Questions & Bible Answers — Drinking of Intoxicants

By Roy Deaver

Vol. 103, No. 08

QUESTION

"Our preacher mentioned recently that with regard to the drinking of intoxicants the Bible does not demand total abstinence. In an effort to prove this position he cited Ephesians 5:18, and stressed the word 'excess.' Does Ephesians 5:18 teach that it is all right for one to drink intoxicants, so long as he does not do so to 'excess'?"

ANSWER

1. As is recorded in Ephesians 5:18, in the *King James* reading, Paul says: "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;…"

It is alarming, frustrating, disappointing, and disgusting that some people who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ persist in efforts to try to justify the drinking of intoxicants. These often stress the words "moderation" and "temperance," and we hasten to emphasize that such usage of these words is a MISUSE of these words. "Moderation" and "temperance" apply to that which is right within itself—not to that which is by its very nature sinful. Does anyone really believe that it is all right to practice sin in moderation? Suppose the thief should say to himself: "I would like to steal three automobiles tonight. But, I believe in temperance and moderation, and so—I will just steal one." One can be "temperate" and "moderate" in eating, because eating is right. One can be "temperate" and "moderate" in sleeping, because sleeping is right.

2. Another word often misused in this connection is the word "social." Reference is often made to "social" drinking. If the word "social" is intended to indicate a proper concern for society, then I can think of no words more paradoxical than the words "social drinking." This is similar to talking about a "civil" war, or an "honest" thief, or a "white" blackbird, or a "sincere" hypocrite.

Further, what about the word "disease"? It is commonly claimed that alcoholism is a "disease." As Peter L. Reamm recently pointed out: "If so, it is the only disease that is contracted by an act of the will. It is the only disease that requires a license to propagate it. It is the only disease that is bottled and sold. It is the only disease that promotes crime. It is the only disease that is habit-forming. It is the only disease that is spread by advertising. It is the only disease that is given for a Christmas present."

3. In *The Spiritual Sword* of July, 1971, page 22, brother Guy N. Woods writes as follows: "In the light of these facts, it is indeed remarkable that there are those who attempt to justify 'moderate drinking,' and excuse 'social' drinkers. Anything which corrupts that which it touches must be, and is, always wrong; and Christians ought to avoid all participation therein. Actually, it is through so-called moderate drinking that most people become alcoholics." Brother Woods also stresses that "Moreover, indulgence to any extent is wrong because drunkenness is a matter of degree, and begins with the first drop of the fiery liquid." He quotes Dr. Ralph Overman as correctly emphasizing: "When you have drunk one drink, you are one drink drunk!" Brother Woods says: "It follows—therefore— as a simple matter of common sense that one should never, under any circumstances, and for any reason, swallow one drop of alcohol for beverage purposes."

4. The problem now under consideration arises at least in part from a misunderstanding of Ephesians 5:18, and—behind this misunderstanding—lies a translation problem. Many words in our

King James Versions do not mean in 1986 exactly what they meant in 1611. Please note that this statement is not a criticism of the King James Version, but is simply a statement of fact, and which points up the constant need for careful study. The English word “excess” as used in 1611 was an accurate rendering of the original. But, as the word “excess” is used in our day, its use in Ephesians 5:18 contributes to a misunderstanding of what Paul actually said.

According to the King James reading, Paul says: “And be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” The American Standard Version has: “And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the spirit.” Paul, in this statement, is not discussing what drunkenness LEADS TO, but, rather, what is already, inherently, IN IT! And, what is inherently IN IT is given us in the word “excess” in the King James reading and in the word “riot” in the American Standard reading. But, the English word “excess” in 1611, following its Latin derivation, meant “loss of self-possession.” In drunkenness (and in drinking) there is loss of self-possession. So, the Record says: “And be not drunken with wine, wherein is loss of self-possession.”

5. Upon this background, we turn now to look at the lexicons, translations, and other passages. The key word, so far as concerns the present study, is the Greek word *asotia.*

According to the lexicons, *asotia* means: (1) reckless debauchery (Green), (2) profligacy, incorrigibility (Arndt-Gingrich), (3) riotous living (Thayer), (4) an abandoned course (Berry). Barns refers to “that which is abandoned to sensuality and lust.”

What about the translations? (1) We have referred to the King James reading and to the American Standard reading. (2) *The Living Bible Oracles* has “And be not drunk with wine, by which comes dissoluteness “ (3) The *Revised Standard Version* has: “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery….” (4)

The New English Version has: “Do not give way to drunkenness and the dissipation which goes with *it.”(5) Montgomery* has: “Do not be drunk with wine, in which is riotous living….” (6) *Williams* has: “Stop getting drunk on wine, for that means profligacy.” (7) *The Pulpit Commentary* says: “And be not intoxicated with wine, wherein is dissoluteness.” We keep in mind that Paul is not talking about what drunkenness leads to (though that is certainly involved). He is talking about what is IN it. And, what is IN it is identified and described by the Greek word *asotia.* About this word, Lenski says: “It describes the condition when the mind and body are dragged down so as to be incapable of spiritual functions.”

How could anybody be in the condition (to any extent or to any degree) described by the Greek word *asotia,* and claim (with any degree of justification) to be pleasing to God? The etymological significance of this word, is—in fact—”without salvation.”

As indicated earlier, we want to look at this word as it occurs in other passages. (1) We look at Titus 1:6. About an elder, Paul says: “…having children that believe, who are not accused of RIOT or unruly.” (2) It is used in 1 Peter 4:4. Peter says: “…wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess (flood) of RIOT, speaking evil of you:…“ (3) Then, in Luke 15:13, *asotia* is used in adverbial form. The prodigal son “…took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living” (literally, living riotously).

6. The notion that Ephesians 5:18 teaches that it is all right in the sight of God for one to drink intoxicants so long as he or she does not do so to an “excess” is unscriptural, antiscriptural, ridiculous, preposterous, and absurd!

We close this document with the following argument:

MAJOR PREMISE: All things which war against the soul are

things from which men are commanded to abstain. Proof, 1 Peter 2:11.

MINOR PREMISE: The drinking of intoxicants is a thing which wars against the soul. Proof, consider Hosea 4:11; Proverbs 20:1.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, the drinking of intoxicants is a thing from which men are commanded to abstain.

And, we note, that "abstain" does not mean to practice it in moderation. All persons are commanded to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:29; 1 Thess. 4:3), and this does not mean to practice it in moderation or with temperance!

Route 1, Box 44-D Summerdale, AL 36580

Judging

By Darrell Conley
Vol. 107, No. 12

There is one passage of scripture that is known by every reprobate and enemy of Christianity. They may know nothing else of the Bible, but be assured they know this one: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). It is used as a weapon by the worldly, the lukewarm, trouble-makers, unbelievers, and false teachers in an attempt to disarm faithful children of God. We are told that condemning sin is judging. Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting is judging. Preaching and practicing the Bible doctrine of separation from the world is judging. Refusal to bid God- speed to false teachers is judging. Attempts to obey Bible teaching on church discipline is branded as the most shameful judgment of all.

What does the Bible teach about judging?

The primary meanings of the words commonly translated judge, *krino, anakrino,* and *diakrino* are respectively "separate, select, choose; examine, investigate, question; separate throughout, discriminate, discern." Sometimes *judge* denotes "sinful action," but sometimes it means "permitted or even required action." As always, the context will enable us to determine how the word is being used.

In the first few verses of Matthew 7, it is clear that the Lord is not condemning all judging, rather a particular kind of judging. Verses 3-5 show the Lord is condemning hypocritical or self-righteous judging.

> *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye (Matt. 7:3-5).*

What right do we have to condemn another when we are guilty of the same sin, perhaps to a greater degree? Paul makes it clear what our attitude should be in attempting to restore another: "Brethten, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Self-righteous and hypocritical judging is also condemned in Romans 2:1-3, 17-23.

The context of Matthew 7:1-5 proves that coming to a negative conclusion about someone is not necessarily unrighteous judging. In verse six Jesus warns against casting pearls before swine and giving that which is holy to the dogs. Since it is obvious he is talking about two-legged swine and dogs, it is necessary for us to come to a conclusion about who are swinish and who are doggish. This constitutes a necessary and

righteous judgment. We are also forbidden to judge things we cannot know such as the motives and secret thoughts of others. “Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God” (1 Cor. 4:5). No one has the right to draw conclusions without sufficient evidence. To do so is to violate what Paul commanded. But he did not forbid all manner of judging. In the next chapter Paul says that he had judged the fornicator in the church at Corinth and commanded the Corinthians to do the same. Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians what Christ said in John 7:24: “Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

The Bible also forbids judging a man a lawbreaker when there is no law to be broken. When we make laws where God made none, we are guilty of sinful judging. This is the kind of judging Paul condemned in Romans 14:3 ASV: “Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.” The same kind of judging is mentioned in Colossians 2:16-17: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day; which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body *is* Christ.”

The word *judge* is sometimes used to mean “to pronounce and execute sentence; to condemn.” It is used in this sense in John 12:47: “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” We as Christians certainly have no right to pronounce eternal judgment on anyone. We do have the right and the obligation to withdraw our fellowship from ungodly church members. Such is called “delivering them to Satan” (1 Cor. 5:3-5, 9-13).

These, then, are the kinds of judging that are condemned in the Bible:

1. Hypocritical or self-righteous judging

2. Judging without sufficient evidence
3. Making a law where God made none
4. Pronouncing eternal condemnation on another

As was pointed out above, some of the meanings of the words translated *judge* are "select, choose, examine, and discern." Judging is examining evidence and drawing conclusions or making choices. It is possible to do this in unfair or ungodly ways. Such judging is wrong. However, certain kinds of judging are commanded. "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Since righteous judgment is judging according to reality, we have no right to prejudge, but we do have the right and obligation to draw conclusions about people or doctrine that are warranted by the evidence. If it is always wrong to draw conclusions about people, how could we obey the following commands?

> *Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine (Matt. 7:6).*
>
> *Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15).*

In the same context Christ said:

> *By their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7:20).*
>
> *Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision (Phil. 3:2).*
>
> *Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear (1 Tim. 5:20).*
>
> *For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).*
>
> *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John 4:1).*

We are commanded to preach the gospel, to contend for the faith, and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort (Mark 16:15-16; Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:2). To obey these commands in an uncompromising, but kind way is not to be guilty of unrighteous judging. To teach truths from the Bible that imply that some will be lost is not ungodly judging. It is not sinful to arrive at conclusions based on what the Bible teaches and to hold fast to those conclusions. The Bible says, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13).

We are commanded to judge those church members who are ungodly and will not repent. Such judging is not only not sin but is positively required of us. Paul said he had already judged the fornicator in the Corinthian church and urged the church at Corinth to do the same (1 Cor. 5:3-5). The word *judge* as used by Paul here means “not only to reach a conclusion, but to act upon that conclusion” by withdrawing from an ungodly brother. “For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked men from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:12-13).

Let us be careful that we are not guilty of prejudging, self-righteous judging, or hypocritical judging, but do not let false teachers and ungodly brethren intimidate us from boldly preaching the gospel and steadfastly standing for the truth. Let us “judge righteous judgment.”

The Indwelling of the Spirit – a Figure of Speech

By Jerry Moffitt
Vol. 110, No. 11

For many years our brotherhood has disagreed on the mode of the indwelling of the Spirit. We have never divided over the issue because there have not only been good, sound men on both sides, but we have wise men on both sides of the issue.

As with many others, I have never felt that acceptance of the personal indwelling was a step toward the dangerous error of a special leading of the Spirit. And some of the best warriors against the charismatic movement and against a direct operation of the Spirit have been those who believe in the personal indwelling of the Spirit.

For more than 26 years I have puzzled over the mode of the indwelling and have felt that there was insufficient scriptural evidence to settle the issue. God doesn't answer every question (Deut. 29:29). Still, in teaching on sanctification, from time to time, I felt I was being led by Scripture in a natural way toward what might be called an indwelling of the Spirit through the Word. Finally, I decided to put the Scriptures and such thoughts into a simple monograph.

Following are those Scriptures and thoughts.

Transformation

Paul told the Roman Christians to "be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye *transformed by the renewing of your mind,* that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Truly a transformation is to

take place; other passages which seem to indicate the same thing in various figures are presented for your contemplation:

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct him? *But we have the* mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16).

“Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, *but Christ liveth in me*” (Gal. 2:20).

“My little children, of whom I am again in travail until *Christ be formed* in *you*” (Gal. 4:19).

“To whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is *Christ in you,* the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, *are* transformed into the same image *from glory to glory,* even as from the Lord the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

“And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, *and the day-star arise* in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19).

As we have seen, some of the verses (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27) talk of Christ dwelling in us. Others talk of God dwelling in us or his Word dwelling in us.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16).

“And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, *which also worketh in you that believe*” (1 Thess. 2:13).

“For *it is God who worketh in you* both to will and to work, for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

“I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; yet ye seek to kill me, because *my word hath not free course in you*” (John 8:37).

“In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*” (John 14:23).

Now, I believe all this is talking basically about sanctification. Paul said, “Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*” (2 Cor. 7:1).

I believe all these things happen much this way. A person hears the Word of God and of his free will and by obedience puts away bad traits and takes on good traits and holy characteristics. In doing so he resembles Christ more.

It can be said, figuratively, that Christ dwells in him. Christ is formed in him (Gal. 4:19). God has his abode with him (John 14:23).

The Word has free course in him (John 8:37).

It could be said he is full of the Spirit (Acts 6:3). It comes through obedience to the Word so the Bible attributes sanctification to the Word (John 17:17).

Now notice another passage. Paul said, “But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin” (Rom. 8:9-10).

Would not the concept of the Spirit dwelling in us fit well with all the passages above? Is it another way, by a figure of speech, of describing the transformation called sanctification which occurs in our lives by obedience to God's Word? Why would the dwelling of the Spirit be literal and all the other indwellings be figurative? And if the "indwelling of the Spirit" is a figure which describes the reality of sanctification, like all the rest, what figure is it?

Metonymy

There is what is called the "metonymy of the cause" where the "cause" is put for the "effect." Sometimes a person is put for an activity of that person. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 Paul says, "Quench not the Spirit," when he seems to have in mind the gifts of the Spirit, especially in context "prophesyings" (Gal. 5:20). Acts 7:51 says, "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit." Bullinger says:

> *The testimony of the Holy Spirit as given by the prophets. Their fathers resisted the prophets and would not hear the Spirit's voice in them and now they, like their fathers, were resisting the same testimony at Pentecost, and since then culminating in Stephen (see pp. 542-543 in Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, by E.W. Bullinger, published by Baker Book House in Grand Rapids, Mich.).*

Under "metonymy of the cause" and under "the person acting for the thing done" Bullinger has several whole categories involving the Holy Spirit. One is called the "Spirit for the gifts and operations of the Spirit" (p. 540). All examples he gives are worth considering. Could not the Holy Spirit (the Person) stand in the place of the thing he does (sanctification which comes through obedience to the truth [John 17:17])?

Could not the indwelling Spirit by "metonymy of the subject"

stand for the fruit he bears in our life when we obey his Word? Metonymy of the Subject is where the subject is put for something pertaining to it, so it seems so to me. For example, notice 2 Corinthians 3:6: “Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but *of the spirit*.” Bullinger says *spirit* stands for “the ministration of the Spirit, verse 8: the New Covenant as contained in the Gospel” (p. 543).

It seems clear there is a “metonymy of the cause” where sometimes the person acting is put for the thing done.

Again, I do not find the doctrine of the personal, literal indwelling of the Spirit distasteful, in and of itself, as long as one does not teach he does something to us separate and apart from the Word. That notion can contradict truth regarding free will and lead to the error of Calvinism. Too, so far I cannot prove the two concepts on the mode of the indwelling are mutually exclusive.

Some Scriptures might speak of one mode of indwelling while other Scriptures speak of another mode of indwelling. Yet, I still have not seen a personal indwelling proved, though I desire to continue to study it with an open mind.

A Personal Opinion

All good sound brethren I have spoken to agree that the mode of the indwelling does not affect salvation and must never divide us. We have good and sound brethren on both sides of this issue. Our dispute must be with those who suppose the Spirit in you works on you or does something to you separate and apart from the power of God’s Word. To save us, God chose the persuasive power of his Word. That leaves our free will intact. The error of a mysterious working on us apart from the Word of God cripples personal choice, weakens human responsibility, and violates the Word of God.

In an age when the denominational world says, “Christ paid it all,” and “God does it all,” and “You can’t save yourself,” those who teach direct leading of the Spirit without the Word are enemies of truth and in our battle with them we cannot take prisoners. Some of our best fighters in the fray, however, are those who differ with my indwelling and who believe in a direct personal indwelling. It is an honor to fight alongside them.

Inexcusable Excuses

By Terry R. Townsend
Vol. 121, No. 09

Have you ever thought about what folks might say to God at judgment for their failure to obey him? It’s sobering, isn’t it, to know there’s a coming judgment – a day in which all men will give account of themselves to the Lord! Paul writes, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). Let’s consider a few inexcusable excuses.

Without question, millions of people will blame their lack of obedience on preachers. Unfortunately, millions today put more faith in mortal man than they do God. Yet, the Bible is abundantly clear that one must be a doer of the word and not a hearer only (James 1:21-25). False teachers are deceiving millions into thinking they have “peace and safety,” when in reality they’re on a collision course with destruction (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). Thus, it behooves us to test the spirits (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). Blaming false teachers at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

There will be many on the Day of Judgment blaming the weather for their lack of involvement in the Lord's work. When asked why they fail to participate in spiritual activities, many blame mother nature – too hot in summer, too cold in winter, too wet in spring, too windy in fall, etc. If truth be told, people will do whatever their hearts so desire! Inclement weather does not negate one's responsibility to serve God (1 Cor. 15:58). Blaming the weather at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

Undoubtedly, millions will blame their parents at Judgment for their failure to do God's will. How often have I heard non-members say the following in a Bible study, "I see what you're saying, but if what I believe was good enough for dad and mom, it's good enough for me!" But what if dad and mom were wrong? Will God still grant you entrance into Heaven despite your failure to obey that which you knew to be true? The Bible says that one must obey Christ above all else, including family (cf. Luke 9:57-62; 14:26-35). In matters of faith, who should we ultimately listen to? Parents or Christ? Obviously, the answer is Jesus (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-3). Putting the blame on parents for your lack of obedience will be an inexcusable excuse.

Others at Judgment will use the excuse of profession for their failing to do the Father's Will. I'm sure some will say, "I would have obeyed and served you Lord, but my job wouldn't allow it." Truth be told, millions are more interested in money than they are in God. Paul had it right when he penned, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Tim. 6:9-10 ESV). Jesus said that we're to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). To blame one's profession at Judgment will be an

inexcusable excuse.

I’m sure that on Judgment Day some will use their lack of earthly substance (poverty) as an excuse for their failing to do the will of God. Some will probably say, “Lord, I wasn’t as blessed as others; thus, I didn’t do all I could.” I wonder if God will have standing beside Him the widow who gave two mites as an example to those making such excuses (cf. Mark 12:41-44)? The Lord expects us to do what we can with what we have (Matt. 25:14 ff). Blaming our lack of service on poverty will be an inexcusable excuse.

Another excuse many will make at Judgment will be that of persecution. I can hear some now, “Lord, I would’ve served You, but I didn’t because I feared persecution.” But didn’t he tell us in his word that Christians would be mistreated on occasion (cf John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12). Didn’t he assure us his presence, protection, and panoply to help us overcome (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6; Eph. 6:10 ff)? Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Thus, fear of persecution as a defense for failing to obey God will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Finally, millions will offer unto God the excuse of procrastination; that is, many will say, “I wanted to obey You Lord, but I simply ran out of time!” I wonder if Felix will be among the masses who will make such an excuse (Acts 24:25)? The Lord is patient, and he gives men ample time to obey (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9-14); thus, to use procrastination as a reason for failing to obey will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Simply put, we can make all the excuses we want to as to why we fail to do God’s Will; however, on the Day of Judgment, God’s answer to such excuses will be this:

“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!”

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).

What About the Rapture?

by Joe E. Galloway
Vol. 106, No. 6, 7, and 8

The rapture is a widely accepted denominational doctrine. Popular TV and radio evangelists teach this idea. Several best-selling religious books deal with this subject. Hal Lindsey's book, The Late Great Planet Earth, became a Hollywood movie. This book, first printed in 1970, was so popular that by 1976 it had gone through forty-two printings!

The result of this blitz of teaching is alarming. The news media mentioned the War in the Persian Gulf as maybe connected with Armageddon. Many people are using the term "the rapture" as if it was a commonly known and established future event, but the word "rapture" is not in any credible translation of the Bible.

The denominational idea of a coming rapture confuses folk and makes it difficult for them to understand and accept the truth. It is necessary to combat this false teaching before we can begin successfully to teach basic Bible truth. Some members of the church have accepted the teaching as Biblical. Brethren, we must teach the truth on "end times" and answer this false doctrine.

This incorrect view of "the rapture" says that Christ will soon appear and take the saved away from the earth for a seven-year rapture, leaving the unsaved on the earth to suffer. Most of us have read articles or heard hair-raising stories on what these people say will occur when Christ raptures the saved.

The anecdotes tell of men waking up and finding their wives

and children mysteriously gone. Others, at work, abruptly disappear from their machines and desks. Drivers and pilots suddenly vanish, causing crippling crashes.

Those not raptured panic, not knowing what has happened. The phone lines are jammed as people call the police, the newspaper office, the radio station. Disorder is rampant. Finally, some slowly realize the “rapture” has taken place, and they, not ready, were left behind. Meanwhile, the saved have inexpressible bliss.

TOO NEW TO BE BIBLICAL

Few people seem to know this unbiblical teaching is somewhat new. Although the false doctrine of premillennialism has been around for a while, dispensational premillennialism (from which comes the rapture idea) is dated from about 1830, beginning with John N. Darby and the start of the Plymouth Brethren movement.

One writer claims the two-stage idea of Christ’s coming commenced with Miss Margaret MacDonald in Port Glasgow, Scotland a few years earlier. No one can trace it back before the 1800’s. This shows the doctrine to be unscriptural. It started 1700 years too late to be from God!

THE DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIAL THEORY EXPLAINED

Dispensationalists, generally, teach that all human history falls into seven divisions. They disagree on the designations and the exact periods covered in the first five dispensations, but all agree we are now living in the sixth period, called,

by them, the Dispensation of Grace. They expect the seventh dispensation to last one thousand years and call it, The Millennium.

Most say the Dispensation of Grace will soon end with the reputed rapture. The living righteous will be caught up to meet Christ in the air to be judged and rewarded. The rapture lasts seven years (the "final week" of Daniel's prophesy – Daniel 9:27)

On earth, during this seven-year period, is The Great Tribulation. During the first part of this period, the Jews in Palestine make a covenant with Antichrist. They rebuild the temple, renew its sacrifices, and convert many to Judaism.

In the middle of this seven-year period the Antichrist breaks covenant with the Jews and demands to be worshiped. Multitudes are slaughtered in a great persecution.

After seven years, Christ comes back to earth with the raptured saints. Dispensational premillennialists call this The Revelation. The battle of Armageddon is fought and the Antichrist is destroyed in the war.

The righteous dead are, at last, remembered and resurrected. All the nations are judged. The millennium begins. Christ rules the world from earthly Jerusalem, sitting on David's literal throne. After the thousand years, Satan is loosed for a little while. After Satan's last fling, the wicked dead are resurrected and judged in "The Great White Throne Judgment."

A PROOF TEXT

Teachers of dispensational premillennialism claim First Thessalonians teaches their speculation about a rapture and tribulation and millennial reign of Jesus on earth. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall

we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17).

The verse does mention the living saved, along with the resurrected saved, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, however the passage speaks of what occurs after all the dead are raised and judged and says nothing of a secret rapture. The passage also indicates the redeemed in Hades are resurrected and the saved on earth are transformed simultaneously.

The book of First Thessalonians does not teach a clandestine return and rapture but says, “he (Jesus) shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thess. 4:16). This is one of the noisiest verses in the Bible! The verse says, “the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

Verse 17 says the saved of earth shall, with the sainted dead, be caught up “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” The word “so,” most people know, is an adverb of manner, and means “in this manner,” that is, “in the air,” shall we ever be with the Lord.

The rapture notion teaches, instead, that only the living righteous will be caught up in the air to be with Christ for seven years. Then they are to return to earth with him in The Revelation.

The advocates of a covert coming of Christ and the rapture say the Bible pictures the final coming Jesus as like a thief. So, they think, he will sneak in and snatch the saved from the earth secretly, like a thief doing his work.

The Bible does not teach the act of Christ’s coming to be as a thief, but says “the day” comes like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2). This does not teach that Christ will be sneaking in and out but shows we cannot know when Christ is coming.

CONTRARY TO BIBLICAL TEACHING

Many things in this fanciful doctrine contradict Bible truth! The word “rapture” is not Biblical. Hal Lindsey says it is not in the Bible and tells us not to look for It (The Late Great Planet Earth, page 126). Consider some discrepancies of this doctrine with God’s revealed truth.

First Discrepancy

The idea that the saved are to be taken from the world, while the lost remain, violates Bible teaching. The parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30; Matt. 13:38-43) disproves this notion. The wheat and the tares grow together “until the harvest” (13:30). Jesus tells us “the good seed are the children of the kingdom” and “the tares are the children of the wicked one” (13:38). “The harvest is the end of the world” (13:39). The sacred scriptures say the good and the bad will “grow together” until the “end of the world.” In the final harvest the householder will command, “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in the bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (verse 30). Jesus’ interpretation of the parable says, “The Son of man shall send forth his angles, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun” (verses 41-43). The impress of the passage is a simultaneous judgment of the saved and the lost. The parable says the lost are to be cast into the fires of hell at the same time the saved go to their heavenly mansions.

Second Discrepancy

Dispensational millenarians teach separate resurrections of the good and evil. According to them, the transformed

righteous of earth are swept away to a seven-year ecstasy. After the seven years, the sainted dead are resurrected to take part in a victorious 1,000 year earthly kingdom. After this, the wicked are resurrected. This makes different resurrections separated by at least 1,000 years.

Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

Some try to dodge the force of this by saying that “all” simply refers to the saved. Jesus takes care of this quibble- “they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” The ransomed and the dammed are raised the same hour.

Third Discrepancy

The rapture theory demands a secret coming of Christ. In discussing the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus told his disciples not to believe it if some said, “Lo, here is Christ, or there” (Matt. 24:23-26). Jesus explained, “For as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:27).

Just as all see the flash of lightening, so Christ’s ultimate coming will be open and public. It will not be an event so secret that most of mankind will not even realize Christ has returned until many hours afterward. Acts 1:11 tells us, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” When he comes again, “every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).

Fourth Discrepancy

The rapture speculation of millennial dispensationalists demands two future, literal returns of Christ. They call one return “the rapture” and the other return “the revelation.” Jesus promised, “I will come again” (John 14:3). He did not say, “I will come again and again.” Hebrews 9:28 tells us that “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” A third literal coming of Jesus is not promised in the holy scripture.

Dispensationalists downplay what the Bible says about a second literal coming by calling it the first and second “phase” of his second coming. This does not remove the fact they teach he is coming two more times, with seven years between his second and third coming. The Bible teaches one, still future, literal coming of Christ!

Fifth Discrepancy

A seven-year period of great tribulation on earth triggered by the second, literal coming of Jesus is not in the Bible. Matthew 24:21 mentions “great tribulation” at the destruction of Jerusalem – not after this age and the destruction of the earth.

The great tribulation of Matthew 24 cannot refer to Jesus’ last coming. The passage tells his followers not to return to their houses for possessions and speaks of the difficulty of being pregnant or nursing a baby and of the inconvenience of fleeing during the winter or on the Sabbath, all of which is meaningless, unless he is speaking of Jerusalem’s destruction, and not of his second, final coming. If Jesus is coming again to steal, like a thief, the good folk from the earth, it is pointless to tell them not to pack their clothes nor urge them to pray nor to have babies, nor that it is winter, nor the Sabbath day when he comes to zing them into rhapsody.

Revelation 7:14 speaks of victorious saints who suffered "great tribulation" on earth, who are rewarded by the Lord in heaven. There is no passage in all the Bible that speaks of a great tribulation after the Christian age. The Bible speaks instead of great comfort for the redeemed at the end of this period.

Sixth Discrepancy

The antichrist concept of millennialism is foreign to the scriptures. Antichrist simply means a person who is against Christ. The term is never used in the Bible to designate a leader of the forces of evil at the end of time.

1 John 2:18 helps answer this false emphasis. John said, "even now are many antichrists." The antichrists of John's day disprove the claim that one antichrist will appear after this age.

A list of those identified as the antichrist is amusing – Napoleon, Wilhelm, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Henry Kissinger, and Ronald Reagan. Soon someone will add Suddam Hussein to the roll. The prophets for dispensationalism are obviously wide of the mark, but that does not seem to bother their followers. They commonly ignore Deuteronomy 18:22! The prophets of the rapture, who teach lies, are the tail (Isa. 9:15)

Seventh Discrepancy

The battle of Armageddon, according to dispensational millenialists, is a war between the forces of the antichrist and those of Jesus at his literal, second coming. Revelation 16:14 mentions a "battle" and Revelation 16:16 mentions a place called "Armageddon." Neither the antichrist nor Christ's last coming is mentioned in this passage.

Pre-millennialists say prophetic statements should be accepted

in an unqualified sense. The battle of Armageddon is therefore a verbatim, carnal warfare. Some claim the carnage will be so great blood will really flow to the depth of the horse's bits – horses will be swimming in human blood.

Will they accept as literal "three unclean spirits like frogs" coming "out of the mouth of the dragon" to gather the kings to battle? The war of Revelation 16 is no more literal than is the instigator a literal frog who comes out of the mouth of a literal dragon.

Eighth Discrepancy

Advocates of the rapture say the earthly phase of the kingdom of heaven is to begin when Christ comes a second time unto salvation. The bible says the earthly phase of the kingdom of God now exists and will end when Jesus appears a final time.

The kingdom of heaven, which John the Baptist said was at hand, began on the Pentecost of Acts 2, during the Roman empire as foretold in Daniel 2:44. First century saints were in it (Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:28). At Jesus' last coming he will deliver an already established kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:23-25).

Ninth Discrepancy

Dispensationalists list as many as seven separate days of judgment. All such false teachers list at least three days of judgment – one at the claimed rapture of the saints, another for the nations after the assumed seven-year tribulation, and a third at the end of the so-called millennium.

The Bible teaches one day of judgment. Near the end of the gospel of Matthew we read of the day of judgment at least four times (Matt. 10:15; Matt. 11:22-24; Matt. 12:36), and "judgment" (singular) at least two more times (Matt.

12:41-42). “He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world” (Acts 17:31). The idea of various days of judgment for various groups of people is alien to the Bible.

“As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:27-28).

218 Pinecrest Drive
Greensville, TN 37743

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.

P.O. Box 690192
Houston, TX 77269-0192

It’s Up to Me and to You

By Hugo McCord
Vol. 116, No. 11

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).

5535 E. Evergreen, #7505
Vancouver, WA 98661