

How Sweet It Is!

by Sis. Barbara Chapple
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Sin was pleasing and seemed desirable, but my own self and Satan had deceived me. Selfishness, worldly wisdom, cultural thinking, and wrong concepts filled my mind with hate for God. I wanted to have it my way! I was not really caring about God's ways and the truth of His word. The world revolved around pleasing me and getting what I believed I wanted. It was all wrong.

At age 27, I had a three-year-old son from my husband whom I married at age nineteen, and whom I gave my virginity to. I was thinking that we would spend the rest of our lives together. My husband suddenly abandoned me.

I was feeling rejected, until I met the man who would be the father of my second child. I became pregnant and we made a choice to abort our baby. He did not want the responsibility because he was already paying child support for two other children. I was at risk of losing my three-year-old son to his father, because I was pregnant by someone else. I was from a broken family and I knew the pain of being separated from my mother. I was so proud to have my son. He was the joy of my life and I could not risk losing him.

My decision was made from that shame, rejection, and embarrassment. I was a member of the church and I could not let them find out about my sexual activity outside of marriage. The church believed in a faithful lifestyle and I was an adulteress. I was living a lie! I had two faces, one for church and the other for my private life. My boyfriend paid for the abortion, took me to the clinic, and waited for me. I was not

taken care of properly. There were so many people who did not care about my unborn child or me. I remember crying, but no one cared. I went home and got in the bed with a cup of hot tea. I had no other care.

I did not have my baby, I had an abortion. I felt like I could not share this with anyone. Most of my friends were in the church. I did not ask anyone for prayer about my situation. They would never understand why or how I could have done something like this. I needed to get right with God and truly turn my life over to Him. Out-of-control flesh and sin guided my life. Fear, shame, loss, embarrassment, and guilt were my secret companions, along with no self worth. At times I would pull away from people and close myself off. I could not even face my own son sometimes. My family was never aware of this problem.

After some time in counseling, my husband and I reunited. We conceived a daughter and gave birth to her. Shortly afterwards I was pregnant again and my husband did not want another child. He pressured me into getting an abortion. He said that he was not going to take care of another child and he threatened to leave me again. Fear, rejection and no self-worth helped me to make the decision to abort again at age 30. On a cold winter day, my husband took me to the abortion clinic. I could not take it, so I asked to be put to sleep.

When I went home, I felt empty on the inside. I suffered with depression and heartache. I was continuing to live a lie. I never told him about my first

abortion, I just went on as if nothing had happened. He did finally leave me and that is when I turned wholeheartedly to the Lord. I put my trust in Him and confessed my sins. He forgave me and removed all the guilt, shame, embarrassment, and pain. The Lord put in me a new heart. A heart he could use. I was told that abortion was a choice, but I could never have been prepared for the repercussions that were to follow after having made that choice! Abortion is legal by the laws of our land, but the pain is too costly. The guilt of being in the role of taking a person's life is too much to pay.

The search for significance had ended when I really came to know the Lord. Part of my journey would include me marrying a Godly man, who asked me to become a volunteer for our local pregnancy center in a large city. I did. The training included abortion counseling and Bible Study for women who have had abortions. During this process, I was able to see what had happened to me earlier in my life. Compassion set in my heart for women who were caught in the trap of past abortions. Now 33 years later, I serve my Lord and Savior as the Founder and Director of a Pregnancy Care Center in a small city in southeast Georgia with my husband.

Though sin seems pleasing and desirable, it brings forth sorrow and death! Only a merciful and gracious Heavenly Father could forgive me, love me, and provide deliverance from the hell I went through!

**God cannot give us a happiness and peace
apart from Himself, because it is not there.
There is no such thing. C. S. Lewis**

If Any Man Have Ears To Hear, Let Him Hear!

by Elder Jason Solomon
Cumming, Georgia

"...the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47)

Sin No More

In their endless quest to undermine and defraud Jesus, the Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in the act of adultery. They wanted to see Jesus' judgment of her. However, Jesus knowing their intentions and their hearts said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Of course, none of them was without sin, and they dispersed without another word beginning with the eldest.

We can imagine that she waited fearfully, even weeping for the first stone to strike her breaking bones and tearing flesh, but none came. Finally, the adulterous woman was left with the Savior, but she said nothing. After all the accusers had departed, Jesus looked at her and said, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." The Savior responded, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Let's be provocative. Have you ever wondered if He did not condemn her, then why did he say "Go, and sin no more?" If she is forgiven, then why does she need to abstain from sin in the future? Won't Jesus just forgive her again? In fact, I John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So, why repent? The answer is a desire to be closer to Him. We cannot abide with God and be unrepentant sinners.

The Troubled Young Man

When a rich young man came to see Jesus to inquire about inheriting

eternal life, Jesus said the answer was to obey the commandments and give away all that he had. Being rich, the young man despaired at the command to sell his possessions. Because of his trust in his riches, he was discouraged and troubled.

The disciples were confused by this exchange and Jesus' final statements, "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23b-24).

When the amazed disciples asked Jesus, "Who then can be saved?" the Lord replied, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:25-26). This one comment has led to many controversies, but the Truth is straightforward. In order to "enter into the kingdom of God" and enjoy that eternal life in part now, there are a few things that must occur.

Prerequisites to Entering the Kingdom of Heaven (Experiencing Eternal Life)

Before time began as we know it, God divinely planned for and chose out a people for Himself (Ephesians 1:3-4). We call this Election. Tied to this choice, before time, He also decided not only on His people, but also to what purpose and end He chose them (Ephesians 1:5-6 and Romans 8:28-29). We call this Predestination. God's Election and Predestination are by God's grace alone, or *sola gratia*, as the Reformers say.

Through God's divinely providential plan, He created a way of Redemption in time. From Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham on to

Jesus the Christ, we see the wondrous plan of redeeming grace working out in the lives of otherwise ordinary men and women. Culminating in the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God, the Father's plan to buy back His people from their sins ushered in the Kingdom age in which we live.

Thus, also in time, we are born again of the Holy Spirit, or in a word: regenerated (John 3:3). We have nothing to do with this process. It is God's discretion as to who and when He changes the heart. Hence, Jesus said, "...with God all things are possible." We can no more cause our second birth anymore than we caused our initial birth. Being dead in trespasses, we take no action as participants in this new birth (Ephesians 2:1-3).

When our hearts are prepared by God to serve Him through regeneration, we are called to repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). We might call this process Conversion. The time between initial regeneration and conversion seems to vary. In fact, we hear of fellow brothers and sisters that resisted the call of the Gospel on their hearts to repent for years. All the while, their quenching of the Spirit caused them great grief.

Becoming one with the Body of Christ in conversion, our newly Spirit-filled hearts yearn for companionship in Christ. We find that we desire fellowship and support from fellow saints called of God who can relate to and share our burdens. Thus, we remember the words of the physician Luke who wrote, "...the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). This new life's tenderness should be guarded by vigilant study and a desire to adhere to Christ through obedience to His will

as revealed in the Word, and in prayer (Romans 12:1-5). When sin sneaks in, we must return to the path of repentance that leads back to Christ.

Hide a Multitude of Sins

Unfortunately, because repentance and obedience are largely left up to the response of the individual, they are often poorly executed. It is easy for us to forgo baptism or a public profession for years. Or we might come forth for baptism, but neglect complete repentance. I am afraid most of us may be guilty of failing to repent fully. Therefore, this process of conversion is continual. Hopefully, we trend toward holiness, and not away.

However, even God's redeemed, born-again people can and do slide away into sin, sometimes for long periods without genuine repentance. It is during these hours that the Body of Christ should shine her light. When a brother or sister errs from the Truth, it is our duty and privilege to turn the erring soul back to Christ with encouragement, admonition, and even rebuke. In the Godly love demonstrated by Christ, we should appeal to new heart within the wayward child of God to return as the prodigal son. James put it this way, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

In light of this passage and the words of Jesus, "Go, and sin no more," we can only conclude, that we are called to a life not only of faith, but also of obedience. In so doing, we find the answer sought by the rich young man, namely "keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). Knowing that we are yet prisoners in bodies bent on sin, God knew that we would need the Holy Spirit and one another to stay in the way of life.

Therefore, since we are part of a larger body of believers, both the local church as well as the elect Body of Christ as a whole, we are called to convert one another with the Word and much love. In so doing, we "shall save

a soul from death." Clearly in context, this saving is not an eternal one, but rather a conversion back to the way of life in Christ through obedience as good citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Words of Eternal Life

Sadly a misunderstanding of the interplay between regeneration and conversion has caused unnecessary strife throughout the life of the Church. Some have pointed to the passages concerning regeneration and called that conversion. Still others have pointed to passages concerning conversion and mistaken it for regeneration unto eternal salvation.

In reality, these are separate things. The one (regeneration) is wholly in the Almighty Hand of God. We can no sooner regenerate our selves than we can jump up from the mortician's table. However, once regenerated, we are called to a life of Christ-likeness (conversion to be disciples) having been empowered to obey through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus addressed both regeneration and conversion clearly in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John. The Lord says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:63-65).

This Truth was hard for those who heard Jesus to swallow! It remains so for many today. On the one hand, Jesus said that His words are life. However, He also said in the same breath "that no man can come unto me, except

it were given unto him of my Father." Wow! On the one hand His words are life, but also we have no hope of coming to Christ without the direct intervention of the Father.

Put the pieces together with me. The Father sends His Holy Spirit upon each and every truly elected child of God. The new believer responds with a new faith to the Gospel message of repentance. The Word (Christ) shows them the way of life that they might have it "more abundantly" in obedience and love. Further, Jesus Christ not only demonstrated the way of life, he died to bridge the gap of righteousness between each saint and God the Father. He defeated death eternally for the elect family of God.

The Good News

As you consider these matters, do not forget that God is holy and righteous, while our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in comparison (Isaiah 64:6). Further, in our natural state, we are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). How could we even hope to respond to any message from God, even the Gospel message of hope and redemption, without His initial and total intervention? Those who are dead spiritually cannot hear, and cannot see! But after regeneration when we receive our spiritual eyes and ears, we are in daily need of God's help in revealing sin in our lives, and helping us to repent and be converted.

Thanks be to God for His mercy and grace! May our praises be heard throughout all the world honoring the Lord. Not only did He give sight to blind eyes and hearing to deaf ears physically, but He cured our spiritual death, gave us spiritual eyes and ears in regeneration, then speaks to our souls saying, "Follow me." Further, Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Therefore, let us say with Him, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:23).

The Walk of Faith!

by Elder McKinley Wright
Jacksonville, Florida

*All along the road
To the soul's true abode
There's an eye watching you
Every step that you take
This great eye is awake
There's an eye watching you.*

Many years ago when he was about the age of three or four years, the writer of this article attended the funeral service of his uncle. A part of that service was the singing of the above cited song. Hearing that song impressed the mind of that young child for many years to come. Maybe the circumstances in which it was sung had something to do with the strength of the impression. From as far back as he has memory, that child knew that God is a reality. Looking backward it is easy to see that this person's new birth, the point at which the walk of faith begins, had occurred at a very early age. Although he knew about God, until he heard the song, he did not think about Him very much. After hearing the song, he began to have a definite conviction about God. He saw God as a great eye in the sky that was seeing everything that he did. Soon he realized that there was a great mind behind the eye and that this mind never forgets anything. Seeing God as such an austere judge caused this child to become very much afraid. He felt sure that he was being judged, and if he did not pass the test, he would not go to heaven when he died. He wanted desperately to find God's favor and approval. At first he found some comfort in the idea that God saw and remembered not only the bad things but also the good things that he did. This idea gave him a glimmer of hope. Maybe if the good things outweighed the bad things, God would approve of him and let him into heaven. But as time went on, he realized that he was getting further and further behind.

He would go to church and observe the rejoicing of the preacher and the

faithful hearers, and he would wonder why they could be so joyful in thinking about God when his own thoughts on that subject brought so much discouragement. He would hear others speak of the powerful way they had come to have such a clear and strong hope in God. Then he would look into his own experience and could not find anything like that. He finally decided that he was just not one of those who would be in heaven. He wanted to be there with every fiber of his being. But the harder he tried, the more hopeless his case seemed to become. His desire to go to heaven grew stronger and stronger. The probability of his going seemed more and more remote. His frustration was great. One day when it seemed that he could not possibly sink any lower, he learned that eternal salvation is not something that is earned by doing more good works than bad ones, but that it is a gift that God gives to His children. No doubt he had heard this fact declared many times before. It had just not registered in his mind. But this time it registered. He still could not understand how God gives that gift without compromising Himself with regard to sin.

The lad still had much to learn. But gradually he learned that God accomplished this by imputing the sin of His children to His only begotten Son, and then requiring full payment for that sin at the hands of the Son. But even though he began to understand how God saved His people, he still did not have a strong assurance that he was one of them. Such an assurance finally came when he understood that a person who has not been born again is so depraved that he cannot even have a desire toward heaven and heavenly things. It was when he realized this truth that hope began to grow in him. When his hope became real, he began to try to serve and honor God and His Son, who had given Himself in order that he (the lad) might

have life. Now he found assurance in the fact that the eye sees all, and the mind remembers. He understood that the eye had seen all of his sin and the mind had remembered all of it, and that every single piece of it had been laid on Jesus, and He had borne it away! Now he understands that the walk of faith is not doing more good than bad in order to qualify a person for heaven, but is the daily striving to do the very best that we can because that is the way we serve and honour our Lord.

When he began to walk along the road to the soul's true abode, he thought the walk would be easy. He has learned that if we walk along that way successfully, we must walk with our eyes fixed on the place toward which we are traveling. As another stanza of the song says,

*Keep your mind on the goal,
That sweet home of the soul.
There's an eye watching you.
Do not turn from the way;
To the kingdom of day.
There's an eye watching you.*

The only way we can keep from turning from the way that leads to the kingdom of day is by keeping our eyes on the home of the soul. The Bible is filled with examples of people who demonstrated this principle in their lives.

God told Abraham to go to a mountain that He would show him, and there to offer his son, Isaac, a burnt offering. This writer believes that it is significant that he was to go up a mountain. The pulpits in our churches are raised above the level of the congregation -- not to suggest that the office of the minister is higher than that of the congregation -- but that the message might be more visible. God's way has always been that His people praise Him in such a way as to be seen. We honor Him more fully when we act in such a way that others can see us.

This principle caused Daniel to open the windows toward Jerusalem when he prayed (as he always did), even after the king had said that anyone who asked anything of any other person or god except the king, himself, would be thrown into a den of lions. Daniel knew that his accusers could see him if he opened his window. But he had his eye on the goal, and he was willing to be judged by men if it took that for him to be faithful to his God. He might well have been saying by his actions, "If my service to God costs me my life, that is just the way it is."

Daniel made a difficult decision, but Abraham's decision was even harder. It is much easier for a person to place himself in danger than it is for him to hurt someone that he loves. And Abraham knew that at the top of the mountain he was going to slay his son. As he walked up the mountain, the real meaning of the mountain to Abraham was not the visibility of his walk, but the difficulty in walking the walk of faith.

As Abraham climbed the mountain, he was not following a paved highway. He was not following even a wagon trail. If there were any road at all to make the way easier, it would have been no more than a trail made by the mountain goats that no doubt lived on the mountain. He was on a difficult journey. But God was so much the center of his life that he never seriously considered not going. Every step of the way was painful. But he kept on. He had his eye on the goal. He could see the place afar off. He kept plodding on --one step at a time!

Seeing the place afar off did not bring Abraham a season of rejoicing. It kept him going in the right direction, but it also reminded him that this was the place where he would slay his son. Some suggest that Abraham's confidence in God was such that he knew in his heart that God would somehow make a way to keep him from having to do this thing. The Bible nowhere suggests that Abraham had such thoughts as this. In fact, the Bible teaches that Abraham's confidence was not in what God would do to keep him from having to do this painful thing. Abraham's confidence was in what God would do af-

terwards! **Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead after he had slain him** (Hebrews 11:19). Why did Abraham believe this? He did so because God had made him a promise, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and he knew that God always keeps His promises. So he reasoned that when he had slain his son, God would raise him from the dead. Surely this confidence made it not quite so hard for Abraham to do what God had required. But it still was not easy. How many of us have grieved beside the grave of a loved one, even though we had the assurance of the fact of the Resurrection. Our grief was real and powerful. Abraham's agony as he went about doing what God told him to do was real and heavy. When he saw the place afar off, he must have relived in his imagination how he thought it would be to be there.

But seeing the place, and being reminded of what was going to take place there, was not Abraham's only pain that day. As they walked along, Isaac noted that they had brought everything that they needed for the offering except the lamb. He asked his father where the lamb was. Abraham told him that God would provide Himself a lamb for the offering. Please look at Genesis 22:7 & 8. When Isaac addressed Abraham, he did not call him "Pop" or some other common designation. Such a title would have been the same as Isaac saying "we are about equal in status." How often do we hear people talking to God in such a way as to suggest that He is little, if any, higher than the speaker. Isaac did not even call him "Father" thereby acknowledging his own inferiority. If he had been thinking only in terms of his father having authority over himself, he would probably have addressed him in this way. Sometimes we address God being more aware of His great majesty and authority over us than of anything else. Our language as we address Him shows what we really think of Him. But Isaac addressed Abraham as "My Father." This is an expression of adoration; and by using this expression, Isaac was saying that a special bond existed between them, and he was happy that Abraham was his father. Do we ever

look up into the face of God and think of Him as being our Father? We ought to do so often. Then, when Abraham addressed Isaac (verse 8), he called him "My Son", showing that the special bond goes both ways!

Abraham and Isaac loved each other deeply. On this mission Abraham was not going to just slay one of his animals. He was not going to slay one of his servants, as painful as that might have been. He was not even going to slay a son. He was going to slay a special son -- one whom he adored and who adored him. When Isaac asked about the lamb, Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." When he said this, he must have thought within himself, "My son, you do not know it, but you are the lamb." Surely his heart was breaking, but they continued on the journey. As we look at this part of the lesson, we need to see Abraham's love for Isaac as representative of God's love for His only begotten son. As Abraham was so devoted to doing what God told him to do that he would slay his son of promise, even so God was so devoted to obtaining salvation for His children that he would require the life of His only begotten Son on their behalf. **What wondrous love is this!**

They went on up the mountain. No doubt the mountain became steeper as they neared the top. No doubt Abraham's burden became heavier and heavier. But they continued on. They reached the top. Abraham probably laid the fire and knife upon two rocks. There was nothing in this that Isaac did not expect. Then Abraham began to gather stones and pile them together to make an altar on which to make the offering. This did not surprise Isaac, either. He might have begun to look around to see the lamb that God was going to provide. But not seeing it did not disappoint him. His father had said God would provide a lamb, and Isaac knew that his father knew what he was talking about. Then Abraham did something that Isaac probably did not understand! **He bound his son and laid him upon the altar!**

Isaac probably did not understand what was taking place, but he might have reasoned about like this: "Pop" might make a mistake. In fact, sooner or later he probably would make one. "Father" would not make a mistake, but if he were in a place where it was necessary for him to hurt me, he might do so. But "my father" would never do anything that would be painful to me. Although I do not understand what is taking place, and on its face it looks like something that would be unpleasant to me, I have confidence in my father."

Is our confidence in God such that we are as submissive to Him as Isaac was to his father? Lying on the altar, Isaac saw his father take the knife in his hand. He did not understand what was taking place, but he was submissive all the way to the end. He fully expected to feel the sharp blade as it cut into his flesh, and must have imagined what death was going to be like. Then deliverance came! Until we come face to face with death, we do not know how to appreciate deliverance! Sometimes (too often) the writer of this article has wondered why God brought him so low before showing him that he is a child of the king. A few times he even felt resentment because God did not show Himself earlier. But in his more rational moments, the writer can see that if God had given him relief and allowed him to feel that he had almost made it to heaven by his own efforts, there would not have been much appreciation for what Christ did for him. God does not make mistakes as He

deals with us!

God stayed Abraham's hand from taking the life of his son. Then he saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. He took the ram and offered it on the altar in place of his son. Jesus told the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John 8:56). It is the opinion of the writer that it was on this mountain top that Abraham did this. He named the place Jehovah Jireh which means, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." Here on the mountain he saw a ram --not a lamb but a ram. The ram represents Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It represents Jesus, Alpha and Omega; First and Last; All in All. A lamb is representative of a servant. Jesus did the work of a servant, but He never at any time was separated from His majesty. Although he had a body of flesh, He never at any time lost any of His divinity. Oh mystery of mysteries! The ram was caught in a thicket by its horns. The thicket could represent the Covenant that was entered into by the three persons in the Godhead as they covenanted to bring about the eternal deliverance of the children of God. It can also be thought of as representing God's grace by which He saved His children. As the ram was entangled in the thicket, even so Jesus bound Himself, agreeing to take human flesh and to suffer whatever was necessary to accomplish the deliverance of those whom He represented. The ram caught in the thicket was not entangled by his feet. His horns were the part of

his body that was entangled. The horns of a ram make a particular animal stand out from all of the others. Thus, this ram being caught by its horns represents the fact that Jesus (God) who cannot lie has obligated Himself to deliver His people from their sins!

When Abraham did what God told him to do, he saw the ram in the thicket. God impressed his mind that the ram was to be offered in the place of Isaac. He understood that as God had provided a ram to take Isaac's place, He also would provide a Savior for all of His children. So, Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Jesus! The ram was there all along, but Abraham would never have seen it if he had for some reason not made the trip up the mountain. God rewards faithfulness, but we are not supposed to walk with our eye on the reward.

The walk of faith involves doing what God tells us to do. The commitment in a person's heart is a step in the right direction, but it is only a step --not a walk. Beginning the journey is not enough to be called a walk. Coming near enough to see the place afar off is not enough. Successful walking in the past does not enable us to say we are walking. **We walk the walk of faith only while we are traveling!** When we stop walking before we reach the end of the journey, our vision of God and the deliverance that He has provided is dim at best. Jehovah-Jireh comes only when we have gone all the way to the top. Let us always be faithful, obeying God in everything that He tells us to do.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

If you are able to help with the expenses of spreading the truth of Salvation by Grace, it will be greatly appreciated. Also, please encourage the Church of your membership to support this work on a monthly basis. We urgently need regular contributors.

*"There are no dead ends in our Spiritual Walk,
just places to turn around." Anonymous*

Consecration

by Elder Spencer Moore
Pembroke, Georgia

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

II Corinthians 5:14-15

Often times there is a misconception of consecration. This misconception is caused by a wrong view of salvation. Such as someone who considers his salvation as doing God a great favor. Under such an illusion, how could anyone speak to Him about consecration? Perhaps he should reread Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus. "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). When we think of consecration we must realize that even a king has to be brought to the place where he gladly lays his crown at the Lord's feet. We need to all understand that it is we who are favored by the Lord in being loved and saved. Only then can we willingly lay down everything!

Consecration in the new testament refers to presenting our bodies and the members of our bodies to God. Romans 6:13 says, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from

the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." While the Old Testament deals with the setting apart for holy service of Aaron and his family, in the New Testament the basis for consecration is II Corinthians 5:14, which says, the children of God are constrained by love to live unto the Lord who died and arose again for them. The word constrained means to be surrounded so that one cannot escape. When a person is moved by love, he will experience such a sensation, love will bind him, and thus he is moved to action! Love is therefore the basis of consecration. No one can consecrate himself without experiencing the love of the Lord. He has to see the Lord's love before he can consecrate his life.

Consecration is also based on the right or what I call divine prerogative. I Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's". Today among Christians, this matter of being bought with a price may not be clearly understood. But to the Corinthians at the time of the Roman Empire, it was very clear. At the time, they had human slave markets. In this human market, the price of each soul was established by bidding at auction! They went to

the highest bidder, and whoever owned the slave had absolute power over him. Let us understand, Christ has given His life as the ransom price to purchase us back to God. The Lord paid a great price, even His own life. Today, because of this work of redemption, we give our rights and forfeit our own sovereignty! We are no longer our own, for we belong to the Lord. Therefore we must glorify God in our bodies. We are bought with a price, even the blood of the cross. We are His by right, by divine prerogative. So on one hand, for the sake of love we choose to serve Him; and on the other hand, by right, we are not our own. We must follow Him! We should not do otherwise according to redemption. We are His! According to the love which redemption generates in us, we should live for Him. One basis for consecration is legal right, and the other basis is responsive love. For these two reasons, we want to consecrate ourselves in service to God.

What should this mean to us? Suppose you have bought a slave. At the door of your house, he kneels, saying, "Master, You have bought me and I gladly hearken to your words." The fact that you have purchased him is one thing, but his desire to serve you is something else.

Consecration is more than love, more than purchasing. It is the action which follows love and purchasing.

***"Nearly all men can stand adversity;
but if you want to test a man's character,
give him power."***

Abraham Lincoln

God's Word, The Bible

by Elder William M. Mullis
Waycross, Georgia

One of the most controversial things among God's people today is the Bible. God's people often misunderstand the Scriptures and therefore have trouble rightly dividing God's word. In order to rightly divide the word of truth, we must understand the difference between the **living Word**, and the **written word!**

In John 1:1 we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word in this text does not have reference to Scripture, rather it refers to Christ, the Son of God, as evidenced by the 14th verse of the same chapter. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." This is the same "Word" used in Hebrews 4:12. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword...." Jesus Christ came to save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21). He didn't try to save His people. He saved His people when He died on the cross. He purchased us with His blood. Jesus Christ also came to this earth to establish His church in the earth. (Matthew 16: 18). He also came to set an example for us in the way we should live our lives. (I Peter 2.21).

We have nothing to do with our eternal salvation, but there is much we can do to be saved from the error of our way as we live here in this world. Psalm 119:105 says that God's word is "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." In II Corinthians 4:4, God's word is spoken of as the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Just as a natural light is of no use to a dead man, but only useful to one who is alive, the gospel does not cause life. It does not cause one to be born again. But after one IS born again, it is then useful for lighting the path that we should trod.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired word of

God written by holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (II Peter 1:21; James 1:18; II Timothy 3:16). The Bible is a spiritual message from a spiritual God to a spiritual people and therefore cannot be understood by ALL people. The only ones who have ears to hear and eyes to see are those who are already born of the Spirit of God. (I Corinthians 2:14; I Corinthians 1:14). Scripture is given to God's people for their learning and comfort. (Romans 15:4). It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that **the man of God** may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (II Timothy 3:16,17).

When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, He, in every instance, used the Scripture to rebuke the devil. Notice that in Matthew, chapter 4, verses 4, 7, and 10, Christ said, "It is written." Christ is our example! Just as He used the Scripture to rebuke the devil, we should also use the word of God to rebuke the devil. The Bible should be our ONLY rule of faith and practice.

The word of God is spiritual food and drink for God's people who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. (I Peter 2:2; Psalm 19:103). John 6:32, 35 states, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger: and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." What a joy it is when God's born again children are blessed to have just a crumb from the Master's table. The Bible is written so that our joy may be full. (I John 1:4).

God's word is truth. (John 17:17). We should use the word of God and clean up our lives so that we can enjoy the blessings God has promised in His word. We are given the Bible so that we might know how to behave in the house of God. (I Timothy 2:15). It gives understanding to the simple. (Psalm 119:130). It is a way of life. (Proverbs 6:23). It has been passed down through

the ages and will stand forever. (Matthew 24:35).

In Hosea 4:6, God's word proclaims, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...." May God bless us to study and earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Let us buy the truth and sell it not. (Proverbs 23:23). The word of the Lord was precious to Samuel and Eli. How precious is it to us today? When Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost, those that heard the word "were pricked in their hearts," and from that day "they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," And they continued daily with one accord in the temple".... These people were doing good works, they were giving to every man that had a need. They were not just hearers of the word. We also should not be just hearers of God's word; we should be doers. (James 1:22).

God has given us His Holy word so that we may enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom while we live here in this world. If we fail to do what God has taught us in His word, we will experience a living hell while we live in this world. We need to pray for wisdom, knowledge and understanding as we continue to study God's word daily. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32).

Jesus Christ, the living word, saved us from the eternal hell to the eternal heaven! He is the Word "which liveth and abideth forever." (I Peter 1 :23). "And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (I Peter 1 :25). When the gospel (the written word) is preached, we hear about Jesus Christ, (the living Word).

Even though it is the living Word (Jesus Christ) who saves us eternally, the written word (the Bible) can save God's children from much heartache,

sorrow, pain, and chastisement, if we hear and obey it! "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the

engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only...." (James 1:21, 22).

May God help us all to realize the importance of the living Word, and the importance of the written word!

Are You Sometimes Implacable?

by Elder Don Williams
Brownsburg, Indiana

In Roman 1:31, Paul uses the word, implacable. This word is not usually used in our everyday language. For several years I passed by this word, not realizing its meaning. Paul uses the word, implacable, in a list of words describing the reprobate mind of sinful man. As we read this list, we can see how depraved man is in his quest for fleshly desires, and how alienated he is from God's ways.

The word, implacable, means never satisfied. Man, in his lusts for fleshly desires, continually strives to fulfill himself, yet is never satisfied. Certainly covetousness, fornication, pride, and boastfulness fall in this classification, for when one is not satisfied with what one has, he goes about to take it by force or deceit. We should have no

trouble seeing dissatisfaction all about us, especially if we include ourselves. When we were young, we were satisfied with small, inexpensive things. As we grew older, we saw others with bigger and better, or more expensive things. We were not satisfied. When we devote time and effort to something -ANYTHING -that takes away from the service of God, we are being implacable!

Paul says in Hebrews 13:5, "Be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." When we lose sight of the cross of Jesus Christ in search of bigger and better material things for this life, we have certainly lost our bearings, and the precious landmarks are being ignored in our daily walk.

I pray that you have been careful to note that Paul was talking about material things, NOT SPIRITUAL THINGS. OUR HUNGER AND THIRST FOR SPIRITUAL THINGS SHOULD NEVER BE SATISFIED. There is a filling and satisfaction in spiritual things that the world cannot understand, and yet it creates a continual yearning for more and more of God's pleasant food which fills the soul as nothing else can. Only those who have experienced God's blessings can understand. As human nature goes, it is evident there are many who have forgotten how good and how pleasant it is for God's people to dwell together in unity of worship EVERY Lord's day. As Jesus tells the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:4, "thou hast left thy first love."

Grow in Knowledge

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| 1. "But his _____ is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he mediate day and night." | 7. "A false _____ is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is His delight." |
| 2. "And I will delight myself in thy _____, which I have loved." | 8. "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and He shall give thee the _____ of thine heart." |
| 3. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the _____ is His delight." | 9. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His _____ with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." |
| 4. "For I delight in the law of God after the _____ man:" | |
| 5. "If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which _____ with milk and honey." | 10. "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a _____; they have no delight in it." |
| 6. "A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his _____ may discover itself." | |

EXAMINE YOURSELVES!

To me, examinations are not pleasant. I never liked exams (tests) in school, do not like medical exams, and am not usually pleased with my personal examinations concerning spirituality. However, examinations are for our good.

Specifically, we will be looking at the fact that the word of God teaches us, as Christians, to do self examinations of our spiritual growth and activity.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (II Corinthians 13:5 a). Satan desires that we spend our time examining others, fault-finding, and condemning others because of sin in their lives. The devil does NOT want us to examine ourselves! Jesus addresses this issue when he said, “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 pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye” (Matthew 7:3-5).

“**Examine yourselves**” is an expression very much like the Old Testament command, “**Consider your ways!**” (Haggai 1:5,7). Look carefully at what you are doing and where you are going; listen to what you are saying; and carefully examine what you are thinking, for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6).

EXAMINE YOURSELVES!

What caused Peter to think he would never deny Christ, though he said all others might? He thought he was much stronger than he really was. He had not examined himself correctly and gave a false testimony!

The Apostle Paul did a good job of examining himself, and sometimes did not like what he saw! “For I know that

in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:18-19). He gives a summary of his self-examination in verse 24 where he says, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” When we examine ourselves, we certainly find at times that we too must declare, “O wretched man that I am!” “I am the chief of sinners!”

Ignorance of who we are, ignorance of our spiritual condition, **failure to really examine ourselves in the light of God's word** will always lead to self-righteous, Pharisaical attitudes! If we examine ourselves by the common standards of the world, by customs and traditions of men, or, we if examine ourselves by comparing ourselves to other people who are worse than we are, we only deceive ourselves! “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (II Corinthians 10:12). It is foolish to examine our spiritual walk any other way than looking at our lives by using the “plumbline” and light” of the word of God. How do we “measure-up” compared to Jesus? We must all conclude, “We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God!” (See Romans 3:23.)

The Church of Laodicea ended up lukewarm because they had failed to “examine themselves” in the light of God's word! They thought they were in one condition, and in fact were in the opposite condition. (See Revelation 3:14-18.) Unless they repented, they were going to be separated from fellowship with God! Failing to examine ourselves and correct our faults will lead to us being alienated from God!

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, **in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:** Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:18-24). We must examine ourselves to see which “man” we have on!

As we prayerfully examine ourselves, and ask our Father for wisdom and grace to make corrective changes in our lives, there will be times we examine ourselves and see things we ARE doing that are right. Paul did that very thing! He declared some things positive about his life when he said:

1. “I have fought a good fight...” (II Timothy 4:7).
2. “I can do all things...” (Philippians 4:13).
3. “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (I Cor. 9:27).
4. “I serve” God! (Acts 27:23).
5. “This one thing I do....” (Philippians 3:13).
6. “I know whom I have believed...” (II Tim. 1:12).

But in the end, we must all confess even when we do good, “By the grace of God, I am what I am!” Without Him, we can do nothing that is right and good! May God help each of us to **daily examine ourselves!**

"God is Great, God is Good...."

by Brother Lee Bush
Decatur, Georgia

I imagine you remember, as well as I do, that simple little prayer that most children of Christian families pray. It is a simple prayer, but it sums up a lot of what we need each day. I remember as a young child sitting around the table with other children and reciting this prayer in unison. Our parents or some other adult made sure that we thanked the Lord for the food that we were about to consume. As I think of my parents, I remember praying:

God is great,
God is good,
Let us thank Him for our food,
By His hands we all are fed,
Give us Lord this day our daily bread.
Amen

I was blessed to be born to a wonderful father and mother, Maurice and Olline Bush, in 1955 in Atlanta, Georgia. My father and mother raised Gayle (sister) and me to go to Sunday school and church and to be thankful for our Christian heritage. My parents knew their roles, and they did not give us a choice of going to church. No matter what we thought as normal children, we had no choice but to go to church. Looking back, I can see how this would lay the foundation for who I am today. I thank God today for my parents and their efforts to expose us to the Lord, His word, and His church.

In 1964, my father passed away, so my mother, sister and I had to make some big adjustments. Mother had to be brave in order to continue to raise her children. Honestly, I don't see how she did it! She was a strong woman who owned and ran a private pre-school. We lived conveniently next door to the business. After working all day in the business of children,

she had to have time for her own children without the help of her husband. Mother's strong work values and faith in God helped her to send both Gayle and me to college.

Fast forward to the 1980's. After graduating from Mercer University in Atlanta, I gradually got involved in helping my mother with her private school business. I will tell you this: running a preschool is not easy. In order to stay on top of things and to compete with new and upcoming trending schools, Mom and I would usually put in ten-hour days and then some on the weekends. We didn't have a department of this and department of that. We rolled up our sleeves and did it all ourselves. We had to in order for the business to survive! We saved the business a lot of money by doing the hands-on work ourselves. As Mother was getting older, she often would say that she couldn't do it without me. However, I have to admit that I couldn't have done it without her help. Yes, we were a team. We worked well together, and, through long hours and work on the weekends, we enjoyed building one of the best well known and respected pre-schools in Atlanta. Unfortunately, work spilled over to Sundays. I was just too tired and burned out to attend any church on Sunday. I gradually got away from church and felt that I could be a Christian on my own. After all, I was baptized when I was five years old, and I still believed in God!

For many years, even though I didn't belong to any church, I still tuned in to various television ministries. However, during that time, I had exposure to the New Age Movements. My experience with New Age did not last long, for I soon saw the deception in such false doctrines. I always remember that God is the same yesterday, today, and

forever. My God is the same always. New Age and occultism are changing fads where "self" is on the throne. I saw that! I believe that because of my upbringing and early training in a Christian church, I was able to see the deception and problems that would be before me. I thank God that He held tight enough rein on me and opened my eyes to the spiritual lies surrounding me. I assure you, from my experience and study, that New Age is a doctrine of devils and demons.

Fast forward to the year 2000. I was scanning the TV shows and ran across a ministry that was offering a tour cruise to Israel. I felt like the Lord was saying to me, "Come and see my land". I did! My sister and I went on the 2000 trip to Israel. Gayle and I were baptized a second time, now in the Jordan River. I went down in the water and then rose back up to new life! That was a symbolic way of identifying with Christ. I died to my old self and came alive to a new spirit! When we arrived back in Atlanta, I just wasn't the same anymore. But, still there was something lacking – I didn't have a church to call "my home." However, I continued studying with television ministries.

Fast Forward to 2008. My mother was now much older and showing signs of being feeble. I moved back home with her to help her. She encouraged me many times to go back to church. Unfortunately, I felt awkward about being back and never really went, except for a few seasonal celebrations. Just about every night, she and I would pray together. Before I would go to bed, I would pray earnestly to God to show me in what way that I needed to help mother. I believe that we should dare to ask, without passing judgment, the spiritual status of those closest to us. Sometimes I would ask

my mother, "When your time comes, will you be ready? Will you be ready to meet God?" My mother said she was not afraid to die, and that if she met God on that day, she would be fine. I accepted her answer.

Well, one late night in February of 2008, my mother said something that alarmed me. She warned me that, "Some sadness is coming to this family eventually. Now, I want you to go back to church because you might need the help of the pastor." I was startled and asked her what it was that she knew that I did not know. Mom said, "Nothing – just be ready when the time comes." True, mom just turned eighty-five and she wasn't feeling good, but we never knew until she finally went to the hospital that she had ovarian cancer. I truly believe she had a premonition from God, but that she didn't know exactly what problem she had. I called her gynecologist after she passed away and he said that he never gave her any indication of ovarian cancer. It is true, ovarian cancer is one of those cancers that can slip up on you.

In late June, mother finally had to go into the hospital. Just about every evening, while mother could still ride in a wheel chair, we would slip down to the chapel. I held her hand and we prayed to God to help us. I never cried so much. I knew it, and Mother knew it. We tried to believe that we could beat the cancer, but it was too late. Her time was coming. A month before Mother passed away, I got in touch with Pastor Billy Mullis in Waycross, Georgia. Brother Billy's family and my family have been friends for many years. We love each other so much. As a child, I looked up to Billy as a "big brother." In fact, Pastor Billy ministered to Gayle and me by giving us assignments to study in God's Holy Word. These assignments helped us to cope and to realize how much we are blessed even in a time of grief. I also got in contact with the pastor at my church. He came over to the hospital and ministered to my mother and me. Pastor Fred did not know either

my mom or me, but came over without reservation to be with us. I don't know what I would have done without the help of these fine leaders of God's ministry.

I believe that God did something special for me. When I went into the ICU to see Mother, she finally said, "Lee, I am dying...It's over with...The hard part is finished...I see angels...I see Momma...This sure is a beautiful room." I felt that God was saying to me, "Come over here and see what your mother sees." I didn't hear God in a physical voice, but I felt Him in the Spirit. Out of all the people around at that time, I was the only one who picked up on it. My mother was witnessing to me and giving me a glimpse of the other side, and she was not afraid to go. I believe that the angels and her mother were there to help her cross over to the other side. I believe God wanted me to know this. Luke 16 talks about Lazarus and the rich man. Jesus describes a death scene where the angels were there to carry Lazarus to Abraham's bosom (v. 22). The angels are there to give the saved a personal escort to paradise. Now that I think about it, what joy! "Oh death, where is thy sting!" By grace, God gave my mother everlasting life with Him in heaven, and He blessed me with the blessed assurance that He does care about me, and that my mother is with Him.

After a while, the doctors shut off all life support. Right before Momma was going into a coma, Gayle and I noticed the breathing monitor at close to zero. At that point where Mother could no longer communicate, we went up to her bedside and said how thankful we were for her and that we would always love her. Gayle said, "Look at the monitor – it went from zero to 80." Gayle is an RN and knows about those monitors. Now, that's unusual. We felt that she was responding to us through her spirit. Olline Bush, my mother, died on Friday, August 22, 2008.

This was the pivotal point in my faith. Pastor Billy insisted that I go to church on the next Sunday, regardless of my

recent grief. He said, "If you honor God with your presence at church in spite of your grief, God will bless you. Trust me – he will bless you." I really wanted to go. I had nowhere else to turn. I couldn't rely on my own strength. When I went to church, everyone received me wonderfully. They let me grieve in peace. When I first walked into the sanctuary, the pastor was doing a sermon on the 23rd Psalm. They had a large video display of Psalms 23. How about that! When my mother and I went down to the chapel in the hospital every evening to pray, we would always read the 23rd Psalm and the Lord's Prayer. This all came back to me. God was reminding me that He was still the Good Shepherd. "The Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want." I don't believe at all that this was all just coincidence, but rather it was a blessing from God. It was God's unending care and concern for me.

As of this writing, I have healed so much and know that God is truly God! I accept the fact that we all must die. I also know that God will never put on us what we cannot bear. Halleluia! God used a sad situation and turned it into something good! Do you know what it is? I know Him! More importantly, He knows me. I also know He has me and none shall pluck me from His hand! How about that! What a prize!

Now, I look forward to going to church and worshiping with fellow believers. When I listen to my Pastor, I always get my spiritual batteries recharged. I admit that I need to be fed spiritually. We, as Christians, should look forward to our daily bread from the word of God for strength and wisdom that is not of us. I need spiritual strength! In the Bible, **we are warned: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole gospel armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against**

spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:10-12). Trust me, when the verse says "wickedness", there is wickedness around us that could deceive us if we're not grounded in the Word of God. **1 Peter 5:8 commands us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."**

I can assure you that I have had many spiritual attacks and battles since my

mother passed away. I've been tested as I'm sure many Christians have been tested as well! If it had not been for my Christian upbringing and exposure to church, I don't know what could have happened to me. **Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."** I believe what was an intervention of God, enabled me to survive a major spiritual test.

I hope that this article can be useful

to those of you who are going through some type of sadness or are about to see some form of sadness in the future. I've been there, and, through the strength of God and belonging to a local Bible-based church, I am much stronger now. So, now I believe I can be useful to God's Kingdom!

Yes, God is Great! Yes, God is Good! I always thank Him every day for my food, both natural and spiritual!

Along Ancient Paths

By Bro. David Gerson
Waycross, Georgia

"God is Love." "God's love is unconditional."

Have you heard these phrases before? Read on.

Do you really want to be loved unconditionally without measure or rule? A part of you might; the part that doesn't want to be measured or ruled! If you say that you want to be loved unconditionally, is that really what you mean? Do you mean that you want to be accepted into fellowship without examination and received into the Church in spite of, or regardless of, what you do?

"To love me means **not** to judge me!" Such is the rant and motto of the anti-Christ movement found so frequently on the lips of those who profess love to the Savior and yet reject His commands.

"God is love and His love is unconditional" Only if you call it a pseudo Cotton Candy, false Christianity, spun with the sweet sugar of deception. This isn't gospel manna from heaven. It is "fast-food McChristianity" and it is unfit for any believer's table, Gospel Pulpit or Church whose pillar and ground must be The Truth of God, not worldly wisdom and the customs and traditions of men. The world and the enemy of our soul will welcome you with open arms should you agree with them and ac-

cept this aberrant abomination.

O may God forgive the evil in our hearts that we so readily spill out as a sewer into a cesspool! Help us Lord to forsake and turn from this evil idea that supplants righteousness with compromise. "God is Love and His Love is unconditional." How many are lead captive by these words? To hear them while living in the light of The Gospel of The Kingdom of Heaven is to see and know the true meaning of these statements. The skein of this amazing saving love and grace that has woven its way through time and space, binding gospel hearts together one to another, and to their Creator's as well, is never to be used to fashion garments of our own making or design. Only in the Light can we see that True Love is as much explained in I Corinthians 13 as it must also be I Corinthians 5:9-13.

Anything and everything else that would call itself true love separates love and discipline, love and the truth of God's Word, love and the finished work of Jesus Christ leaves us heretic at best and false teachers at worst. May our tongue never move in wrong counsel, instruction or praise to God or man first without permission from the Most High. When our silence would be mistaken for agreement with the most lovely, subtle, attractive and palatable

evils that the world and the church offer, then we must speak or be deafened with the crowing of a thrice sounding rooster in our ears. If your heart was stony but now is made flesh, if you've denied Him and been crushed by it and for it, rejoice. If you've been in a far country, your Father beckons you. If you have forsaken Him, He has not completely forsaken you. If you can hear The Shepherd's voice, come home. If asleep in the light, awake. Open your eyes. Climb a tree! Reach out for the hem of his garment. The Lord is walking by. God's relationship with you is unconditional. His fellowship isn't. God is Love. Love Him back and be restored. By so doing, you will reap great joys and blessing in the kingdom of heaven which are "conditional."

"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). This applies to God manifesting His love to us while we are walking in obedience to His teachings and commandments.

"We love him, because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). This applies to the unconditional love of God manifested from before the foundation of the world in choosing, and predestinating us, as well as redeeming us at Calvary!

He Keeps Telling Me!

by Sis. Tatum Strickland
St. Simons Island, Georgia

It says in scripture that God sometimes speaks in a still small voice, and I can attest to that fact. However, I have found that His voice gets louder and more demanding when ignored. All of my adult life, I've based my self-worth and security in money. I felt like if I had money in the bank, there were no limits on where I could go and what I could do. Obviously, I put tithing on hold because it interfered with my dreams of financial security. Instead, I spent my extra money on things for me: new clothes, pedicures, and day trips to fun places. After all, God wants me to be happy, right?

As I progressed through my first year of teaching school, each month got financially tougher. I managed to pay all my bills on time and in full, but I still continued to blow money on myself. Due to my self-absorbed mindset and lack of financial planning, I over-drew my bank account in June 2009 by \$500+. It was at this point that I really began to realize that I needed to get a grip. I began to cut back on my selfish spending and really began praying that God would release my desire for financial security, and increase my desire for spiritual security. But still, I did not tithe. I did not change my selfish habits. God knew that I was struggling financially, so I just felt that He would be ok with me just giving him \$20 here and there as I could. So, that was what I did. I'm ashamed to admit

that every Sunday morning I'd sit in the pew and think "Ok. Can I afford God this week?" and never did I ever give more than \$20 at a time, for fear that I may need the money for something else. I am ashamed of my selfish behavior because what I was doing was prioritizing my bills and then giving God my "leftovers". I was inadvertently saying, "God, I guess you are worth a little bit." Hello! He paid the ultimate sacrifice with the blood of his Son, and I just wanted to give him \$20?

In September of 2009, the church I attend offered a class entitled "Managing Your Money God's Way." I thought, "There it is again!" It appeared in the church bulletin for about a month, and, on the Sunday before it began, I signed up! The study guide was \$15. As I wrote the check for the book, I thought to myself, "Now this is stupid. You want to learn how to save money but you're spending it?" That was indeed the best \$15 I've spent in quite some time! After completing the course, I decided to do it; cold turkey. I was going to tithe. That next month, I wrote my check and prayed that my ends would meet that month. They didn't. I over-drafted again, but this time by only \$50. I was ANGRY! For the first time in my life I felt all alone. I mean, I had taken something so dear to me (my hard earned money) and given a chunk of it to God, yet He let this happen. What I didn't realize at the time was that I had not made a

sacrifice. I had continued to live by my own selfish standards, instead of giving up things for Him.

I did not tithe for two months and felt horrible about it. I was making enough money with side jobs to completely cover my tithe, but I was instead blowing it on Christmas presents and dinner with friends. I had decided I would just wait until my next pay raise to begin tithing again, but God had a different plan. During the course of just 2 weeks, I heard 7 radio sermons on tithing. With each sermon, I would feel more and more convicted. One time I even changed the station, only to land on a song that was singing about giving money. Talk about inescapable! I decided in mid-January that no matter what, I was going to tithe the full 10 percent no matter what my financial situation. This morning, I dropped a check in the offering plate that could have paid my gas bill for the month; however, I know that it is God's, and He will do much more with it than I could ever do.

Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: **these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone**" (Matthew 23:23). Please pray for me to do what Jesus said.

Answers to Grow In Knowledge

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|------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Psalm 1:2 | 4. Romans 7:22 | 7. Proverbs 11:1 |
| 2. Psalm 119:47 | 5. Numbers 14:8 | 8. Psalm 37:4 |
| 3. Proverbs 15:8 | 6. Proverbs 18:2 | 9. Song of Solomon 2:3 |
| | | 10. Jeremiah 6:10 |

How Sweet It Is!

by Sis. Barbara Chapple
St. Simons Island, Georgia

Sin was pleasing and seemed desirable, but my own self and Satan had deceived me. Selfishness, worldly wisdom, cultural thinking, and wrong concepts filled my mind with hate for God. I wanted to have it my way! I was not really caring about God's ways and the truth of His word. The world revolved around pleasing me and getting what I believed I wanted. It was all wrong.

At age 27, I had a three-year-old son from my husband to whom I married at age nineteen, and whom I gave my virginity. I was thinking that we would spend the rest of our lives together. My husband suddenly abandoned me.

I was feeling rejected, until I met the man who would be the father of my second child. I became pregnant, and we made a choice to abort our baby. He did not want the responsibility because he was already paying child support for two other children. I was at risk of losing my three-year-old son to his father, because I was pregnant by someone else. Coming from a broken family, I knew the pain of being separated from my mother. I was so proud to have my son. He was the joy of my life, and I could not risk losing him.

My decision was made from that shame, rejection, and embarrassment. I was a member of the church and could not let them find out about my sexual activity outside of marriage. The church believed in a faithful lifestyle, and I was an adulteress. I was living a lie! I had two faces, one for church and the other for my private life. My boyfriend paid for the abor-

tion, took me to the clinic, and waited for me. I was not taken care of properly. There were so many people who did not care about my unborn child or me. I remember crying, but no one cared. I went home and got in the bed with a cup of hot tea. I had no other care.

I did not have my baby, I had an abortion. I felt like I could not share this with anyone. Most of my friends were in the church. I did not ask anyone for prayer about my situation. They would never understand why or how I could have done something like this. I needed to get right with God and truly turn my life over to Him. Out-of-control flesh and sin guided my life. Fear, shame, loss, embarrassment, and guilt were my secret companions, along with no self worth. At times I would pull away from people and close myself off. I could not even face my own son sometimes. My family was never aware of this problem.

After some time in counseling, my husband and I reunited. We conceived a daughter and gave birth to her. Shortly afterwards, I was pregnant again. My husband did not want another child. He pressured me into getting an abortion. He said that he was not going to take care of another child, and he threatened to leave me again. Fear, rejection and no self-worth helped me to make the decision to abort again at age 30. On a cold winter day, my husband took me to the abortion clinic. I could not take it, so I asked to be put to sleep.

When I went home, I felt empty on the inside. I suffered with depression and heartache. I was continuing to live a lie. I never told him about my first abortion,

I just went on as if nothing had happened. He did finally leave me, and that is when I turned wholeheartedly to the Lord. I put my trust in Him and confessed my sins. He forgave me and removed all the guilt, shame, embarrassment, and pain. The Lord put in me a new heart. A heart he could use. I was told that abortion was a choice, but I could never have been prepared for the repercussions that were to follow after having made that choice! Abortion is legal by the laws of our land, but the pain is too costly. The guilt of being in the role of taking a person's life is too much to pay.

The search for significance had ended when I really came to know the Lord. Part of my journey would include me marrying a Godly man, who asked me to become a volunteer for our local pregnancy center in a large city. I did. The training included abortion counseling and Bible Study for women who have had abortions. During this process, I was able to see what had happened to me earlier in my life. Compassion set in my heart for women who were caught in the trap of past abortions. Now 33 years later, I serve my Lord and Savior as the Founder and Director of a Pregnancy Care Center in a small city in southeast Georgia with my husband.

Though sin seems pleasing and desirable, it brings forth sorrow and death! Only a merciful and gracious Heavenly Father could forgive me, love me, and provide deliverance from the hell I went through!

"The most important things in our homes are the people."

Bible Reading Calendar for March

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
1	Numbers 23,24,25	Mark 8:1-21
2	Numbers 26,27	Mark 8:22-38
3	Numbers 28,29	Mark 9:1-29
4	Numbers 30,31	Mark 9:30-50
5	Numbers 32,33	Mark 10:1-31
6	Numbers 34,35,36	Mark 10:32-52
7	Deut. 1,2	Mark 11:1-19
8	Deut. 3,4	Mark 11:20-33
9	Deut. 5,6,7	Mark 12:1-27
10	Deut. 8,9,10	Mark 12:28-44
11	Deut. 11,12,13	Mark 13:1-13
12	Deut. 14,15,16	Mark 13:14-37
13	Deut. 17,18,19	Mark 14:1-25
14	Deut. 20,21,22	Mark 14:26-50
15	Deut. 23,24,25	Mark 14:51-72

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
16	Deut. 26,27	Mark 15:1-26
17	Deut. 28	Mark 15:27-47
18	Deut. 29,30	Mark 16
19	Deut. 31,32	Luke 1:1-23
20	Deut. 33,34	Luke 1:24-56
21	Josh. 1,2,3	Luke 1:57-80
22	Josh. 4,5,6	Luke 2:1-24
23	Josh. 7,8	Luke 2:25-52
24	Josh. 9,10	Luke 3
25	Josh. 11,12,13	Luke 4:1-32
26	Josh. 14,15	Luke 4:33-44
27	Josh. 16,17,18	Luke 5:1-16
28	Josh. 19,20	Luke 5:17-39
29	Josh. 21,22	Luke 6:1-26
30	Josh. 23,24	Luke 6:27-49
31	Judges 1,2	Luke 7:1-30

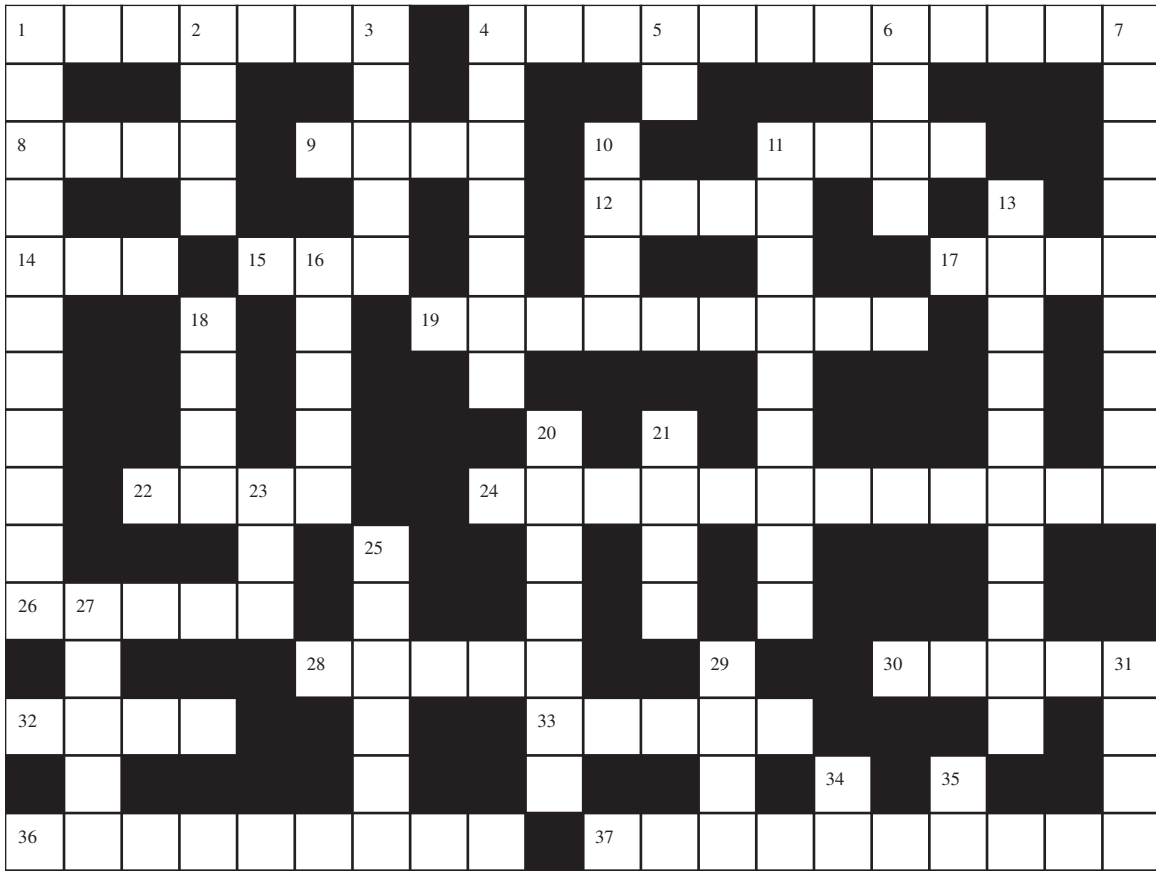
**ANSWERS TO
CROSSWORD
PUZZLE
FEBRUARY 10**

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Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. "____ me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." 4. "Wherefore the law was our ____ to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." 8. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, ____ Christ:" 9. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to _____, than to give the sacrifice of fools:..." 11. "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the ____: from whence also he received him in a figure." 12. ". .but now ____ in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." 14. "____ the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;..." 15. "... he went into the synagogue on the sabbath _____, and stood up for to read." 17. "Shew me thy _____, O Lord; teach me thy paths." 19. "Let _____ and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee." 22. "... ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the world of God, which effectually worketh also in your _____ believe" 24. "Let your _____ be without covetousness;..." 26. "... To him be _____ both now and for ever. Amen." 28. "... _____ to do evil;" 30. "Suffer not thy mouth cause thy _____ to sin;..." 32. "And Abraham _____ my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:..." 33. "...for he hath said, I will _____ leave thee, nor forsake thee." 36. "But grow in grace, and in the _____ of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..." 37. "And her parents were _____; but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done."



DOWN

1. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into _____ fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" 2. "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master. if then I be a father, where is _____ honour? ..." 3. "The last _____ that shall be destroyed is death." 4. "His lord said unto him, well done, thou good and faithful _____:..." 5. "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made _____ sins every year." 6. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take _____ sins." 7. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no _____." 10. "Then said he, Lord _____ to do thy will, O God. ..." 11. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have _____ up the kingdom to God, even the Father;..." 13. "By the which will we are _____ through the offering of the body, of Jesus Christ once for all." 16. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried _____ with every wind of doctrine,..." 18. "_____ you, make you clean;..." 20. "... and be _____ with such things as ye have:..." 21. "... put away the _____ of your doings from before mine eyes; ..." 23. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter _____ thing before God:..." 25. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou _____:..." 27. "_____ to do well;..." 29. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast _____ thy first love" 31. "Take _____ therefore how ye hear:..." 34. "...teaching and admonishing one another _____ psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." 35. "The Lord _____ my shepherd; I shall not want."

O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing

by Sis. Sarah D. Ledger
Bartow, Georgia

It was almost dark when my husband and I came out of Wal-Mart. The chimes from the church building across the street were playing. As I waited for my husband to load our packages and unlock my side of the pickup, I listened to them play, "O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing, My Great Redeemer's Praise, The Glories of My God and King, The Triumphs of His Grace". I stood there listening long after he had unlocked my door. I asked my husband if he had recognized the hymn, and of course, he had.

There is a small Methodist church across the road from us. They are a very small part-time congregation that meets on Sunday afternoon twice monthly. For several years I played for them since they had no pianist in the group. Even if I had somewhere I needed to be, I would play for their song service and quietly slip out when

it was finished. For many years, they had the same pastor. He had a beautiful voice and loved the old hymns. He would usually select the congregation's favorites, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms", "What a Friend We have in Jesus", "The Lily of the Valley", and several others. When his wife was able to come to the meeting, they sang together, but often he and I sang, usually at someone's request. Two of the very favorites were, "How Great Thou Art" and "He Touched Me". Since they were such a small congregation, I often played "O For a Thousand Tongues I Sing" as the offertory hymn. Usually, when I played it, the pastor would say if I would get the hymn started, we would sing it too. He and I would begin and the rest would join in. The acoustics in that small building are very good, so it would usually sound more like a 25 or 30 voice choir, rather than twelve or

thirteen. Many of the saints that were in the congregation then have now passed on, that pastor has retired, I understand that both he and his wife are in poor health, and I no longer play for the congregation. But what sweet memories!

I thought of all these things as I listened to the chimes that night. I thought of all the wonderful messages in song that congregations who use only "contemporary" music miss. Thankfully, in our worship service, we still sing the old hymns and usually I am reminded of some dear person that loved a particular hymn when we sang it, and how much that person loved God and our little church. I think we will always sing the old songs.

When the chimes had finished "O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing", we drove away. How thankful I am that we went to Wal-Mart that night. God is so good!

*Too many Christians are no longer fishers of men
but keepers of the aquarium.*

Paul Haroeg