

Life in the Son

A Journal of Grace and the In-Christ Message



Note - Mouse click on the **Yellow Highlight** in the Table of Contents to go to an Article page. When reading a multipage article, you may mouse click at the bottom of the page to go to the next page.

Life in the Son

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Christ in you, the Hope of Glory*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

BY WARREN LITZMAN3

THE REAL SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

BY DWIGHT DAVIS5

COMPARING PETER'S EARLY CHURCH & PAUL'S CHRISTIAN CHURCH

BY WARREN LITZMAN6

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE SON: FESTIVE FAMILY TIME

BY ALICE SCOTT-FERGUSON9

BOOK EXCERPT

.....11

THE PRODIGAL SON

BY DON BYRD13

THE ELDER SON

BY ED GARDNER16

THE PRODIGAL'S FATHER

BY ED GARDNER18

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

BY WARREN LITZMAN22

FROM OUR READERS

.....24

EPHESIANS 1:3-12

BY MIKE SCOTT25

VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN CEO'S

BY CLIFF GARDNER27

GRACE AND MERCY

BY DIETER SCHUETTE30

JAMES: THE HALF BROTHER OF JESUS

BY FRANK STIGALL31

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

BY DEXTER BYRD35

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This magazine bears a message of God's grace to hungry hearts. Its readers are world-wide—a very select God-led audience. We have but one mission, and that is to publish the ever-expanding truths of *Christ in you*. We welcome everyone to join our mail list and encourage those who, for any reason, do not care to continue to receive this magazine to notify us. All gifts are tax-deductible. From the first edition, we have published *Life in the Son* as a work of faith. Through the years our Father has provided for publication through many faithful and generous believers. We have never charged for subscriptions, nor do we beg for support. Those who are blessed by the message and want to contribute should send their gifts to:

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Life in the Son is a periodical sent to those who want to go on in Christ to the knowledge of His fullness in them. We have never beat around the bush, as the saying goes, when it comes to the power of this message—Christ in you. The magazine is dedicated to that number of believers who want the knowledge and truth of the final gospel brought by the Apostle Paul. Most in modern religion show little or no interest in God's plan for His children, even though we could be living in the closing moments of earthly time.

Because of the limited time before the coming of our Lord, we are committed to nothing but the gospel of grace, and the gospel of grace plus nothing. We affirm that this gospel is according to the faithful testimony of the Scriptures and concerns the objective, historical, finished and unrepeatable act of God on behalf of the human race in the life, death and resurrection of God's Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

LIS declares that the gospel Christ gave to Paul is the joyful proclamation that all who believe in Christ's life, death and resurrection on their behalf are forgiven, accepted of God and may have the assurance and security of eternal life. We also declare that all who belong to Christ can exhibit the Spirit of

Christ and live for God's glory and the well being of humanity.

Consequently *LIS* opposes every religious idea that corrupts Paul's gospel. This includes:

Sectarianism, which insists that salvation is found in believing the gospel plus something else.

Subjectivism, which confounds the gospel with some religious or personal experience.

Sentimentalism, which substitutes pious feelings about Jesus of Nazareth for faith in Jesus Christ, our life.

Techniqueism, which advocates that salvation is attained through the application of religious formulas or disciplines

Retranslationalism, which certain scholars and even ordinary believers use to get around the plainly written Word of God.

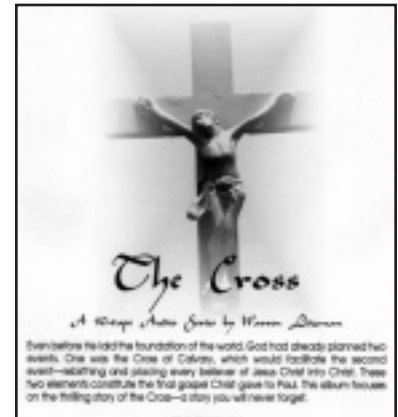
LIS's commitment is to teach nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the foundation stone of truth for today. We see the whole counsel of God in this truth. The recognition that Paul's gospel is the final gospel obliterates any and all ideas, whether from the past or into the future. This is not to say that there is much more to know, but if any knowing we come to is not based on Christ as the life of the believer, then it is not applicable as truth for today. ✚

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The Cross

By Warren Litzman

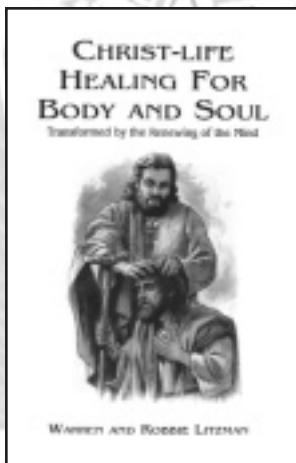
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The Real Spirit of Christmas

By Dwight Davis

One of the several Christmas stories that have really stood out to me that illustrated the real spirit of Christmas was this one, shared by one of my former pastors from a book he read. It was shared this way:

“A friend of mine named Paul received a new automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve, when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. ‘Is this your car, Mister?’ he asked.

“Paul nodded, ‘My brother gave it to me for Christmas.’ The boy was astounded. ‘You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn’t cost you nothing? Boy, I wish...’ He hesitated.”

“And Paul knew what he was going to wish. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels. ‘I wish,’ the boy went on, ‘that I could be a brother like that.’”

“Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, then impulsively he added, ‘Would you like to ride in my automobile?’”

“‘Oh yes, I’d love that.’”

“After a short ride, the urchin turned and, with his eyes aglow, said ‘Mister, would you mind driving me in front of my house?’”

“Paul smiled a little. He thought he knew what the lad wanted. He wanted to show his neighbors that he could ride home in a big automobile. But Paul was wrong again.”

“‘Will you stop where those steps are?’ the boy asked.”

“He ran up the steps. Then in a little while Paul heard him coming back, but he was not coming fast. He was carrying his little polio–crippled brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car.”

“‘There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn’t cost him a cent. And some day I’m gonna give you one just like it... then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I’ve been trying to tell you about.’”

“Paul got out and lifted the lad to the front seat of his car. The shinning eyed older brother climbed in beside him and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.”

“That Christmas Eve, Paul learned what Jesus meant when He said, “It is more blessed to give...”

“And the angel said unto them Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11).

This Christmas, I just wanted to informally share with you a few thoughts concerning the people and events surrounding the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1) Mary is a type of believer born again by the Word implanted within by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35, 38; 1 Peter 1:23). We are to allow the Holy Spirit to bring forth the Son from within us as in Mary (Luke 1:31; 2 Cor. 4:7, 10).

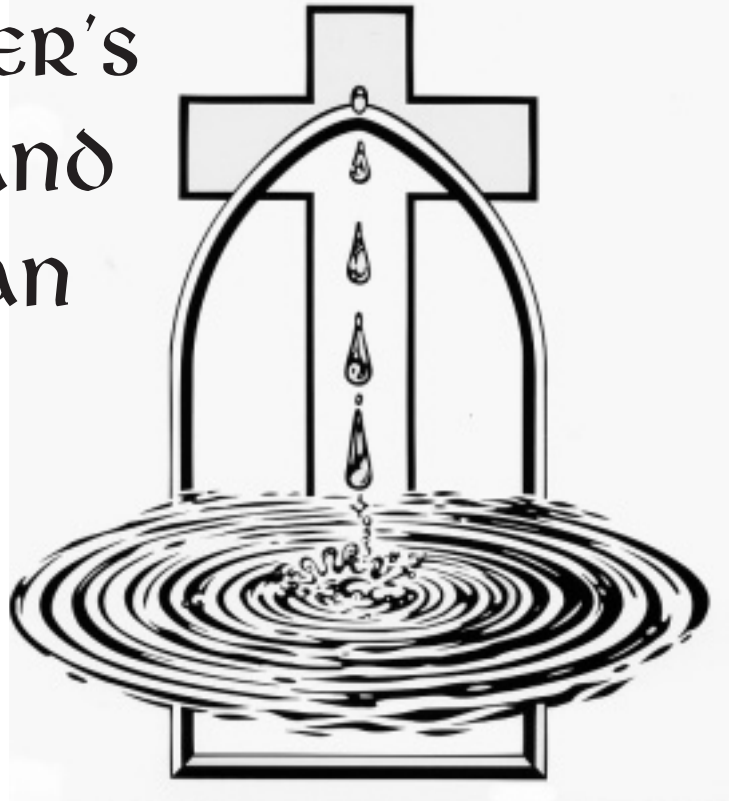
2) The shepherds were abiding in the field with their flock by night. With Bethlehem setting at 2,550 feet above sea level, on December 25 it was normally too cold for sheep to be out in open fields. Most likely Jesus was born around late September, probably on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26–32), and was the one who would prophetically fulfill that day as the final sin sacrifice and Savior of the world (Heb. 9:6–14; Luke 1:11; John 4:42).

3) When Jesus, the Word, was implanted into Mary by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35, 38); it most

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 19)

COMPARING PETER'S EARLY CHURCH AND PAUL'S CHRISTIAN CHURCH

By Warren Litzman



Most Bible students never think that there is any difference between believers in the New Testament. In fact in my day most teaching has been to move believers to be exactly like the believers in the early Church. It is necessary to state first that the so-called “early Church” was a Pentecostal church. This is obvious when you begin to read the first two chapters of Acts. It was a church that began on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came. The coming of the Holy Spirit was to form a new body of Christ on the earth. It would be like Jesus Himself had returned to earth. The Holy Spirit was on the mission to place Christ in every one of the 120 believers gathered in the Upper Room. And that is exactly what happened. Every one of those believers, the 120 first and later, the 3,000 converts, were all placed in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

You see, Christ Himself in His last message to His disciples had plainly said, *“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”* The day He mentions would be the forthcoming Day of Pentecost. It was God’s intention that every person saved in the New Testament would be put in Christ. This baptism into Christ would be the means of creating the new body of Christ on this earth. It would be the true and only Church. This had been in God’s intention from before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4).

Now the Father kept the word of Jesus that He spoke in John 14:20 and did exactly as Jesus had told His disciples. Every one of the people involved on the day of Pentecost, all 3,120 of them, were placed into Christ. Later on, another 5,000 were saved at the

Beautiful Gate and all of them were placed in Christ. The Holy Spirit had come and His great mission was to place every believing sinner in Christ. Being placed in Christ constituted membership in the body of Christ, the true Church on earth. Now there would be a new gospel, a new understanding of God’s plan and new group of people that never before had been on earth.

But amazingly as it must sound, the early Church never understood this. On that day, the Day of Pentecost, they were to come to the knowing that they were in Christ and Christ was in them, but sadly the outer events of the day, the mighty rushing wind, the cloven tongues of fire and the “drunkenness” in the Spirit, overwhelmed the knowledge that the Holy Spirit had baptized them into Christ. To this day, 2,004 years later, many in the institutional church still do not have the revelation from the Holy Spirit that Christ lives in them. Neither does, by my own conclusion, at least ninety percent of born-again believers living today.

In the days of the early Church the Lord had a remedy. Because all saved believers already had Christ in them, for there is no other kind of true salvation. What he would need was a new messenger to bring the final gospel to the Church. That messenger would be the Apostle Paul. There were

innumerable preachers and teachers available, but each of them had some kind of hang-up that prevented them from seeing what God was actually doing in the Church of that day. The unneeded baggage the early Church carried made the critical difference between the early Church and the new Christian Church established by Paul. Understanding these differences is necessary to the modern believer's growth.

The big church at Jerusalem believed that salvation came from the death of Jesus. They believed in the works of Jesus of Nazareth, practiced them and had great results. But the extra baggage they connected with these truths bedimmed the glory of what Christ had done. That extra baggage was the continued practices which were distinctively Jewish Old Testament and Judaistic. None of these things were to be carried beyond the cross and carrying them provoked a dual loyalty for those believers who hindered what God was doing in their lives. Keep in mind that the Christian Church did not start until the Lord raised up Paul, and that was some years away at Antioch, for it was at Antioch believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). This was some years after the first operation of the early Church. While the early Pentecostal Church did not have Paul's teaching, it did have the teaching of the Holy Spirit that was to specifically teach them that they were in Christ. They may not have known truths about the body of Christ or the full grace of God given to believing sinners, but they could have known about the Christ that was in them, a gift of God to all who believed, starting at the Day of Pentecost (John 14:20). They, as many today, believed that the coming of the Holy Spirit was the return of the Spirit of Christ.

It would be impossible to investigate every point regarding this subject, but I will consider at least four of the early Church doctrines and practices that kept it from being a Pauline Christian Church.

Their Christology

The Jerusalem Church made a basic distinction between the person of Christ before and after Pentecost. All of their background and training dealt with Jesus as the Messiah. They continued to accept only the Jesus of history. The new

Christianity, based on Gentiles—for Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles—had no background of the Messiah or any of the prophecies concerning the Messiah in their understanding. The early Church continued preaching Jesus of Nazareth as their fulfillment of prophecy and the new Christian Church proclaimed Jesus as Lord of the believer's life. Jesus of Nazareth had taught them a life of power that was contingent on their faith and obedience. This ignored the Christ that was in them and put the emphasis and burden of living godly lives on them and what they did, rather than on the Christ who lived in them.

This same practice continues today as believers attempt to become within themselves and through their own efforts what they already have and are by Christ in them. The simple issue came down to this—the early Church preached what Jesus could do if you had enough faith and the Christian Church preached you could do all things through the Christ in you. The years that went by from the Day of Pentecost to Paul lifted up Christ in a way that was different from the Christ Paul would preach (2 Cor. 5:16).

There were great and significant things done in the early Church up until the seventh chapter of Acts. This spelled out God's grace that would be for everyone regardless of what they believed (it was a day of signs, wonders and miracles). From that point onward it is evident that the Lord would bring the final gospel to Paul and grace would be the theme.

Even though both had the same Jesus, the life of the early Church believers would be greatly different from the life of a Christian. All because of how the person of Christ would be handled. Works, even supernatural works, would be the theme of the early Church, and grace would be the theme of Paul.

The Church

What was meant by the term *church* was different in the two groups. The early Church saw the church as a place, a building. This was because the early Church, like in Old Testament times, placed great emphasis on the Tabernacle in the wilderness and Solomon's Temple. Going to the building was an essential act of spirituality. Also, the church build-

ing was the place where much legal and secular state business was done. When Jesus ran the money changers out of the Temple, it was because they were desecrating the house of the Lord. To this day there is a mindset that going to the church building is the initial act of spirituality. This has become so deep a law within some believers that fellowship is broken with them if you don't go to a church building. Consequently, the building had become the place where one's personal religion or one's personal relationship with God was sanctioned or judged. It was at the building that confession was made, water baptism was affected, the teaching was presented and worship was promoted. The Apostle Paul would bring about a radical change in this understanding.

In grace, the Church is not a building, you can't go to church; you are the Church. The Church is a people. Christianity was destined, in this regard, to put the spiritual emphasis on what God does to humans rather than what others do or what you do. The revelation given to Paul concerned a body, the body of Christ, which Paul would call the Church. Certainly, if there is any merit to 1 Corinthians 12:13 where Paul says plainly that the Holy Spirit places the believing sinner into Christ's body, there could be no misunderstanding as to what that means.

The "in Christ" aspect is clearly the basic and continual motivation for the Christian that lives by the grace of God. The body of Christ, made up of many members, is the true Church. It may meet in a building, or a home, or a barn, or a tent, or on a street, or any where; it does not matter. The meeting place does not constitute who the people are. A grace believer is "in church" wherever they are. They cannot "go to church;" they are the Church wherever they go.

If a believing sinner is placed in Christ the moment of believing, then what could possibly be added? Paul would say that Christ is all and in all (Col. 1:17–19). A Christian is one in whom Christ lives. Going to a building, being baptized in water or joining yourself to a doctrine of some sort cannot add to the regeneration that took place at the initial moment of belief. The whole bucket of grace was dumped on the sinner the moment he accepted Christ. These religious things, the things we do with-

in ourselves, are not wrong within themselves; they are wrong if they are added to grace, or are an attempt to make one's salvation complete. The Christian Church is based objectively on the finished work of Christ at the Cross. Paul would encourage all believers, especially those of like faith, to gather together whenever and wherever they could.

The Doctrine

For the early New Testament Church, their beliefs were based on what we now call the "kingdom message." The kingdom message was based on the prophecies in the Old Testament that the Messiah would come and set up a millennial kingdom where Christ would reign and the earth would be without sin as it was in the days of Adam before the Fall. This was prophesied and will take place. However, this is strictly a Jewish thing, and for it to happen a multitude of laws and rules must be observed. Thus, the early Church believer of the New Testament picked up all the rules and laws out of the Old Testament as well as the rules Jesus of Nazareth laid out in Matthew chapters 5–7.

This causes anyone who preaches the kingdom message to lay down heavy law to the hearers. The purpose of this, even to this day, is to bring about more signs, wonders and miracles. This heavy stress on law is added to the work that Jesus did at the Cross, nullifying much of the free grace that was in Christ's sacrifice. It is important to recognize that in the early Church age the majority of the Jews regarded Jewish Christianity as an offshoot or just another sect of Judaism. The first church of Jerusalem regarded itself as the "true Israel living under Moses law," a point made obvious by James, the pastor of the church, in his epistle. This meant that what happened at the Cross and what happened on the Day of Pentecost was to be threaded into the age-old doctrines of Israel. The doctrine was clearly pointed out by the Apostle Paul (Col. 2:13–23). These verses plainly show that these works from the Law of Moses and the Torah of Israel do not belong to the regenerated Christian.

Paul, on the other hand, would spell out that being a Christian was based on a whole new gospel—new to the age he lived in, but certainly not new to God's eternal plan. Paul's gospel, he called it

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 29)

Everyday Life in the Son



Festive Family Time

By Alice Scott-Ferguson

“Home for the holidays!” kindles such festive feelings. Sights, smells and sounds waft through the corridors of the mind and heart. Images of tables heaped with fine food; echoes of happy voices and the squeals of children; the room redolent with the scent of candles, cooking and freshly cut Christmas trees where colorful, mysterious packages of various shapes and sizes lie stacked under its branches. The holidays are synonymous with family and what joy it is to gather all our precious ones under one roof for a few noisy, crowded, cluttered days.

For those happy times, there is an abundance of advice, affirmations and suggestions about decorating, cooking and coming together. However, because of the immensity of pain so many families face year round, this article is written with the hurting in mind so that we might all be prayerful for those among us with less than happy homecoming prospects this Holiday Season.

Sometimes the unwelcome guest of disappointment tags along when families gather from distances both of place and philosophy. When discord mars the melody of the season, our elaborate preparations come crashing down long before the trimmings are dismantled. Then, when the family unit is shattered due to death, divorce or sickness, sorrow supplants celebration, and our hearts lie in shards along with the broken bits of ornaments off the tree. Suicide

rates spiral around the holidays because of dashed dreams and lonely, hopeless hearts.

If our holiday gatherings do not live up to expectations, then it may be time to re-examine the concept of family. As we contemplate Thanksgiving and Christmas coming up on our calendars, we need a fresh vantage point—and the view from above is very different from our earth-bound perspective.

We hear a great deal about traditional family values these days. Trouble is, we forget that traditional family life as a model to emulate is a myth, and the facts are that every age has had its own sets of dysfunctionality, dissension and despair. Much of the past generation’s pathology was hidden due to the mores of the age—and the lack of Dr. Phil and the like—but the truth is that the fifties and sixties, for example, were earmarked by absent dads climbing the corporate ladder and stay-at-home moms wolfing down handfuls of tranquilizers.

So, despite many well-intentioned and energetic efforts by both religious and secular organizations to fortify the family, the American domestic unit continues to disintegrate. Fifty percent of marriages end in divorce and almost a third of children are raised in single parent households. The forces of evil, the end of the age, and hardening of the heart are all cited as causes—and they are—yet I wonder whether our dismay over the deplorable state of affairs would not be tempered if we looked at God’s view of family. It has seemed to me for a long time now that marriage and family have been deified in a way that He never intended.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 34)



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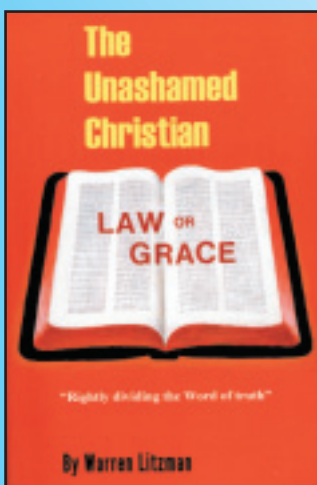
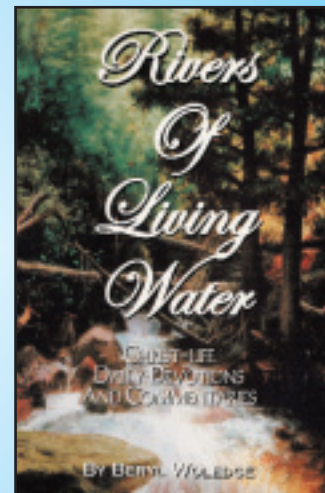
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The Effect Of Commingling On Spiritual Growth

Excerpt from Warren Litzman's book,
The Unashamed Christian.



When we do not rightly divide the Word, comingling affects our spiritual growth. Our understanding of the Trinity is affected. A right understanding the Godhead is essential to spiritual growth. The ultimate purpose of Christ in the believer is for the human being to be a bona fide offspring of the Father. Then we see Jesus as life, our life, our eternal life. Jesus is the incorruptible seed in us, and we can see Jesus as the God-nature, the new nature, ousting the old sin-nature.

To come to this knowledge, the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, does His work. Some cominglingers mistakenly believe the Holy Spirit takes the place of Christ in the believer. The most visible work of comingling is shown in this statement: “We invite Jesus come into our hearts, but it isn’t Jesus who lives in us, it’s really the Holy Spirit.” The Scriptures never say the believer is in the Holy Spirit. Rather, the believer is in Christ. Comingling has kept modern religion from seeing that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Christ in the believer (John 14:20).

The Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit are separate persons of the Godhead. They are inseparable in purpose but separate in ministries. The term spirit is often not specific as to the person in the Scriptures. A simple rule can help: When the word

spirit is connected with an action verb, it refers to the Holy Spirit. When the word *spirit* has no action verb, it is Christ. For example, Romans 8:9, “*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ*” refers to the person of Christ, not the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:11 and 14, the word spirit is accompanied by action words such as raised, dwell or led, showing the Spirit to be the third Godhead member. Such attempts to read the Scriptures without rightly dividing the meaning has kept many from seeing the Christ-life.

Comingling affects our relationship with the Lord. It puts the pressure on me instead of Christ. There are three prominent areas of pressure to be considered. It puts pressure on me to live the Christian life instead of on Christ in me. The whole reason God chose me to be in Christ was that He knew a human could not, within himself, please God.

It puts pressure on me to get more faith to please God rather than on me, as His offspring, trusting my Father to take care of me. Often, human works become the criterion of faith. Getting faith becomes hard work and causes me to lose sight of who I am in Christ. As a result, I cease to enter into His rest. It pressures me to “get righteous” rather than to know Christ is my righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30).

Commingling keeps me struggling between Christ being my sanctification and my getting sanctified. There is no doubt about it; many believers are kept under the pressure of the law to forward some man-made agenda.

Commingling affects the overall understanding of God's Word. If a believer keeps taking to heart Scriptures that were not meant for him, soon his understanding of the Word is impaired. Commingling is a mixture of ideas. In time, no idea will be worth promoting if this mixture continues. Commingling is a mixture of truths. This means they become half-truths. Half-truths are worse than lies. Paul says the mixture of law with grace will kill you spiritually (Rom. 7:4–6). Worse than that (if anything could be worse), the Word becomes diluted when commingled. Multitudes of God's children have had so much of the Word diluted they are stunted in their growth and laid open to outer demonstrations of the flesh as seen on religious television.

If we are to rightly divide the Word of Truth, a good place to begin is to rightly divide the gospels. The term *gospel* is used to denote any number of themes in the New Testament. We know, of course, that the word *gospel* usually translates as “the good news.” While there are many gospels, there are those that should not be commingled.

We should not commingle the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth given to the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:5) and the seventy (Luke 10:1) with the gospel given by Jesus, the resurrected Lord, to the Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:11, 15–16). The gospel of Jesus of Nazareth to Israel ended at Acts 28:28, while the gospel of Jesus given to Paul continues until Jesus comes again.

We should not commingle the gospel of circumcision (Gal. 2:7) with the gospel of uncircumcision. The circumcision gospel is the most often preached gospel today because it has to do with the cutting away of the flesh. This gospel makes *do*-ers out of believers. The gospel of uncircumcision (grace) is the least preached. This gospel allows the believer to be a *be*-er instead of a *do*-er.

We should not commingle the gospel of restoral, which has the believer building a kingdom on earth, with the gospel of our “*hope of glory*”

(Col. 1:27). The gospel of restoral is the attempt of man to restore Adam and the cursed earth. This gospel keeps

believers bound to the third dimension. Our “*hope of glory*” gospel has the believer seated in heavenly places, far above the earth. This gospel fulfills the Father's ultimate intention before the world was created and is fourth dimensional.

We should not commingle the gospel of the Pentecostal church in the first few chapters of Acts with the gospel of the body of Christ formed after Paul's revelation. The gospel of the early Pentecostal church emphasized man with power and supernatural abilities, but the gospel of the body of Christ teaches that man is dead in Christ, and, therefore, all gifts, ministries and power are in Christ (Gal. 2:20).

We must not commingle the gospel of law, which was to restore Israel to the covenants and earthly reign, with the gospel of grace, which, after Paul's revelation, belongs to both the born-again Jews and gentiles and seats them both with Christ at the Father's throne.

We should not commingle the gospel of Jesus of Nazareth in the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16) with the gospel of “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col. 1:27). The reason multitudes of believers fail at living the Christian life is that they try to live like Jesus of Nazareth. This, of course, is impossible. We, within ourselves, cannot live like Him, but He in us can live through us.

We must not commingle the gospel of prophecy with the gospel of the imminent return of Christ. Almost all prophecy belongs to Israel. Most of the signs of the time have to do with Israel. The only prophesied message to the born-again is the rapture of the body of Christ, and while there may be earthly, last-day trends of the end of time, only the Father knows when Jesus will return.

Wherever I go I am asked, “What's wrong with the Church; what's wrong with Christians?” My answer is, “commingling.” The true gospel has not been preached, and believers are so “dumbed down” that even the unconverted world knows the difference. It is time to search the Scriptures and study the Word until we are approved and unashamed. †



THE PRODIGAL SON

CHASTISEMENT & PUNISHMENT

By Don Byrd

Chastisement the Father's Way

Most believers have a biased understanding of chastisement. In the account of the prodigal son's return to his father's house (Luke 15:11–24), was there any chastisement involved? It appears as if the father had ignored what the son had done and there was no chastisement. But, let us take a closer look at this portion of Scripture. While the son was still in the pigpen he decided that he would return home to his father. At that same time he decided that he would make penance toward his father. Repentance should always be a part of the believer's relationship toward his Father.

In this scenario, the father seemed to ignore what his son was saying: *"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son"* (Luke 15:21). And the father just continued doing what he wanted to do. It appears that there was no chastisement administered by the father to his son. Does our heavenly Father ignore the wrong deeds that His sons do?

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12:6–7)

Chastisement can come in various ways that may be unknown to the believer. With this father and his younger son, chastisement came in the form of love. *"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth;"* that is,

the Lord chastens with love. When most of us read this, it is usually understood in this fashion: for whom the Lord chasteneth He loveth. Most believers can recognize chastening from our Father, if it is in some form other than love. Look at the father of the younger son and see how he chastens his son whom he loveth. The love is very obvious, but the chastening is obscured by our biased understanding of chastisement.

Upon the son's return, the father ran to his son. He fell on his neck; he kissed him, etcetera. What greater chastisement could he have administered at this point? He could have given his son a discourse on how to be a good son and not to waste goods, but the son had already realized this from what happened to him in the pigpen experience. He was prepared to receive a stern rebuke from his father, but instead, his father just loved him. What greater rebuke to a son, who had wasted his goods and failed than for his father to love him as though it never happened?

This was, in fact, the greatest chastening a penitent son could possibly receive from his father. If the son had received justice, he would have received none of the things that his father gave him. When the son was totally at fault, his father loved him and gave him the best robe, a ring for his finger and shoes for his feet. What was happening here? This man knew how to be a father to his son!

Only the Father Disciplines the Sons

How did the father deal with the elder son's anger? The immaturity of the elder son was so great that he did not get mad at his brother; he was mad at his father. He was so angry that he would not go into the house where they were eating the fatted calf and dancing.

Let us see how this father dealt with the immaturity of his two sons that created an immovable barrier between them. First, he did not try to get the two sons to deal with each other over their differences.

This is so often the case in Christian circles; believers try to deal with each other and correct each other's problems. Much of the time it only makes matters worse. If things are resolved between believers, it is because our Father has dealt with each of them. Our heavenly Father deals with each of His sons Himself, as He deems necessary. Father does not use one son to correct another son. It is the ministry of our Father to chasten every son He has.

Chastisement is only for sons and not for members of a hierarchy.

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Heb. 12:5–9)

Chastisement from any source other than the Father would cause the recipient to be dealt with as a bastard and not a son (Heb. 12:8). Only the father can properly administer chastisement to a son. The father in Luke 15 dealt with each of his two sons differently because their needs were different and their levels of maturity were not the same.

This is a great fallacy in the hierarchy of religion. They try to make everyone conform to the same structured environment. The rules and regulations are not changed to meet the needs of the believers; they require believers to conform to

their standards. Only the father of that son has the right to administer chastisement, for it is he who birthed them, not some organizational hierarchy. Why is the father the only one who has the right to chasten his sons? Because he, and he alone, is the one who loves the son.

Hierarchies do not discipline according to love but according to standards. The father in Luke 15 did not have the same standard for both sons. Why? The only standard that he had was one called *father love*, and it came from his heart. His love fit each of his sons, no matter how great their differences, or how great their needs were. His love met their needs where they were and brought them to the next level of understanding.

Without Chastisement

Discipline in most hierarchical structured organizations comes as a result of a member's failure or nonconformity. The ones who always conform to the standards of the organization and are, therefore, not in error are never chastised. Do you realize what this does? *“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons”* (Heb. 12:8). *“But if ye be without chastisement...,”* this results in an illegitimate child whom no one loves. If a member conforms and meets the standards, he is free from chastisement and void of love. Can you possibly imagine a religious organization using the same method that God our Father uses? How long would members, whom the organization loved, last if they were chastised when they did nothing wrong? The Scripture states that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. Most religious organizations do the very opposite. The ones who are without chastening are the ones they love. Chastisement is a wonderful thing if it comes from our Father, but if it comes from any other source it is totally corrupt. We are His sons, not members of His religious organization!

Did you notice that the father of the prodigal son did not chastise him for failing? The son had taken his portion of goods and wasted it with riotous living and eventually found himself in a pigpen. Surely, having wasted his father's living, he should be punished—right? Wrong!

In the scenario above, we are looking at the son's failures. Chastisement is the result of love,

not failure! What did the father do when he saw his son a great way off? Did he grab a stick and begin to beat him because he wasted his goods? Did he verbally discipline or abuse his son. Did he say, I told you this was going to happen; I knew... No! He did what seemed to be the very opposite. He ran to his son, fell on his neck and kissed him! He loved him to pieces!

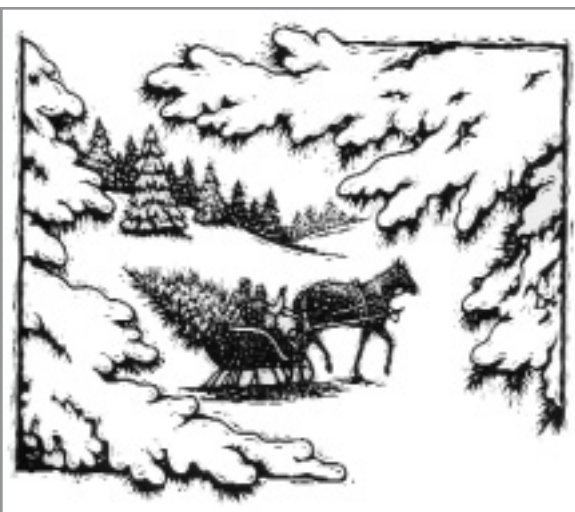
When someone punishes someone else's son, it usually results in anger and rejection. But when we discipline ourselves as the result of knowing our Father's love for us, that is true discipline. If we base the use of chastisement on our failures, we will never know what love is.

This father never looked at the failures of his son. He never mentioned any thing derogatory to his son. All he wanted to do was express himself as a father to his son. This was the son he birthed himself, and success or failure had nothing to do with it. He loved this son with or without failures, with or without successes. The son's

successes or failures did not make him any more a son or any less a son. Now if he loved his son unreservedly when his son was in error, how much more love would he have when his son was not in error? Actually, there would be no more love and no less love, for his love is based upon his fatherhood, and not upon his son's successes or failures. Without this son the father would never be able to express his love in the way that he desired called *chastisement*.

Did the father of the younger son ignore the fact that his son had totally and miserably failed? If the father had taken a stick to beat his son because of his failure, that son would not want to fail again because of fear of being beaten. Chastisement came out of love and not out of fear. What greater chastisement could be found than one who loves when there is failure? This is chastisement in its purest form. This type of chastisement would cause a son to never want to fail his father again, ever! It is love that causes a son to not want to fail his father. The majority of believers think that

chastisement comes in a negative sense. The majority of believers associate chastisement with punishment. Listen to what the Scriptures declare. "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear bath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love*" (1 John 4:18). It is perfect love that casts out fear. This perfect love comes as chastisement to every son. It rids the sons of fear. Perfect love causes sons to never want to fail again, not because they will be disciplined, but because they love their Father. Where does perfect love come from? It can only come from Him who is our Father!



Our failures would be devastating to us if we faced them by ourselves, especially when we are expecting some drastic form of negative reprimand as chastisement. But when our Father just runs to us and falls on our neck and hugs and kisses us, we experience chastisement the Father's way!

The next time the son is given a portion of goods, he will not leave his father's house and waste it on riotous

living. Why? Because now he will do nothing to hinder his relationship with his father. He has learned that his relationship with his father is greater than his desire to go to a far country and do what he wants to do. Love is the greatest form of chastening our Father has to give to a penitent son who matures and comes to know the Father-heart of God.

Many times in our greatest moment of need we refuse to let our Father love us because we think we have failed and do not deserve His love. That may be true, but what we need at that point is to see ourselves through the Father-heart of God. Because of who our Father is, there will never be a son of His that will be a failure. Oh, his son may fail to do things right, but his Father will never let him be a failure. Why? Because He knows how to be Father when we do not deserve to have Him as our Father!

It is He that makes us who we are in Christ. How can you be a failure if Christ is in you? Our Father has not one son who is a failure! †



THE ELDER SON

By Ed Gardner

Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of his servants, he asked what it was all about. The servant told him, Your brother has come back safe and sound, and your father has killed the fatted calf to celebrate. He became angry and refused to go in. So, his father came out and began to urge him to come in. But he retorted to his father, All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for that son of yours, when he comes back after squandering your money with loose women you kill the calf we had been fattening (Luke 15:25–32).

Not only did the younger son—who left home to look for freedom and happiness in a distant country—get lost, but the one who stayed home was also a lost son. On the exterior, the elder son did all the things a good son is supposed to do, but, on the interior, he had wandered away from his father. He did his duty, worked hard every day, and fulfilled his obligations; but he had become increasingly unhappy and lost his freedom.

Isn't it the nature of an elder son that they want to live up to the expectations of their parents, and they want to be considered obedient and dutiful? In reality, they probably fear the disappointment of their parents. They can also experience a certain envy toward a younger sibling who seems to be less concerned about pleasing and much freer in doing "their own thing." The disobedient life is not something that this elder brother would want

to live. This elder brother does not have the courage to run away as the younger son did. The obedient and dutiful life of this elder son apparently felt like a burden that was laid on him and continued to oppress him, and he accepted it to such a degree that he could not throw it off. It is at this place that obedience and duty became a burden and the resulting service became slavery. Being lost in a situation like this can and does breed judgment and condemnation, anger and resentment, and bitterness and jealousy. The younger son's sin could be easily seen and identified, but the elder son did all the right things. He was obedient, dutiful, law-abiding, and hard working. People respected him, admired him, praised him, and likely considered him a model son. Outwardly he was faultless, but when confronted by his father's joy at the return of his younger, rebellious brother, darkness erupted in him and boiled to the surface. Suddenly, there came forth a resentful, proud, unkind, and selfish person, things which had remained deeply hidden for years, were now open and exposed to everyone. There is a lot of frozen anger among people who are concerned about avoiding the very appearance of sin. For the elder son, as with the Pharisees, Scribes, and many very religious people, there was a conscious effort to avoid the pitfalls of sin and a constant fear of giving in to temptation, which can make one increasingly uncomfortable about feeling at home in his father's house.

The elder son harbored a resentment that came from feeling he had never received what was due him. When the elder son saw the joy from his

father and the excitement from the servants at the return of a sinful brother, it made the him withdraw to the outside.

The father not only wanted his younger son back, but his elder son as well. The elder son, too, had to be found and led back into the house of joy. Would he respond to his father's plea or remain stuck outside in his own bitterness, resentment, and hurt?

In this parable, Jesus confronted the Pharisees and scribes not only with the return of the prodigal son, but also with the resentful elder son. These religious people had to face their own complaints and choose how they would respond to God's love for the sinners. It appears that the younger son's return from a lustful escapade was much easier to identify than them returning home with their cold religious anger, which was deeply rooted in keeping the Law.

The elder son was also faced with his own inability to root out his deep resentments. These resentments are so deeply anchored in his inner soul that pulling them out would be like self-destruction. He had to come to realize that he alone, by himself, could not find himself. He could not disentangle himself from the darkness that surrounded and enveloped him. He needed light, but that light must conquer his darkness. He was confronted with the impossibility of self-redemption. Jesus said to Nicodemus: Do not be surprised when I say: 'You must be born from above.' Indeed something had to happen to both Nicodemus and the elder son that they, themselves, could not cause to happen. They could only be healed from above, where God reaches down, and sets men free.

It is God, Himself, in the person of Jesus, who runs out to find us and bring us home. It is at that point that we must not only recognize that we are

lost, but also be prepared to be found and brought home.

The choice must be the son's, even while the Father waits with outstretched hands. Would the elder son be willing to be touched by the same hands and arms that touched his younger brother? Would the elder son also be willing to be forgiven and to experience the healing presence of the father, who loves him beyond compare?

When the father realized that the elder son was not present for the celebration, he immediately went to find him. The father could not begin the celebration of the younger son's return until all his sons were present. The father loved both sons equally without comparing one to another. This father did not measure out his love according to how well his sons behaved, but he gave them all his love because they were his own birthed sons—bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.

The father had no desire to punish either son. They had already been punished excessively by their own inner or outer waywardness, the C & S gang. The father wanted them both to know that the love they had searched for in such distorted and different ways had always been there for them in the unconditional love of the father. The father had always said to both of them, you are my beloved; on you my favor rests!

Here is the Father that we believe in—a heavenly Father, who, from the very beginning, stretched out His arms in merciful blessing, never forcing Himself on anyone, always hoping that His children would return so that He can speak words of love to them in and through Christ.

Everything was created for Christ, and through Christ, and without Christ nothing was created. He was before all things, and by Him all things consist!

Jesus is Love! ✚



THE PRODIGAL'S FATHER

By Ed Gardner

The parable of the Prodigal Son is really a parable of the Father's love. Everything comes together here: time and eternity intersect; sin and forgiveness embrace; the human and the divine become one. These divine realities emanate from the father— infinite compassion, unconditional love, and everlasting forgiveness.

The heart of the father burns with an immense desire to bring his children home. His love is too great to warn them against the many dangers that they may face and try to convince them that everything they left in search of can be found at home. His love cannot force, constrain, push, or pull. It only offers the freedom to reject his love or to love in return. Our heavenly Father wants his children to be free, free to love. That freedom includes the possibility of their leaving home, going to a "far country," and losing everything. The Father's heart knows all the pain that can come from those choices, but His love makes Him powerless to prevent it. Here is our heavenly Father who, from the beginning of creation, has stretched out His arms in merciful blessing, never forcing Himself on anyone, but always waiting, always hoping that His children will return so that He can speak words of love to them. His only desire is to bless. The Father has no desire to punish them, as they have already been punished excessively by their own choices and waywardness. The Father wants His children to always know that you are His beloved, on you His favor and His love rests. He is the shepherd feeding His flock, gathering lambs in His arms, holding them against His breast.

The elder son's dilemma is to accept or reject his Father's love in coming to the party. The Father

knows that the choice must be the son's even while He waits with outstretched hands. Will the elder son be willing to come, and be touched by the same hands that touched his younger prodigal brother? Will he be willing to be forgiven and to experience the healing presence of the father who also loves him beyond compare? Not only does the Father run out to welcome the younger wayward son, but he comes out to meet the elder, dutiful son as he returns from the fields wondering what the music and dancing were all about and urges him to come in.

The Father's joy is so intense that he couldn't wait to start the celebration, but as soon as he became aware of the elder son's arrival, he left the party and went out to him, and pleaded with him to join them.

The Father's heart is not divided into more or less. The Father does not compare one son to the other. All of God's children are His favorites. God loves with a divine love, a love that flows to all men and women in their uniqueness without ever comparing. The prodigal's father had God's vision, as an all-giving and all-forgiving Father who does not measure out his love to his children according to how well they behave, but loves them because they are His birthed sons and daughters. He hopes to see them together as brothers and sisters around the same table; he wants them to experience that, different as they are, they belong to the same household and are children of the same father.

This father's attitude is the same as God's: I have found my sheep that was lost. Rejoice with me! God does not want to keep His joy to Himself. He wants everyone to share in it. His joy is the joy of all who belong to His kingdom. God rejoices when one repentant sinner returns. Statistically that is not

very interesting, but for God, numbers never seem to matter.

From God's perspective, one hidden act of repentance, one little gesture of selfless love, one moment of true forgiveness is all that is needed to bring Him from His throne to run to His returning son and fill the heavens with sounds of divine joy.

A child cannot remain a child. A child must grow into an adult. An adult then becomes a father or mother. When the prodigal son returns home, he returns not to remain a child, but to claim his son-

ship and ultimately become a father himself. This is the call for each of us that come home. Having claimed our sonship, each of us must now grow up and claim our heritage. I now see the hands that forgive, console, heal, and offer a festive meal must become my own. These hands of mine have been given to me to stretch out toward all who suffer, to rest upon the shoulders of all who come, and to offer the blessings that emerges from the immensity of God's love. Fatherhood is the ultimate progression of sonship. †



(REAL SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS—CONT'D. FROM PAGE 5)

likely occurred nine months previously, or on December 25, around the end of the Festival of Lights (Chanukah). For Jesus was the true light through which all men might see God and have life (John 1:4–18). And light was the first thing that God spoke into darkness during the redecoration of the earth (Gen. 1:2, 3). I believe God honors life from the time of conception (Luke 1:38, 42), and that is His answer to the abortion questions.

4) Joseph is a type of the local church organization, which houses and provides for the work of God; but the church organization can't give you life (Matt. 1:18–25).

5) The wise men could have been more than three in number, for it only mentions that they brought three different specific gifts (Matt. 2:11).

There could have been more than one bringing any one of the gifts; or many bringing one or all gifts.

6) The wise men probably got to Bethlehem approximately two years after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 2:16) looking for Jesus and following the direction where they had originally seen the star (Matt. 2:1, 2) apparently the star was no longer visible in the sky (Matt. 2:7).

7) The star which they saw two years previously when they were in the East, reappeared and went before them and led them to Jesus (Matt. 2:9, 10). This is a type of the light of the Word as quickened by the Holy Spirit. It will always go before us, and lead us to Jesus (Ps. 119:105; John 15:26; 16:13–15).

Wise men still follow after Jesus today. When they find Him, they find life and the greatest treasure of all! Merry Christmas to all of you! †

New Church In The Home

Starting January 2004



The Great Adventure Continues

One of the most important aspects of this great adventure we have in the Christ-life is the fellowship we have in the Christ-life family. How wonderful it is to fellowship with believers who see Jesus in you!

Robbie and I have always wanted to come into the home of every Christ-life believer at least once a month, every month, and now the blessing of the Father on the Church In The Home video program has made it possible.

The new Church In The Home video will allow everyone in our fellowship an opportunity to know and be a part of what is happening worldwide as the Father projects this message. Robbie, members of our staff, our special singers and many believers like you will participate. I know you will be blessed to see how God is moving throughout the Christ-life Fellowship worldwide.

We are no longer traveling to monthly meetings. All our Fellowship meetings now meet quarterly with the exception of the Dallas Fellowship. But we still want to be with you every month, and we can by video.

The new Church In The Home program is a monthly gift to every regular giver to the Christ-life message and will replace the monthly message audiotapes. Church In The Home will produce one video each month. We love this fellowship the Father has given us, and we want to be as close to you as we possibly can.

**In Christ,
Warren and Robbie**



Merry Christmas!
In Christ,
Warren & Robbie



COMPLETE in CHRIST

By Warren Litzman

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:8–10).

The greatest discovery that any human being can ever make is the discovery of the all-sufficiency of Christ. When God created human beings, He made them after His image and likeness. However, every human being is created differently and, just as there are no two leaves on a tree alike, so are there no two human beings created alike. It was never God’s intention that a human being be anything within himself. In fact, in the creation of human beings, God left a great hole, as it were, that must be filled. This means that all human beings were created with a woeful lacking. That lacking is Christ. Thus, the New Testament is filled with the awesome message that except a human being is fulfilled and completed by Christ in him, he is not all there. That great open hole and the depth of it is the explanation for how human beings become everything opposite to the image and likeness of God. This means that man is utterly worthless without Christ in him. Therefore, the message we bear in the Christ-life is very simple; it is the same message Jesus said to Nicodemus—that except a man be born again, he cannot see or enter the things of God, or, we might add, he will never complete God’s purpose for him. Because

multitudes have not been born again, and further, because multitudes of born-again believers have not come to know Christ as their life, they have never fulfilled what God created them for. Scripture has made it very plain with its strongest message. The believer is in Christ, and Christ is in the believer; and now Paul says in these wonderful verses in Colossians 2 that it is only by Christ dwelling in the believer that the believer has ever reached his fullness. The fact that Christ is all is emphasized throughout the entire Epistle to the Colossians. Chapter 1, verse 18, says, *“that in all things he might have the preeminence.”* Verse 19 says, *“in him should all fulness dwell.”* And in Colossians 2:3, Paul says, *“...in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* Colossians 2:9 says, *“in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”* And in our text now, which says that Christ is the head of all principalities and powers, and finally in 3:11 it says *“Christ is all and in all.”* These verses certainly leave no doubt as to the completeness that the human being must have in Christ. This is not only something that the human being obtains when he becomes a Christian—which is taught in all Christianity—but the fact that the human being never becomes what he is created to be except Christ be in him is a message which is greatly needed today. Scripture is most clear on this, that only through the believer containing Christ does he become complete. Therefore, the Epistle to the Colossians is a positive presentation of the antidote to every form of heresy. Epaphras had come to Paul

at Rome with the news that there was real danger of false teaching in the church at Colosse. This new heresy was called gnosticism and was a combination of Judaic ritualism and oriental mysticism as it is related in chapter 2:16–18.

These Colossians were being asked to accept something in addition to their salvation. They were being asked to accept something in addition to Christ being in them. By this they were taught that Christ was not their sufficiency, and they were equally being taught adversely to becoming who God created them to be. As a result, in verse 8 of chapter 2, we see they were taught philosophy and astrology. Additionally, we see in verse 11, they were taught circumcision as well as the worship of angels shown in verse 18. Whenever someone says any of these things help to make him who he is by knowledge or by repetition of the discipline of these various ideas, or by attempting to keep the law of these ideas, he has been misled and can never become God's creation in perfection, and can never enter into the rest that is his upon this earth.

Most believers who have never come to the knowledge of who they are in Christ have been bound by the law. You can never enter your completion in Christ as long as the law is being maintained. Romans 10:4 says, *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."* Also, if anyone suggests we can add to our salvation by doing something, he has never understood this phrase, *"complete in Christ."*

It is amazing that throughout the entire Scriptures various tributes have been given to Jesus Christ. Christ is seen in every promise, parable, prophecy, type, poem, narrative, allegory and symbol. He is likened unto the sun, the stars, the shepherd, the lamb, the lion, the door, the cornerstone, the foundation, the bread and the wine. Everything about Him is superlative. He is Lord of lords, King of kings, and the fairest among ten thousand. Nothing in existence can go beyond the completeness of His person. You cannot add to it, and certainly, there is no way you can take away from it. All fullness dwells in Him, and He dwells in every believer, and by that every believer is complete in Him. Believers need nothing else, they need go to no other source; they need to do nothing on their own to ever become

what God's creation of them is by Christ in them. Therefore, it is necessary that every believer recognize Christ's fullness. The text says that in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. One writer paraphrases this verse: "For in Him dwelleth all the complete perfection essential to the Godhead. It abides corporately, substantially and realistically, and not in manner of shadows." This means that Christ's fullness is resident in His person, in Him. This is why in the Christ-life we so strongly stress the over 200 occasions that the terms *in Christ* or *in Him* are used throughout the New Testament. This phrase is given to emphasize that there is nothing outside of Him that is worthwhile, and all who are in Him have fullness. The Holy Spirit wants us to see Christ as our fullness. Religion is set to keep us from this fullness because when a believer becomes completed in Christ, he does not need any aspect of man-made religion. He does not need buildings, doctrines, programs or ministries. All these things are alright in their place, but a believer who is complete in Christ needs none of them to be further completed. He will abide with these various aspects as a means of fellowship and love, but he will never consider himself needful of these things to be complete. This is a great error of modern Christianity and the erroneous force of religion today because multitudes are deceived, believing that these things are what make them what they ought to be. This is not only contrary to the Scriptures but contrary to life because multitudes of believers today are finding that they are not completed by what they do for God or what they do in the name of the Lord. You are only completed by knowing that Christ is in you as your life and whatever you do is His doing rather than yours.

When we come to the understanding of the fullness of Christ and our completion in Him, we realize that Christ is that part of God we know as the Son, and that part of God in us (by the incorruptible seed and the birthing) makes us sons of God. We, of course, are not the Son of God as Christ was. But by Christ's Spirit in us, we too become firstborn sons of God. He has now completed our creation and God's intention for all human beings by being our life. When we begin to see the fullness of Christ, we understand what it means to have

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 26)

From Our Readers

Dear Christ-life Fellowship:
Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from our eternal life, Jesus Christ. I want to express my gratitude to your ministries for your generous contributions of publications to aid me in my spiritual growth. I have been a Bible student of R. B. Thieme Ministries of Houston for approximately thirty years, and I believe Mr. Thieme to be one of the finest and well-prepared teachers of the Word of God in the world. I have learned so much from him, and he has always taught the importance of rightly dividing the Word of Truth and the dispensations. Sadly, I have lived my life in disobedience to our Father's plan for my life and now, at forty-nine years old, I find my self in prison for the first time serving a twenty-year prison sentence. I have done my studies of the Word of God, and the Lord has been moving me toward greater revelations of who I am.

First, I was introduced with some of Watchman Nee's publications, and I was fascinated and felt the Lord was really moving me to a greater understanding of who I am. Then one day a fellow inmate introduced me to one of Mr. Litzman's books, *Paul, the Apostle of Grace*. The timing was so perfect. Certainly, the Holy Spirit is leading me to a great knowledge of who I am in Christ, and it has made such a difference to me. I have the desire to continue my spiritual growth and request more books and your quarterly magazine. I have currently *The Unashamed Christian*; *Paul, the Apostle of Grace*; *Jesus Lost in the Church*; and *Every Believer Must Have a Revelation of Jesus Christ*, and I am on lesson 2 of *Line Upon Line* studies. I have read these books five to six times each and hunger for more. Mr. Litzman is indeed a fine teacher, and I love him in Christ for his teachings. It has helped me, so I hope my letter is not too sloppy. I am trying to rush it before they call breakfast. I have been up all night talking to our Father. Please send more publications if you can, and I want you to know that, once the Lord brings me home, I plan to contribute back to your ministries monies to aid in the Christ-life message. Since I have received this revelation of Paul's, I am amazed at how many people do not know who they are in Christ. They are hungry for the truth, and they need to know what a fantastic dispensation we live in and how wonderful of a blessing our Holy Father has given us.

My prayers are for you all and the furtherance of your most important message of Christ as our life. I come up for parole soon. I ask for your ministries prayers that the Lord will grant me my freedom to live our new life together to honor and glorify Him and ask always—His perfect will be done.

Christ's prisoner
forever,
Reginald King



Ephesians 1:3-12

By Mike Scott

This writing goes to anyone who believes that the Bible is God's inspired word. It has been said that the letter to the Ephesians is one of the greatest documents ever written. I like to go to the Internet and discuss Bible truths with other believers. There is a fellowship of believers ever growing on the Internet, and there is always some bickering between denominational people who have different viewpoints. I often talk to people involved in the New Age movement, and some of them are hung-up on the fact that they think God has no faith. Yet at times, a believer comes along who has been hearing from the Spirit when it comes to knowing the things of God. What a great difference there is between a person that is hungry for Christ (truth) and one that is locked in the trap of denominational or humanistic/secular religion. It is this very issue that prompts me to write on this subject. First and foremost, it must be understood that the grace of God was sent to the gentiles (Acts 28:28).

There is a teaching being received as truth by some believers that God has no faith because He knows all things before they happen. They question, why should God need faith when He knows all? That may seem like a good question. Allow the Holy Spirit to show you that the almighty God needs faith. Follow along with me in the reading of Ephesians 1:3-12, while I give some personal remarks along the way.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us (the born-again believer) with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he (God the Father) has chosen us (the born-again believer) in him (Christ) before the founda-

tion of the world, that we (the born-again believer) should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us (the born-again believer) unto the adoption of children (having the same Father) by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us (the born-again believer) accepted in the beloved (Christ). In whom (Christ) we (the born-again believer) have redemption through his (Christ) blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Wherein he hath abounded towards us (the born-again believer) in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us (the born-again believer) the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth; even in Him (Christ): In whom (Christ) also we (the born-again believer) have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his will: That we (the born-again believer) should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."

As the Scriptures state, God had faith and trust in the assignment that He gave unto His Son. The Son of God was received into the womb of a virgin when she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. The virgin conceived the incorruptible seed of God and manufactured a flesh-and-blood body (container) for the Son of God to live in on the earth. Before Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit was seen on His head, Jesus was in all points tempted as we are, yet He remained without sin (Heb. 4:15).

This is what God, the Father, had faith in. To trust His seed that was in that flesh-and-blood body, a body that was in all points tempted as we are. The soul that occupied that body could be tempted. That soul had to make decisions based on the information that He received. But it wasn't only His body that was tempted; the Scriptures say that He, Himself, was tempted, yet was without sin. Thoughts also had to enter His mind (intellect, will and emotions) for Him to be tempted in all points as we are. Yet, He did not sin. God had faith in the Holy Spirit that was in Christ's soul. God also had to have faith in what He did concerning His plan to birth and have His own family. It would be by the Son's life that God, the Father, would have His own family (Rom. 5:10). The Son allowed men to take His life upon a Cross and bore the sin of the world. The Father had faith in the raising up of His Son from the dead. This would grant Him the right to exchange spirits and natures in every believing sinner that accepted the work of His Son on the Cross.

Several times the Scriptures mention the "*faith of the Son of God.*" One of the first places is Acts 26:18, where it says: "*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*" Notice it says the faith that is in Him, His faith. Galatians 2:16 will clarify this for us.

Notice, in Galatians 2:16, the faith of Jesus Christ is mentioned twice and faith in Jesus Christ is mentioned once. In just this one verse of Scripture, we can clearly see that He has faith of His own, and we trust in Him or have faith in Him; however you like to say it.

God, the Father, still has faith today in His Son, the Son whom He has birthed in every born-again believer's spirit. God is not depending on us, the born-again believer, but He is depending on, or has faith in, the Son who is within us (Col. 1:27). Dear reader, if the New Age religions have told you that God has no faith, you just may want to reconsider what the Bible says against what men say. Peace unto you. †

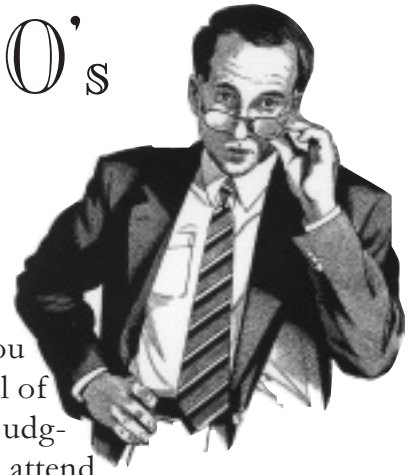
(COMPLETE IN CHRIST—CONT'D. FROM P. 23)

Christ dwelling in us bodily. This means, as Paul said in another place, that we hold in these earthen vessels a treasure, Christ in us, which means that in our very bodies we now possess the fullness of Christ as our spirit is joined with Christ's Spirit. It means that when Christ comes into a believer, He not only comes as partaker of man's spirit, but He joins with man's spirit, and they become one. This is the beauty of what it means to be in Christ. We are no longer in a separated state, but we have become one with Him by the birthing. This is what we mean when we say Christ-life, Christ is our life. He does not give us life; He is our life. He does not offer us a special gift saying, 'Here, it is yours; I give it to you.' He is that gift. He says, 'I am going to live in you and through you.' Thus, we no longer live. When that consciousness comes to us, we are alive physically, but we really no longer live our own life; we would be fools to continue to do so. The life we now live is Christ, and we enter into the glorious experience of Galatians 2:20. It is only as the believer sees Christ as his life that he can ever come to

this completeness. The problem in the world today is that men are incomplete. The problem in religion is that ministries are incomplete. Most church buildings are filled with people who are uncompleted believers because they do not know Christ lives in them. We must join with Paul, who is able to say that Christ in us is our hope of glory. Our hope, therefore, is not religious programs, doctrine, or church meetings; our hope is Christ. Not just Christ coming again, but our hope is Christ in us. Christ in us is our hope of glory. We must get this fixed clearly in our thinking if we are to move on in the Lord. If, in this writing, I can say anything that is very important, it is that human beings can never become what God created them to be without the revelation of Christ in them as their life. Let this message be heard to the ends of the earth: let us tell all men everywhere, for they are going hopelessly and helplessly about in this world to become something within themselves, when that was never God's intention. His intention is that Christ be our all and He be our completion, and, by that, we in Him will lack for nothing. †

Vocational Christian CEOs

By Cliff Gardner



Recently, I had a long conversation with a dear person, a sincere person seeking to know truth, who had fielded some very pointed questions about why he was apprehensive about believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. After answering several of these questions, I sensed a pattern in this person's thinking. His problem revolves around his ideas about what constitutes church. Apparently, in his experience, church, and all that went with it, was so demanding that he couldn't see how it would be possible to "do everything the church would demand" of him. He couldn't see himself involved at the level of being a "good church person." He then concluded that he could never be close to God and decided to live the best that he could outside the blessing that the church bestows on "good members." I admire this person's transparency and candid honesty.

As I reflected on this, I began to think about some contrasts between what the Apostle Paul saw as church and what all of this has become in modern times. I believe Paul saw church as God's birthed (born-again) offspring who are left upon this earth to learn to "walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7) while they are learning Christ (Eph. 4:20), and while going through the circumstances and situations of living day by day. Paul, I sense, saw the gathering together of the "called out assembly" (church) as a weekly family reunion where the love of Christ in each individual was ever reaching out to and touching the lives of others. Christ in them could minister to His body, the Church, however He saw fit. The Biblical record shows that when the church lived like this, the world around these believers was very much affected by this Christ who was alive in them!

How has this been so twisted into what passes for church in our time? To the laity (or church members), church usually is a place they go at a certain time on a certain day to obey God and be pleasing to Him. To some, it is done as an appease-

ment to Him; you may incur some level of chastisement or judgment if you don't attend church. Often, the motives to go to church are more based on fear than based on love. Then there are those who have sensed a "call" to what I call vocational Christianity where the profession of a full-time job is to do some sort of ministry. Those who sense this call usually go on to Christian higher education, completing Bible college or divinity school and seminary training. Frequently, these people end up being missionaries, teachers, or pastors who feel qualified, by virtue of the disciplines of their education, to lead the masses of lay people who need to be organized into a workforce for the Lord. Many of these leaders see themselves as an under-shepherd of Jesus Christ, meaning that they are under Christ and over His flock. This under-shepherd idea motivates these leaders to act in Christ's behalf towards those "sheep" under them. Because of this clerical mind set, many of these leaders eventually assume a Chief Executive Officer stance within the church to which they feel the Lord has sent them. Consequently, I have felt the need to write down some of my observations about what I see has happened in modern churchianity that has caused my friend's problem with believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's Christian world, especially in America, is filled with *vocational Christian CEOs* (chief executive officers). They see themselves as ones under divine management who have been called to run ministry and soul-winning factories. Their perceived responsibility, it seems, is to manage input and output of the factory to establish divine order on the earth. These vocational Christian CEOs endeavor to build soul-winning assembly lines where their employees (members) are matched up to specific

places on this assembly line where their gifts or skills will be utilized for the maximum output of the soul-winning process. The theory seems to be that if enough souls are won, righteousness will be established on the earth, bad politicians will be brought under divine chastisement, therefore causing the earth to be made fit for the kingdom and the King to come.

In the process of keeping the assembly line running efficiently, the employees' needs have to be addressed, at least at a minimum level, to avoid possible labor-management relationship problems. This becomes a frustration to these vocational Christian CEOs because their goal is to not dissipate too much energy on internal affairs within the factory itself, but rather to have maximum "outreach" so that the employees will miss no soul-winning opportunities. The sooner the souls are won or reached, the sooner the kingdom will come. This will give the CEOs and their "top flight" employees honor with stars in their crowns and top management places in the kingdom, allowing all to live happily ever after. Thus, time spent on oiling the soul-winning machinery and coddling the employees causes huge frustration levels among the CEOs.

Some very chronic problems have arisen among the employees of these soul-winning factories. Many employees begin to feel that they have been miss-matched on the assembly line and have taken issue with the CEO's management skills. If these labor-management issues are not addressed to the employees' satisfaction, these employees are either fired, or sometimes resign with great fanfare and fireworks. They usually find another factory in which to join to work. The reasoning seems to be that they need to be on an assembly line some place where the new CEO will be nicer to them than the last one was. Some employees leave quietly and give up on getting involved with another factory. They have had it with being used and abused by the CEO and all of his supervisors. Some other employees opt to stay and form unions, and finally fire the CEO. They usually appeal to upper-level division headquarters to send a new CEO more suited to their liking.

Meanwhile, there really is a lost and dying world out there wondering what this monkey business is all about. They are waiting to see the real Jesus, the one

who loved them enough to take their sin upon Himself and give His life for them, literally taking their place on the Cross for their reconciliation back to God the Father, the one who created them and loves them. The soul-winning factory has failed to reveal the true Jesus to the world that needs to meet Him. The primary cause, it seems, is that there is so much nest-feathering (building a name for one's self or ministry and gaining praise from division headquarters, the denominational hierarchy) going on among the CEOs. There is much jockeying for position and recognition that goes on. If a number of the CEOs ever do get together for an area-wide outreach, those who are the most sensitive and temperamental must get their due respect or they may never be involved again.

How different was the Apostle Paul. He spoke of himself as the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). He saw himself as "*less than the least of all the saints*" (Eph. 3:8). Although he had been given great authority by God the Father to bring forth the "*ministry of reconciliation*" (2 Cor. 5:14) to the Gentile world, he never misused or abused that authority. Like his master, the ascended and glorified Christ, he was willing to lay down his life, literally, for those to whom he was called to serve. He had no time for spiritual novices who loved to throw their weight around. Paul truly operated by the "*love of Christ [which] constrained us*" (2 Cor. 5:14) in the face of all things that stood against him. Through the message he called "*my gospel*" (Rom. 16:25), Paul was used of God to bring many people into a Father-son relationship with God that Israel and the Kingdom message never did accomplish.

God the Father is extending the call to us in the twenty-first century to know the ascended and glorified Christ as our very life. May the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon the body of Christ on this earth—which is the Church, those born of the Father by His "*incorruptible seed*" (1 Peter 1:23)—by revealing Christ in us to us, the true head of the body, not all these man-appointed under-shepherds, as our only true life and "*hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27). May we never aspire to being *vocational Christian CEOs*, but rather may the blessed Holy Spirit teach us what sonship (being a born again child of the Father) is really all about! †

“my gospel” three times, was based on two events that happened before the world was created. One was written by Paul in Ephesians 1:4 which says the human was chosen to be in Christ before the creation of the world. The other was written in 1 Peter 1:18–20 that says the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. These two points form the basis of doctrine for the Christian.

It must be seen that these two events are all of God. Humans have nothing to do with either one and can do nothing about changing either. Israel, the Old Testament, the kingdom message or the institutional church, have no part in effecting these events. Going to church, being water-baptized, paying your dues, and obeying the religious doctrines have nothing to do with this salvation based on God’s ultimate plan before the foundation of the world. It is by grace and grace alone that one is saved. Paul’s “my gospel” is the unpreached message in religion today. As a result of this, the majority of saved believers do not know or understand what it means to be in Christ.



Jesus of Nazareth said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again.” This could not and did not happen until the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Every believer on that day was put in Christ, and ever since that day, every sinner saved by grace has been put in Christ. This means, in Christ’s own words, they were born again. This event of re-birthing a human was the foundation of Paul’s gospel. To him, this idea that a human could be reborn in spirit was so far out of human ability to understand that he called it a mystery.

As Paul writes the final gospel, he clearly says that the hope of all believers is Christ in you (Col. 1:26–27). Perhaps of all the things that could be said about the difference between the early Church kingdom message and Paul’s gospel is that the former says you must do it according to the law and you may become righteous. Paul says you already are everything God can make you. God’s part is finished in the human who believes, the human part is to grow up in what you already are. In grace, the believer has

Christ joined to his spirit and the Holy Spirit is joined to his soul.

The Holy Spirit

It was the Holy Spirit who began the Christian Church, the body of Christ on the earth. He did this by placing believers in Christ. It was the work of the Holy Spirit that began the early Church. The difference between these two ministries of the Holy Spirit indicates one of the great differences between these two bodies of believers. To the Christian Church, it is the Holy Spirit who places Christ in the believer and makes the believer a new creation in Christ. To the kingdom church believers, the coming of the Holy Spirit to one’s life is to make the believer something and somebody within themselves.

This is what happened on the Day of Pentecost. Even though Christ was in them, it was what happened to them personally, their power, their gifts and their ministry that was most important. From that day on, through out the book of Acts and even to this day, it was what men who were filled with the Holy Spirit did that was the essence of the ministry. Paul would say this differently, “*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*” (Gal. 2:20). The Christian Church has just as many signs, wonders and miracles today as God allows, but the ministry is not man’s, rather it is Christ alive in the believer. Grace believers come behind in no spiritual gift (1 Cor. 1:7). They are able to do all things through Christ who strengthens them (Phil. 4:13); they can rely upon their heavenly Father because He birthed them and they are His offspring. The Christian believer can come into a rest knowing that he can do nothing within himself, but by simply trusting the Father, he can live victorious. The kingdom believer today cannot rest; his whole relationship with the Lord is based on his faith and his effort. The Christian believer enters his rest because he knows in spirit he stands perfect before God; he knows Christ in him is his salvation. The issue of Christianity today comes down to: Is it me who lives, or is it Him? †



Grace and Mercy

By Dieter Schuette

“Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. We thank God, whom we serve with a clear conscience ...as we constantly remember you in our prayers” (2 Tim. 1:2–3).

Fall has arrived again and winter is just around the corner. The first snow was just reported in Southern Germany and suddenly we realize that another year has come to a close. God’s creation of nature has turned into a fast-changing kaleidoscope of beauty, which often reminds us of the rolling hills of the Blue Ridge mountains in Georgia. We can’t help the sense of homesickness. As nature has produced its harvest, farmers plowed the weary soil; as vineyards have yielded their heavy load of luscious fruit, it seems that all nature has come to a rest. Yes, it was a good harvest in Germany, a crop beyond expectation. But as the farmers, so we must learn to wait for the spiritual harvest. As we reflect on our own lives, we can’t help but to marvel in awe, considering the countless seeds God has planted during those years we have returned to the mission field of our native country, Germany. Though the harvest is indeed ripe, the workers are few! We, as a family, are deeply grateful that the Lord of harvest has chosen us to be His vessels in His vineyard. But walking by

faith and grace, we are also keenly aware of our limitation. We don’t dare to claim a stake in His harvest as our own. It is He who is at work—in us and through us—both to work and to will for His own good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). He is forever the vine; we are the branches. He is the treasure within; we His containers. No longer we—but Christ in us. How wonderful and profoundly astounding!

As we celebrate Christ-mas in a few weeks, it is our prayer that the Christ born in Bethlehem has found His manger in your heart. Christ-mas happens in your heart when Jesus is born in you. It is the prerequisite of the *“Ye must be born again”* in (John 3:3). Only when the Christ-mas celebration happens in our own souls, and Christ is born within, then will we know the joy and thrill that true redemption has come! The glorious message of hope and salvation must go forth and be proclaimed to the uttermost part of our sin-bound universe. There will be great rejoicing in the land, for those who were formerly dead will be made alive. *“Christ in us, the hope of glory”* (Col. 1:27) will be our prayer this Christ-mas for you and us. Let us become so transparent that others can see the risen Christ in us! Joy to the world, the Lord has come! Amen. †

JAMES

The Half Brother Of Jesus

By Frank Stigall



Synopses

It is not commonly known that the Epistle of James was not fully accepted in the canon of Scripture until the end of the fourth century. Evidently, the people that lived before this time did not believe that the Epistle of James measured up to the standards of the teachings of Paul. The contents of the Epistle of James fit perfectly with the gospel of the kingdom to the Jews. If we are trying to group all of the New Testament into one category for the born-again believers, then the book of James presents real contradictions and unsolvable problems. However, if we understand that it is written to the Jews (the twelve tribes scattered abroad) in context with this kingdom message or circumcision message, then its contents make perfect sense. However, we will see that churches of today use the Epistle of James as though it is part of the grace message. James says in his own epistle to whom he is addressing. *“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting”* (James 1:1).

I will try to show some differences between the Epistles of Paul and the Epistle of James. The first thing we can see about the Epistle of James is that he is rather heavy in law, which is keeping in step with the kingdom message. There is a fundamental difference between the grace message given to Paul and the kingdom message given to Israel.

Anointing with Oil

The anointing with oil, found about 191 times in the Old Testament and used mostly in dedication and consecration of something or someone to God, was an acceptable practice among Israelites

(Ex. 29:2; 29:7; 30:31; Ps. 23:5). Knowing where in the Bible this anointing was practiced and who practiced it tells us if this is valid for today and if it really matters for healing? *“Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church. Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord”* (James 5:14–16).

This is not worth making a fuss over. It is just one of those things that doesn’t matter. I just wanted you to know where it came from and that it is part of the law message. However, without question, many in the grace message practice this ritual not knowing they are practicing a legalistic ritual. James said to do this, so it is done without question.

We have at least one more reference to the anointing with oil in the New Testament in connection with healing. *“And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them”* (Mark 6:13). We must remember this Scripture was given when people were under law.

The whole Epistle of James is somewhat like reading the Sermon on the Mount. You receive something because you have done the necessary works. For instance, James advocates healing by confessing your fault’s one to another. This might be good if you have offended someone. However, I do not recommend that you go around telling someone all your faults. It may put you in a vulnerable position for someone to gossip about you.

More than One James

There were about three men in the Bible who were named James. The James that was martyred was a true apostle of Jesus. He was one of the “sons of thunder,” his brother was John who wrote the

gospel and the epistles that bare his name. Jesus had four half brothers. Two wrote epistles that bear their names, James and Jude. Acts 1:13 says Jude was the brother of James. All three are listed in Luke 6:14–16.

Examine the Evidence

Christians have the right to examine the evidence, even though few do. We should do so to separate fiction from truth; and the kingdom message from the grace message. This does not do any dishonor to the Word. The real Word of God can stand the acid test. *“These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”* (Acts 17:11). So, we have to question why James said anointing with oil was necessary for healing while Paul on the other hand makes no mention of oil associated with healing. In fact, Paul has no doctrine on healing, even though he did practice healing from time to time. Paul never focused on healing, and never once mentioned any of the healings of Jesus.

James and Politics

James, the half brother of Jesus, became the head of the Jerusalem church. We are not told how this was accomplished. It is my opinion that this was a political move on the part of James and not a God-given position. James is called an apostle in Galatians 1:19 by Paul, but the rendition of the Greek says that he was an apostle of a different kind. This most likely means that he was elected to that position by the Jerusalem church. He was not a real apostle, appointed of the Lord.

When the Apostle Peter got out of jail, he instructed his friends to go tell James. James must have had the superior position in the church in Jerusalem at this time. According to Jesus, this church was slated for destruction, and in 70 A.D. it was destroyed. *“We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands”* (Mark 14:58). One can only conclude this church was ship wrecked spiritually because of their rejection of Jesus as king, not once but twice. Paul, on the other hand, was called by Jesus to be an apostle and declare the mystery of

Christ among the Gentiles. He never positioned himself as the head of the Church of Christ, but always gave that title to Jesus.

Faith and Works

If you have been studying about the mystery, the birthing, and salvation through faith of Christ, then you will find the things in James do not quite add up with the epistles of Paul. I ask the reader to compare the few Scriptures in James with those given by the Apostle Paul. I think anyone can see that James emphasizes works to have faith and Paul emphasizes that you cannot be justified by works but by faith in Jesus Christ. It is commonly believed that this is one of the main reasons the Epistle of James was not included in the Scripture in the first four centuries.

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (James 2:14) *“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works”* (James 2:18). *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”* (James 2:24).

“But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.... Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone” (Rom. 9:31–32).

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).

James never mentions the resurrection of Jesus Christ in his epistle. There is no record that he ever performed any miracle, no record of his conversion, no record that he spoke in tongues. There is nothing to suggest that he has repented or changed in any way, other than to ascend to the head of the Jerusalem church.

James and Paul both say, Abraham had imputed righteousness, but Paul adds that the born-again have righteousness by the obedience of Christ (Acts 5:19). Both ways produced righteous, but in different dispensations. Therefore, imputed righteousness is no longer available, but born-again righteousness

is. Therefore, in the Epistle of James the imputed righteousness by works is no longer valid. Both worked, in their own time and under two separate plans of God. Two separate puzzles do not fit together. Separate them, and they both fit as intended. The Father never intended for the kingdom message to fit the grace message.

Peter and James

It is commonly believed that Jesus handpicked Peter to be the head of the Jerusalem church (Matt. 16:17–19). To Peter, God gave the revelation of who Jesus really was; it was to him that Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom. That speaks to me as one that has the authority. Peter was the person who was to take charge. On the day of Pentecost, Peter did just that, he stood up and took charge. He preached a great message beginning at Acts 2:9. It was a kingdom message out of the book of Joel. He also pointed his finger at Israel and explained how they had crucified the Lord of glory. There is no evidence that Jesus ever changed his mind and selected James to be the head of the Church. There is no record that James ever preached the grace message or that he ever led anyone to the Lord or performed any miracle. However, the record of James shows that he pursued the law message.

Most likely there was a power play after the ascension of Christ. James was a lover of the law and Jesus said, *“the world would love him.”* Reading of the Scriptures shows James has a certain contempt for Jesus. The legalistic Jews must have seen this in James and considered it a good quality in him. I have no doubt that James was an active voice in the Jerusalem church for quiet some time to have gained his position. Peter, most likely, was caught up in his miracles-working ministries and did not want to run the Jerusalem church. His life was in danger many times from that very church of which he was supposed to be the head. Herod put the Apostle James (son of Zebedee) to death and saw that it pleased the Jews, therefore, he laid hold of Peter with the

intentions of putting him to death also. But an angel of the Lord intervened. There is no record that James, the half brother of Jesus, lifted a finger to prevent the killing of the Apostle James or to intervene for Peter.

James and Paul

Acts 21 also troubles me, not so much about what Luke has written, but by what is not written. You can see from reading this chapter Paul the apostle was present to celebrate the Day of Pentecost. Several people told him by the Spirit not to go, but he went anyway. I suppose he was zealous for the Israelite brothers to hear his message. On the Day of Pentecost the city would be overflowing with people.



In order not to labor the story, when some of the Jews recognized Paul they considered him to be a traitor so they ganged up on him and began to beat him. They would have killed him, however, the Roman soldiers came to his rescue, saving his life. Now this is the unwritten part. James was there and talking to Paul before the entire ruckus started. Don't forget James is the head of this powerful Jerusalem church. We have no record that James tried in any way to save Paul, at that time or later. Circumstantial evidence is heavy enough to say James cared little for the life of Paul, Peter and the Apostle James. I could not by any stretch of the imagination call James a friend of the message of grace.

Summary

Paul, the apostle appointed directly by Christ, clearly teaches a grace message. It is centered in our faith in Christ and His finished work on the Cross plus nothing else. This is the only true gospel today for the born-again believer. We must realize that James, while called an apostle, was appointed by man and not directly by Christ. He clearly teaches a kingdom message and a gospel with law and works, which was intended only for the Jew. It is neither written to, nor for the born-again believer today. We must “rightly divide” the Word of truth, and look primarily to the epistles of Paul for God's revealed message to the body of Christ for today. †

The able author Gretchen Gaebelein Hull accurately observes, “It would have been easier for us if Jesus had set down a nice, definitive family-values list. But the one who searches the thoughts and intents of our hearts knows us too well for that...we would have slid into a sterile legalism by upholding that list and that list alone” (Priscilla Papers/Spring 2001:15:2).

The specter of legalism looms large over much of Christianity which attempts to establish health, wealth and happiness in the here and now. That these attributes elude the vast majority of believers and leaves them bitterly disappointed and disillusioned does not daunt these purveyors of illusion. Under grace, we come to a different conclusion regarding what is temporary and what is permanent in this life. Family is temporary and therefore subject to change—much change as we witness in our everyday lives. When we glimpse the vast, eternal, permanent plan of God, we will come to a place of peace in the matter of family, even if we do not experience equanimity in our earthly relationships.

When Jesus was part of an earthly house, he gave us many statements that reflect the Father’s view of family. In Luke 2:49 we have the classic response to his anxious mother’s inquiry as to where he had been. “*Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?*” Thereby declaring a higher allegiance. On yet another occasion when he was told that his earthly family sought him, he answered—as He often did—with a question. “*Who is my mother, or my brothers?*” Then He looked around and declared that whoever did the will of God is His real family (Mark 3:31–35). It was Jesus of Nazareth who, on recruiting His disciples, called family something to be forsaken rather than clung to.

When we identify only with our kith and kin—no matter how joyously close-knit we may be—at the expense of our identity with Christ and His body, the Church, we miss the larger picture in place from before the foundation of the earth—that we are destined for the Father’s house. The Apostle Paul speaks sparingly about earthly relationships except when they reflect God’s bigger plan. As when he writes

about the marriage relationship that he concludes is really referring to Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32). In the same epistle, chapter 3:14–15, he declares that from heaven’s perspective, Father God is the parent of the whole family, both in heaven and on earth. These examples offer a wider window on the definition of family, a less constraining view of relationships and an expansive open field of possibilities for those whose earthly bonds have broken down.

The attempts to equate success with a whole and happy family makes so many of us hurt afresh from the wounds that life circumstances have inflicted. When there is no present under the tree for a missing child, when a long-looked-for prodigal has yet to return for Thanksgiving dinner, or when divorce leaves an aching empty place at the Christmas holiday table, we need to know that our family is bigger than the four walls of any house or home.

Our family is God’s family and it spans the ages and the acres of the globe. C.S. Lewis wrote, “Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.” We already have reservations to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb where the food is the best and the wine is the finest. Where there will be no empty spaces at the table. No one stirs up strife, for no one feels inferior or left out, and eyes that were previously dimmed with disappointment now sparkle with the reflected light that illuminates every corner of our heavenly home. The Son, Himself, is that light.

So, whatever your plans, dreams or expectations as you come together this festive season, enjoy the incomparable warmth, comfort and joy of family when it is at its best. As one of my little grandsons says of his holiday hopes, “Colorado is where dreams come true!” But, should the dreams disintegrate, don’t let sadness sit in the empty chair; instead invite the presence of hope to grace the table, then rejoice and be merry, for we are in the one who calls us His family. We are those who do the will of God—letting Christ rule and reign in our hearts by faith. Until we all gather in the Father’s house, we will never be fully satisfied with the earthly shadow of family, no matter how full, fun or festive. †



The Sentence Of Death



By Dexter Byrd

“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9).

Many believers who come to know and understand this message find it hard to be faithful to that which they know. The circumstances and situations (C&S) in life seem to come against everything that they seem to be. It has always been my deceptive desire that if I can only come to understand, to know what the will of God is, then all would be well; I could even find joy in bad situations (Rom. 5:1–5). It’s hard to find joy when it seems that your world is falling apart around you. Only a fool would say that it doesn’t affect him. I say this because we are only now starting to catch a glimpse of what Paul teaches concerning this subject. We are learning Christ, but making it practical is another matter.

C&S

God has designed this world where we will always have the C&S to push us to an understanding of who He has created us to be. We all have a false imagination of who we would like to be, but the C&S won’t allow us to make it work. I can well remember this about my three children. I had in my mind an image of what I wanted all of them to be. I wanted them to be well-educated and successful in life so they could be happy, but none of this happened. This is not to say that they are unhappy, but I can safely say that they didn’t go down the road that I had prepared in my mind for them. C&S changed it all. I can now look back and say that

everything that happened works for good to them that love the Lord because all three of them know only this Christ-life message.

Moving On

Regardless of what happens in the C&S, I have found that the world keeps moving on. Things change and our understanding and everyday life must adapt to these changes. I can remember the first time I heard this message that Christ lives in the creature, about twenty-five years ago. It seemed the most foolish thing I had ever heard, as I was raised in a holiness church. In my mind I said that I would never accept such a foolish doctrine as this. Of course, it was revelation from the Holy Spirit that brought me to accept the joy of this truth, but there were also many C&S that pushed me toward searching the Scriptures for this truth.

God intends that every child in His family move on in knowledge and understanding. I believe that when we accept this truth and willingly move on, the C&S become less bothersome to the real you. I saw on TV the other night a video of a man who was having trouble with his car. He didn’t know how to fix it so he just got out and began to beat the thing to pieces. It had all sorts of bent places in the hood. It would have been easier to just call a mechanic who knew what the problem was than to beat his fist to a bloody pulp. This is the way most believers do when a situation arrives that calls for knowledge and understanding. Instead of looking for someone who knows the way through it, they wage war against something that may well have been sent by God.

The False You

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more” (Phil. 3:4). It is clear that there are two means by which we can approach the C&S. The first, and most prominent in our mind, is by the flesh. What is Paul referring to here? In some places the flesh means simply this body of flesh that we live in. In many other places it means that our soul-mind and the body work together to handle the C&S. Regardless of the outcome or result of the C&S, God is not pleased when we do this. This is contrary to religion in which we were raised, but let's look at it further.

The Mind of the Flesh

“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). This verse doesn't say that if you fast and pray and make a good decision things will work out and God will be pleased. It says that anything that is done based on your own self-interest cannot please God. We have studied long and hard to make things work for the better and things just seem to get worse. We have fasted, prayed and given more than demanded by religion and things look worse than ever before. Christians are going nuts trying to make it work. There is an Old Testament commandment that always pops up in my mind when I attempt to do something to improve God's image. *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness [of any thing] that [is] in heaven above, or that [is] in the earth beneath, or that [is] in the water under the earth”* (Ex. 20:4). We do this all the time. We would like for the world to see in us an image that pleases them. Remember James, the half brother of Jesus, who negotiated with the Romans so that he could become the ruler over the early church? This is part of the graven image that God rejects.

The Sentence of Death

“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9). Paul's C&S were outward, but inwardly he had the sentence of the death of the Cross. Our problem is that we don't understand what happened at the Cross. Because of this, we fight a war of the flesh. The Spirit-life within is held

in check by this war. We haven't moved on by what we do know and it allows sins of the flesh to rule in our life. The old mind and body (this makes up the old man of Romans 6:6) rules over who we are by a new birth, and we allow it to be so because we keep Christ in the rocking chair refusing to allow Him to be who He is in us. Many of us know about the finished work of the Cross, and we find joy in placing it right in the lap of Christ in His rocking chair as though it was only Him who went through death. It becomes useless, but it makes a pretty mantelpiece for others to brag about.

“For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Tim. 4:10). It makes no difference which decision you make when it comes to suffering. You will suffer anyway. The problem is most believers would rather believe that they have control over the C&S. What a lie this is! All things are of God or nothing is of God. Accept this and trust God to do what He is doing in your life. Accept the sentence of death and move on with God. Here is the joy of Romans 5. This gives you the liberty to be who God created you to be.

Why the Sufferings?

It seems that the finished work of the Cross is sufficient to please God. God has given us the Holy Spirit to teach us these things and to guide us into all truth. He teaches us by revealing His Son in us (Gal. 1:15–16). He guides us into all truth by using the C&S. When we are being led this means we have placed our trust in the one who does the leading. This speaks of our “moving on” or growth in maturity. Most of us love to have Christ revealed in us. What a joy this is. But few find joy in being led into the truth that we see by revelation. Remember the nation of Israel and her walk through the wilderness. She complained and grumbled about everything. God was leading her into a new way of living, and she resented it every step of the way. There is little difference in the average believer today.

For His Sake

“For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:11). Have you ever thought on

the level that the sufferings we face are for the sake of somebody else? We don't even want to think about that, do we? Since the finished work of the Cross is complete and true, why then do we have to go through all the daily situations? Until recently, I thought it was for my sake because I reasoned that the more C&S I went through the sooner things would get better. Once again, poor ole' Jesus was set aside for my own selfishness. In the last couple of years, things seemed to get better. The C&S came along but were not as devastating as before. I reasoned again that I must be better because God was giving me a break. But there was still a place of emptiness within me that needed to be filled. What was missing?

"So then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:12). The sentence of death in you is no good unless life is shared with others. It becomes head knowledge, even though it is true. This was a deception that Satan led the early and modern-day churches into. The result is that a graven image has been made by man's hands. To know to do good and not do it is sin. This is a life that must be shared by the body of Christ. It is for the sake of Jesus that we die daily. Each day must be lived in the reality that we are living containers of His life, and God's intention is that all His children understand and be led into this truth. Life comes out of death; and when we acknowledge our death in Christ and live according to that truth, others will see this life. We suffer that others might have joy.

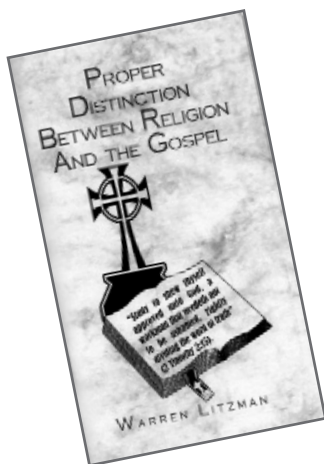
God's Intention

Most people really don't trust God during C&S. We say we do because we were told to do that, even in holiness churches. But they never said "trust God—period." Something was always added which voided the trust. I see all denominations doing this to their people. Trust God, but do something. Why not just trust Him and see what He will do. The problem usually arises when He does nothing. That's when death is *"working in you."* During this time, will you pass the sentence of death on the C&S or will you give God another five minutes to straighten it out? You may as well wait because the C&S will come around again if the flesh prevails

Trust God

This sets your new mind on the road to walk after the Spirit. It is freedom to be who you find happiness and peace in. You become aware that Christ really does live in you and is your only life. Whatever happens, learn to trust God even when you don't understand the reason for it. Remember Isaac being sacrificed by Abraham? God knows that we don't understand the reason why He does a lot of things, but He still allows these things in our life for the sake of Jesus. The sentence of the finished work of the Cross is final. The false me can't be revived. *"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). †

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