth," indicates that men will have to look more closely and more carefully to perceive the nature of the advantage and the expediency of which He spoke. In other words, this advantage is not apparent to the carnal mind. It is imperceptible to those who are not walking in the Spirit. But it is definitely recognizable to all those who are living by faith!

"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (Jn.

16:7). This is a point that the Lord Jesus makes more than once in this discourse. It seems that the Savior is perhaps saying here that only one Member of the Godhead can be on earth at a time, being made subject to the rejection, indifference, and callousness of men. Or, possibly, that at least two Members of the Godhead must be in Heaven at all times. Or it could be that the Comforter could not come until the Savior was enthroned at the right hand of the Father. But we are in the realm of holy speculation here, so, whatever the reason, we will simply draw your attention to the fact that the Lord emphatically declares that the Comforter would not come, *unless He went away!*

The Holy Spirit is a subservient Member of the Godhead: He does not act independently. From what we know of Him in Scripture, He has no self-interest, other than the interests of the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit, the Comforter. We will probably make this point more than once, but the Holy Spirit is called "the Comforter," because He has been appointed to console believing men and women *in the absence of the Savior*. The Comforter was going to come because the Savior was going away. Jesus called Him "another Comforter," implying that He Himself was also a Comforter, while He was here in this world. The Comforter has not been dispatched merely to help religious men hobble through life's troubles; He has been sent to comfort believing men and women while the Lord Jesus Christ is gone away into Heaven.

Consider the Savior's words found in Luke's gospel. "And He said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it" (Lk. 17:22). "One of the days," meaning days like those prior to His resurrection and ascension into Heaven. These were days like the days of His flesh, as the writer of Hebrews expressed it.

Now that the Savior has gone away, redeemed men and women stand greatly in need of divine comfort. Do you feel the dire need for consolation in the time of the Savior's absence? Not merely because you have been called upon to taste of a portion of earth's troubles and woes, but rather consolation because our Lord Jesus Christ, for the time appointed by the Father, has gone away into Heaven!

The Ministry of Comfort and Reproof. This almost sounds contradictory at first consideration. *When the Comforter is come, He will reprove.* The same Spirit who is the Comforter is also the divinely appointed Reprover. The One who ministers everlasting consolations to some men is also the one ministers great reproofs and conviction to other men. On the individual level, before He was the Comforter to men, He was the great Reprover. He comforts where He has previously reproved, and He reproveth with the intent of eventually comforting men, who have not yet believed, but who shall believe unto life everlasting.

When the Comforter is come, He will reprove. The greater part of the reproofing and convicting done by Him is done through the words and holy manner of living of those that He indwells. Search and see, but there are no records in Scripture of the Holy Spirit convicting anyone of sin apart from the Word of God, and especially from the preaching of the gospel. There are no chapters in the book of Acts devoted to the Holy Spirit convicting men of sin *independent of the lives of men and women indwelt by Him.*

Even the great awakenings and revivals in history were sparked either by some who were intently considering the Word of God, and by men and women who were living and walking in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not "swoop down" from Heaven to bring salvation to men independent of the involvement of

believing men and women that He indwells. We are workers together with Him! Our purpose here is certainly not to limit the “gifts,” “administrations,” and “operations” of the Godhead (cf. I Cor. 12:2-4), but rather to declare some of His ways (Ps. 103:7), as they are revealed in Scripture.

When the Comforter comes, He will reprove. He will convict, He will work conviction in men’s hearts. In creation the Holy Spirit moved upon the face of the waters (Gen 1:2), but now He moves upon the field of men’s hearts. The Holy Spirit does not reprove birds and oxen and fish and trees. He works conviction in the hearts of those who are created in God’s image. He says to them, as it were, “Return, ye children of men” (Ps. 90:3).

The Ministry of Comforting and Reproving. These almost appear to be contradictory ministries of the Holy Spirit. But to those who have obeyed the gospel and who are living by faith, the Holy Spirit is the Comforter. His primary ministry to them is one of comfort and consolation. He comforts by counseling them in the truth. He is “the Spirit of truth” (cf. Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). He comforts by bringing the truth to bear upon men’s hearts and minds in all of life’s woes and adversities. He does not comfort by mysteriously imparting good feelings to men. He consoles the heart by making the understanding fruitful. Where truth is known and understood clearly by men and where there is agreement with it, there the Holy Spirit will comfort. Where men are conversant with the truth and with the powers of the world to come, there are great consolations!

The Holy Spirit, a Reprover. To all who are yet unreconciled to God, the Holy Spirit is a faithful Reprover. He is a convicter. His ministry to such ones is to make them feel inwardly uncomfortable so long as they are at a distance from the Savior. He says, in effect, to unreconciled men, “You’re in the wrong -- Your thoughts are wrong, your actions are wrong, your living is wrong.”

If men are yet dwelling at a distance from God (to whatever degree), the Holy Spirit will reprove them. Wherever men and women are unbelieving, the Holy Spirit will convict them. Where men are drifting away from the Savior, the Holy Spirit will not give them rest, at least unto a certain point. For God has said, “My Spirit shall not always strive with men” (Gen. 6:3).

The Holy Spirit will continue to reprove and convict men so long as He is not resisted and quenched. So long as unbelieving men remain within earshot of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will be to them a reprover. He will give them no rest, nor will He permit them to remain at ease in their sin and unbelief. Wherever men’s consciences have *not* been “seared with a hot iron” (I Tim. 4:2), the Holy Spirit will continue to convict them of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment.

On the Spirit Striving with Men. Incidentally, on the matter of the Holy Spirit’s striving with men, it can be plainly seen that He strove with men even before the calling of Abraham and the giving of the Law (cf. Gen. 6:3). Way back at the beginning God was clearly demonstrating that He was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (cf. II Pet. 3:9).

And again, regarding the Holy Spirit’s reprovng the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, this is a great mercy from the Lord our God. He is presently summoning men to judgment in their own consciences, so that they may prepare themselves and have confidence in the day of judgment. O consider the blessedness of the Holy Spirit’s reproofs and power to bring conviction to the hearts of men! And He will do this wherever He is not quenched (I Th. 5:19), or grieved (Eph. 4:30), or resisted (Acts 7:51).

(The Holy Spirit’s work upon men’s hearts is a great and

mighty influence, that works upon men wherever the gospel is preached. *But His power and work can be resisted!* The Holy Spirit also *strives* with men with great tenderness, seeking to draw the wandering ones back to the Father through the Son. *But He most certainly can be grieved.* Speaking anthropomorphically, the Holy Spirit has feelings, and is hurt and even angered, wherever men are rejecting God’s salvation. The Holy Spirit’s influence upon men’s hearts is as a fire that burns everything up in the heart’s affection that stands between God and men. But this burning is not a conflagration, *it is a fire that can be quenched!* In all of these things it can be seen that the Holy Spirit does not force Himself upon men, but rather that His influence and working extend only as far as men will permit.

Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment. There is a lot of talk in our day about the Holy Spirit, and about His leading, that is outside the parameters of sin, righteousness, judgment. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” such ones would quote in defense of their earthbound views. But in the Romans 8 context where that expression appears (v. 14), the Spirit’s leading has to do with the mortifying of the (sinful) deeds of the body. His leading has to do with getting rid of personal sin, and appropriating God’s righteousness through the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the Galatians 5 text, the result of His leading is that those being so led of Him are not under the law (v. 18). Those who are led by Him sense that they are accepted of God because of what Christ has done, not because of personal merit or achievement on their part.

The law of Moses reprovng men of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. “Sin is the transgression of the law” (I Jn. 3:4). And the law was given “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19). Israel *followed after* the law of righteousness, *but they did not attain* unto the law of righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law (cf. Rom. 9:31-32).

But the Holy Spirit’s reproof of sin, righteousness, and judgment drives these matters home all the more to men’s consciences, wherever men will give heed to Him. He will give men no rest (so long as He is not quenched), until they are reconciled to God. “Sin, and righteousness, and judgment” are issues that men must face squarely if they are to be “accounted worthy to obtain that world” (Lk. 20:35).

In this case, the reproof is not primarily because men committed this sin or that sin, but rather because they did not believe on the only Savior. The sin of unbelief and *particularly* the rejection of the the Lord Jesus Christ dwarf all other sins. Adultery, fornication, murder, theft, bearing false witness, coveting, as evil as these sins are, are next to nothing when compared to rejecting God’s remedy for sin in Christ Jesus. As the Savior Himself declared in another place, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Jn. 3:19).

It is certainly true that “sin is the transgression of the law,” as John declared, and the Holy Spirit will certainly convict men at every point of the law’s transgression. But this level of conviction is in order to show men their need for the Savior (cf. Gal. 3:24-25).

A Word of Dedication. Here is a word that we would dedicate to all legalists. The Holy Spirit is declared to be reprovng men of sin, *not* because they failed to measure up to the law, or laws, but rather because they did not believe on the Savior: because they did not receive for themselves God’s salvation in Christ Jesus!

Incidentally, a legalist, (or someone that is seeking to please

God or find acceptance with God by measuring up to law), is simply a religious person that has unacceptably small thoughts of Christ. Such individuals have not yet perceived with the heart the enormous cost that was paid for *their* redemption. In other words, these have not believed on Him with all the heart (cf. Rom. 10:10), and thus they do not adequately comprehend that which Christ has accomplished for them. In the church, wherever Jesus is not adequately seen for who He really is, and for what He has accomplished salvationally, there men will be found, seeking to climb up to Heaven some other way than that which God has appointed. Whenever men have a restricted view of the Lord Jesus Christ, *without exception*, they will be seeking to find acceptance with God by their own achievements.

Faith's Indispensability. Let us underscore here the absolute importance of faith in the New Covenant era. Where there is no faith, there is no justification. There is no salvation. Men are yet in their sins (I Cor. 15:17). They are guilty, and their blood is on their hands. They stand condemned, not only before the law's tribunal in this world, but also before the great unseen Tribunal in the heavens.

And where there is no faith, there is no life Godward. Men are dead; they are alienated from the life of God (cf. Eph. 4:18). They are unresponsive to God and they feel extremely uncomfortable in His Presence. And if they feel uncomfortable in God's Presence now in this world, how would they ever hope to dwell with the Holy One throughout the ages to come?

We must seek to have larger thoughts of the Savior, and labor to believe upon Him more perfectly. Particularly is this the case in the generation in which we live. The foundations of truth have been destroyed in men's understanding (cf. Ps. 11:3). In our day we are faced with the swelling increase of religious error, humanism, cults and the occult. Many of the men and women that we meet daily are not merely unbelievers, having heard, but not having believed the gospel. A large number of them are souls that have become entangled in religious and philosophical errors of many sorts. But as we preach the Word of God to them, the Holy Spirit will reprove them. We can depend on Him to do this.

Let us give thanks that the Holy Spirit is not content to stop at the point of convincing men of sin. Jesus Christ, the Righteous One (I Jn. 2:1), was disapproved of men (cf. I Pet. 2:4), but He was "approved of God" (Acts 2:22). This was made abundantly plain by His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into Heaven.

He will Reprove the World of Righteousness. The Holy Spirit will convince all unbelieving men of an inflexible standard of Divine righteousness, which is far above them, and which they have miserably come short of. He will drive this matter home to their consciences, as long as He is not quenched. He will make unreconciled men feel the guilt of their sin even more than the law of Moses could do.

But He will persuade believing men of a righteousness that is on a much higher plane. It is a righteousness which declares that it was right for God to save them through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a righteousness which is now in them, and even which they have been made to be in Christ Jesus (cf. II Cor. 5:19-21).

Evidence of the Spirit's Work. Let us say here that wherever you see men and women trembling with great conviction that they shall someday stand before God in judgment, there is evidence that the Holy Spirit has been at work in their hearts.

The Prince of this World is Judged! Let us affirm it again with great confidence and joy. The prince of this world is judged! Divine sentence has already been passed upon the Devil, and he knows that he has but a short time (cf. Rev. 12:12).

Let us look at this another way. What if the prince of this world had *not* been judged or simply had *not yet* been judged? Sinful men would have no inflexible witness that they will stand before God in judgment.

Satan's judgment and conviction, however, leave no question that every sin will certainly be brought into judgment and that every sinner will be brought face to face with his or her iniquities. The reality of Satan's Divine sentence and conviction yet reverberates throughout the present tenancies of fallen angels (cf. Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:24) and it extends well into the domain of men, wherever the gospel is preached. Think of men like Agrippa and Felix (cf. Acts 24:25; 26:28), trembling before the Apostle Paul. And Paul himself (Acts 9:6), and the Philippian jailer at their conversions.

Men and women will occasionally be seen to tremble as they behold the risen Savior dwelling and abiding in you. We would exhort you all to walk in the Spirit, so that God may provoke unto jealousy (cf. Rom. 11:11) all those who are within hearing distance of you. May they be made jealous of your nearness to God by faith, which they shall readily perceive!

A Closing Thought. As a final thought, we would ask you to consider which chapters in the book of Acts are specifically and exclusively devoted to the acts of the Holy Spirit? We find chapters devoted to Stephen, to Paul, to Peter, to Philip, and other of the first century Apostles and saints. If the Spirit's ministry is as vital and significant as we have just considered, why are there not chapters focusing *only* on the Spirit's work?

The answer to this question is that the entire book of Acts is actually devoted to the Holy Spirit's work. But just as He is the unobtrusive member of the Godhead, He also works unobtrusively through Apostles, and prophets, and saints. Wherever the Word of God is being declared, *there* the Holy Spirit is at work. Wherever the gospel is being preached and where the risen Savior is lifted up by men, *there* the Spirit of God will be reproving men of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. There He will continue to effectively convince and convict men that it will not go well them, so long as they remain aloof from the salvation which God has provided for "all men" (cf. Tit. 2:11; I Tim. 4:10) in Christ Jesus. But if men will open up their hearts to the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will persuade them of the great and eternal blessedness associated with God's salvation in Christ Jesus. --*Editor*

(Forgiveness, Continued from Page Four)

And the gospel era is not to be confused with the days of Jesus' earthly sojourn, a common practice in some circles. While here in the flesh, He went about personally and directly executing His and the Father's will without regard to "the law of the Lord" which was to later "go forth from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2-4), unto which we are now shut up.

In other words, in our Lord's earthly ministry, He possessed and exercised what is known in legal circles as "ambulatory rights," or personal discretion without regard to the terms of a will, which after one's death becomes inviolable. It is to this law, or principle, that Paul refers in Hebrews 9:16-17. "A will takes effect," says he, "only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive" (RSV).

So, while Jesus was here on earth He could, with all propriety as Son of man and Son of God, do at the moment as seemed good to Him. That involved His Lordship of even the Sabbath day, imposed upon the Jews by His Father; personally forgiving sins on the spot without any stipulated condition, not even that of faith; etc. But when He returned to heaven and the

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The Grace Journey

By Rebecca R. Schmitt

Wallowing in the soot of shame
so dirty
Wanting to become clean
So filthy, so enslaved.

Seeing a glimpse of pure beauty
So unworthy
Frantically crawling toward beauty
So lowly.

Occasional sprinkles washing off some soot
So futile?
Will purity come?
So slowly.

Seeking wholeness, seeking cleansing
So painful
Worthiness being restored
So gradual.

Showers of blessings, in a sea of grace
So nourishing
Beauty being realized
So nurturing.

Swimming in a marathon
So vibrant
Love accepted
So pure, so free.

Miscellaneous Observations and Reflections

"Sin is both illogical, and out of character, for spiritual life."
--*Aaron Hutchcraft*

"The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (I Cor. 6:13).

"We must come to hate anything and everything that interferes with personal holiness." --*Gene Hutchcraft*

"Once Adam and Eve had lived for God; after the Fall they lived for self." --*Dave Hunt, in The Berean Call*

To the Lord Jesus, and from Him to men, were ministered, by the Holy Spirit, counsel, wisdom, knowledge, and strength.
--*David Maddack*

"With regard to loving God and loving His people, love has to do with what you do, what you give, and what your care about." --*Seth Wilson*

"Woe to the man who mocks God! Those who are not following Him (through faith in the gospel) are guilty of mocking Him." --*Michael Lohrman*

"Those who walk in the Spirit can expect to be overcomers, 'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts'" (Zech. 4:6). --*Aaron Hutchcraft*

"Man lives not by one favorite verse (of Scripture) twisted out of context, but "by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." --*Dave Hunt, in The Berean Call*

"That" which was inflicted upon the sons of men in Genesis 11 by the confounding of languages "was quite a curse, and we bear the scars of it unto this day." --*June Blakely*

The so-called "lost gospels," that some speak of, were really not lost at all. The early church fathers knew where they were. They simply were, and are, no good! --*David Maddack*

"God will not settle for a distant relationship with men. Men must press in to "know Him" (I Jn. 2:4; 5:20), or face the consequences of being excluded from His Presence." --*Ricky Sims*

Much Appreciated Contributions. The following individuals have recently sent in contributions to *The Banner of Truth*: Eleanor T. Shermer, Winston Salem, NC, \$30.00; Joan Hemmerick, Quartz Hill, CA, \$10.00; John Bertsch, Fort Wayne, IN, \$10.00. We extend our heartfelt thanks to God for all who have supported the paper financially and with their prayers, both in recent months, and over the years. --*Editor*

(Forgiveness, Continued from Page Eleven)

new covenant was promulgated on the Day of Pentecost, both He and the Father are bound by their own integrity to abide strictly by the terms of Divine benefit laid down therein (Jn. 12:48).

Hence, now men are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn. 1:13), when, by hearing the gospel and obeying it, they are "begotten" and born "with the Word of truth," which was both given by God and embodies His will for man (Jas. 1:18). --**The End**--

From Fort Wayne, Indiana. "Brother Al, I greet you in His wonderful Name, Christ Jesus. I enjoyed meeting you at Refreshing Waters. The meeting was a joyful and rewarding fellowship of the saints. God speed! John (Bertsch)."