



TOWARD THE MARK

*“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF
THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”*

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

A MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS
OF ALL AGES

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Dear Reader,

“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself “(Dan.1:18)

What is the highest ambition of your life? You know how the man of the world would answer such a question. But how about you dear young Christian?

I believe that the highest ambition of every Christian is to be like Jesus our lord!

So let us “purpose and god will give the enabling power. To become men and women after his heart we must let him have our undivided attention .to win we must surrender to live we must die. And oh the sweetens of such a life, the joy of his fellowship! There is nothing like it on earth. All the success in the world will not compensate for it. Money brings its burdens, and fames its bitterness. Even loved ones disappoint but he is never a disappointment he satisfies.

Jesus, thou art enough
The mind and heart to fill;

A hymn written by a young man who cam to the realization that “ a man’s life consistent not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15)

We trust that you will be strengthen and blessed by reading the articles in this issue.

Thanks to all of you for your e-mail and letters of encouragement and support.

Please continue to pray.

Yours in our soon coming Lord,

Emil S Nashed

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Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or J.N.Darby translation.

MILK

The truth shall make you free

IN THE WRONG PLACE

		<u>The Apparent Cause</u>
1. Abram in Egypt	Gen. 12:10	Anxiety
2. Lot in Sodom	Gen. 19:1	Ambition
3. Jacob in Shechem	Gen. 33:18	Half-heartedness
4. David on the housetop	2 Sam. 11:2	Indolence
5. Man of God under an oak	1 Ki. 13:14	Self-complacency
6. Elijah under a juniper	1 Ki. 19:4	Discouragement
7. Jonah in the ship	Jon. 1:5	Self-will
8. Peter at the fire	Lk. 22:55	Fear
9. Paul in Jerusalem	Acts 21:15	Spiritual Zeal

How easily we may discern the grave mistakes of these beloved saints of God, in being where they were, and the positive harm that resulted. **Yet, can our hearts possibly ignore the sad fact that these same alarming motives noted in our last column have had far too great influence in leading us also astray?** What formidable enemies are these, against which we have no real protection unless armed with "the whole armour of God." If only "the shield of faith" is briefly dropped, Satan will use his "fiery darts" to full advantage. If we quietly analyze all these motives, every one will be seen to stem from personal pride, which is the one principle in man that will respond to the cunning deceit of the enemy, who himself fell through pride. But it is good to have these things so broken down for us that we may be able to discern the working of such motives in our own hearts, and to judge them unsparingly.

1) Abram. Who has not known something of Abram's anxiety, not only for himself, but for his loved ones, when famine struck the land of promise? Led by sight, he goes where he sees the food is. Faith had wavered, for God had brought him to the land, and would He not sustain him, famine or not? Shall we leave the place

of God's testimony because apprehensive of the future, and seek other fields that appear greener? **Whether for material or spiritual need, let us "be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).** It is this that brings "the peace of God," not seeking elsewhere some provision that seems attractive. If there are stern tests of faith, they are intended to test us. But "the trial of your faith" is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth" (1 Pet. 1:7). Why should we be content to fail the test-and suffer for it?

2) Lot. From this backsliding, however, Abram was fully recovered: Egypt's attractions deceived him only for a time. Not so with Lot. Rather than being recovered from a spirit of anxiety, he allowed it to grow into worldly ambition. We may sincerely insist that it is necessary for us to make a living on earth; but how many who do so are very soon trapped by the snare of seeking worldly advantage and position! Lot may likely have persuaded himself that he was really trying to improve the condition of Sodom, as certain Christians endeavor to improve the world; but is this thoroughly honest? He sat as a judge in the gate. Could he dare to say that is was really Sodom's improvement he was seeking, with no concern about his own earthly circumstances? **Oh no, he was ambitious for himself, and he lost everything. What a warning for the child of God!**

3) Jacob. In Jacob something of this same spirit is evident in Haran, and he labored hard to "provide for his own house," yet in his case he did not forget that he owed much to the grace of God. God indeed seeks by this same grace to fully restore him, when He tells him to return to Bethel, "God's house." But Jacob lingered on the way, and at Shechem "bought a parcel of a field," and settled down. Instead of leaving the world fully behind, he bought a little part of it, and the price he paid later was far higher than a sliver of gold. How easily we too, because of divided affections, may be content with a half-way house, instead of being in God's place for us, "God's house." But the results here, in Jacob's family, were the most shamefully evil in his history. **Let us beware of a divided heart, partly for the Lord, partly for the world; but rather pray in earnest with the Psalmist, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name" (Ps. 86:11).**

4) David. However, on the other hand, supposing we do learn to refuse worldly ambition, does this mean we may give ourselves up to a lazy existence? Can it be that such a thought as this influenced David at a time "when kings go forth to war?" If there was no need to gain anything for himself, did he forget that there was yet much to gain for God? Indolence will lead to positive sin. David, energetic, devoted man of God as he had been, found himself now with nothing to do but to "walk upon the roof of his house," though Israel had gone forth to war. Are we in vital exercise as to the things of God? — **not settling down in selfish contentment, but using leisure time in storing our souls with the truth of the word of God, and going forth to bear a consistent witness to the Lord Jesus, as good soldiers of His?** If we are willing to allow indolence in our lives, the world has its thousands of attractions to excite our natural senses, for which, if we were properly engaged, we should just not have time, nor inclination. Can the eternal God of glory not supply us with enough to profitably occupy our time? Let us make no excuse for failing to serve Him.

5) Man of God. Yet another danger presents itself even to those whom the Lord may use in faithful service. The man of God in 1 Kings 13 had obeyed the voice of the Lord in bearing solemn witness against Jeroboam and his idolatrous altar at Bethel, and obediently began his return journey, going by another route. Why did he stop to sit down under an oak tree? It was here that he was deceived by the old prophet, and fell into the snare of which God's word had solemnly forewarned him, and he was killed by a lion. If the horror of the evil of Bethel had had its due weight with him, as attested by the solemn word of God, certainly he would not have lingered for a moment. **But allowing himself some pleasant satisfaction at having faithfully spoken the word of God, instead of feeling still the force of that word in his own soul, he was in a state fit to be deceived.** What a warning! Let us indulge in but a little self-complacency, and we too may be deceived, and it was he who suffered. How good to take to heart the words of the Lord Jesus, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Lk. 17:10).

6) Elijah. Elijah illustrates another very real danger in connection with the service of the Lord. Here is another man of God who had, after deep exercise of soul, stood firmly, alone, for the living God, had brought down fire from heaven, had destroyed the prophets of Baal, and whose prayer brought rain to desolate land. Yet immediately after he is found under a juniper tree, fleeing from Jezebel, and in utter discouragement asking God to take away his life. Of course he thought that through God showing such mighty works of power, Israel would be brought back to God, and now found that no such moral and spiritual effects had taken place. He feels his efforts have not been appreciated: he is despised and alone. Has not every true servant of God had to feel this in some measure at least? But can discouragement ever be right? Never! **It is God who decides the value of our service for Him, not man.** If the service has been done for the Lord, the results may be left fully with Him. It is not easy for us to apply this in real simplicity of faith, but we must remember that we are only servants, and the same truth of God for which Elijah could stand before Ahab is really sufficient to sustain Elijah when he is utterly rejected and despised. Let us have our eyes simply upon our holy Lord, and discouragement will not overwhelm us. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

7) Jonah. As though this were not enough, there is yet a worse evil that may attack a servant of the Lord, and it **must not be forgotten that today every child of God is a servant of God** and intended to "serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Jonah writes concerning himself, and exposed his own motives, which seems a clear indication that in his judging such motives, God did in grace recover his soul. Instead of going to Ninevah when God had sent him, Jonah is found in a ship, asleep, which led to an experience of intense anguish in the belly of a great fish. The reason for his disobedience he himself reveals in chapter 4:1-2. He felt that if he went and warned Ninevah of the awesome judgment of God, Ninevah might repent, and God's judgment be averted, for he knew that God is gracious! When this actually happened, he was very angry, possibly because he felt his reputation as a prophet would suffer, or else because he would rather see Gentiles perish than repent! Can it be that the motives

of a child of God can descend so low? Sadly, it is true. **In order that I may be something, it is possible I may cruelly desire to have others put down.** Do we honestly pray for all men — the lowest, the vilest? Do we rejoice in the thought of guilty sinners turning in repentance to God? May our hearts go out in true, active love for souls, and we shall be preserved from this cold-hearted self-will that does what one prefers rather than obey God. Ought not Jonah to have rejoiced that this preaching was used by God to turn a whole city in repentance to cry to Him for mercy? But if we know nothing of repentant spirit ourselves, then the repentance of others will fail to move our hearts with thankfulness.

8) Peter. The case of Peter is a more common one, however, for have we not all too frequently found ourselves in his company as regards the sadness of his failure when his Master faced the cruelest hour of man's persecution? What powerful enemy so weakened this fervent, affectionate follower of the Lord Jesus? Simply "the fear of man," which "bringeth a snare." Can it be that this man, so naturally bold and courageous, will cringe and speak falsehood when confronted by a woman? Alas how weak are our hearts! But why should he be afraid? He had before assured the Lord he was ready to go with Him to prison and to death (Lk. 22:33). At that moment, though, the Lord Himself was not ready. He must go first to the garden of Gethsemane, where His soul was poured out in agonizing prayer to God, in preparation for the deeper agony of the cross. Peter neglected such preparation, and was asleep. **What a lesson for us! In the things of God, natural courage will fail. Only God's divine power and grace can sustain us and preserve us from fear.** "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee" (Ps. 56:3). "I will trust, and not be afraid" (Isa. 12:2). Most strikingly, Isaiah 51:12-13 shows that fear, no less than the other evils we have noted, is the product of mere pride, little as we might think it so: "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?" Is this not a stern and righteous reproof to our foolish fear of man? The results of Peter's fear were humiliating in the extreme, nor shall we escape reaping what we sow. Yet divine grace did, and does, wonderfully restore.

9) Paul. However, this element of fear has no place whatever in Paul's going up to Jerusalem when the Spirit of God had plainly warned him against it. But he was certainly not in the right place, however bold he may have been; in fact, it was a consuming love for his own people Israel, and a desire for their salvation that moved him so powerfully in seeking to attract their ears to the gospel. But the truest spiritual desire cannot be substituted for the guidance of God, who knew that Paul's testimony would not be received at Jerusalem. This is a lesson not easy to be learned in practice, a most humbling lesson, and necessary for the most earnest servants of God. The fact that Paul had been so greatly used by God in the salvation of Gentiles in other lands was no indication that he would be so used in Jerusalem with his own people, the Jews. How can we escape the sad conclusion that there was some element of pride in his feeling that he could persuade these Jews, and specially after God had told him he could not? **How we need the clear word of God for every step!** Not that spiritual zeal itself is an evil: it is not; but if we depend on this, we shall find it will mislead us, and we shall reap the results. Constant, consistent communion with God and submission to His word is our only real protection; and of all these cases, this last no doubt is intended to press this upon us most positively.

These are by no means all the cases of saints in wrong places recorded in the word of God, and we should do well to consider such histories as those of Abraham's going down to Abimelech the Philistine; of Samson's many compromises with the Philistines; of Elimelech and Naomi going down to Moab; of David's sojourn at Gath, and later at Ziklag; of Jonathan's choosing the court of his father Saul when David was in rejection; of Jehoshaphat's going down to visit the wicked king Ahab on friendly terms; and of Obadiah the servant of the Lord found serving Ahab. So numerous being the cases of such failure, they are surely serious warnings. Certainly they are not intended to provide us with any excuse for our own failure, but as warning signposts that we may avoid the same pitfalls, and rather find in the Lord Jesus the strength and grace necessary to meet these things, cultivating the positive motives of faith in the blessed Son of God, and of love Himself and for others.

L. M. Grant

Meat Sanctify them by the truth

CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS

"...what they begged should take place" (Lk. 23:24).

Involvement in politics is one of the questions of daily living Christians find hard to come to terms with. Many point to a good influence that may result from Christians who "make their voices heard." Others argue that, apart from our heavenly calling, we are also called to play our part in the kingdom (which is true) and therefore in politics. This article attempts to establish whether that argument is valid.

Principles of politics

Luke 23 sets the scene. Having accused the Lord before the religious authorities (the Sanhedrim, Lk. 22:66), the Lord's enemies "arose, and led him unto Pilate" (23:1), the Roman governor of Judea. "And they began to accuse him" (v. 2). The accusation brought forward - that the Lord "perverted the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar..." - was entirely unfounded (compare 20:25), but designed to achieve their objective. When accusing the Lord before the religious council, they used a charge of blasphemy. Before Pilate, they used a political charge.

After a brief examination of the case, Pilate stated that he "finds no fault in this man" (v. 4). This should have settled the matter for him, but we read that the multitude was "the more fierce." This is where a first element of (democratic¹) politics becomes visible: what matters is not the correct moral judgment of the issue in question, but the opinion and mood of the crowd.² In one sense, it is not surprising that this principle has become the general rule in many countries. With the rejection of the Bible as God's word and

¹ Democracy is not the root of the problem. Decisions taken by monarchs may run against God's will just as much as democratic ones (e.g., Dan 2:5). The problem is not so much the form of government, but rather the fact that the legitimate king has been cast out.

² Consider, for instance, the (Western) political debate on topics such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, etc. If a politician stood up and shed biblical light on these matters, this might well be the end of his career.

as measure, there is a lack of absolute values; therefore, there is no base on which to define the meaning of “correct moral judgment.” As people live in a moral vacuum (what scripture calls darkness), judgment is transferred to the masses.³ As a result, the Man who “went about doing good” was “murdered by hanging him on a cross” (Acts 10:38-39). We do well to respect the old warning: “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Ex. 23:1-2).

Pilate found himself in a political dilemma: the multitude exerted pressure against the right course of action. As a good politician, he makes a clever political move. When the expression “Galilee” was made (v. 5), Pilate immediately perceived a way of escape. If “the man” was a Galilean, this would be a welcome opportunity for the politician to rid himself of an embarrassing case by sending the Lord to Herod, the tetrarch ruling that region (vv. 6-7). This demonstrates another principle of politics: when an issue is clear but the right action is unpopular, then it is not dealt with at all or is referred to someone else. Of course, one must recognize there are some cases one is not able or not the right person handle and therefore should refer it to someone else. However, the aim should be to deal with the matter in the best possible way, not to rid oneself of an unpopular task.

After the Lord’s trial before Herod (vv. 8-12), Pilate was confronted with the same case again. His next move showed his increasing desperation to solve the issue. He repeated his own evidence, that he “found no guilt in this man” (v. 14) and tried to strengthen his case by citing Herod’s judgment (v. 15). His conclusion, however, must surprise the unbiased observer: “I will therefore chastise him, and release him” (v. 16). This verdict was calculated to achieve the objectives of both Pilate and the crowd at the same time. On the one hand, it would allow Pilate to release Jesus (as he knew he should). On the other hand, it would appease the crowd by declaring the Lord guilty in a twofold way: first, He would be chastised – which involved the cruel procedure of scourging (Jn. 19:1); and, second, He would be released, not as innocent, but because Pilate had to release a criminal (!) during the feast (v. 17). Thus Pilate would achieve his hidden agenda whilst giving way, to some extent, to the desire of the crowds. In one word,

³ There are, of course, situations in which no moral principles are involved. Further, safety is in the multitude of counsellors (Proverbs 24:6).

Pilate’s proposal was based on compromise. Again, one can discern another element so characteristic of politics: when people are ready to bargain with their beliefs they will soon resort to the principle of compromise⁴.

Despite the popularity of compromise in the political arena, it does not always lead to the desired result. Pilate repeats his proposal another time (v. 22) without success. This leads us to what may be the most shocking moment in the trial of the Son of God. Despite the convictions of the judge, despite the overwhelming evidence for the innocence of the Man Christ Jesus, we read, “And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required” (vv. 23-24) or, as the New Translation puts it, he “adjudged that what they begged should take place.” This sentence is diametrically opposed to the evidence, and the simple but telling reason is that the “voices prevailed.” When pressure becomes too strong, political judgment bows to it. This is underlined by the next verse: “but he delivered Jesus to their will” (v. 25).

The Son of Man had no comment to make on these procedures: “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth” (Isa. 53:7).

It was not only the intensity of the pressure, not only the rage of the crowd, that prompted Pilate to give in. John 19:12 throws light on the argument which brought about the change: “but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend.” In politics (and elsewhere), good relationships with influential people secure one’s own position and career; therefore, a righteous judgment jeopardizing one’s own prospects and relationships must be avoided at all costs.

Servants of the King

Apart from the principles outlined above, the Lord Himself made a statement in front of Pilate that should also be weighed by any Christian who considers involvement in politics. John reports that the Lord said the following: “My kingdom is not of this world: if my

⁴ You may think of examples in daily life where a compromise is appropriate. The danger comes in when biblical principles are abandoned because we settle for a compromise with a human (or worldly) point of view.

kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (19:36).

Should not these words alone settle the issue?

1. If Christians argue today that they should be politically active in order to fulfill their role in the kingdom, the Lord's words, "my kingdom is not of this world," should make clear that these are spiritual and not civil duties.
2. If others point to negative developments in our societies and argue that Christians must not tolerate this, do not the Lord's words give the answer again? "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."

A more scandalous event than the Lord's trial has never happened since, yet His servants were not called to fight. One of them, Peter, had not understood this and cut off the right ear of Malchus (Jn. 18:10). "Put up thy sword into the sheath," is the calm advice of the Master.

Impact outside politics

Having examined some principles, or elements, underlying politics in a world that rejected Christ – and the terrible result in the case of cases – the Bible reader may concede that political activity is not the way for a Christian. At the same time, the question may and will arise, "How, then, can Christians have an impact in this world?"

Christians do and should have an impact in the world. However, this is not achieved by "fighting" or trying to improve the world. Rather, the believer is called:

- to be light (Mat. 5:14 and Phil 2:15) – giving testimony
- to be salt of the earth (Mat. 5:13) – preventing corruption.
- to pray (not vote) for those that are in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2)
- to preach if sent to do so (Rom. 10:14.15)
- to be an example (1 Pet. 3:1-2)

In a world which rejected Christ, our testimony is to a rejected Christ.

A matter of timing

Christians are identified with Christ. They reign when He reigns (Rev. 20:6), and they share His rejection when He is rejected. The

Corinthians were not clear on this issue. They did not want to wait for the time of Christ's reign. Paul rebuked them, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you" (1 Cor. 4:8). Then he continued to describe how much the apostles were suffering. They were "appointed to death... made a spectacle" and "unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless, being persecuted, we suffer," etc. After this long list of sufferings the apostle appealed to the Corinthians to forsake their attitude of wanting to reign and rather to follow his example: "Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

A man who had an impact (and one who did not)

Another example that sheds much light on the subject is that of Abraham and Lot. Abraham was separate whereas Lot sat in the gate of Sodom, the place of influence (Gen. 19:1). Lot tormented his righteous soul (2 Pet. 2:7.8), and his testimony was compromised to such an extent that, when he warned his family, "he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law" (Gen. 19:14). He had no impact at all. Abraham, on the other hand, was separate. He had no place in Sodom and he would not even receive gifts from the sons of Heth (Gen. 23:3-16), nor from the great of the earth (Gen. 14:23). And what was the result? He had a much better testimony: he was regarded by them as a prince of God. Ironically, he turned out to be the one who had to rescue Lot (Gen 14:16). Look at the scene of Sodom's destruction (Gen. 19:27-29): Abraham stood afar off, and Lot was saved because of him (not the other way round).

A Christian has a far more elevated place (Eph. 2:6) and object (Col. 3:2). Once conscious of being "partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1), they should be less preoccupied with earthly objectives. Equally, let us beware not to introduce political principles (such as majority decisions) into the practical - individual and collective - life of God's people. Living in democratic countries, the development would seem so natural, but we can thank God for the absolute and infallible guidance contained in His word.

It has been said...

An old Latin proverb says: “vox populi - vox dei” (the voice of the people is the voice of God). Others thought it truer to say: “vox populi - vox bovis” (the voice of the people is the voice of an ox). It has been pointed out that, often, things are worse and we have to say “vox populi, vox diaboli” (the voice of the people is the voice of the devil). The passage from Luke 23 discussed above is a striking example of this. It remains true as long as the Nazarene is despised and rejected. But soon, He will reign on the earth and it will become true to say: “vox regis, vox dei” (the voice of the King is the voice of God).

Conclusion

1. The Lord's trial before Pilate often occupies us with a focus on the Lord as the innocent victim, the Lamb of God as “brought as a lamb to the slaughter” and “dumb as a sheep before her shearers,” and we consider His unique perfection in this trial. While this is certainly the main thrust of the passage, the report also contains valuable hints regarding the nature of politics which one should not overlook.
2. In so far as politics aims to please the multitudes, it may easily go against the mind of God. The outcome of the trial led by Pilate illustrates the danger of decision processes based on majorities.
3. Christians should be extremely careful not to adopt political procedures (such as majority voting) to regulate matters of their collective lives.
4. Nonetheless Christians should, and do, have an impact in a world that rejected Christ, not by trying to improve it but by giving a positive testimony to Him.
5. It is God's plan to put things right in this world: not by our initiative, but by establishing Christ's kingdom on the earth, the very place where He was – and still is – rejected. Then (during the Millennium) Christ will make the Church the central seat of government (Revelation 20:6 and 21:9-27)

M. Hardt

Honey

How sweet are thy words unto my taste!

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

By inspiration we mean that which is **God-breathed**. We are told “all (or every) scripture is given by inspiration of God.” It might be rendered “**every scripture is God-breathed**” (2 Tim. 3:16). The scriptures are therefore a revelation from God; and their force or authority to our hearts and consciences flows from that fact. If scripture be not God's word, it has no more value to us than the writings of good men; but it is His word, hence it comes to us with the authority, love, wisdom and holiness of God. Though its pages run over thousands of years, take us back before time was, and lead our thoughts on to the eternal state, and some of its books were written more than three thousand years ago, it is unlike any other book, for it is always new. Take up an ordinary volume composition, written two or three hundred years ago, or even go back to one of the Fathers, and you will find you have scarcely patience to read a few pages; but scripture, as we have said, though old, is always new. It carries with it a freshness and power to the heart and conscience, as no other book does; and all the changes in the world and in mankind never seem to affect it. It warns us against “men” and their “philosophy,” ritualism and its imposing ordinances, and of putting “tradition” in the place of authority instead of Christ. While addressing itself to the heart and conscience, it has always a voice of instruction and blessing to those who believe and receive its words from the mouth of God. Those who do not believe cannot understand it, for “by faith we understand.” Such only know its blessedness. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,” and we have “joy and peace in believing.” To the rationalist scripture is inexplicable, to the ritualist it is confusion, to the infidel it abounds with mistakes, to the literary man there are inaccuracies and contradictions. Such, however, little know that God said that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor.2:14).

The Bible is the only book that faithfully tells us what we are — even to the discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This shows it to be divine, for God only searches the heart. It also truly reveals God, so that when the word is received, it brings our souls into the consciousness of God having to do with us. This also shows its divinity, for “the world by wisdom knows not God.” The variety of aspects in which the Son who came forth from the Father to save sinners is presented to us: His personal glory, moral perfection, finished work, walk, words, ways, life, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, present offices, and future judgments and reign - as the leading truths of scripture, give it also a divine character. Its unity, too, carries with it the stamp of divinity as nothing else could. The way in which the different parts are adapted to each other; types of the Old Testament having their antitypes in the New; a multitude of prophetic statements in the former having their accomplishment in the latter, and the immense number of quotations in the New from the Old testament, to prove the soundness of the doctrines taught, combine to give it a divine character which is incontestable. It is not then surprising that an inspired writer should commend “the word” to us as if in its operations it possessed divine attributes. “The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

A professing Christian lately said, “There are many opinions about the scriptures;” to which we replied, “How can that be, if they are the utterances of God to us? For surely, then, we have only to hearken to His voice, and seek to do His will.” How little did this man think that he was, in the vanity of his mind imagining that he was competent, as a fallen creature in Adam, to sit in judgment of the things of God, and thus take ground with rationalists and infidels, instead of bowing to scripture as God’s word, and allowing it to judge him. Alas! Such is the pride of man in these last and closing days that many prefer their own opinions to scripture, and, as of old, make void the word of God, that they may keep their own tradition. Hence, also, the word is being solemnly fulfilled in men’s rejection of holy scripture that “seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

If we have not “the word of God,” we have no basis for faith, and must therefore be tossed about with irremediable uncertainty; but having divinely-given communications, we have on their authority divinely-given certainty as to eternal salvation. By it we have present assurance, founded on the redemption-work of our Lord Jesus Christ, that: our sins are forgiven, we have eternal life, we are the children of God, and we shall not come into judgment (Acts 10:43, Jn. 3:36, Gal. 3:26, Rom.8:1). If such are asked why they believe on our Lord Jesus Christ and why they have such certainty as to their present and eternal blessings, their reply will be, “because God in His word says so, and faith needs no other authority for confidence, and no other rest for the heart and conscience.”

The days are indeed evil and perilous. Time was when heathen idolaters were those who chiefly scoffed and mocked at the scriptures being God’s own revelation of His mind; and later on, avowed infidels in Christendom treated the subject with scorn and ridicule; but in our day it is those who profess to be servants of Christ, and guides of the flock of God, who are so busily engaged in undermining the eternal verity of the Holy Scriptures and their divine authority. This too, is seldom attempted as a whole by one person; but by different persons in various places, so that it may be, by Satan’s artifice, the less manifest. At this moment there is scarcely a vital and fundamental doctrine of scripture that is not being assailed or corrupted within the length and breadth of Christendom.

What has especially stirred many hearts at this time is the consciousness of the appalling state of souls in the neglect of the scriptures, and the skeptical thoughts that are current among professors of Christianity as to their divine authority. Not that we imagine that we have power to lead any to see and act differently, for we are told that “no man knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God.” The prayer, however, of not a few, has been that God will yet work by His word, and bless and help souls according to His own thoughts, and for His own glory.

H. H. Snell

Intelligence Report

All that go forth to military service..

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

PART 4

In his first epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul writes, “the end of what is enjoined is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith” (1 Tim. 1:5). Do we not find three parts of the panoply of God in this passage? Is not the loins girt with truth “a pure heart,” the breastplate of righteousness “a good conscience,” and the shield of faith “faith unfeigned?”

“Above All Taking The Shield Of Faith”

This divine shield is to protect us against the inflamed darts of the wicked one, which are aimed to distress the Christian and to destroy his enjoyment of the blessings of God. If we are not enjoying God’s blessings, there will be little testimony in our lives for Christ, and Satan will have succeeded in his attack. Inflamed darts are sent to wound and burn into the soul of the believer; they can be darts of doubt and unbelief or of teachings erroneous and dishonoring to Christ.

All that is required of us when the enemy is throwing his fiery darts is to bring God in between the enemy and ourselves, for the enemy is no match for God. Faith in all simplicity, says, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” When David was confronted with Goliath, his faith recognized that, in challenging Israel, the giant was defying the living God, and it was this that enabled David to overcome him. We see the shield of faith used by King Asa, when Zerah the Ethiopian with his hordes came against him (2 Chr. 14:11). This matchless shield was also brought into use by King Hezekiah when confronted with the fiery words of the King of Assyria (2 Chr. 32:8).

When Paul wrote to Timothy of “unfeigned faith,” he spoke from long experience as “a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” To the Galatians he had written, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.” This is one of the secrets of the successful warfare of the apostle, who, at the end of his long service for His Master, could say, “I have kept the faith.” The shield of faith had protected him in many conflicts and he used it unto the end.

“Take the Helmet Of Salvation”

When our thoughts are engaged with God’s salvation, the heart and mind are guarded against every thought that would disturb and produce feelings of uncertainty. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we are taught, “Ye are saved by grace, through faith; and this not of yourselves; it is God’s gift: not on the principle of works, that no one might boast.” There are many Christians that live constantly with doubts and fears concerning their salvation, never having properly learned that “God hath saved us,” and that our salvation depends entirely on the work of Christ and on the sovereign grace of God. Such never enter into the present possession of what God has given to us in Christ; their lives are lived in miserable uncertainty through not resting in simplicity on the value of the precious blood of Christ and on the truth of God’s holy word. The helmet of salvation brings a state of restfulness, for the soul rests on what Christ is and has done, not on its own futile endeavors.

The Thessalonian saints had not been instructed in the truth of the Lord’s coming, and this lack had been used by the enemy to distress them. Paul sent them “for an helmet, the hope of salvation”, the full salvation that was to be obtained at the coming of our Lord Jesus: “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him” (1 Thes. 5: 8-10).

“The Sword Of The Spirit”

The sword is not only a defensive weapon; it can be used to put the enemy to flight. Such is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Do we not have the supreme example of the wielding of this divine sword when the blessed Lord met the assaults of Satan with the words, “It is written?” It is not enough to quote Scripture when facing the foe; we must meet him with the Scripture chosen by the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us. For this we must be both instructed in the Scriptures and under the control of the Holy Spirit. Satan quoted Scripture when assailing the Lord, but the Lord met him with another Scripture, which was the sword of Spirit, and Satan had no answer to this.

In his many conflicts, Paul often used the sword of the Spirit, but even in such a remarkable servant there was not the perfection seen in his Master. When the high priest commanded them that

stood by to smite Paul, he replied in righteous anger, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." This was not using the sword of the Spirit, although it was meeting wrongful action with righteous indignation. The wronged apostle was not then in the spirit of His Master who, in similar circumstances, showed not the slightest anger. Indeed, Paul has to turn the sword of the Spirit against his own hasty words, saying, "It is written, Thou shall not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

"Praying Always In The Spirit"

The seventh, and final, part of the armor is prayer: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." If our use of God's word is to be under the control of God's spirit, our prayers are also to be "in the Spirit." Prayer is the expression of our dependence on and confidence in God, and this attitude is to mark us at all seasons. All prayer, prayer of every kind, will embrace the whole field of God's interests in this world, even although we know little of what is actually taking place among the many thousands of God's people.

In times of special trial there will be special requests both for the saints and for the servants of the Lord, although we should ever keep in mind that all the saints are dear to the heart of Christ, and that we are bound up with all in the unity of the body of Christ. Here the apostle desires the prayers of the saints in relation to the special ministry confided to him by the Lord Jesus. Our blessed Lord has not only shown us to wield the sword of the Spirit in conflict, but has given us the perfect example of dependence on God, for, we read of Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, "and being in conflict He prayed more intently" (Lk. 22:44).

The evil day will soon be over, for the Lord is coming to take us to be forever with himself. Then there will be no more need to engage in conflict with the spiritual forces that seek to hinder our entering into the spiritual blessings that God has given to us in Christ in the heavenly places, and that endeavor to rob us of the privilege of being loyal to Christ during the time of His absence from this world. But we cannot stand for Christ unless we take every part of the divine armor, realizing that all the strength for this conflict is only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

H. Smith

Exercise

Exercise thyself unto piety

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Romans 8:37

The phrase "more than conquerors" used by the apostle Paul with such supreme confidence is but one word in the Greek, and is used only in this verse. The word conqueror is the word translated in other places as "overcomer," or more literally, "to gain the victory." But what does the apostle mean by "more than conquerors?" Not only do the saints pass through these various conflicts - whether caused by men or demons - and emerge victoriously, but they are also stronger after the conflict than they were before entering into it. **Time after time God allows His people to be in conflict so they might feel their need of His grace and power in going through it; and with the help of God they emerge from the trial stronger than they were before entering into it.** We add, going through it with the help of God, for we shall never be victorious without the help which God alone can give. History records many severe trials through which men have passed, and who by supreme efforts have emerged victorious, but it does not record that they were stronger after the conflict than they were before. *Only in the spiritual realm can this be experienced.* In demonstration of this we have in mind to call the attention of the reader to two passages in Scripture, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament where this encouraging fact is recorded. We hope thereby to encourage all to stand fast in the conflict, and hence not only to emerge victorious, but to have gained more strength as the result of the trial we have sustained. **There are two statements in the New Testament which ought to be ever in the hearts of those who desire to be characterized as "overcomers."** They are "**stand fast**" (2 Thes. 2:15), and "**hold fast**" (2Tim.1:13). **If we "stand fast" we do not give way, and if we "hold fast" we do not give anything up.**

In the history of Job as given to us in the book which bears his name, we see something of the tremendous conflict which rages

ceaselessly between the powers of light and of darkness. God draws aside the veil which separates the unseen spiritual world from the material world, and graciously allows us to listen to a conversation between Himself and Satan, the arch enemy of the saints. This conversation mainly concerns Job, and gives the setting for the further events outlined for us in the rest of the book. We have not far to look before we discover that Job, though the most righteous man on earth at that time, was in danger of being puffed up as a consequence. **He said himself, "I shall die in my nest" (29:18); and it is again recorded, "he was righteous in his own eyes" (32:1). In the first statement Job was in danger of putting his confidence in the substance God had blessed him with, and in the second he was assured he deserved it.** But it was God and not the nest who was his safeguard; and his righteousness was according to divine estimation and not according to his own. Job needed to learn these two things, and for his own safety and blessing God was about to teach him regarding them.

It is just here that Satan comes into the picture. **It is well to notice that God Himself raises the matter of Job's righteousness with Satan, and not Satan with God. God saw that Job needed a lesson for his own safety, and He used Satan to teach him this lesson.** The enemy, ever ready to attack the saints, takes advantage of the liberty given him by God, and sets about to destroy everything in which Job had placed his confidence - whether his family, his wealth, or his health - but the one thing he could not destroy was his faith. Praise God for that! Stripped of all that in which his confidence lay, his wife unsympathetic, and his three friends scornfully giving him up as one who would not listen to wisdom, he is left with only his faith in God. It is then that God begins to rebuild him on a much safer foundation, till at the end we read, "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (43:12). Could Job not have said, with twice the possessions and once again a family surrounding him, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us?"

The New Testament reference is to the apostle Peter. He was the most outstanding of the apostles, always amid the first in the lists of the apostles, yet with a weakness well known to our Lord; in view of the great service he would ultimately render, this

needed to be dealt with. Once again we see Satan used in the matter, and the Lord allowing him to attack His servant. We read, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Lk. 22:31-32). **May we ever remember that no matter what Satan desires, not one hair of our heads can be touched without divine permission. Both Job and Simon are seen in the hands of Satan for a time, but in each case Satan could go only as far as divine wisdom allowed him. So whilst Satan was allowed to lead Simon into a temptation, and caused him to fail in it, all he really succeeded in doing was to destroy Simon's self-confidence; he could not destroy his faith. Thank God he never will be able to destroy the faith of any saint of God, however severe the trial may be through which he may be allowed to pass.**

What chagrin must have filled the heart of Satan as he discovered his attack upon Simon made him a stronger man than before. Did ever a man more fearlessly declare his attachment to the Lord than the disciple who before had denied he knew Him? Moreover, Peter did give his life for the Lord at the end of his service; we can be assured when that moment came he faced death in the true confidence faith alone can give, and not in some fancied strength which, as men in the flesh, we do not possess. Surely Peter also could say, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that love us."

May we then face the future with this confidence, determined to "stand fast" and to "hold fast." What may lie ahead for us in our earthly path we cannot tell. God knows our hearts; if He detects something that is a hindrance to our growth or our service for Him, He may allow Satan to buffet us as he did with yet another servant, Paul. Yet, if we face this trial with God, and go through it with the strength that faith in God alone can give, we too shall emerge stronger than we were before, and shall be able to say, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Science and the Bible

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world....

CARBON DATING DATING METHODS

“...the grass has withered and its flower has fallen; but the word of the Lord abides for eternity.” 1Peter 1:24,25

How many times have you heard something like, “This animal lived 50,000 years ago,” or “This person died 20,000 years ago?” Have you ever wondered how the scientists knew the age of the bone? After all, the scientists haven’t been around that long, have they?

There are a variety of different ways to figure out how old an object is. Of course, the best method is to check the account of a reliable eyewitness, if one is available. The Bible is such a record. Since it is the written Word of God, we can trust it to tell us the truth about the past. Carefully studying the Biblical record, we find that the universe has an age of around 6,000 years, and that a world-changing, global Flood occurred about 4,300 years ago.

Those who don’t accept the Biblical account of history look for other ways to discover the age of things. One of these methods is based on a substance found in our bodies, plants and all living things - it’s called carbon.

How Carbon Dating Works

There are two basic forms of carbon: one that occurs naturally, called carbon-12 (12C), and one that forms from processes acting on nitrogen in the atmosphere, called carbon-14(14C). Both of these combine with oxygen to form carbon dioxide (CO₂), which we breathe out and plants take in. When a cow eats grass, its body absorbs the carbon (both 12C and 14C) in the plant.

When the cow dies, it stops taking in carbon (for obvious reasons). The amount of 12C in the cow’s body stays the same after death, but the amount of 14C changes because it returns to nitrogen.

As time goes on, the amount of 14C continues to decrease until nothing is left, which is supposedly about 50,000 years later. When a paleontologist finds a bone (or a piece of wood), she can measure the amount of 14C and 12C it contains. Based on how much 14C is left, she can supposedly calculate when the animal (or plant) died. Sounds like a good idea, doesn’t it? But there’s a problem.

The problem

There are many factors that affect how much 14C an animal (or person or plant) has in it when it dies. This changes how long ago the animal appears to have died.

For instance, plants don’t take in as much 14C as scientists expect. So, after they die, there is less 14C in the plants to change back to nitrogen. This makes the plant appear to have died many more years ago than it actually did (for example, the plant might appear to be, say 3,000 years old, rather than 2,000).

Also, the amounts of 14C and 12C in the atmosphere haven’t been constant throughout history (for instance, Noah’s flood lowered the total amount of available carbon by burying lots of animals and plants). So something that lived (and died) when the proportion of 14C was less than normal would appear to have died more years ago than it actually did (for example, it might give an age of 3,000 years before the present, rather than its true age of 2,000 years).

Even many archaeologists don’t think “carbon dating” is completely accurate all the time. When these (and other) problems are then taken into account, a scientist can interpret the result of the carbon dating within a Biblical timeframe, but even so, these results can not be used to prove the age of once-living things.

Creation Magazine

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: If someone is doing something mean to someone else, and you just stand there, is that like sinning too?

Liz

A:

Dear Liz,

In view of your question, allow me to suggest first how we ought to deal with such a matter with a believer and then consider the sinning aspect of it.

The Bible teaches us the following: "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love" (Pr. 17:9) and "Open rebuke is better than secret love" (Pr. 27:5). Please also read Proverbs 10:12, 27:6, and 1 Peter 4:8.

Covering does not mean we should hide the issue; rather, we should deal with it directly (and privately) with the believer in question. We should talk to them in a spirit of meekness, praying that we may help them. We should never be indifferent to sin, error, and meanness.

As to the sinning aspect, the Bible teaches us that associating with individuals who sin makes me guilty as well, even though I might disagree with their actions. See Joshua 7, 1 Timothy 5:22, and 2 John 2: 11.

If the individual is an unbeliever, I trust that reading Ezekiel 3:18-19 will be helpful.

J.A.

The Upward Way

Sing without ceasing, sing
The Saviour's present grace;
How all things shine, In light divine
For those who've seen His face.

He's gone within the veil,
For us that place He's won;
In Him we stand, A heavenly band,
Where He Himself is gone.

There all's unsullied light;
My heart lets in its rays,
And heavenly light, Makes all things bright,
Seen in that blissful gaze.

Such here on earth I am,
Though I in weakness roam;
My place on high, God's Self so nigh,
His presence is my home.

My heart is filled with bliss –
Heaven's own eternal joys;
My soul at rest, Of peace possessed,
That world its strength employs.

Thus, in divine delight
Of love so richly known,
God's works below, with beauty glow;
His hand, His grace I own.

And stayed by joy divine,
As hireling fills his day,
Through scenes of strife, and desert life
I tread in peace my way.

That way is upward still
Where life and glory are;
My rest's above, In perfect love
The glory I shall share.

Forever with the Lord,
Forever like Him then –
And see His face, In that blest place,
My Father's house in heaven

J. N. DARBY

A WORD TO THE ATHEIST

A present –day poet relates how he was dining at a table with some young men who were talking about God and other religious matters.

They described themselves as atheists.

After listening for a time in silence he said,

**”Gentlemen, there are only three kind of atheists.
The first are deep thinkers who, in the course of studying
the philosophical system of ancient and modern times,
have been turned aside and a last missed God.
I do not know if such studies have brought you to this point.”**

Modestly they acknowledged that this was not the case.

**”Now the second kind are those who, without any judgment
and in parrot-fashion, repeat what they her from others.
I hope you are not among that number.”**

This they denied indignantly.

**”Well then, the third kind consists of those
who do not have good conscience,
whose past life holds some evil deed,
so that they cannot help but wish that
there is no God of holiness, and righteousness.
They take comfort in the claim that there is no God,
and so go on sinning to their heart’s desire.**

**Gentlemen, There is no fourth kind.”
And with that he got up from the table
and left the atheists with very long faces.**