



new wine

NOVEMBER 1973

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
DEDICATED TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH

TAKING A BEARING ON
DIVINE GUIDANCE

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STEWARDSHIP STIRS READERS

Praise the Lord for the September issue — the Lord has been trying to get through to my wife and me about finances, and via the Forum and Brother Prince's article I have realized the lies I had been listening to about tithing. God has shown me my false, greedy, rationalizing heart. I might love Him, but I apparently don't trust Him very much. I've been saying, "Lord, when I finish my training and pay off my loans, then I'll start to really give to you." Only it never works that way and we have been slowly getting into deeper financial water despite being quite careful with our money. Now I know clearly that God is asking us to act on His Word and to be faithful to Him.

B.S.
Madison, Wis.

In reading the Forum section in your September magazine on stewardship, I thought perhaps some observations might be in order. Your weaving tithing so strongly into this article was not convincing to me. So far as I can determine, the word *tithe* is not used anywhere in the New Testament in the context of New Testament Christianity. However, the word *stewardship* is taught continually, both directly, and indirectly. As I understand the New Testament teaching on this, we are not taxed by God for anything. God's mercies are given to us on the basis of grace alone, as we live under this dispensation now, and not the law.

It has been my observation over the years that many church leaders do not seem to trust the Holy Spirit's work in man's heart to convert the selfish heart of the natural man, to the generous heart of the converted man, so they substitute the tax aspect of the law in the form of tithes to force what they think is additional revenue to run the church.

While I freely admit that we who are under the grace of our wonderful Lord should do better in this area of giving than those under law, I also think that we need to get involved in all aspects of Christ's ministry for us in "seeking and saving" the lost, and not get hung up on the Old Testament legalism as attractive as it may seem at times.

G.K.R.
Storm Lake, Ia.

NEW WINE IN UNIFORM

I was forwarded a copy of NEW WINE by an Air Force captain. As I read I knew I should have a subscription. I would also like a copy of "The Best of New Wine" so I can catch up on what I have missed.

I am at present stationed in Thailand with the U.S. Air Force. When I first got here I thought I had landed in Sodom and Gomorrah. However, when I made a trip to



the chapel I soon discovered that there were several hundred good men here.

The Thai people respond slowly to the gospel. Countless generations of Buddha worship has certainly built up a wall of Satanic resistance to any Christian message. The miracles that confirm the Word seem to be the most effective weapon against the Satanic wall of deceit. Among the military men the Word goes forth with good results, bringing back powerful testimonies of new-found freedom from heroin, alcohol, sex hang-ups and even solutions to marital problems.

R.P.C.
Thailand

NEW WINE has been a blessing to me through the copies received by a brother here. Praise God, His Spirit is working everywhere! I did not expect to find much fellowship when I came to Germany via the Air Force three years ago. But I discovered people who served God out of a genuine love for Him. God baptized me in His Spirit, and my life has been changed! My experience is only one of many in the military here, as well as the civilian community.

Bless God, He feeds the hungry!

F.T.
Germany

Just to fill you in, there are a number of Spirit-filled coffeehouses (military-run) here in Germany. The one where I fellowship is "The Two Roads Coffeehouse" and is next door to my barracks. All of the GI's in charge are Spirit-filled. The Assembly of

God group in Germany holds monthly meetings at Erchausen, Germany, where several hundred Spirit-filled Christians (mainly military) from all over Germany meet together. They are expecting approximately 1,000 at their annual retreat.

S.B.G.
Germany

GOD'S INSIDE WORK

I want to thank you very much for your fine magazine. It is a very informative publication.

I am 28 years old and an inmate at the Indiana Reformatory. I have been a Christian only eight months now. I was baptized with the Holy Spirit only six months ago. There are only two other Spirit-filled believers that I am aware of in here.

The thing I appreciate about your magazine is that it follows the teaching of the Bible and doesn't put forth any half-truths or false beliefs.

R.R.
Indiana Reformatory

I am writing in regards to a young man who just recently met Christ and got the Baptism of the Holy Ghost in the county jail of Kansas City, Kansas. I'd been praying for my husband for five years and he came to Christ in this jail. Due to his stand, six other men turned their lives over to Christ! One of them is now in the Leavenworth penitentiary. I would like for him to receive NEW WINE Magazine! I want him and the others to receive all the guidance and help possible in their brand new walk with Christ.

L.J.

HOW DO YOU READ US?

I condense the main ideas and write them in a little notebook, then I can quickly refer to them. —E.E.P. (Palatka, Fla.)

I read it on the day I receive it, and then reread and reread. —Mrs. D.L.H. (Chama, N.M.)

Numerous times a topic will come up raising questions and I will search back through previous issues and find answers. —Mr. & Mrs. G.M. (Sandston, Va.)

Last night I read NEW WINE from cover to cover and went to bed in peace. —M.D.

Even if one can't swallow all the teachings of NEW WINE he can "take in the fish and spit out the bones." —A.S. (Ferriday, La.)

Editorial

When David was about to do battle with Goliath one of his most serious hindrances came from his fondest well-wisher, King Saul. Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." Then Saul proceeded to put his own armor on David. David was uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the heavy binding armor and put it off in favor of what was his own method of battle, a sling.

The body of Christ must come to realize that everything that is "put on" them may not be from God. Like Saul's armor, "truths" and "methods" which are put on us by a well-meaning brother often bring more bondage than help. The results of the "put on" feeling is a sense of wanting to rebel, being hemmed in, or a feeling of not having quite arrived spiritually.

"Putting on" is commonly expressed in "sharing" what God has shown individuals about their own lives: "We don't need savings accounts or life insurance any more. . . it is idolatrous to watch television. . . if you want your eyes healed, throw away your glasses. . . what you need. . . etc."

Part of maturity is realizing that another's word from the Lord may be *just for him*, and God's word *to you* may not be for the entire body of Christ.

A father may tell one of his sons to study algebra and allow another son to go play football. The father's decision reflects his understanding of the needs of each of his boys, as well as their maturity and ability.

Likewise, God may require something of us because of a need to protect us, to teach us a truth about Himself, to fulfill a need in the body of Christ, or as a test of obedience — any of which can be representative of God's dealing with us at our own particular stage of growth. But we need not put on each other what God has required of us. If *He* required it of us, then *He* can require it of another.

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IT MATTERS WHERE YOU GET IT

by Charles Simpson

Seeking guidance apart from God has always been expensive beyond calculation



Either man is the chance happening of incidental and accidental forces, or he is the premeditated product of God's eternal purpose. If we believe that man is created, it is foolish to neglect the Creator's counsel. It is also foolish to seek counsel from other sources than those designated by Him.

"Advice is cheap"; so is guidance. But the cost of following cheap advice or guidance may be expensive beyond calculation. Correct counsel will lead to righteousness, joy and peace. Psalm 1 plainly declares, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked. . . . But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does he prospers. . . ."

GUIDANCE: YOUR MOTIVE MATTERS

Isn't it enough just to ask God for guidance or are there some conditions that must be met before He will guide?

One day I was praying (me, a sound, orthodox, fundamental Baptist preacher of the Gospel truth), "Lord I want to preach the *truth*. . . . You know I don't want to be in error. Help me to preach the truth — *the whole truth!*"

Slowly, this question began to form in my mind, "Why do you want to preach the truth? Do you want to preach the truth because you want the people to know the truth? Or, do you want to preach the truth so that people will think, 'HE really knows the truth!'" I began to realize that my motive mattered to God. My motive would determine what I did with the truth and how I communicated it.

"Lord," I prayed on one occasion, "send revival to our land. We *need* revival."

"Do you really want revival?" the question came.

"Lord, I want revival more than anything!"

"Then, Charles, you wouldn't mind if I use some other group as the instrument to bring it."

"Oh, Lord. . . . you wouldn't!"

Our motive matters. Do we want revival no matter who is used or do we want to be known as the ones who brought it.

There are basically two motives for seeking guidance. One is self-preservation, the other is self-sacrifice. Self-preservation involves trying to get God to bless *your* plan, help *you* out of a jam, or imposing *your* will on a situation (in Jesus' name, of course). This is a common motive for prayer because self-preservation is a basic human instinct. The error and danger of this motive is subtle. God does help

us in a time of trouble and He does promise prosperity, but don't overlook the fine print: "And we know that all things work together for good *to them that love God and who are called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28). Real prosperity must be linked to the will of God. The most dangerous thing that could happen would be for God to prosper one who is moving out of His will toward destruction. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

Real repentance is not just turning from our bad habits; it is turning from the practice of running our own lives. We do not merely *have* a problem. We *are* the problem. Repentance is turning self over to God — future and all.

In ancient days, kings ruled by "divine right." It was commonly believed that God established them and he who resisted the king resisted God. Therefore, kings were the legislative, executive and judicial power. They made and enforced the law. There was no voting on the matter. Later, parliaments or legal assemblies were formed to balance sovereign authority. In governments where kings still remain, they are usually "constitutional monarchs." That is, the parliament makes the laws and the king gives his approval. Modern kings are usually mere "figureheads."

Many of us want Jesus to be that kind of king, a constitutional monarch. We make the rules and He blesses our decisions — a figurehead king. Naturally, all of our decisions will preserve and prosper ourselves since “the Kingdom” exists for our benefit. This is dangerous thinking because it is a delusion. We cannot relate to God on that basis. In fact, God is sovereign in His kingdom. He still “works all things after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11 NAS). There is no voting and the kingdom exists for His honor and glory. His subjects are convinced, by experience, that He knows best. They know that given the opportunity His purpose will ultimately be more fulfilling than their own.

There is, however, a basic requirement to knowing the will of God and being led in it: One must be willing to sacrifice himself . . . and what may *seem* to be best in his own eyes (Luke 14:25–35). This is what the apostle is saying when he says, “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to *present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice*, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual (or rational) service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may *prove what the will of God is*. . . .” (Romans 12:1,2 NAS). Before knowing the will of God one must eliminate the clamor of self-preservation; that spells “self-sacrifice.” Lay it down. Then, God can be heard without prejudiced motive.

The big question now is, why do we want to know the guidance of God? Is it to further our own ends, or decorate our own plans with a religious facade? Is it to fulfill our success drive, or is it to find our place in God’s eternal purpose? Your motive will make all the difference as you approach Him who searches the heart.

Isaiah 58 is a vital chapter to every child of God. In it we see a very religious people who were not heard when they prayed — though they did all the right things (vs. 1–5). I discovered in this chapter, that one could do the right things (i.e. study,

pray, give, fast, etc.) for the wrong reasons. Religion can be a means to feed one’s ego, “to win points with God” or “to out debate those of other persuasions.” When one does all these things but continues to oppress his family, neglect the needy, or fails to be compassionate, he reveals a motive of self-preservation. If, on the other hand, his motive is selfless, God guarantees, “I will guide you continually” (Isaiah 58:11). In other words, God says, “If you are burdened for others, I’ll take care of your burdens.”

The key to receiving guidance from the Lord is not a superabundance of religious activity, knowledge or vocabulary, but a willingness to lose one’s life in Christ’s purpose — redemption. “In all your ways acknowledge His Lordship and He will direct your path” (Proverbs 3:6).

GUIDANCE: WHY WE NEED IT

Briefly, two solid reasons can be cited for seeking God’s guidance: *We do not know ourselves; God does.* “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick (or wicked); Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart” (Jeremiah 17:9,10 NAS). It is naive to be self-reliant in the face of this fact. We only discover ourselves in the eternal purpose of God. God says to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you” (1:4 NAS). David declares, “For thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb . . . My frame was not hidden from thee, when I was made in secret . . . Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in thy book they were all written” (Psalm 139:13–16 NAS). God knows best where we fit in His eternal plan. Only He can lead us into that place of purposefulness.

There is another vital reason for seeking God’s guidance: *We do not know the future; God does.* Jesus said, “When the Spirit is come . . . He will show you what is to come” (John 16:13). If the Spirit can show us, then He must know.

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning . . .” (Acts 16:18 KJV). “Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning . . .?” (Isaiah 41:4 KJV). “Ask me about the things to come concerning my sons . . .” (Isaiah 45:11 NAS). In order to endure, present investment must consider the future.

We are in the midst of international realignment. Monetary and political systems are in a state of fluctuation. More new nations have emerged in our generation than any other. Enemies have become friends and vice versa. Fortunes have been caught in the crunch. False investment of one’s resources, abilities or ambitions means disaster. The Scriptures speak of an international, political and economical collapse at some future date. But one cannot back away from the swirling sociological streams and simply play it safe. We have a commission out there. We need guidance!

GUIDANCE: THE SIGNIFICANCE IN ASKING FOR IT

“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church” (Ephesians 5:23 NAS).

One of the chief functions of the head is to guide the body. With its senses, intelligence and nerve control the *head directs the body*. Christ is the head of the church. This statement declares Christ’s ministry of guiding and directing the church. *Wherever one receives his guidance, there is also his (or her) headship*. This is a most significant principle. The right to guide belongs to the head. A sincere request for guidance is an admission of headship.

Then God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship

Charles Simpson, former Southern Baptist pastor, travels widely as a teacher and conference speaker from his home in Gautier, Mississippi.

them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving-kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (Exodus 20:1-6 NAS).

"I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." Jealous of what? Jealous of Israel. Israel was His purchased possession, brought out of slavery. God had established His eternal covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. Israel was to Him as a wife (Jeremiah 3, Hosea 2). They were His people. He had the right to guide. His warning was in essence, "idolatry gives way to adultery" (relating to another head). Generations later, Israel ignored the warning of God and erected idols in the groves and on the hills (Jeremiah 3:6-10).

Guidance by any spirit other than the Holy Spirit is a relationship that God calls spiritual harlotry. God views it as a husband would view his wife having an affair with another man. Israel drew near to God with their lips . . . but their hearts were elsewhere. For this cause, God divorced Israel (the northern ten tribes).

When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and

because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 18:9-13 NAS).

When Israel was facing the new land, God took time to soberly remind them that He was their head. They were not to be seduced by diviners, astrologers, communers with the dead, witches, etc. He took pains to catalogue the sort of things He meant. He spelled out His hatred for such practices. Not only did such activity steal His beloved's affection and detour from His glorious eternal purpose, but these delusions led back into slavery from which they had so recently been delivered. One has but to visit countries where these spiritual adulteries are practiced to see the bondage brought about by them.

FALSE GUIDANCE: THE FALL OF A NATION

Can God give territories to whom ever He wills? Is the earth the Lord's and the fullness thereof? Yes, indeed! Did God give Israel the land or *did they steal it*? If He did not give them the land, then they did steal it. One or the other is true. The Scriptures declare that God, the rightful owner, *gave the land to Israel* (Genesis 17). Was God unjust in driving out the former inhabitants or was there a valid reason?

"For those nations which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so" (Deuteronomy 18:14 NAS). God's reason for dispossessing the nations was witchcraft, divination and false guidance. They were spiritual harlots involved with seducing spirits. Such guidance had led them into permissiveness and immorality, even to the literal practice of adultery in worship. Does the principle still prevail or did God only so deal with that generation? "But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in

the things which you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them" (II Timothy 3:13,14 NAS).

"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and the end of the age? . . . And Jesus answered and said unto them, '*See to it that no one misleads you . . .*'" (Matthew 24:3,4 NAS).

The Spanish came to these shores for gold but the land was not given to them; the French came for trade, but the land was not given to them; the pilgrims came seeking freedom to worship the Lord God, and they inherited the land.

"Brother Charles," a school teacher was looking at me through tears, "it was not long ago that the Bible was read each morning over our school intercom. Now the astrology chart is read each day."

"We are transferring our daughter to another school," a mother said to me recently.

"Why?" I asked.

"The first grade teacher is a witch!"

"A witch? You mean you don't like her?"

"No, I mean, she is an avowed, practicing witch. She has said so publicly." I caught my breath.

Most major newspapers carry "astro guides," etc. It is safe to say that *more professing Christians read the astrological projections for guidance than read the Word of God.*

If God doesn't deal with America, He will have to apologize to the American Indians, the Amorites, Amalakites, Jebusites and others who have been dispossessed according to Deuteronomy 18:14. *America's most serious problem is spiritual adultery.* The blessings of proper guidance, and cursings of false guidance are catalogued in Deuteronomy 28. The pronouncements of the Lord have been sustained repeatedly by history.

When men are guided by other gods, here are some of the results: (1) Cities and countryside will be cursed; (2) National confusion — the inability to accomplish objectives; (3) Pestilence and disease; (4) Long droughts followed by torrential eroding rains;

(5) Inability to defeat enemies; (6) Hemorrhoids and skin diseases become prevalent; (7) Increase of insanity and mental disorders; (8) Criminal oppression and "shake down" rackets from which there is no judicial reprieve; (9) Unfaithfulness of wives. Women become vulnerable to seduction as men turn from God; (10) A foreign people will eat agricultural products (results are scarcity and high prices).

GUIDANCE: HOW GOD SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the Lord your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, let me not see this great fire any more, lest I die." And the Lord said to me, "They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him" (Deuteronomy 18:15-19 NAS).

While the Lord had explicitly forbade certain means of seeking guidance, He reiterated His chosen way of guiding His people. "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen." The subsequent history of the Old Testament is a parade of men of God, chosen from among Israel to deliver the word of God to His people. When Israel hearkened, she prospered. When Israel rejected, she declined.

John the Baptist was accepted as a prophet in Israel; so was Jesus (Matthew 21:11,26,46). John was called "more than a prophet" by Jesus. Jesus, Himself, was "The Prophet." A prophet essentially is one who speaks for God. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Isaiah 40:3). He is God's spokesman.

Jesus endorsed the ministry of

prophets and exhorted his disciples to receive true prophets (Matthew 10:41). The ministry of prophets continued in the New Testament church. Agabus was called a prophet (Acts 11:27,28) as was Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32). The church at Antioch had prophets as did the church at Corinth (Acts 13; I Corinthians 14:29) and probably all the other New Testament churches. The ministry of prophet was one of the five given to the church for its maturation (Ephesians 4:11). The context indicates that the ministry of prophet, like the others, will be with the church until it has come to full stature.

It should be stated that the office of prophet and the ministry of those in the assembly who from time to time prophesy, is not synonymous. The office is a man raised up by God from among the people. In Ephesians 4:11, the man is a gift of Christ to His body (as are Apostles, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers). These are the gifts of *Christ's ministry to His body*. In I Corinthians 12:8-10 another word for gift is used. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit *in the body*. One of these gifts is prophecy. Every believer is exhorted to covet that gift and at the proper time may exercise it. The exercising of that gift is to be judged by the prophets and the assembly (I Corinthians 14:29, I Thessalonians 5:20,21). So there is the office of prophet. He is raised up by the Lord and given *to the church* to speak for the Lord. Then there is the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy that is set *in the church* and is available to the whole body. These ministries tend to bring a balance to each other. Both are designed to operate in the context of the assembly - the church. They are not private possessions (I Corinthians 12:18).

While Israel had one tribe set aside as priests (Levi), the church is a *kingdom of priests* (I Peter 2:9). This means that we all have access to the throne through the redemptive work of Christ Jesus (Hebrews 4:16). The Holy Spirit indwells us all (Romans 8:9). The possibility that we may all

prophesy (I Corinthians 14:31,39) is not only exciting but enlightening. We can all receive *direct* guidance as well as *indirect* guidance through the office ministries of Apostle, Prophet, Shepherd and Teacher. It is when both means of guidance agree, that we are assured of our leading. Neither the subjective leading of the Spirit, nor the office ministries were designed to stand alone in guiding the New Testament saint. There is plenty of scripture exhorting us to seek both.

GUIDANCE: THE SERIOUSNESS OF MISREPRESENTATION

In Deuteronomy 18 the Lord has warned Israel not to refuse the ministry of a prophet. A solemn responsibility has been placed upon Israel. Our enemy, Satan, would like nothing better than to use the sincerity of God's people to his advantage.

Satan might well have said, "If they will not go after spiritism to be beguiled, I'll raise up false prophets. The false prophet will either lead them astray or cause them to be disgusted with the office of a prophet so that they reject all prophets."

His plan has worked too often. Then there is often the sincere but misdirected person who has a carnal zeal to prophesy. His words are often true, but of no effect. There is no "amen" in the inner man when his message is delivered. He ran to bring a message but wasn't sent by the Lord.

God, foreseeing that the office of prophet would have lots of "job applications" and would be popular with some wrongly inspired, said, "But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die" (Deuteronomy 18:20 NAS). This is a solemn warning. It was fulfilled in Jeremiah 28. Why is God so severe with false prophecy? Because the prophet is a link between God and His people. God Himself has ordained the office and God has declared His readi-

ness to protect that ministry. We can all be grateful for the mercy of God and His willingness to forbear our ignorance. He is gracious to take into account our motives. The further we develop, the more seriously we will treat means of guidance.

False prophecy generally (not always) has three common traits. It flatters the hearer; it exalts the giver, or serves to establish him as an oracle; and it fails to come to pass as stated.

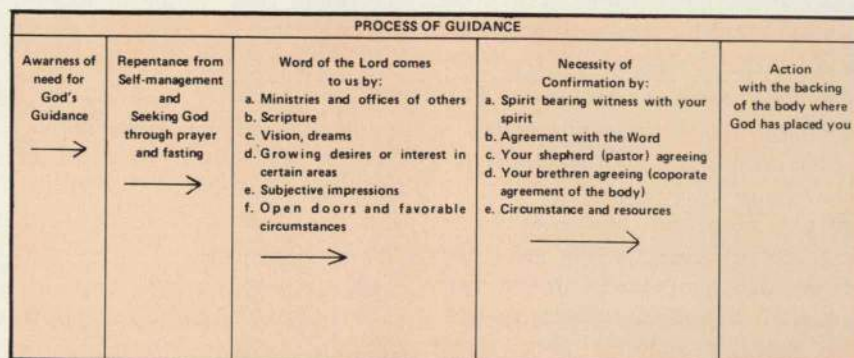
GUIDANCE: HOW SHALL WE KNOW?

And you may say in your heart, "How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?" When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of

from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, because the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:16-21 NAS).

Samuel was known to be a prophet because his word came to pass. He was known by the people *where he ministered*. This is a good pattern.

Jeremiah 23 is one of the best chapters on true and false prophets. One of the outstanding attributes of a man *sent from God* is his message will bring repentance and holiness to God's people (vs. 22). God's word is like a hammer (authority), like fire (purifying), and comes to pass. According to I John 4, the Holy Spirit exalts Jesus, agrees with the written Word, ministers God's love, and will bear witness with the anointing within us (I John 2:20,27).



him (Deuteronomy 18:21,22 NAS)

In this passage the Lord gives a sure way to judge a prophet. Does it happen the way he said it would? This implies that before you accept this ministry you should have had opportunity to judge it.

Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." And he said, "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you." So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him." Thus Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fail. And all Israel

My family and I have often thanked God for His guidance and lamented when we missed. Many instances come to mind. In 1964, Ken Sumrall received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and shared with Ralph Branham (a minister friend) and myself. We too, received and the three of us would often pray together.

One late night, Ken, Ralph and I were at Ralph's church in prayer. As we prayed, we paced the floor seeking after the Lord. Ken and I were walking side by side, heads bowed, worshipping, when we heard Ralph say, "Thus saith the Lord, as you are now walking together in prayer, so shall you walk around the world together and preach the gospel . . ."

At that time I had scarcely preached

out of the county. My first reaction was private. "Lord, you'll have to forgive Ralph. He gets carried away when he gets in prayer. He exaggerates." We praised the Lord and continued in prayer. Years passed and we forgot the prophecy. Ken's church grew and so did ours. Four years later in 1968, Derek Prince and I were in a meeting together. He suggested that I go to New Zealand. Already the Lord had been speaking to me about Southeast Asia and that area of the world. Just after Derek spoke to me in August 1968, the phone rang: "Praise the Lord, Brother Charles!"

"Is that you, Costa?" It was Costa Deir, a close friend and man of God. He was visiting the city. "Can you come to see us while you are here?"

"No, I'm just passing through. I called to tell you that I believe you should go to New Zealand. If it is of God, He'll confirm it!"

In the next few days, an invitation from New Zealand came. Then came finances. Confirm it — the Lord did!

I planned not only to go to New Zealand, but Israel, India and Indonesia as well. Not wanting to go alone, I wondered whom the Lord would have to go with me.

"Why, I'll invite Ken Sumrall," I thought. "We would enjoy ministry together." After prayer with his people, he replied that he would go.

Soon the day came. We met in Birmingham, Alabama to fly on to New York. As we sat on the plane awaiting the exciting journey, Ken said, "Charles, do you remember that night we were praying in Ralph's church . . ." In a flash, I remembered that prophecy four years earlier that I had forgotten: "You shall walk around the world together and preach the gospel . . ."

God performs His own word. True guidance is a piece of God's eternal purpose placed in the human heart; it is not given in vain. False guidance may seem to bring momentary dividends, but it does not take into account the eternal plan of God. It's a bad investment. Guidance is vital. It matters where you get it.

Saviour, like a shepherd lead us... ♥



by Don Basham

Although there are millions of Spirit-baptized Christians in America today, relatively few of them seem to feel they are consistently led by the Holy Spirit. Practically everywhere I minister Christians will ask: "Reverend Basham, I love the Lord and I want to serve Him faithfully. But how can I know what He wants me to do or where He wants me to go? If I feel led to do a certain thing, how can I be sure it's God and not just my own desire or even the devil?"

Even mature Christians at times mistake their own desires for the will of God and all of us at times have been duped by Satan into foolish decisions and hasty actions. But in this article it is not so much our desire to deal with the carnal nature or the wiles of Satan as to offer valid counsel for the myriads of Christians frozen in inactivity for fear of "missing God." I believe the major cause of the problem is that we often seek a form of guidance which God does not normally provide.



To answer the question, "How can I be sure it's God?" Let's examine a portion of Scripture in Acts chapters 15 and 16 which records one of the missionary journeys of Paul. In the process we will be illustrating three major principles involved in receiving and following guidance. Here they are:

- (1) All progress in the Christian life is by faith.
- (2) Guidance comes when we move in faith, not while we sit in doubt.
- (3) God has a goal for every endeavor we undertake for Him.

1. All Progress In The Christian Life Is By Faith. The question, "How can I be sure it's God?" often reveals a lack of understanding of how God deals with us. There is a basic contradiction between "being sure" and "having faith." Certainty requires no faith, and the Christian life is based on faith.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he who cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

This means that while God will guide us, normally His guidance will not be so explicit or detailed as to preclude the need for exercising faith in following it. So God guides by impressions, by thoughts dropped into the midst of our own thoughts, by nudges and by circumstances, not by thundering in our ears or striking us with heavenly lightning. As I understand the Spirit-led life, it basically consists of receiving impressions from God, then in *faith* acting on those impressions as if they are from God; trusting that as we move, God moves with us. I believe the scripture passage we will examine clearly illustrates this truth.

But before we get into the scripture let's recognize we often have difficulty relating properly to biblical events since we tend to regard biblical characters as "larger than life." We view them through two thousand years of stained-glass history. We call them "saint" John and "saint" Paul. We've named our cities, our churches and our children after them. We've gazed in awe at the works of master artists who portrayed them with haloes over their heads and inwardly we've thought, "God's dealings with those men must have been unique."

But if we are to understand God's guidance, we must correct that distorted view. The apostles were ordinary people like us. They endured the same temptations and struggled against the same rebellious natures. They were saved by the grace of Jesus Christ just as we are, and were empowered and led by the same Holy Spirit who wants to empower and lead us. Perhaps the first verses in our scripture passage may help us get rid of those haloes.

Acts 15:36-41: Chapter 15 of Acts begins with the Jerusalem conference which met to decide whether Gentile Christians were required to keep the law. When the apostles and elders agreed on certain restrictions Gentiles should observe so as not to offend Jewish Christians, Paul proposed a return visit to the churches he and Barnabas had established to deliver the

decision of the council and see how the churches were getting along. Barnabas wanted to take along John Mark who had deserted them on a previous journey but Paul refused. A bitter, angry dispute was the result. "And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other" (15:39).

The Antioch Missionary Society promptly blew apart! Church fights are not a twentieth-century invention. Paul and Barnabas, spiritual giants of their own time, practically came to blows! So much for haloes.

After the explosion with Barnabas, Paul chose Silas, another apostle, and Timothy to accompany him and they started out. Note that up to this point there's nothing "superspiritual" about their trip. No voice of God thundering, no vast revelation of God's master plan. Paul simply said, "Let's go visit the churches," and he, Silas and Timothy moved out. Now comes the second principle.

2. Guidance Comes When We Move In Faith, Not When We Sit In Doubt.

Acts 16:4-9: Almost as soon as the journey got underway, the men ran into trouble with their itinerary. "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia . . ."

What's this? Apparently the men had headed in the wrong direction and the Holy Ghost slammed the door in their faces. Dare we say it? They made a mistake: *they missed their guidance!*

How God revealed their mistake doesn't matter. Maybe they missed a boat or perhaps someone sprained an ankle. The facts are, they tried to go where the Lord didn't want them to go and God stopped them. So they tried again. "After they were come down to Mysia, they assayed (attempted) to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not. . . ."

Dare we say it again? *They missed their guidance again!* A second door was slammed in their faces. Again, it doesn't matter how God stopped them, but stop them He did!

Now a most intriguing and hum-

bling picture begins to emerge. Saint Paul, renowned missionary and apostle extraordinaire, who had met Jesus face to face on the road to Damascus and later received revelations from the third heaven too sacred to share; this Spirit-filled, gift-endowed number one leader of the early church we find, on this occasion, reduced to getting his guidance by ricocheting off closed doors slammed in his face by the Holy Ghost!

Not very spiritual, you say? Not very supernatural? Right! But *it is nevertheless a valid form of guidance.* Actually, this should encourage rather than disturb us. It's as if God is saying, "Don't be afraid to move out. Don't be afraid of closed doors!" I believe this story is in the Bible to comfort and encourage people like you and me. Paul and Silas weren't daunted by the closed doors, they just sought God more earnestly.

It is precisely the fear of failure, the fear of closed doors, which chains so many modern Christians to their own front doorstep when they ought to be moving in faith. Guidance comes when we move in faith, not when we sit in doubt.

The kind of guidance we are describing is like the rudder on a ship. The rudder functions only when the ship is moving. Just after we moved to Florida some years ago, the *Queen Elizabeth* was retired by the Cunard Lines and berthed at Port Everglades in Ft. Lauderdale. Driving by the ship as she rested high in the water we could see at her stern the huge rudder which had steered that great vessel safely across the Atlantic on hundreds of voyages. But as long as the *Queen Elizabeth* rested in that harbor, the rudder never did a thing. It

Don Basham is a former pastor, now a full-time teacher, counselor and author. Recent publications include *Deliver Us From Evil* and *True and False Prophets*. Soon to be released is *The Miracle of Tongues*. Reverend Basham, a native of Texas, now resides in Pompano Beach, Florida.

was useless because the ship wasn't moving.

So the specific guidance we seek from God may never come until we learn to trust Him enough to begin to move in faith. Then His guidance can come — like a course correction, when necessary. God may close some doors which beckon attractively. If he does, it's because the door He wants us to enter is open further down the line. Don't be afraid of closed doors!

Years ago while still in seminary in Oklahoma, I felt the urge to change universities. I applied for admission and was accepted by a fine seminary in the state of Maryland. My wife and I had once lived in Maryland and loved that beautiful state. Besides, I thought it would be "theologically broadening" to have training from more than one seminary. But as the semester grew to a close and we tried to prepare for our move, nothing seemed to go right. Even routine preparations seemed vastly complicated. And the nearer the time came, the gloomier we felt. Finally, we decided God was telling us not to move. With a mixture of relief and disappointment I re-registered for my next semester's courses. Months later I discovered that by making a slight adjustment in my schedule, I could complete the requirements for my degree a whole semester earlier than I had anticipated, something which would have been impossible if we had changed schools. My wife and I ended up praising God for a door He had closed in our faces.

Christians often hammer away at doors God closes, not realizing they always lead to costly delays, dead-end streets and blind alleys. Still others, when they bump against a closed door, sit down on that doorsill wondering where they went wrong. Remember, closed doors are an inevitable part of every Christian's life; they are signposts pointing toward other open doors.

In the case of our scripture story, the doors God closed led to an open door to Macedonia, for on their third attempt to find God's direction God gave Paul a vision of a man from

Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." (Isn't it interesting that God didn't give Paul that vision before he began the trip!) But notice: even when God gave a vision, *He gave only enough information to get them headed in the right direction.* Which brings us to our third principle.

3. God Has A Goal For Every Endeavor We Undertake For Him. As we examine the rest of the story a significant fact becomes apparent: the missionary team was moving in faith toward what *they* believed their goal to be, *but God had another goal in mind!* And He works in us the same way! God may send you some place letting you think you're to do one thing, only when you get there you find out He had something altogether different in mind. Like it or not, that's often God's way. Besides, if you knew ahead of time what was going to happen, you might not have had the courage to go. I believe that is the reason God is so sparing with long-range guidance. Moving in faith means walking one step at a time.

The Psalmist says, "Thy words are a lamp unto my feet . . ." but most of us would prefer a searchlight shining two miles down the road. We want to know before we start how things will work out, but that's contrary to principle. We're to walk in faith, not certainty.

Acts 16:9-15: Paul, Silas and Timothy, now joined by Luke the author of Acts (note how the pronoun "they" in verse 8 becomes "we" in verse 10) boarded a ship to Philippi, a major city in Macedonia. On arrival they discovered a woman's prayer meeting where Paul began to preach with some success. One of his converts, Lydia, opened her home to the missionary team.

So at last, things seemed to be working out. After a couple of false starts the tour began to produce results. Not only did the team visit some of their established churches but they began a new one. They had a congregation to preach to, a parsonage which provided them with room and board, and people were being saved.

How much more success could they want? But God had a different goal in mind.

Acts 16:16-24: Suddenly the team's successful ministry turned into a nightmare. Paul cast the demon out of a fortune-telling slave girl whose enraged owners had him and Silas arrested. Angered by the deliverance, Satan whipped the courtroom into a frenzied mob so that the magistrates treated Paul and Silas like public enemies number one and two. They were beaten and thrown into the inner prison where their hands and feet were fastened in stocks to make sure they could not escape.

What a reversal of circumstances! Successful missionaries that morning, by midnight they had been arrested, beaten and cast into prison. Where did they go wrong? How did they miss their guidance?

Suppose you were arrested for witnessing to your faith. How would you take it? I'm afraid most Christians today would immediately assume they were out of God's will. We live in such sheltered, comfortable circumstances that if our faith really begins to cost us something we assume we have missed our guidance. Yet, scripturally, we've no right to expect such favored treatment. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12).

We American Christians are so success-oriented it often blinds us to God's will. But remember this: *God has not called us to be successful, He has called us to be faithful.*

Acts 16:25-34: Fortunately, the drastic change in circumstances did not bring Paul and Silas to despair. Indeed, they still had the victory, even in prison. Hands and feet may have been fastened in stocks, but their spirits were still free! They began to sing and praise God and to preach to the other prisoners.

God honored their faithfulness and sent an earthquake to punctuate Paul's sermon. Talk about signs and wonders attesting to the gospel, how's that for a sign? The earthquake opened the prison doors, Paul and Silas' stocks fell off and all the lights went out. The

jailor came rushing in from the next room and, seeing the cell doors open, assumed everyone had escaped; but the same Holy Ghost who had opened the doors and stocks held all the prisoners in place.

Astounded by the double miracle of the earthquake and the prisoners still sitting quietly in their cells, the jailor fell on his face before Paul and asked to be saved. After he and his household accepted Christ and were baptized he served Paul and Silas a banquet. Next morning the magistrates let Paul and Silas go, and our story has a happy ending.

Now, about the goal God had in mind. We said Paul and Silas were ministering with one purpose in mind while God was sovereignly working toward another. As Paul and Silas moved in obedience to the first two principles (all progress in the Christian life is by faith; and guidance comes when we move in faith, not when we sit in doubt) God was working his deeper plan in accordance with the third principle: God has a goal for every endeavor we undertake for Him.

Looking back we see God's basic purpose for this missionary journey was the conversion of that jailor and his household. Yet this purpose was not made known to Paul and Silas until after it had been fulfilled.

Remember the journey began by Paul wanting to revisit the churches and deliver the decrees of the Jerusalem council. But God, although He would allow some of those churches to be visited, had a more specific goal in mind, the conversion of the jailor's household. Space does not permit a full discussion of why the jailor was so important to the Lord. It is sufficient to note that in spiritual warfare as in physical warfare, certain objectives are considered to be vitally strategic in the overall conduct of the war. I believe the jailor was such a strategic objective. At any rate, he was God's objective for *this* trip. When Paul and Barnabas split up and went their separate ways, he was still God's objective. And when Paul and Silas started out, God was with them to make the neces-

sary changes in their itinerary to accomplish His purpose.

When they started into Asia, God slammed the door shut. Why? Because the jailor wasn't in Asia, he was in Philippi. When they started into Bithynia, God slammed the door shut again. Why? Because the jailor wasn't in Bithynia, he was in Philippi.

Then God gave Paul a vision to get the team headed in the right direction. They arrived in Philippi in Macedonia and began a successful ministry, the congregation by the riverside, the parsonage with room and board, and converts. But as nice as those blessings were, they did not fulfill God's *basic* purpose; He was out to win that jailor. And the jailor wasn't attending the prayer meetings by the riverside, he was in jail. Therefore, in order to get the gospel to the jailor, God had to get the preachers in jail.

So after God had Paul deliver the slave girl, He stepped back and allowed Satan to stir up a riot in the city court so Paul and Silas would be considered dangerous and thrown into the *inner* prison (next to the jailor's office) so the jailor could hear the gospel.

At this point, God's strategy and God's goal are still unknown to Paul and Silas. They are simply enduring hardship for Christ's sake as they continue to walk in faith. Even in prison they continue to minister, not to the jailor, but to the prisoners. The jailor obviously overheard, but was unimpressed.

But when God punctuated Paul's sermon with an earthquake, the jailor had a change of heart. "These men must be of God," he must have said to himself, and then fell before Paul and said, "Sirs what must I do to be saved?" Where had he heard the message of salvation? Listening to Paul preach to the prisoners. But isn't it strange to note that not a single prisoner was converted, only the jailor, who wasn't even a part of the audience? This is a graphic illustration of how God often uses our walk in faith to accomplish not what we want to accomplish, but what *He* wants to accomplish. That's why we are not to

be afraid to move out in faith, why we are not to be downcast over closed doors or adverse circumstances. What may seem difficult or humiliating is often later revealed as God working out His great purposes!

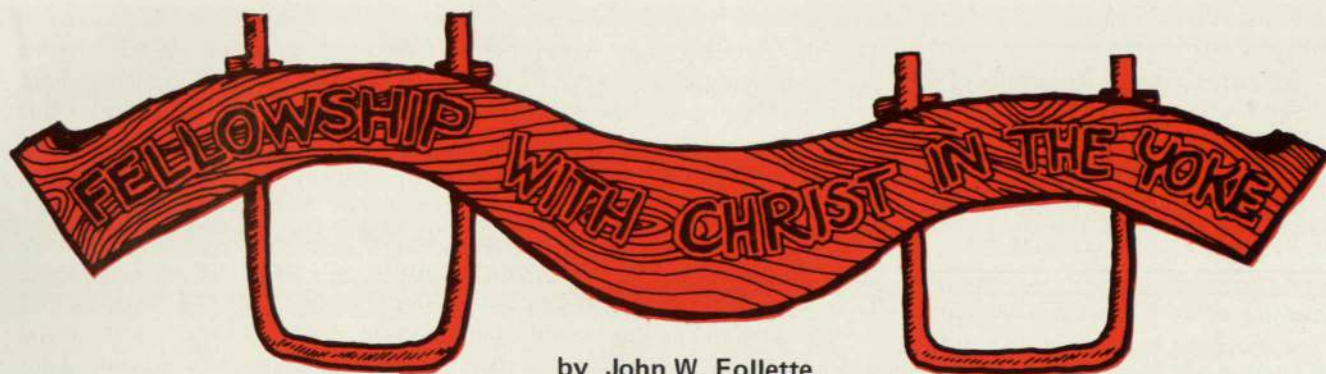
I believe at some point, probably about the time the jailor was baptized, Paul must have taken a closer look at him and said, "Haven't I seen you some place before?" I believe the jailor was the man in Paul's vision.

At any rate, Paul and Silas finally recognized the sovereign working of God in their situation and knew that with the conversion of the jailor, God's purpose for their stay in Philippi had been accomplished. For when they were released from prison next morning, (why do you suppose the same magistrates who considered Paul and Silas public enemies number one and two at midnight, decided by daylight they were harmless? Could God have had a hand in that?) they made no attempt to continue their ministry. They simply bade the brethren at Lydia's house goodbye and sailed away.

Now It's Our Turn

I believe it's clear to some of you by now that God wants you to take some fresh step of faith. And some of you already know what He would have you do but you're a little shaky and frightened when you contemplate doing it. Perhaps a new job in a different city, or opening your home for a prayer meeting. Perhaps making some sacrificial gift to some work the Lord has told you to support or even leaving secular employment to go "full-time with the Lord."

The thought may have been with you for weeks, months or maybe even years, but you've hesitated saying, "How can I be sure it's God?" Can you see now there's only one way you will ever be sure? That's to try it and see, remembering that as you begin to walk in faith, the Lord who loves you goes with you to close the wrong doors and open the right ones in order that His divine purpose may be accomplished in and through you. ♥



by John W. Follette

There is a wonderful word in one of the Epistles upon which I often like to meditate. We find it in I Corinthians 1:9. First, we notice there is a call sounding out from the heart of God to all of us as His children. We are called *from* and *unto*. Not only from the world and sin in their visible and common manifestations, but from the whole natural order and scheme of the Adamic and human limitations. The call is sounding today by the power of the Holy Spirit down in the depths of our hearts. It may take different forms but we are conscious that it is the will of God calling us (the personal individual) out from the natural and into a life of the Spirit where a certain fellowship may be developed.

It is about this *fellowship* that I wish to speak. As we ponder over the Word we are conscious of hidden possibilities and of very intimate communion and understanding with the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We must have, of course, a common basis for the fellowship. In creation we are given that capacity. We are created in the image of God. That image, in fact, is the capacity of receptivity for spiritual communion with God. We find no tracings of His image upon any other form of His workmanship. The new birth is necessary and all other subsequent experiences in order to deepen and enlarge the power of reception. One may be tempted to think the experience or crisis is the fellowship, but we make a grave mistake often in resting in the experience and not allowing it to act as a *door into* a new phase of life and fellowship. All experiences are beautiful, wonderful and uplifting; but do not park on any one of them. They are never in them-

selves the life or fellowship. They are but doors. They are to work out, in and through us a manifestation of the power and glory of God; to introduce us to and give us qualifications for the life. Salvation gives us an introduction, as it were, to Christ, but we must have more than an introduction. There is a merely *bowing acquaintance*. Many have that. They go to church on Sunday and bow to the Lord, but He wants us to come closer, to tarry often and to share in the interests which are upon His heart.

Following our introduction to Him, Jesus turns to the individual and says, "*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*" He so longs to have hearts and lives united with Him in the thoughts and purposes He has for them, that He turns and invites all those who are heavy laden to come unto Him.

Now please remember that when Jesus came He didn't come simply to bring us happiness or joy; He didn't come just to bring us rest. All of these are included in one great element which He brought and of which He knew the world was in desperate need. He came to bring life. Death reigned everywhere — spiritual death. Oh, yes, men could run and jump and sing and dance, but it was all physical. So when Jesus came He said to them, "*I have come for this purpose, that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly.*" Not merely life enough to put a little breath in you and perhaps get you to heaven but life that will expand into an abundant display of God. We don't know very much about this abundant life. We may know something of its joy and exhilaration. But the life more

abundant means something far above all that, and I fear most of us are touching only the fringes of the possibilities that this life holds.

Now here we are, strange personalities, yielded and surrendered, washed and lined up on the sin question and possessors of this marvelous life. We contact Him and the Spirit thrills us and we are conscious of that wonderful new life so that we feel we want to go out and convert the world. This new life wants to express itself and it is right that it should. It wants to go and preach and serve the Lord. If you are *really* born you have life.

Now the Lord understood all this and He knew that the first movement in this new life would be manifested in a fellowship of service for Him. He was very wise in meeting the situation and seems to say, "Now just wait a minute." But someone may say, "Wait? Why, I have peace and victory, my burden is lifted and why should I wait?"

But He bids us listen till He has finished what He was about to say, "*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you —*" And as we look we see a yoke — yes, a yoke. And we hear Him say, "*Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.*" But we say, "What do I want to do with a yoke? That great big clumsy thing to hang around my neck when I am free! No, no," and we turn away.

But if we are open to His voice we will hear Him say, "Come, wait, till I put this yoke upon you. I bore a yoke and let me say that I am not quarreling with you because you have this new life; I know you have it, but if I left you alone in the manifestation of the new life you might never know the full

Affiliated with the Assemblies of God until his death in 1966, John Wright Follette taught the Word of God with a simple profoundness that left a lasting impression in the Body of Christ.

meaning of real fellowship with me. New life alone never brings to you the burden that I am bearing." We say, "Oh, I am willing to do anything! I want to go as a missionary and work for you." But He answers, "Yes, I know you want all of that but I wear a yoke because I am bearing a particular burden and I want you to *fellowship* with me in *service*. Remember, I have my head under the yoke and there is a bow in this yoke for you." As long as you have your head in that yoke, you will not be doing the wrong thing. All this energy that you feel, all this desire to serve, and all these gifts will run in a channel which will be effectual in glorifying God; for this yoke is *His* will and as long as you are being yoked with Him His will is being accomplished. When He stands still then you will stand still and when He pulls, you will pull; in this way you will be having fellowship in service; you will be co-workers *with* Him, not *for* Him; serving with Him because you are yoked up.

I was born on a farm and I remember we had two oxen called Punch and Judy. I learned many a lesson there. One thing I noticed was that when those two oxen were obedient to walk in the path which was directed for them, everything was all right, but just as soon as they started wanting their own way — as folk will do sometimes when they don't want to do the will of the Lord — then there was trouble. One ox would pull one way and the other ox the other way and that was a tragedy, for when night came and our man, David, who helped father on the farm, would take off that yoke, their necks would be badly rubbed. The will of their director had galled them because they refused to obey that will. Did you ever have your neck galled? If so, let me give you a little remedy.

Take the ointment of the Name of the Lord and apply it as a salve to that sore neck. He says, "*My name is as ointment poured forth.*"

Another thing I noticed about these oxen was that whenever they had to stop, they would look around and see some green grass that they wanted. They didn't see it as long as they were moving along and pulling together, but just as soon as they stood still they saw it and oh, they wanted it so badly! It looked so green and fresh. "Why not have it? We are just standing still." Do you know when the most severe temptations come? It is when you are standing still. When you are moving right along in the conscious presence of the Lord you do not think about the green grass; but you stand still and see if you don't get taken up with things that you never noticed before. They have been all along the road but you had been so occupied with Him that you didn't see them. But now that you are standing still your vision gets filled with other things.

So He says, "Take my yoke upon you, for my will is the most blessed thing that you can ever have." It steadies us; it holds us; it is the means of helping us bear our burden with ease. If you tied the yoke about the middle of one of these oxen and then tied him to the stoneboat, how long do you suppose that ox would go without having trouble? Suppose it were tied around its hind leg? The hind leg is strong, why not tie it there? But you know if that were done it wouldn't be long till the hind leg would be out of joint. How are you bearing the burdens that God has laid upon you? Is your leg pulled out of joint so much that you cannot walk in the Spirit anymore? If so, then you have been bearing your burden in the wrong way, "Oh," but you say, "I cannot understand what the Lord is trying to do with me. I don't seem to be getting anywhere with Him." Perhaps you have the yoke tied around your middle and you are bearing the burden in a way He never intended you should. Let the yoke be fastened about your neck. The neck stands for

submission and when the will of God rests upon my neck I show that I am in submission, that I am working in perfect co-operation with my divine Companion.

One of the Gospels is called the *Ox Gospel* — Mark, the Gospel of Service. An ox was sometimes used as a sacrifice. You may either be a sacrifice or a servant. Can you be an ox for Him? You know when you get yoked up with Him you get so close to Him that you can get His very breath; you can see His eyes, sense the pressure and feel the pull that is upon His heart so that you are consumed with Him instead of scampering around on some hillside. It is then that your service is sanctified, and owned of Him; kept where He wants it because you are yoked up with Him.

Now all these things which He asks us to take are symbolic. Our first service for Him is always manifested in some kind of activity and when we are made partakers of His life it moves out in some manifestation of service. Then how wise He is! The instant that He finds our love going out in service He says, "Now wait a minute! Get yoked up with Me and you will be safe." Otherwise that manifestation will get us nowhere; it may be a display but there will be no fruitage.

Now the next thing after He mentions the yoke, He says, "*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*" He has already given us the rest; that is an immediate possession — a gift. But having given the rest He wants us to learn of Him. Learn what? You say, "I am all right." No, we are but babes in Christ, little inquiring babes. Now little babes can be saved and sanctified and baptized and have gifts; all of this is not a sign of maturity. He wouldn't even give them to us, excepting, that in their reaction they mature us. Remember, it is never a sign that we are deeply spiritual or wonderfully developed in God when He baptizes or gives gifts. He baptizes us because we are babes that need life and help and then upon these weak bodies He deposits the gifts of heaven.

(Continued on page 22)

New Life

Part 4 —
Final in Series on
Restoration of
the Individual



by
Charles Simpson

For Your Body

As we conclude our series on "The Restoration of the Individual," Paul's words in I Thessalonians 5:23-24 again speak to us of the all-inclusiveness of God's purpose for mankind. They show us that He is interested in restoring every aspect of man's being.

(23) And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(24) Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

Jesus capsuled His Father's intentions when He told Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). In this brief statement of fact, we find answers to the who, why, how and when of Restoration.

First, it is God who initiates the action. He is the one who desires Restoration of the Individual. Each of us is His creation . . . made in His image — but marred by the rebellion and sin of the First Adam. Each of us, as well as all of us — spirit . . . soul . . . body — matters to Him!

Then, Jesus tells us why we matter to the Father — He so loved us! When one cares, one dares to go to all

lengths to restore and maintain a cherished possession.

Next comes the how: ". . . that he gave his only begotten Son." It is through Jesus Christ that God's will is accomplished in the earth. He is the provision for our every need.

For whom is the provision made? "Whosoever believeth on him!" Every individual has the possibility of restoration, and it is based on personal choice. *Do I want* this offer of renewal which is provided through belief in God's Son? The answer to this question determines the most important issue of life. Why do we say this? Because God said it!

Here is God's conclusion to His loving and giving. ". . . should not perish but have everlasting life." What a choice. What diverse consequences. Perish — or have everlasting life! Every man faces this crossroad — makes his decision — and as a result either turns himself over to God for Restoration, or faces eternal separation from this One who so loved . . . that He gave . . . provision for now and eternity.

We have emphasized the fact that there is more to salvation than the initial choice — that is only the beginning. It might appear to us that it would make it easier if the transformation could be instantaneous; but this is not God's plan. The new birth is an instantaneous transaction, but it simply places one in God's hands for

His "working on." We repeat Paul's explanation given in II Corinthians 1:10: "Who hath delivered us, who doth continue to deliver us, and who will yet also deliver us." Past, present and future is expressed here. He "sanctifies" us wholly — and it is a continuing process.

Just as man's make-up, spirit . . . soul . . . body, is completely inter-related, so is the restoration process. Once we give God the green light, we are launched into a program of change. Change is necessary, for the "old man" is unacceptable and useless to God. Once we have a new spirit, which is the product of (1) the Word, (2) the work of the Holy Spirit, (3) man's consent — then the soul becomes the center of action.

Renewing the soul — intellect, will and emotion — is a life-time undertaking. It is part of the "eternal life" which God gives to all who believe on His son — all who believe that it is possible to be changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Paul often refers to the "old" . . . "unregenerate" . . . "natural" . . . "carnal" man. We want to discuss this former state in relation to provisions for the body.

We need to see that the carnal man is one who is controlled by his environment, rather than by the Spirit of God. His inspiration comes through his five senses. His mind controls his spirit. This is the "course of this world." As a born-again believer we

need not be controlled by the world. Paul, speaking to Christians at Corinth said, "Ye are yet carnal" (I Corinthians 3:3); as well as giving them the way to exchange carnality for the renewed mind: "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind . . ." (Romans 12:2). Remember, only God can change a man's spirit; *but only man can change his mind!*

Here again man faces choice. Even after becoming a child of God, he can forfeit the right to his inheritance provided by the Father. If one permits the Word of God to be the guide of his thinking, his soul will obey his spirit and he will be the victor over his circumstances in life. This is what God intended. Will I live "under" or "above" the circumstances which come my way? Christ died to make us "more than conquerors" over every circumstance. But the victory must be claimed and appropriated by choice.

As we now consider God's provisions for our physical bodies, we investigate what He has told us in His Word on the subject.

ABUNDANT LIFE

Jesus, God's Word made flesh, tells us that He came to give us abundant life. He also makes it clear that some hindrances must be encountered and overcome: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Satan is out to steal everything that would contribute to this abundant life Jesus came to give. The enemy would like to kill and destroy every opportunity for change in mind and body. We need to be alert to his operations. Over the centuries, he has made inroads in his evil intent. He has caused the written Word to be misused, watered-down, and in some instances even nullified. As a result, man has very often been robbed of his rightful possessions.

Each one of us has to decide

whether he will stand by faith on the Word of God, or on what he feels . . . he thinks . . . what past experience may indicate . . . what man may say. Remember, God desires that we "change." He wants us to re-program our faulty computers, which are bound to come up with faulty answers if we depend on pre-fed information on the abundant life. I Corinthians 2:9-10 tells us - "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard . . . what God has prepared . . . but God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit." With our new spirit we can "see and hear" if we look to and listen to the Spirit for new "intake." This aids in developing the "new man" we are in Him.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, these four men who recorded for us the active ministry of Jesus Christ in the flesh, all attest to his interest in the total welfare of men and women. Jesus always stressed that God was spirit and we worship Him in spirit and truth. He taught over and over again the importance of a "change" in man's thought patterns - "Ye have heard of old . . . but I tell you . . . change!" Also, one-third of His ministry was devoted to healing. The body was of vital concern to Him then, even as it is today. The body houses the soul and the spirit; and, as we have said, what affects one part affects all. We are interrelated.

In further examining the abundant life, we see that God has arranged for (1) Preventive maintenance of health; (2) Renewal of bodily strength; (3) Release from the cause of obstruction to enjoying God's divinely provided abundance; (4) healing.

PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

I believe that it is God's will for us to experience health. Proverbs 4:20-23 offers us a key to unlocking this storehouse:

My son, attend to my words: incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes: keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with

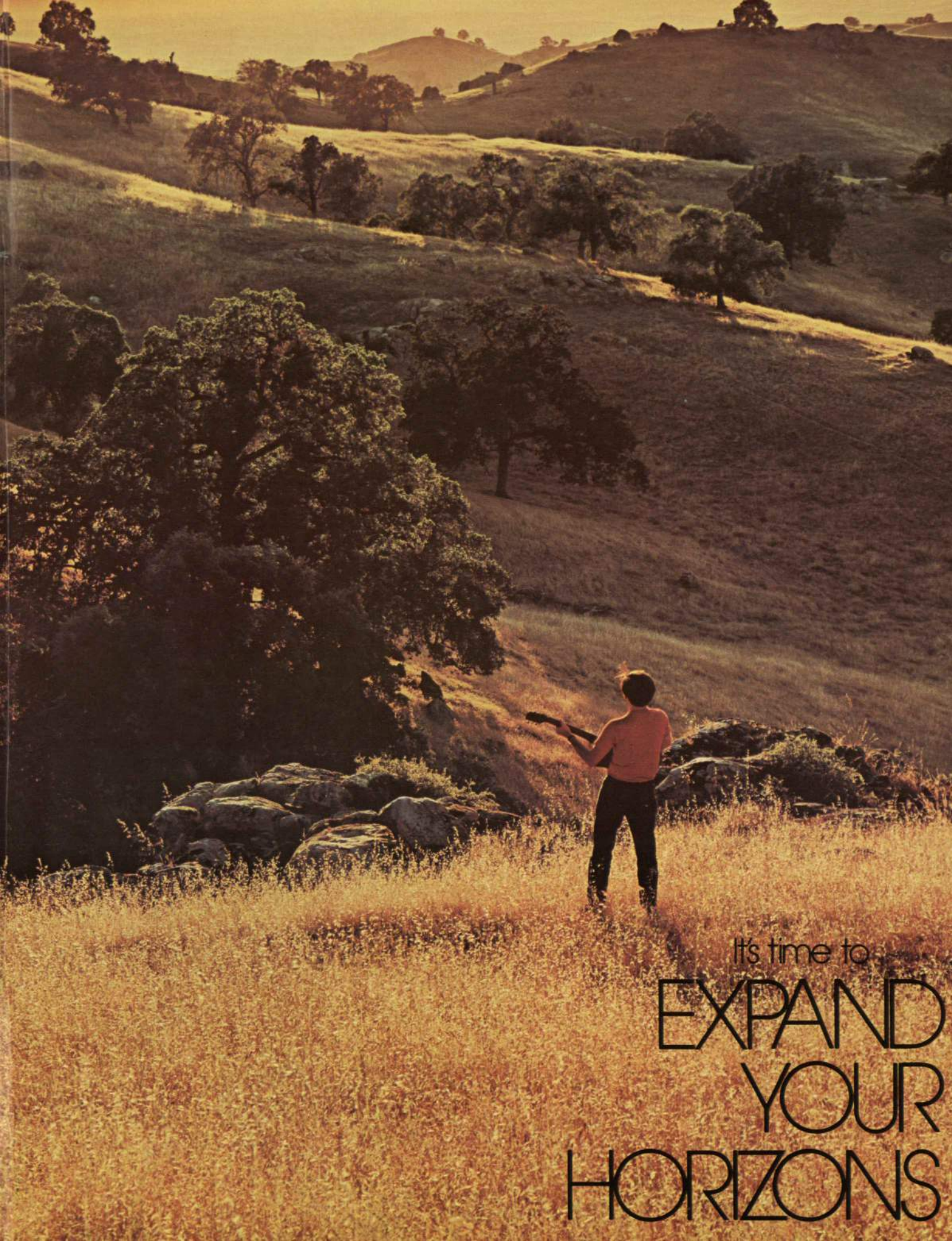
all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life.

What could be plainer? "My words are health to your flesh!" He doesn't say anything about spirit or soul - but health to our flesh. This is what I call preventive maintenance.

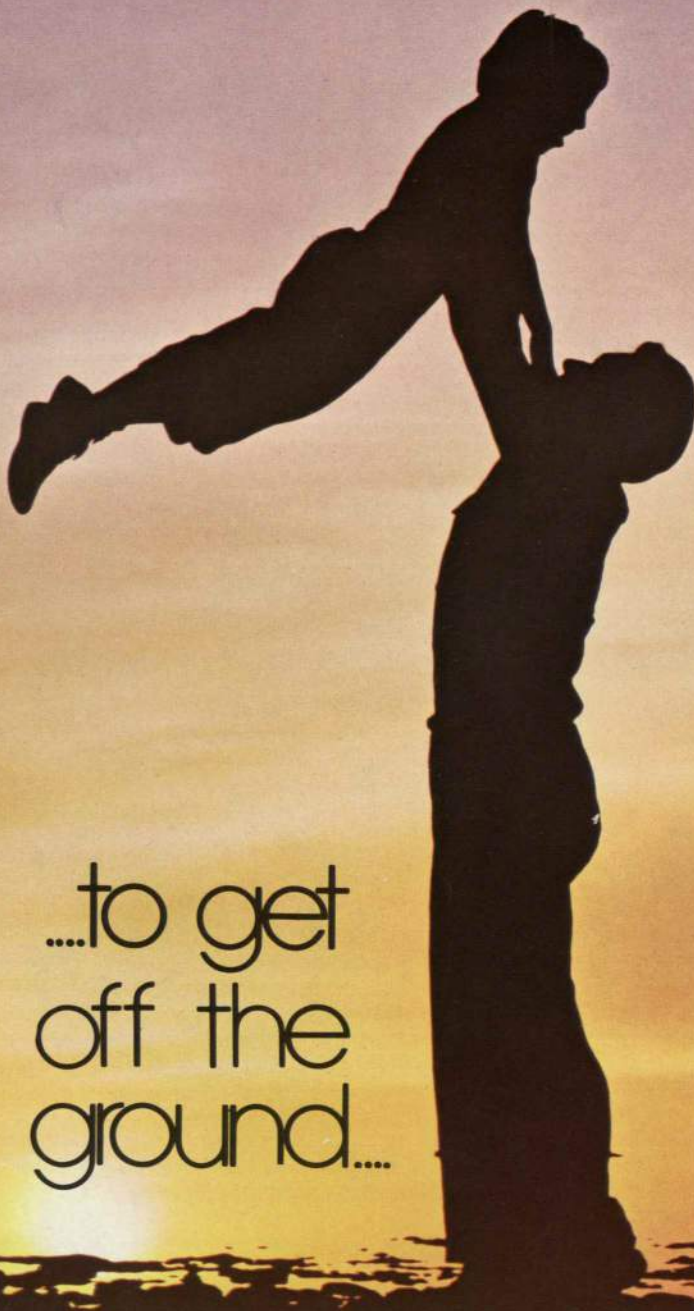
Again, as always, we find that when God gives us a command, He always supplies the "how-to." Note the personal responsibility for appropriating His Word. We are to: give attention to . . . listen as His words speak . . . keep them before us . . . keep them within us! This affords some idea of how important God feels His Word is in the matter of maintaining health. You will notice, too, that He links the health of our flesh to the "issues of life." You can be certain this is part of the abundant life God originally intended for His children - and part of His restorative measures, as well.

Think with me on the necessary steps in "keeping" a garden. Two needed activities are (1) planting good seed, and (2) keeping out the weeds. You don't have to plant the latter - they just grow! Both of these operations are vital to productivity. If we walk according to God's Word, we are on the pathway to health. We may encounter some underbrush or other obstacles, but it is God's will that we overcome all hindrances to good health.

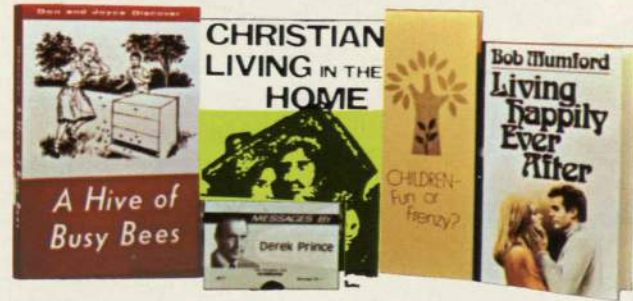
Do you want to know of a provided "assist" in the matter of clearing away obstacles to the fulfillment of God's promises in our lives? *Isaiah Chapter 58* is filled with promises for all who are seeking to walk with God. We often refer to it as the "fasting" chapter. You may wonder what fasting has to do with health. In the area of spiritual health, fasting is a powerful weapon in enemy warfare. In the physical realm, medical doctors tell us that fasting, properly carried out, is a healthy practice. And God tells us in this portion of His Word if we meet eight conditions, we may expect fourteen results. That is a good return on any investment! Examining just a few of these will impress us with the goodness of our Father for our welfare.



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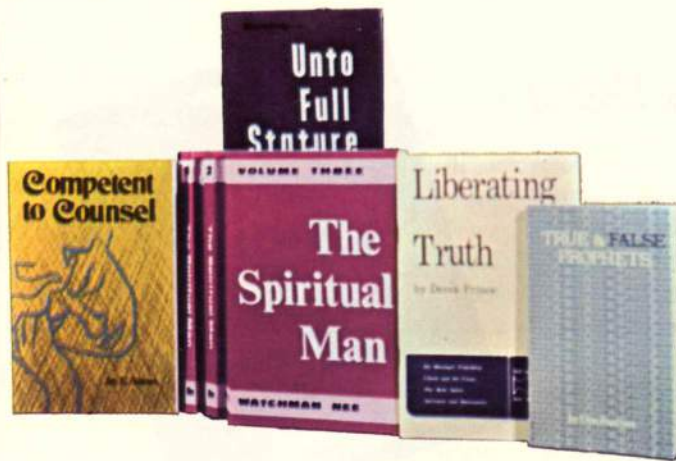
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We find that we must have the proper motives for fasting. *Verses 5-7* tell us about God's chosen fast; and *verse 8* follows with God's response: "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily . . ." If we attempt to give ourselves to meet the needs of others, God promises to take care of us. *Verse 11* continues: ". . . and make fat thy bones." Medical information links the marrow in our bones with healthy blood. It seems that "fat bones" enrich our health. Another benefit offered to us is, "thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Continual supply!

To me, this all speaks of preventive maintenance. We make much of health insurance in the secular world. God has provided health insurance for us, if we will comply with His stipulations.

RENEWAL

God speaks to us again about physical provisions through the prophet Isaiah. *Chapter 40* closes with these exciting possibilities for those who look to Him for help in a time of depleted energies:

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.

We think of young people as having abounding energy. Yet we know that they, as well as those who are older, have times when their "natural" energies are exhausted. Did you ever watch a child completely expend himself . . . just "drop" and wait for the return of physical strength . . . then get up and begin all over again?

The terms "mount up . . . run . . . walk" require bodily fitness. God tells us He will furnish renewal if we "wait

upon Him." There are times when we may need a burst of energy and, in ourselves, we know this is not possible without "concrete" aid to our drained resources — food . . . sleep . . . cessation of activity. But, in God, we can receive divine renewal if we go to the place He has provided for that extra needed strength.

A national sports magazine once carried an interesting article on the habits of eagles. It said that certain kinds of these large birds have a built-in system for renewal. When they feel they are losing strength, they go into a deep depression. A growth begins to form on their beaks, causing them to lose their equilibrium. They cannot fly as straight as previously, sometimes even missing their desired goal in landing. This drives them to the point of considering doing away with their lives; and to do this they propose to fly higher than they have ever flown before, in order to get away from it all. As the eagle soars into the heights, the air pressure bursts that tell-tale growth on his beak and equilibrium is restored. In a triumphant burst of exuberance, he flies still higher and experiences a renewal of his youth.

Do you see a parallel here too — ". . . they shall mount up as eagles . . ."? As you mount into the heavenlies and "wait on the Lord" your physical strength is renewed.

RELEASE FROM THE CAUSE

The cause of sickness is sin. This does not mean that if you are sick, it is because you have sinned. What it does mean is that sin came before sickness. When Adam sinned and God's perfect creation was marred, sickness became a part of man's inheritance. But, through Christ's atonement, God provides for forgiveness of sin . . . and this includes provision for release from all of sin's effects.

It was a great blessing to me when I found out that the atonement was total. Jesus died to buy back for me everything I lost in Adam. My salvation includes physical restoration.

Turning once again to Isaiah, we

listen as he prophesies about the Messiah and what He will effect on our behalf. Two words in this often quoted passage are "griefs" and "sorrows." These are better translated "sicknesses" and "pains." So the passage could be, "Surely he hath borne our sicknesses (which brings grief), and our sorrows (which come from pain), yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5). This agrees very closely to the Amplified translation's handling of these two words.

This came as a revelation to me, since my computer was pre-fed with a dispensational restriction in this area of healing. It also helped me when I saw this same provision presented in Matthew 8:16-17: "When the even was come, they brought unto him (Jesus) many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

Here Matthew is quoting Isaiah while Jesus is actually healing the sick. He is saying, "This is exactly what Isaiah meant when he said, 'Jesus would take our sicknesses.'" When I saw that Jesus died for my sicknesses, that our healing was cared for in His atonement, I felt just as free to pray for my healing as I did for my forgiveness. We find over and over in the Scriptures that healing and forgiveness are linked together. One such reference is Psalm 103:1-5.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases: Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies: who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.

Notice when the psalmist speaks of "all his benefits," he follows with forgiveness and healing. Also he writes of the renewing of the eagle. It would seem that the writer of our story about an eagle's manner of renewal and the writer of the Psalm had some common knowledge.

Another reference which links forgiveness and healing is James 5:14-15:

Is any sick among you? let him call the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Three helpful insights into the ministry of healing are incorporated in this word from James. First, he says that the one who is sick is to send out the distress signal — he is to take the initiative — he needs to have a desire for help in his need. Next, he is to call upon the "elders," those men who are spiritual leaders in the assembly or church. Healing is a corporate ministry and operates within the body of Christ. Then comes the "anointing with oil." Many have questions here. But, to me, this act is a symbol of faith . . . a point of contact . . . or a release of faith. What we need to stress is that it is the prayer of faith that saves the sick — and we are told to pray for everybody.

James continues teaching in the sphere of healing by saying, "Confess your faults one to another . . . the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Sin can be, and quite often is, the cause of many problems in the physical body. Before we pray for anyone to be healed, it would be well to heed this advice of James "If there is anything between you and God — or you and someone else — confession and forgiveness is needed." Repentance may open the door to health.

Paul also had some words along the line of corporate concern for each other: "For this cause some among you sleep and some are sick because they have not discerned the Lord's body" (I Corinthians 11:30). Paul told believers in Corinth that some of their members may even have experienced death ("sleep") and others were not enjoying the health God provided for them because they were not "discerning" — or properly treating — each other. Faulty knowledge and a lack of appreciation for one another can have drastic and far-reaching results in the Body, as well as in our physical bodies.

Christ's atonement included release from sin — which not only includes forgiveness but restoration of the body. You may be saying, "Yes, Matthew saw this in action when Jesus was present to heal. And James and Paul saw the Holy Spirit bring healing in Jesus' Name. But that was twenty centuries ago and at a time when the early believers needed confirmation as to the power of God through His Son. What about today? Times have changed."

HEALING TODAY

I would ask you . . . is forgiveness of sin needed today? Is it available to believers? Is healing needed today? Is it still possible in the Name of Jesus, ministered through the power of His Spirit? My computer had faulty answers to these questions. They had to be changed; and they were — through my own experience and in seeing God act in the lives of others.

Early in my charismatic ministry, I was scheduled for a seminar on healing. While there, I developed one of my rare sinus headaches. The pounding of that thing kept building up in spite of everything I said to do and did! Sunday came and I felt that I just could not go before that congregation and preach a message on healing. Finally I said, "Devil, if they have to carry me in there on a stretcher, I am going to preach on healing because the Word of God says that Jesus heals." Even though I had to lean on the pulpit for the first ten

minutes of the message, I soon experienced an easing of the pain, and God used that occasion to deliver me of that malady! I believe the Lord wanted to find out whether I preached healing because I had it — or because He said it.

About this same time, a member of my church became ill. His name was Harold, and he took a firm stand on the Word of God. Due to the extreme pain he was suffering, he had to resort to lying on the floor for relief. He faced the possibility of two operations; and, even then, there was no definite hope that his trouble might be overcome. Declining finances added to his problems.

One day Harold called me on the phone and asked, "Brother Charles, do you believe the Bible?" Upon assuring him that I did, he asked, "Do you believe James 5:14?" Again I affirmed that I did, which brought the request that I bring my oil and come over to his home.

Now I had never been taught in seminary about anointing with oil. But Harold was the kind of person who had a dogged determination, so I knew I had better go right over or be prepared for more phone calls. On the way, I stopped by a drugstore to buy some oil — not being at all certain what kind to purchase. I settled on olive oil. Next I was faced with what to do with the oil. Do you daub or pour? I finally put a drop on his forehead, offered up a weak petition to the Lord, and left saying, "Well, I hope you get to feeling better, Harold."

Hurrying home, I began reading about healing in the Bible. I discovered several things. One was that oil never healed anybody. It said, "The prayer of faith healed." I had to admit that I had more oil than faith! I also saw that faith comes by the Word . . . that Jesus died for our sicknesses . . . and that the atonement opened the door to claiming healing in His Name.

The next day Harold phoned again . . . you guessed it — something more was needed! Before I responded to his second call, I called upon God. Walking into that home with more

assurance than on my previous visit, I poured oil all over his head and prayed like I believed it was going to do some good. And it did! Harold jumped off the floor saying, "I feel better!" That was seven years ago. Today Harold is preaching the gospel and, as you can well imagine, that gospel includes healing. God has a message He wants to get out to His people.

SCRIPTURE SPEAKS

God wants us well. Proof of this is found in His Word — from "cover to cover." Briefly, we share portions, claiming the promise that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever!

Psalms 105:37: "He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes." This refers to the exodus of the children of Israel from their captivity in Egypt. Imagine, several million people — and not one feeble!

Matthew 6:10: "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray. Do you think there will be any sickness in heaven? Then why on earth? His will is sound health.

Someone may want to stop here and say, "You have to die some day, so you have to be sick." Do you realize that there is no place in the Bible where we are told we have to be sick to die? Death does not have to come from sickness. Two references bear this out.

Revelation 14:13: "Blessed are they (the dead) that die in the Lord." We don't need to die "in sickness" — just "in the Lord."

Genesis 49:33: "Jacob gathered his sons around him, prophesied over them and when he was finished speaking the word he folded up his legs under the cover and he gave up the ghost." He released his spirit when God's time had come.

Someone else may ask, "What about Paul's thorn in the flesh?" Before we answer from Scripture, we do well to remember that Paul knew and saw things from God that most people do

not. When that happens, we are all prone to pride and God has to deal with us accordingly. Here is how Paul was dealt with: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." The "thorn" was a messenger from Satan sent to keep him from getting proud. It was God's reminder that Paul was subject to spiritual attack. And God provided the necessary grace to meet the situation — My grace is sufficient" (II Corinthians 12:7-9).

What about Job? His experiences are a constant reminder to me that the enemy cannot touch me unless God allows it. I don't believe that God makes me sick. That's the work of the enemy and God uses this work to strengthen me.

JESUS SPEAKS

Jesus spent one-third of His earthly ministry healing the sick. Do you remember Him saying, "The works that I do shall ye do also; and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). Almost every commission that Jesus gave to His disciples included provision for deliverance and healing: Matthew 10:1 and Luke 9:1 — given to the twelve; Luke 10:9 — given to the seventy; Mark 16:17-19 — His parting words, as recorded by that writer. Also Jesus commands, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

Insofar as I know, there are no scriptures which indicate that God would withdraw His commands — or His power to fulfill them. I feel that God loves His children too much to take away from them anything that would enable them to have and to share the abundant life He gave His Son to provide.

The Kingdom gospel is ours! This proclaims the King — Jesus Christ — and delivers people from the captor. It sets them free — spiritually, mentally

and physically. In concluding his gospel, Mark tells us that the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word, God confirming His Word with signs following. You don't necessarily have to preach healing to get healing. You preach Jesus and signs follow. We don't follow signs. We are to preach Jesus is King; and whenever the enemy stands against that message, Jesus will prove His Lordship by the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people.

This power was released when, as a body, our church prayed for the healing of a hospital patient dying with cancer. A request had come to our congregation that we visit an unconverted woman who had been given only ten days to live. As I entered the room, her husband was in the process of taking her to the window to wave to their children gathered outside. I thought, "Lord Jesus, if You were here in this room, You would do something about this." So I asked if they would mind if we, as a church, prayed for the family.

About a dozen men of the congregation spearheaded the effort, praying and fasting in her behalf. One day our associate pastor paid another visit to the hospital room. Anointing her head with oil, he prayed a simple prayer, "Lord, you know this need. Would you heal her?" God answered that request and today — four years later — that mother is a happy Christian, serving God and her family in good health.

Making men and women whole is God's business. He has commissioned us to the task of carrying out His business in the earth today. We begin by receiving a new spirit . . . freeing that spirit for work and worship . . . renewing our minds . . . and claiming His provisions for bodily health. Then we can carry His message to those who are needing that same new birth . . . renewed mind . . . provision for the body.

The process of Restoration of the Individual will culminate one day as mortality puts on immortality and we move into His presence. Until that day, let us proclaim the King! ♥



"Take heed that no man deceive you," was the instruction given by Jesus when He was asked about the end of the age. Examination of the 24th chapter of Matthew, which records this warning, reveals use of the words *deceive* and *deception* three times. The tenor of the teaching has to do with betrayal, false prophets, etc. Jesus knew and wanted us to realize these hazards.

Recently, while teaching a series on deception, I was surprised to hear myself define deception as: *being wrong when we think we are right*. In other words, the very nature of deceiving, or being deceived, is to lead one on a path that appears to be correct, when, in fact, it is not.

This thought is the implication of Proverbs 14:12, which declares: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man . . ." The Living Bible states it this way: "Before every man there lies a wise and pleasant road that seems right but ends in death." The Greek word for deception simply means "to wander or be led astray." The meaning expressed is to lose the right path and consequently to perish.

However much we may wish it were different, there lies before the newborn or newly Spirit-baptized child of God a maize of confusion and a multitude of conflicting ideas and leadings. If I did not know the faithfulness of

God, it would cause me despair. There are two important guidelines which need to be stressed as we approach the subject of guidance and deception.

(1) Our basic premise is that of the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to guide and guard every pilgrim on his spiritual journey. The Holy Spirit who inspired the Word of God also commits Himself to abide by and conduct Himself according to the "Handbook" which was given to us by His direct intervention. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:20-21).

(2) We are not here interested in open sin, gross error or apparent doctrinal deviations; but rather in the subtle forms of spiritual deception which, if unchecked, may result in just such confusion.

Once the Apostle Paul remarked in passing (II Timothy 4:10): "Demas has left me. He loved the good things of this life and went to Thessalonica."

Should it not be apparent to us that Demas was deceived? He convinced himself *somehow* that accompanying Paul was not the life for him . . . reasoned . . . rationalized . . . persuaded — until his actions resulted in his missing God's highest for his life.

How Reliable
Are Your
Leadings?



by Bob Mumford

Bob Mumford, full-time Bible teacher, headquarters Fort Lauderdale, Florida. His ever expanding ministry includes teaching by video and audio tapes, speaking engagements throughout the United States and abroad, as well as a growing list of books.

Perhaps there was a certain girl, a position, maybe even a place of which he was too fond to release. Deception begins all too often by our internal desire for the "wide and pleasant road" — not realizing the final implications of saying "no" to God's best and choosing our own way.

SOME DANGERS

Let us now enumerate some of the dangers in guidance which lead to deception. Most varieties, you will find, place themselves under one of the following categories.

Over-eagerness: Forms of spiritual pride which say, "If God tells me to do something, I am going to do it! Others have failed God, but I shall not."

Deeper-life Syndrome: This exhibits itself in a person seeking to place himself spiritually where he has not had *time* or *teaching* to attain.

Emotional Fixations: A person who learns about or who has heard of someone else having a dramatic form of guidance, and who will not be truly satisfied until he receives such an experience.

Spiritual Simpleton: One who says, "Well, the Lord knows I am sincere, and *He* will never let me be deceived." This is an attempt to place on God responsibility which belongs to us. The same Epistle (Ephesians) which teaches us that we are saved by faith, not of works lest any man should boast, *also* teaches about wrestling with principalities, powers and *spiritual wickedness!*

Lone Rangers: Having seen the conflicting advice and competition in the Body of Christ, these believers

decide to ride off by themselves to spiritual safety and tranquility. This usually manifests itself in: "I read no books but the Bible; and I do not receive instructions from man!"

Remember guidance is a skill which needs to be learned. It is not automatic and infallible. It consists of developing a hearing ear and responsive heart. It involves us in what may be termed *spiritual value judgments*. Hebrews 5:14 (Amplified) describes it as: "... those whose senses and mental faculties are trained by practice to discriminate and distinguish between what is morally good and noble and what is evil and contrary either to divine or human law."

How *do* you teach someone how to know whether there is sufficient time and distance to pass another automobile on a two-lane road? Experience — a couple of close calls — and, perhaps, an occasion when he has to drop back because he misjudged the distance or the speed. Even as driving an automobile is a skill which needs to be learned, so is guidance.

Deception becomes a problem in guidance when one or more of the five dangers we listed are present. Satan is not above taking advantage of a spiritual weakness to cause us to be led astray. Consider carefully the fact that even as Jesus teaches us to be fishers of men, so — in like manner — Satan and the hosts of hell are good fishers of men, knowing how to bait a hook... taking advantage of the areas of weakness in the child of God.

Let us look again at the five basic human weaknesses we have discussed as being dangers in the matter of guidance: (1) Over-eagerness; (2) Deeper-life Syndrome; (3) Emotional Fixation; (4) Spiritual Simpleton; (5) Lone Ranger. There is, also another danger to which we need to be alerted — that of the possibility of demonic activity or influence.

WARNING SIGNALS

Just as there has developed over the years the ability to detect activity in the air currents, making it possible to

predict weather conditions and give warning of possible dangers in that area, so there are some evidences in the spiritual atmosphere which should serve to warn us of impending trouble. Three of the most usual evidences are:

Authoritative and demanding impulses: that is, a voice or leading which is compulsive and arrogant. Once interpreter of this evidence described it this way, "It is a loudness in the mind" (G. D. Watson). This type of direction is detectable when you compare it to the gentleness of Holy Spirit leading. Remember — sheep are *led* by the Spirit... not *driven* like cattle!

Insistent and recurring leadings: While seeking to imitate the voice of the Lord and Holy Spirit direction, the insistence that verges on preoccupation is a symptom we need to recognize and deal with as from the enemy. Contrariwise, when we fail to obey the Holy Spirit, He gently retreats — grieved and quenched is the way the Scriptures describes His actions. Never does the Holy Spirit force Himself upon anyone in such a manner as to violate or overwhelm.

Misuse of Scripture portions: The most notable example of this type of activity is the quote from the Psalms which Satan used in tempting Jesus (Luke 4:9-11). Since the enemy was not above employing this tactic against the Son of God, we can be certain he will try to resort to this same approach whenever possible. Other portions of Scripture which he delights to misuse are Matthew 10:35-36 concerning recklessness in family relations; Matthew 10:9-10 regarding finances; as well as the famous unpardonable sin as presented in Matthew 12:32 and related texts in Hebrews chapters 6 and 10. His desire is to cast down and destroy the unwary pilgrim.

PRECAUTIONS AND PROTECTION

We need now to be specific as to the precautions and protection needed to avoid deception in the realm of guidance.

(1) Take special note to guidance which encourages us toward personal

advantages (in position, finances, notoriety, etc.). Whenever there is guidance which involves a decision in which you have somewhat to gain — be on the alert!

(2) Never discard the plain teaching of the Scriptures in order to follow some leading, guidance, or prophecy — no matter how strongly you may “feel” it is from the Lord.

(3) Do not forget the ramifications of human influence. Just as God uses people to influence us toward Himself and His kingdom, Satanic influence may come at us through people.

(4) Do not fail to question and refuse a voice, leading or impression which comes in an urgent, demanding attitude. Remember, the spiritual atmosphere surrounding a situation is as important as the content.

(5) All guidance does not come in such a manner as to be spiritually experienced. Your responsibility is to pray; it is God’s responsibility to guide. Unconscious guidance — that is, being led without knowing it — is an

important part of spiritual maturity. Listen to Genesis 24:27: “. . . I, being in the way, the Lord led me . . .”

(6) Do not presume to interpret and add all the details to the first leading and direction you do receive from the Lord. Guidance involves *details and timing*, both of which require a day by day faith and dependence. To run ahead involves us in adding to God’s Word; as a result, it is we who shall be found to be in pain and confusion.

(7) Get yourself related to some brothers and sisters in the Lord whom you can love and respect for their dedication. To these, we submit our leadings openly and in sincerity. Especially do we consider carefully all leadings that involve the lives of others, geographical moves, doctrinal matters, and leadings which include personal directives — such as, “thou shalt go . . . do . . . be . . . etc.”

CHALLENGE AND CHOICE

The very presence and possibility of

deception in this matter of guidance should be sufficient cause for each of us to forsake individualism, arrogance and spiritual pride. It should, as well, cause us to look for biblical submission, plurality of leadership and spiritual unity.

Because of weaknesses and dangers inherent in learning the skill of recognizing and following God’s divinely ordained way of direction, some may feel it is safer to remain on the shoreline. However, refusing to move out into the realm of Holy Spirit leadership carries a price that is too great to even consider. Those who take that approach may never know the joy and maturity reserved for those who will accept the challenge of learning to live under the guidance provided by the Master Teacher.♥

For more detailed help see Take Another Look at Guidance by Bob Mumford; published by Logos and available from your book store or Christian Growth Ministries, M103 — \$1.50. Use order form on back page.

(Continued from page 14)

So Jesus said, “*Take my yoke . . . and learn of me.*” “Learn, when we have had all these wonderful experiences?” Why, yes, bless your heart! He has only started to get you ready, to introduce you to the schoolroom. He saves, sanctifies, baptizes and gives us the gifts and then sets us down in the primary department, puts a primer in our hands and says, “Now learn to spell.” And then we begin to learn all sorts of lessons in obedience, lessons which will develop us and make us mature; and then He moves us up to the second grade. Oh, I know some of you thought you were graduated and ready to sit on a throne with the Lord! What under heaven would some of us do sitting on a throne as we are now? If in the next age He should give us some divine commission which required certain elements of character, and we had not had our training here, whatever would we do? I am sure it would be a merciful thing to keep us from such a throne experience.

Capacity, power, development — these are the things that will qualify us for such positions, and nothing else will ever do it.

Knowing all this, He says, “*Take My yoke . . . and learn of Me.*” We think we are serving Him so wonderfully when we are bearing this yoke, but let me enlighten you. He lets us think we are doing something when all the time He is bearing the burden and pulling the load. “*Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me.*” Do you see what He is trying to say? “I will take care of the pulling, for I am doing it anyway, only you don’t know it.” We are to learn of Him because we are stupid and ignorant. Blest beyond words to express, but stupid and untaught.

Just one little secret in connection with this. If the burden gets too heavy and the yoke too hard to bear, there is something wrong. He says, “*My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*” His yoke is His will, and the burden is that which we incur by *doing* His will. So when we find the yoke becomes

uneasy and the burden too heavy it is very likely because we are doing our own will and bearing some burden which He has not laid upon us.

In this verse we find two *rests* mentioned. First, the rest which He gives in salvation — the burden of sin is lifted and the soul, worn and tired from that burden, enters into the *rest* thus mentioned. However, as we journey down life’s road there will be many burdens to bear, and our hearts oftentimes will become weary. But ample provision is made, for He says, “*Ye shall find rest to your souls.*” This is progressive discovery. So we find the first phase of this fellowship consists of co-operation in service with our blessed Lord. His yoke (His will) is upon us, the power of His Spirit is thrilling the heart, and life finds a proper channel for its movements. Then God’s heart is satisfied, His name glorified and we enter into an understanding of His will and purpose.♥

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OUTREACH REPORTS



A report on Christian Growth Ministries' Outreach Program

During 1971 and early 1972, as *New Wine* began to circulate abroad, and the work of Christian Growth Ministries became known, we began to receive numerous letters from foreign missionaries and laymen requesting assistance for their ministries in the form of books, tapes, and copies of *New Wine* Magazine.

In the months prior to the November 1972 Conference, the Board of Directors began to seek the Lord as to how to handle the ever increasing requests for help. After considerable discussion and prayer, we adopted the following guidelines for handling requests for foreign outreach. The program was first presented at the above-mentioned Conference.

(1) Our outreach is to be an extension of our present calling and form of ministry in methods and materials.

(2) We will not create a special department for Outreach, thus avoiding the development of a centralized "headquarters."

(3) We will not commit ourselves to pay the salaries of missionaries or workers on the field.

(4) We will not invest money to construct churches or other buildings.

(5) We will work through existing agents and agencies which are presently on the field, now engaged in doing a good job, but needing support, help and encouragement.

(6) We will support specific projects, but will not commit ourselves to support works on a continuing basis.

After this program was outlined at the Fall Conference, the Lord began to supply funds for certain projects that came to our attention. To date, we have provided help in the following ways:

THE WORLD: Approximately 5,000 issues of *New Wine* are freely distributed each month to 73 countries around the world.

CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA: We have supplied material to ministries in several countries in Latin America. We have assisted in the translation of

several of Derek Prince's *Foundation Series* into Spanish. *The Best of New Wine* is being translated for distribution in all of Latin America. We hope to be distributing these copies by early 1974. We are also assisting in the Spanish translation of Bob Mumford's *The Problem of Doing Your Own Thing*.

AFRICA: Missionaries, laymen and local leaders in Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia and South Africa have been among those receiving the numerous books, tapes and magazines which have been distributed without charge.

THE ORIENT: Bob Mumford's *Christ in Session* is being translated into Japanese; and tapes and books are being sent to several Far Eastern nations, including India.

EUROPE: Teaching materials are being mailed to several European countries. *Christ in Session* is being translated into German. We have sent a tape duplicator, along with books and tapes, to help with the ministry of a couple who formerly worked with Christian Growth Ministries and are now in Germany.

CANADA and the U.S.A. On our continent, we have underwritten the placement of two video-tape ministries. One in Montana covers small communities west of the Rocky Mountains. This subsidy is to reach folks who would never have the opportunity to receive teaching other than through this type of ministry. A second video-ministry, now in the beginning stages, is on the Grand Cayman Island of the British West Indies, and in Jamaica. Materials have also been distributed to various points in Canada.

FUTURE

We are now investigating various possible projects which are still in the discussion stage.

In Latin America, we are hoping to help with a tape exchange program whereby Spanish tapes may be circulated among many different countries and groups. The placement of strategic

tape duplicators which will allow the output of a greater number of tapes for local use is under consideration.

A conference of key Latin American leaders is being looked into in San Jose, Costa Rica. By being together with the spiritual leaders of these countries we will be able to teach as well as hear what God is saying to our brothers.

We also expect to expand the outreach of *New Wine* with a Swedish and Korean translation in the near future.

GROWING NEED

During the past summer more missionaries from several points around the world have stopped by the offices of Christian Growth Ministries. More than ever before in our history, many have come inquiring about the possibilities of receiving help through books and tapes. We believe that this is indicative of the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the nations of the world; and the cry that is arising is for good solid Bible teaching through this media.

We are committed not to form any type of missions department, but to be used of God to assist existing ministries that are already doing the work.

If your church or group is already involved in a valid ministry of outreach you are most blessed.

It is our belief, however, that there are many who desire to see their money used in areas of poverty and need, but have had no channel to send help. Christian Growth Ministries seeks to be a channel that is in touch with areas of real and vital needs. Since we clearly have the material available which is needed, it is possible that we could serve you by helping place your support in areas where we already know a need exists. Monies designated for overseas use is utilized 100% toward the intended goal. We ask that you pray for us as we seek to help strengthen the work of the Lord in the nations of the world! ♣



forum

GUIDANCE

Do you have questions which you feel need to be discussed through FORUM? If they represent a need for enlightenment or encouragement to the body of Christ, we will be happy to consider them for possible future topics to be referred to our Panel.

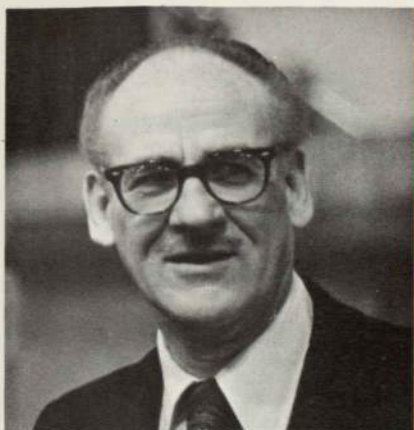
Please state questions clearly and mail them to FORUM PANEL: *New Wine Magazine*, P.O. Box 22888, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33315.

This month's questions on DIVINE GUIDANCE have come to us from various sources. We feel a definite need for clarification along these lines. We appreciate reader participation in this monthly feature of *New Wine*.

Some believers seem to get divine guidance about everything down to the most minute details of how to live their lives. They always seem to have a "word from the Lord" about a matter, or voices and visions about where He is leading them. I don't receive this strong type of guidance. Am I missing God some place?

MUMFORD: As I understand divine guidance, it rarely takes the form of constant and continual direction and interruption. There may be some period of greater activity in early Christian experience when God is teaching us to walk in His way. This should not be construed to be normal

PANELISTS:
Don Basham
Bob Mumford
Ern Baxter



Guest Panelist: Reverend W.J. Ern Baxter, Editor of *New Covenant Times* and senior minister of Christian Centre, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada.

guidance in a maturing life. Once we have learned to flow with the general direction of God for our lives, the *amount* of guidance will usually lessen, but the *quality* of guidance increases. By this I mean that when God intervenes in the flow of normal daily activity it is due to a specific need or some new direction. Immaturity and zeal often attribute to God the leadings, impulses and voices, which I would attribute to "superheated imagination"! This causes others to feel as though they are being "left out" — or, at least, affords a sensation of being "second class" Christians.

BAXTER: I find myself identifying with this question, since I often feel uncomfortable in the presence of people who seem to speak very glibly about receiving "a word from the Lord" — or, "the Lord said to me . . ." I think many times such phrases are used to describe impressions experienced by the one speaking, the source of which might be human or otherwise.

There is no question about God giving guidance. He has said, "I will guide thee" (Psalm 32:8). The major source of guidance and direction for our lives, however, comes from "letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly with all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Colossians 3:16). As we do this, we become conversant with the great divine principles of life, and our thought and behaviour patterns are conditioned by these principles, so that in the greater part of our living we are responding to life

situations in terms of these principles.

We are also told that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). This is not in opposition to what we have just said, since the Word and the Spirit are one. The Spirit's first work of guidance is to quicken the Word and its principles to our redeemed and renewed understanding, and then empower and enable us to behave in terms of the Spirit-inspired revelation.

That there will be times when the Holy Spirit will give special and obvious direction, there is no question. Bible illustrations abound to support this. However, it is my persuasion, that in the main, our daily lives are to be directed by the principles of the Word of God, while being healthily sensitive and open to any specific direction that the Holy Spirit may give.

BASHAM: Yes, I feel, too, that while at times God may get very specific about detailed guidance — even to insisting on trivial matters being carried out in a certain detailed way — such cases are the exception and not the rule.

It has been my experience that the closer we walk with the Lord, the more normal or natural guidance seems to be. When we're walking in His will, we will "happen" to be in the right place at the right time; or we "happen" to miss one plane only to catch a later one where there is a seat-mate who needs our counsel.

When it's working well, I find my relationship to my Heavenly Father is similar to my own children's relation-

ship to me. They do not continually run to me twenty or thirty times a day to check and see if every move they make has my approval. Rather, out of the family relationship (which is loving and secure), they act, live and move in a way which properly reflects the security of that relationship. So it is with our day-by-day relationship with God. It is more fully expressed by an intimate, continuing relationship rather than my repeatedly and consciously trying to "get a word from the Lord" on every matter.

How can I know that a leading, or an impulse, I receive is from God, the enemy, or my own flesh?

BAXTER: It is my view, that we are most often misled by what is referred to as "the flesh." Consideration of this term in Scripture has brought me to this definition: "The flesh is the inclination in our nature to self-gratifying behaviour." If the so-called "leading" is toward self-gratification, then it should be suspect.

If one is seeking to walk honestly before God, then he is capable of evaluating his motivation, and can determine whether or not self-gratification is the goal of this desired guidance. I am inclined to believe that it is through this permitted response to the inclination for self-gratification, that Satan is able to influence our decisions and behaviour.

I find a spiritual rule of thumb to be that if anything that I may consider to be guidance or leading carries with it an uneasiness, I take a second look. Divine guidance should be accompanied by "the peace of God," giving deep inner rest and a sense of rightness. The Apostle Paul says, "He that doubteth is condemned in the thing that he doeth" (Romans 14:23). If there is any question, then stand still until the guidance is accompanied by peace and this "sense of rightness."

As one lives habitually in the Word, reading and applying it, this inner perception will develop and improve. We

believe this is what the writer to the Hebrews is referring to when chiding the Hebrews for not going on from the "milk" of the Word to the "strong meat" of the Word. He tells them that as they go on from "milk" to "meat" they will come into maturity... then they will become those who "by reason of habit have their organs of perception well trained" (Hebrews 6:14, Rotherham). Such a person will be able to "discriminate between what is good and what is bad for him" (Hebrews 6:14, J.B. Phillips).

MUMFORD: Yes, Ern, everyone soon discovers that guidance is a skill to be learned. However, some Bible teachers unwittingly present it as that which functions automatically in the life of a Spirit-filled believer.

Developing a skill involves a twofold approach — *teaching* and *training*. Many are *taught* the principles of divine guidance who have never been *trained*. Fear of failure is, I suppose, the greatest single cause of inability to be guided. When someone asks, "How can I know...?" it throws the question into a realm of experience, value judgments, and that ability which we call *skill*. Recently, Hank Aaron hit his 712th home run — that is not luck, but *skill*!

The person who: (1) stirs himself to search out God's ways; (2) desires to study and be taught the principles of guidance; and (3) puts these principles to work in everyday experience — can soon *know* the difference between leadings that originate in God, the enemy, or their own flesh. That kind of knowledge is in the realm of skill. It has been acquired by the type of training which is known as the *skill to know the difference*.

BASHAM: Speaking of skill, we soon learn that if a leading is from the Holy Spirit, it will be gentle and peaceful — more like a nudge. It may be insistent, but there will be a gentle, wooing quality about it. The leadings which come from Satan tend to be harsh and compulsive: "Do it now! Quick, before it's too late!" Leadings which are the result of the flesh tend to

manifest themselves most often when we are walking in the flesh — when we are not moving in the Spirit.

I've learned, the hard way, not to make big decisions about anything when I am not at peace with myself or the Lord. Also, decisions based on impulses from the flesh normally cater to the desires of the flesh. They will have an, "I'm entitled to this," or "I deserve to have this," or "Other Christians do it, so why can't I do it?" kind of quality about them.

Of course, in the final analysis, we learn to distinguish between the three kinds of impulses only by making the decisions and walking them out. By experience — often quite painful experience — we learn which impulses to trust.

How should I receive a prophecy or a "word" from another believer which gives direction or counsel to me?

BASHAM: According to Paul, prophecy is for "edification, exhortation and comfort" (I Corinthians 14:3). Therefore, for the most part, I believe prophetic utterances will not be predictive or directive. I tend to be on my guard against any "prophet" whose main emphasis seems to be that of "getting a word" for this or that Christian. In other words, it is my feeling that directive prophecy should be relatively rare.

But, having said that, I recognize the validity of such a prophecy when it comes — provided it meets certain tests. First of all, a directive prophecy coming to me from someone else must be confirmed. If it confirms something God has already been speaking to me about in my own spirit, then I find it easy to accept. If it appears to be something fresh or new, which I had not already considered, I do not reject it — but neither do I act on it. Rather, I take a "let's wait and see" attitude. If it is from God, I have a right to have it confirmed. Proverbs 11:14 says: "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

Many a zealous Christian has

suffered disaster by acting hastily on a "prophetic word" given them by someone else.

BAXTER: I, too, would receive a prophecy or word from another courteously and cautiously. I do not believe it is right to categorically rule out the possibility of God speaking through others to me. However, as I consider the Scripture on this point, I find that the character and proven ministry of these "prophets" is often of such a calibre that it reduces the probability of this type communication considerably.

It is distressing to me to see many new converts and immature Christians aspiring to oracular utterances. I think it is a very serious thing to tell someone what to do, and claim that it is a "thus saith the Lord." I believe it is much better, when sharing counsel with Christian friends, to offer any counsel or advice as that which is your best and most responsible evaluation of the situation, and then let the person receive it and put it to the test of God's peace and inner rest. There has been much harm done in this area and for this reason, I would urge great caution in either giving or receiving advice and direction as though it were an inspired divine word.

MUMFORD: In discussing the last question, we spoke of guidance as a skill to be learned. Prophecy, as well as all forms of directive word or counsel, is one of the *tools* we need to learn how to use in gaining that skill.

Most of us have seen a power saw in operation. It whizzes through heavy boards — saving hours of valuable time and untold preservation of human strength. It is, however, a dangerous tool. Fingers, hands, feet — even fatalities — are recorded casualties from working with power saws.

Prophecy fits into this analogy very comfortably. The prophetic word has a way of cutting past human intellect, tradition, rebellion and disobedience. I have seen the prophetic gift save years of trial and error and swiftly solve problems that would demand hours of human endeavor.

At the same time, there are many shipwrecks (injured churches, groups and individuals) as a result of the wrong use of the prophetic gift. Some, in reaction, have discarded the *tool* as being dangerous. The solution is learning the use of the tool — its advantages and disadvantages. "Despise not prophesying" (I Thessalonians 5:20). In its proper place, prophecy is a tremendous tool in guidance.

Is it valid to expect God to show you where He is leading you, even if it may be years before it comes to pass — or should we live day by day and never worry about it?

MUMFORD: My answer to the question is *yes!* Actually, divine guidance carries both of these elements in a single encounter with God concerning guidance. Let us use Joseph as an example. His two dreams about the binding of sheaves and the stars doing obeisance to him contained his whole future in *seed* form.

As Joseph proceeded on his spiritual itinerary from the day of the dreams, he did not receive new guidance each day, but was required by the Lord to walk in the light already received. Spiritually alert, he began to see the unfolding of the significance of the dreams, as an oak tree unfolds from an acorn.

Seeking to know all guidance at once is the cause of much pain and error. Resist the temptation to interpret, force meaning, and to run ahead of God in the *significance* of the guidance received. Rarely does it ever go the way we think it should! God works as we trust Him for His sovereign ability to "work all things!" Each event that relates back to the original guidance acts as a road sign that says, "That's right . . . this is the way . . . you are making progress and the end result of this guidance is the fulfillment of that which God desires."

BASHAM: In some high moment of inspiration God may indeed give you a

glimpse of what lies ahead. But wisdom dictates that while we should welcome such revelation, we should not seek it! Jesus said, "Take no thought for tomorrow . . . Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34).

The problem with glimpsing the future is that we then feel strongly compelled to help bring it to pass; and by so doing, often upset God's timetable for us.

Years ago, while I was still in Bible college, a friend prophesied over me that the time would come when I would no longer be in the pastorate and would move out into a freelance, faith ministry. But, wisely, the Holy Spirit had me forget all about that prophecy for almost fifteen years — until He was ready for me to make the change the prophecy had spoken about. Then he brought the prophecy to mind at the right time and with unmistakable clarity. And it helped give me courage to resign from my church and move into the ministry God had waiting for me.

Frankly, I believe it is the wisdom of God which prevents us from having more than a rare glimpse of what lies ahead. If we could peer into the future, or if God would draw back the curtain and allow us to see clearly what lies ahead, two negative results would follow. (1) We would see the wonderful things which would happen and tend to get prideful and puffed up. (2) We would see the struggles and tests which lie ahead, and would become fearful. Since God wants us neither prideful nor fearful, He wants us to walk day by day in faith with Him.

BAXTER: I believe that if we have taken care of the prerequisites for a sound relationship with God, we will have divine indication as to our general direction and place in life. This is true of all committed Christians.

There are those, however, whom God has called and appointed to places of specific leadership. These usually experience a distinctive divine call and directing, which may not be the experience of the majority of Christians.

The number of gift ministries, as compared to the number of people to whom they are sent, would be comparatively small. One shepherd over many sheep may be a fair indication of the ratio.

However, whether it be leader or people, I believe God gives indication of one's place in the purpose and Kingdom of God. I find it very difficult to believe that God leaves His people hanging in perennial uncertainty. Such uncertainty indicates poor relationship, which always results in poor communication.

Undoubtedly there is a period of time between the distinct indication of God as to one's place in the Kingdom and the full realization of that call. However, I am constantly confronted with people who say that they are sure they were called to be this or that. Many times the call has come through people and this, in itself, is questionable. The months and years go by and nothing develops in terms of the call, and the person seems to be expecting some kind of a miracle to take place in fulfillment of the purported call. This has created disillusionment, disappointment, and in some cases, the destruction of a life.

I believe that our Lord, from the time that He was aware of His destiny and ministry, went through a process that was ever leading Him to the fulfillment of the Father's will. So it was with the Apostle Paul. While many years elapsed between his call and commission in Damascus, until the full recognition and expression of his ministry at Antioch, there is no doubt that during those years he was knowledgeably involved in preparation for the work to which he had been called, and that he knew where he was going.

I feel this question is very important. There is a factor here that needs clarification. Whom God calls, He instructs and trains for the calling. It may be a considerable time before such a calling is maturely manifest. I do not believe God calls without gifting and enabling the person to fulfill that call, even though such gift and enablement needs to be developed and

matured. Any supposed call or direction in life that does not bring with it the divine enablement for its fulfillment, I believe, should be abandoned. Too many people are wasting precious time waiting for promised ships that are never going to come in.

One further word: divine guidance for ministry, almost without exception, originates directly from God. What comes from others, then becomes confirmation.

I have often been told to "lay out a fleece" to find the will of God. Does this deny the New Testament principle of being led by the Spirit?

BASHAM: On rare occasions, God will allow the use of fleeces. The major problem, as I see it, is that once we make use of one and it proves successful, we want to use them all the time — a process which tends to diminish, not increase, our trust and faith. We are to walk by faith, not by fleeces. Bob, what is your opinion?

MUMFORD: When we talk about "fleeces," we often get into trouble with many sincere Christians, for their testimony is, "I tried it, and it works." May I say I *know* there are times when "it works" — and am continually amazed at God's mercy, longsuffering and patience with us.

Examination of Gideon's "fleece account" in the Old Testament will reveal it was not intended as guidance (see Judges 6:36), but rather as a sign to help unbelief (6:39). What God had asked from Gideon (the guidance was clear) was so difficult that unbelief arose in his heart. Fear of failure required — or at least Gideon felt that it did — a powerful reassurance that God indeed was going to be with him.

My suggestion is that people who use "fleeces" as a form of guidance may be walking in fear of failure — demanding a sign without being conscious of the implication of their actions. Secondly, the reason the fleece does work is usually due to our

immaturity and sincerity. God, seeing our *ignorance* and *intent*, honors our request for guidance in this form.

My caution is this, however: a more matured person who resorts to fleeces as a continual form of guidance and refuses to grow in the faith realm will open himself to serious deception. Eventually, this type person feels he has developed a "foolproof system" of guidance. Unconsciously, then, he begins to depend on the system rather than upon God. Whenever we think we have God figured out, He changes His method of revealing Himself — thus maintaining His sovereignty to do as He pleases. Ern, what has been your experience in this area?

BAXTER: As has been presented, there are problems involved in this type of seeking guidance. I am, personally, not comfortable with "putting God on the spot," and demanding that He accommodate my specific requirements for His response. I have had spectacular and indisputably supernatural direction from time to time; however, most often my guidance comes by following what I believe to be some very simple rules for governing one's life in relation to God and His will. Let me share them with you as we conclude our remarks.

The first rule has to do with the Word of God itself. The matter for which I desire guidance should be checked out with the Bible. If the Bible has a specific word on it, then that ought to suffice. The Bible is the Spirit's Word, and He is not going to give guidance that would violate the Word that He has already given. This might be referred to as the objective rule. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my pathway" (Psalm 119:105). There may not, however, be a specific Scripture concerning the matter about which I am concerned. I should then check it out to see if it is in violation of any principle, such as honesty, sincerity, love, etc.

If it passes the test of Scripture, then the inner ministry of the Holy Spirit may be appealed to directly, and I will know if I should or should not by the peace or uncertainty —

whichever may be the case — which I feel. If I am in doubt of the rightness of the undertaking, then I should abstain until I have a sense of inner peace. Romans 14:23 tells us: "He that doubteth is condemned in the thing that he doeth."

I next look for the providential hand of God in circumstance. "He opens doors and no man shuts them, and shuts doors and no man opens them" (Revelation 3:7-8). If my life is properly adjusted to God, and all other relationships, and I am sincere in wanting to know His will, I will go along with His opening and shutting of doors. I will not attempt to kick them open when He shuts them; nor pull them shut when He opens them.

As one matures in God, the matter of guidance is very much like a mature marriage. One gets to know the ways of his or her companion. So, as one walks with God year after year, he comes to know the ways of God, and will make judgments and evaluations almost automatically in the light of his mature understanding of divine principles.

I would counsel young Christians to spend much time in the Word of God, and to keep their lives open to God and sensitive to the Holy Spirit. As they do so, they will walk in the precepts and principles of God's revealed will with the approval of the Holy Spirit in their spirit and conscience, and will flow with God's providence in the opening and shutting of doors.

I am becoming increasingly convinced that our blunders in life can be traced to a breakdown in relationships, so that we follow many times the self-gratifying desires of our nature camouflaged by a religious rationale. Maintaining a right relationship, as we have discussed it, will guarantee the maintenance of right guidance. ♡

Our next FORUM topic will be "Christian Morals and Ethics." Guest Panelist, Herb Ellingwood, who is Legal Affairs Secretary in the office of Governor Ronald Reagan, joins regular panelists Derek Prince and Charles Simpson in answering questions in this crucial area.

BIBLE

STUDY

by Howard Coffey

THE MINOR PROPHETS – PART 2

NAHUM

SYNOPSIS: The prophecy of Nahum deals with one subject – the downfall and destruction of Nineveh. His description is so energetic and vivid that it would almost seem that he was an actual observer of the sacking of the city. The divine purpose of the prophetic revelation was twofold: (1) Being just, God could not overlook the deliberate sinfulness of Nineveh; (2) Being merciful, He made known that, though Assyria had wrought destruction in the earth through cruel conquest, and had carried away the Northern Kingdom into captivity, He would not forsake Judah.

The prophet Jonah had preached judgment to this capital of the Assyrian empire one hundred and twenty years prior to Nahum. But the repentance and humility that his message produced had long been abandoned. In this state of apostasy their heathen brutality and idolatry had so increased that God sent the prophet Nahum to denounce their abominations, and to pronounce their destruction, though at the time the city seemed impregnable. Approximately one hundred years later, the prophecy was fulfilled in the destruction of the city by the combined armies of the Medes and Babylonians. (Prophesied also in Is. 10:5–9, and Zeph. 2:13–15).

OUTLINE:

- I. God, the just Judge, who defends those who trust Him: Judah (Ch. 1)
- II. God, the just Judge, who destroys enemies who defy Him: Nineveh (Chs. 2 and 3)

HABAKKUK

SYNOPSIS: The prophecy of Habakkuk is a dialogue between God and the

prophet dealing with the question of why wickedness seems to triumph.

Wickedness and oppression had filled Judah. In answer to Habakkuk's call for help, God let the prophet know that He was raising up a cruel nation, the Chaldeans, to bring judgment upon His people. Then Habakkuk asks, "Will you let them get away with this forever? Will they succeed forever in their heartless wars?" (1:17 L.B.). God replies that, although the Chaldeans were used as an instrument of punishment, He will judge them (Ch. 2).

With the assurance of God's justice, he closes with a Psalm of triumph (Ch. 3). Outstanding Portions: 1:15; 2:2–4, 14, 20.

OUTLINE:

Introduction: Basic truth – "The just shall live by his faith" (2:4 KJV).

- I. The conflict of the faith of the just (Chs. 1 and 2)
- II. The triumph of the faith of the just (Ch. 3)

ZEPHANIAH

SYNOPSIS: The prophet Zephaniah ministered during the reign of Josiah.

His prophetic exhortations were directed against (1) the idolatry of Judah and (2) the threats against Judah by neighboring countries (Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria). In spite of the pronouncements of judgment of the "terrible day of the wrath of God poured out," glimmers of hope shine through the gloom with a promise to the repentant: "Gather together and pray, . . . Beg Him to save you, all who are humble – all who have tried to obey. Walk humbly and do what is right; perhaps even yet the Lord will protect you from His wrath in the day of doom." (2:1,3 L.B.). Then those bits of shimmering light burst forth into glorious full-day brightness and

warmth, and the promise of restoration comes: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem. For the Lord will remove his hand of judgment, and disperse the armies of your enemy. And the Lord himself, the King of Israel, will live among you! At last your troubles will be over – you need fear no more. On that day the announcement to Jerusalem will be, 'Cheer up, don't be afraid. For the Lord your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty Savior. He will give you victory. He will rejoice over you in great gladness; he will love you and not accuse you. . . I will gather you together and bring you home again and give you a good name, a name of distinction among all the peoples of the earth, and they will praise you when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes,' says the Lord" (3:14–20).

OUTLINE:

- I. Wrath Pronounced (Ch. 1)
- II. Repentance Required (Ch. 2:1–3:8)
- III. Restoration Promised (Ch. 3:9–20)

HAGGAI

SYNOPSIS: Haggai is the first prophet of the post-exilic period. For historic background of this prophecy read Ezra chapters 1–7. Cyrus, of Media-Persia, decreed the return of the Jews to their land. Zerubbabel was governor at the time, and Joshua was High Priest. An altar was erected on the site of the old Temple, but after two years the foundation for the new Temple was laid in the midst of great jubilee. The joy, however, was short-lived. The rebuilding was discontinued during the reigns of Cyrus' successors due to the bitter hostility of the Samaritans. Sixteen years passed. During the reign of Darius a decree was published permitting the continuation and the termination of the work. By now, however, the people were accustomed to living indifferently and selfishly – doing their own thing. The prophet's message was given to arouse the people to build for God.

The closing message directed to Zerubbabel foreshadows the over-

throw of the nations and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ our Lord.

OUTLINE:

Introduction: Five prophetic messages to the people; to Zerubbabel, the governor; and to Joshua, the High Priest:

- I. *First message*: "... rebuild my Temple, and I will be pleased with it and appear there in my glory" (1:8 L.B.)
- II. *Second message*: "I am with you; I will bless you" (1:13 L.B.)
- III. *Third message*: "... take courage and work, for 'I am with you'... 'I will shake all nations, and the Desire of All Nations shall come to this Temple, and I will fill this place with my glory... The future splendor of this Temple will be greater than the splendor of the first one'" (2:4,7,8 L.B.)
- IV. *Fourth message*: "'You people... were contaminating your sacrifices by living with selfish attitudes and evil hearts - ... But all is different now because you have begun to build the Temple... From this day I will bless you'" (2:14,15,19 L.B.)
- V. *Fifth message*: "Tell Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, 'I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow thrones and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations. I will overthrow their armed might, and brothers and companions will kill each other. But when that happens, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, and honor you like a signet ring upon my finger, for I have specially chosen you,' says the Lord of Hosts" (2:21-23 L.B.)

ZECHARIAH

SYNOPSIS: Zechariah, the second of the post-exilic prophets, was a companion of Haggai in the great ministry of encouraging the returned exiles in God's purposes - an influence that resulted in the re-building of the second Temple (6:14). He was born in Babylon, of priestly lineage, and returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel. He began his ministry as a young man, shortly after the beginning of Haggai's prophecies, in the second year of Darius. He also prophesied in the fourth year of Darius.

The book can be divided into three principal divisions: symbolical visions, practical exhortations, and prophetic promises. The latter has to do with

God's judgments and the restoration of Israel under the Messiah. These Messianic prophecies are among the clearest and most outstanding of Scripture.

Along with other prophetic utterances there is depicted the rejection of Jesus Christ the Messiah, warning that there will be a deceiver, the Anti-Christ (11:16-17). This is followed by an account of the attack of Jerusalem (12:2-3) and the promise of the salvation of His people at the coming of Messiah, who shall establish His kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital and center of worship: (12:8,10; 13:1,14; 3-4,9-11,16).

Other Messianic prophecies are: 6:12,13; 9:9-12; 10:4; 13:7-9; 14:5-8,16-21.

OUTLINE:

Introduction: 1:1-6

- I. Symbolical Visions: 1:7; 6:15
 1. The Horsemen 1:7-17
 2. The Four Horns and the Four Blacksmiths 1:18-21
 3. The Yardstick - Ch. 2
 4. Joshua, Type of the Messiah - Ch. 3
 5. The Golden Lampstand - Ch. 4
 6. The Flying Scroll 5:1-4
 7. The Woman in the Flying Basket 5:1-4
 8. The Four Chariots 6:1-8
 9. The Coronation of Joshua, the High Priest, Type of the Messiah 6:9-15
- II. Practical Exhortations: Chs. 7 and 8
 1. Concerning fasting - Ch. 7
 2. Concerning rebuilding the Temple - Ch. 8
- III. Prophetic Promises: Chs. 9-14
(See Synopsis)

MALACHI

SYNOPSIS: We have now come to the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi, the third post-exilic prophet, prophesied during the time of Nehemiah when Judah was a Persian province. The book of Nehemiah closes the *History* of the Old Testament, and Malachi closes the *Prophecies* of the Old Testament. The prophet denounced the spiritual ills of Nehemiah's time. (Compare: Neh. 13:10-12 with Mal. 3:8-10; Neh. 13:23-27 with Mal. 2:10-16; Neh. 13:29 with Mal. 2:4-8).

The Temple and the walls of Jerusalem had been rebuilt. However, the unfulfilled expectation of an immediate Messianic Kingdom had produced disappointment and frustration. Enthusiasm had given place to skepticism, rebellion, and even open defiance. Their attitude toward every accusation of God was, "Really? When was this? ... Who? Us? ... When have we ever done a thing like that? ... What do you mean? When did we ever rob God?" (1:3,6,7; 3:8 L.B.).

Out of this bewildering spiritual wilderness the prophet's voice cries out in denunciation. He also shouts triumphant assurance of the glorious coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, our Lord, announced by His forerunner, for the purpose of judging and purifying His people. "Listen: I will send my messenger before me to prepare the way. And then the one you are looking for will come suddenly to his Temple - the Messenger of God's promises, to bring you great joy. Yes, he is surely coming," says the Lord of Hosts" (3:1).

Someone has said: "Prophecy of the Old Testament expired with the Gospel on its lips." This began a four-hundred-year nocturnal period of prophetic silence, to be broken only by the rising of the "Sun of Righteousness" proclaimed in the wilderness of Judea by John the Baptist. He announced the coming of the Prophet of Prophets, our Lord, with the cry: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!" (Matt. 3:2,3 KJV)

OUTLINE:

- I. Israel's dilemma: Disappointment in the delay of the Messiah. Consequence: rebellion and confusion (1:1; 2:17; 3:7-17 L.B.)
- II. God's answer: Assurance of the coming of the Messiah. Consequence: healing and victory (3:1-3; 4:1-6 L.B.)

This month concludes our study of the Old Testament by Rev. Howard Coffey. In January we will begin a new series of Bible studies.

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For pastors and prayer group leaders
(wives are invited)

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