

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

CHRIST'S DESIRE FOR OBSCURITY

By Bro. Richard Ebler

"And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee,) arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; . . . And he charged them straitly that no man should know it (Mark 5:41-43).

"And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man" (Mark 7:35, 36).

"After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town" (Mark 8:25, 26).

"And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead" (Mark 9:9).

"He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing" (Luke 9:20, 21).

These passages quoted above are very seldom preached, and yet they do present a vital aspect of Christ's person and work while here on earth. Since it is written that "all scripture is profitable" (II Tim. 3:16), we are sure that needful instruction is buried in these passages. May we not uncover this by grace?

Our blessed Lord no doubt had more than one reason for doing what he did on these occasions. Here are a few:

1. After healing a leper in Mark 1:40-45, Jesus commanded him to "say nothing to any man," yet the healed man could not restrain his newly-found enthusiasm and he began to "blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to him from every quarter." Here it seems apparent that the masses were actually hindering the work of Christ in the city Jesus had intended to enter. Perhaps there was some private tutoring that Jesus wanted to do in that city. But now he was thronged by a multitude that was eager to see a miracle performed on some one's flesh. Although miracles were intended to confirm His doctrine, yet there was the ever-present danger that they would overshadow and replace his teaching ministry. On one occasion He had to get away from the masses by retreating into a house where he could be alone with his disciples for intensive instruction in private (Mark 7:17; Mark 9:30, 31). This seemed to be his preference and his priority.

(Please turn to page 2)

In This Issue . . .

The Cross of Christ - page 3

What God Hath Joined Together, by Richard Ebler - page 7

The Word of Truth

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Christ's Desire For Obscurity

(From page 1)

2. Jesus had to get away from the masses in order to have private communion with God. Being around the multitudes had a way of sapping his spiritual strength. He knew that many were merely following him for the loaves of bread that he could produce (John 2:23-25), because he "knew what was in man." He was known to sigh deeply in his spirit and groan because of the unbelief that he was surrounded with. At one point we read that he sent away the people, "and when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray" (Mark 6:45, 46). He had to care for his own spiritual health in order to function at top efficiency in the future.

3. Jesus often withdrew from his enemies, the religious leaders of the day, in order to do his work as secretly as possible. "Then the Pharisees went out, and held a counsel against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence; and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; and charged them that they should not make him known" (Matt. 12:14-16).

Jesus was arousing the envy of the religious leaders by his popular miracles. Their hatred was inflamed against him as they beheld each work of compassion that he did. Therefore he sought obscurity in order to preserve his life until the proper time had arrived for him to be killed (at the hour of the killing of the passover lamb). He was not supposed to die until his hour had come. In the meantime he labored quietly to finish the work that the Father gave Him to do. He was wise as a serpent which stays hidden as much as possible, knowing that he was in a good position to get "stepped on," so to speak.

4. There were times when the few who had real faith had to fight their way past the multitudes in order to get to Jesus. Such was the case of the woman with an issue of blood, Zaccheus, the man let down through the roof by his friends, etc.

5. There is a passage quoted from Isaiah 42:1-4 which is given in Matthew 12:14-21 as a reason why Jesus commanded a healed multitude to **not**

make him known. If Jesus had no other motive for seeking obscurity, this **one** would have been sufficient: to fulfill the Messianic prophecy alluded to in Isaiah. The prophecies were merely a revelation of God's predestinating will for the future. Christ came to fulfill God's will. "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). Repeatedly it is said that Christ did things that the scripture might be fulfilled.

In this passage it is said that the Messiah would not strive nor cry, neither would his voice be heard in the streets. He would not be a clamorous, ostentatious, political rabble-rouser, noted for violent inflammatory speeches to whip up the multitudes to follow him. He did not depend on mass support for his power, as politicians do. Although the Jews looked for a Messiah to set up an earthly kingdom, yet Christ's kingdom was not of this world. Christ was gentle, meek, and humble. He would not blow a trumpet to call attention to his miracles in order to get fame and glory and praise from men. He would have compassion and immediately heal all who came to him for mercy, even if in public; but he would prefer to work in secret as much as possible.

Another expression in this passage tells us that the Messiah would not break a bruised reed nor quench a smoking flax. When Jesus healed some one, he often forgave their sin and sent them away as a new enthusiastic convert, so to speak. However, this new convert was like a sheep among wolves. He was likely to be persecuted by Christ's bitter enemies. For example, the blind man that was healed in the ninth chapter of John ended up being cast out of the synagogue. This was no doubt hard to bear. It might have quenched the smoking flax of his faith. Jesus was very tender about this matter and sought the man out diligently and perfected his faith. His warnings to his newly-healed "converts" was partly for their own protection. If they kept a low profile and told no man, then it would save them from unnecessary persecution while they were young and tender.

A third expression in this part of Isaiah tells us that "he shall show judgment unto the **Gentiles**" and "in his name shall the **Gentiles** trust." This is best expounded by a close look at Romans the eleventh chapter. There we learn that the Jewish nation had always been largely addicted to unbelief and idolatry in spite of the abundance of revelation that God had favored them with. Therefore, in the sovereign purpose of God they were appointed to be cut off after their rejection of the Messiah in order that God might turn to the **Gentiles** and give them the gospel. This theme is very dominant in many of the parables of our Lord and it certainly influenced much of what he said and did. He knew that in spite of His miracles the vast majority of the Jews would unfaithfully reject and crucify him. "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they **could not believe**, because that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that

they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:37-41). Therefore, it appears that this hard reality may have been one factor which influenced Jesus to attempt to cast a veil of secrecy over many of his miracles by charging that they tell no man.

There is **only one exception** where Jesus said, "Go home to thy friends and **tell them** how great things the Lord hath done for thee" (Mark 5:18-20). This was when Jesus was in a predominantly Gentile territory, Gadara, east of Jordan, a region noted for swine farming (not a favorite Jewish pastime).

If it still seems strange to my readers that Jesus might veil his miraculous **works** to some degree for this reason, let us remember that Jesus **did** indeed veil his **words** to the multitudes by putting them into parables so that they could **not** be easily understood by those who were disinterested and had no heart for the truth.

On this point let us consider carefully the following passages which I will quote without explanation: "and the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore I speak unto them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:10-15). "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them" (Matt. 13:34, 35). "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (Mark 4:11, 12).

It should be noted that the text in Matthew stresses the guilt and responsibility of the Jews while the text in Mark stresses the sovereignty of God in the matter.

It should also be noted that Jesus **did** extend mercy to the multitudes in that he spoke to them at all. The parables were enough bait to lure those few who may have been truly hungry for truth.

Truth is like Jacob's ladder. The bottom rung **alone** will **not** get you to heaven, but it **will** get you to the second rung, and the second rung will get you to the third, etc. This explains why the works of the natural creation are enough to con-

(Please turn to page 16)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" — Gal. 6:14

It is the glory of the Lord to take that which is a reproach unto men; that which is obnoxious and a shame, and turn it into glory and a source of blessing and thanksgiving! Thus is it said of God's transcendent wisdom: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (I Cor. 1:27-28).

I suppose that this truth is nowhere evidenced as potently as it is in the cross of Christ Jesus our Lord. Here we have an instrument of cruelty; an instrument of suffering; an instrument of punishment; an instrument of shame and reproach. It was the vilest form of capital punishment; and even the law of Moses declared "cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree" (Duet. 21:23; Gal. 3:13).

Sundry Comments About The Cross

Firstly, it is just that — a cross; a combination of horizontal and vertical beams. Herein is a parable of truth: **the cross speaks loudly of the horizontal dimension of earth, and the vertical dimension of heaven.** Firstly, concerning the earth, the cross speaks of the hardness of earth — a hardness that was evidenced in crucifying the Lord of glory; insensitive, untouched! His death is unparalleled as a manifestation of the deadness of the heart of man. Beneath the cross of the holy Son of God, men "cast lots upon His vesture" (Matt. 27:35). It is further written that some "sitting down **watched Him there**" (Matt. 27:36); what apathy, what indifference! What a destitution of heart into which the race of man had been cast by sin. Secondly, a true manifestation of the absolute need for a propitiatory death of a ratifying victim chosen of God Himself! Some, not content to be passive about this distinctive death, mocked Him in His sacrifice by crying; "He saved others, himself he cannot save" (Matt. 27:42). Thirdly, here we find a revelation of the blindness of mankind; the Creator of life before them, and they crucified Him! There is no blindness so acute, so permeating, as that which is confronted with the Author and Sustainer of life, and yet in aggressive and zealous action nails Him to a tree. The cross of Christ reveals the pride of earth — a pride that attempted to cast away from itself the bands and fetters which the presence of the Son of God cast about it (Psa. 2). Foolish though it was, vain though it proved — yet it was a sin of the greatest magnitude. Fourthly, the cross revealed the great energy that the earth employs in its fight against the Living God. **The greater the revelation of God, the greater the opposition to Him that the earth exhibited.** Fifthly, the cross reveals

the vanity of earthly religion. When confronted with the Christ of God, the highest religion upon the face of the earth — yea, the only revealed religion — after it had been perverted by man, took the Prince of life and slew Him, hanging Him upon a tree. **Crucified in the name of religion** — in the name of revealed religion; in the name of the God of heaven! Sixthly, the cross of Christ manifests to us the vanity of earthly government; Pontius Pilate and Herod — rulers — conspired together against the Lord's Christ (Acts 4:27). Let no praise go to the governments of men — however noteworthy they may appear. **A stigma was placed upon the political organizations of men at the cross** — their potential opposition to God was there unveiled! Seventhly, the cross of Christ demonstrates the vanity of earthly unity. There, at the cross of Christ, "the people", the religious leaders, and the political leaders united against the Lord Jesus Christ — and yet, their efforts were thoroughly dispelled by the resurrection of our Lord from among the dead! **Earthly unity can never be successful when it is a conspiracy against the Lord and His Christ!** The only effectual unity is that of the Lord Jesus and His people! All other unities are destined to destruction.

Eighthly, the cross points out the vanity of earthly purpose; "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us" (Psa. 2:3). That purpose, however, was vain, and did not realize fulfillment. What an exposé of the purposes of men the cross proved to be! You see, there was, indeed, a horizontal beam to the cross; one that exposed the nature of earth in contradistinction to God.

But there was also a revelation of heaven — a vertical beam — in the cross of Christ. Firstly, it spoke of the great patience of God to bear man's sin — particularly the sin exhibited in the slaying of His only begotten Son! Secondly, it reveals the great love of God to submit His Son to such suffering and ignominy in the behalf of rebels. It is written that Christ "was **delivered** for our offences" (Rom. 4:25); yea, that the Father Himself "**delivered Him up** for us all" (Rom. 8:32), God "not sparing" His only begotten Son — what a revelation of the great love of God! Thirdly, we have a revelation of the obedience of Christ to submit to such. As it is written; "He became **obedient** unto death, **even** the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). The Lord Jesus laid down His life a ransom for many because He had received that "commandment" of the Father (Jno. 10:18). Fourthly, we have in the cross a manifestation of God's hatred for sin. As it is written; "for the wrath of God is revealed against **all** ungodliness and unrighteousness of **men** . . ." (Rom. 1:16-18). Such an extreme sacrifice was occasioned not only by the Father's love for the world, but also by His perfect hatred of sin! How can we who have been joined to the Lord live any longer in sin once this truth is seen! Fifthly, the cross speaks of the righteous demands of God; there had to be a sacrifice because of man's sin! No amount of reasoning, rhetoric, and other appeals could move the Father! Christ "**must suffer**", by His own admission

(Matt. 16:21; 17:12; Mk. 8:31; 9:12; Lk. 9:22; 17:25). Time would fail us to speak of the many other things revealed at the cross; The zeal of the Lord for righteousness, The immutability of God's purpose, The absolute righteousness of the Law, The need for atonement before God, The need to remove sin from the very presence of God, The legal acceptability of a substitute before the Almighty, and the willingness of the Lord to pledge Himself over a Sacrifice. The cross of Christ, as is clearly seen, therefore, is a point of **revelation**, of illumination — where the eyes of the understanding may be opened. Let us avail ourselves of that ministry of the cross.

Jesus And The Cross

It is a fact that our Lord Jesus Christ — the "Prince of the kings of the earth" was associated — and is irrevocably associated — with the cross! The depth of humility that is to be seen here is more than natural man can comprehend. To assume such a burden our Lord had to "make Himself of no reputation" and take "upon Himself the form of a servant" and be made "in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7-8). The extreme gulf between our Lord's station before coming to earth and His station while upon earth can only be perceived to any appreciable degree by faith — for it absolutely transcends man's intellectual capacity!

The cross is associated with the Lord Jesus! That is a marvelous thing; a revelation of what condescension was necessitated by our salvation! It is written, "And He bearing **HIS** cross went forth into a place called the place of the skull" (Jno. 19:16-17). Again, this cross is called "the cross of **Jesus**" (Jno. 19:25). "The cross of **Christ**" is also a frequent and familiar appellation (I Cor. 1:17; Gal. 6:12; Phil. 3:18). It is not that no other man ever died on a cross; but it is that **the Son of God gave meaning to the cross**; it was the Son of God that sanctified the cross, not the cross that sanctified the Son!

The cross is elsewhere called a "tree": "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a **tree**" (Acts 5:30); "And we are witnesses of all things which He did. . . Whom they slew and hanged on a **tree**" (Acts 10:39); "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the **tree** . . ." (Acts 13:29); "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the **tree** . . ." (I Pet. 2:24). It is called a tree because it denoted a cursing of God, as written in the Law (Duet. 21:23). Here, at the cross, was a vivid picture of cursing; of rejection — cursing by God, rejection by man! Suspended between heaven and earth, our Lord tread the winepress of the wrath of God alone. God forsaken — man rejected! A dreadful day was that for Christ Jesus, a blessed day for us, for therein was our salvation secured, the wrath of God appeased, and the head of the Serpent bruised!

The Proclamation Of The Cross

The cross of Christ is the subject of Gospel preaching; "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us

which are saved it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18); ". . . it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). It is "foolishness" to those that perish because it speaks to them of defeat, not of victory. They see the contempt of the cross, but not the sanctifying death of the Lord Jesus! They hear of the cross, but not the Christ of the cross! It is foolishness because the earth cannot conceive of power and the reconciliation of man flowing from such a contemptuous thing as the cross. But those that are saved behold the cross in truth: they see there the power of God manifested because it speaks of the remission of their sins, and the righteousness of God. The cross of Christ declares a God that is both "Just and the Justifier of him that believeth" (Rom. 3:26). **The proclamation of the laying down of Christ's life — when believed — enables the heart to take up life!** Believing with the heart that Christ died for our sins brings a spiritual resurrection! Let not the death of Christ be despised — there is a transcendent power in its proclamation. It is written — let none deny it — that the preaching of the cross is "the power of God" to those that believe! There is regenerative power in this message! The believing soul awakens, as it were, from its slumber of death when the Gospel sound pierces the air!

The cross of Christ is preached every time one is baptized into Christ; "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). The cross of Christ is also declared when we gather about the table of the Lord; "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come" (I Cor. 11:23-26). We also preach the cross of Christ when we mortify our members that are upon the earth "And whosoever doth not bear his CROSS, and come after Me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). Behold, therefore, the absolute centrality of the cross of Christ; it is the center of the Gospel proclamation, the center of initial obedience to Christ, the center of continued remembrance of Christ, and the center of discipleship itself.

The cross of Christ speaks of the God-centeredness of the Kingdom of heaven; of the absence of self-centeredness! The heart that embraces the cross, denies the flesh. Those that believe the preaching of the cross of Christ are not reluctant to follow Him in laying aside self and conforming to the will of God the Father! The Lord Jesus denied His impulses to withdraw from the cross, submitting Himself to the will of God. "Enduring the cross," He "despised the shame" (Heb. 12:2). Now, that sets before us the very nature of the Kingdom of God! I see at once in the cross of Christ that the will of God is supreme, and cry out; "What wilt Thou have me to do"! Once seen, I too become involved in the cross of Christ; "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ. by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14)!

The Cross of Christ —

The Center of Controversy

"Then is the offence of the cross ceased", declared the Apostle in asserting the obvious result of preaching a system of law for approval before God. **The truth is that involvement with the cross of Christ brings offence!** But it is the "offence of the cross", not the offence of our persons! The issue with the world is "to live or not to live"; it is whether man is pre-eminent or not! **The cross of Christ declares that man is not pre-eminent, that God and His will are pre-eminent; that even the spotless Son of God submitted to that immutable will!** This sets man forth as a subject, not a king; as a servant, not a master; as a creation, not a creator! That is offensive to the flesh! Offensive because it sounds the death toll for pride, for ego, for the centrality of mankind! To avoid this, one only needs to preach a Gospel that is cross-less; one that does not demand the mortification of the flesh; one that does not declare that the death of Christ was necessitated because of man's rebellion against the Living God!

There is such a thing as suffering persecution for the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:12); it is something that literally myriads avoid, conceiving of all sorts of religious substitutes for the cross of Christ. But none of them are effectual; none of them work redemption or placate the Living God. Such men are really the "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18-19); enemies because they have set themselves against God's mode of redemption. They have, in fact, graphically demonstrated that carnal men object to the fact that One had to die because they are so vile! They find it loathesome to admit this — but that is only because their minds are blinded by the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4). However, when we see our sin as it is, the cross is no longer an offence! Praise the Lord! Those that refuse, therefore, to die to sin and self are "THE ENEMIES" of the cross of Christ. They have set themselves against God, against Christ, and against the Gospel. They have thrust from themselves the very means of salvation. We may find kind words to describe such individuals, seeking to be thoughtful and polite — but when all is said and done, they are actually the enemies of the cross of Christ. If they do not repent of this evil, they shall have "their part" in the lake of fire with the devil and the false prophet. Make no mistake about this, the Lord does not take kindly to men repudiating His salvation. Their sophisticated wisdom cannot and does not erase the fact that they are in opposition to the Lord of lords and King of kings. The enemies of the cross of Christ refuse to die to sin; they refuse to mortify their members which are upon the earth (Col. 3:5ff); they desire to make a fair show in the flesh (Gal. 6:12).

The Apostle's Doctrine Centers

About The Cross

The fundamental points of the Apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42) found their center in the blessed cross of Christ. It was there that spiritual bearings were gathered, as it were, and where the true

nature of the Kingdom of God and the work of God was apprehended. Let us here briefly examine but three points by way of illustration.

1. The reconciliation of Jew and Gentile: "And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body **BY THE CROSS**, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:16). While this particular point is largely ignored by the contemporary church, it was of fundamental value to those that were commissioned directly by the Lord of glory! It was referred to as the "mystery of Christ" which "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." That mystery is declared in these words; "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel" (Eph. 3:4-6). The Gentiles, that "wild" olive branch, have been grafted into the natural olive tree "contrary to nature" — and that is a source of great marvel to those that have perceived it (Rom. 11:17-25). Where is this truth seen? It is at the cross of Christ. It was there that the Father made them both — Jew and Gentile — one body. **There all men were reduced to a common denominator: sinners!** No distinction of men is perceived at the cross. There we behold that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and that **very breaking down of distinction becomes the source and means of unity.** The common admission of sinnerhood opens the way for the **common** acceptance of a **common** Savior, thus making believers "one"! There was only one body on the cross (I Pet. 2:24), and only one body resulted from the effectuality of that sacrifice upon Golgotha!

2. There has been peace made through the blood of His cross: "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in heaven, or things on earth" (Col. 1:20). The magnitude of this Divine purpose staggers the imagination of man. Reconciling **ALL THINGS** unto Himself! Things on earth! Things in heaven! What mind dares to declare that it has comprehended such largeness — and yet, this is something of what was accomplished in the cross of Christ! A reconciliation so large in scope, so unfathomable in magnitude that we can only cry out, "Help thou my unbelief"! Who would dare to demean the cross of Christ in view of this proclamation of peace! The cross is so effectual that every soul throughout the length and breadth of this world, of all times, if embracing the blood of the cross will find a sure peace with God! That peace is evidenced in the fact that even we that were "sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (Col. 1:21-22). Satan was a rebel — he cannot boast of a peace like this! The angels that lost their first estate cannot boast of a peace of this order! No! There has been no peace made for them — but the enemies upon the earth! There has been peace made for them through "the blood of the cross"! Praise the Lord for that!

3. The handwriting of ordinances that was against us have been nailed to the cross; "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,

which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, **nailing it to HIS cross**" (Col. 2:14). There is no more "handwriting" of ordinances — with pen and ink, upon parchment, or even upon stone! The writing has now been made more durable: ". . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart" (II Cor. 3:3). The point here is this: that **when the commandments of God had to be registered upon our conscience by outside media, they were against us!** That is precisely why external assistance was required. However, the death of the Lord Jesus brought a certain end to that economy! When Jesus died, our enmity against God died. He then implanted His nature within us, giving us a delightful proclivity to His law. It was, in fact, written upon our hearts. **Now the law does not speak of what we have not done, but of what we desire to do!** It does not speak condemningly of what we have done, but it confirms that we are now disinclined from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind!

If Jesus did die upon the cross — **and He did** — then the handwritten ordinances which were against us have been taken out of the way! Now His commandments are no longer grievous (I Jno. 5:3). You see, **the fact that they had to be handwritten revealed that they were against my nature!** Against me because I did not desire to retain them in my heart! But the cross of Christ took away that form of religion — the religion of constraint by fear and threat! The cross of Christ brought an abrupt end to "manual" religion — to religion by coercion — to religion by threat — to religion involving tediousness! This was accomplished by the removal of sin, which did, in fact, clear the way for the Lord to change our natures. It provided a **legal basis** for the Lord God to have **immediate dealings with me. The ancient law addressed man as an alien; as a transgressor; as one whose heart was bent away from God. But when Jesus took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross, the tone of God's speech to man changed; "All things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . . ."** (II Cor. 5:18-19). Why the alteration in speech? Why is man now addressed as one that is reconciled instead of an alien? Because that which was against us, which was contrary to us, has been taken out of the way, being nailed to His cross. The **source** of our condemnation has been removed! The accusing finger of the Law has been broken, praise the Lord! Our sins have been cancelled, thus eliminating the effectiveness of the condemnation of the law! **Handwritten ordinances no longer stand as a testimony to our failures, but the cross declares plainly the accomplishments of Christ in our behalf!**

You see, the cross of Christ is absolutely central! The question is whether or not you are being identified with it! Have you been baptized into His death? Do you remember His death about His table regularly? Are you taking up your cross daily and following Him? Forget not that He took up His cross for you; you do well to take up your cross for Him!

WHAT GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER

By Bro. Richard Ebler

"What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6).

The text we have quoted above has to do with the subject of marriage as an institution which God Himself originated. When God has joined man and woman together in holy matrimony, it is a solemn matter. It should be entered into as a permanent arrangement "till death do us part."

We can take this principle of truth and apply it to many other areas where God has joined two things together inseparably. Here are a few:

1. FAITH AND WORKS

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26).

God has joined these two things together, and yet there are multitudes who are trying to put them asunder. These are they who say they have faith, but they have no works to show for it. Faith without works is dead faith. Works without faith are dead works (Heb. 6:1). We might succeed in dividing a loaf of bread in half and finding both halves useful afterwards. But when men try to divide faith and works, they end up with something phony, no matter which half they choose. "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

2. CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

"And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. 2:19).

This text speaks of false teachers who are not cleaving unto Christ the Lord, the Head of the church, "with purpose of heart" (Acts 11:23). They would beguile the church into worshipping angels. But if a church is led astray from the spiritual presence of Christ into idolatry, then the result is an apostasy and a false church.

3. REPENTANCE AND FAITH

"Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

Where true repentance and true faith exist, they are always found together. If man tries to separate them, he ends up with something phony, no matter which half he chooses. There must be a simultaneous turning from sin and turning to God through faith in Christ.

4. HOLY SPIRIT AND TRUTH

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

There are many today who claim they have the Holy Spirit, but they are not teaching the truth. Will the Holy Spirit put his blessing on a lie?

5. BAPTISM AND REPENTANCE UNTO THE REMISSION OF SINS

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

BAPTISM AND FAITH

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16).

BAPTISM AND PUTTING ON CHRIST

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

BAPTISM AND NEWNESS OF LIFE

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

BAPTISM AND BEING SAVED

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" (I Pet. 3:21).

Baptism by immersion in water is the God-ordained work of faith whereby we approach God by putting on Christ unto remission of sins and newness of life. What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

6. PREDESTINATION AND HOLINESS

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son . . ." (Rom. 8:29). "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy . . ." (Eph. 1:4). "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, Holy and beloved . . ." (Col. 3:12). ". . . God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (II Thes. 2:13).

There are some who stress their own claim on being predestinated but are not very interested in holiness. They ignore the above Scriptures which teach that holiness is the unailing consequence of predestination and is the absolutely essential evidence of it. Without holiness we **cannot** be **assured** of our predestination or election. It would be presumptuous to claim it while willfully remaining disobedient. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

We know that God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are clearly taught in the Scripture. Both are true. Neither should be minimized at the expense of the other.

7. SIN AND SUFFERING

". . . the way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 13:15).

Those who sin will not get by with it. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Satan tries to convince men that sin is good for them and that maybe they will get by. He even goes further and convinces them that sin is necessary in order to make an adequate amount of money in this world. But the justice of God will inevitably prevail; if not in this life, then certainly in the one to come. There may be pleasure in sin **for a season**, but the bitter consequences of sin always follow. It is the path to destruction.

8. GODLY LIVING AND SUFFERING

"Yea and all that **will** live godly in Christ Jesus **shall** suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12).

This kind of suffering can be done joyfully with a good conscience and with faith in an eternal reward. After being beaten, James and John departed from the council of the Pharisees with great joy that they had been counted worthy by God of the privilege of suffering for Jesus. Those

who have a Christianity without a cross to carry, do not have the real thing.

9. LABOR AND REWARD

"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love . . ." (Heb. 6:10). ". . . then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27).

Men have promoted the doctrine that all rewards in heaven will be the same for everybody. It will be a sort of democracy in the clouds. Everyone will be equal. The Bible, however, teaches of labouring for a "full reward," and an "abundant entrance," and a "better resurrection." Even as some wicked men shall receive "greater damnation," so it is that some godly men will receive more reward than others. Christ even pointed this out in his parables.

Some others teach that there are no rewards at all in the life after death. They teach soul-sleeping or annihilation of the soul after death. They discourage the idea of working for a reward as being both untrue and selfish. But here again we rely on Scripture. The Bible clearly teaches us to lay up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20). From this we can conclude that rewards in the next life are both real and legitimate.

10. SUFFERING WITH CHRIST AND REIGNING WITH HIM

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (II Tim. 2:12).

There is nothing that men shun so quickly as suffering. There is nothing that men strive for so much as reigning, which includes power, wealth, and fame. Christ asks us to be willing to suffer for him in this life so that we may reign with him in the world to come. These two are inseparably connected. We are exalted through humbling ourselves. The way up is down. This was especially true in the case of Jesus himself who humbled himself to the obedience of death and was highly exalted by God to a throne and a name above every name. (Phil. 2:5-11)

Man would like to skip the suffering and the way of humble obedience, but God has joined these two things together. Let not man put them asunder.

11. FAITH AND OTHERS—WORLDLINESS

"By faith (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:9, 10).

True faith will turn a person into a pilgrim. He will catch a glimpse of glory with the eye of faith and will long for "that better country," even heaven itself. He will sense that this world is not his home nor his final resting place. He will live for the next life with eternity in view. His values will be the opposite of the world's values. He will consider the truth of God to be supremely important and earthly matters to be secondary. He will be heavenly-minded. The "world to come" will be often in his thoughts. He will see this fleeting life as a mere short preparation for the ages to come in which his ultimate desires will be fulfilled in uninhibited worship, study, and service of the infinite God. He will maintain this vision by faith and continue to press for this goal. This is characteristic of true faith. What God has joined to-

gether, let not man put asunder.

12. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION AND STRIVING FOR IT

"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1:29).

"I Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

There is a current trend of religious thought which teaches us to expect progress in the faith to be automatic and effortless. "Just relax and let the Lord do it all" seems to be the gist of this doctrine. There is seemingly no need for personal effort and discipline, nor any need for regular Bible study and prayer and church attendance. They hammer on grace and deprecate all sorts of works completely, not discerning how the two are properly related. This tends to disarm people and to produce wicked and slothful servants. The point is that God works **in and through** our own faculties of will, emotion, and intellect as **we thrust ourselves** into the work of his kingdom, under His leading and empowerment.

13. LOVING GOD AND LOVING THE BRETHREN

". . . everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (I John 5:1).

He that begat the brethren unto spiritual and eternal life is none other than God. Everyone that loves God will love those that are born of God. This is because they have partaken of God's nature. Those who say they love God but love not the brethren have deceived themselves by trying to put asunder what God has inseparably joined together. As we have pointed out, when these are split apart, both halves, become phony and we end up loving neither God nor the brethren.

14. LOVING GOD AND KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments . . ." (I John 5:3).

Here is an objective test as to whether we love God or not. Do we love God's commandments and have a goodly measure of success in keeping them? Are they indeed **not** grievous to us? Then we love God.

15. GRACE AND GLORY

". . . the Lord will give grace and glory . . ." (Psa. 84:11).

There are three kingdoms, so to speak: the kingdom of nature, of grace, and of glory. We are born into the natural order first; then we are born into the spiritual order of grace when we believe on Christ and obey him; and finally, we are born into the eternal order of glory at the resurrection when our bodies shall be glorified. Now we must not attempt to go immediately from nature to glory without passing through the sphere of grace. God has joined grace and glory together. One is not to be had without the other. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

16. LORD AND SAVIOR

". . . our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ . . ." (II Peter 1:11, 2:20).

Men must take Christ for all that he is or not at all. Those who try to divide these things asunder have been known to say, "You have made Christ your Saviour, now make him your Lord." But un-

less he is our Lord, He is not our Saviour. The proper Scriptural order is: "**Lord and Saviour**" not "**Saviour and Lord**," as we commonly hear today. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

There are some things that God has put asunder which Satan tries to join together by deluding men's minds so that they cannot see the great gulf that divides them.

1. THE SPHERES OF TORMENT AND BLISS IN THE NEXT LIFE

"And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke 16:26).

Many teach that there is no eternal punishment or perhaps that there is a second chance after death. We do not find this in Scripture. Instead we find great exhortations to holiness in view of the final nature of things in the life to come.

2. LAW VERSUS GRACE AS TWO DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO GOD

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4).

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6).

Man by nature is very sinful, yet he tends to give himself a very high rating. He tends to think that he is fully able in himself to come unto God on the basis of his own works of righteousness. The law, if properly perceived as spiritual, will be a schoolmaster to teach man his utter depravity of heart so as to drive man to feel his need of a Saviour and flee to Him as the only hope of salvation. This is the only true way of acceptance with God. By faith we claim the perfect righteousness of God in Christ as our own. We are saved by faith in Christ's blood shed for our sins.

These two ways of approaching God, by law and by grace, are antithetical to one another. There is a great gulf between them and they cannot be mixed. Satan has tried to put them together by setting up churches which teach a system of law and call it "grace." However, this distinction should be kept clear in the minds of the people.

3. THE TWO "I's" OF ROMANS SEVEN

"For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:15-17).

The fact is that every true Christian has two natures, an old man and a new man. These two natures struggle against each other inwardly. Whichever one is fed the most will win the battle. Satan wants us to think that we **only** have the **old** nature; then he will drive us to despair. If he can get us to think that we **only** have the **new** nature, then he can get us to flirt with temptations presumptuously and become an easy prey for sin. The fact is that we **do** have **two** natures and we must continually disown the old one and

(Please turn to page 16)

THE PROFUNDITY OF GOD

One of the great errors of contemporary religion is that of attempting to make God simple, plain, and understandable to the carnal mind. God is not simple, plain, or understandable — He is profound; in the fullest, most comprehensive, and most minute sense of the word. **There is nothing common about the Lord God of Glory** — He is, in fact, God! Perhaps one of the reasons why true worship is at such a premium today is this — that people have not viewed the Living God as profound. He is all too often viewed in terms of manhood — likened to men "which shall die" (Isa. 51:12), and diagnosed as One that is altogether like the finite: a mistake made in the past by Jew and Gentile alike. However, it is one thing for the Gentile nations which "knew not God" to liken Him to men, or for the Jews who lived under the sin-illuminating ministry of the Law to do likewise — but for the church of the Living God to be guilty of such a matter is beyond all excuse; it simply cannot be condoned or overlooked.

One of the chief marks of the New Covenant is this: "And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother saying, Know the Lord; for **they shall all know Me**, from the least to the greatest" (Heb. 8:11). And yet, there is this incessant observation that is made by the spiritual, that the professed church does not really know the Lord. They speak of Him in earthly terms, and make it quite clear that His Divine Nature, His incomprehensible wisdom, power, and works, are thoroughly beyond their recognition. If there is one thing on the other hand that the real redeemed know, it is this: "How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33). This is, of course, the one inescapable fact that makes worship and adoration such a reality in the humble and contrite heart. **We simply cannot worship someone that can be comprehended and understood.** To know God is not to plumb the depths of His infinity — it is, rather, to have personal concourse with Him; to be "acquainted", as it were, with Him (Job 22:21). One facet of that acquaintance is the understanding that the Lord God cannot be understood!

The word "deep" is often associated with our Father in Heaven in order to more thoroughly acquaint us with His transcendent nature. The word connotes something that lies beyond the analysis of man; something that may only be perceived in even the smallest measure by **revelation**. For instance, the Psalmist declared: "Thy judgements are a great deep" (Psa. 36:6). By this he meant to confess that the reasons that lay behind the Lord's judgements could not be discerned by the writer. This was due, largely, to at least two unquestionable realities: (1. That the judgements of God are themselves transcendent to the earthly order; i.e., they are not of this realm. Like His thoughts and ways, they are as "high as the heavens are above the earth" (Isa. 55:9). (2. Mankind is not endowed with faculties capable of digesting the Lord's motives, ways, and judgements — at least not in this life. He (man) is surrounded by transient things, a transient realm, a transient nature, and transient values. He has been thrust, by providence, into a realm that does not call so

much for discerning "why" the Lord does things, as believing that He does, in fact, do things according to the "counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). **Those that are not "spiritual" will find that their ignorance of God's profundity becomes the basis for them stumbling at His will.** Because they cannot discern why He moves in this way or that, they choose to walk in their own willful ways, even though they are contrary to the revealed will of God. Few men there are, indeed, that will humbly bow to the will and commandments of the Lord, even though they see no reason for doing so other than His commandment! Let it be understood once and for all that the Lord's commandments are not to be analyzed — they are to be obeyed; they are not to be diagnosed, they are to be embraced. **The best reason for believing that they are absolutely right is that God is God, and man is man — there need be no other reason: none at all!**

Again, it is written of the Lord: "Thy thoughts are **very deep**" (Psa. 92:5). Let it be clearly perceived at this point that the Lord's thoughts are viewed as "deep" not merely because of man's inability to digest them thoroughly, but because of the **inherent** nature of His thoughts — they are actually deep, whether there is man or not! Angels, which are "greater in wisdom and might" than men (II Pet. 2:11) find them equally difficult, even "desiring" to look into and investigate certain matters pertaining to redemption (I Pet. 1:12). **God is not to be viewed as profound because man is not profound — He is not, that is, profound by comparison! He is profound by nature!** He was profound and unsearchable before there ever was a man, or an angel, or a seraphim or cherubim! At no point is it proper to view the Creator as "**great**" simply because the creature is not great: that is not a proper approach to the matter! In glory, when our creaturehood is swallowed up of life, God shall be no less God, no less profound, no less incomprehensible, than He is now. In fact, His incomprehensibility will probably be multiplied, since in this world we have only had a **facet** of His greatest revealed to us. His thoughts will be "deep" to us **then** also!

When it is written, "Thy thoughts are very deep", it is meant that **they actually have no terminal point**: there is no juncture where His thoughts may be said to be thoroughly diagnosed or comprehended. Lovers of the Word of God continue to marvel at this trait in His Word. The Scriptures continue to unfold in ever new senses — something like the universe and its multitudinous galaxies. As astronomers have not been able to find an ending point to the universe, so students of the Scriptures have been unable to find an ending point to any **one** of God's many revealed thoughts. For the astronomer, a larger telescope only produces a universe more vast, more unending, more marvelous. Likewise, for the redeemed, a more refined and spiritual mind only brings them into a larger room, a more acute awareness of the vastly incomprehensible nature of every word of God — "The thoughts are very deep"! **These many thoughts of the Lord cannot be made basically simple: they may be expounded, applied, and delineated in various fashions — but**

they will remain deep and profound! That is because (without being too redundant on this point) they are **inherently** deep, not deep by comparison. God's thoughts, to put it another way, are not said to be deep because man is shallow! They are **not** profound because they are **not** perceived! They are deep because they are the thoughts of God! If for instance, the multiplication table was presented to a four year old which was capable of expressing himself, he might say that it was profound: not because "two times two is four" is particularly characterized by depth, but because his mind was not equal to the absorption of the tables. But this is not so in the Kingdom of God. Take an apostle, for example: one that was a prince in the kingdom of God, which had received an abundance of revelation — yea, revelations (II Cor. 12:1-7). After having been "moved" by the Holy Spirit, having the word of God revealed to him, together with that Divine reasoning which characterizes the Lord of glory alone, this apostle declared; "How **unsearchable** are Thy judgements and Thy ways **past finding out**" (Rom. 11:33).

"The Spirit Searcheth . . .

The Deep Things Of God"

It is written; "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit **searcheth** all things, yea the **deep things** of God" (I Cor. 2:10). This is not to be construed as a mere commentary upon the motions of the Holy Spirit of God; it has direct bearing on the appropriation of Divine truths by mortal men. It is assumed that those to whom these things are brought or revealed are not only interested in them, but that they are actually engaged in an earnest quest for the "things of the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:14). They have, in fact, that very attitude which is described by the wise man of old: "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Prov. 23:23). It is particularly with these people in mind that it is said the "Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God"; i.e., He is the One that assists them in their digging for the truth.

Now, it should at once be observed that it is the "deep things of God" that the Spirit searches out — i.e., the things that lie beyond the scope of Adamic ability; that cannot be discovered by mere human wisdom, however diligent and pressing it may be. It is not the function of the Spirit, for instance, to search out the mundane and earthy, but the "**deep things of God.**" Men are not to suppose, for instance, that the Spirit of God is given to them to assist in understanding politics, wage-earning, marriage, dating, job hunting, people's personalities, etc. The Christian community, I fear, is all too often engaged in such futile quests for understanding. To the Spirit, we ought to say, these things are not relevant matters for "searching". Much of the truth that pertains to these matters, if not all of it, has been revealed in the Scriptures. It is **not** the understanding of terrestrial matters that is so vital, but the proper perspective of them and the meticulous obedience in those areas which the Lord demands.

"The deep things of God", on the other hand, are matters which concern the Lord God Himself; His redemption, salvation, purpose, will, character, etc. It is in fact, an expansion of the answer to

Moses' request to "show me Thy glory" (Ex. 33:18). To know and understand the Lord — that is the fundamental thing (Jer. 9:23), and the Holy Spirit of God searches out for man those things which pertain directly to that "fundamental thing." It is axiomatic that those who truly know and understand the Lord to their measure will live and move and have their being in an acceptable manner to the God with Whom they have to do.

The Spirit of God "searches" the deep things of God NOT because they are deep to Him, but because they are deep to us. They are deep and profound from our vantage point, not from the Divine vantage point. By "searching", the Lord does not mean a "looking for", as though they were difficult for the Spirit to apprehend. He explains what He means in the first part of the verse; "But God hath REVEALED them to us by His Spirit" (I Cor. 2:10a). That revelation, or opening up of the things of God, then, is the "searching" of the Spirit of God. That is, the things of God are brought to bear upon our very persons; filtered through our understanding, and perceived by our spirits. **It is called a "searching" because it is actually sifted through our intellect and heart.** Having been "joined to the Lord", we have been constituted "one spirit" with Him (I Cor. 6:17). In that capacity, there is such a close union between the saint and the Spirit of God that what the saint is said to do, the Holy Spirit is said to do — "search". However, so that no pride might be gendered within the heart of the believer, the searching is credited to the Holy Spirit of God, not to man; and it is called a "revelation", not the answer of an earnest quest. It is, in other words, possible for even godly men to "search diligently", and yet fail to find particulars. As it is written; "Of which salvation the prophets have **inquired and searched diligently . . .** unto whom it was revealed, that **not unto themselves**, but unto us they did minister the things . . ." (I Pet. 1:10-12). In their case, therefore, it was not the will of the Lord that they know these particular "deep things of God" — that revelation was reserved for a later time. Now, however, in Christ Jesus, the Spirit is searching out those "deep things of God", revealing the glorious mysteries of redemption to the Lord's children — working through their very spirits which have been united by grace to the Lord of glory.

Suffice it to say at this point that the things of God are so deep, so profound — so beyond the understanding, comprehension, or even the imagination of mortals — that **only the Holy Spirit of God can register them to any appreciable degree upon the understanding of men.** This is not, I reiterate, because they are profound by comparison; or that it takes a revelation to reveal them because man is so unlearned. It is, rather, because they are inherently profound, deep, and transcendent. How we must learn to think of the matters of our salvation as "the deep things of God"! There is altogether too much shallowness associated with redemption in many people's minds. They think of deep things in dissassociation from salvation — but we are taught in Scripture to associate our salvation, redemption, and justification with profundity; with the necessity for revelation, with "deep things", "searching", and the Spirit of God!

THE WEIGHT OF CARE

"Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" — II Cor. 11:28

There is not a mature mortal that is not familiar with care — with the weight of concern that often comes upon the heart. Some of these "cares" are legitimate, and some are not. In one place it is written; "Be careful for **nothing . . .**" (Phil. 4:6-7); and again, ". . . the cares of this world **choke the Word . . .**" (Mk. 4:19). But it is not that sort of care which presently concerns the writer — although it is to be admitted that much needs to be said on that subject. It is the weight of an ordinate **spiritual** care that now comes to my mind — **a care that is not centered in self**, but in other subjects of the Kingdom of God. I believe that it is noteworthy that this distinction is **not** appreciated by many otherwise knowledgeable believers, and thus the need to bring it to our attention.

It is a central truth in the Kingdom of God that **no single person is himself the hub of God's working**; our attention must never be focused exclusively upon ourselves, for we, at best, are but **subjects** of the Lord whose interest is to be centered in Him and His Kingdom. We have, in fact, abandoned ourselves as central in our lives, confessing that in this world we are "strangers and pilgrims" not only to the world, but to all of the basic postulates proffered by the world — including those that concern the supposed pre-eminence of self. In this concern, care becomes particularly unlawful when it thrusts us into unbelief concerning the Lord's promise to be our "Helper" (Heb. 13:5-6).

Again, it is not proper for us to become **distraught** over anything — i.e., to permit our spirits to become distorted, our understanding and perception perverted due to care: "Be careful for nothing . . ." Before matters reach that proportion, we are to "let" our "request be made known unto God" with "thanksgiving" (Phil. 4:6-7). But, these things are commonly known among the members of the household of faith; they are not strange words.

There is, however, a certain "care" which is not altogether common among the saints; a care that centers about other constituents of the Kingdom — not a critical care, but a heart care: such as the one mentioned by Paul in our text. It was something that came upon him "daily" — "The care of **all** of the churches." He was concerned after a godly sort with their status in the Kingdom; with their progress in grace; with their growth in knowledge. He simply could not divorce himself from those members of the household whose paths had, by providence, been crossed with his. The fact of an impending apostasy and falling away; the presence of false teachers; the predominate spread of heresies; the embracement of false and devastating concepts; the persecutions of believers — these all were a point of concern or "care" to the Apostle. This was something that was "within"; i.e., not readily discernible. But, it was a **weight** nevertheless. Those that have experienced this particular weight of care find it increasingly refreshing to think of the time when it shall be no more. O, we wash our face so as to

appear **not** to men to be concerned — but we are! There are members of our families; members of our fellowships; fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, etc., which bring great and weighty seasons of concern for us. How blessed to contemplate when we shall never again shoulder such burdens. Often does the tear flow, the eyes moisten, the heart stoop with heaviness because of what we see, what we hear, what we know! Because we often are unable to see the sort of progress which we know ought to be present, or because we are aware of some incessant struggles and handicaps under which some of the saints have been forced to operate. We cannot shrug them off; we cannot divorce ourselves from them — they are legitimate and come under the category of the “fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10). When we read that “Jesus wept” (Jno. 11:35), we are not reading of theatrics, but of a very real weight of sorrow. When we read of Paul sorrowing grievously because Ephaphroditus almost expired of illness in his very presence, we are not reading of some sort of secret sin, but of a large heart — one that felt the weight of care! O, it is not as easily cast off as some would have you believe; and that is because it is a **fellowship** with Christ not a sin; an **insight** into things not a transgression; an involvement in the Lord’s enterprise not a preoccupation with self interests.

Heavy hearts, sleepless nights, tear-stained pillows, and weariness of soul — these are the price of a heart knit to Jesus! No longer can you sweep the state of men under the proverbial rug and shrug your shoulders in disinterest! When you are alone, when you are in public, there are certain sights, sounds, and memories which stir within the soul weighty cares concerning those cast within the sphere of your influence, O, you do not despair; your tears are not because of defeat, but because somehow, through your wonderful union with the Lord Jesus Christ, you are made to feel the way the Savior did when He walked among men, wept over Jerusalem, and groaned in His spirit when he saw men as sheep wandering without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36; 23:37). **The infirmity of human understanding is here demonstrated to be extremely weighty.** So helpless we feel in many situations — not the helplessness of unbelief — that is transgression — but the helplessness which sees but cannot change. It is written in one place that our Lord “could do there **no mighty works**” (speaking of His home town) because of their unbelief (Mark 6:5-6). **Only the heart that is knit to Jesus knows something of the weight of that inhibition.** And, if the mighty Son of God was so inhibited, what can be said of we that are but servants of His Majesty? Do you think for one moment that this was received with glad-heartedness or ignorance by He who could weep at a tomb, and cry out for followers on the “day of the great feast” (Jno. 7:37); He whose heart went after a rich young ruler that went his own willful way because he was not willing to sell all that he had and give to the poor at the word of Jesus (Matt. 10:20-23). I tell you, that these matters were hard to be borne; they were weights — the weight of care of which I speak.

The fact of the matter is that **we ought to**

treasure such weights of care; not because they are precious of themselves, but because they are the result of our being “joined to the Lord” (I Cor. 6:17). We would not feel this way if it were not for Lord of glory, for our interest in His Kingdom. The very fact that the Lord Jesus has permitted this fellowship is a treasure. O, it does not mean that the situation will be instantly resolved — but then again, it may! What it does mean is that the Lord has given us to see this case as He sees it — and that is a **stewardship** which is not to be lightly esteemed. Let the people of God not shun this fellowship or recoil from it. Satan will tempt you to despise such suffering, and to make such concessions and compromises as will reduce the friction of soul that is experienced in this “suffering”; but see to it that you do not yield to him. There is a “more exceeding weight of glory” that awaits those that do not remove their shoulders from this kingdom burden (II Cor. 4:17). Recoiling from this sorrow of soul constitutes a denial of the Lord Jesus. Thus is it written; “**If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us**” (II Tim. 2:12). Strengthen, then, those feeble hands and weak knees! Do not be weary in well doing, and if you suffer for righteousness sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad! When the illumination that you have in Christ Jesus causes you to see and perceive things which become weighty to the soul, do not draw back from it; there is a large reward for bearing burdens such as these!

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THE POWER OF WORDS

Words—they are powerful weapons in the arsenal of the Spirit of God, **and** in the weaponry of the “prince of the power of the air”! It is true that we live in a time when the church, as a whole, has underestimated the power of words. She has depended upon appearance, methods and techniques, authority, etc. to implement what she supposes is the purpose of message of the Gospel. In certain circles, there is even an outright despising of words. We hear such favorite aphorisms as, “I would rather see a sermon than hear one”. I have personally spoken with “preachers” that confessed they spent the least amount of their time in sermon preparation. There are very few “preachers”, in fact, that actually consider the **verbal** ministration of the Word of God as primary and fundamental. It is generally considered a side line—something that is more or less an adjunct to administrative activity.

These views, however, are wrong; they do not at all reflect the mind of Christ. Furthermore, Satan has taken an advantage of this spiritual ignorance to exploit this area of words. Countless minds are swayed away from the truth, hearts snatched from the covert of God’s word by false and deceitful words. Now, we are warned in Scripture of Satan’s activity in sphere. Let us hear the word of the Lord. “For they are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good **WORDS** are fair **SPEECHES** deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:18); “For when they speak great swelling **WORDS** of vanity, they allure through wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them that live in

error" (II Pet. 2:18); "Let no man deceive you with vain WORDS; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6); "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing WORDS" (Col. 2:4); "And through covetousness shall they with feigned WORDS make merchandise of you. . . ." (II Pet. 2:3); "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling WORDS, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16). It certainly ought to be clear from these texts that while some religious sophists despise words and their power; Satan and his princes are utilizing their influence to the fullest extent that God's will permits. Those that had once "clean escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" are actually lured into a state of alienation from the Living God by words — powerful words, crafty words, feigned words, swelling words of vanity, vain words, enticing words, good words, fair speeches! Those that once were partaking freely of the tree of life are often seen to tumble into the bottomless pit because of false and deceptive words! Church of God! See to it that you do not despise the power of words! Think not that because the religious opportunists of the day have reduced words to a secondary force that they have delivered a truthful concept or representation of the issue! Truth is to be SPOKEN! It is to be iterated, declared, made known through the mouth! That is God's appointed means! **No amount of administration however efficient will ever conduct one into the kingdom of God—but words will** (I Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16).

We believers are also admonished concerning truthful words; "Hold fast the form of SOUND WORDS" (II Tim. 1:13). By this exhortation, the Apostle means to persuade Timothy to couch expressions of truth in "words that the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13). **It is the church's responsibility to preserve words that form proper containers for concepts of truth. Reality cannot be properly conveyed to the hearts of men without an exact and precise container — and that container is "sound words."** One of the unspeakable great legacies left us by our Lord Jesus was His WORDS: "remember the words of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:35). His words were "pleasant" (Psa. 15:26), "acceptable" (Eccl. 12:10), "comfortable" (Zech. 1:13), "gracious" (Lk. 4:22), and "spirit and life" (Jno. 6:63). His words were more than rhetorical—more than merely weighty; they were ultimate and final truth! **They were the exact expression of the mind of God.** They reduced reality to verbal expression—precise concepts were addressed to the mind in His words! Thus did the Lord Jesus declare; "Whosoever shall be ashamed of ME AND OF MY WORDS in this adulterous and sinful generation of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mk. 8:38). In a day filled with scoffing and ridicule for the words of Christ, the people of God must stand up—in the very MIDST of this sinful and adulterous generation—and side with the words of Christ. When the world cries against them, we must cry for

them; identify with them; claim union with them, and forthrightly refuse to become dis-associated from them in even the smallest or most minute sense. To fail to do this is to thrust ourselves into a state of rejection by the Lord of glory! Our Lord has told us that "heaven and earth shall pass away, but MY WORDS shall not pass away" (Mk. 13:31). He further proclaimed; "He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not MY WORDS, hath one that judgeth him: **the word** that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jno. 12:47-48); and again, "If a man love Me, he will keep MY WORDS . . . He that loveth me not keepeth not MY SAYINGS . . ." (Jno. 14:23-24); and again, "If ye abide in Me, and MY WORDS abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (Jno. 15:7).

In view of these things, several observations become apparent. 1. What is said to us, whether it be the truth or a lie, is weighty; it does have an impact upon our spirits, either for good or for evil. 2. It is vitally important that the truth be spoken as well as believed ("We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak"—(II Cor. 4:13). 3. Our apprehension of reality—the truth—will be brought to our hearts by the medium of words. **Improper words bring improper concepts, "sound words" bring sound and proper concepts.** 4. Satan will particularly attempt to make us ashamed of Christ's words—to cause us to cease to speak them, cease to embrace them, cease to openly be identified with them. 5. The judgement day will find the words of Christ a very central point in determining (or revealing) the eternal destiny of all men! ! ! 6. In view of these proclamations, God's people ought to be known as **the people of the book**—individuals that are addicted to the Scriptures, who speak in the language of the Scriptures and have had their concepts of spiritual things strictly formed by them the Scriptures. 7. **There are no spiritual concepts that have not been formed by Scriptural words; words from the Bible!** The aim of the saints of the Most High God is not to simply speak every man in his own language and way attempting to convey the truths of God. There is a unanimity in their expressions because they have embraced "the words of the Lord Jesus." 8. Whatever we may think of false doctrine, evil words, or unsound words and fair speeches, they are effectual. They do deceive the hearts of the simple, cause men to turn away their ears from the truth, and make merchandise of the people of God. Therefore the mouths of false speakers are to be "stopped", not tolerated (Tit. 1:11). Yea, we are to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (I Tim. 1:3). While many are teaching that "doctrine makes little difference, and that we ought to be tolerant of those with differing views, the Lord asserts that certain ones are not to be permitted to speak: their mouths are to be stopped. And if they are not stopped, then they are not to have a hearing among the faithful!

Hear, then, these words concerning the speech of the faithful. The exhortations underscore for us the importance and weight of proper words.

The fact that you may or may not see results has no bearing whatsoever upon these proclamations. You must take by faith what is said, and conform to it implicitly. **“Speak thou the things that become the sound doctrine”** (Tit. 2:1); **“These things speak and exhort”** (Tit. 2:15); **“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”** (I Pet. 4:11); **“We speak before God in Christ”** (II Cor. 12:19); **“But as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ”** (II Cor. 2:17); **“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”** (Matt. 12:37).

We have, then, two main areas of truth concerning words. Firstly, they are the God appointed means of conveying the truth, and therefore must be spoken **before** Him, properly and precisely. Secondly, they form the basis for our own judgement—and that is sufficient reason for us to be concerned about them. This is not an area for generality, or for being slipshod. Our language ought not be permeated with slang, or with the expressions of oath: at least, not if we shall be justified or condemned by our words. May you personally take heed unto these words.

THE PROPHETS

It is generally acknowledged among the illuminated that the prophets of God constitute one of the most neglected and unappreciated segments of the Kingdom of God. And yet, much is made of the Holy prophets in the Scriptures. The church, for instance, is built upon the foundation of the apostles and **PROPHETS**” (Eph. 2:20). Our Lord Jesus also declared that **“all of the holy prophets”** would be seen in the **“kingdom”** (Luke 13:28). The prophets are an honorable society, and to be held in very high esteem by the entire camp of believers! It was the **“prophets”** that the Lord **“expounded”** to Cleopas and his partner on the road to Emmaeus (Luke 24:27). Further, in time past **“God spake unto the fathers by the prophets”** (Heb. 1:1), thus emphasizing their central role in the scheme of redemption. You will also recall that the injunction of the Lord was **“do my prophets no harm”** (Psa. 105:15), and the ignorance of that warning brought the **“blood of all the prophets”** upon the generation of rejectors that lived in Christ’s earthly ministry (Luke 11:50).

The prophets are held forth to us as **“an example of suffering affliction, and of patience”** (Js. 5:10). Their message, truthful though it was, was greeted with stern faces, malicious hearts, and bloodthirsty retaliation. They were scoffed, rejected, and conspired against; thrown in dungeons, lion’s dens, and deep mire. They were smitten by heartless rulers and hunted like wild jackals. Yet, their message rang out above the monotonous sounds of earth’s rebels. Wherever sin was rampant, the strong and hearty voice of one of God’s prophets could be heard sounding as an oracle of God. The Lord refers to them as **“my servants, the prophets”** (Zech. 1:6; Jer. 26:5). He **“sent”** these servants (II Kgs. 17:13), **“speaking”** by them (II Kgs. 21:10), **“commanding”** by them (Ezra 9:11), and **“crying”** by them (Zech. 7:7). So

engrossed were the prophets in their message that they fervently desired to look beyond their day and see the day of Christ—which blessing they were **not** afforded (Lk. 10:24; Mt. 13:17).

The Lord also was diligent to fulfill the words of the prophets—and not a single one of them shall fall to the ground. **This world shall remain in tact, and the Lord of glory shall remain at the right hand of the Father until the “times of the restitution of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began”** (Acts 3:21). To the carnal mind it appears that many of their words have gone into the air—but they linger about us, only awaiting the will of the Lord to bring them to fulfillment. The prophets, do not forget, have spoken of such things as the restoration of Israel, the demise of earthly kingdoms, the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God, the destruction of the grave, the gathering of all nations unto the Lord, and the passing away of the heavens and the earth. These writings are filled with matters that apparently had no relevancy at all for their day—and yet those matters were highly relevant when grasped by faith. **Faith knows no seasons, no times, no periods!** It transcends all that is transitory and fleeting.

Think of the many things that are spoken of in connection with the prophets; things that show their centrality in the eternal purpose. While these things may seem small and trite, you must peer beneath what **appears** to be and behold how the prophets themselves were central — **everything else took meaning because of being associated with them.** We read, for instance, of **“The sons of the prophets”** (Kgs. 4:38); the **“words of the prophets”** (Jer. 23:26); **“the ministry of the prophets”** (Hos. 12:10); **“the mouth of the prophets”** (Zech. 8:9); the **“blood of the prophets”** (Matt. 23:30); **“the book of the prophets”** (Acts 7:42); **“the voice of the prophets”** Acts 13:27); **“the scriptures of the prophets”** (Rom. 16:26), and **“the Lord God of the holy prophets”** (Rev. 22:6). It is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to read of these things without being acutely impressed with the importance of the prophets to God Himself. He has unequivocally identified Himself with the **“holy prophets”** — no small blessing! He further speaks of **“all the prophets”**, bringing their entire number into a position of respect and honor (Acts 10:43; 3:24; Lk. 13:28).

When we hear of the prophets, several names come to our minds at once; Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc. But there are a host of individuals which we do not normally associate with the prophets — and yet they are specifically called prophets in the Word of God. In honor of them, permit me to name a few. Aaron (Ex. 7:1), Gad (I Sam. 22:5), Nathan (I Kgs. 1:32), Ahijah (I Kgs. 11:29), Jehu (I Kgs. 16:7), Shemaiah (II Chron. 12:5), Iddo (II Chron. 13:22), Eldad (Num. 11:27), Medad (Num. 11:27), Eliezer (II Chron. 20:37), sons of Asaph (I Chron. 25:2), sons of Jeduthun (I Chron. 25:3), Haggai (Ezra 5:1), Urijah (Jer. 26:20), Enoch (Jude 14), Oded (II Chron. 15:8), Samuel (II Chron. 35:18), Hananiah (Jer. 28:17), Baruch (Jer. 36:26), Habukkuk (Hab. 3:1), Jonah (Matt. 12:39), **The Lord Jesus Christ** (Matt. 21:11), Eliseus (Lk. 4:27), John the Bap-

tist (Lk. 7:28), Joel (Acts 2:16), Agabus (Acts 21:10), David (Acts 2:30), Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (II Kgs. 22:14), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), Anna (Lk. 2:36), the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9), Judas (not Iscariot) — Acts 15:32, Silas (Acts 15:32), Zachariah — father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:67). Would not the time fail to mention such notable prophets as Micaiah, Obediah, Zechariah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Micah, Nahum, Hosea, Malachi, Daniel, and Amos. Their ministries have sanctified those names and accrued for them an exceeding great reward in heaven. They had a message from God; they delivered it mightily. Some of them paid for it with their lives; most all of them paid the price of forfeiting popularity and appreciation. But their day is coming — a day when the assembled universe shall behold them congregated in the Kingdom of God. Let us stand in reverence and appreciation of all the holy prophets, and take full advantage of the books that they have left behind, which were given for our foundation and edification.

The Ministry of The Prophets

We are living in a day when there is an extraordinary number of men and women that claim to be prophets. They have messages, according to their own diagnosis, which are from God and are highly relevant to this present age. These prophets range all the way from the Jean Dixon breed to the charismatic denomination. The former brand boasts of about an eighty percent accuracy-level, while the latter have invented all sorts of modifying factors to explain the fact that their percentage of fulfillment is something less than one hundred percent. With one consent, all of these "prophets" apply their "ministry" to the foretelling of the future. That is pretty well the limitation of their concept of prophecy. It appears to this editor that we must first dispell that thorough misapprehension, for that limitation of prophecy is **not** scriptural concept.

Firstly, prophecy has, among other things, to do with right and wrong, not only future days and future ages. Is it not written; "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us **right things**, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). Secondly, a prophet was one that spoke the words of God — the past, present, or future, was not the point: rather, it was the **SOURCE** of the message that constituted one a prophet; "And I will raise up unto them a Prophet from among their brethren . . . and will **put my words in His mouth**; and He shall speak unto them **all that I shall command Him**." In connection with the same passage, which was declaring the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ's ministry, the necessity of obedience to the words of the prophet indicated that his message had a direct bearing upon the conduct of the people; it was not merely an informative work that he performed; "And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto **My words** which He shall speak in **My Name**, I will require it of him" (Duet. 18:18-19). There are, then, two important things to see at this point

with reference to the work of prophecy: Firstly, prophecy is **the declaring of the message of God**. Secondly, those that hear it are to bring their lives into strict comportment with that message. Whatever else prophecy may entail, those matters are imperative to ascertain!

The prophet was one that declared the mind and counsel of the Living God. He declared a message that could not be obtained or discerned by natural means. He forth-told the message of God, whether past, present, or future. While there is some-tantalizing to man's intellect about dealing exclusively with the future, the true prophet also deals with the present, interpreting its significance and hearkening men to obedience to the Lord. God's message does not **always** have to do with the future, and thus prophets do not always speak of what shall happen.

The prophets have a specific end or objective to their ministry; it is to speak unto "edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (I Cor. 11:14). That is the effectual result of prophesying — and where that is not accomplished, prophesying has not been done! Prophesying edifies; it builds up in the most holy faith, anchoring one more securely to that sure foundation which hath been laid (I Cor. 3:11). It is not the excitement of the intellect, or the arousing of fleshly curiosity and interest that is the objective of prophecy. Rather it works to cause one to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10). Prophesying also exhorts; it stimulates the people of God to further **involvement** in the grand eternal purpose of God. It stirs saints from beds of ease, and causes them to take up their beds and walk. It enables them to continue stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). It causes them to be of good courage, and not to be weary in well doing (Gal. 6:9; II Thess. 3:13). The work of prophecy also brings comfort to the believer, combining often encouragement and the alleviation of grief that often is the portion of the pilgrim. It assures the child of God of the presence of the Lord and the Divine help that has been pledged to him through the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:6). Where these three elements (edification, exhortation, and comfort) are **not** present, it is **not** likely that any prophesying has been done. For instance, if one claiming to be a prophet arose and told us that our president was to be assassinated next month, or that a bridge was going to crumble in Los Angeles, or that an earthquake was going to take place in Southern Rhodesia, and it did come to pass — so what! What difference would it make! If that message was not accompanied by some further word which spoke of obedience, or of repentance, etc., it would be nothing more than a relaying of **irrelevant** information. When the prophets of old prophesied, their message was accompanied with exhortations, or with a proclamation of the Lord's displeasure with sin, or pleasure with righteousness. **Their message was never divorced from conduct, or from the people's association with the Living God.** It was not separate from spirituality.

(To be continued next issue)

we are not to focus our attention inordinately upon the present, or permit circumstances to deplete our spiritual resources and energies. This world is not our home, but we are pilgrims and strangers here. The **awareness** of this truth has the capacity to rescue us from many a snare!

* * *

"About half of the 400,000 illegitimate babies born annually are to single teenagers aged 15 to 19. While the illegitimate rate for women from 25 to 44 has declined throughout the 70's, the rate for teenagers has remained stable. In New York City 61.5% of babies born to teenage mothers were illegitimate." — Good News, Jan., 1976.

We find these statistics appalling to our spirits, chiefly because they evidence the presence of a moral decline that is alarming, and which admits to no improvement whatsoever. It is with shame that the professed church must admit involvement in this moral decline, some of its own children having been participants. Fornication is a sin of the greatest magnitude (I Cor. 6:18-20), but when actual fruitage comes from it, the sin has been, so to speak, immortalized. Though repentance may be experienced, and even forgiveness from God, there is a certain sorrow and heartache that shall attend that transgressor for a lifetime, Truly, "the way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 13:15).

PUNGENT POINTS

True spirituality centers about the Lord of glory, not self. Those, for instance, that have come to the knowledge of the truth and have "clean escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," seek for the honor and glory of the Lord instead of self-glory. They are offended when the Lord's Name is reproached, not merely when their name is despised. Their quest is for glory, not for honor; for the approval of the Lord, not the approval of men. It seems apparent to me that as long as one insists upon centering his world about himself, he is, in fact, cut off from God. He has not acknowledged the Lord's pre-eminence, nor bowed the knee to Him. Much work, in such a case, must needs be done in the heart before any significant advancement toward heaven can be made. Furthermore, this is not so easily apprehended as we might be prone to imagine.

* * *

Wicked imaginations and assumptions are the opposite of discernment and judgement. "He that is spiritual **judgeth** all things", declares the Word (I Cor. 2:15). We take it, then, that those that insist upon imagining iniquity, or assuming evil, continually, are not spiritual, but carnal, and walk as men.

* * *

If the Lord has promised "He that goeth forth bearing precious seed shall doubtless come rejoicing, bringing **his** sheaves with him" (Psa. 126:6), then we may implicitly depend on that to happen — precisely and exactly as He has said. Our feeble hands can be strengthened by this truth, and the weak knees given spiritual rigidity. Our hearts may be made to rejoice in hope, for "our labor is **not in vain** in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). The world, the flesh, the devil, and spirits from the nether world may seek to convince us otherwise — but yet we shall cleave to this promise. Yea, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17-18).

* * *

Believers do not depend upon the **apparent** success of the **present** to give stimulus to joy! Their hope is in the future, not in the present. Their anchor is cast in glory, not in temporality. They **know** what the **future** holds — it is the present that is held in question ("Who knoweth what a day shall bring forth"). Faith gives us the capacity to rejoice in the Lord whether our lot be pleasant or otherwise; whether our present path be strewn with plenty or poverty, sorrow or gladness, ease or pain, comforts or threats! Therefore

Christ's Desire For Obscurity

(From page 3)

demn, but are not enough to save (Rom. 1:20). Those who lovingly follow the truth they have, will get more truth. They will be judged according to how well they lived up to the revelation that they were given.

What can we learn from these things? We can learn to highly treasure God's truth and live up to our privileges of revelation. We can learn to use discretion as to how we go about witnessing among our enemies in the world of daily work. We can be humbly thankful that we Gentiles have obtained mercy at all. We can learn to be humble and uncontentious, not seeking earthly fame. We can treasure in-depth instruction among a small number of true disciples as being preferable to shallow instruction among a shifting carnal multitude. We can culture and treasure private communion with God.

What God Hath Joined Together

(From page 9)

claim the new one, while feeding the new one on the pure truth of God (a rare commodity nowadays).

4. UNBELIEF AND BLESSING

"So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19).

The Israelites of old could not enter the promised land because of their unbelief. God had set a great gulf between unbelief and blessings. Let us also beware lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. All the curses of the Bible are promised to those in unbelief and all the blessings of the Bible are promised to those who keep the faith. Let us strive to keep the faith!!