

# Magazine **New Wine**

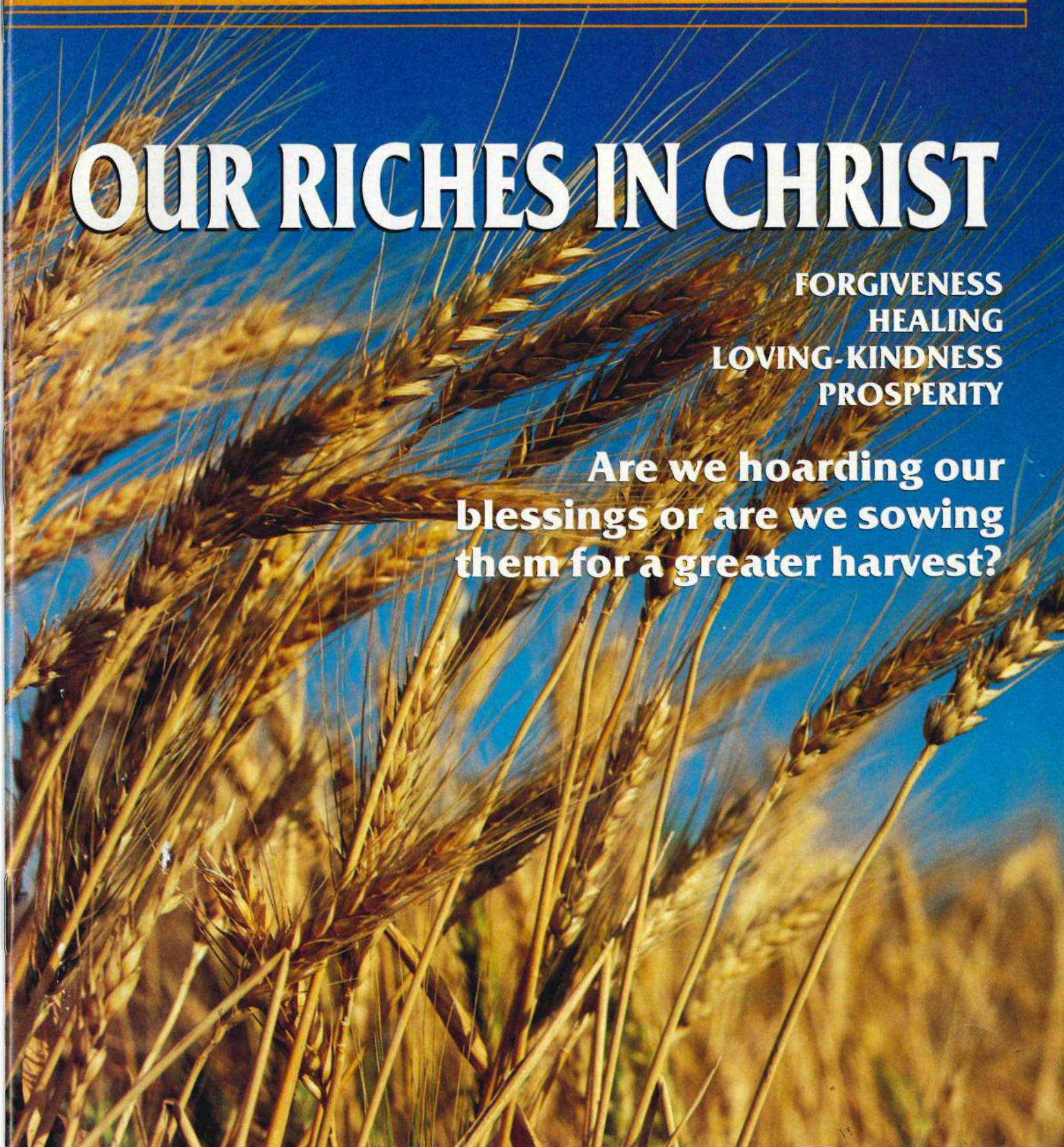
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May 1986 \$1.95

## **OUR RICHES IN CHRIST**

**FORGIVENESS  
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PROSPERITY**

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blessings or are we sowing  
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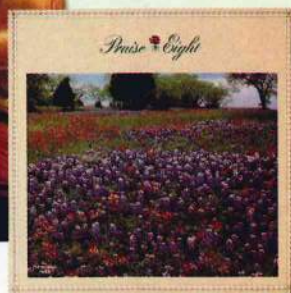
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## CONTENTS

# Our Riches in Christ

- 6** **GOD'S WATERMELON PATCH**  
by Kenneth Copeland  
Sowing to produce a hundredfold

- 10** **THE GOD OF INFINITE SUPPLY**  
by Terry Fullam  
Why the Lord gives to His people

- 12** **THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS**  
by Ern Baxter  
How God can and does forgive us

- 16** **"FORGIVE AND FORGET"**  
An interview with author Lewis Smedes

- 20** **WHO IS THE LORD?**  
by Chris Davis  
Are you serving a graven image or the God of the Bible?

- 23** **BROTHERLY L.O.V.E.**  
by Diana Scimone and Jackie Conn  
Reaching out to boys in need

- 30** **EL-SHADDAI**  
by Charles Price  
The secret of Christian victory

## Feature

- 28** **THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST**  
by R. C. Sproul  
No single event in the life of Jesus is more important to us today.

Vol. 18, No. 5, May 1986



- 12.** *Ern Baxter lists 7 illustrations of what happens to our sin when we're forgiven.*

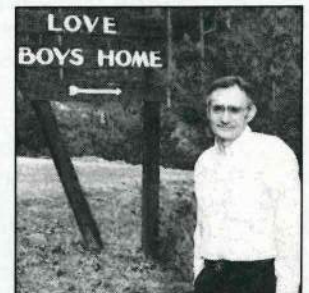


- 23.** *In 17 years, Bill Wilson has taken care of some 200 "dependent, neglected" boys.*

- 10.** *Can you imagine a church where people are just begging for an opportunity to give?*



- 20.** *The key to walking in the fullness of the Christian life is knowing who the Lord is.*



## Departments

- 2** EDITORIAL—Helping the soul remember  
**3** WASHINGTON WATCH—Genocide Treaty  
**4** LETTERS  
**16** DID YOU KNOW—Reaching the world  
**35** THE WORD—From Ur to Egypt  
**36** THE WAY I SEE IT—Faces we wear

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## EDITORIAL

# Bless-and-forget-not principle Memory Joggers

by Bruce Longstreth

**T**he Scriptures, especially the Psalms, indicate that the human soul, the psychological control center of our being, is in a constant state of unrest: sometimes depressed—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" (Ps. 42:5); sometimes fearful—"Soul, 'Flee as a bird'" (Ps. 11:1); and at all times in need of counsel and help—"Return to your rest, O my soul" (Ps. 116:7 NAS) and "I have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child" (Ps. 131:2 NAS).

Strangely enough, the soul is also responsible for our thanksgiving and praise: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 103:2). For restless souls, blessing and remembering are an inseparable team that work together to bring victory and stability.

Psalms 103 indicates that when fretful souls remember the goodness of the Lord, they become perpetual instruments of thanksgiving and praise. David, the writer of this Psalm, knew this to be true, and listed several memory joggers to cause his soul to continually express gratitude to the Lord. The soul must remember that the Lord has forgiven all his sins, healed all his diseases, redeemed his life from the brink of death and adorned him with loving-kindness and mercy, and provided abundantly for all his material needs.

Our initial focus for this issue was on those memory joggers, things the Lord has done to enrich our lives. But as we gathered the material together, we began to see that the bless-and-forget-not principle is most effective in the lives of people who have become channels of God's blessing rather than vessels that only collect and con-

tain it. For them, God's blessing provokes not only praise to the Lord but a liberty in sharing what the Lord has given as well.

*A forgiven people* can only fully understand what it means to be forgiven by forgiving others. Ern Baxter helps us to understand the Lord's forgiveness of us, and Lewis Smedes helps us to forgive others.

*A healed people* recognize God as their source. Charles Price encourages us to tap into our source—the Lord—and extend His healing power to those in need.

*A people who are redeemed and then crowned with goodness and mercy* are a merciful people as well. Chris Davis shows us why we may not be experiencing God's mercy, and then we see a ministry of mercy in operation at L.O.V.E. Boys Home in Alabama.

*A prosperous people* see their abundance as an opportunity. Ken Copeland and Terry Fullam encourage us to use it to extend the kingdom of God.

In his old age, the Apostle Peter wrote to the Church, "And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder. . ." (2 Pet. 1:13 NAS). His words strangely echo the sentiment of our Psalm, "Bless the Lord and forget not." He knew that a Church continually reminded of God's grace could not only survive, but also prosper in the midst of a perverted generation as it blessed the Lord and extended His grace.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!" □

*Bruce Longstreth is editor of New Wine and Fathergram.*



## Genocide Treaty: A License for Abuse?

When the Senate ratified the Genocide Treaty in February by a vote of 83 to 11, it did little to prevent genocide, and presented missionaries with some remote but troubling possibilities.

Genocide is the massive extermination of an ethnic or religious group, such as the slaughter of six million Jews during World War II. But the treaty's definition of the crime is in vague language that could be a license for abuse in the hands of an international court.

Under the treaty, "causing serious mental harm" to a particular religious group would be an act of genocide. Take the case of a missionary who converts members of a pagan tribe to Christianity. Theoretically, if the International Court of Justice ruled that this journey from darkness to light inflicted "severe mental harm" on members of the tribe, it could convict the missionary of genocide—hardly sensible, but not unthinkable, considering some of the rulings international bodies have made. □

## A Responsive Market

For all its entrusted bureaucracies, Washington still has what a businessman might call responsiveness to the market. When voters speak with a clear united voice, Washington listens. That's why it's so important for Christians to become a part of that market, injecting their concerns about our national life into the political debate.

In the past few years, Christians have begun to have a far greater impact on the national and political debate, and a top White House aide recently told a group of Christians that its dedication and faith are greatly needed in Washington.

As key political figures have begun to recognize that the basic changes in our society will require spiritual renewal, they have made traditional values, long ignored by most public officials, a standard theme in speeches across the political spectrum.

Admittedly, substantive action and not a shift in rhetoric is the indicator of true change. But a basic shift in political rhetoric is not inconsequential. If leaders begin to pick up the message that Christians are carrying, it will inevitably have an impact on national policy. □

## Leaders Under Fire

One important political development of the past six years has been the rise of the so-called religious

right. Leaders such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell have entered into the political debate and mobilized an important part of the electorate around the issues of abortion, school prayer, and pornography, and as a result have drawn some political fire.

A recent article in the *Washington Post* outlined how Democratic political strategists planned to continue the attack on Jerry Falwell and those he supports. The tactic—hardly a new one—is to cast him as the leader of a small intolerant minority, implying that the candidates he supports are captives of narrow and dangerous special interests.

One congressman said, "Falwell may have some problems with his image among some groups, but his position on things like abortion, school prayer, and pornography have broad support. Each election, attacks on Falwell and his agenda become less and less effective."

Richard Neuhaus, author of *The Naked Public Square*, also points out that the movement Falwell represents runs far deeper than any one figure. "I'm persuaded that it's more accurate to see this as a very deep cultural shift with powerful religious and political components."

According to Neuhaus, Falwell and others have had a positive impact, forcing religious values back into the arena of public discussion. Most Americans, he feels, want to relate their religious beliefs to the social and political issues of the day.

In upcoming elections, look for more negative advertising surrounding Jerry Falwell and others who have a high visibility on moral issues, but look for that advertising to be less and less effective in swaying votes. □

## "Year of Thanksgiving"

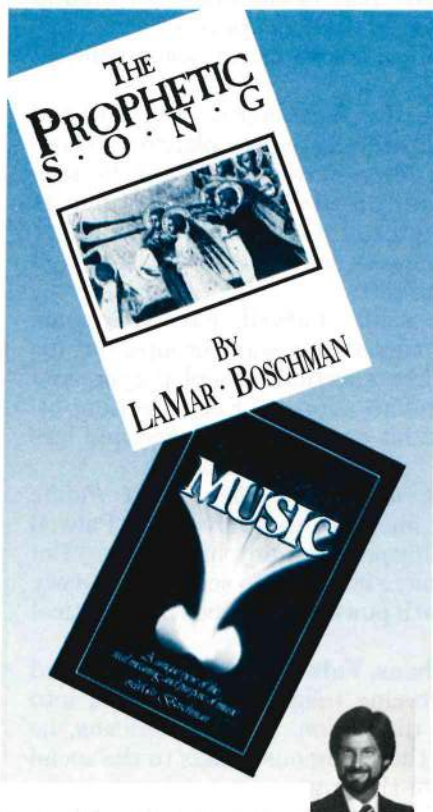
Next year marks the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution and in commemoration of that event a joint resolution in Congress is designating 1987 as the "Year of Thanksgiving." It recognizes that a season of thanksgiving has been a tradition in America from the time of the early settlers, and instructs the President to call upon the people of the United States to "observe such a year with appropriate ceremonies and activities." Not surprisingly, the resolution doesn't say whom we are to thank.

Already, many Christian groups are planning events to bring real meaning to this year of celebration. From meetings at local churches to national prime-time telecasts, Christians will have an opportunity to point to the One to whom we owe our thanks. □



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## LETTERS

# "Dear New Wine,"

### Finally!

I have been reading *New Wine* for about ten years and have been blessed by many articles, but was always left feeling that the real issue wasn't being addressed. After reading the March issue, "Waking the Sleeping Giant," I can say that one word describes my opinion: finally.

I have believed for so long that we must get to the root of secular humanism and not just pluck at its fruit. For me, that meant getting God's people into the driver's seat of political activity. I feel we must bring civil law back into harmony with God's law.

I hope future issues will continue this course by giving some practical advice about how Christians can (and must) get involved in the political arena.

Dan Smithwick  
Lexington, KY

### Time to Open Our Eyes

Ern Baxter's article "Why Do the Heathen Rage?" (March) delights my heart. It's about time we Christians open our eyes to what is going on all around us. How can we protect our society, our country, or ourselves if we allow ourselves the liberty to ignore all the blessings we are being robbed of?

Another topic I wish you would address is the New Age movement. Our people are being brainwashed into accepting the occult in alarming proportions. Church people who should know better are playing with fire when they accept yoga, mind control, and uncontrolled viewing of television. Sooner or later they are going to get burned. This is nothing new, but now it's open witchcraft and devil worship without any attempt to hide it.

Prayer is our weapon, but are we using it effectively?

Ione Gamache  
Superior, WI

### Quake Update

In regard to "Quake on the Lake" (March), I have some additional information. We had prayed that God would literally shake Cleveland as a sign of His coming revival, and on January 31 people in the region were stunned as a "quake on the lake" actually occurred—an earthquake registering 5.0 on the Richter scale shook the entire area. With the epicenter of the quake located only thirty miles from downtown Cleveland, believe me, it was felt! I believe it was more than a natural occurrence. Cleveland has never experienced a quake of this magnitude. Truly signs and wonders are occurring in the heavens and the earth! Keep praying!

Stephan Witt  
Coordinator, Quake on the Lake  
Brunswick, OH

### Accepting the Sinner

I have read with apprehension your articles about the effects of rock and roll on the minds and morals of its listeners ("Born Again, Spirit-Filled Rebel" and "Warning: Rock Music May Be Hazardous to Your Child's Health," January), wondering what sort of response they would engender. Were you going to take the position that all rock and roll is satanic and should be banned, and in so doing ignore both the artistic achievement and ministry of such performers as Phil Keaggy and Keith Green? I have seen people cry tears of healing inspired by the songs of those artists, and hoped you would not negate their ministry in an era when Christian art is something to be more embarrassed about than lauded.

Inspired by my concerns, I tried a sampling of the local rock stations. The message was unmistakable: "Won't somebody please save me!" These were people crying out to God in explicit



terms.

Banning this music will solve nothing. There is no reason why we should be more outraged about pornographic rock-and-roll lyrics than, say, about the cleverly disguised adultery or blatant fornication of the people we ride the elevator with or take to lunch. These musicians are crying out for someone to have the courage to help them get saved! Ours is not to silence the songs, but to bring light into the darkness of those who sing them. We need to stop being scandalized by sin, trying to hush it up, demanding that people get cleaned up before they can come to church. And this applies whether they're punk rockers or the accountants who live next door.

Kevin D. Rhodes  
Denver, CO

#### ***Radio Program a Blessing***

I have been listening to your radio program, "Challenge—With Charles Simpson," on KMLE Radio, Phoenix, Arizona. I truly enjoy your broadcast and I feel the love of Jesus and am so blessed each and every day. I only wish your program would last an hour or more.

Sara Weaver  
Globe, AZ

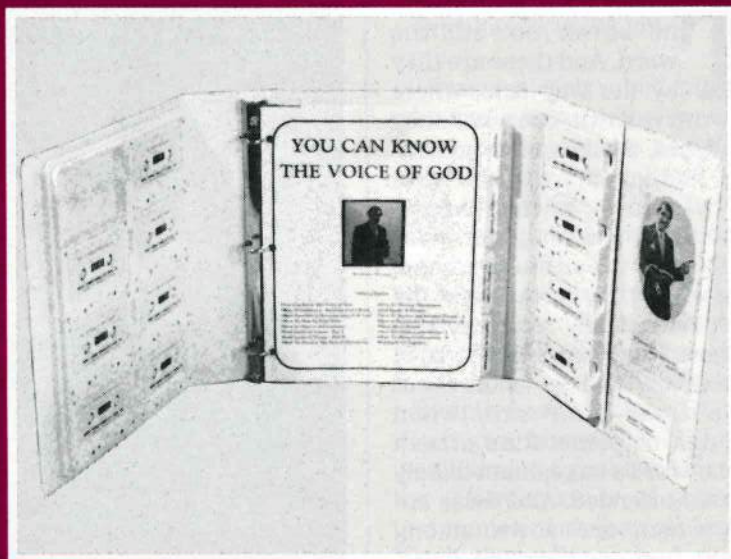
#### ***Praises of His People***

The Hosanna! Music tape "All Hail King Jesus" has really been a blessing. Two different times I was plagued with a headache, which aspirin and much resisting and rebuking were not helping. As I played the tape, the pain left. Praise God, He inhabits the praises of His people!

Jan Zackery  
Holdredge, NE

If you'd like to respond to a specific article, to question a writer, or to share how God spoke to you or challenged you, this is your opportunity to do it. Send your letters to "Dear New Wine," P.O. Box Z, Mobile, Alabama 36616.

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# God's Water

Sowing to produce

by Kenneth Copeland

**T**he sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have *heard*, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have *heard* the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as *hear* the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as *hear* the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred" (Mk. 4:14-20, italics mine).

For years I read that scripture as if the ground was the subject of the parable. The translators of the King James Bible obviously thought the same thing. They mark a paragraph in the twenty-first verse, as if Jesus were about to change the subject. He was not. The parable is about the sower that soweth the Word. Jesus uses a couple of illustrations in the rest of the chapter to make His point.

If the subject is the sower and the Word, what is the object of His lesson? If we think the subject is the ground the seed was sown in, then the object would be to be good ground. But that's not the point. The object is how to sow the Word of God so that it produces



a hundredfold. This entire chapter is about sowing the Word. In it, Jesus also explains why some people produce nothing, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and others a hundredfold. But He clearly wants to show here how to produce a hundredfold.

## We Need the Word

After teaching about the different

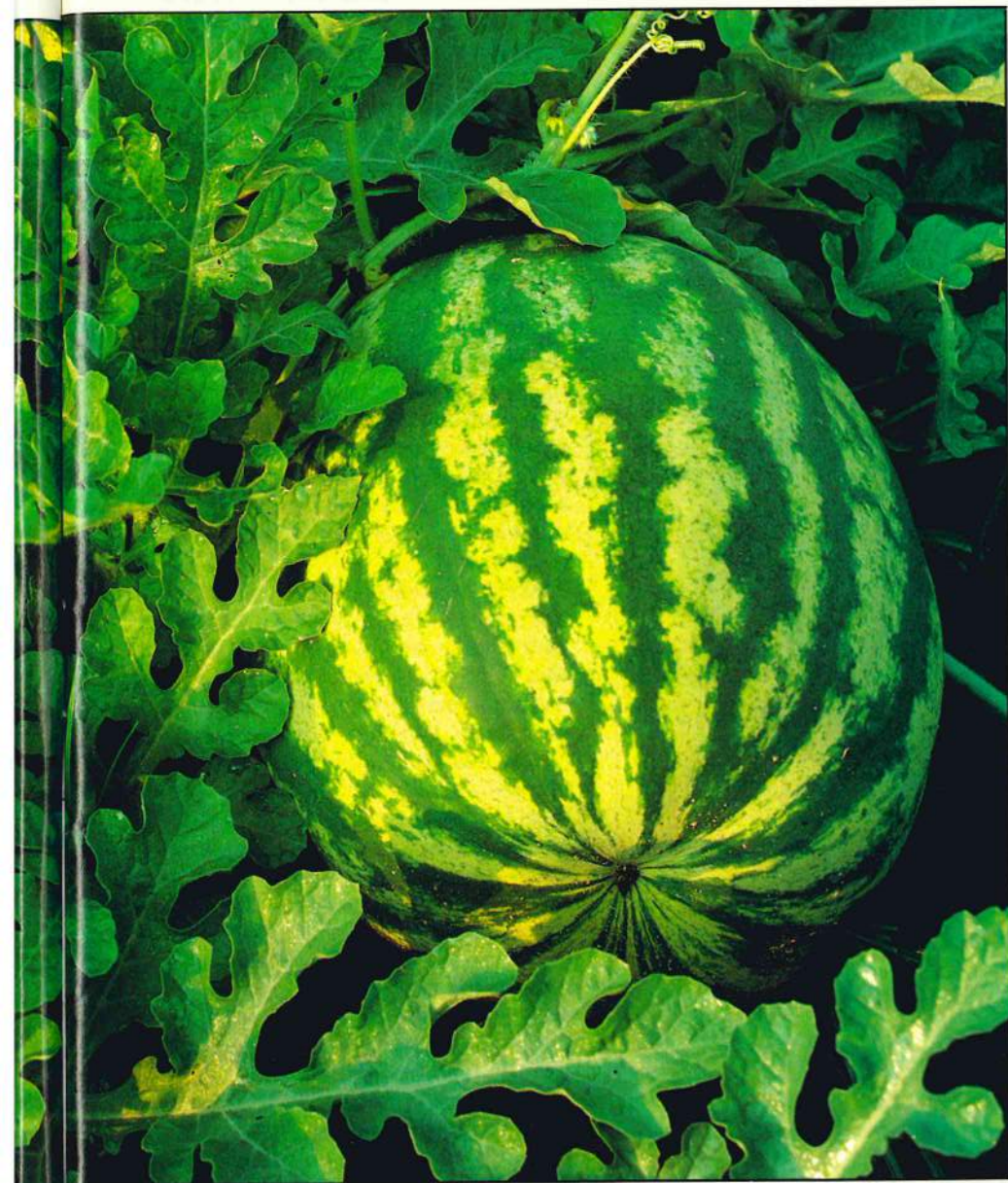
kinds of ground, Jesus asks, "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?" (v. 21). He's saying, "What good is the Word if it's to be hidden forever?" For instance, people have told me, "Brother Copeland, I just don't believe God intended for us to understand the book of Revelation."

"He didn't?" I ask. "Well, why



# Watermelon Patch

seed a hundredfold



did He write it? Why didn't He just keep it?"

Once, I was visiting a friend and our wives decided to go to the beauty shop. They started out the door, and my friend asked his wife, "Where's your Bible?"

Puzzled, she asked, "To the beauty shop?"

"Well, you could carry it in a sack," he answered.

Wherever we go, we need the Word. It will work in the beauty shop. It will work in the barber shop. It will work on the street. It will work wherever it's put to work.

Then, continuing to speak about the Word, Jesus says:

"For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but

that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (vv. 22-23).

Jesus clearly indicates here who can operate in the hundredfold return. Is it only the apostles? the prophets? the evangelists? the pastors? the teachers? No, Jesus says that any man with ears can do it.

He says, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." And He quickly adds, "Take heed what ye hear" (v. 24). The main problem in the operation of the hundredfold principle is not Satan. Of course, if we give him place, he will give us all kinds of problems. One thing the different kinds of ground had in common was they all heard the Word; they all received the seed. But they all acted differently with what they heard. They all took different measures. The problem in the operation of the hundredfold principle is mainly with the hearer.

## Who Can Have More?

In the same verse, Jesus equates hearing with measuring:

"Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete [or literally translated, what measure you measure with], it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given" (v. 24).

Who can have more? Anyone who will hear can have more. In other words, the hundredfold principle is for anyone who will respond to the Word. But the amount we receive is directly proportional to the measure we use.

I've asked people, "How had you rather God measure to you? With a spoon or a shovel?" If we are measuring with a shovel, we are going to get a shovel. If we are measuring with a spoon, we are going to get a spoon. God's spoon is a hundred times bigger than our



spoon. But His shovel is a hundred times bigger than our shovel. So whoever chooses the spoon sows a little and will get a hundred spoonsful. Whoever chooses the shovel sows more and will get a hundred shovelsful. God guaranteed it. Whoever doesn't spoon or shovel gets a hundred times nothing. The principle works all the way through from nothing to however far we go with it.

Next, Jesus says, "He that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath" (v. 25). Notice it is not God who takes away "even that which he hath." A few verses earlier we clearly saw that Satan would come and take it away. That is what has happened to people who believe in healing but are not getting well, to people who believe in prosperity but are broke all the time, to people who believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit but are never operating in the gifts of the Spirit. I ask these people, "Do you believe these things are for us today?"

"Yes, amen."

"Do you believe in healing?"

"Oh, I believe God heals today."

"Wasn't that a wonderful testimony of that woman's healing?"

"Oh, it was wonderful."

"Are you well?"

"No."

Many are in this condition. Believing God heals and believing God for healing are two different things.

### **Sowing in the Kingdom**

Jesus then says that the whole kingdom of God is based on the sowing principle and the hundredfold return. Verses 26-29 say:

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

"So is the kingdom, as if a

man should cast seed into the ground." That should be underlined in every believer's Bible. It is critical to understanding how to walk in the hundredfold principle of the covenant. Jesus is saying that the whole kingdom of God is like a man who sowed seed in the ground. That means faith works by this principle, that healing works by this principle, that salvation works by this principle. The Bible says we're born-again not of corruptible seed



**Jesus says  
the whole  
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principle  
and the  
hundredfold  
return.**

but of incorruptible.

In Luke 17:5, Jesus illustrates this principle: "And the apostles said unto the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'" If I go to God and say, "Increase my faith," I should know that for faith to increase, it must be planted as a seed. When it is planted, it will grow. I should also know that if I want my faith to be a hundred times bigger than it is now, I should continue to sow it so that it will grow to that size.

When the apostles asked the Lord to increase their faith, He began

His response, saying, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed" (v. 6). We've been so silly and so religious in our thinking that we have thought He was talking about the size of the mustard seed. I have even found Bible versions that translate it that way, but the Greek text doesn't say that at all.

In fact, the King James Version is almost word for word what the Greek says:

"If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, 'Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea'; and it should obey you."

I've had people say, "Brother Copeland, I did that once and the tree didn't budge."

I asked them, "You didn't plant the seed in the ground and then stand there to see if it came up, did you? You didn't go out the next morning to see if it came up, did you?"

### **The Watermelon Patch**

When I was a boy, I planted watermelon seeds along the driveway, and every day I went to see if a vine was growing. We can laugh at a little boy like that and say, "Bless his little heart—he doesn't know." But if I had been doing that for forty-two years, it would not have been something to laugh at. People would have said, "What's the matter with that dumbbell? He planted that yesterday, and went out this morning to see if there were any watermelons."

It's sad, but that is the way some do in their spiritual life. Someone lays hands on them, and thirty seconds later they say, "Well, I didn't get anything." By saying that, they dig up the seed and throw it away.

I was that way with my watermelon vine. I'd come home after school every day and go look at that vine. I could hardly keep my hands off it. I wanted to pull on it, but if I had, I would have killed it. The life was in the vine. It didn't need any help. All it needed me to do was to keep the weeds away from it. That's all God's Word needs. It doesn't need our help. All we need to do is to keep the weeds



out by keeping our confession strong.

One morning I discovered a little watermelon about the size of a half-dollar on my vine. I was ecstatic! My vine was producing. But even in my excitement, I wondered why it wouldn't hurry up and grow. Each day I'd look to see what was happening.

My dad had been watching and decided to play a trick on me. He went and bought a great big watermelon and put it underneath the vine while I was at school. When I came home, I saw that huge melon and screamed at the top of my lungs. I couldn't believe it. Interestingly, in a way God does that for us at times. In His goodness and mercy, He moves in on our situation and grows the whole watermelon at once.

But as a grown man I have had to realize that when I want watermelons, I don't call my dad to manifest them under my bush. If I want watermelons, I need to keep planting and growing them.

That's the way God wants us to walk. He'll get involved when we are a little baby Christian, and He'll grow our watermelon all at one time. That's what Jesus did in His earthly ministry. He intervened in the normal course of doubt and unbelief and the lack of love in this earth, and showed what He would do to turn people's lives around.

But when we grow up, we've got to plant our seeds and keep planting them. Some of them have got to come up, and when one does, it's a hundred times what we put in there. One watermelon has enough seeds in it for us to plant a whole field of watermelons. So the next time I go to my field, I should get a truckload. And those melons have enough seeds to plant more fields. If I'm smart, I'll hunt more ground, plant more seeds, get more trucks, and haul more watermelons.

### **The Word Is Life**

Jesus said the whole kingdom of God works the same way as we plant a seed. He said we don't even have to understand what makes it grow. Archeologists took seeds out of the Egyptian pyramids,

planted them, and they grew. They produced fruit exactly as they should; the life was in them. The life is in the Word of God.

"The sower soweth the word." God's Word is life. When we plant it, it will grow. We don't know how, but it does. For the faith of the disciples to increase, they needed to sow the Word in faith. The word on healing will produce healing. The word on salvation will produce salvation. The word on



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sinner.**

the gifts of the Spirit will produce manifestations of those gifts. Pastors who want the gifts to operate in their church must begin to teach and preach on them. God will confirm His Word with signs following.

Another aspect of the hundred-fold principle we need to know is that according to 2 Corinthians chapter 9, God is the provider of seed for the sower and the multiplier of the seed sown. He doesn't intend that we live out of another man's watermelon patch, because He is the multiplier of the seed sown,

and He multiplies a hundredfold. Many ask, "How come this guy over here didn't get any?" In the parable of the sower, Jesus says that Satan came against him with persecution, affliction, deceitfulness of riches, the cares of this world, and the lust of other things. As a result, some didn't get anything while others got only thirtyfold.

The man with the thirtyfold return paid seventyfold attention to persecution, affliction, deceitfulness of riches, and so forth. He let the devil beat him out of seventyfold. It wasn't God trying to hold back on him. They all heard the same Word, and the Word is no respecter of persons. The seed doesn't care who plants it. The watermelon seed is not going to say, "Wait just a minute. I'm not going to grow for you. I only grow for this denomination over here."

Also, the ground doesn't say, "Oh, no, not watermelons again this year. I'm holding out for cucumbers." The ground doesn't care. It just does its best to grow whatever we put in it, and whatever we put in it does its best to grow. The Word doesn't care who is believing it. It will work for anyone. It will work for an outright sinner, because it's the Word that gets us born-again. Jesus said it would work for anyone who would hear it.

The whole kingdom of God is like a seed. But no one can live entirely out of my patch. A man has got to plant his own patch. God intends for him to come by my patch and get one of my melons, to eat it and to enjoy it, to plant the seeds and to grow his own watermelon patch. Then, he needs to give some of his melons to another so that he can start his own patch. Soon, we'll corner the watermelon market. Such is the kingdom of God. □



*Kenneth Copeland is heard on 218 television stations, 235 radio stations, and 2 cable networks on The Believer's Voice of Victory program, and has recorded 14 gospel music albums. He and his wife, Gloria, live in Fort Worth, Texas.*



# The God of I

Why the Lord gives to His

**O**f all the churches the Apostle Paul established, it is clear his favorite was the church at Philippi. In his epistle to that body he celebrates again and again his joy in them, saying things such as, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you" (Phil. 1:3 RSV). Paul is saying that every time he thinks of the Philippian Christians, he is filled with thanksgiving to God.

Considering the circumstances under which the church was founded and that Paul wrote his letter to it some ten years later, I think the intensity of his love is remark-

able. The Holy Spirit led Paul to Philippi by frustrating his own plans, and then, once he got there, he was thrown into prison for delivering from demonic oppression a young girl who was being used as a fortune-teller.

Like Paul, all of us have memories. Some bring us joy; some we would like to forget. But we all have memories that kindle a spirit of thanksgiving in us. I remember my parents. When I was a tiny child, they turned my footsteps in the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every time I think of them, I'm thankful for the parents God

gave me.

I remember Katrina Munn, who took my ten wobbly fingers and trained them so that they could play the piano. At first, I had many opportunities to get discouraged, but occasionally she would move me away from that great grand-piano in her studio, and would sit and play so beautifully that it inspired me. Later, she would sometimes play a record of a great pianist performing the piece I was struggling with. That also inspired me. I am thankful every time I think of Katrina.

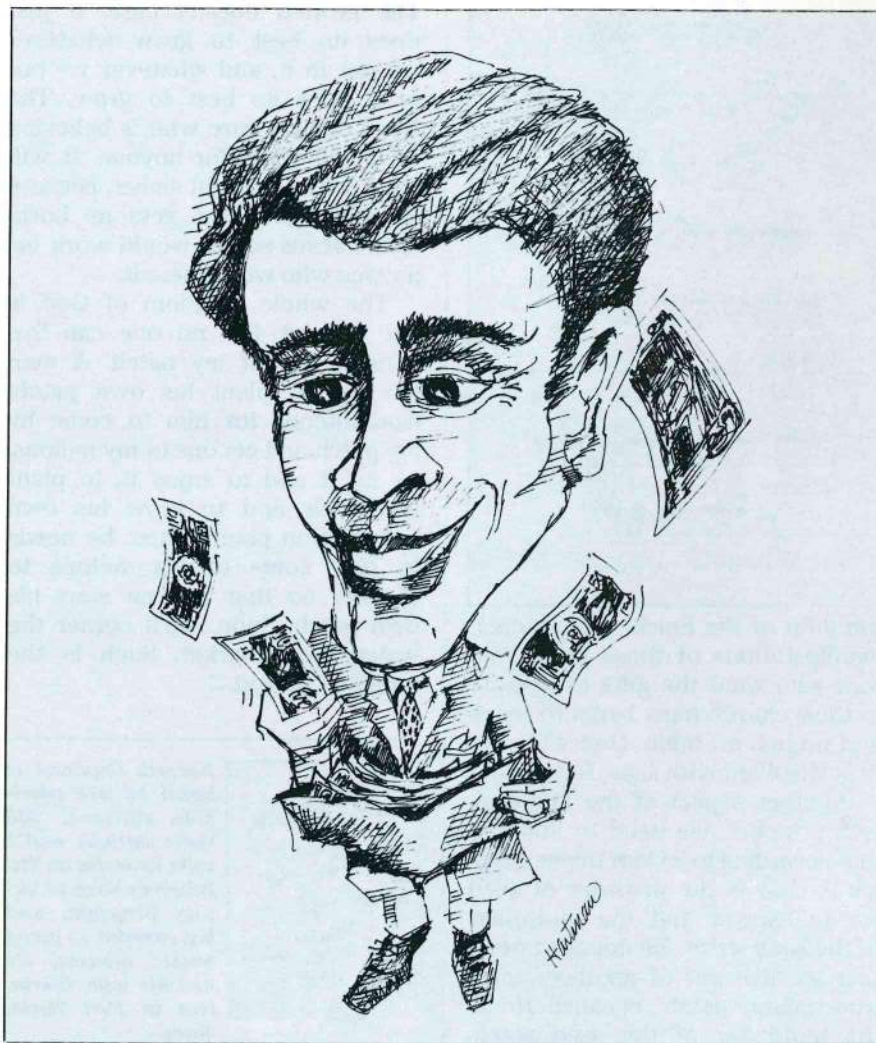
I remember Alex Stewart. My wife and I were members of his congregation for some eight years, during which time the Lord called me to prepare for the Episcopal priesthood. Someone has said it's harder to get into the Episcopal priesthood than it is the kingdom of God. (My brother reminded me once that they're not the same thing!) But from the first time Alex and I talked about it, through all my years of ministerial training, he was a constant encouragement to me. "I believe this is what you should do," he would say, "and I want you to know how happy I am that you're doing it." Alex presented me when I was ordained, and has been a friend and inspiration ever since.

## The Source of Paul's Joy

Many people generate in us the spirit of thanksgiving. For Paul, it was the Philippians. Verses 4-5 explain why he felt the way he did:

...always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now (RSV).

Paul then elaborates on their "partnership in the gospel" in chapter 4:





# infinite Supply

for people by Terry Fullam

And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only (v. 15 RSV).

The partnership was formed at the beginning of their relationship. When the Philippians turned from worshipping dumb idols to worshipping the living God, they had an instinctive awareness of their responsibility to share their new life with other people. It was a partnership of receiving and giving. Paul introduced them to Jesus in a personal way, taught them about forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and established them in the faith.

But the apostle received from them as well. He says:

For even in Thessalonica you sent me help once again. Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God (vv. 16-18 RSV).

These Christians not only received the gospel, but also realized it was imperative they share it and spread the Word. So they gave to the Apostle Paul. They saw a ministry that God had raised up and that had blessed them, and they offered their support in return.

Not every Christian recognizes that to whom much is given, much is required. Not every Christian recognizes that he has no right to hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once. Every church must have a burden to carry the gospel where people have not heard

it—whether in its hometown or to the ends of the earth—and the Philippian Christians understood that. They received, but they also gave.

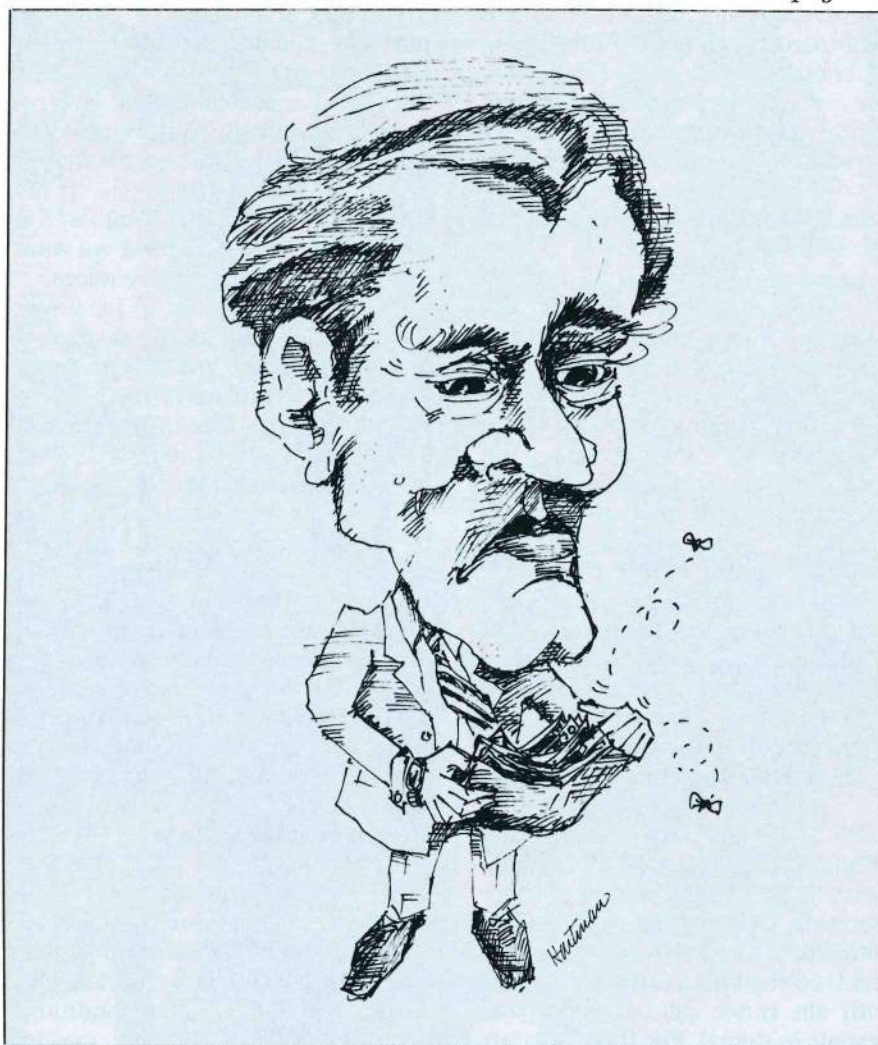
## A Stormy Relationship

Unlike his relationship with the Philippians, Paul had a rather stormy one with the Corinthians. He spent eighteen months in Corinth—only in Ephesus did he remain longer—and during that time, he faced much opposition. Some criticized him; some even questioned his apostleship. They said, "He's not an apostle at all. He wasn't even converted until after the Lord ascended and

returned to heaven." They questioned his authority in teaching, and some lashed out at him because he refused to accept support from the Corinthian church. But he did that because their attitude wasn't right. There were strings attached to the gift, and they were giving out of duty rather than the joy of the Lord and their gratitude to Him.

The Philippians, on the other hand, had given for all the right reasons, and it is interesting that Paul talks about this church he was so proud of in his second

*continued on page 26*





# THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

How God can and does forgive us  
by Ern Baxter

**I** believe in the forgiveness of sins." These words form part of the Apostles' Creed, Christianity's oldest statement of belief, and have been recited by countless thousands of believers down through the centuries.

Forgiveness of sins is the heart of the Christian message. Our Lord instructed that "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:47 NIV). Peter obeyed this order on the day of Pentecost, urging his audience to "repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven" (Acts 2:38 NIV).

In Paul's first recorded sermon he makes forgiveness of sins the theme of the gospel, declaring that "through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you" (Acts 13:38 NIV). Much later, when being questioned by King Agrippa, Paul tells how the Lord commissioned him on the road to Damascus:

"I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:17-18 NIV).

Sin is a stubborn reality that offends God, contaminates the individual, and defiles society. There are really only two ways of dealing with this universal scourge — man's and God's! Human attempts to deal with sin range all the way from despair to denial. For the Christian,

there is a better way — "the forgiveness of sins" and all that statement implies.

## The Nature of Sin

Before we look at forgiveness, however, we need to consider the nature of sin as revealed by God in the Scriptures. The essential nature of sin is first seen at the point of its entry, which is recorded in Genesis. Adam and Eve — our first parents — decided to rebel against God's sovereign government in their lives, and to assume that government themselves. They decided to do things their way. Isaiah writes, "We have turned every one to his own way" (Is. 53:6). That is the essence of sin — doing what we want as opposed to what God requires.

Sin manifests itself in many forms. Intellectually it is people formulating philosophies of life apart from God's revelation. In the area of the will it is the individual and society becoming their own god. In physical behavior it is doing what one wants, challenging God by eating forbidden fruit. We have not seen the seriousness of sin until we understand that first and foremost it is rebellion against God! Sin has been defined as lack of conformity to the law of God. Therefore, even when our sin appears to be only against another person, it is still against God in that we have violated His law governing interpersonal behavior.

## The Result of Our Sin

When we consider the various words used in the Bible to define *sin*, we are faced with a devastating description of the human condition. The late William Barclay, master

and popularizer of Bible words, summarized the various words for sin: "Sin is failure; sin is perversion; sin is rebellion; sin is the state in which sinning finally leaves a man."

As a result of sin, people have to contend with guilt and pollution. When we choose to ignore the divine truth concerning sin, we then try to downplay guilt and redefine pollution. Neither of these works. Barclay writes that guilt is debt or obligation to suffer a punishment proportionate to the iniquity of the sin. Guilt is inevitable and unavoidable when we have broken God's law. Calling it by different names does not alter it. Judgment and punishment inexorably follow. So with pollution, redefinition does not change it; the stench of moral corruption is not reduced by calling it something different.

Two scriptures address God's attitude toward sin: "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong" (Hab. 1:13 NIV). "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Ps. 86:5). On the one hand, the very nature of God requires His uncompromising hatred of wickedness: "You love righteousness and hate wickedness" (Ps. 45:7 NIV); "The wicked shall be turned into hell" (Ps. 9:17). On the other hand, His mercy has made a way for the wicked to be forgiven: "...forsake his way, and...return unto the Lord" (Is. 55:7).

This brings us to the second part of our creedal confession. If we believe the Scriptures, we have to say, "I believe in sin." That's easy because sin is so obviously  
*continued on page 15*







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## Forgiveness

*continued from page 13*

real. Saying "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" brings us into the realm of faith. It is common for people to find it difficult to believe that God can forgive sins, especially when they have any clear comprehension of the true nature of sin. How can a God who is so holy forgive sins? He cannot do so at the expense of compromising His holiness. If He did that, He would cease to be God. And yet He does forgive sins. How is this done? The answer is a matter of revelation.

### The Meaning of Forgiveness

Let us first look at the meaning of the word *forgiveness* and its synonyms, as they are used in the Bible. The most common synonym for sin is *remission*.

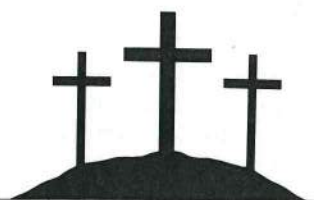
Barclay tells us there are three Hebrew words for forgiveness. One literally means "to hide." The picture is that sin is hidden, put out of sight. The second one literally means "to lift up" or "to lift away." Sin is a burden, and forgiveness lifts it away from a man. The third Hebrew word means "to send away." Sin begets debts; sin merits punishment; sin involves guilt.

But in forgiveness the debt and the punishment are remitted, sent away. Covering, lifting away, sending away—all three ideas express the same thing, the forgiveness of sin.<sup>2</sup>

In the New Testament the most common word for *forgiveness* is similar to the Hebrew word that means "to send away." It also means

...to set free, as cattle are set free in a field, as doves are set free to fly away, as people are set free from some captivity to go their own way. It is man's liberation from the awful liability to God in which His sin has involved him.<sup>3</sup>

How can and does God forgive sins? The Scripture links several words with forgiveness: Christ, blood, mercy, grace, repentance, baptism, human forgiveness, confession. How do we put these together? Is



Forgiveness  
nourishes the  
heart of the  
redeemed  
community.

there some kind of order to the manner of God's forgiveness?

Let us start with blood. It is bluntly stated in Hebrews that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22 NIV). This has been true from the occasion of the first sin at which time God slew an animal in Eden and covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve with the animal's skin. Throughout the Old Testament the forgiveness of sins is related to divinely prescribed blood sacrifices. There certainly can be no doubt as to what Jesus meant at the inauguration of the Holy Communion meal when He said as He blessed the cup of wine, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt. 26:28 NIV). These words are especially significant when we recall that John the Baptist had introduced Jesus as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29 NIV).

We cannot talk about blood without talking about Christ's blood. The references to forgiveness through Christ have to do with the uniqueness of His death. The first words in Paul's definition of the gospel are that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). To the Romans he writes, "Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). He also reminds the wavering Galatians that Christ "gave himself for our sins" (Gal. 1:4). Many other scriptures could

be cited.

According to the Scriptures, sin merits death: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Man cannot change that. He is powerless to do anything about that death sentence. Paul says, "When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly....God demonstrates his own love for us" (Rom. 5:6, 8 NIV). We should die for our sins, but instead "Christ died for our sins." Grace, mercy, and love combined to provide through Christ a way God could justly forgive our sins.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Is. 53:4-6 NIV).

God has laid the ground of forgiveness in the death of Christ.

### The Need for Repentance

But what about the other words we mentioned: mercy, grace, repentance, baptism, human forgiveness, and confession? The ground of forgiveness has been laid, but as we read earlier in Luke 24:47, repentance and forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations. The good news of God's loving and merciful willingness to forgive must be declared everywhere with a view to people's response.

The first divine requirement for forgiveness is repentance. John the Baptist came "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk. 1:4 NIV). Then, Jesus came actually forgiving sins, not only because of who He was, but also on the basis of repentance (see Mark 1:15). When Jesus sent the twelve disciples on a preaching tour, their message was "that people should repent" (Mk. 6:12 NIV).

What does it mean to repent? It means to change one's mind. The sinner left to himself does not think right about divine things. So



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God says:

Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord (Is. 55:7-8 NIV).

In response to the gospel, men must follow this command to receive pardon or forgiveness.

The Apostle Peter says that when we first come to Christ for forgiveness, we must "repent, and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). Baptism is the God-ordained way to express our initial repentance and faith. When a person repents and believes the gospel, he gladly obeys the command to be baptized (see Acts 2:41).

But after receiving initial forgiveness and becoming a member of God's redeemed family we still sin and so we need parental forgiveness. This requires dealing with the sin and confessing it to our heavenly Father with the promise that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).

One other factor is involved in forgiveness. It is the necessity of our forgiving those who have sinned against us. Even though one may not want our forgiveness, we must have an attitude of forgiveness that stands ready to respond. This is explicit in the prayer taught by our Lord: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Mt. 6:12). After the "amen" our Lord emphasizes the statement:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt. 6:14-15).

Forgiveness is the heart of the gospel and nourishes the heart of the redeemed community.

## Believing in Forgiveness

Even after I know God can forgive my sins without compromising His holiness, it is still quite difficult

to receive it. I have no problem believing I am a sinner, because sin is very real and none of us is sinless. But I continue to have a problem believing a holy God will forgive my sins. It is evident that God understands this tension, because He emphasizes and reemphasizes His desire and willingness to forgive, and also has used many comforting illustrations to show what happens to my sins when forgiven. Let's look at seven of these illustrations:

1. *My sins are forgiven and covered.* King David writes, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. 32:1-2).

David was God's servant, but he sinned grievously. At first he kept silent about his sin, but God's hand was heavy upon him (see verse 4). Then, he says:

I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin (v. 5 NIV).

When he confessed his sin, God forgave it (took it away), covered it (put it out of sight), and didn't charge it (impute) to him. Paul quotes this passage in the New Testament when dealing with justification (see Romans 4:6-8). God has always dealt with sin the same way. Because of the sin-bearing death of Christ, God can freely forgive and not charge the sin to the repentant sinner because another has died for it. This is sheer blessedness! How happy the man who experiences this release! This is divine mathematics; subtract sin and add joy!

It is said that Luther, during a serious illness, seemed to see Satan coming to him with a great scroll on which were written all the sins and errors of his life. With a triumphant smile, Satan unrolled it before the saint and said, "There are your sins. There is no hope of your going to heaven."

Luther read the long list with growing consternation when suddenly it flashed upon his mind that one thing was not written there.



He said aloud, "One thing you have forgotten. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*"

2. *My sins are swept away.* "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist" (Is. 44:22 NIV).

Israel was much tempted to idolatry. In Isaiah chapter 44, God brings a stinging denunciation of idols, and then reminds Israel that He alone has the right to forgive sins. And when He does, it is like the elimination of a dark threatening cloud overhead, and the disappearance of a morning mist before the rays of the rising sun.

3. *My sins are not remembered.* "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more" (Is. 43:25 NIV).

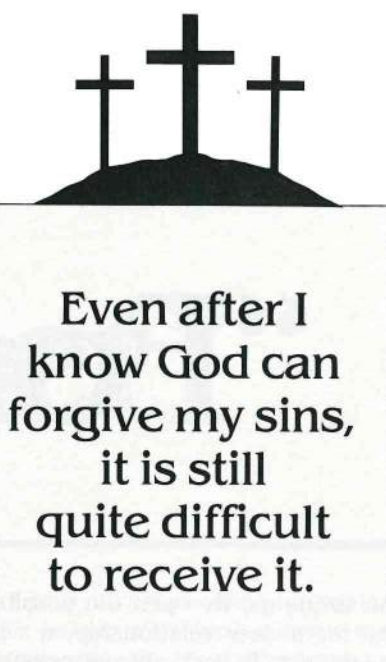
Here we have a bookkeeping reference. The transgressions recorded in God's book are erased—not only are they no longer charged to me, but there is no possibility of their reappearing in God's accounts, for He chooses to forget them.

A charming Celtic legend says that the angel of mercy was sent to a certain saint to tell him that he must start for the celestial city. The saint received the messenger and his message with gladness, and at the appointed hour, they started off together. As they passed up the shining way beyond the bounds of this world, the saint was suddenly troubled with the thought of his sins. "Mercy," he said, addressing his angelic guide, "where did you bury my sins?"

"I only remember that I buried them," he replied, "but I cannot tell where." Then, he added, "As for the Father, He has forgotten that you ever sinned."

4. *My sins are cast into the depths of the sea.* "You will...hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:19 NIV).

This is a graphic picture of the disposition of forgiven sin. It is the action of the One to whom Micah had just addressed this question: "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression?" (v. 18 NIV). As God drowned the Egyptians when they pursued Israel, so God has made an end of our forgiven sins. We are assured



that they are buried in the depths of the sea.

It is said of Dr. A. J. Gordon, a prominent Bostonian Baptist of the last century, that when he preached on this text, he forgot to put in "the depths." He merely said that God would cast them into the sea. When he arrived home, his little boy said, "Father, why didn't you tell the people that sins were heavy like lead, and sank out of sight in the water? They might think they were like corks, floating around on top where they might be seen."

5. *My sins cannot be found.* "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found" (Jer. 50:20).

There is a fascination about sin, especially the sins of others. It seems to be the favorite occupation of some to investigate them. We are not referring here to legitimate handling of wrongdoing, but to the self-righteous desire to discover another's failures. But if we go to God hunting for forgiven sins, He will tell us they have been so completely disposed of that they cannot be found.

6. *My sins are cast behind God's back.* "For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Is. 38:17).

Sin is sometimes seen as standing between God and man. Here sin is declared to be behind God's back. Furthermore, God is the one who put it there. So when sin is

forgiven, God takes responsibility for its disposal, and "behind His back" joins "the depths of the sea," the banished "mist," and other illustrations to assure us of the complete erasure of forgiven sin. There is also a sense in which God takes charge of my sin, and anyone wanting to get at it must face God.

7. *My sins are removed as far as the east is from the west.* "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12).

The psalmist did not say "as far as the north is from the south." If a person would travel north, and keep on traveling, he would eventually come to the north pole, and then he would go south until he came to the south pole. Then, he would again be going north. The distance is measurable. This is not true in going east or west. If a person would start west and continue going, he eventually would go around the world and come to the starting point and still be going west. This is immeasurable. God has moved our sins an immeasurable distance from us.

A man said to an elderly Christian woman: "Does the devil ever bother you about your past sins?"

"Yes," she replied.

"What do you do?"

"I send him to the east."

"Does he come back after that?"

"Yes, but then I send him to the west. I just keep him going between east and west."

I believe in the forgiveness of sins. □

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *The Apostles' Creed for Everyman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. pp. 316-317.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



Ern Baxter, a long-time leader in the charismatic renewal, pastored a large evangelical church in Canada for more than twenty years. A popular conference speaker, he has traveled extensively during the past fifty-three years.

He is senior pastor of Christ Chapel in San Diego, California, where he lives with his wife, Ruth.



# FORGIVE & FORGET

Healing the Hurts  
We Don't Deserve

LEWIS B. SMEDES

The Lord loves and

# "Forgive and

An interview with c

**New Wine:** In your book *Forgive & Forget*, you outline a four-stage process that we have to go through to forgive people for hurts we don't deserve. Would you expand on that process?

**Lewis Smedes:** Yes, the dynamics of forgiving follow this pattern: First, we revise our vision of the person who hurt us. When someone hurts us deeply and unfairly, we inevitably draw a caricature of him. We define him totally by the fact that he hurt us. When we hear his name, the first thing we think of is that he is the one who hurt us, the unfair clod who made us feel a sting. Gradually, as we forgive, we revise that caricature and begin to see him as a weak and needy, fallible person who is coping with his weakness by being mean to us.

The second stage is a healing of our feelings. As our vision changes, our feelings change. Gradually the hard-core, indigestible lump of bitterness, resentment, and even hatred begins to dissolve, and we feel compassion and love for the one who hurt us. Eventually we even have the power to pray for his welfare, to wish him well.

Third, we surrender our right to get even. Whenever we get hurt and know we did not have it coming, we feel it's unfair and have a natural wish to even the score. We feel it would be wrong for us not to get even. But as we forgive someone, we surrender that right to get even.

Fourth, after all this has gone

on inside us, we open the possibility for a new relationship, a new beginning. It isn't always possible to achieve that. Sometimes a person disdains our forgiveness and tells us to put it down the garbage disposal. Sometimes the person is dead, such as a parent or other relative. We can't always turn back the clock and reestablish the relationship, because we've both changed, or time and circumstances prevent it. But it's important that even if we cannot reestablish the relationship, the reason does not lie with our bitterness or our hatred.

**NW:** In this process, how do you distinguish between hate and anger?

**LS:** Anger is a passion of desire. It's healthy to be angry. There are things that need our anger, because it motivates us to do something about things that are wrong. Hate is the desire to hurt the wrongdoer, the desire to wish him evil and pain. Anger is directed at the situation. Hate is directed at the person.

**NW:** Many times our anger and unforgiveness are directed toward God. How should we deal with that?

**LS:** First, it's vital to recognize our resentment against God. He understands it. It's spiritually healthy to face up to it because we often feel that God has let us down, that He wasn't there to rescue us or help us when He promised to. Or,

depending on your theology, if you believe that God caused it all, then you believe that He not only wasn't there to rescue you but was actually there to clobber you.

Second, it's necessary to speak your feelings to Him. I had a letter recently from a man whose little boy was playing in a valley when a single rock fell from the hills above where he was playing. It could have landed in a trillion other places, but it zeroed in on this boy's head and killed him. The man said it was as though God had stood on that hilltop and thrown the rock at his boy. I told him that besides telling me these things, he ought to take them to God. When we do, God will give grace for us to discover that it wasn't His fault after all. He'll help us to discover that life is good in spite of the bad things that happen.

That's the difference between forgiving God and forgiving someone else. When we forgive someone else, we say, "You were responsible but I forgive you." When we forgive God, we say, "I thought You were responsible and now I know that You never meant me harm."

**NW:** In your book, you say that forgiving is not a duty. Would you explain that?

**LS:** Forgiving has to be free, just as love has to be free and just as grace is always free. When God forgave us, He didn't do it because He was obligated. He did it because He wanted to. Forgiving is not some-



cheerful forgiver

# and Forget"

author Lewis Smedes



thing we do because someone tells us to. If we forgive out of a sense of obligation, we're not really forgiving. We forgive because we know the healing we get from it is what we desire. Love sets us free to do it, and Christ expects us to do it. He warns more than once of the consequences when God forgives us and then we are not willing to forgive others.

It's a mistake to think of forgiving as a duty. It transcends that kind of moral obligation. In fact, when we forgive any other way but freely, we tend to use the word *forgive* only as a way to manipulate. It's possible to say forgive and really mean, "I want to make you feel bad, to put you down, to control you, to remind you that I'm better than you are." It's the same thing as perverting the word *love* by saying, "I love you," but really meaning, "I want to use you or to control you."

**NW: What are some of the devices we use to deny the need to forgive someone?**

**LS:** The main rationale for not forgiving is believing that the person doesn't deserve it, that he doesn't have a right to it, that it would be unfair to forgive him. We concentrate on the fact that he doesn't deserve to be set free to justify that we won't forgive him. The answer to that is, of course, the person *doesn't* deserve it. If he deserved to be forgiven, you would not have to forgive him. Forgiving

is God's invention for our coping with people who don't deserve our forgiveness. So to concentrate on someone not deserving forgiveness is to miss the point completely.

The flip side of that is also important. People who focus on the fact that the person doesn't deserve to be forgiven would do well to ask themselves, Do I deserve to go on hurting? Someone hurt me and it wasn't fair. Do I now deserve to go on indefinitely feeding that pain in the form of my resentment?

Concentrating on the fact that the person does not deserve to be forgiven brings needless pain to us, because we deserve to be healed of it.

**NW: How do we know when we have totally forgiven someone?**

**LS:** There is no stereotype. We are all unique individuals, and our forgiving experience should not be pressed into a mold so that everyone's experience is the same. But often forgiving takes time and needs repetition. The deeper the hurt, the longer it takes. It's important not to demand instantaneous success at forgiveness.

But how do we know we're making progress? One test is this: Am I prepared to say a prayer or a blessing for the person who hurt me? Am I able to wish him well? If we can answer yes, it's a sign that we're on the right path. Another sign is that gradually our pain diminishes. But don't look for the pain

necessarily to dissolve in an instant. Sometimes it does, but we shouldn't demand it anymore than we should demand total and instant healing of anything.

**NW: What are the alternatives to forgiving?**

**LS:** There are really only two alternatives. One is revenge. But that becomes an unending cycle where one person gives pain, and then the other returns it at an increased level. We see that everywhere: in family feuds, in Lebanon, in Ireland, and in our own feelings.

The other alternative is suppressing the wrong by denying it and the accompanying pain. If we say, "I'm not going to let them hurt me," we only shove the pain down into our gunnysack to let it come out later in a disguised form that will cause other kinds of pain.

God shows us the only real way to cope with unfair pain. Forgiveness is His way for us to deal with the pain we get in a broken and fallen world.

**NW: That would tie in with what we are saying in this issue about receiving the benefits of God.**

**LS:** To receive the benefit of God's forgiveness without forgiving is a mind-boggling travesty. To forgive as we've been forgiven is the only way to happiness. □



*...who redeemeth thy life from destruction;  
who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies*

# Who Is the Lord?

Are you serving a graven image or the God of the Bible?  
by Chris Davis

**I**n the book *Yes I Am*, author Norman Grubb describes what he believes to be the normal Christian life:

There *is* a joy unspeakable and full of glory, a peace that passeth understanding, and an all-sufficiency in all things by which

we are able to abound unto every good work. Though we are always only the earthen vessels in which "the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us," there *is* a reigning in life by Christ, a bearing of the good fruit of the Spirit, an overcoming in all things. There *is* a self-

release from bondage into liberty, an overflowing of the rivers of the Spirit, and a counting and experiencing of temptations and trials as "all joy" instead of miseries to be avoided or endured ....we experience life as adventure, zest, thrill, and gaiety at the heart of a desperate seriousness.<sup>1</sup>





Although Grubb beautifully describes the Christian life as it should be, as a pastor I've discovered that the average Christian lives far below this norm. Recently, a friend said to me, "I have been a Christian nearly twenty years now, and all I can say is my life just doesn't work."

Another friend said, "Although I'm saved from hell, I never feel that I am victorious in life. I still feel guilty most of the time; I still feel as if I am resisting God; and I am always trying to get God to like me."

One day I was reading in Exodus where Moses demanded that Pharaoh release the Israelites to go into the desert to worship the Lord. Pharaoh responded with a question: "Who is the Lord?" (Ex. 5:2). I have learned that the answer to that question is the key to walking in the fullness of the Christian life. If we are going to walk with the true God, we must know who He is and how He relates to us.

### **A Graven Image**

After reading that scripture I seemed to hear God say, "You are not serving the true God, as you suppose, but a graven image." It wasn't that I didn't love God or that I was preaching something other than Christ or the Bible. It was that I was serving a mixture of the God of the Bible and a god I had fashioned out of my own unhappy experience.

A graven image is a representation of a god created by the mind and hewn into reality. When God said in the second commandment, "You shall not make for yourself a graven image" (Ex. 20:4 NAS), He was talking about more than making a material idol and worshipping it. He was speaking of those who have created in their minds a god far different from the true God and are so strongly bound by their warped perspective that it affects their whole lives.

If our image of God is derived from any source other than the revelation of His Word, we are worshipping a false god. This is tantamount to being "those who hate Me" of the second commandment, because we are not accepting the truth of who God is (see verse 5). But those who love Him by accept-

ing who He is by His Word, no matter how much their circumstances appear to the contrary, will see His loving-kindness (see verse 6).

### **Based on Our Perceptions**

In some sense God's relationship to us is based upon our perception of how He will relate to us. We find examples of this in Scripture. When ten of the men who spied out the promised land returned to the people, they said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us" (Num. 13:31 NAS). The response of the people to the report reveals their perception of God: "Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword?" (Num. 14:3 NAS). God had repeatedly told them they would face difficulties in overcoming the occupants of the land and He had assured them He would drive out their enemies before them. He had also made every provision for their journey but somehow they had forgotten and continued to murmur against the Lord. God's response was to deal with them according to their word:

"How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me...I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them" (vv. 11-12 NAS).

Moses, however, appealed to God based upon his perception of Him:

"...let the power of the Lord be great, just as Thou hast declared, 'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression.' ...Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy lovingkindness" (vv. 17-19 NAS).

God then acted as Moses expected: "I have pardoned them according to your word" (v. 20 NAS). But to Israel He said:

"I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in My

hearing, so I will surely do to you'" (vv. 27-28 NAS).

Then, God told them that their corpses would fall in the wilderness for forty years until all were dead who perceived that He was not a God whose heart was to do them good.

God's people must take their example from men such as Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah, and David, who emphasized what God would do for those who expected Him to relate to them out of His love. David said it most simply: "This I know, that God is for me" (Ps. 56:9 NAS).

In Jesus' parable of the ten minas, the servant who buried his mina had this perspective of his master:

"I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow" (Lk. 19:21 NAS).

The master replied to the servant:

"By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man?...Take the mina away from him, and give it to the one who has the ten" (vv. 22, 24 NAS).

Who is the Lord? Our perception of the God we are serving is of ultimate importance.

### **A Terminal Disease**

Not long ago our third child was born, but soon after his birth he became ill and would not respond to medical treatment. After several weeks in the hospital, it was discovered he had a terminal disease. My wife and I, even as Christians, have had to face the difficulties that come with such a diagnosis.

When our son was a year old, we took him to a healing service near our town. We knew and respected the speaker and his gift of healing. During the meeting, the speaker called my wife out of a crowd of fifteen hundred people to pray for her, and as he prayed, a word of knowledge came that my wife's family was under a curse. Then, he prayed for our son and the curse was broken. God had





told my wife several months prior to the meeting that our son's disease was the result of a curse upon both our families.

After the meeting, we immediately drove several hundred miles to the hospital that had diagnosed the disease. We insisted they retest my son, and the next day, we went to pick up the results.

When I returned to the car where my wife was waiting, she did not have to ask what I had found out. Our son still had cystic fibrosis.

At that point we had only two choices: We could decide that God was not loving, or we could find out who God really was. To be honest, we held the question open for a while as we compared what we believed about Him with who the Bible says He is.

### Discovering God's Attitude

First, I studied all the names of God, and in that I discovered God's attitude toward His people is always giving, merciful, redeeming, and long-suffering. Although many Christians honestly believe that God sits disapprovingly on His throne with arms folded, waiting for us to become the kind of people who are acceptable to Him, in fact, the reverse is true. His arms are eternally extended to us; His life eternally sacrificed for ours. I discovered that God was portrayed

in Scripture exactly as He had told Moses, saying:

"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Ex. 34:6-7 NIV).

My dilemma was obvious. What image of God would I accept? Would my source of information be experience or His revealed Word?

I had begun to feel that God was not as loving as I had previously imagined. But I had to ask, whose perspective would be more honest, mine or God's? At that point, my wife and I decided we would accept God's revealed perspective of Himself even if all our experience flew in the face of that revelation. If something had to change, His Word or our perspective, it would have to be our perspective.

Our circumstances immediately improved. My wife and I became aware of the goodness and loving-kindness of God. We began believing that all things were working together for good. My son still had a terminal disease. But one night as I was praying for understanding of what God was doing that was good in it all, He settled the issue. The Lord asked me, "How long

should a person live?"

Immediately I knew how to respond, as if the Lord were giving me the answer to His question. I said, "He should first fulfil all that for which You have created him. After that, no one would want to live one moment longer."

"And if he does that, it does not matter whether he lives 10 years, 20 years, or 120 years?"

"No, given the length of eternity, the length of one's life is pretty much irrelevant."

Then, the Lord said, "Don't worry about your son. He will do all that for which he has been created."

Once I changed my perspective about God's loving-kindness, He was able to demonstrate it to me. Then, He began to show me other areas where I was not allowing Him to be who He really was. I had not experienced "joy unspeakable" because I felt God was a hard taskmaster. I had lacked the "peace that passes understanding" because I felt God was using me as a tool to accomplish His purposes. I had lacked an "all sufficiency in all things" because I thought God was reluctant to bless me until I somehow proved myself faithful. I had lacked "rivers of living water" because I felt God meagerly doled out His resources. I saw trials and temptations as miseries to be avoided or endured because I did not know God was "working all things together for my good."

Now, as I more perfectly allow my image of God to be formed by what Scripture alone says of His nature and attitude toward me, rather than by my perceptions, I find that He is "able to be to me exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ask or think!" □

### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Norman Grubb, *Yes I Am* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1982), p. 6.



*Chris Davis is senior pastor of Knoxville (Tennessee) Covenant Church. He and his wife, Ellyn, have four children and live in Knoxville.*



# Brotherly L.O.V.E.

Reaching out to boys in need  
by Diana Scimone and Jackie Conn

**F**or many people it's hard to imagine that there are boys whose parents won't care for them — boys who have never been taught how to use a fork, boys whose vocabularies consist mostly of four-letter words, boys who have witnessed their mother being murdered by their father.

The state calls these boys "dependent, neglected." Bill Wilson calls them "son."

Some twenty years ago, Bill and his wife, Bonnie, knew a couple who had become foster parents, and soon a desire sparked in them to do the same. "I guess we felt like we could help these kids," Bill says. "We had no idea anything would ever come of it." But three years later, Bill founded L.O.V.E. Boys Home in Brookwood, Alabama, and since then has taken in hundreds of boys who have had no

place to call home, and has seen God restore many broken lives.

It all started when as a Methodist minister in Decatur, Alabama, Bill confided in a friend that he felt the Lord wanted him to work with homeless children. The friend was visiting in Brookwood the following week and met a woman, Linnie Oden, who also confided she had a burden for the homeless. She felt God was calling her to give thirty-two wooded acres to start a home for boys, but didn't know how to go about it.

Their mutual friend suggested she contact Bill. "She wrote me a brief letter," Bill recalls, "explaining her vision and asked if I'd be interested in helping her. She said, 'If the Lord is not in this, don't even bother to reply.' So I didn't."

But three months later, Bill felt the Lord telling him to write Linnie

back. "I told her that, like her, I didn't know anything about establishing a home for boys, but that if it was the Father's will, He would lead us."

They decided to proceed with plans, and Bill agreed to direct the home. The first step he took was to establish a board of directors to oversee the home, which it decided to call L.O.V.E. Boys Home, short for "Linnie Oden Voluntary Effort."

## Built on Faith

From the outset it has been a faith ministry. Bill knew what the Lord had called him to do, but had to trust Him for direction and provision each step of the way. Before the home could take in any boys, there first had to be a place for them to live. The board hired an architect to design Faith Cottage,



*Don Wilson, right, recently succeeded Bill Wilson, left, as director of L.O.V.E. Boys Home in Alabama.*



*The home for boys was begun seventeen years ago on thirty-two wooded acres given by Linnie Oden.*



# “You have to take a whole lot, because they’ll stand right up in your face and curse you out....how would you have turned out if you had watched your father kill your mother and then had to help throw her body in the river?”

a two-story brick home for twelve boys and their house parents, and then found a contractor who agreed to build it for sixty thousand dollars. The day came when Bill needed ten thousand dollars so that the contractor could pay his suppliers; but the home had only two thousand, and the local banks refused to loan Bill any money. All he could do was hope for a miracle.

“I had a meeting at 1:30 that afternoon with Charlie Gilbreath, the chairman of our board of directors. At exactly one o’clock I was driving down a street in the midst of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa when I felt strongly impressed to stop at the first convenient parking place.”

Then, sitting quietly in the car, Bill reminded the Lord that He had told him to go ahead with the proj-

ect, and that the money was due that afternoon. As plain as day Bill heard the Lord tell him, “Hush! I’m going to see this through. I know what time it is!”

Bill knew then that God was still in control. “From the top of my head to the tip of my toes, the presence of the Lord was with me in that car.” He then drove on to the meeting in complete peace. He and Charlie met again with the bankers, but to no avail. Next, they went to their lawyer’s office and there Charlie looked over at Bill, began to grin, and handed him a check for ten thousand dollars.

“He told me that earlier in the day a young businessman had come by his office saying the Lord had sent him to help us. He left a check for ten thousand dollars. I asked him what time he came by, and

Charlie said one o’clock – the exact time the Lord had pulled me off the road and told me to stop worrying.”

God has continued to be faithful to His word to provide for the home. Bill remembers meetings with the board to plan fund-raising campaigns. But every time, the Lord would shut the door, reassuring them that He would get the word out about the home and raise the necessary funds to keep it going.

One group the Lord has used to support the home is the Bessemer, Alabama, chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). It has given tens of thousands of dollars in funds and supplies, recently donated twenty thousand dollars for a swimming pool, and each year makes a five-thousand-dollar contribution at Christmastime.



*Fourteen boys live at the home. They are referred to it by the state, which is responsible for them.*



*Bill believes the boys need a close family atmosphere where they can receive love and discipline.*



Once every three months, the housemothers make out their grocery lists: twenty pounds of frozen broccoli, twenty-four pounds of bacon, thirty pounds of sausage, seventy-two pounds of powdered milk, and other staples in quantities that the average mother would never need. The VFW does the shopping, pays for the groceries, and brings them to the moms.

"At Christmas," says Bill, "they call and say, 'Have the boys make out their Christmas lists, and then meet us at the store.' They spend up to \$150 on each boy for Christmas." Earlier this year they bought a truckload of groceries, and then paid for a walk-in freezer to store them in. "There just seems to be no end to what they do for us!"

### Satisfying Moments

At present, the home has fourteen boys, four house parents, and a director, and the board has established another home at Double Springs, Alabama. The boys, who must be school-age, are referred to the home by the state Department of Pensions and Security. Some stay at the home only a few days, but many stay until they graduate from high school. After seventeen years of operating L.O.V.E., Bill, who is now at the Double Springs home, looks back with satisfaction as he remembers certain boys.

"The Lord's after you," he recalls telling one defiant boy a few years back. "I don't care if you're seventy-five years old. He's going to stay after you. One of these days you're going to turn around and face up to Him!"

And in fact, the boy did face up to the Lord. He graduated from high school, joined the Marine Corps, and is now stationed at Camp Pendleton, California. Just recently his wife had a baby, and he telephoned Bill to share the news.

"He was bawling on the phone, because he was so happy," Bill laughs as he remembers the call. "That's what it's all about."

At first Bill thought all he had to do was get the boys set up in the home and they would respond. "I thought they were all going to become preachers or lawyers," he recalls. "Of course, it didn't take

long to see that wouldn't work every time. But we do believe that because they're hearing God's Word they will be touched. What we put into them while they're here will not be wasted. One day it will bring forth fruit."

Bill also quickly learned that he needed God's grace so that he could show mercy and compassion to the boys. "You have to take a whole lot, because they'll stand right up in your face and curse you out. They don't know anything else. After all, how would you have turned out if you had watched your father kill your mother, and then had to help throw her body in the river?"

But Bill adds that with the right combination of discipline and love, it's not long—usually just a few days—before new boys begin to sense that they are loved and cared for. "And that's when they respond," he says.

Although "experts" may argue that house parents need degrees in child psychology or counseling, Bill knows that doesn't necessarily work. "Our society complicates things. I don't want to be overly simple, but working with these boys is majestically simple. They need a male figure—a father—someone they can look to and pattern their lives after."

Bill believes the best way to help the boys is by providing a close family atmosphere where they can receive the love and discipline they need. Rather than staying in one large dormitory, the boys live in groups of six to eight in houses. Each home has house parents, who are responsible for raising and disciplining the boys, cooking their meals, washing their clothes, and teaching basic living skills, such as how to make a bed, sew on buttons, and take care of their rooms—in general, how to be part of a healthy, growing family. The boys even call them Mom and Pop.

### Soaring With Eagles

Besides dealing with the emotional problems many of the boys have as a result of their pasts, Bill has encountered an almost constant barrage of spiritual warfare that comes through various sources. One source in particular is the state

*continued on page 33*

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### **Infinite supply**

*continued from page 11*  
letter to the Corinthians:

We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part (2 Cor. 8:1-2 RSV).

"Their abundance of joy and extreme poverty." How's that for a combination? These Philippians didn't have anything. They weren't wealthy. In fact, the church was largely made up of poor people, the slave class. No doubt they had services at odd hours because they were not free at other times. They had nothing except abundant joy. But it overflowed in a wealth of liberality. No wonder Paul was willing to receive from them. They gave not because they had to, not even because they ought to, but because they wanted to. Paul says:

For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own

free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints (vv. 3-4 RSV).

I love that! How many times does a Christian worker find the congregation just begging him for an opportunity to give?

Paul goes on to say, "This, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (v. 5 RSV). First, they gave themselves to the Lord, and then to Paul.

### **Canceling the Canvass**

I remember my third Sunday as rector at my present church, St. Paul's in Darien, Connecticut. After I had been there a week, I called an emergency meeting of the vestry to ask it to call off the annual canvass of church members during which they were asked to make a financial pledge. The vestry members were absolutely stunned. I'm sure some of them were thinking, *Well, maybe the church is strong enough to stand one disastrous year, and maybe by that time he'll learn.* Or some might have been thinking, *He's new. Maybe we ought to go along with it.* Whatever they thought, they sat there patiently awaiting my new plan.

But I didn't have a plan. I only had a feeling that the canvass was not pleasing to the Lord. Instead I suggested we send a pledge card and a letter to the people, saying, "Thank you, but we'll not be around to the homes this year. Bring your pledge card to church next week."

Someone asked, "But what about the people who don't come?"

"Are you telling me that there are members of this church who don't come to this church?" I asked.

"Of course! Every church has members that don't come," he defended.

They were accepting as perfectly natural something that must be abhorrent to the Lord. But I guess because I was so new, they went along with my suggestion.

On pledge Sunday, I said a few things about giving: "You know, you can't tip God. The idea of putting your hand into your pocket and pulling out a few dollar bills to tip God will never work. Neither can

you bribe Him, giving out of guilt. As a matter of fact, the Bible is clear about what God wants from us—it's us. He doesn't want anything in place of us. So my question to you isn't how much are you going to give to St. Paul's this year. It's, Have you ever really committed your life to Jesus Christ? If you haven't done that, today would be a good day to do it. But if you don't want to commit your life to Jesus Christ, I beg you not to give one cent to this church. God doesn't want it and we don't need it."

At that point, audible gasps were heard in the congregation, and the church treasurer was seen sliding under the pew in front of him.

Now, at St. Paul's we have accepted the principle of the tithe. It's biblical in both Testaments. But we don't apply it as a law upon the people. We simply say it's God's standard, and if a person wants to argue that tithing is under the Old Testament dominion of the Law, and that we are under grace, I then ask, "If it was ten percent under the Law, would it be less under grace?" Sometimes I ask people, "If God gave you ten times what you give Him, could you live on it?"

We believe God's way to raise church finances is to change people's hearts and lives and put joy inside them so that they beg to take part in the spread of the Kingdom. We don't have rummage sales, because God isn't in the junk business. We don't have spaghetti dinners, because God isn't in the restaurant business either. We also don't have fairs. It's odd to me that we have to bribe people with trinkets they don't want to make them give money they don't want to give. It certainly isn't God's way to finance the Kingdom; that's for sure.

Paul continues in his letter to Corinth, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6 RSV). Elementary, isn't it? If we sow a few seeds, we get a few plants. If we sow many seeds, we get a greater harvest. If we take our little spoon, dip it into our resources, and scatter a little spoonful, the Lord will say, "Give Me your spoon," and



He'll dip it into His blessings and give it back to us. Jesus said that the measure we give is the measure that we receive (see Matthew 7:2). We determine the degree of God's blessing upon us by our faithfulness in the stewardship of what we have. This is the one place where the Lord says, "Prove Me, test Me, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven" (see Malachi 3:10). He also says that we rob Him when we fail to tithe, because the tithe belongs to the Lord (see Malachi 3:8). We show we believe that everything we have—our possessions and even life itself—belongs to Him when we tithe.

### The Work of the Kingdom

God wants the work of the Kingdom to be funded by the citizens of the Kingdom. When we tithe, He blesses us so that we can in turn give more. Paul writes:

And God is able to provide you with *every* blessing in abundance, so that you may *always* have enough of *everything* and may provide in abundance for *every* good work (2 Cor. 9:8 RSV, italics mine).

I don't expect the world to pay the freight on the truth of God. I don't want to go to the world to raise money for the church. I don't want to ask the world to come in and underwrite the expenses of the Christian ministry. That is to be done by God's people, and God's people are to be blessed so that they are able to do it. That is God's plan for financing the work of the Kingdom.

Once when I was preaching on tithing, a couple came up at the end of the service and said, "We've made a decision. Although we've given quite a lot, we've never tithed ten percent of our income. There is no way in heaven or on earth for us to tithe, but we're going to do it. We can't make ends meet, but we're still going to do it."

The next day, the husband came rushing into my office. "You will never believe this," he said. "I was called into my boss's office today and given a very significant raise, and this is not even the time of year when raises are given out!

And you know what? I calculated the raise between now and the end of the year, and it is exactly ten percent of my present salary!"

I said, "Bless the Lord! Now you'll need to recalculate your tithe!"

I'm talking about God's working in a person's life. Paul says, "Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience" (v. 13 RSV). In our service of giving and receiving we glorify the Lord.

### Others Bless Him

When we give, not only do we get blessed and we glorify God, but we also cause others to bless Him. Paul writes, "The rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God" (2 Cor. 9:12 RSV).

Several years ago, a man came to see me after my Monday Bible class in Washington, D.C. He was Ian Smith, prime minister of Rhodesia (which is now Zimbabwe). He said, "I want you to know how grateful I am to you, because my son listened to a tape of yours and was converted. Thank you for sending the tapes to Rhodesia."

"I didn't know I had any tapes in Rhodesia," I said.

"You have thousands of tapes in Rhodesia," he replied.

When I got back to my church, I asked my secretary if she had been sending tapes to Rhodesia, but she hadn't.

Some months later, I found out that the former American ambassador to Rhodesia and his wife were members of my class in Washington. They would buy four tapes every week and send three of them to Rhodesia. Once there, the tapes were reproduced and distributed. They had been doing that for years. People in Rhodesia were blessing the Lord because of the ministry of our church.

That's exactly what the Lord said He would do. Those people in Rhodesia didn't know anyone from my church, but they were blessing God because of a partnership in the gospel that was forged in our church.

One final note, Paul says, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7 RSV). The root of the word *cheerful* is the same for the word *hilarious*.



**If we sow many seeds, we get a greater harvest.**

God loves a hilarious giver. I heard someone say, "God loves a cheerful giver but He'll accept from a grouch." I'm not sure that's true. I think we should give as much as our love for the Lord warrants, as much as our faith in the Lord will produce. We should give hilariously in response to the Lord God every day of our lives that our giving may abound in the praise of many to Him. □

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# The Ascension of Christ

No single event in the life of Jesus is more important to us today.

by R. C. Sproul

**M**y graduate work in theology in Amsterdam provoked a crisis in my Christian life. The crisis was triggered by a technical study of the doctrine of the ascension. Like most Protestants I had neglected this theme, considering it a concluding unscientific postscript to the life of Christ, not worthy of special commemoration like Christmas and Easter. The actual event is described only twice in the New Testament. I am now convinced that no single event in the life of Jesus is more important than the ascension, no, not even the cross or the resurrection. It is dangerous business to assign relative values to the episodes of Christ's life and ministry, but if we underestimate the significance of ascension we sail in perilous waters.

What could be more important than the cross? Without it we have no atonement, no redemption. Paul resolved to preach Christ and Him crucified. Yet without the resurrection we would be left with a dead Savior. Cross and resurrection go together, each borrowing some of its value from the other. But the story does not end with the empty tomb. To write *finis* there is to miss a climactic moment of redemptive history, a moment toward which both Old and New Testaments move with inexorable determination. It is the apex of Christ's exaltation, the acme of redemptive history to this point. It is the pregnant moment of Christ's coronation as King. Without it the resurrection ends in disappointment and Pentecost would not be possible.

My crisis experience in Holland was provoked by a study of one obscure statement from the lips of Christ. On an occasion when Jesus told His disciples of His impending death, He said, "Yet a little while and ye see me no more, and where I go, you cannot come." Jesus continued His discourse by explaining, "It is expedient for you that

I go away." Here Jesus was making a value judgment about His departure. The thrust of His comment was to suggest that His absence was better for His disciples than His presence. This must have strained the understanding of His friends to the uttermost limits. *Prima facie* it is unthinkable that under any circumstances people could benefit more from the absence of Jesus than from His presence, save for those unfortunates who face His judgment and would welcome a respite from Him. The Christian longs for the abiding presence of Christ. The contemporary Christian grows wistful imagining what it must have been like to have seen and known the incarnate Christ when He walked the earth. Millions travel annually to Palestine just to see the footprints that are left. Surely the church has either failed to grasp the import of Jesus' words or has simply been unable to believe them. We live as if there had been no ascension.

## A Change of Attitude

The disciples were slow in grasping the expediency of Jesus' departure. They resisted His determination to go to Jerusalem and took umbrage at His announcements of His coming death. Between the resurrection and the ascension new light dawned on them as they began to undergo a remarkable change of attitude. The culmination in the change was evidenced by their immediate reaction to Jesus' visible elevation into heaven. The normal human reaction to scenes of departure was shattered by their behavior. The record says, "The disciples returned to Jerusalem rejoicing."

Parting may be sweet sorrow, but the normal measure of sweetness is unable to turn sorrow into rejoicing. When men ship out for war or sailors go to sea, there are more tears than smiles on the faces of loved ones left behind. I remem-

ber tugging at my father's dufflebag when he started for the troop train at the end of a furlough during World War II. There was no joy in it. I remember the end of Christmas vacation ritual which took place at the Greyhound bus terminals during my college days when I put my fiancée on a bus to return to school after enjoying a brief interlude together. I did not return to my school rejoicing.

To be sure, the disciples had to be prodded by an angel to leave the spot where Christ departed on the Mount of Olives. They stood there transfixed, savoring the vision of the glory cloud enveloping Jesus. They were rooted to the spot, spellbound by the vista of majesty surrounding them. Their reverie was broken by the words of the angel: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing into heaven? This same Jesus who has departed from you will return in like manner."

They returned to Jerusalem. They must have been giddy: laughing, skipping, and singing the whole way. They recalled the words of Jesus in the upper room of the promise of another Comforter who would come. They were glad in heart because they finally understood where Jesus was going and why He was going there.

Earlier Christ had said, "No one ascends into heaven except he who has come down from heaven." He was speaking of Himself. These words placed the ascension squarely in the category of the unique event. In His ascension Jesus displayed again that He was *sui generis*. No one before or since has "ascended" to heaven. The prerequisite for ascension was a prior descension. As the only-begotten incarnate Christ, Jesus was singularly qualified for this event. Others had gone to heaven. Enoch was "translated" and Elijah was "taken up." One could "ascend" a ladder (as Jesus spoke to Nathaniel that he would





see angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man and as Jacob beheld in his midnight dream at Bethel), or one could "ascend" to Jerusalem, moving to a higher elevation from sea level. The term could be used figuratively to refer to the elevation of a king to his royal office. But no one ever had "ascended to heaven" in the sense in which Jesus was speaking.

### The Supreme Political Event

The ascension of Jesus was the supreme political event of world history. He ascended not so much to a place as to an office. He departed from the arena of humiliation and suffering to enter into His glory. He, in one moment, leapfrogged from the status of despised Galilean teacher to the cosmic King of the universe, jumping over the heads of Pilate, Herod, and Caesar Augustus. The ascension catapulted Jesus to the right hand of God where He was enthroned as King of kings and Lord of lords. Here the political "expediency" of His departure stands out in bold relief.

The implications of this event

for the church are staggering. It means that though we suffer persecution and the scorn of hostile power structures—though we groan under the demeaning status of an unwelcome minority—our candidate sits in the seat of sovereign authority. The Kingdom of God is not an unrealized dream or religious fantasy. The investiture of our king is a *fait accompli*. His reign is neither mythical nor illusory. It corresponds to a real state of affairs. At this moment the Lord God omnipotent reigns with His Son in the seat of imperial authority at His right hand. To be sure, the Kingdom is yet to be consummated—that is future. It has however been inaugurated. That is past. He reigns in power, possessing all authority in heaven and earth. That is present. His Kingdom is invisible but no less real. It is left to His church to make His invisible kingship visible.

Christ's session at the right hand of God is inseparably linked to the coming of Pentecost. In a certain sense Jesus lacked the authority to dispatch the Spirit prior to His ascension. One of the first acts of authority he exercised after His

enthronement was to endow his church with power from on high. His disciples were given a great commission, a mandate to penetrate the whole world bearing witness to the Kingdom. These were and are to be the authentic witnesses of Jehovah. But no border was to be crossed or mission undertaken until first the Spirit fell. The disciples returned to Jerusalem rejoicing for the purpose of waiting; waiting for Pentecost. When the new King of the cosmos sent the Holy Ghost, the power of the Kingdom was unleashed on the world.

### He Daily Intercedes

Christ's elevation was not only political, it was also sacerdotal. He assumed not only the scepter of the King but the garments of the High Priest as well. In His ascension, Jesus entered the sanctuary as well as the palace. Not only does Jesus *sit* at the right hand of God, He kneels. He has entered the *sanctus sanctorum*, the holy of holies to make daily intercession for His people. We are a people whose King prays for us by name.

Wonder ye then at the disciples' joy? Once they understood where Jesus was going and why He was going there the only appropriate response was celebration. They danced back to Jerusalem. His physical presence was gone, but His spiritual and political presence was enhanced, giving rise to the creedal affirmation: "Touching His humanity, Jesus is no longer present with us: Touching His deity, He is never absent from us." His words console His "absent" bride: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." □

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*...who healeth all thy diseases*

## The secret of Christian victory by Charles Price

**A**t the disposal of the consecrated child of God there has been placed the resources of that strength which God alone can provide. It is the recognition of the miracle of that vital contact, with its illimitable possibilities, that means victory over sin and self as we travel along the homeward trail. Lose that contact and you lose not only the hope, but also the possibility of a victorious life. You are dependent upon Jesus for everything. He gives freely. Whether or not you avail yourself of the opportunities, which His presence offers, is dependent entirely upon whether or not you have learned the lesson of drawing on the Master's strength.

Go back in the pages of the Sacred Word and get a glimpse of this stupendous revelation in God's dealings with Abraham the faithful. The first verse of the seventeenth of Genesis brings us into an understanding of the faithful purpose of the divine heart in a lesson so beautiful that men must stand in awe, and angels must wonder. The faith of Abraham was being tested. God had made a promise. Never in all of time or eternity did He make one He was unable to fulfill! From the loins of the ancient patriarch was to come the seed through whose life and service all the nations of the world were to be blessed. Numberless as the stars of the firmament was to be his progeny. Upon that child was to be placed the hand of the Lord in benediction and in power.

Night after night the old man dreamed of the happy day when that promise would be fulfilled. But the sands in the hour-glass on the mantel measured the passing of time. The lazy years drifted by and oh, how long and interminable they seemed. The boy did not come. Old Abraham was ninety, but still no fulfillment of the promise divine.

Ninety-five, and still Sara and her husband waited in vain.

Then came the year in which he looked forward to the turning of the century. He was ninety-nine; and yet there was no boy. Reason commenced to whisper things of fear in his ear. The ground began to tremble beneath the old man's feet. His faith began to slip. Up to this time his walk had been perfect—not in self—but in his Lord. He was getting miserable now. I presume more than once he had looked up at those same stars which he had seen on the night in which God had given him the promise; and the misty tears spread themselves like a film across his vision, until the stars seemed to dissolve in a sea of sorrow and disappointment. Reason said, "Abraham, this thing is impossible." He thought of Sara's age. He pondered over his own advanced years. How could this thing be? And yet—and yet—there was that promise! Long and fierce raged the battle in the old man's heart and mind. But there was the promise—from God Himself.

### Hearing the Voice

One night a voice spoke to Abraham's heart. He knew that voice. He lifted up his eyes in weakness and listened with his failing ears to the awesome intonation of the Voice which had spoken to him years before. Then God spoke: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." What words! I am told that many Jews refuse to mention that majestic name of God, "El-Shaddai," but refer to that word as "The Name." What does it mean?

The word El means "God," or "The Strong One." Abraham might be weak, but God was strong. Men might be moved by the power of circumstance and the iniquitous forces of life. But God never. He

is the Strong One. But what good does that do us? Suppose God is strong while we are so weak? To sit in our weakness, misery, and failure, and look at His strength only aggravates our lost condition. God is strong—no doubt about that—but what about our poor weakness and need? Then God spoke to Abraham. He said the glorious and wonderful words that like a rainbow of glory bridge the chasm between helpless man and omnipotent God. He said, "I am El-Shaddai..."

The word Shad is the Hebrew for "breast." It is used invariably throughout the Old Testament for the breast of a woman. It is the place from which baby lips derive the food that gives them strength. There is no sweeter picture on earth than that of a little child in its mother's arms. There is no symphony more beautiful than her baby's laugh. It is part of that





# -SHADDai

mother's life; flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone. The life of the mother flows into the babe. Her strength, love, solicitude, and care all flow into the life and body of the sweet little bundle that is a part of her. Thus an eternal God wrapped up an infinite truth in the vocabulary of earth and gave it as a gift to Abraham and to you and to me.

What God meant was Draw from Me, Abraham. I am your strength. I am your sustenance. I am El, the Strong One, but I am also Shaddai, the Nourisher, and the Life-Giver. There is no need for you to falter, Abraham, no need to tremble and shake in your faith. Draw for your weakness from the fountain of my strength, even as a babe draws from his mother's breast the milk of life. No need to stumble over unbelief, Abraham, but "*walk before me and be thou perfect*," thus saith

the Lord.

That is the lesson. God is the source, the unfailing source, of the supply that is more than sufficient for all our need; of grace to cover all our sin; love that pardons all our iniquity; stripes that are sufficient for all our healing; strength for all our weakness. We believe that; but herein we have failed. We believe that God gives it, but we have not learned how to receive it. The mother gives the milk to her babe, but the little one must receive it. The infusion of the divine strength and nature is dependent upon two things: your knowledge that God is willing to give, and your learning how to receive. As unfailing as the law of the seedtime and the harvest; as irrevocable as the marching of the days and nights in their order is the great truth that God is always ready to meet your every need, if only you are

ready to receive.

## **Becoming Partakers**

Praise His Name, He is still El-Shaddai! Does not Paul admonish us to become "partakers of the divine nature"? Has God Himself not told us, "My grace is sufficient for thee"? Back of all our vainglorying, our miserable spiritual pride and abhorrent self-righteousness is the God who loves us and gave Himself for us, and who longs for us to learn the lesson of drawing from Him all that we need for every moment of every passing day.

El-Shaddai still speaks to the hearts of men and, of a truth, we can still sing, "Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide." Reader, draw upon His Life. Take the grace He so freely and gladly imparts. He is more than sufficient for *your* need, and it is possible to walk before Him and be perfect, not in



self, but in Christ. I know whereof I speak.

It has been my privilege to be called by my Lord to preach His gospel over the earth. The greatest joy of my life is to win souls, as He leads me and gives me strength for the task. Many of the campaigns run from eight to ten weeks, and sometimes the body gets very weary. One night I was sitting in an office in a corner of the tabernacle, feeling tired and at the end of my endurance. Out in the auditorium a great crowd was waiting for the service to begin, and through the thin boards I could hear the murmur of people at prayer. Then the door opened. A minister stood there and said, "Brother Price, there are about five hundred people here tonight who expect to be anointed in the name of the Lord for healing."

Five hundred—and I did not have the strength I needed to preach. Then there was that multitude to meet in the name of my Lord. In my heart I felt for a moment like running away. Then I wondered if I could dismiss the sick and tell them to come back some other night. I looked through a crack in the wall, and there I saw the poor sufferers waiting for a poor human like me to come and tell them of Jesus. Suddenly my nerves seemed to go to pieces. I dropped to my knees on the floor and wept. "Oh, Jesus," I cried, "I can't. I have not the strength. I am so weary and tired. I want to, Lord, but I am not equal to this task."

Then I heard that still, small voice in the depths of my heart. "You have no strength...Why not take *mine*?" For a moment I thought, *could this be real?* Why not? Did not the Lord give His strength to people in the olden days? Why not now. "Thank you, Lord," I said as I waited for what He would do. Then I felt a warm glow come over this body of mine. I walked out on the platform. Many times I preach from notes, but not that night. There was no weariness, no fatigue; nothing but the conscious knowledge of His strength.

In faith I assured the sufferers that all would be reached that night. When the midnight hour came, I was still laying these unworthy hands of mine upon human heads,

## God is the unfailing source of the supply that is more than sufficient for all our need.

in the name of the Lord Jesus. The power of the Lord was present to heal them, because the Lord Himself was there. Then came the last one. I prayed; pronounced the benediction; and went home. As I was about to retire, I became conscious again of a great weariness. But I was not too tired to drop on my knees and thank Him for what He had done that night. He was still El-Shaddai. I knew that He had imparted *His strength* to meet my weakness. He will meet your weakness too. He will meet your every need, and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

### The Poor and the Rich

It is the poor and the needy who have been given so many good things, and it is the rich whom he has sent empty away. A crippled man was brought to the meetings some years ago. Those who brought him told me he was a man possessed of all the faith in the world and one who was known in the community for his good life and works. He was a good-living man and, no doubt, loved his Lord; but he was to go away from more than one service because of the *one thing* that he lacked, and which His Master was ultimately to reveal to his mind.

How the people prayed for that cripple! I can see him now, struggling to rise in answer to the entreaties of the people that he arise in faith and walk. Many times

I knelt by the side of his chair and rebuked the power which bound him. The days went by and yet there was no sign of his healing—no acquiescence had come from the skies in response to prayer. One afternoon they wheeled him to a corner in the building. He asked the people to leave the two of us alone, and then said something which has lingered in the chambers of my memory.

"What a failure I am," he declared. "I came here strong in what I thought was *my* faith in the Lord. As I look deeply into my heart I find something about which I wish to confess. What a poor, miserable failure I have been. I have been spiritually proud of the fact that people have pointed to *me* as a man who suffered without complaining. They pointed me out as the man who never grumbled, although he had a cross to bear. I grew proud of my reputation and I can see now that what I termed my goodness has been self-righteousness in the sight of my Lord."

He put his face in his hands and wept. There was something so pathetic about that poor, crippled man, that the tears welled up in my eyes too. I reached out my hands and put them on his head and commenced to pray. I prayed for his healing; and, as I prayed, he stopped me. "Dr. Price," he said, "I don't need healing half as much as I need Jesus. I am so hungry for His presence. More than anything else in my life, I want to know Him better, and I am content to spend my days in this chair if only He will flood this self-righteous heart of mine with His peace and love." So I watched the cripple in the wheel chair disappear around the corner of the building.

He went away quietly, and my heart went with him, as they wheeled him out of the building. All the way home my heart was singing for him the hymn:

"Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry;  
While on others Thou art calling,  
Do not pass me by!"

A broken and a contrite heart  
will He not despise! How sweet it  
*continued on page 34*



## L.O.V.E.

*continued from page 25*

welfare system, which has ultimate responsibility for the boys. Because the state system is based largely on humanist principles, it differs sharply with Bill on how a home for children should be run. On matters such as discipline, Bill has fought a constant battle with secularism.

He has learned how to walk the fine line between standing up for what he believes while at the same time heeding Paul's admonition to the Romans to "be in subjection to the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1 NAS). Through it all, he has developed a good relationship with the state and is able to work with it when differences occur. Bill credits his ability to endure the warfare for seventeen years to encouragement from his wife and knowing that the Lord is in control.

The first thing visitors notice about Bill's office is that there are eagles everywhere—a huge oil painting over the sofa, a bronze eagle on the bookshelf, a wooden eagle on the wall, and several others. Bill just smiles about the eagles and quotes from Isaiah chapter 40.

Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary (v. 31 NAS).

In seventeen years of working with some two hundred boys, Bill has seen the truth of that scripture. "I've been in places where I was weary and didn't think I could mount up and soar above a circumstance. But I knew that if God would give me the grace to wait, that the time would come when I could walk, when I could soar, when I wouldn't faint." □

*Editor's note: If you would like to help support L.O.V.E. Boys Home, you can send a tax-deductible contribution to P.O. Box 131, Brookwood, Alabama 35444.*

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## El-Shaddai

*continued from page 32*

is to come to the end of self! How wonderful, after we have toiled all night and have caught nothing, that He condescends to wait for us on the shore! How gracious the voice that tells us to cast our nets on the *right* side of the boat, that our joy might be full! What determines which is the right side of a boat? Why, the way it is going, of course. You will soon find out where the right side is *if your boat is going toward Jesus*; and the boat must be *empty*, if you would *bring* the Nazarene on board.

### Seeing Jesus

A few days later I was leaving the building in company with Dr. Manchester, the man who buried

President McKinley. At the door of the auditorium sat the man in his wheel chair, patiently waiting for the doors to open for the evening service. The afternoon meeting was over. Dr. Manchester looked at the face of the crippled man and stopped. Then he walked over to him and I followed. "Are you coming for prayer?" he asked.

"For prayer and to receive healing," was the reply. There was something different about the man. His voice—his tone—his eyes—such a look of reflected glory on his face. I knew something had happened. "Tell me," I said, "what has happened. My brother, I discern you have experienced something that is so wonderful I can feel its glory, though I do not know what it is."

Then he told me he had been with Jesus. He had spent the night in prayer—not in intercession alone, but in praise and worship. He told me that at four in the morning a consciousness of the presence of his Lord had overwhelmed him. He knew Jesus was in his room in a special way. He told me how his voice in adoration had commenced to praise his Lord. He said that he then became conscious of an infusion of the Life Divine. Something passed from Jesus to him; and he felt as though a fog had rolled away from his heart and mind. From that moment on he knew his struggles were over; and a sweet and holy peace was wrapped around his soul. He told us that now he *knew*, when once again he came to obey his Lord in the anointing with oil, strength would flow from Jesus, and life divine would be given him to restore him to health and strength.

As I looked into Dr. Manchester's face, I noticed that tears stood in his eyes. Then he spoke, "Why does this man have to wait until tonight?"

"He does not," I replied. "The Great Physician is here now. Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

A moment later it was over. Out of his wheel chair arose that man. He ran and jumped and praised the Lord for his deliverance. It was a miracle of power divine. Around him on the snowy street, men and women gathered first to praise, and then to pray. Unsaved hearts were broken, and many were the peniten-

tial tears that were shed! More than once I have been with a group of disciples, struggling at the foot of a mountain; and oh, how my heart can testify to the difference it makes when into the midst of our helplessness Jesus Himself comes walking!

That is the secret of Christian victory. That is the secret of overcoming. Laying your burdens at His feet—to leave them there and never again carry them around like an old worn-out garment—is the confidence the Lord desires that we enjoy. That is the message of the God Who is Enough. Enough for whom? Why, for *you*, of course. Enough for when? For *now*, of course. That is the provision of El-Shaddai! Then as you march daily along the trail of time to the portals of eternity, you will be conscious of heaven on earth. As you draw nearer and nearer to the day when you can tell the angels you are coming, the songs of grace and glory will resound throughout the country of the homeward trail—His presence—His strength—His power—His love—His faith—His grace—and you will find yourself singing as onward and upward you go—

"All the way my Saviour leads me,  
Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for every trial,  
Feeds me on the Living Bread.

"When my spirit cloth'd  
immortal  
Wings its flight to realms  
of day,  
This my song through endless  
ages,  
Jesus led me all the way."

Oh, the wonders of El-Shaddai,  
the God Who Is Enough! □

*Taken from The Real Faith by Charles Price.  
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Charles Price was a Methodist and Congregational pastor in the United States, and ministered in Europe and the Middle East. For twenty years, he also published a magazine, *Golden Grain*. He died in 1947.

## NEXT MONTH IN NEW WINE: THE POWER OF WORDS

Don Basham urges us to take Proverbs 18:21, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," literally. Using examples from his ministry, Don shares seven steps to redeeming our speech.

Derek Prince says that like the slogan "Think before you strike," which is aimed at preventing forest fires, we must also think before we strike with our words. It is infinitely more important to prevent spiritual fires that devour whole areas of the inheritance of God's people.

Karl Strader emphasizes the treasure we have in the written word—the Bible—and the living word—the Holy Spirit. Both, he says, are eternal riches that we have on deposit in our earthen vessels. He shares how we can draw on the power they contain.

Also, look for a brand-new feature as *Fathergram*, the popular newsletter that for years has provided timely tips and wisdom for dads, becomes a part of *New Wine*.

All in the June *New Wine*



## A journey through the Old Testament From Ur to Egypt

**E**ach month we will study a portion of the Old Testament from three viewpoints: the Kingdom principle, God encouraging man to live under His rule; the incarnation principle, God demonstrating His nature through faithful men and women; and the Spirit principle, God acting in human affairs by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we study the scriptures that take us from Ur to Egypt, we find several characters in whose lives we see the Kingdom principle clearly at work.

One day in a place called Haran, God said to Abraham, who was then named Abram, "Come, follow Me." Abraham had moved with his father from Ur of the Chaldeans, and now in response to this "inner voice" left everything he had ever known. God promised Abraham that he would become "a great nation," and to fulfil His promise, God gave him a son despite his advanced age and his wife's lifelong barrenness. God chose this miracle child, Isaac, to carry on His purpose.

Later, God further tested Abraham's faith and obedience by asking him to sacrifice Isaac on the very mountain where many years later Jesus was crucified. Abraham would have plunged the knife into Isaac, but God stopped his hand and said, "Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Gen. 22:12 NAS).

Out of Isaac's two sons, Esau and Jacob, God chose the youngest, Jacob, to carry on His purpose, even though he was a liar and thief. But God steadily pursued him for many years until one night He sovereignly intervened in his life by sending His angel to confront and wrestle with him all night. As Jacob

fought with the angel, he was not only permanently disabled, but permanently changed in his attitude as well. God even changed his name to Israel, which means "power with God." At this point, God begins dealing with mankind in a redemptive way through a family—the twelve sons of Israel. The stream of divine government then widens to the nation Israel—the descendants of the twelve sons.

One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers, and eventually wound up in an Egyptian prison. God's favor was on Joseph and he was providentially taken from prison and made ruler of Egypt second only to Pharaoh! God *does* overrule any circumstance of life for the purpose of His kingdom.

The incarnation principle, God's nature in man, is the only explanation for the faith of Abraham. God gave him the ability to believe fantastic things. Even today, God will give us faith to believe the impossible; it's not something we have to work up.

Isaac's obedience also reflects the image and nature of God. The scene on top of Mount Moriah in Genesis chapter 22 is a perfect description of God's dealings with His Son many years later. Abraham's faith and Isaac's obedience incarnate the nature of God the Father and God the Son at the cross.

God placed in Jacob a desire for His blessing that tormented him all his life until he groaned at Peniel, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Gen. 32:26 NAS).

Joseph is an outstanding example of a man who was a type of Christ: The Bible records no sin to his account; he was led of the Spirit; he was falsely accused, beaten, and imprisoned; he was

exalted of God and became the savior of his people.

Before the flood, God strove with men by means of His Spirit. Afterward, He began to speak by His Spirit only to selected individuals. Speech comes by breath, and God's Spirit is the breath of God. So when God spoke to Abraham, it was by His Spirit. Joseph's dreams and interpretations were also the direct result of the activity of God's Spirit. Even Pharaoh recognized that (see Genesis 41:38).

### GENERAL READING ASSIGNMENT: Genesis 12-50

#### FIRST ASSIGNMENT:

Compare the genealogies in Genesis chapter 5 with those in Genesis chapter 11.

Question for study and discussion:

1. Why is there such a decrease in the ages of the men listed? (Look up "canopy theory" or "age of antediluvian" in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia.)

#### SECOND ASSIGNMENT:

Study Genesis chapters 25, 27-36.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. What was there about Jacob that made God choose him, and what was there about Esau that caused God to reject him?
2. To what experience in your life can you liken Jacob's experience at Peniel in Genesis chapter 32?

#### THIRD ASSIGNMENT:

Read and study the life of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37-48.

Question for study and discussion:

1. In what other important ways was Joseph like Jesus? □



## THE WAY I SEE IT

How many more does my Father see?

# Seventeen Faces

by Don Basham

**R**ecently I spent several nights in a hotel room that had an overabundance of mirrors. Even the folding doors of the closet were mirrored so that when I pulled them open, I not only saw myself in each one, but in reflections of reflections I also saw both my left and my right profile.

It made me recall how—as a boy of twelve—I discovered I had a knack for sketching profiles. I drew profile portraits of my father, my mother, my brothers, Hal and Fred, my cousin Corky, and my bird dog, Penny. The portraits actually resembled their subjects except they all looked rather stiff and solemn. Even Penny, who never had a solemn day in her life.

My great frustration was that I could not draw a self-portrait. It wasn't because I didn't want to, but because I had never seen my own face in profile, although, goodness knows, I had tried often enough! I can't count the times I stood sideways in front of a mirror, rolling my eyes to one side, trying to see the side of my face without turning my head until my eyes blurred and I got a stiff neck.

Then, one day, holding a hand mirror at a certain angle while standing before another mirror, I glimpsed my profile for the very first time. At last, I saw a face by which others had always known me but which I had never seen.

In that hotel room, not only were the closet doors mirrored, but mirrors also covered three walls of the bathroom. In the one over the sink I saw the same image I always see when I wash my face. But in the mirrors on either side, my face peered out of multiplied reflections that repeated themselves into the distance as if they might go on forever. Wondering just how many I could see, I leaned forward to

count eight faces in each direction before bumping my head against the glass.

So I had to settle for seventeen faces: one in the middle, eight to each side. If you had been standing where I was, you could have seen seventeen of your own faces as well.

Of course, every one of us carries around some extra faces. Some, like profiles, are invisible to us but easily recognized by everyone else. Others we deliberately put on to conceal what we are really like.

Faces in mirrors never change but the real faces we wear vary greatly. Yet even they seldom reveal us as we really are, what we really think, or how we really feel. Our best faces may fool the public or even our friends, but not one of them fools God. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart," the Lord said to Samuel (1 Sam. 16:7 NIV), and faces are part of our outward appearance.

Seventeen faces, all of them me.  
How many more does my Father see?

How many faces do You see,  
Father God, when You look at me?

My hopeful face, my fearful face?  
My lonely or my tearful face?  
The modest face which covers my pride?

The honest face which denies I lied?

The face that turns away from You?

The face which hides my sin from view?

The pleading face which no one sees

When I ask forgiveness on my knees?

Seventeen faces, all of them me.  
How many more does my Father

see?

I find that the older I get, the easier it becomes to hide behind those different faces, and that's unfortunate. The Bible extols the virtue of having a "single eye" but surely it's just as important to cultivate a single face, "an open countenance."

We most often identify people by faces, but first impressions are not always accurate. All of us have met folks who appeared beautiful or handsome at first. But after getting to know them we found they were not so attractive after all. "How could I ever have thought of him as handsome, or her as beautiful?" we mutter, and quote old slogans to ourselves, such as, "Pretty is as pretty does."

Perhaps the best thing to remember in all this talk about mirrors and faces is that for Christians trusting to be transformed daily into Jesus' likeness, the Father sees the job already done. Looking at us, He sees only the face of His Son because we are "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

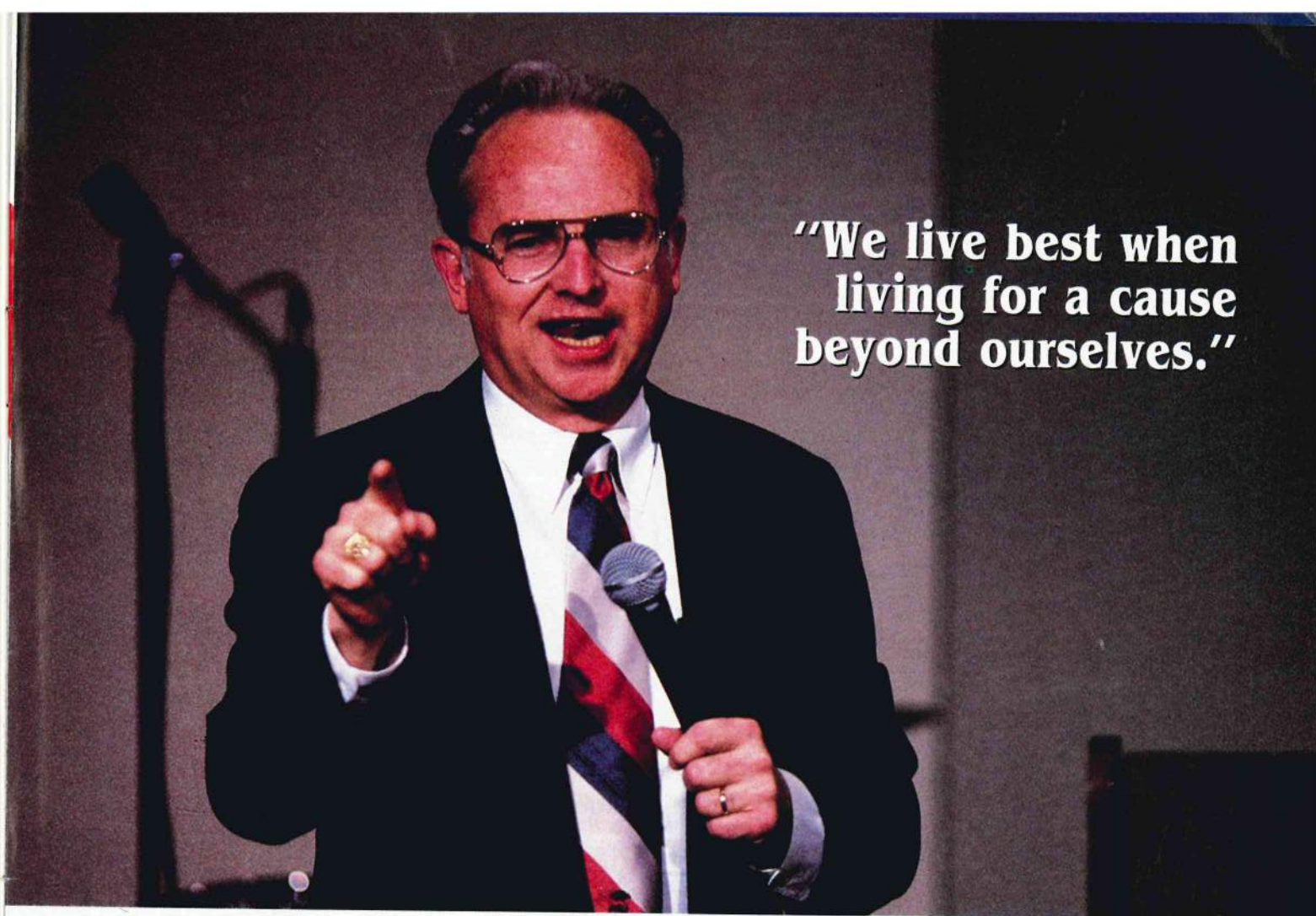
Time goes by and God proves His faithfulness. Our years of beholding His glory follow one after another until the day we make the glad discovery that grace once only *imputed* has at last been *imparted* and we have become what we beheld.

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

What a wonderful promise to keep in mind each time we gaze in the mirror. At least, that's the way I see it. □

*Don Basham is chief editorial consultant for New Wine.*





**"We live best when  
living for a cause  
beyond ourselves."**

## **"Challenge—With Charles Simpson"**

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Roseville, MN

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Name Withheld


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Phoenix	KMLE FM 108	12:45 PM



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A woman with curly brown hair, wearing a white sweater with red and blue horizontal stripes and light purple pants, stands in a kitchen. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. In front of her is a large stainless steel mixing bowl on a white countertop. She is holding a white spatula and stirring the bowl. To her right, on the countertop, is a silver boombox with two large speakers. Behind the boombox are three wooden lidded jars. In the background, there is a window with blue curtains and a potted plant on the sill.

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at all."***

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