How Are Men Saved?

By Louis Rushmore

Out of boundless love, God the Father sent his son Jesus Christ into the world to die for our sins. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us was part of God’s grace and mercy by which we are saved. The sacrifice of Christ and grace permits a just God to grant forgiveness of sins; Christ’s sacrifice and mercy permits a just God to withhold punishment for sins. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

Through grace God gives men what they do not deserve (salvation), and through mercy God does not give men what they do deserve (punishment). However, the grace and mercy of God which results in salvation is conditional upon man’s obedience to the Gospel.

With no less love for our souls, Jesus Christ willingly died for us. “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). Through his shed blood Christ saves us. “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5).

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

Also, as mediator between God the Father and ourselves Jesus saves us. “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:4-5). However, Christ as mediator and his blood save men conditionally.

The Holy Spirit’s role in conversion relates primarily to the provision of inspired revelation (the Word of God). Second Peter 1:20-21 summarizes the way in which Scripture was communicated from God to man. “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Holy Spirit, along with God and Jesus Christ, participates with men in their conversion. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13). That joint participation of the Godhead with us in the forgiveness of sins is non-miraculous and through the Word of God.

All that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have done to arrange for the forgiveness of sins is conditional upon man’s obedience to God’s plan of salvation recorded in the Gospel (the New Testament portion of the Bible). First, one must examine what the Bible teaches about salvation in order for faith to develop. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Without faith salvation is impossible. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek

him” (Hebrews 11:6); “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).

However, faith only is useless. “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20). “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24). Though men cannot earn salvation, God refuses to grant forgiveness of sins to men who refuse to obey him.

Faith is followed by repentance. All men are required to repent or perish. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

Profession before others of one’s faith in Jesus Christ naturally occurs next. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10). One New Testament character worded his profession: “. . . I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:38).

Baptism (immersion) is the point at which sins are forgiven. “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Baptism, though, does not save without the Godhead’s role in salvation as well as man’s part in his own salvation (i.e., hearing, believing, repenting, professing).

God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have done their parts toward saving men. However, man also has a role in his own salvation according to Philippians 2:12. “Wherefore,

my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

Man's role is summarized in the Bible as obedience. Speaking of Jesus, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). Obedience is the conditional basis of the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's roles in our salvation.

Men who do not obey the Gospel will be lost. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Dear Reader, are you saved? Have you obeyed the Gospel yet? The Father Son, and Holy Spirit have done their parts toward your salvation. It only remains for you to fulfill your role in your own salvation.

Miracles of the Bible

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

The idea of a miracle holds fascination for many people because it is charged with enigma. Strange and unknown things somehow appeal to the human psyche. Everybody talks about miracles but few know what they are talking about. The first step in discussing miracles is to say what we are talking about and note what we are not talking about. The purpose of

this study is to consider the miracles of the Bible. We are not surveying unusual events in the human experience that some wrongly call miracles and that have no connection with the Word of God. Things like Unidentified Flying Objects and little green men with antennae coming out of their heads and long, snake-like fingers, and squeaky voices are figment and not miracle. Neither are we discussing the magician's tricks. Furthermore, not every strange thing that is difficult to explain is a miracle.

The word "miracle" in the New Testament translates two Greek words. These two words are variously translated "miracle, sign, token, wonder, ability, power, might, strength, violence, and virtue." The King James translators use the word 37 times. The American Standard translators use the word only 9 times. Often where the King James translates "miracle" the American Standard uses the word "sign." A miracle is a sign, but not every sign is a miracle.

The New Testament speaks of signs or miracles performed by agency of the devil. In warning of a coming apostasy, Paul wrote: Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall

slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:1-11). The lawless one would come with the power of Satan to perform signs and lying wonders. In the book of Revelation the miraculous power of evil spirits is mentioned. “And he doeth great signs (miracles), that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men” (Rev 13:13).

“And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs (miracles) which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived” (Rev. 13:14). “For they are spirits of demons, working signs (miracles); which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty” (Rev. 16:14). “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs (miracles) in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone” (Rev. 19:20). Malignant spirits, under the control of the great Red Dragon, were able to perform wonders and signs to deceive people and bring them under the power of the Prince of Darkness. When the empire of Satan is utterly crushed by the heavenly army of the Captain of our salvation, these wonder working spirits will be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

In the book of Acts we are told of a pretender to magic powers who amazed the people with his sorcery. “But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who beforetime in the city used

sorcery, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called Great. And they gave heed to him, because that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries" (Acts 8:8-11). Simon of Samaria was a charlatan, but the people were fooled. His humbug was effective. He was a fraud, but the people didn't know it. The great and the small in the city of Samaria thought Simon was the real thing. They jumped on his bandwagon.

This Samaritan, Simon, was a conscious agent for Satan, and knew he was using trickery to deceive the people. Every generation produces swindlers who exploit gullible people eager to believe in voodooism. It is strange that people would rather accept claptrap than truth. The kind of signs these people do cannot favorably compare with bona fide miracles. Philip, a preacher of righteousness, came to Samaria and when the people of Samaria "heard and saw" the signs which he did they knew they had been bamboozled by Simon.

"And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For from many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city" (Acts 8:6-8).

Satan has real power and can pull wool over the eyes of sincere folks. We need to be alert to this and not allow ourselves to be hoodwinked by quacks. To be guided by astrology, Tarot cards, alchemy, palm readers, and fortune-tellers is about as sensible as making life-changing decisions on the basis of a message found in a Chinese after-dinner-cookie.

In the first century, the devil was allowed to use his mystical power without limit. The wonder-working power of God

was also fully unleashed. There was a great contest. The supernatural power of God was arrayed against the supernatural power of the devil. The devil lost! Demon possession of Bible times was a display of Satan's power. In the case of the woman with the "spirit of infirmity," we are told that Satan had bound her for eighteen years (Luke 13:16). The maid with "a spirit of divination" was a tool of evil spirits (Acts 16:16-18). Every time demons came into contact with one having the supernatural power of God, the demon lost. In each case, the demon was cast out. In one case, demons were sent into a herd of swine (Matt. 8:31-32). They could not predominate in the presence of divine omnipotence.

Satan was defeated. Jesus' victory over death was the final blow. Evil was pulverized. The terms of surrender were dictated by the conquering Christ. He who used his power to bind many was himself bound. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:8). "And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time" (Rev. 20:2-3). The vanquished Satan will never again be allowed to use his supernatural power to afflict humanity. God also restricts his power to natural means by his own choice. We have the sweet assurance that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Having looked at fake miracles and having considered Satanic signs, we now consider the miracles performed by the power of God that are recorded in the New Testament. A study of supernatural acts executed by divine power will demonstrate

the nature of miracles performed in the name of God. There are several conditions that determine what constitutes a miracle performed by the power of the Creator. First, the heavenly miracles of the first century were always successful. No applicant for miraculous healing in the days of Jesus and the apostles ever went away disappointed. And the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them (Matt. 4:24). “And when even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick” (Matt. 8:16). “And Jesus perceiving it withdrew from thence: and many followed him; and he healed them all” (Matt. 12:15). “And he came forth, and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick” (Matt. 14:14). “And there came unto him great multitudes, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at this feet; and he healed them” (Matt. 15:30). “And when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them” (Luke 4:40).

There were no failures! No one ever went away from a “healing service” of Jesus or the apostles still sick, possessed, or bound. We are told of an epileptic the disciples of Jesus could not heal, but the Lord healed him (Matt. 17:15-18). There was no failure in this situation. Jesus, we are told, “did not many mighty works” in Nazareth (Matt. 13:58). The reason he did not do many miracles in his hometown was not that he could not do it, but the people did not believe him and therefore did not come to him for healing. He was not going to break their doors down to demonstrate his divine credentials. If a person wants to reject Jesus, he is allowed to do it. This, obviously, does not constitute failure, but lack of opportunity.

There never was a failure. So, the first thing we learn is that God-authorized miracles never fail. No sufferer who applied to Jesus or his disciples for healing was told that his lack of faith caused the cure not to materialize. Second, the cure was always perfect. No person was ever partially cured. If God heals supernaturally, the cure must be complete, or the power of God is inadequate. It is true that on one occasion at Bethsaida a blind man was brought to Jesus with a request the he be healed (Mark 8:22). Jesus "spit on his eyes" and said "Seest thou aught" (Mark 8:23). The man answered, "I see men, for I behold them as trees, walking" (Mark 8:24). Jesus laid his hands upon the man and he "saw all things clearly" (Mark 8:25). Why Jesus healed this man in stages I do not know, but it is true that the blind man never left the presence of Jesus until he "saw all things clearly." In supernatural healing there is never a period of recuperation. The sick person does not begin to get better and over a period of weeks or months or years finally recover health. Miracles of healing always take place instantly. Third, there was no relapse. There is not a single instance in all of the New Testament where any person healed by the power of God ever suffered from the same complaint. A blind person who received his sight did not at a later time retrogress to darkness. The miracles of Jesus and the apostles were long lasting. Fourth, it was instantaneous. There was no waiting period. The cure was always abrupt.

"Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus

Christ of Nazareth, walk. And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up: and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him" (Acts 3:1-10). The God-authorized miracles of the New Testament were always without failure, or setback, perfect, and immediate. Anything that purports to be a miracle but that does not have these earmarks is not a God-authorized miracle. It may be a man-made fraud, it may be a Satan inspired fake, but it is not an act of God.

The miracles performed by approval of Jehovah in the New Testament were for the purpose of confirming revelation. God spoke through his appointed representatives and then sealed the message by signs and wonders. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). Nicodemus was right about that! The message of the New Testament is confirmed by signs and wonders. "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). If God performed miracles today, they would be available to all and would not be selective. "God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). They would be immediate and perfect and there would be no regression. The purpose of God's miracles was to confirm his word. "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen" (Mark 16:20). When that purpose was realized, miracles ceased. Satan is defeated. The truth is established. Miracles are no more. They are not needed. If miracles had remained after the truth of the gospel

was certified to be of God, then many people would follow Jesus for the wrong reason. If believers are put under a glass and protected from sickness and hurting, many would come to Jesus for the loaves and fishes. We are cautioned to not labor for the meat that is perishing, but for that which endures to eternal life (John 6:27).

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Col. 3:1-4).

Holy Spirit

By Frazier Conley
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> *…we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 19:2 ASV)*

What is the object or goal of the following discussion, what is the subject? The subject is, "Holy Spirit baptism." Why does it come up for discussion? It is a New Testament phrase about which conflicting ideas are expressed – and because it is a good starting point for understanding the whole doctrine of the Spirit.

The following is a complete list of the passages where the phrase is used:

• Matthew 3:11: "I indeed 'baptize you in water unto

repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire:"
• Mark 1:8: "I baptized you in water; but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit."
• Luke 3:16: "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water, but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and (in) fire."
•John 1:33: "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me. Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit."
• Acts 1:5: "For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence."
• Acts 11:16: "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit."

Some would add 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit." Later, however, I will show that this passage does not belong in the list, at least not as it is usually interpreted.

What are some of the diverse ideas Bible students have when they speak of being "baptized in the Holy Spirit?" The following list summarizes several of these:

• Some will say that it is the Holy Spirit entering into a person and bringing him "regeneration." It is salvation, as they suppose, that is accomplished.
• Similarly, others hold it is the saving presence or action of the Holy Spirit at baptism – water being the external part of the baptism and the Spirit the internal part. Some of these will teach that the Holy Spirit in baptism is "non-miraculous." Others will say that it sometimes, or always, involves miracle power.

• People who hold the “Pentecostal” viewpoint will affirm that at conversion one receives an indwelling of the Spirit. Then, subsequent to conversion, Christians should seek to receive power from the Holy Spirit. The empowerment must involve speaking in “unknown tongues.” This, they say, is Holy Spirit baptism.
• Still others explain that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a special measure of power (the “baptismal” measure), bestowed exclusively on the apostles and the house of Cornelius.

Are any of these correct? The thesis here is that none of them is exactly right. The following statement is Holy Spirit baptism in a nutshell. The remainder of the discussion in this book will set forth a defense of the following definition in the context of the larger New Testament theology of the Spirit:

Holy Spirit baptism is that event of the first century in which God gave divine notice to the world of the commencement of the age of salvation in Christ. He did so by imparting to a large number of people a variety of extraordinary Holy Spirit empowerments, including especially prophetic proclamation. This event was initiated on the day of Pentecost, as depicted in Acts 2. It ceased with the fading of the apostolic period. The manifestations were not only attention getting, but also served to advance and confirm the gospel. Receiving the Holy Spirit in this office though associated with an attitude receptive to the gospel was not the means or the instrument of one’s personal salvation; nor was it the Pauline doctrine of the indwelling Spirit; rather, it was simple empowerment.

Here it is suggested that one should not say, “Holy Spirit baptism” but, *the* Holy Spirit baptism.” It was a specific event, which had a beginning and an ending.

The Spirit received for empowering proclamation

To confirm the distinction made in Acts between reception of the Holy Spirit and salvation itself, one first needs to look carefully at Luke 4:18-19. There Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2:

> *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*

The Messiah receives the Spirit in order to preach or proclaim the good news of salvation, the arrival of the acceptable year of the Lord. He did not receive the Spirit for his own personal sanctification or for imparting the Spirit to others for indwelling sanctification. Throughout the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts the Spirit was received by persons, and then it is specified that the recipients as a result proclaimed and preached the gospel.' The gospel of salvation is *proclaimed* through the empowerment of the Spirit. *Salvation* comes when the hearer of the proclamation responds obediently to what is proclaimed.

In this connection one should especially note Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:38-39; and 5:31-32. In Luke 24 forgiveness of sins upon repentance is first mentioned (Luke 24:46-47). Then separately the conferral upon the apostles empowering them for preaching is noted (Luke 24:48-49). The preaching of salvation by the Spirit is not the salvation. The same order and distinction is in Acts 2:38-39. Peter first proclaims repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins. Then he mentions the reception of the Spirit – a reception that in Luke's gospel and the book of Acts, time and again, is an empowerment for proclamation. In Acts 5:30-32 first there is

the proclamation of the gospel, the promise of repentance, and the forgiveness based thereon. Second, there is the mention of the Spirit who empowers testimony. The role of the Spirit is to empower the proclamation, not to indwell directly and sanctify by his presence, as described in Paul's letters. The forgiveness or salvation comes when the gospel is preached and the correct response follows – repentance and baptism. In summary, one (a) learns about the salvation from preaching inspired by the Spirit: (b) and one responds to the preaching and obtains forgiveness by a penitent baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. The two matters are not identical.

As noted, among the powers bestowed during the period of the Holy Spirit baptism was the gift of inspiration, prophetic utterance. Inspiration was a special empowerment, although *it* was not technically "miraculous." Nevertheless miracles, manifestations, predictions, and tongues usually accompanied inspiration, which authenticated the inspiration.

How conferred?

If the baptism in the Holy Spirit consisted of a widespread bestowal of special Holy Spirit powers conferred upon the inaugural generation of the church, how was the power imparted? Certain principles, set forth especially in Acts, arise from the New Testament description.

It will be shown that:

(1) the extraordinary empowerment was conferred *directly* (without apostolic hands) only upon the twelve at Pentecost, and the house of Cornelius;

(2) through apostolic hands alone was such power conferred to others (Cornelius received the "same" gift as the apostles so far as the manner of reception – direct from heaven – but not the measure of power given to the apostolic office, which included the ability to confer gifts of the Holy Spirit to

others by laying on of hands);

(3) the power necessarily ceased with the apostolic age; and (very important);

(4) the reception of such power was only indirectly related to individual personal salvation.

Basic facts.

Here are some basic facts about Holy Spirit baptism. As noted, the expression "baptize in the Holy Spirit" or its verbal equivalent occurs only six times in scripture (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8: Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). Acts has the most to say about it – the expression itself however occurs in Acts only in quotations from Jesus. The author of Acts, in his own usage, wanted to reserve the word *baptize* for (water) immersion. Instead, Luke speaks of the Holy Spirit baptism typically by such phrases as "filled with the Spirit."

The first reference in Acts states:

> *…he charged them not to depart from Jerusa1cm, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which said he, ye heard from me: For John in. deed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence… you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:4-5, 8).*

Note the following facts from these verses:

(1)The baptism in the Holy Spirit was "the promise of the Father."

(2) It would occur, for the apostles, within a few days.

(3)This event would bring to its recipients an empowerment for witness.

The preamble to Acts 1 is Luke 24:36-53, “And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Note again that “the promise of the Father” (the Holy Spirit baptism) would include “power from on high.”

With reference to the apostles (others would receive empowerment in due time), the “promise of the Father” was plainly kept on the day of Pentecost, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit from heaven (Acts 2:1-13). They were empowered to speak in tongues. The whole event was accompanied by a sound from heaven like wind (which filled the entire chamber); and flames in appearance like fire, resting on each of them. Peter explains in Acts 2:33 that the Father had imparted the promised Holy Spirit to Jesus, and that Jesus then “poured out” upon the apostles that which had been seen and heard. This was the event which empowered the apostolic witness (see Acts 1:8).

When Peter began his sermon in Acts 2, he said:

> *… but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall he in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of my spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall he turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the day of the lord comes, that great and notable day. And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:16-21).*

There is no ambiguity in Peter’s introduction: “This is that.” The event which had just been witnessed: the sound, the fire-

like phenomenon, and the languages were the fulfillment (or the inauguration of the fulfillment) of the prophecy found in Joel.

We pointed out that the prophecy of Joel is the "promise of God" – the promised "pouring out" of his Spirit. Therefore, when John the baptist spoke of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and when Jesus is quoted in Acts 1:5; 11:16. The reference is to the prophecy of Joel in chapter 2:28-32. Clearly, if anyone is to understand the baptism in the Holy Spirit, he must understand Joel's prophecy.

Summary

In Acts the following are related or correlated: (1) the baptism in the Holy Spirit. (2) the promise of the Father, (3) the coming of the Holy Spirit, (4) the reception of power from on high, and (5) the events of Acts 2:1-4. This included (6) being filled with the Spirit, (7) the sound that filled the house. (8) the fire- like flames. (9) the empowerment to speak in tongues, (10) the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32, and thus, (11) the pouring out of God's Spirit.

John the baptist declared that he baptized with water, but the Lord would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Did John affirm that water baptism replaces Spirit baptism? Many Bible students take it this way. However, it is quite indisputable that Jesus ordained water baptism for his church (Acts 8:36-39; 10:47-48; 22:16; Eph. 5:26; et al.).

Please note carefully (it is frequently overlooked) that the word *baptizo,* when used literally and without any specification of a medium, has inherent in it the element of water (Oepke, *TDNT 1:539;* and see most Greek lexicons). *Baptizo* should therefore, in many passages, be rendered "immerse in water" and resurrected to a new life. By definition in such passages it cannot be understood to refer to a baptism "in Spirit." It is clear that John was not

teaching that Jesus was going replace water baptism with Spirit baptism.

Since the elements of the two baptisms are not the point of contrast, what is? The comparison is rather John's ministry, his preparation for the kingdom, versus its later inauguration with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. John's ministry could not claim the fulfillment of Joel 2. His ministry was a baptism of water only, looking forward to the coming of Christ. Christ, in the new age, not only authorizes a water baptism, but at the inaugural he confers an overwhelming of the Holy Spirit on the infant church.

John's ministry (thus his baptism) was preparatory; Jesus' ministry (including the baptizing in the Holy Spirit), in contrast, was the consummation. From another perspective (looking toward the future), Jesus' ministry, with its culmination on the day of Pentecost, was initiatory.

[1]One should notice John the Baptist (Luke 1:14-17); Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45); Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79); Simeon (Luke 2:25-35); Jesus (Luke 4:14-15, cf. 16-21; 10:21-22); disciples (Luke 12:12); the Twelve (Acts 1:8; 24ff, cf 2:l7ff: 4:8ff, 31: 10:l9ff, 34ff; 11:12, 14); Stephen (Acts 6:5, 8-10ff; 7:lff, cf. 7:51); Philip (8:29ff; Paul (Acts 9:17, 20); the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2, 4ff); and the Ephesian 12 (Acts 19:6). Other Luke-Acts material could be cited which suggest something similar.

God's Ideal in Marriage

By Roger Jackson
Vol. 107, No. 11

Genesis 2:18-25 is a record of the first marriage and the creation of the first home. In the beginning it was just as God planned it-perfect in every way. It was not long before marriage lost its pristine beauty.

Genesis 4:19 records the first case of bigamy. There followed a shameful degradation of the marriage bond and the abuse of a divine gift. By the time of Moses, men were divorcing their wives for any reason. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4 this abuse was because of the hardness of their hearts. God made it plain before the close of the Old Testament that he hated divorcing (Mal. 2:16).

In answer to the question, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” Jesus answered an implicit, “No.” There is only one scriptural cause for putting away, and that is fornication (Matt. 19:3, Matt. 19:9). Divorce is not God’s ideal in marriage.

Modem enemies of the home are wrecking God’s ideal marriage. Divorce destroys marriages and is available for almost any frivolous excuse. It has not helped society to make divorce readily available, as its advocates have insisted it would. It has left us with more homeless and one-parent children than ever before in the history of this nation. We have over 47,000 in Alabama alone. The social consumption of alcoholic beverages contributes to over half the fatal accidents on our highways each year. It is the culprit in nearly as many divorces. The use of alcohol socially contributes to immorality, which in turn breaks up homes and marriages. Humanism teaches atheism and Godless agnosticism, which denies a moral standard higher than human wisdom. The result is the contamination of the home that leads to its destruction.

We need to ask what is God’s ideal regarding marriage and then get back to it. No philosopher or marriage counselor is going to help us if we leave God, who created marriage and the home, out of its restoration.

What do we find when we examine what the Bible says is God's ideal in marriage?

Marriage is for the comfort, pleasure, and happiness of the Creator's people. In Proverbs 13:22 the inspired record states that the man who finds a wife finds a good thing. She is good for him because she was created that way.

Marriage is for the comfort, training, and security of children. In the home children are to be trained "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Marriage is to fulfill the sexual desires of men and women. It is honored around the world in every civilized society as an undefiled institution (Heb. 13:4).

Marriage is to perpetuate the human race. The idea of surrogate mothers would destroy the home if carried to its logical implications.

God's ideal home and marriage involve one man and one woman. The creation of only one of each sex implies this. This teaches against the marriage of two women, two men, one woman to two or more men, one man to two or more women, group marriages, and communal marriages. When God made Adam a "helpmeet" as one preacher put it, "He made Eve, not Steve." Homosexuality and lesbianism are abominations to God (Lev. 18:22). This is a nauseating sin. For it God severely reprimanded the Gentiles (Rom. 1:27). It is among the sins of which the unredeemed are guilty, but of which they must repent to inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9).

God's ideal for marriage is one "helpmeet" for life. This word *helpmeet* means "an exact design for the needs of man." God designed woman for man. This also means he is designed for her. Together they fit the needs of each other. Other considerations regarding marriage matches involve personalities and personal traits. Two people go through a dating period to discover the presence or absence of matching

characteristics. When we find the one who best fills those needs and more nearly matches (is compatible with) our own personality, we marry. In that union we become “one flesh.” It is the “coolest” union of a physical nature that humans know. Although it has nothing to do with marriage, Ruth 1:16-17 describes the kind of union involved in scriptural marriages. It has to do with staying close to the one with whom we are united until he or she dies (Rom. 7:1-2). Death is the only honorable means of ending a marriage. This will be the case in every marriage if we follow God’s ideal.

When God created woman, he did not take her from man’s head that she should rule over him; or from his foot that he should walk over her; but he took her from man’s side, to be a companion, from under his arm, to be protected, and from near his heart to be loved.

God’s ideal for marriage is one head. I Corinthians 11:1-3 explains the man is the head of the woman. No matter how many women’s liberation movements we have, that is God’s law. Women who acknowledge it are happy and well-adjusted.

It is much easier for the wife to be dutifully obedient and submissive when the husband follows the instructions of Ephesians 5:23-24 to love his wife as himself.

Paul says in I Timothy 2:12-14 that the woman may not usurp authority over a man and that this is not simply a church ordinance but is so because from the first God made it so.

In the marriage bond there must be a unity of values and goals. This is God’s ideal. Marriages will suffer if the significant goals and values are different. Of these goals, none is more important than going to heaven. Although there will be no marriage in heaven, it is a valid idea for couples to seek to go to heaven together where the relationships will be superior to marriage.

When we get back to God’s ideal in marriage, we will restore

the home as God would have it, and the world's problem of broken homes and lost souls because of them will disappear. May God hasten the day.

Cotham's Comments on the Holy Spirit

By Perry B. Cotham
Vol. 108, No. 08

A misconception of the Holy Spirit and his work for man's salvation leads to all kinds of religious errors. All that we can ever know about the Spirit and his work comes from the Scriptures. It is tragic to see some turn away from what the Bible teaches in favor of an inner, mystical longing, which they mistake for information about God.

The Holy Spirit is a person. There are three beings in one Godhead (Acts 17:29; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), but three beings possess the divine nature.

The Holy Spirit gave us the Holy Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; Eph. 6:17). The apostles were guided by the Spirit into all of the truth (John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1:3). In conviction, conversion, and edification the Holy Spirit operates on the heart of man only through the inspired Word of God (Psa. 19:7; Psa. 73:24; Psa. 119:50, Psa. 119:93, Psa. 119:105, Psa. 119:130). "The Gospel … is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The Spirit operates through the words of revelation, which are spirit and life (John 6:63).

The Bible plainly says that the Holy Spirit dwells within Christians. Paul wrote, “Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19).

How does the Spirit indwell the child of God? He indwells directly or indirectly. There is a difference in stating the fact and in stating the method (the how) of the Spirit’s indwelling. The Bible does not teach that the Spirit dwells in Christians apart from the inspired Word. Many religionists have the idea of a personal, direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the child of God. They think the Spirit gives the believer extra help besides the Word of God. This, of course, denies the all-sufficiency of God-breathed writing to make the man of God complete. Of course, this belief leads to all kinds of “experiences” and “feelings.”

Let us note some things: (1) God dwells in Christians (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 4:12-16). Does God dwell in his children directly or indirectly? It is indirect, through obedience to the word: “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him” (1 John 3:24). (2) Christ dwells in Christians (Col. 1:27). But how does Christ dwell in us? Paul explains, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:17). “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). (3) The Holy Spirit dwells in Christians. The Spirit is in each faithful member of the church the same way that God and Christ are in the saved. Neither God, Christ, nor the Holy Spirit dwells directly, personally, in Christians. As the Christian obeys the Spirit’s message, the Spirit’s influences are in him, and he brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in his life: “Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Comparing Ephesians 5:17-19 with Colossians 3:16 shows how the Spirit is in the child of God. To be “filled with the Spirit” is to let the “word of Christ” dwell in you richly. There is

no statement of Scripture saying the Holy Spirit dwells literally, directly, and personally in the child of God. If Jehovah the Father and Jesus the Son can indwell Christians indirectly and figuratively, the Holy Spirit can do the same.

Children of God cherish the Spirit's message and live by it, and in this way the Holy Spirit dwells in them and in the church. The teaching that the Spirit works directly – separate and apart from the Word of God in the heart of the alien sinner or the child of God, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God … that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We have the Bible and it is sufficient to make us what God wants us to be.

The Seal and Earnest of the Spirit (E. Trimble)

By Earl Trimble
Vol. 107, No. 12

In its noun form the word *earnest* appears only three times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14). In both of the Second Corinthian verses the word is used in the phrase, *earnest of the Spirit.* In the Ephesians verse it appears in the phrase, *earnest Of our inheritance.*

Thayer defines the Greek *arrabon (translated earnest* in these three passages) as "a foretaste and a pledge of future blessedness" (p. 75). Interestingly, Thayer likens *foretaste* to "tasted" as found in Hebrews 6:4 ("tasted of the heavenly gift"), in Hebrews 6:5 ("tasted the good word of God"), and I Peter 2:3 ("tasted that the Lord is gracious"). The idea of

tasting is "to partake of, to enjoy, to experience."

An analysis of these three verses reveals the contextual usage of the word *earnest.*

2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:5
"Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God; who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."
"Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

Attention is called to three words used in these two verses as defined by Thayer:

1. Anointing *(chrisma):* "a miraculous gift"
2. Seal *(sphragidzo):* "to mark with a seal"
3. Earnest *(arrabon):* "foretaste and pledge of future blessedness"

Notice also the usage of the expression, an *anointing,* as referring to a miraculous gift in I John 2:20, I John 2:27:

"And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things … his anointing teacheth you concerning all things."

Brother Guy N. Woods (in his chart #20, used in his debate with Given 0. Blakely on the subject of the Holy Spirit) says (regarding the word *earnest),*

> *The word is used three times in the New Testament, but always in a figurative sense: in the first (2 Cor. 1:22) it is applied to the gifts of the Holy Spirit which God bestowed upon the apostles, and by which he might be said to have hired them to be the servants of his Son; and which were the earnest, assurance, and commencement of those far superior blessings which he would bestow on them in the life to come as the wages of their faithful services: in the two latter (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14), it is applied to the gifts bestowed*

> *on Christians generally upon whom, after baptism, the apostles laid their hands, and which were to them an earnest of obtaining a heavenly habitation and inheritance, upon the supposition of their fidelity.*

The contextual setting wherein the words *(anointing, seal, and earnest)* are used, show their relativity to the Holy Spirit as being the miraculous gifts that God bestowed upon the apostles and early Christians through agency of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, their primary application was to those of that age and not to us today. The word *anointing* is not applicable to us in any sense, who live in the post-miraculous era. The words *seal and earnest* could be said to apply to us today only in a secondary sense.

Ephesians 1:13-14
". . . ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's. own possession. . . ."
In commenting on Ephesians 1:13, J. W. Shepherd says, "They [the Ephesians] received the gift of the Spirit in its miraculous manifestation. We do not; but we receive it in our hearts and bring them in subjection to it" *(Gospel Advocate Commentary, p.* 27). Commenting on verse 14 (p. 28), he uses the meaning of Romans 8:16-17 to illustrate the meaning of the *earnest of our inheritance.* He says, "It is rather the very work of the Spirit himself." Then he explains how the Christian's godly life, as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), is the assurance of God's approval. David Lipscomb adds: "So much of real spiritual blessings as he enjoys is heaven already in his heart; what he has in the work and fruits of the Spirit is for him alike pledge and foretaste."

Is it reasonable that the Spirit, himself, given to Christians as a seal and earnest for confirming God's approval and guarantee (as some contend) would himself be dependent upon "outside evidence" (i.e., God's word) to confirm his

indwelling? It is the result of the indwelling, and not the indwelling itself, that serves as the seal and earnest. Testimony and confirmation by the Spirit is dependent upon action and not passivity on his part unless there was an effect, the cause would serve no purpose. Some, in contending for a direct, personal indwelling, are ready to admit to direct operations (miraculous manifestations) of the Spirit in the Christian's life today.

Actually the Spirit proves his indirect indwelling, not in being passive, but rather by being active in producing fruit iii the Christian as the result of his teaching. This work performed by the Spirit in today's Christian is accomplished indirectly through the medium of the all-sufficient, Spirit-empowered word (John 6:63, John 6:68; Acts 20:32; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12, et al).

Has Man Outgrown the Gospel?

By Allen Webster
Vol. 107, No. 11

Time is changing. The new soon becomes old; the modern becomes ancient; the technological breakthrough becomes yesterday's news; the popular becomes lost in the latest; and the up-to-date is soon out-of-date.

Eternal truth never changes. It reads the same today as yesterday and as it will tomorrow. It is "once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). Those who would change it become "accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9) and find that it will meet them in judgment unchanged (Rev. 20:12).

Modem man feels he has outgrown the ancient gospel. He thinks

an absolute standard is obsolete. Exaltation of self and sensuality replace the idea of sin and spiritual death. He ridicules blood and the need for forgiveness. He scoffs at the virgin birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, and miraculous resurrection of Christ. He regards these as myths of a bygone era.

Has Man Outgrown the Gospel?

Never! The only way man can outgrow the gospel is to conquer sin. He has not. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" was true in Paul's day and is true today. Sin is still the transgression of the law of God (I John 3:4), which can include violating one's conscience (Rom. 14:23), omitting a duty (James 4:17), and lawlessness (I John 3:4).

Never! God, not man, determines what is sinful; sin will not change. Men may call sin by another name, but that will not alter what it really is. Forgiveness is still the most basic spiritual need that man has (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23). The only way a person can be forgiven is through the gospel (Rom. 1:16).

Never! The gospel is the power to overcome temptation (Eph. 6:17), and man needs its power because temptation is still with us. Mankind has not conquered carnal desires. He still gives in to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17). He cannot overcome without the power of the written word (Heb. 4:12).

Never! The devil is still "as a roaring lion" walking about "seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). Man is still in danger; therefore he needs the unchanged gospel, for it is God's great power to save. When humans can defeat Satan without the truth, then they will no longer need the truth. They cannot. No one is strong enough to conquer the Evil One without an "it is written" (Matt. 4:1-11).

Never! The soul of man needs food. If man could invent a substitute for "soul food," he would not need the gospel, but

he has not. Peter stated that the soul feeds on the "sincere milk of the word" (I Pet. 2:2), and Paul wrote that he could progress to eat "strong meat" from the hand of God (Heb. 5:12-14). The gospel fills those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6).

Never! Man still needs a map to heaven. Men try to invent a roadway to heaven, but these maps will only get one lost. If we follow the road of "faith only" or the lane of "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" or the path of "once saved always saved," we are traveling a broad way that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). Only Christ and his gospel can lead one to heaven (John 14:6). "I must needs go home by the way of the cross; there's no other way but this."

Jesus plainly stated the conditions by which men can reach much needed salvation. A sinner must believe in Christ (Mark 16:16), decide to change his sinful life (repent) (Luke 13:5), confess the sweet name of Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4). We can choose to heed these scriptures or harass them, to read them or reject them, to respect them or ridicule them. Still, the same ancient gospel is the cure for all the spiritual ills of men! Why not obey today?

The Blood of Christ (Outline)

By Victor M. Eskew
Vol. 111, No. 03

I. Introduction.

> *A. Jesus shed blood at Gethsemane, in the halls of Pilate, and at Calvary.*

B. Christians remember his blood each Lord's Day.

C. Peter called it "precious" blood (1 Pet. 1:19).

1. The word precious means "dear, valuable, costly."

2. The blood of Jesus is invaluable.

II. The Precious Blood of the Lamb.

A. The blood was real.

1. While on earth, Jesus had a human body of flesh, blood, and bones (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-8; Luke 24:39).

2. Jesus' blood, like ours, was composed of red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma. It was real blood.

B. The blood was royal.

1. He was of the house and lineage of David, whose dynasty continues to the end of time (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:32-33).

2. His kingship was mocked during his crucifixion (Mark 15:16-20).

3. Jesus was raised from the dead to sit on his eternal throne (Dan. 7:13-14; Acts 2:32-36).

4. Jesus is “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15).

C. The blood was innocent.

1. Jesus did nothing wrong (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).

a. Judas said, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood” (Matt. 27:4).

b. The wife of Pilate said, “Have nothing to do with this just man” (Matt. 27:19).

c. Pilate said, “I find no fault in this man” (Luke 23:4).

d. Pilate also said, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person” (Matt. 27:24).

2. The people who knew Jesus best could not convict him of sin (John 8:46).

3. If the enemies of Jesus could not convict him of sin, who can?

D. The blood was substitutionary.

1. Jesus gave himself for us (Titus 2:14).

2. Jesus "bare our sins in his own body" (1 Pet. 2:24).

3. Jesus "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

4. Jesus' stripes heal us (Isa. 53:5).

E. The blood is satisfying.

1. God is holy (holiness is a general term for moral excellence).

a. "The Lord our God is holy" (Psa. 99:9).

b. "Holy and reverend is his name" (Psa. 111:9).

c. His pure eyes cannot behold evil (Hab. 1:13).

d. Men fear God because he is holy (Rev. 15:4).

2. The holiness of God demands that sin be punished.

a. God is just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

b. God cannot tolerate evil.

c. God must judge and condemn sin.

d. God can justify sin only by the merit of a substitutionary sacrifice.

e. God can only be just if he forgives by a blood sacrifice, because "the blood of it is for the life thereof" (Lev. 17:14).

3. Jesus' blood satisfied the demands of divine justice.

a. Jesus was made a sin-sacrifice for us, though he knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

b. Jesus became an "offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Eph. 5:2).

F. The blood of Jesus was effective.

1. It cleanses from sin (Matt. 26:28; 1 John 1:7).

2. It redeems from sin (Eph. 1:7).

3. It gives life to the dead (Eph. 2:4-5; 1 John 5:11).

4. It purchased the church (Acts. 20:28).

5. It was shed once, never to be shed again (Heb. 10:11-12).

III. Conclusion.

A. The blood of Jesus is precious.

B. His blood is real, royal, innocent, substitutionary, satisfying, and effective.

C. We remember his blood each Lord's Day.

A Habitation of God Through

the Spirit

By Earl Trimble
Vol. 106, No. 06

Ephesians 2:22 is sometimes cited to support the view that the Holy Spirit personally indwells the Christian in a direct and in-Person manner. Often the question will be asked: "How can God dwell in us through the Spirit if the Spirit does not indwell us?" The phrase, "through the Spirit," in this Ephesians verse, is thought by some to mean that God, being in the Spirit, indwells us indirectly, figuratively, or representatively through (by means of) the Holy Spirit who is literally in us in his own Person.

Does this verse in the Ephesian letter, in fact, teach that the Spirit indwells one literally and immediately, as some affirm? This phrase, "through the Spirit," occurs at least four times in the New Testament (Acts 21:4; Rom. 8:13; Eph. 2:22; 1 Peter 1:22, KJV). An examination of the other three references will show that this phrase, through the Spirit does not refer to an indwelling of the Spirit. Notice the similar usages of these four references:

1) "…who said to Paul through the Spirit…" (Acts 21:4)
2) "…through the Spirit do mortify the deeds…" (Rom. 8:13)
3) "…a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22)
4) "…obeying the truth through the Spirit…" (1 Peter 1:22)

Notice the similar meanings of this phrase, "through the Spirit" in these four references:

"And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). The Holy Spirit made known to the disciples at Tyre that Paul would be in danger of his life if

he returned to Jerusalem (see also Acts 21:10-14). Here "through the Spirit" means "by the Spirit" (ASV). That is, the Spirit had warned the brethren of the danger that awaited Paul at Jerusalem. This information given the disciples by the Spirit was inspired revelation.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). Who would argue this means if those Roman Christians would mortify the deeds of the body "through the Spirit" that indwelt them, they would live? It is apparent Paul was telling them if they would mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit's teaching, that is, according to what the Spirit taught, they would live.

"In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). How are Christians built together for a habitation of God? Is our being built together accomplished by the Spirit as he literally indwells us? If so, then would our being built together not be a direct operation of the Holy Spirit? Again, in this Ephesians 2:22 reference, the phrase "through the Spirit" could have been rendered "by the Spirit." Our obedience to the Spirit's teaching builds together as "a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). This verse does not allude to a direct, personal, immediate indwelling of the Spirit. It is a misapplication of Ephesians 2:22 to use it to teach that the Spirit indwells us literally in his own Person.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love on another fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). Who would affirm that one's "obeying the truth" is effected "through the Spirit" that literally indwells him? We know that one obeys the truth through, or by, the Spirit's influence exerted through, or by, the inspired Word of God. The Spirit's only influence upon the human heart or conscience is through the message of the inspired Word of God, and never by direct operation. In like manner we are built together for a

habitation of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit through the influence exerted by the Spirit in the inspired Word of life (John 6:63-68).

Working the Works of God

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs
Vol. 121, No. 08

The Bible teaches that works have nothing to do with salvation, and it teaches that works are necessary to salvation.

Still, the Bible does not contradict itself.

How can this be? How can the Bible say two things that seem to be diametrically opposed and yet not contradict itself? It would appear to be self-evident that works cannot be both necessary and unnecessary to salvation.

Since the Bible is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), it must be true and therefore cannot contradict itself. Truth, in order to be truth, must be coherent. If two statements contradict, either one or both of them must be false, but there is no way they can both be true. How, then, do we deal with the fact that the Bible says works are not necessary to justification, and also says that we are justified by works?

Some assume a "take your pick" attitude and go blithely down the path not knowing how to reconcile the two statements — and, possibly, not caring. The honest person however cannot do this and must either reject the Bible or find a logical way to harmonize the two statements.

Various Works

To understand the Bible we must define its terms correctly. It is necessary to understand accurately how Bible writers use the word “works” (sometimes “deeds”), or we will be confused. A survey of how the Bible uses this word will help us to avoid the confusion of misunderstanding. A failure to understand something correctly leads to incomprehension and perhaps unbelief.

Following is a partial list of “work(s)” mentioned in the Old and New Testaments:

- The work God does – Gen. 2:2; Judges 2:7; Ps. 71:17; 1 Cor. 12:6; John 6:28-29; John 10:37; John 14:10
- The work man does in providing food and shelter – Gen. 3:17-19; Exod. 23:12; Exod. 26:1; Eccl. 2:4; Matt. 21:28
- The work man does in obeying specific commands of God – Gen. 6:13-22; John 9:4; 1 Cor. 15:58
- Work of iniquity (evil) – Ps. 6:8; Ps. 14:1; Jer. 1:16; Ezek. 33:26; Matt. 7:23; Luke 13:27; John 3:19; Rom. 1:27; Eph. 4:19; Rom. 13:12 (“works of darkness”); Gal. 5:19-21 (“works of the flesh”)
- Work of righteousness (good) – Ps. 15:2; Acts 10:35; Matt. 5:16; Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 3:13-14; 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; James 1:4; James 3:13
- Works that are worthy of repentance – Acts 26:20
- The mighty works (signs, miracles) of Jesus – Matt. 11:23-24; John 10:32; Acts 2:22
- Works of the Law of Moses – Rom. 3:20; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:2
- Greater works done by Jesus’ disciples – John 5:20; John 14:12
- Good and bad works by which all men shall be judged – Rom. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12-13; Rev. 22:12
- Human works apart from works of God – Rom. 9:11; Rom. 11:6

- Converts to Jesus – 1 Cor. 3:14
- Apostolic signs, and wonders, and mighty works – 2 Cor. 12:12
- Work of sinless perfection – Eph. 2:9; Col. 2:21-23
- The power that works in the saved – Eph. 3:20; Eph. 4:12
- The word of God that works in the believer – 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 1:11; 1 Tim. 2:10; 1 Tim. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:21
- Works that justify – James 2:24; James 3:13
- Works of the devil – 1 John 3:8
- The ungodly works of ungodliness – Jude 1:15

This gives a sample of various "works" mentioned in the Bible. It is a mistake to suppose that the word work(s) always refers to condition of acceptance with God. It does not!

Even a casual glance at this list will convince the thoughtful Bible student this is a complicated subject, having many interrelated parts. It is difficult to deal with because of the need to take different relationships or points of view into consideration.

The mighty acts of Jehovah are works. Creation (Ps. 8:3-6; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 33:4; Ps. 92:5; Ps. 102:25; Ps. 104:24), redemptive acts in history like the Exodus (Judges 2:7-10).

Jesus is our perfect example in all things (1 Pet. 2:21). The Savior went about doing good (Acts 10:38-39; John 4:34; John 5:36; John 10:25-38; John 15:24; John 17:4). His words and his works confirmed his authority and mission.

Humans are sinless at birth, seeing that Jehovah is the Father and Giver of the human spirit (Heb. 12:9; Eccl. 12:7). As the child matures it comes to understand that some things are right and other things are wrong, but chooses to do wrong things and ignore right things. This is called sin – sin of omission and sin of commission. This is the something a person knowingly does to himself. Iniquity separates a soul from its

God (Isa. 59:2). Those who die in sin cannot go where Jesus is; they “shall not inherit the kingdom of God (John 8:21; Gal. 5:19-21).

In his infinite compassion Jehovah sent Jesus to offer himself sacrifice for sins (John 3:16; John 10:18; Matt. 26:28).

We access the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb of God through belief (John 8:24).

“They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:28-29).

Saving belief is a work that includes other works. Faith is shown by works (James 2:18). “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). Abraham was justified by works produced by faith (James 2:21-22). Works make faith perfect (James 2:22). Sinners are justified by works and not by faith only (James 2:24). Faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

Jesus said, “He that believeth (a work) and is baptized (a work) shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (James 2:22). In baptism the sinner, “is buried with Christ” and is “raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). In baptism we are buried “with” Christ and we are raised “with” him believing that God will keep his promise to save “he that believeth and is baptized.” Peter tells us that baptism saves (1 Pet. 3:21). In baptism our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).

The spirit that is born again in the water of baptism (John 3:5) enters the kingdom of God, where faith continues to work, bringing glory to God (Matt. 5:16). The saved “work the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 16:10), abound “in every good work” (1 Cor. 9:8). Servants of righteousness “end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:5). The child of God is “created in

Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10); the saint is "fruitful unto every good work" (Col. 1:10). The Christian "works out his own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Paul prayed that God the Father may "comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word" (2 Thess. 2:17). Women professing godliness are to adorn themselves "with good works" (1 Tim. 2:10). If a man desires the office of bishop, he desires "a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1). Widows to be enrolled are to be "well reported of for good works" (1 Tim. 5:10). The new covenant lauds the good works of some that are "evident, and cannot be hid" (1 Tim. 5:25). Those described as "a vessel unto honor" are "prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). "The man of God" is "furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). Preachers are to be "an ensample of good works" (Titus 2:7), "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Followers of Jesus are to "be ready unto every good work" (Titus 3:1). Paul desired "that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8). "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister" (Heb. 6:10). "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works" (Heb. 10:24). Our Lord Jesus "make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:21).

The "wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13). Behave seemly among the pagans, "that, wherein they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12). "My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth (1 John 3:18). Jesus knows and commends the works of his disciples on earth (Rev. 2:2, Rev. 2:9, Rev. 2:19; Rev. 3:8). Those who die in the Lord are blessed because "their works follow with them" (Rev.

14:13).

On the last great judgment day, God will render unto every man "according to their works, whether they be good or evil" (Eccl. 12:14; Rev. 20:12-13; Rev. 22:12).

It is because of a present and future judgment that we must avoid the works of the flesh … the works of darkness … the works of the devil. Abstaining from all evil works is critical to the believer.

In the light of what the new covenant has to say about the importance of good works – works of faith – works that justify (James 2:24) – it seems strange that anyone would say that works have nothing to do with salvation … unless, of course, he is blinded by denominational dogma.

The Bible does warn us that we cannot live to maturity and be sinless (Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 4:2-6). "All sin and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). It also tells us the works of the Law of Moses cannot save us (Rom. 9:32; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:10). If eternal salvation could come by the Mosaic Law, then the death of Jesus was needless, because the people had that law for 1,500 years before Jesus was born of a woman (Gal. 2:21). We are also told that we cannot save ourselves by austerities (Col. 2:18).

Some honest person may be misled into wrongly supposing that when the Bible tells us we cannot be saved by our own works because it is not possible for us to live without sin – sooner or later all will sin and fall short of God's glory, that it is saying that even works of faith and righteousness – works of God – do not save. Also some will read Bible passages which say that the works of the Law of Moses cannot save, and mistakenly conclude that works have nothing to do with salvation. This study should clear that up because it gives indisputable proof that there is no justification without works.

It is indisputably true that works are necessary to justification (James 2:24), but it is also true that some works cannot save – the work of living a perfectly sinless life – the work of devising our own scheme of redemption – the works of the Law of Moses – the works of darkness, which are the works of Satan.

So, it is true that works both save us and have nothing to do with our salvation, depending on what kind of works you are talking about.

It is not possible for a reasonable adult to be sinless and therefore, in this sense, one cannot save himself by his own works. We cannot be saved by the works of Satan, nor by the works of the Law of Moses, nor by any human invention. Such works have no power to save and many of them are an offense to God.

Still, it is true that the work of faith (the works produced by faith, see Rom. 1:5; Rom. 16:26), bring the sinner into a right relationship with his Creator, help to maintain that relationship, and will one day be the reason for his promotion to glory (Matt. 25:31-46). To say that works have nothing to do with salvation is to fly in the face of Bible teaching.

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Miracles

by Alstone L. Tabor
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Do miracles occur today? If they do, who performs them? Perhaps most important, what is a miracle?

Most of us believe that God performs “miracles” daily as we consider the worlds in orbit and development of a tiny seed into a great plant. But this usage of the word “miracle” means “an unfathomable wonder” not a direct sign from God given as some special confirmation of His will. Our bodies are a miraculous creation! In this sense God continues miracles, and “miracles” is used, in this sense, by many writers in a poetic way. “To me, every hour of the day and night is an unspeakable, perfect miracle” (Walt Whitman).

A speaker recently declared that he believed in miracles. He told of his heart transplant and that his heart stopped beating twice and that the doctors and nurses started it again with electrical shocks. He said that he had died twice and came back to life.

This event was, understandably, a miracle to the speaker. By this definition, nearly everyone believes in miracles. But his wonderful experience is in no way comparable to the miracles of the New Testament. Those miracles were signs of a special sort which God used to confirm the inspired word. Marvelous medical advancements are different; they do not defy explanation, as do Biblical miracles, but are merely wonderful examples of human achievement.

Biblical miracles were real miracles. When Christ healed the sick, raised the dead, and gave sight to the blind, He never declared, “I will perform this miracle provided you go to the hospital and let the surgeons operate on you.” His miracles did not depend, even in part on the skill of earthly physicians or technology.

Miracles, such as the restarting of a stopped heart, do depend upon man and his skills. Such “miracles” do not have the same force upon those who witness them. When Jesus performed a miracle, no one could doubt that God had intervened in the natural world. God may, or may not have intervened in the heart transplant case, but doubt exists. Jesus’ signs left no

doubt, to the observer, that God had suspended natural laws to do His will.

One denominational Houston preacher who has a large following declares that he believes miracles happen today in the same way as Christ and the Apostles performed them. He says that he prayed for his young daughter, and she was healed. The daughter is now grown, and a few weeks ago, was opening the mail for him when a bomb went off in her lap. Does he rush in and pray that God will heal her? He claims his prayer was answered before. Does he rely on a miracle now? No sir! He rushed her to the emergency hospital and implored the surgeons to do their work. If God miraculously heals today, why not pray for her right there in the office and let God do the healing, without benefit of surgeon or nurse?

Would this sort of "miracle," say the rushing of Bartimaeus to the emergency room in Jericho, have confirmed Christ or his word? Certainly not! Christ did not perform miracles in this fashion.

God is all powerful and one day will perform the miracle of miracles by resurrecting all that are in the grave (John 5:28-29). He will also instantaneously change those then living (1 Cor. 15:51-52). But today He does not give the spiritual gifts of healing, tongues, prophecy, miraculous knowledge or any of the other gifts mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:6-10. God Himself told us that miraculous gifts would cease. "Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

He tells us plainly that faith, hope and love (these three shall abide or continue) not the eleven gifts which included the miraculous and healing gifts of the twelfth chapter. Only

three were to abide! “And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13).

What is that which is perfect? David declared in Psalm 19:7, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” James calls the New Testament “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25). So when the law of God was completed (made perfect), then miraculous gifts ceased. God said they would fail, cease, vanish away! I believe God rather than Oral Roberts, Pat Robinson or John Osteen. God no longer performs miraculous feats such as raising the dead, walking on water, the gift of prophecy, healing or speaking in tongues.

We believe in prayer, but we do not believe prayer will cause God to grant us the miracle-working power that He gave in the first century. Some people believe that God has to perform a miracle for prayer to be answered. That position is not supported by scripture. God’s hands are not tied, nor his power limited. God does move in our world. God provides many things in answer to prayer. Prayer accomplishes much, but God has not promised miracles in our age of the same kind that He performed through Christ and the inspired apostles.

Consider Heb 2:3-4:

> *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?”*

Consider also Mark 16:17 and Mark 16:20:

> *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on*

> *the sick, and they shall recover." Did this occur? Read verse 20. "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."*

The miracles or signs described in the preceding passages were to confirm the word. In that time without a written New Testament early Christians could know that God inspired certain messages because God confirmed the word by His miracles. He has confirmed His word: He does not need to continue the confirmation.

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men… And he gave some Apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man… That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine…" The first century church needed all these miraculously inspired people as they had no written New Testament then. Later the word was committed to writing. Obviously we no longer have Apostles or Prophets, nor do we have inspired evangelists, pastors or teachers. The inspired people were to continue "Till we all come in the unity of the Faith" (Eph 4:8).

We now have that faith, in the unified form, in the New Testament. Jude declared that we should "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3). This is not our personal faith, but the system of faith which had been revealed in God's Holy Word. Miraculously endowed gifts were to last "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God…" (Eph. 4:8). This unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God was completed, made perfect, when the last word of inspiration was written.

Now instead of all these miraculously endowed individuals, we have the “perfect law of liberty” completely given to mankind. God said supernatural things were to cease (1 Cor. 13:8), so His word being true, we have none of these today.

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Anti-Christs (antichrist)

By A. B. Gregoreo
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No other term in the Bible stirs the imagination and fires such wild speculation as that of “antichrist.” The speculation is extreme among those religious teachers holding the various premillennial theories. It is the stuff of scary movies and novels that attract multitudes of superstitious worldlings. In their ignorance, authors weave a web of error. God’s word provides the light that will help us understand the who and what of “antichrist.”

The term is a combination of “anti’ and Christ. “Anti” has two basic meanings: (1) “over against,” hence one who puts himself in the place of Christ; (2). “opposition to,” i.e., one who stands in opposition to Christ.

From first to last, the story of the Bible is that of Satan’s attempts to take the place of God, and his opposition to the Creator’s rule and will. This was first displayed in heaven in the misty past when certain angels, not content with their position, sinned and were cast down to hell (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Satan then appeared in Eden to corrupt the only creatures made in God’s image (Gen. 3:1-6).

In Noah's day he nearly succeeding in snaring all of humanity in his vile net (Gen. 6:9-12). In Egypt, Satan's man enslaved the Hebrews and slaughtered their male children. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, crushed God's people and demanded that they worship his image (Dan. 3:1-5).

The Holy Spirit inspired Daniel to foresee Satanic efforts to hinder and even destroy God's cause. From the broken Grecian Empire he saw a "little- horn that rose up to persecute God's people (Dan. 8:9-14; 23-25). This represented the Syrian tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes (176-164). He hated the Jews and their religion. Their temple he robbed. He placed an image of Jupiter in the Holy of Holies. A swine was sacrificed on the sacred altar and the temple defiled with its blood. He forbade circumcision. Every copy of the Hebrew Scriptures that could be found was destroyed. He tore down the walls of Jerusalem. Truly he was anti-God.

Daniel also saw yet another little horn that persecuted God's people. It sprang from the Roman Empire and most likely represented the vicious emperor Domition (Dan. 7:23-26). From Nero onward most of the Roman emperors were antichrist.

Jesus was confronted by antichrist forces of evil. At his birth, wicked Herod the Great sought to have him murdered. When his ministry was launched, the Jewish hierarchy waged an ongoing war against him and his teaching. Ultimately they secured his death. The Master warned his disciples of imposters who would claim to be Christ, i.e. messiah (Matt. 24:5). With deceitful signs they would lead many astray, even among the elect (Matt. 24:24).

Paul warned of a coming "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:1-12) – described as the "son of perdition." He would oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or worshiped. He would sit in the temple of God and set forth himself as God. His coming would surely be a work of Satan. He would use lying signs and wonders to deceive people. This malevolent spirit of

anti-Christian iniquity was already at work in Paul's day.

The apostle John wrote of "antichrists," not just one single evil individual. In his day there were already many antichrists. They formerly had been among the faithful churches but they have gone out from them because them were no longer with them in heart and mind (1 John 2:18-19). They were liars because they denied that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22). They denied his Sonship to God. They were false prophets. In their teaching they denied Jesus had come in the flesh, i.e., his incarnation. They were actively at work in John's day and he warned the brethren to reject and avoid them. They were deceivers (2 John 7). Because they did not abide in the doctrine of Christ, they had not God (2 John 9). There is an attitude or spirit held by certain false teachers then and now which John labels "anti-Christian" (1 John 4:1-3).

Antichrists are of two varieties. There are those yet within the church. Paul warned the Ephesian elders, "From among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). He likewise warned Timothy that "some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Such antichrists seek to corrupt the faith and practice of the church. They seek power and control over congregations.

Some create their own churches that compete with Christ's church for the souls of men. These are counterfeit churches that do great damage to Christianity. We see popes who put themselves in the place of Christ, claiming to be the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). Of similar nature are the founders and heads of denominations. Founders and leaders of all the cults that pervert the message of the Master seek to situate their "church" in the place of Christ's sacred body as antichrist. Most prominent in this class of antichrists are those theologians and "pastors" who have embraced one of the many

varieties of religious skepticism. Claiming to be Christians, they deny Jesus existed from eternity, that he is God, that he was virgin born, that he worked genuine miracles, that his death secured for- give of humanity's sins, and that he arose and ascended back to heaven. Occupying positions in seminaries and churches, these unbelievers are against Christ and his holy Cause.

Then there are those antichrists who in no way are associated with Christianity. They are unbelievers of every stripe who hate Jesus, his church, his word, and his disciples. Their hatred drives them to make war against the saints (Rev. 12:13-17). This warfare can be violent, physical persecution such as Rome and Jews employed in the early years. Modern examples of this violent anti-Christian spirit are seen in Russia under Communism, China, Cuba and most Muslim nations.

The opposition of unbelieving anti-Christians can be ideological such as presently prevails in academia, the media and the entertainment industry. They ignore the existence of Christianity, or they marginalize Christians. They subject them to ridicule and continual assaults on their faith. This opposition can take the form of legal harassment. Anti-Christian organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State use every legal trick to hinder, hobble, and undermine the influence of Christianity in America.

Imagining antichrist to be some horrid supernatural enemy who is to come at the end of our age, many are ignorant, blind, and unaware of the antichrists working in their very midst!

Paul describes the end of all such anti-Christian enemies, "Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:8). In the day when the Christ returns, "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God " (Phil. 2:10-11). This will certainly include every person who has set himself in the

place of Christ or worked against his cause!

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It’s Up to Me and to You

By Hugo McCord
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Many gifts from God, as our lives, as the air we breathe, are absolutely free. But whether or not we are (1) thankful to God and (2) live for him and for others is wholly in our hands. It’s up to me and to you.

Thankfulness

Some “believe that he [God] is” but are not “thankful” to him (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 1:21). To be thankful (says Webster) is to be “impressed with a sense of kindness received,” to be “ready to acknowledge it,” to be “grateful.”

To be thankless (says Webster) is “not feeling or expressing thanks, not acknowledging favors,” and Webster quotes Shakespeare, “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.”

After Jesus had healed ten men of leprosy, only one of them, a Samaritan, “when he saw that he was healed turned back and praised God with a loud voice, and fell on his face at the feet of Jesus, giving him thanks” (Luke 17:16). Jesus was shocked that the nine Jews were thankless, and he asked, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was none found to return to give God the glory except this foreigner?” (Luke 17: 17-18).

A psalm written 3,000 years ago is timeless:

> *Shout joyfully to Yahweh, all the earth. Serve Yahweh with gladness. Come before him with singing. Know that Yahweh, he is God. He made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise. Be thankful to him, and bless his name, for Yahweh is good, his kindness is everlasting, and his faithfulness is from generation to generation (Psa. 100).*

Paul was grateful "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst" (1 Tim. 1:15), "who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), exclaiming about Jesus, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable [indescribable, inexpressible, unutterable] gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

All Christians are exhorted, "Always give thanks to God, even the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20); "Give thanks for everything, which is God's will in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

Living for Others

Jesus not only died for others (Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:14-15), but he is a prime example of living for others. "He went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

To believing, penitent hearts (Acts 16:31; 2:38), as their bodies are raised from the water of baptism (Acts 10:47; Col. 2:12), Christ is their everything (Col. 3:11).

Redeemed sinners ("all have sinned," Rom. 3:23) realize that if "one died for all, then all had died" (2 Cor. 5:14), "and since he died for all, the living should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:15).

Living for the Lord includes daily Bible reading (Col. 1:10; 1 Pet. 2:2), daily praying (Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17), a weekly observance of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), a weekly contribution (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and living for others as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1), being "ready for every good work" (Titus 3:1, 8, 14).

No matter how selfish and self-centered a sinner was before his baptism, no longer does a Christian live "to himself" (Rom. 14:7). Every morning, as Jesus "went about doing good," on the mind of every Christian is, "what can I do today to help somebody?"

Those who live for Jesus not only live to serve other Christians, but they look for opportunities to serve non-Christians, as Paul taught: "Therefore, as we have an opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to those of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10), "contributing to the needs of the saints, showing love to strangers" (Rom. 12:13).

The first ones at Corinth in A.D. 51, "hearing, believing," and being "baptized," were "the household of Stephanas" (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 16:15); apparently Stephanas himself and his wife had children old enough to believe.

Their conversion was more than "joining a church." Theirs was a life-long commitment to live for Jesus and to live for others. Six years later (A.D. 57) Paul wrote of them: "They have set themselves to serve the saints" (1 Cor. 16:15). The KJV says that "they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." The word addict means to give oneself over to a thing, and generally, says Webster, in a bad sense. The word is used in reference to alcoholics or those given over to drugs. But the KJV used the word in a good sense, that the Stephanas family addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.

Sadly, some Christians allow selfishness to take over, and

live only for themselves. Phygelus and Hermogenes “deserted” Paul (2 Tim. 1:15).

Demas, who had been one of Paul’s “fellow workers” (Phil. 24) “deserted me,” said Paul, “having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10).

On the other hand, most Christians crucify selfishness, living for their Lord and for others: “Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24).

During Paul’s three years at Ephesus (A.D. 54-57) a Christian by the name of Onesiphorus “served” Paul in such a way that he could say to Timothy that “you know better than I the ways he served me in Ephesus” (2 Tim. 1:18).

Then later, during Paul’s last day in “chains” in the Mamertine Prison in Rome (A.D. 67-68), for some reason Onesiphorus was in Rome (2 Tim. 1:16-17), over 600 miles away from his home in Ephesus, and somehow he knew that Paul was there. The Mamertine Prison is a three-quarter cellar with a tiny window opening toward a cemetery.

In A.D. 67 Paul wrote, “When he [Onesiphorus] was in Rome, he searched diligently and found me. …He often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains” (2 Tim. 1:16-17).

Paul appreciated his good friend, and, apparently after Onesiphorus died, Paul penned two prayers about him in a letter to Timothy: “May the Lord grant mercy to the family of Onesiphorus,” and “May the Lord grant that he may find mercy from the Lord in that day” (2 Tim. 4:16, 18), and Paul asked Timothy to greet “the family of Onesiphorus” (2 Tim. 4:19).

An unselfish Christian lady in Bartlesville, Okla., a member of the Sixth and Dewey congregation, showed no self-pity when paralysis made her bedfast. She had never missed a Bible class or a church service until she became bedfast. Then she asked

that the names of the Sunday morning auditorium Bible class absentees be sent to her every Monday morning. With her telephone in bed she called each absentee. I preached for the Sixth and Dewey congregation six years (195 1-57), and I am sorry I have forgotten the name of the bedfast Christian of whom it could be said, “She has done what she could” (Mark 14:8). She was a good example for every church member.

I am thankful that the Lord, though he does not need it, has “a book of remembrance … written before him, for them who reverenced Yahweh, and who thought about his name” (Mal. 3:16), “whose names are in the book of life” (Phil. 4:3).

In conclusion, “None of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself. If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Whether, therefore, we live or die, we belong to the Lord” (Rom. 14:7-8).

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