

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

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*"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"—Jno. 8:32.*

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*"Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18)*

## SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

### THE IMMEDIATE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The very nature of the Kingdom of God is such as speaks of "NOW"! We are not to limit our thinking to the future when we think of it, but include "NOW". We are not to think only of the past when it comes to our minds, but include the "NOW". The Kingdom of God possesses an immediate nature; a nature that demands men's attention NOW; that calls for allegiance NOW; that summons obedience NOW! It is not a kingdom upon which we think until we have convinced ourselves of its reality, but one which is NOW, even in "the midst" of us all!

I have, over the years, heard professed believers speak lightly of their dullness; of their slowness to apprehend the will of God—how that God had to beat them over the head, so to speak, to get their attention! Such a state is certainly no cause for boasting! That it often does happen, I cannot and will not deny; but that it is merely a minor infraction of the principles of righteousness I emphatically and categorically deny! It is not to be lightly viewed! Slowness is UNGODLY! It is worldly! It is of the lower order! This is not a trait of God—but rather immediacy! Slowness or retardedness is something to be repented of! Those that are slothful and lethargic would do well to adorn themselves in sackcloth and ashes and stand ashamed before the Lord of glory, upon whom they so often call for a swift answer!

*From the beginning, the immediate nature of God's work was manifested.* Look at the creation of the heavens and the earth! "And God said, Let there be light; AND THERE WAS LIGHT"! Immediate response! Instant obedience! "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters . . . AND IT WAS SO"! "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; AND IT WAS SO"! "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind . . . AND IT WAS SO"! "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years . . . AND IT WAS SO"! "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beast of the earth after his kind, AND IT WAS SO"! (Gen. 1:3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 24). "AND IT WAS SO"—perfectly executed; perfect response, immediate and instant. In a single day each Divine fiat was obeyed! Science demands millions of years for the formation of the world which they cannot explain with

*(Please turn to page 2)*

### In This Issue . . .

The Disadvantages of Mortal Life - page 4

Special Articles by Bro. Richard Ebler - page 7

## The Word of Truth

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Author and Editor: Given O. Blakely

Circulation Managers: Mr. and Mrs. Al Stoner

Publication Office: 78th and Independence St., Merrillville, Indiana. (Send no correspondence to this address.)

Business Office: 10701 W. 124th Ave.  
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### The Immediate Nature of the Kingdom of God

(From page 1)

carnal wisdom. But the Word of God reveals that it was an **instant** creation of the Living God with Whom all things are possible! Not a millennium for the formation of living creatures, but a day! God has, then, at the very doorstep of revelation geared our minds for the nature of His Kingdom.

**The miracles of our Lord also demonstrated this immediate nature of the heavenly kingdom.** When our Lord began to show forth His glory (Jno. 2:11) in His miracles, He demonstrated the essential nature of the Kingdom of God in regards to time — immediate! Think of the leper that was healed of the Savior; it was said “And **IMMEDIATELY** his leprosy was cleansed” (Matt. 8:3). Of the blind men that received their sight, it is written; “and **IMMEDIATELY** their eyes received sight” (Matt. 20:34). There was that woman with an issue of blood that pressed through the throng to touch the hem of the Lord’s garment. It is said of her healing, “and **IMMEDIATELY** her issue of blood was stanch’d” (Lk. 8:44). Then there was that daughter of Abraham which had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, being bowed together and which could in no wise lift herself up. Our Lord and Savior “laid His hands on her; and **IMMEDIATELY** she was made straight and glorified God” (Luke 13:11-13). Remember the lame man that was at the pool at Bethesda. He had an infirmity for thirty-eight years, being impotent. Being confronted by the Lord, he was asked whether or not he wanted to be made whole, and having answered in a manner satisfactory to the Savior, he was straightway commanded to take up his bed and walk. It is written that “**IMMEDIATELY** the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked . . .” (John 5:6-9).

Even the angelic hosts are noted for their immediate response, as noted in the case of Herod. When giving an oration which constrained the people to cry out “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man”, it is written “And **IMMEDIATELY** the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory” (Acts 12:22-23). Other cases could be cited which demonstrate this principle, but this should suffice to lay the groundwork for an ex-

hortation to the faithful. Remember that disciples followed Him “straightway” (or immediately) — (Matt. 4:20). Certainly this characteristic should be more prominent in our lives than it often is. We ought to be swift to obey, swift to hear, swift to respond to our Redeemer and Lord. Should we not be quicker to perceive, more instant in our recognition of the devices of Satan, and less hesitant in our engagement of the forces of evil? To ask these questions is to answer them.

**Our present condition in Christ Jesus demands this immediate view of the Kingdom of God.** It is “NOW” that “we are the sons of God” (I Jno. 3:2). It is “NOW” that God is demonstrating to principalities and powers His “manifold wisdom through the church” (Eph. 3:10). It is “NOW” that we have been made “free from sin” (Rom. 6:22). It is “NOW” that we are “light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8). It is right “NOW” that the spirit of antichrist is in the world (I Jno. 4:3). “NOW we are the people of God” (I Pet. 2:10). God is working NOW! Christ is working NOW! The Holy Spirit is working NOW! The angelic hosts are working and beholding NOW! Our status in the Son has been realized by grace NOW! The commandments are for NOW! The whole thrust of the Kingdom is NOW! We are living in the realm called in Scripture “the life that NOW is” (I Tim. 4:8). Make no mistake about it, there is a life to come, and it is one that is appropriately termed “better” — but there is a life “NOW” with the Lord and His Christ; a life that is characterized by sonship, illumination, freedom from the dominion of sin, and battle against the powers of darkness! “TODAY is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:23). There is a whole body of doctrine that has arisen in our day which speaks of the future — an earthly future. It speaks not of glory or of the passing away of heaven and earth, but it speaks of earth-activity: and it is supposed to comfort the people of God. The people of God need to learn to live NOW with the Lord; to call upon the Lord NOW; to wrestle against principalities and powers NOW! They must learn to “forget the things that are behind” (Phil. 3:13).

Exhortations concern “NOW”! Tomorrow may be too late to repent! Tomorrow is not the time to awake to righteousness: “NOW it is high time to awake . . .” (Rom. 13:11). Our response to the Lord’s command to awake from spiritual lethargy ought to be like the response of the impotent man that took of his bed and walked at the command of the Lord. How will men be able to explain their spiritual dullness and slowness and response (I speak as a man) to that lame man in glory; or to that daughter of Abraham which had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years, or to the blind man, or the woman with the issue of blood. Will you dare to suppose that it is more difficult for you to awake than it was for a man to walk that had been lame for thirty-eight years, or for a woman to straighten up that had been bowed together for eighteen years! The power is in the word, not in the man; the strength to obey accompany the commandment of the Lord! “**AWAKE**” has just as much power as “**TAKE UP THY BED AND WALK**”! If it is received by faith, it will bear the immediate fruitage of that ancient word uttered by Bethesda’s troubled pool.

'NOW' is the time to obey (Phil. 2:12). If there is some commandment that has registered upon your conscience, NOW is the time to obey. Not tomorrow; not next week; not later today, but NOW! You need to obey the word of the Lord to you in the same manner as the disciples which left their nets and "straightway" followed Jesus! The same Lord speaks it; it possesses the same inherent Divine power! Faith lays hold of that power for you like it did for the blind, the impotent, the infirm, the leprous!

"NOW" is the time to put off the works of the flesh, our members that are upon the earth are to be mortified now (Col. 3:8). Do not learn to live with your sin, learn to respond by faith to the word of the King; "NOW ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth"! **Can you hear that word? OBEY IT!** Rise and walk, slumber no longer in the slime of sin! It is "TODAY" that you are **not** to harden your heart (Heb. 3:13; 3:7, 15; 4:7). You are under attack from Satan NOW! You are being called of God NOW! The word of Christ possesses power for you NOW! The promises of God are to you NOW! The warnings of God are for you NOW! They are not for you when you feel better; not for when you believe you have more control of yourself; not for the supposed time of more tenderness! They are for NOW!

It is not enough to be "almost persuaded" (Acts 26:28)! NOW is the time to desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby (I Pet. 2:2). NOW is the time to put on the new man (Col. 3:10). NOW is the time to put off the old man (Eph. 4:22). NOW is the time to draw nigh unto God (Js. 4:8; Heb. 10:22). NOW is the time to confess your sin unto Him (I Jno. 1:9). NOW is the time to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:11ff). NOW is the time to cleanse yourself of all filthiness of flesh and spirit and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord" (II Cor. 7:1). NOW is the time to serve the Lord in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of letter (Rom. 7:1-3). NOW is the time to walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4). NOW is the time to walk in the light as He is in the light (I Jno. 1:7).

Can you not, dear reader, see that! The Kingdom of God is not for then, not for "when", but for NOW! The exhortations and teachings of Scripture are for NOW! They are designed to perfect you NOW, warn you NOW, teach you NOW, equip you NOW! They all **demand** immediate response! The Kingdom of God is not intellectually perceived; it does not come by weighty analysis and scholastic probing; **it comes by the response of faith!** The blind, the halt, the lame, the leprous, the infirm that were healed of our Lord did not become whole by weighing what the Lord said, or by analyzing it, or placing it in a sort of intellectual test tube! They believed and responded—and that is the nature of the Kingdom of God for you. Enter into this nature of things by faith—NOW! Do not be as Felix who trembled at the preaching of Paul saying; "Go thy way **FOR THIS TIME**; when I have a **CONVENIENT SEASON**, I

will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). A wicked response is that, indeed, seeing that the Lord of glory did not hesitate to lay down His life—yea, to give it a ransom for many. How can men declare themselves to be on the Lord's side, while they are hesitant to obey the Lord, hesitant to live and to walk by faith? There can be no affinity between the Kingdom of God and the heart that delays to do the will of the Lord! These are evil days in which we live—days that call for a resolved "redeeming" of the time (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). **This is the time to live for the Lord! This is the time to work for the Lord! This is the time to obey the Lord! This is the time to pay your vows to the Lord! His death, His burial, His resurrection— they all summon us to serve, to worship, to adore Him NOW!** Is there something in your life that ought to be dismissed; that ought to be 'put off' because of its inhibitive influence? Is there a sin or a weight ("that so easily besets you") that must be cast off? Are there deeds of the body which ought to be mortified? Ought you not to busy yourself with the putting off of "the old man" and the putting on of "the new man"? **NOW IS THE TIME TO DO IT! You ought to obey God as quickly, as immediately, as you expect for Him to answer your prayers!** Do you want Him to hear you "early"? Then obey Him early!

Contemporary religion is all too tolerant of slothfulness, of spiritual retardedness, of slowness to believe! But the Lord does not approve of such actions any more than He did of old when He spoke to Cleopas and his partner; "O fools and SLOW OF HEART to believe . . ." (Luke 24:25). He who is "slow to believe" is still a fool! Those that delay to do the bidding of the King are foolish above all others! Let there be a revival of obedience; a revival of instantly serving the Lord (Acts 26:7); "instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12), instant in the preaching of the Word (II Tim. 4:2), instant in giving of thanks (Luke 2:38)! Let professionalism give way to a godly simplicity that "delights to do" the will of God! Let institutionalism be supplanted by true spirituality that does not take into account fame, fortune, or the approval of men; but rather heartily seeks the approbation of the Living God. Such religion shall leave a greater impact for the Lord of glory than thousands of stereotyped approaches to evangelism; more godly influence shall be wrought by such action than all of the studied methods and techniques of teaching that are being foisted off upon the church!

## WANTED

The congregation at 78th and Independence is looking for some used pews for their house of meeting. If you have access to any information that will be of value to these believers, please forward the particulars to Brother Danny Powers, 7721 Independence Street, Merrillville (Independence Hill), Indiana 46410.

## THE DISADVANTAGES OF MORTAL LIFE

When man sinned and "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) the curse of God began to hover over his being. As it is written; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". . . . "If through the offence of one **many** be dead . . . the judgement was by one to condemnation . . . by one man's offence death **reigned** by one . . . by the offence of one judgement came unto **all men** unto condemnation . . . by one man's disobedience **many** were made sinners . . ." (Rom. 5:12-19). Oh, that sin brought a dreadful plight to man! The entire natural order was cursed, repudiated by God, and made subject to vanity (Rom. 8:20). Corruption, dishonor, weakness (I Cor. 15:42-43) — it all entered with sin! As soon as man sinned, this became true — "Heaven and earth shall pass away" (Mark 13:31). The natural order would never again be blessed in its present state. Mortification, decay, death — this is the curse that was left in the wake of man's transgression. That curse will not be completely lifted until the heavens and the earth have passed away and a new heavens and a new earth appear wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Pet. 3:13).

It is a basic postulate of Scripture — though not written in these precise words — that **any natural benefits are only temporal**. Winds may be stilled, bodies may be healed, trees may bring forth fruit, rain may descend when needed, water may be brought from a rock, manna gathered in the morning, ravens bring bread to the hungry, and starving widows sustain the prophets of God — **but they are all only temporary measures**. The natural order has **not** been promised a blessing, but a cursing! I must reconcile myself to these truths in order to a proper manner of life! Now, while these things seem evident, there is a great body of religious teaching today which contradicts it — which expressly teaches the people of God that they do not have to ever be subjected to inconvenience, financial deprivation, or any form of illness or destitution — that God has, in fact, pledged Himself to keep them in health, financial prosperity, and a general state of temporal blessedness. It is toward this particular heresy that I direct my attention.

**Believers are not exempt from the normal handicaps of life.** It makes little difference what self-appointed preachers say on this subject. The revelation of God is too clear, too concise, to conjecture anything else. We have a very precise example of this in the instruction of our Lord concerning the judgement of the nations: "I was an **hungered**, and ye gave me meat: I was **thirsty**, and ye gave me drink: I was a **stranger**, and ye took me in: **naked**, and ye clothed me: I was **sick**, and ye visited me: I was **in prison**, and ye came unto me. . . . Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:34-40). Observe several things of note here: (1. That Jesus unreservedly identified Himself with hunger and thirst, with social ostracization, with nakedness and destitution, with illness and infirmity, and with the suffering of the reprisals of men. Note:

He identified **Himself** with these things, thereby indicating that they are by no means a reproachful curse. Never did He identify Himself with fornication, murder, lying, idolatry, or any other form of disobedience. He never identified Himself with sinning or with repentance — but he did with destitution, want, and sickness. All of the rhetoric and imaginative reasoning in this world cannot remove that fact!

When all of the treaties have been set forth concerning the Satanic origin of illness, and the promise of deliverance from it. When all of the theses have been presented concerning healing being in the atonement, and the benefits of the death of Christ including health and prosperity as its benefits — while the sound of the words yet remain in the air, the words of our Lord resound in our ears; "I was **hungry** . . . I was **thirsty** I was a **stranger** . . . I was **naked** . . . I was **sick** . . . I was **in prison**:"! Men must reckon with these words! Men must explain why the Lord Jesus Christ would say such things without any apparent compunction at all. But, let us further observe that: (2. Instead of setting these things forth as being unnecessary, **men are judged in respect to their response to these situations. It is not, then, the experience of them that is the issue, but our response to those that experience them!** Also, (3. Observe that our Lord Jesus took these adverse experiences of life and placed them in direct association with His "brethren"; **Not with unbelievers, not with the weak and the backslidden; not with those that have no faith, or little faith — but with "my brethren"**! It is not that these things are to be coveted — God forbid: that is not the sense of the text. It rather establishes to us that these mentioned areas are not forbidden areas for believers: it indicates that they are not ground where only the weak in faith are found. These are normal handicaps of life into which any one of us may be thrust. They are the necessary result of the Adamic curse, and they rightfully belong to **this** life.

**Men of God have always suffered these handicaps of life.** It is certainly true that there have been some exceptional men in holy history that have been exempted from infirmity in an unusual way. Moses, for example, at one hundred and twenty years of age had an eye that was not dim, and his "natural force" was not abated (Deut. 34:7). Joshua, too, said at an old age; "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in" (Josh. 14:11). But these men were the exception, not the rule — that is why special note is made of them. Who can forget Job, a man of exemplary note for this single reason in Scripture; he endured unusual and weighty affliction that was beyond measure: loss of property, loss of children, loss of health, loss of friends, and lack of insight from his own wife. Yet he is not cursed; he is not thought less of by holy men and women! His faith is not held in question. Men that suppose that infirmity exemplifies a lack of faith must reckon with Job — **they must!** Then there was Lazarus the beggar who was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16). Is there one that will impugn the faith of that man — one

that will say that he was a weak, an inferior, a defeated believer? I say, is there one that is foolhardy enough to make such an assertion, such an insinuation, such a foolish supposition? There was Paul who glorified in his "infirmities" — gloried in them, not wept over them! Gloried in them, not ashamed of them (II Cor. 12:5ff). Timothy was admonished to take "a little wine for his stomach's sake, and oft infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23): he was not upbraided for a lack of faith; he was not told that he was weak! **He was not told that his healing was in the atonement and that he ought to claim it by faith.** That is what presumptuous preachers say — but that is nowhere — I repeat, NOWHERE, stated in Holy Scripture. Sir, you may infer that from some passage, but when your inferences are finished, the Scripture does not so address any believer. The fact is that the Apostles did not seem overly alarmed because the blight of infirmity struck them. **It was because of Paul's infirmity that the Galatians received the Gospel** (Gal. 4:13). If infirmity itself is an indisputable curse and a reflection of unbelief, then how could the rescue of the Galatians come through such a medium? Come now, those of you that preach this falsity, this spiritual babble — deal with the issue! Address yourself to the word of the Lord! Stop preaching your presumptions, it is confusing many people! Paul "left Trophimus sick at Miletum" (II Tim. 4:20) and not once hinted that his faith was insufficient to heal him, or that Trophimus' illness was a crisis, or that Trophimus didn't have enough faith to be healed. Not a single word is stated to the effect that Trophimus was not able to "claim" his healing, or that he was healed and retained the "symptoms", or that he was not able to discern that his healing was in the atonement. Those are all the suppositions of contemporary men — not of the Apostles! As for that matter, remember that our Lord Jesus plainly identified Himself with sickness in Matthew 25:36: "I WAS SICK", said He, speaking of His indissoluble unity with His own people that experience such things. The issue with our Lord Jesus was not whether or not men were sick, it was whether or not we responded properly to his sick brethren by "visiting them": that is the precise point that He made. We insist as dogmatically as we can, that modern apostles address themselves to explaining why the Lord Jesus would so speak if what they state about illness is true? Why didn't Jesus upbraid His followers for being sick like these false prophets do? Why is it that He rather upbraided and even cursed to "everlasting punishment" those that did not visit them, did not minister to them, did not relieve them?

The simple point we seek to make here is this, that infirmity is an allotted portion of this present life, and is so viewed in Scripture. True, the Lord oft showed compassion upon such, relieving their affliction and healing them by His virtue — so also did His apostles on sundry occasions — but not on all occasions! Nor did they set forth any form of doctrine that was designed to cause men to look down upon infirmities of the body or to regard them as a sign of inferiority or weakness of faith. If you have power to heal the sick

— if that is your ministry — then, in the Name of the Lord do it, and do it heartily! But if that is not your ministry, if that is not your gift — in short, if you cannot do it — then do not cast a reflection upon the faith or the confidence of the suffering! **Give them what you can, but take nothing from them!** When Epaphroditus was "sick nigh unto death" "because of the work of Christ" (Phil. 2:27-29) Paul did not upbraid him for lack of faith, nor did Epaphroditus challenge the reality or depth of Paul's faith. In fact, when the Lord dealt favorably with Epaphroditus and healed him so that he might be "sent" unto the brethren, it is not stated that it was in response to faith or prayer (though it might well have been). Instead, it is declared that "God had MERCY on him . . ." (Phil. 2:27b).

I believe that we may learn several valuable lessons from this case of Epaphroditus. (1. **To deal honestly with infirmities!** He does not say that Satan attacked Epaphroditus, nor that the Lord punished him, or that he was being tried. He simply states "Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death"! When we do not have Divine interpretations, we do well to simply state the case as it is. I recall that message sent to Jesus by the sisters of Lazarus; "He whom Thou lovest is sick" (Jno. 11:3). **O, that God's people would seek to state things as they are, not as they think they are.** It appears to me that they would sooner obtain mercy were their analysis to be accompanied by more honesty than color, more straightforwardness than stilted theological explanations. 2. To evidence by our analysis a sympathy for and tenderness toward the afflicted. There are too many cold reports about suffering saints; too many individuals trying to diagnose reasons rather than bestow mercy. Epaphroditus' illness brought sorrow to Paul, and the contemplation of him possibly passing this life posed the presence of "sorrow upon sorrow" (Phil. 2:27). 3. That we ought not to be anxious to relate to everyone our bodily infirmities. Epaphroditus was "full of heaviness because that ye had heard that he had been sick" (Phil. 2:26). A refreshing attitude indeed, and much to be coveted in the church of the Living God. There are too many rehearsals of infirmities, I fear, which are not in the best interest of the Kingdom of God. The people of God are not meant to be a depository for complaints and oft and bitter reports concerning affliction. **"Let every man bear his own burden"** is the injunction of Scripture concerning such things (Gal. 6:5). And again, "Is any among you sick, let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Js. 5:14). Spend no time, sir, complaining to those with a sympathetic ear — "call for the elders of the church" if so be that your sickness merits such a call!

There is an instance in Scripture of a holy man that **became sick when he received a vision from the Lord** — a text not often presented by those self-proclaimers of "divine healing". The man was none other than Daniel, against whom not a single transgression is recorded in Scripture. Hear the word of the Lord; "And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be

for many days. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it" (Dan. 8:26-27). A startling revelation that must have been to have even thrown his bodily functions out of order so that he became "sick certain days." Such an illness was certainly not due to a lack of faith. Once again, the man of God is perfectly honest in stating the case; "I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days". He is not ashamed, he does not apologize for it — that is simply the facts as they are. Blessed be the Name of the Lord that those who live by faith can speak honestly, without theological colorings or fear of shame and reproach!

**There have been holy people become sick and die of that sickness.** Those that have an inordinate affection for "healing" seem to forget that only two men have went to glory without dying, Elijah and Enoch: there are records of no other!

It is written that "Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died" (II Kings 13:14). Is there one so foolish as to reflect reproachfully upon the faith of this great prophet of God? A miracle worker transcended by none before our Lord, and yet **he died of a sickness.** Come now, thou false prophet, take up this text and deal with it. Explain these things to those that you have deceived — to those over whose spirit a mantle of despair has been cast because of your empty and vain words. What will you say of Elisha — he "was fallen sick of HIS sickness whereof he died"; it was "HIS", given and appointed to him in order to accomplish his death. Not out of punishment — not because of lack of faith — not because of weakness! Lazarus whom Jesus loved was sick and died (Jno. 11:1, 2), though the Lord raised him from the dead as a testimony to His Divinity. Dorcas "was sick and died" (Acts 9:37), later being raised from the dead by Peter. In none of these cases, however, were the sufferings rebuked. In not a single case was their sickness viewed as the result of lack of faith. These saints are to be reckoned with by those that cast disrepute and reproach upon the sick and suffering!

**Some miscellaneous observations.** We do not leave the people of God without hope — God forbid that such a heartless thing should be done! If you are sick, then there are at least five alternatives which may become your portion. (1. Through the ministry of the "gifts of healing" the Lord may deal with your infirmity (I Cor. 12:9). (2. You may call for the elders of the church to anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over you, and thus be made whole (James 5:13). (3. The Lord may give you grace to glory in your infirmities and experience an extraordinary measure of strength in your weakness (II Cor. 12:10). (4. You may be sick unto death, which will consummate in your being with the Lord and absent from the body (II Cor. 5:8). (5. You may be afflicted because of sin, being chastened of the Lord (I Cor. 11:29-32). In such a case, you must learn to judge yourself, to cleanse yourself of all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord (II Cor. 7:1).

Our Lord Jesus never rebuked a man for being sick — he had mercy upon him. He taught that men ought to have mercy upon the afflicted, for the Lord will have "mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. 9:13). The "fast" that the Lord has appointed is to "loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke . . . to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house . . . when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him. . . ." (Isa. 58:6-7). In this instance, therefore, **those that are afflicted but provide an opportunity for the others to observe the fast of the Lord.** The poor we always have with us (Matt. 26:11), not because of their lack of faith, **but because of the need for faith to express itself in "doing good unto all men, especially those of the household of faith"** (Gal. 6:10).

The crucible of life may not always be pleasant, but it is good, and it is working together for the good to them that "love the Lord, to them that are THE called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). God does not promise perfect health here — He might well make that your lot now, but not out of necessity, and not in answer to one of His promises. But the world to come — ah, there this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality. (I Cor. 15:51-54; II Cor. 5:1-7). As Isaiah well prophesied; "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa. 33:24).

The body yet remains under the curse; it has not yet been adopted, even though it has been bought: ". . . even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). That redemption has not yet been realized! We still remain in a tabernacle of clay (Job 4:19; II Pet. 1:13, 14). It is aptly called "our earthly house of this tabernacle" (II Cor. 5:1), and we ought not to expect perfection for it yet. It is not yet exempt from the curse, though **it shall be in the "regeneration"**. It seems clear to me that even an elementary understanding of these facts will assist in delivering one from those false notions concerning health and prosperity which are not only entertained by some, but which are zealously propagated to the hurt of many.

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## PUNGENT POINTS

by

Bro. Richard Ebler

Merrillville, Indiana

The all-sufficiency of the cross of Christ is seen in the fulness of its ministry. It provides the believer with a firm foundation and starting point by providing legal justification and right standing with God (Gal. 2:16). It also is the means of purifying the heart by faith (Acts 15:9) which makes one eager to live so as to please God. But the cross does not stop there! The cross also offers instruction for daily living.

For example, the cross teaches us to suffer patiently and quietly under abuses from others, committing ourselves to God, and praying for our

(Please turn to page 8)

## THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS OF FAITH

By Richard Ebler

‘For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:5-10).

Paul is contrasting the righteousness of faith with the righteousness of the law. In the latter, man attempts to gain righteousness before God (legal acceptance by God) on the basis of his own works of righteousness which are done in obedience to the commandments. This is approaching God on the basis of law. It is old-covenant religion which was tried by the Israelites beginning at Mount Sinai and was found to be a defective system due to the sinfulness of man’s nature (Romans 8:3). To approach God on this basis would require 100% obedience at all times in one’s own strength. It would include obedience to the tenth commandment of not coveting, which is a heart-matter. Since this is impossible, it becomes apparent that we need a Savior.

The key words in verse five are “doeth” (a word appropriate for a system of works) and “shall live.” The word “live” here means to be proclaimed righteous and unworthy of death, to live forever, accepted of God.

Paul next describes the righteousness which is of faith. He takes up the subject of the gospel. Here Christ is the “doer,” not us. The gospel tells us that Christ came from heaven to earth to die for our sins on the cross. Then he descended into the deep (abyss, Hades, abode of disembodied spirits) during the three days of his burial (I Peter 3:19 4:6) and finally rose again for our justification. Christ has done all of this on his own without any help from us. It was all necessary for our salvation. It has **already** been **done**. It was done perfectly. All that is left for us to do is to believe it. When we really believe it, we are declared righteous by God.

Paul alludes to Deuteronomy 30:11-14 and applies the language of Scripture principles from the law to the gospel. In that chapter God was telling the Israelites that his law had been very plainly revealed to them. It was not hidden nor far off. It was not hidden in heaven as a thing not yet revealed, nor was it far across the sea. But it was “very nigh” unto them, in their “mouth,” and in their “heart.” In short, the law was plainly revealed to them and they knew it, although they may have preferred to forget it. But ignorance was no excuse. They were being exhorted to be good stewards of their knowledge by obeying the law. God was telling them that (1.) the law **HAD ALREADY BEEN REVEALED**

to them (2.) the revelation was **PLAIN** (3.) all that was left for them to do was simply to obey.

In these three principles the gospel is similar to the law. Christ’s work in His incarnation, death, burial, descent into Hades, and resurrection, has **ALREADY BEEN ACCOMPLISHED**, so that nothing can be added to it. It is a perfect, complete work. The revelation of it is **PLAIN AND SIMPLE**. All that is left is the believing of it. Then the believer is counted righteous by God.

When Paul uses the expression “Say not in thine heart” (v. 6) he is telling us that the questions proposed are foolish and unnecessary questions. The questions **assume** that Christ has **not** yet come down from heaven to die for our sins, and needs the help of some man to get this work accomplished. But the work has **already** been accomplished and plainly reported to us. Our part is to believe and be saved.

It is no longer a matter of doing with the hands, but of believing with the heart and confessing with the mouth. We are told to “confess with thy mouth Jesus as **Lord**” (ASV), for He is the Lord who descended from heaven, the seat of all authority. We therefore own Him as our personal Lord. We also believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead. The promise is that we shall be saved.

## THE NEGLECTED THIRD OF THE GOSPEL

By Richard Ebler

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you . . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (I Cor. 15:1-4).

In the text which we have quoted above, there is given a precise definition of the gospel as the proclamation of three grand facts: Christ’s **death** for our sins, his **burial**, and his **resurrection**, according to the scriptures.

We live in a day when all three of these grand truths are largely neglected in many religious bodies. They are viewed as too elementary to dwell upon at any length. The major emphasis of the preaching becomes something else, such as speaking in tongues or soul-winning. But these truths ought to never become dry and stale to us. They ought to be treasured, pondered, and preached repeatedly in order that rich nourishment might be derived from them. Is not this why Christ instituted the frequent taking of the Lord’s Table? He knew what needed to be emphasized repeatedly. He knew man’s tendency to stray away from the major things and to exalt secondary matters as though they were primary.

These three truths may appear to be very simple on the surface, but they are very profound and nourishing when they are mediated upon and treasured in the heart. All other truths are related either directly or indirectly to these three grand truths.

Of these three truths, the one that is probably neglected the most is the burial of Christ. Yet it is a vital link between the other two major branches, and it is worthy of our attention.

A few observations are in order:

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219 W. 76TH, AVE  
MERRILLVILLE, IN 46410

1. Christ's burial established the fact that he was dead. People are not buried until it is certain that they are dead. Pilate inquired diligently to see if Christ were really dead and found it to be so (Mark 15:44, 45). Christ's death was earlier than that of the thieves, and this provoked serious inquiry to establish the fact. He was officially pronounced dead by expert executioners. His body was slowly and deliberately prepared for burial. He stayed buried for three days. There was no doubt that he was dead.

On the surface this may seem like an obvious and unnecessary point, but it is an extremely important point. If Christ did not actually die, then our sins are not paid for and our salvation is void.

2. Christ's burial is not only related to his death, but it is also important to his resurrection. The burial itself provided a very necessary dark background to highlight the majesty and drama and reality of his resurrection. The burial helped to manifest the glory of his rising from the dead. It helped to make the point absolutely clear.

3. Christ's burial gave his religious enemies one last chance to show their opposition. They sealed the tomb and set a watch of soldiers. They recalled Christ's prediction of his rising from the dead. They claimed that they were afraid lest his disciples come and steal the body and thereby convince the people of his resurrection. However, in view of Christ's many miracles which he performed while he was yet alive, it seems likely that his enemies suspected that there was a very real possibility that he actually **would** be able to carry out his own prediction of actually rising from the dead.

They probably had **more** insight at this point than Christ's own disciples! We do **not** read of **them** talking of the possibility of his resurrection! The disciples had trouble believing it when it had **already happened!**

The opposition of the enemy in trying to keep Christ buried also served to highlight the glory of His triumph over the grave. They were allowed to do their worst: to kill the body, bury it, seal it, guard it. What more could they do? Yet it was all in vain. Christ rose from the dead against all opposition.

4. It behooved him to be thus identified with the human race in being buried. "It behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren," we read in Hebrews 2:17. The sons of men for centuries had been dying and receiving burial. We read of the burials of Abraham, Joseph, Moses,

David, and Elisha. It was needful that Christ be buried also.

5. Christ's burial allowed his triumph to begin at the lowest point possible. In fact, while his body was buried, his spirit went to Hades, the abode of disembodied spirits. In doing this he identified with mankind by going to the depths of the standard route that all men must go after death (I Peter 3:18-22; 4:5-7). His triumphant resurrection began at that lowest point.

6. It was necessary for Christ to go to the grave in order to conquer the grave. He could not conquer the grave until he had allowed himself to be put into it as a temporary victim.

7. Christ's burial has an important lesson for us sinners, in that not only did Christ identify himself with man in his humility, but God identified him with man in God's own view of things. When God viewed Christ on the cross and in the grave, He actually saw us as sinners being represented in the person of Christ. Christ died in our place. God punished us at the cross with the full penalty. Then He took the destroyed sinner (you and me in the person of Christ), and he buried the carcass of that sinner "out of his sight" (Gen. 23:4). Dead bodies are buried to get the corruption out of sight and out of mind. Now the "sinner-me" is dead and buried out of God's sight and out of God's mind. God once looked on Christ and saw me. Now God can look on me and see Christ!

The poet said "Living He loved me. Dying He saved me. Buried He carried my sins far away!" When Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress* saw the cross, his heavy burden of sin fell off his back and rolled into the tomb and it was seen no more! From God's viewpoint all our sin was buried with Christ and He sees it no more!

Praise God for the burial of Christ!

### Pungent Points

(From page 6)

enemies (I Peter 2:19-24). It teaches us to be generous in our giving, as Jesus was at the cross when he gave himself (II Cor. 8:1-9). It teaches us the secret of inward joy, power, and life; namely, inner death (II Cor. 4:10, 11). Finally, it teaches us to look beyond the sufferings of this life to the joy set before us (Heb. 12:1, 2). This is what Jesus himself did at the cross.

Some people find an **excuse** (not a reason) for their total rejection of Christianity by pointing at the religious hypocrites and saying, "All religious people are a bunch of phonies." We sadly admit that there are many false churches which bear the name of Christ but do not live the religion of Christ. We are commanded to avoid all such and to neither support them with our time, energy, nor money (II Tim. 3:1-5). **BUT THE EXISTENCE OF A COUNTERFEIT ONLY PROVES THE EXISTENCE (SOMEWHERE) OF THE REAL THING.** There could be no counterfeit dollars if there were no such thing as real dollars. There could be no counterfeit churches if there were no real genuine churches somewhere. Happy is the man whose love for God is so strong that he persists in hunting for the real thing and knows when he has found it.