

THE BANNER OF TRUTH

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth"

Volume 33

February 1995

Number 1

These Attest Our Divine Acceptance

Evidences of Sonship

The "Firstfruits of the Spirit" Certify Our Adoption

By Fred O. Blakely

Although other indications are specified, there is one fundamental and inexorable evidence of one's affiliation with God. It is possession by the individual of the divine Spirit.

Those who have the indwelling Presence of the Deity are attested to be the bona fide children of God. The ones who do not carry within themselves this heavenly Presence are not so related. That is the case regardless of whatever else they may have to their credit.

Possession of the Holy Spirit is the one great sign given in Scripture of the sonship and daughtership of the Almighty. To that situation there can be no exceptions.

"Hereby we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His holy Spirit," asserts the Apostle John (I Jn. 4:13; cf. 3:24; 5:10; Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6).

By the same token, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," is the simple conclusion of the Apostle Paul (Rom. 8:9).

It is remarkably significant that such endowment is the only test of record concerning the genuineness of one's adoption into the family of God ever specifically exacted by inspired men. Any other test of discipleship appears to have been in subordination to a single grand end: that people may have had their hearts purified, and have been forgiven of their sins, and so be eligible to receive the Holy Spirit.

The authoritative proclamation of the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost conforms to that situation. The bestowal of the Spirit by Christ, in token of His forgiveness of the believers, was the climactic blessing promised on the condition of repentance, confession of Christ, and immersion into Him (Acts 2:36-39).

A Form of "Open Membership." This centrality and pre-eminence of the Spirit's possession as God's seal of approbation is a circumstance that should be duly pondered by those who are zealous in their opposition to "open membership" in the church.

Perhaps an index is apparent in this situation. Is it not that concerning the essential superficiality of a religious association that has fastened dogmatically on meticulous conformity to precise action of an external rite as the one invariable condition and seal of acceptability by God?

While undeviating conformance is required in the case of the overt act of baptism, little thought and virtually no emphasis is often given to the part of the transaction that was stressed by the Apostles: possession of That which submission to the ordinance was designed to procure--reception of the Spirit.

Has it never occurred to such persons that to acknowledge "membership" to those without the Spirit is to practice "open membership" in its most critical form? It is to recognize as brethren those whom God has not received as His children.

Consequently, it is to laden and encumber the temple of God with dead constituents, rather than to build it with the "living stones" which alone can constitute that "spiritual house."

Externals do not of themselves constitute true religion. They are a

visible embodiment of it, but not its vital substance. Let us not set too high a value on rites and forms of devotion and worship, or we may glorify the husk, to the neglect of the kernel, and a shapely bark may obscure a rotten tree.

"They are the fringe, not the vesture," and too much emphasis on the externals is apt to degenerate into "trifling and casuistry". "He who is always deliberating about the necessary outworks will never reach the heart of the palace of truth" --S.R. Aldridge, *The Pulpit Commentary*, New Edition, Vol. 43, pp. 421-22.

These observations, of course, are not intended as a justification for the relaxation of the divine requirement for immersion. Rather, they are meant as an indictment of the policy of unconcern with the weightier matters. I would suggest the possibility that we have become so obsessed with the container, that we have neglected the content, or have been so enamored with the form, that we have passed over the life and power it was intended to embrace and convey. It is certain that such a procedure was not dictated by Him in whose Name we baptize. But, as the reason for the prevailing dearth of spiritual life in the churches is sought, it undoubtedly can be traced, at least in part, to this dereliction in emphasis.

The Sign of the Spirit. In response to this criticism, the time honored rejoinder probably will be made. It asserts that the objective evidence of submission to Christ is all that the church may demand. Only God and the individual can know with certainty of the attestation of the Spirit.

Within certain limitations, that is admittedly a valid premise. But its validity is not without qualification. It is true that, as conditions of adoption into the household of God, we may not require more than God exacts. Included in those demands are faith, repentance, the confession of Christ, and baptism into Him. On compliance with these we well insist.

But the gift of the Holy Spirit is also involved in the transaction of adoption. He not only is promised in return for compliance with God's will. He is explicitly made the verifying token of heaven's ratification of the process.

It, thus, is wholly inexcusable that the church be unconcerned with this confirmatory witness by God to its acceptance by Him. It is even more unthinkable that the individual should be indifferent to this vital witness to his Divine sonship.

In the position that the presence of the Holy Spirit is undiscernible, the traditional view is completely wrong. If that is the case, what evidential value does this endowment possess? How can it be an effective seal of Divine affiliation, if it is concealed? That the Spirit's indwelling of a person is apparent to those who have eyes to see and hearts to discern spiritual things is a circumstance postulated by Scripture.

Hence, we should diligently seek to comprehend the evidences of this Divine stamp of approval within ourselves, that we may experience the rich fruitage of assured standing with God, and of confident and effective discipleship before men.

For the same reason, the church, as a unit, should exercise great care and much concern that all received within its fold come experientially into this precious and indispensable part of their heritage in Christ.

How may I know that I have the Holy Spirit?, therefore, is a vital question that sooner or later confronts every sincere and studious disciple of Jesus. If the possession of Him is the one essential mark and guarantee of my acceptance by God as His child, I must have positive assurance on the subject.

(SONSHIP, Continued on Page Four)

THE BANNER OF TRUTH

FRED O. BLAKELY, Founder and, for the first 31 years, Editor
Published Monthly by the Independence Hill Christian Church
2230 W. 78th Ave., Merrillville, IN 46410

Please do not send any mail to above address.

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

ALBERT G. STONER, JR., Editor Phone: (219) 769-7048

MR. AND MRS. RICHARD SANKOWSKI, Mailers
Phone (219) 696-1110

DEAN E. BOELT, Local Distributor Phone (219) 844-8699

Editor's Address : 7903 Hendricks Street, Merrillville, IN 46410-5023

Mailing List Address : 18912 Delaware, Lowell, IN 46356

Requested donation to pay for actual cost of publication, \$7.50 per year

Sent Free for Three Months upon Request

Nonprofit Organization, Mailing Permit No. 358, Gary, IN 464

Regarding the Contents. All writing herein should be ascribed to the editor, with the exception of that which appears within quotation marks and/or is specifically credited to other sources.

Responsibility for Views. In the very nature of the case, THE BANNER OF TRUTH, in its editorials and editorial policy, represents only the views and attitude of its editor, and those of the other writers whose articles appear or whose assertions are reviewed therein. The paper is not to be understood as necessarily speaking for all members of the Independence Hill Christian Church, as would be the case with the expressions of any person or agency of any congregation.

Reprint Permission. All material, except that indicated as excerpts, condensations, or reprints from copyrighted sources, may be reprinted in full or in part without further permission. We appreciate a credit line in case of reprinting, but it is not demanded. We are anxious to share as widely as possible the truth which God has made known to us.

On the Nature of Armageddon

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16:15-16). This is the only place in all of Scripture where this word appears. Commentators are right in saying that this battle shall be the greatest and the most decisive one for the people of God. But they are completely wrong in drawing attention to nations such as Russia and China as being the arch-enemies of the saints of the Most High God.

The Revelation is not drawing attention to a geographical location, except symbolically. Allusions are obviously being made to mountain of Megiddo (cf. Judges 5:19; II Kings 9:27; 23:29-30) as the place of significant battles and where kings were slain. Upon consideration of this word in the Revelation, however, it becomes evident that the nature of this final conflict, alluded to here, is not at all the same as the battles mentioned in the Kings. The conflict of which we speak is spiritually discerned.

Armageddon is not a flesh and blood battle. It is the battle for the prize of eternal life! The victors of this conflict are not those who have the best man power and artillery, but rather those who watch and keep their garments (see also Mk. 13:34-37; Mt. 22:11-14). It must be recalled that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:12-13; see also I Tim. 6:12). And truly this is an evil day in which we have been called to stand.

Let us not be disarmed, then, by predictions of a coming conflict in the land of Israel! The conflict is now upon us who are fighting the good fight of faith! And it is becoming increasingly fierce as we approach the end of the age. The old serpent has picked up the pace as he knows that he has but a short time. Let us fight so that we may win! --Editor

A Much Appreciated Letter. Dear Sirs: I enjoy reading the Banner so much that I am sending a \$40.00 check to renew my subscription plus order two new subscriptions for my daughters for Christmas. The extra money is for a donation. Thanks again for a great Banner and proclaimer of the Truth. In Christ Jesus, Lynda Ogg, Dexter, IA.

Brother Paul Writes. Dear brethren, We trust all is going well with you and your ministry there. I am busy, as usual, working on the book with Vic Knowles and doing the finishing touches on my New Testament version which will be privately published for my family and a few friends. Enclosed is a check for our personal subscription (\$10.00) to the Banner. Please send it to our home address. May God's richest blessings be upon you and yours. Bill Paul, Seattle, WA.

From California. Enclosed is a check for \$10.00. I would be pleased if you could send me an extra copy of the February 1994 issue of the Banner. Joan Hemmerick, Quartz Hill, CA.

When you realize how far man fell, it takes away your confidence in the flesh. --Given O. Blakely

If the devil is getting through to you, it is because you're not up high enough. He is the prince of this world. --Given O. Blakely

Your spirit and the Holy Spirit have been merged together in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. And the Holy Spirit is the dominant One. --Given O. Blakely

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24). Christ is now appearing in the presence of God for us, and this is the appearance which is of more immediate need for us right now. Our continuance in the faith depends upon this appearance of Christ. And incidentally, if we were "locked into salvation" as some theologies teach, this appearance of Christ would not be necessary. --Given O. Blakely

Christ is not appearing in the presence of God to "keep back the wrath of God" from us, as was the case of Moses and children of Israel. For we, that are in Christ, have not been appointed unto wrath, "but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5:9). Wrath is for those who are unbelieving (cf. Jn. 3:36). --Given O. Blakely

God was the One who was offended by sin, not us. And Christ appeared to put away sin from the face of God by the sacrifice of Himself. And "this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (Heb. 7:27). --Given O. Blakely

In Christ the remedy for sin has extended as far as the curse. --Given O. Blakely

As soon as Jesus put away our sins, He headed back home to be with the Father. --Given O. Blakely

"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4:7-8).

"What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, who shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh

The Way of Effectiveness

It is written of Christ that "when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (I Jn. 3:2). That is because, at that time, we shall be fully transformed into His image.

And essentially-related situation needs to be properly considered and yielded to. It is this: To the extent that we now behold the Son of God--by faith and through the Holy Spirit--we are spiritually transformed into His likeness.

That is the clear proclamation of Paul in Second Corinthians 3:18. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Let us, therefore, by proper devotion to Christ, continually seek to perceive His glory. That is God's way--and the only effective one--to grow in grace and in conformity to the divine will for us, as we are expected to do.

As David declared, "They looked unto Him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed" (Ps. 34:5). --*Dan Powers*

The Way to God's Peace

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). That is the promise to those who "in nothing" are "anxious," but "in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving" let their requests "be made known unto God" (v. 6).

"These things have I spoken unto you," said Jesus to the disciples, "that in Me ye might have peace." "In the world, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

Peter characterized the gospel thus: "The Word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36).

So are "grace and peace" multiplied unto us through the Son, as we receive and live in Him (I Pet. 1:2). Let us, therefore, diligently seek and ensue, or pursue, it, as Peter urges us to do (I Pet. 3:11). --*Dean E. Boelt*

God does not want us to be ignorant of His purpose. --*Rebekah McCormick*

I appreciate the blending of the warnings and the promises in the book of Revelation. --*Timothy McCulfor*

The word rapture is not only not a Bible word, it is also not a Bible concept. This world remains here because the saints are here. When they leave, the earth will be burned up. --*David Maddack*

God has placed us in this arena of tribulation and affliction. Let us seek to glorify Him in it and to be among those whom He is looking for? --*Rebekah McCormick*

The laugh of Sarah (Gen. 18:13-15) is not recorded against her in Hebrews chapter eleven. This is because sins have now been put away by Christ. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Every day I live by my faith. --*Fred O. Blakely*

You must firsthandly know some of the things that are hoped for, in order for faith to be the substance of them (cf. Heb. 11:1). --*Timothy McCulfor*

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Heb. 10:36).

"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas. 5:8).

Divers Musings for the Times

On Acceptable Songs. The criterion for determination of the acceptability and spiritual effectiveness of sacred songs is their verbal content, not their tunes or melodies. If the music make more impression on you than the thoughts expressed by the words, the song or chorus stands thereby impeached as a suitable vehicle for the praise and worship of God. As for ourselves, we detest to perceive echoing in our spirit the lilted noises of some frivolous "fun" chorus. It serves as a detraction from our walk with God, rather than a help. And what is true of such music in the involuntary retrospect of the individual is more so for a congregation as it actually renders the song or chorus, professedly before the Lord of heaven and earth. Contrary to the carnal mind's demand, He is not a "fun" God, and cannot be worshipped in a frolicsome spirit. Our address of and devotion to the Most High in song should befit His lofty and Holy Person and station in both words and music. --*Fred O. Blakely*

A Significant Milestone. If the Lord Jesus continues to tarry in Heaven, and he is still abiding in his earthly body, The Banner's former editor, Brother Fred O. Blakely, will pass an especially significant milestone on February 6th. That will mark his 85th birthday.

Fred praises God for this longevity, which represents four years more than that of any of his nuclear family. His desire and prayer is that whatever time on earth is left for him may continue to be used to God's glory and the eternal well-being of His people. --*The Banner of Truth*

Shiloh Has Come. Pursuant to God's promise, "Shiloh" has come (Gen. 49:10). And, "by the blood of His Cross," He has made peace between God and man (Col. 1:20). He is coming again, "without sin unto salvation," for all who have availed themselves of the peace which He has made (Heb. 9:24-28). It is our privilege and responsibility, by reception of the Savior and cleaving unto Him, to be among that blessed number. --*Fred O. Blakely*

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18-19; cf. Rom. 4:3-8). Keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they all may be one" (Jn. 17:11). My desire is that "My joy" may be fulfilled or realized in themselves (v. 13). "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name" (v. 12). --*Dan Powers*

In commenting upon Isaiah 45:13-15, Brother Robert Cobb made this remark: "The world is a stage on which God is working out and unfolding the drama of His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, His beloved Son.

Your kept faith will glorify Christ at His appearing. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Since Satan has been cast unto the earth, then this is the place where we must not abide. "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. 12:12). Let us then "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). With our affection set on things above, we escape the domain of the old serpent. --*Robert Cobb*

Gold will continue to have impurities until it yields to the heat of the furnace. --*Tina Cobb*

The times of exposition of the truth cause our hearts to rejoice more fervently. --*Dan Powers*

Surely, no thoughtful person can ever rest in uncertainty on a matter of such vital and eternal consequence to himself. The church should covet the confirmation and comfort for its people which satisfaction on this subject alone can provide.

Evidences of the Presence. The means for this satisfaction are abundant in Scripture. Many and varied are the unmistakable evidences of Divine indwelling that are given. A complete listing of this criteria is not within the scope of these observations. However, I do want to list certain fundamental evidences associated with the genuine child of God. These all take the nature of certain endowment with the Holy Spirit.

When considered in the aggregate, together with the other manifestations of the blessed Paraclete, they should provide the individual with firm evidence of His acceptance by God. In like manner, discernment of these fruits of the Spirit should convince one's associates that God is in him of a truth.

1. Obedience to the Initiatory Demands of the Lord. Genuine faith and repentance, and the desire to confess Jesus as the Christ and be baptized into Him are all the product of the Holy Spirit. True, there seems to be a distinction in the nature of this ministry and that of the indwelling Presence, but the incipient fruitage is nonetheless of Divine origin. He who accords hearty obedience in these particulars is led by the Spirit, and so is born of God. Accordingly, his sincere submission attests the sonship to which it brought him.

By the same token, whosoever has not rendered that obedience has a distinct flaw in his title to sonship. John asserts, in fact, that such neglect or failure belies claim made to covenantal relation with God (I Jn. 2:3-5).

2. The Personal Knowledge of God and Christ. To the Spirit-filled heart, the Father and the Son are not merely theoretical or historical Personalities, for removed from one's own consciousness. That level of relationship is at best a traditional one, although it appears to be the one of far too many churchmen today.

The Holy Spirit gives the individual the Deity *pere et fils*, experientially--as real living Companions (Jn. 14:21-23, etc.). That is the Divine knowledge which the Scriptures equate with spiritual life. Its possession confirms God's approbation.

Similarly, the absence of it is portentous. If God is not personally known to the individual, assuredly he cannot know with certainty of his salvation and acceptance by the Father.

3. Genuine and Continuing Prayer to God. The indwelt heart is lifted to God in fellowship and prayer. It continually calls upon the Deity--"Father, Father!" (Gal. 4:6; cf. Lk. 18:7; Rom. 8:15-16). That is an unending fruit of the Holy Spirit, and its experience by the individual is a token of the Spirit's possession.

He who finds it difficult to pray, or who takes recourse to the throne of grace only in times of desperation is not, to say the least of it, dominated by that gracious Personality, who has as an outstanding characteristic the circumstance that He make intercession for the saints "with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26-27).

4. Ever New and Increasing Insight into the Meaning of God's Word, and into the Nature and Purpose of God Himself. The Spirit gives those in whom He dwells the mind of Christ and of God. (Eph. 3:14-21, etc.).

The experience of continually growing in the knowledge of and with "the increase of God" is a sure sign of tutorship by the Spirit, and thus of sonship with God. Contrariwise, the person who makes no progress in these areas ought to be suspicious of his or her relationship to the Father.

Certainly, all will not experience the same rate of development under the divine Tutor, but all will grow.

5. Genuine Appetite for and Love of the Things of God. He that is "after the Spirit" minds the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-9; etc.). By the Holy Spirit our tastes and appetites are refined and inclined to spiritual fare, God inscribes His Mind and law upon our hearts. Thus, whereas we were averse to Him and His precepts, we now find our chief delight therein. That result is an unending ministry of the Spirit. Therefore, he or she who has Him within themselves has "portable evidence" of his or her

affiliation with God.

Indifference toward God and His Word, on the other hand, indicates carnality. It shows plainly the absence of God from the heart and life.

6. An Unfeigned Love for the Children of God. "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (I Jn. 5:1-2). "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (I Jn. 3:14).

Love of the brethren, *i.e.*, those who are indwelt by God as you are, is more of a spontaneous experience than one of coercion on the part of the redeemed. It takes the nature of a sign of bona fide quickening and illumination.

Certainly, it was never to be applied in a sectarian sense, *i.e.*, love of denominational associates on the basis of sectarian loyalties held in common. That kind of attachment affords no evidence of new life. Even the pagans exemplify it.

But our genuine love for and tender esteem of all who truly are of "like precious faith" does provide such testimony. Those lacking in this area have another defect in their claim to be the children of God.

7. The Possession of Spiritual Liberty. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (II Cor. 3:17). Liberty from what? From the law of Moses (Gal. 5:18, etc.), from human tradition and error (Col. 2:8-10; 16-23; Tit. 1:13-14; etc.); from domination by the flesh (Rom. 8:3-6; Gal. 5:16; etc.); and from sin in general (Jn. 8:32-36; I Jn. 3:1-10; 5:18; etc.).

"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free, indeed;" exclaimed our Lord (Jn. 8:36). Paul referred to that liberty as an accomplished fact in the church (Gal. 5:1). It is truly a precious boon, but one that I am not altogether persuaded that some are ready to accept in its entirety. That is because the liberty has its responsibilities and consequences, and they are not palatable to the flesh. But he who has spiritual liberty has with it the testimony of the Spirit's presence, and so of his relationship to God as a son. Those still in bondage--to the extent that they are so--are lacking in this respect.

8. A Displacement of the Cringing, Hampering Fear of God--the kind which recoils from His Presence, an flees from Him--with a loving delight in His society.

In Christ "we have boldness and access with confidence" (Eph. 3:8-12; cf. 2:18; etc.). In the Presence and fellowship of God is "fullness of joy" (Acts 2:25-28; etc.).

Our Lord has consecrated for us a way through the veil (Heb. 10:19-22); and in Him we can "draw near" to God "in full assurance of faith" and of acceptability by Him. Such confidence is wrought only by the Spirit.

Its actual experience, therefore, is certification of the Spirit's Presence, and is ratification of one as a child of God. Its absence raises another question as to that standing.

9. A Fervent Desire for the Coming of the Lord. That is the "blessed hope" of the church. For it "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth" (Rom. 8:18-25). We who have the firstfruits of the Spirit do likewise.

The revelation of Jesus from Heaven is the grand, culminating, event for which we, in our preliminary regeneration, have been wrought. Consequently, we earnestly desire that the work of God begun in us may be brought to completion. That aspiration is also a characteristic of the Spirit's ministry. He, therefore, who has it has another token of the Spirit's Presence, and so of His approval by God. Those who fear and quake at the thought of the Lord's coming should examine themselves to see whether they be in the faith. To say the least of it, they are assuredly not "made perfect in love" (I Jn. 4:16-18).

Conclusion. There are, as I have said, other evidences of one's possession of the Holy Spirit. But these will suffice as landmarks.

It should be observed that all these tokens are integrally associated with God's purpose for the church, which is to bring it to glory in Christ. Of heartening concern is the fact that they, with all the other gifts of the Spirit, are freely available to God's people.

It is Available to Us in the Scriptures **The Knowledge of Salvation**

By Fred O. Blakely

God Gives it to People through Obedience to the
Gospel of Christ

The salvation of the human soul is by far its most important and urgent consideration. In view of that, the widespread confusion that exists concerning the terms of salvation is especially deplorable. It is virtually impossible for one to have concrete assurance that he is saved on the basis of the bulk of denominational teaching.

The Prevalent Confusion. "Oh," asserts one group, "you are saved by grace, and by grace alone." "No," another replies, "It is by grace through faith." (Insofar as man's part is concerned, it is by faith alone.)

The more emotional and demonstrative of the sects insist that an "altar experience" is indispensable to salvation, and the only dependable assurance of it. And so on, almost endlessly.

This hodgepodge of confusion and human tradition results in disinterest, and sometimes exasperation, on the part of many. Thus, some of them who might have accepted Christ go into Godless graves and a Christless eternity (Jn. 17:20-21; cf. I Cor. 14:8).

The Clear Note of Scripture. Can it be, however, that God has left man in uncertainty as to the terms of gospel pardon, when He went to such great length by the sacrifice of His Son to provide that pardon? Human reason cries out against such an assumption. And, of course, so do the Scriptures, whereby one may know for sure that he is in Christ. In his "Benedictus" (Lk. 1:67-69), the godly Zacharias sounds the keynote on the subject, when he prophesied of the ministry of Christ. It was to "give the knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins".

That is the answer. What must one do in order to the forgiveness of sins? Do the Scriptures make that clear? If so, when an individual has sincerely done that, he can know upon the authority of God, that he is saved. But not until then.

No Need for Confusion. It is true that the Restoration Movement has made much of this point. But not too much. Thousands still seek in vain among denominationalists for the way to heaven. The fact remains that the plain, unequivocal doctrine of God's Word is that sins are forgiven only when a penitent believer is baptized [immersed in water] into Christ (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-47; Jn. 3:3-5; I Pet. 3:18-22).

And the denominations are not teaching that doctrine, neither do they consent to it. Baptism, along with faith, repentance, and confession, is specifically said to be for "the remission of sins". Thus, with regard to our obedience, we are "saved by water," full as much as, from the standpoint of Christ's atoning work on the Cross, we are saved by His blood. That is because it is in the water that we contact the blood. Jesus Himself plainly indicated that when He declared that, under the new covenant, one cannot enter the kingdom of God without the "washing of regeneration" (Jn. 3:3-5; Tit. 3:5-7).

It is not enough merely to believe in Jesus as the Christ. Contrary to denominational tradition, the Scriptures expressly state that salvation is "not by faith only" (Jas. 2:14-16). "The devils also believe, and tremble" (v. 19).

There are comparatively few people in this country who, if pressed on the subject, would not acknowledge some measure of "faith" in Christ. But many of these have not been baptized. Still God's Word says that we are saved by baptism. And it elaborates by declaring that the ordinance is for the forgiveness of sins. And that salvation constitutes salvation in its essence.

The Inescapable Conclusion. So the Scriptures shut one up to an inescapable conclusion. It is that unbaptized adults, no matter what may be their profession of faith, are unsaved. They are still in their sins.

Whatever assurance of salvation they may claim is founded upon human tradition and opinion. That is so whether the evidence is that of the "inner voice," or evidence otherwise miraculous.

Christ came to impart the "knowledge of salvation" "by the remission of" "sins" (Lk. 1:77). And He unmistakably laid down the terms on which the sins are to be forgiven. So until one complies with those terms there can be no bona fide "knowledge of salvation".

The marvel is that thoughtful persons will permit themselves to be so misled in the matter of their gravest concern, and with God's plain Word available to them. Why do people eat of the husks of human philosophy and theology in preference to the manna from heaven?

As a steward of the gospel of Christ, we say to you all in solemnity. If you have not been immersed in water in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you have no divine assurance that you are saved. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," said our Lord (Jn. 13:8). But the gracious invitation is extended to everyone, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28: cf. vv. 29-30). If you truly believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, "arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the Name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). And you will have the Companionship of the blessed Holy Spirit as your Comforter and Companion on the way to heaven.

That is "the knowledge of salvation" which Christ offers. It is foolish to reject it. "Today," therefore, "if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:7-8).

The Lonely Way of the Cross

If one walks in the way of truth and conviction, he must prepare to walk alone. "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me," wrote the battle-scarred apostle in describing his first appearance before Nero. He was on trial for his life for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world.

Truth has been out of fashion since man changed his robe of fadeless light for a garment of faded leaves. Noah built and voyaged alone. His neighbors laughed at his strangeness and perished in style. Abraham wandered and worshipped alone. Sodomites smiled at the simple shepherd, followed the fashion and fed the flames. Daniel dined and prayed alone. Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone. Jesus loved and died alone.

Speaking of the lonely way His disciples should walk, Jesus said: "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Those walking in the broad way would not receive their words. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The multitude went its own way and spoke evil of the way of truth.

The people in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The people under the kings (of Israel) praised Moses and persecuted the prophets. The people under Caiaphas praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus. The people under the popes praised the Saviour and persecuted the saints. Multitudes in the church today applaud the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness and foolishness, like faithfulness in our generation. Matthew Henry wrote, "Peace is such a precious jewel that I would give anything for it but truth." --Editor Bobby Key, *Four State Gospel News*, November 1994, p. 2.

Faith joins us to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The cleansing of our hearts enables us to serve the living God. And it would be unthinkable for us to serve Him without the atonement made by Jesus Christ. --Gene Hutchcraft

The highest form of prayer involves more than praying for daily needs. --Gene Hutchcraft

The Pre-eminence of Christ

Scripture Correlations by Fred O. Blakely

“He is the Head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:15-19).

“He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”

“And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:15-23).

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created”; “all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things; and by Him all things consist” (Col. 1:12-17).

God “hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express Image of His Person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power; when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they” (Heb. 1:1-4).

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, how much more shall we not escape who turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven?” (Heb. 12:18-27).

The Only Consistent Election

We are certainly not prepared to affirm it as a dogma but, as regards the election of persons to salvation, universalism is the only view of such election that could possibly be harmonized with all that Scripture has to say about ultimate salvation. And it would be quite an assignment, indeed, to attempt that harmonization, since numerous passages seem to contradict such an idea. There are not nearly so many of these, however, nor are they as positively insuperable, as those which preclude Calvinistic election. To mention just one of them, it simply cannot be shown how God, on the one hand, “will have all men to be saved” (II Tim. 2:4), yet did not include all of them in His eternal election-to-salvation decree. If He could save a portion of the fallen race by such a determination, He could have saved all of it, if He desired. And He has plainly said that He desires the salvation of all. (It is nothing but an absurd expediency to distinguish between the ineffectual and effectual will of God at this point.) He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). Unless the electionists of the corrupted theory can resolve this difficulty, which is just one of many of like formidability confronting them, they should cease trying to convince others of the validity of their perverted idea of election. If, in times eternal, there were such election of individuals to everlasting salvation, it was of all humanity, as distinguished from demons (of which Judas Iscariot would be an example). This is the only kind of such election, we repeat, that could possibly be sustained by Scripture, and even that with not a great deal of doing. We must prefer to simply take the Scriptures as they stand: as depicting God as having in Christ provided salvation for all and making it available to all upon the conditions therefor which He has stipulated. --Fred O. Blakely

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:3-4).

On the Need For Revival

J. C. Choate

When I was growing up the denominational churches were always talking about the need for revival. They even called their meetings revivals. We in the church reasoned that we didn't need a revival since the church was not dead. The closest we came to anything like that was to sometime sing the old song, “Revive Us Again.”

But in more recent years I have come to the conclusion that the church does need a revival, and it needs it now! I am not saying the church is dead, or that it is going to die, but there are ample signs that the American church is in serious trouble and it is in critical need of an over-all revival.

Many members are spiritually dead, and far too many congregations have passed on without the members being aware of the decrease. In such congregations the funeral was never conducted, but the stench of death is heavy in the air. It is too late for a revival in such cases.

There are other individuals and churches, though, where an awakening now would make the difference. Where Christians are sickly, apathetic, bored, tired, negligent, and unfaithful there may yet be the possibility of turning things around. In these cases, the churches are not dead yet - although they are close to it - but they most certainly will die unless something is done quickly to revive them and to restore them to a living and active faith.

Our problem today is that we are in love with self, thinking only of self in a very superficial way, thinking of what we want and of having our personal preferences about everything. This is true in the physical realm and we have brought it over into the church as well.

The world which concerns us most is the material one, and it shows in our attitudes, our actions, our jobs, what we have or don't have, the way we spend our money, the way we deal with our families and with each other, our forms of recreation, and life as a whole. In the church we don't have time for God, for study, for reading, and even for worship and work. Even if we go to the assembly we may go late and leave early. --From *Gospel Light*

The Results of Neglect

I looked upon a farm one day

That once I use to own;

The barns had fallen to the ground,

The fields were overgrown.

The house in which my children grew--

Where we had lived for years--

I turned to see it broken down,

And brushed aside the tears.

I looked upon my soul one day,

To find it, too, had grown

With thorns and nettles everywhere--

The seeds neglect had sown.

The years had passed while I had cared

For things of lesser worth.

The things of heaven I let go,

While minding things of earth.

--The Gospel Trumpeter, August 6, 1978

The Glory That Shall Follow

Glory Defined. Glory has been defined as high renown, or fame, or honor. Another definition is resplendent majesty, or magnificence, or great beauty. In this connection one of the dictionaries gives the example of *the glory of Versailles or the glory of the rose*. But this is a commentary on the current day absence of faith among men in general, in that God is not mentioned as the chief example of resplendent majesty and beauty. When thinking of glory and majesty, our minds and hearts should go first to the God of glory. He is the essence and the wellspring of resplendent majesty, and all other majesties are but a faint adumbration of His own glory Person and Majesty. The noblest things of earth are, at best, but a faint picture of heaven.

Glory has also been defined as the bliss and splendor of heaven. Bliss speaks of a prevailing happiness which is enjoyed inwardly. Splendor speaks of that which is perceived and beheld with great delight. And finally, glory is a state of exaltation, unfailing prosperity, and undiminishing happiness. It is a state of blissful exaltation in the presence of God. With regards to the Savior of men, Jesus Christ, He has now entered into His glory. And those who are in Christ are presently awaiting the glory that shall be revealed in them (cf. Rom. 8:18).

The Twenty-Fourth Psalm. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah” (Ps. 24:7-10)

This is David speaking beforehand of the resurrection of Christ. This is the blessed occasion when the Lord Jesus Christ was “received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mk. 16:9). *Lift up your heads, O ye gates*. These words were evidently spoken by the angels who were escorting the Lord Jesus Christ back to heaven at His ascension. The doors are called everlasting doors because they provide admission into the presence of the everlasting God and into eternity. It will be recalled, that the cherubims guarded the way back to the tree of life (cf. Gen. 3:24), lest man should partake of that tree while yet in his sinful state, and live for ever. And here in this psalm we see the angels guarding the way into the everlasting habitations.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of glory! He is seen here to be greeted by a band of welcoming angels gathered before the everlasting doors of heaven. They have assembled to receive the Savior into glory after His humiliation and suffering. And it was *after He suffered* that He entered into His glory.

Who is this King of glory? The battalion of angels guarding the gates of heaven are cautiously selective about who enters there. This matter has come up over and over again in Scripture. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?” (Ps. 24:3). “*Not every one* that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 7:21). And again Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, *but by Me*” (Jn. 14:6).

The King of glory shall come in. Jesus Christ is presently in the glory never to suffer again. He is now ensconced in glory, never to taste of humiliation again. And when He comes again, He shall be coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He shall come in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels. And He shall come in His own glory. And then, bless His name, shall we appear with Him in glory!

Let us state here that glory follows divinely appointed suffering and humiliation, but it shall never be followed by suffering again. When suffering has finally passed, it shall pass for ever. And when His glory shall be revealed, both He and the glory shall be with us for ever. Let us rejoice that the King of glory has entered into His glory and that we shall soon follow Him there.

The Identifying Question is Asked Again. *Who is this King of Glory?* (v. 10). Let us consider this well. If Christ had to pass the scrutiny of the identifying angels before He could enter in, much more will men have to face the same scrutiny. But they shall pass the angelic examination, by virtue of their being in Christ, and by their continuing in the faith, grounded and settled, and by their being “not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Col. 1:23).

Let us also give thanks for the angels who guard the entrance into the world to come, for they will ensure that nothing defiling shall enter there. “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27).

The One Hundred Tenth Psalm. “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (Ps. 110:1). Christ Jesus did not sit at God’s right hand until after He had suffered and tasted death for every man. His enemies were made His footstool *after His humiliation*. But now He has taken the highest station! For God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. Jesus took, as it were, “the lowest room,” in His humiliation and suffering, and God said to Him, “Friend, go up higher” (cf. Lk. 14:8-10).

In His abasement and suffering, Christ’s enemies were permitted to reign, as it were, for a season over Him. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Ps. 2:2-3). But now He is reigning over all His foes in His glory.

The enemies that mocked Him and spat upon Him and those that pierced Him shall be made His footstool. And all the rejecters of the gospel shall grieve because of Him. “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen” (Rev. 1:7).

The Rod of Christ’s Strength. “The LORD shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies” (Ps. 110:2). The glorified Christ is presently ruling over the sons of men, though the reign is unperceived by them for the most part. The rod of His strength is coming forth from Mt. Zion, that is, through the preaching of the gospel. It will be remembered that the gospel is “the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

“Him (that is, Christ) hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31). And we read later on in Peter’s epistle that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet. 3:9).

In the present age (from the day of Pentecost to the end of the world) the power of God has a special application. It is that of making appeal to men’s wills, through the preaching of the gospel, to avail themselves of the salvation which He has prepared before the face of all people. However, this power does not force or coerce men’s will to receive it. Not even the glorified Christ can force men into heaven. But His people (that is, the ones who repent and obey the gospel) shall be willing in the day of His power (cf. Ps. 110:3).

All who reject God’s salvation in Christ are regarded to be Christ’s enemies. He presently rules *in the midst of them* as He devotes Himself to bringing many sons unto glory. And let us duly consider that the glorified Christ is the friend of all who have “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered” them (Rom. 6:17) and who are continuing in the faith. But He is the enemy of all who reject “the word of reconciliation” (II Cor. 5:19).

Christ Received Up Into Heaven. “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mk. 16:19). Christ Jesus was *received* up into heaven after He suffered, and let us devote ourselves to being received there as well, by

(GLORY, Continued on Page Eight)

virtue of our being in Him. Right now "Christ" has "received us", who have obeyed the gospel, "to the glory of God" (cf. Rom. 15:7). Let us abide in His love (cf. Jn. 15:10) that we may be received of Him at the last day as well.

The Glory of the Lord Revealed. "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa. 40:5). This glory was revealed in part at Christ's first coming, but it shall be revealed in all of its blessed fulness at His second coming.

John declared with regard to His first coming, "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). Of His second appearing it is written, "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Lk. 21:27).

A Question to Be Considered. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Lk. 24:26). This question, asked to the two on the road to Emmaus, is full of implications. Reasoning upon revelation, would we not come to this conclusion, that Christ Jesus should have suffered the things that He did in our behalf, and then enter into His glory?

Ought not Christ to have suffered? "For this cause" (cf. Jn. 12:27) He came unto that hour when He would offer Himself for the sins of the world. He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), and He was sent by the Father "to be the propitiation for our sins" (I Jn. 4:10).

Ought not Christ to enter into His glory? In earth the association is not generally made between suffering and glory. The world has learned that suffering can work certain virtues in men while they are here, but not that it is able to bring them into a better condition. Yea, for the people of God, divinely appointed suffering is able to bring them into a far better condition. That is because there is a definite connection between suffering and glory in the divine economy. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (II Tim. 2:12). "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). This connection is true in the case of Christ, and also for us as well.

Thus it is written with regards to the glory that shall most certainly follow our tenure here in this present evil world, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be *conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: *and whom He justified, them He also glorified*. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:28-31).

A Word of Exhortation. A final word of exhortation is in order. Let us be certain that we are following the divinely appointed way to glory. The Apostle has given a directive that is certainly needful for us to heed who are yet in this world. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*" (Col. 3:1-4). --
Editor

The Wilderness and Gethsemane. "The temptations in the wilderness He (Christ) saw through at once; they must have been very clumsy artifices in His eye. But Gethsemane tried Him. The pure gold went into the furnace that its purity might be made manifest. And thus it was shown that He was without sin. The more we are made to feel our own sin, the more our hearts are revealed, the closer we are drawn to Him who has no sin, and who shows us that sin is no essential part of human nature." --
Pulpit Commentary

Christ's Temptation and Ours. In Hebrews 4:14-16 the apostle "alludes to the career of temptation through which the Redeemer fought His way to the glory which awaited Him. He was tried by the loneliness of His spirit, for none could completely understand Him. He was tempted by Pharisees and Sadducees. He was tempted by the ingratitude of men. He was specifically tempted by Satan, who strove to turn Him aside from His work, and stain the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world.

He passed through all His trial without one act which was unworthy of the Divine character, and came out of the furnace of temptation without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This qualifies Him to sympathize with His afflicted followers. Angels and archangels can from their special experience offer no such help to struggling believers. Sympathy divides our sorrows and heightens our joy; and that which our Lord affords is quick in its movements and efficient in its influence. *He knows what sore temptations mean, for He has felt the same.*" --*Pulpit Commentary*

"Forgiveness does not spring from man's repentance, but from God's mercy. Repentance is a condition of forgiveness, but the grace of God is the source." --*Pulpit Commentary*

The old covenant promised blessings to the obedient; the new promises blessings to enable us to render obedience." --*Pulpit Commentary*

There Is No Death

There is no death! The stars go down
To rise upon some other shore,
And bright in Heaven's jeweled crown
They shine forever more.

There is no death! The forest leaves
Convert to life the viewless air;
The rocks disgorge to feed
The hungry moss they bear

There is no death! The dust we tread
Shall change beneath the summer showers
To golden grain, or mellow fruit,
Or rainbow-tinted flowers.

And ever near us, though unseen,
The dear immortal spirits tread,
For all the boundless universe
Is life -- "there are no dead."
--*Anonymous*

Put Jesus First

The world all about me now has no allure:
Its pleasures bring pain, its wisdom is vain;
I seek a foundation that's steadfast and sure:
I'll put Jesus first in my life.

The Lord Jesus died my salvation to win:
He went in my stead to Calv'ry and bled;
Redemption impels me to give up all sin:
I'll put Jesus first in my life.

--*James D. Murch*

If one Man (Christ Jesus) can be in the presence of God, then every man has hope. --*Given O. Blakely*

His Appearance to Him on the Isle of Patmos

John's Vision of Christ

By Fred O. Blakely

The Glorified Savior Was Shown as Holding the Churches in His Right Hand, and They Were Revealed to be Accountable to Him.

The apocalyptic writing of John at the close of the received canon of Scripture is well characterized in the first verse thereof. It is said to be "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him" (1:1).

It concerns "the things which must shortly come to pass." And the message was "signified" to John when he was on the isle of Patmos "for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 9).

"What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia," the Lord said to the Apostle (v. 11). Although the churches of reference existed at that time, it is generally understood that the messages to them are intended for the churches of all ages.

We, thus, do well to give careful attention to those messages, and seek to apply the principles therein set forth to our times and situations.

The Messages' Source. It is essential that we adequately consider the source of the messages. That is clearly and forcefully set forth in the introduction. It is He "which is, which was, and which is to come," and "the seven spirits which are before His throne" (v. 4).

That is, the message is from God the Father; and from "Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness," it is continued. He is also identified as the "first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth" (v. 5).

That One is further identified as He "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (v. 5). It is well for us to recognize that it is because of that washing in our Lord's blood that we can come before the throne of the holy God, and worship and serve Him (7:14; cf. 1:5).

As verse 8 declares, He is "the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending." That is, He is He "which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty." Thus, as the heavenly voice asserted on the Mount of Transfiguration, we are to hear Him (Mt. 17:5; cf. Heb. 12:25).

The Involved Blessing. The blessing pronounced upon those who give heed to the message which John received is to be noted, and to be zealously sought. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein; for the time is at hand" (v. 3).

That pronouncement, of course, is in full accord with the proclamation of our Lord during the days of His flesh, as would be expected. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," He declared; "but he which doeth the will of My Father, which is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21).

So are they wise, with that wisdom which is from above, who hear the Word of God and keep, or do, it. They are building the house of their lives upon the Rock. That is in contrast with the ones who hear that Word, and do it not. The latter are building their house upon the sand (Mt. 7:24-27).

Thus, as the Lord declared, "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it" (Lk. 11:27-28). God's blessings are for those who are duly responsive to Him and His dear Son; not for the unresponsive ones.

Thus the benediction of Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Here is a vital consideration which needs to be noted. If we are "keep" or "do," the Word of God, we must be able to understand it. That necessitates spiritual discernment. And the blessing of the Lord thus pronounced implies that God is ready to impart that understanding to those who are duly concerned for the promised blessing.

The Kingship and Priesthood. Having loved us, and "washed us from our sins in His own blood" (v. 5), Christ has elevated us to a high plane. He has made us "kings and priest unto God and His Father" (v. 8).

We, therefore, have been duly fitted to serve here and now as the representatives of the Most High.

In our capacity as "a spiritual house, an holy priesthood," we are to "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5).

As the Apostle goes on to remark, in elaboration on the situation, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (v. 9).

In anticipation of that situation, the Lord Jesus--in the days of His flesh--similarly exhorted. "Ye are the light of the world," He said. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:14-16). They who are thus "rich in good works" (I Tim. 6:18), as they are done in Christ's Name, are glorifying God.

The Sovereignty of Christ. The absolute sovereignty of Christ in the churches--and in the whole world, as for that--is figuratively depicted. He is represented as holding the churches in His right hand (v. 16; cf. v. 11).

So His promise to the Apostles--and to us; as they, and we, were, and are, faithful to the commission received from Him: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:18-20).

Mark's account of the sequel to that promise is recorded in Mark 16:20. "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

Today we may confidently expect and claim that same fellowship with the risen and glorified Christ in our labors for Him. As I understand the situation, however, the miraculous signs are not promised to us today.

As we proceed in the proclamation of the gospel, we need to rely implicitly on the promise of our Lord to be with us, and to give effectiveness to our labors for Him. It is with His kingdom and His glory that we are primarily involved. And we may be certain that He is for and with us, as we labor for Him. So can we say with David, "My times are in Thy hand" (Ps. 31:15).

"I have the keys of hell [hades] and of death," the Lord said to John. That was the Word of Him "that liveth, and was dead," but now is "alive forevermore" (v. 18). That triumphant One is He who is our Savior and Lord.

In spiritual recognition of His Person and triumph, let us be strengthened for the work to which He calls us. Seeing that He "ever liveth" and reigneth (Heb. 7:25), He is fully able to sustain us in the new life and labors for Him.

Right thinking has to precede right doing. If you want to live godly, you must think like God. --Fred O. Blakely

Abstain from all appearance of evil!

We preach but we are not responsible for men's response to the preaching. --Dean Boelt

The firstfruit reign, that we presently have in Christ, is over sin, the flesh, and the devil. --Gleaned from a men's fellowship discussion at this assembly.

God did not appoint men unto unbelief, but rather to the consequences of it, if it be found in them. --Gleaned from a men's fellowship discussion at this assembly.

When men come to the point where truth does not constrain them to godly living, God gives them up. --Robert Cobb

An Invitation to Visitors

For those of our readers who are travelling through northwest Indiana, we invite you to visit us at our place of assembly. We would very much desire to meet you and to be comforted by the mutual faith, both yours and ours. The types of materials that appear in *the Banner of Truth* are but samplings of the kinds of things that are commonly preached and taught in our assembly. We welcome you in the name of the Lord Jesus!

Our regular meeting times are as follows:

Lord's Day, Bible School - 9:30 a.m.

Lord's Day, Morning Service - 10:30 a.m.

Lord's Day, Evening Service - 6:30 p.m.

Midweek Service (open discussion of a topic of

Scripture and time of prayer) Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

Independence Hill Christian Church is located at 2230 W. 78th Avenue (two blocks north of Route 30 and one block west of Rt. 55[Taft] in Merrillville, Indiana). Our building has a cream-colored stucco finish. The phone numbers are 219-793-9318 (leave message on answering machine at place of assembly, if no one is present) and 219-769-7048 (Editor's home). You may call us for further information.

Every other Sunday we have a carry-in dinner immediately after the morning service. Visitors are cordially invited to join us as we eat together with gladness and singleness of heart.

Tapes Now Available

Audio and video cassette tapes are now available for the 5th annual Refreshing Waters Renewal, held in Joplin, Missouri this past July. The subject of this year's renewal was that of "Faith." The messages of this Renewal were titled as follows: *Defining Faith, The Obedience of Faith, The Necessity of Faith to Please God, The Relationship of Faith to Works, Being Full of Faith, The Law, or Principle of Faith, The Righteousness of Faith, The Relationship of Faith to Grace, The Shield of Faith, The Good Fight of Faith, The Full Assurance of Faith, and The Spirit of Faith*. In addition, there were also discussions and testimonials that have been recorded and are being made available.

Robert Cobb, of Wheatfield, Indiana, has taken the responsibility for the taping and recording of these gatherings. In addition tapes of the preaching festival on the Book of Revelation (September 18th at Independence Hill Christian Church) are available. In the month of October Brother Bob also recorded some special meetings that were being held by Given Blakely in the Joplin area. In November and December Brother Bob has also been compiling audio tapes on the book of Revelation which were preached by Brother Given in the 70's and 80's.

You may contact him by letter or by telephone in order to obtain either video or audio cassette tapes of any of these meetings and messages. He and his staff stand ready to serve you. His address is: *Robert Cobb, 11092 N. 550 West, Wheatfield, IN, 46392*. His telephone number is: 219-987-3049.

He in fulfillment of the precept keeps the Lord's day when he abandons an evil disposition glorifying the Lord's resurrection in himself. -- *Clement of Alexandria*

You fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face. --*William Cowper*

Refreshing Waters Renewal Announced

The sixth annual Refreshing Waters Renewal is now in the planning stages and is to be held on July 25th, 26th, and 27th in Joplin, Missouri. This year's theme will be "The Blood of Christ." All of the messages and discussions will be focusing on that particular subject. The 1995 Renewal, because of the nature of the topic, should prove to be a veritable confidence builder. We are encouraging as many of our readers as possible to begin making plans to be in attendance there.

For more details on the location and messages you may contact Given O. Blakely at 406 Sergeant, Joplin, MO 64801. His telephone number is 417-782-3063.

Some Thoughts on Baptism

Baptism is related to Christ. It is not a work of human merit by which we earn salvation. It is an act of faith and a demonstration of our trust in Christ. We do not depend upon the water, but upon the blood of Christ. Baptism puts us into Christ's death. Our faith is in the working of God, and not in what we do (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12).

Baptism is meaningless apart from the cross of Christ. Like faith, baptism looks to Calvary. In baptism, we trust God's precious promises to save - we die with Christ, we are buried with Christ, we are raised with Christ (Rom. 6; Col. 2). After baptism, we live with Him (Rom. 6:8). In faith and baptism, we pledge our lives to Him. --John Banister, *Four State Gospel News*, December 1994, p. 4.

The Battle is On!

We must fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12). Our quarrel is not with flesh and blood; our fight is "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (II Cor. 10:4).

The world does not know the Father. There is little fear of God in America. Many refuse to retain God in their knowledge; professing themselves to be wise, they have become fools (Rom. 1:22). Because men no longer fear God, morality is on the decline. Violence, drugs, drunkenness, adultery, rape, theft, and sodomy increase with each passing year. These things are from the devil.

We are tired of hearing God and His word blasphemed. Both radio and television talk shows poke fun at religion. Those claiming to be Christians are held in contempt. The Christian must not be ashamed to fight the good fight of faith. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3).

What can the righteous do? We cannot give up. We dare not change our standards of right and wrong. Since the world is having an immoralizing influence on the church, we must put on the whole armor of God and fight the invaders. In God's good time, we shall emerge from this maze of darkness and see the sunlight! The victory will be ours!

What can I do? I can pray - earnestly pray. God may not change our situation, but He can give us strength to win the victory. We shall reap if we faint not.

Don't leave God out of the picture. We may be persecuted and forsaken by men, but we shall never be abandoned by God. The world may knock us down, but it can never knock us out. God's power is greater than Satan. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I Jn. 4:4). Taken from *Four State Gospel News*, December 1994, p. 2.

"Fear God, and keep His commandments! For this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

It is a Hard and Relentless Driver

The Tyranny of Faith

By Fred O. Blakely

It Demands Much of Those Who Have it, but, if Kept, It Will Bring Them to Eternal Glory.

The paradoxes of God's kingdom are a source of never-ending marvel and delight to those initiated in its mysteries. Many and varied, these apparent inconsistencies tacitly suggest in themselves the divine wisdom and power by their contrast of these qualities with the judgment and might of man.

When they are illuminated by the individual's experience of God, and their actual incorporation into the Deity, the implicit witness becomes both explicit and unimpeachable. Not only is absolute harmony clearly evident, but with its perception there is the abiding knowledge that only God could have produced so unreasonably by human judgment, yet in such glorious reality.

Experience of these evident anomalies include the following evidences:

1) Living, though dead (Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 2:19-20); 2) Saving life by losing it (Lk. 9:23-26; Jn. 12:24-25); 3) "seeing Him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27); 4) being "not in the flesh" (Rom. 7:5-6; 8:8-9), Though "in the body" (Heb. 13:3); 5) sitting with Christ "in the heavenly places" (Eph. 2:1,6), though still in the world (Jn. 16:33; 17:15); 6) being at once with the Lord (Jn. 14:21-23; Rev. 3:20) and absent from Him (II Cor. 5:6-8);

7) Nourishment in the wilderness (Deut. 8:15-16; Ps. 23:5; Jn. 6:27-33); 8) Streams in the desert (Is. 35:6; Ps. 46:4-5; 78:15-16,20; Jn. 4:10-14; 7:37-39) "a root out of dry ground (Is. 53:2); 10) peace in the midst of conflict (Jn. 16:33); 11) joy in suffering (Acts 5:41; Rom. 5:3-5; II Cor. 12:7-10; Jas. 1:2-4); 12) knowing that "which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19); and 13) and experiencing that "which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:6-7).

Although not specifically catalogued in Scripture, another such paradox is plainly manifest to those who seek by God's grace to both live and walk in the Spirit. It may be denominated the delightful tyranny or taskmastery of faith. Here, obviously is a contradiction in terms, for the ordinary concept of such an imposer of burdens is any thing but pleasant. The connotation given to the taskmasters by the he overseers of the Egyptian oppression, as well as by the Mosaic law, and that arch-tyrant sin, has crystallized the institution as a symbol of cruelty, fraught with fear and awe, rather than joy and gladness.

So, if faith may be regarded under this appellation, and at the same time its dominion be said to constitute a happy experience, surely we have all the essential paradoxical elements.

The Despotism of Faith. That faith is a hard and relentless despot over its subjects, no one who possesses it in dominant measure will question or deny. In that view, those who mistakenly come to Christ to escape the yoke of Divine authority and compulsion are in for a rude disappointment. It will be to find that they have leaped from the frying pan into fire.

If the law drove and chastised with whips, faith will do so with scorpions. Under faith, in comparison with the carnal level of life, the burdens of their souls will be increased and doubled, not lightened. Genuine faith "rouses the whole soul, quickens its energies, and works them to weariness" in the service of its object, which is Christ.

In these remarks, obviously, we are writing in the Spirit, and so from the standpoint of holy scripture, not from the unregenerated standpoint of the typical modern churchman.

The reason for this situation is clear. In Christ, God has not abandoned His requirement for righteousness; by faith He has implemented it. Christ is not the end of righteousness for the believer, but of a means for its achievement that was weak and ineffective (Rom. 8:3-4; 10:4, 10;

Heb. 7:18-19). Hence, under His reign not one whit less of the moral righteousness required by Moses is expected (Mt. 5:17-19). Rather, the standard has been greatly elevated. A righteousness that vastly exceeds that of the ordinary concept of the law is demanded (Mt. 5:20; Phil. 3:7-9).

It is the achievement of this superior quality of godliness that entails the harder drive and the heavier burdens of faith. In other words, God has a much bigger and more difficult job to be done under Christ than was purposed by Moses. So it is necessary to employ an agent commensurately more severe and compelling.

Its Tyranny over the Faithful. The austerity of faith, and its handmaiden, a living devotion, was felt by both our Lord and the Apostles. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!" exclaimed Jesus, under its driving pressure (Heb. 10:5-7).

It brought Him from the riches of heavenly companionship with the Father to the poverty of earthly indigence and obscurity, and investment with the likeness of sinful flesh. It compelled Him to be subjected to every temptation that is common to man, "yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15); to humble Himself in meek and complete obedience to the will of God in all its particulars, and so to perfectly "fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:13-17).

Virtually consumed by the austerity of this adamant master (Ps. 69:1-4, 7-9; Jn. 2:17), He cried out, as He approached the final point of His perfection through suffering, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mt. 26:36-38).

At last, the faith of Christ nailed Him to the cross, and did Him to death in His submission to God, that He might provide atonement for the sins of a lost world.

The tyranny of faith bore heavily upon the Apostles. By it, they left all and followed Christ--the fishermen, their nets; the publican, his tax booth; and the Pharisee, his place of high and auspicious stance in the Jewish hierarchy.

Under that dominion, they suffered the reproaches of Christ; they were defamed and persecuted, and made "as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things," "a spectacle unto the world, angels, and to men"; by it, they were "appointed unto death," which all save one is said to have suffered as a martyr (I Cor. 4:9-13).

That was the burden they bore under faith. The end that faith achieved for them by its mastery was personal experience of "the righteousness of God" (Rom. 3:21-22; Phil. 3:1-9), and the privilege of finishing their course, and the ministry which they had received from the Lord Jesus to "testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24; II Tim. 4:6-8).

The Taskmastery of Believers. In believers today, faith, if given full sway, will exert its taskmastery. It will goad them to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Tit. 2:11-14), to continually reckon themselves "dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:1-11), and to practically take up their cross daily and follow our Lord (Lk. 9:23-25).

It will constrain them to live "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," and to earnestly desire the coming of the Lord, and the consummate redemption that is to be brought to His people at that time (I Pet. 1:5, 13).

The stigma of peculiarity, nay, of eccentricity and religious fanaticism, together with the related aspersions which that status of actual sanctification in Christ will elicit from an evil and adulterous generation and a carnal "church, will not diminish the faith of the elect. Rather, as the case was with Jesus and the early Christians, this reproach will be patiently and courageously endured.

It is thus evident that the despotic drive of faith in whomsoever it controls is, indeed, rigorous. In view of that rigor, it is a paradox par excellence that faith's mastery can, in any sense, be regarded as pleasant or delightful. But such is the excellence and antithesis of the mind and ways of God to those of men. It can be, and is happily so, with those who

(Tyranny, Continued on Page 13)

The Warfare of Faith

By Robert Cobb

As we stand before the end of time, and the beginning of eternity, there are many who have fallen away, and many who have given themselves over to diverse lusts. We must fight to hold on our way, for if we do, we will win. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (I Jn. 5:4).

It has not come as a shock that many have departed from the faith. God has amply warned us of this in His word. However, with the onslaught of multifarious translations of Scripture (some good, some unacceptable), the warnings contained in the Bible are largely being disregarded. We who can see clearly must shout aloud the message of the ages. "Lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh" (Lu. 21:48).

Men that are serious cannot and will not be satisfied with anything less than a living relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This reality of the present indwelling of the Holy Spirit is one of the most important, if not the most important issue concerning men today.

With the presence of God and Christ abiding in men they are thrust into a moral arena. Everything takes on new and vital significance. No longer do the common functions of life appear to be fruitless. They are urged by God to live by every word that proceeds from His mouth, and everything that they do is done for their Master and Savior.

Once the fellowship has been initiated through the obedience of the Gospel and belief of the truth, God is then enabled to become their "helper" (Ps. 54:4). This is the missing element in the modern evangelical movement, where lesser earthly things have taken the place of the persons being joined with the Lord in everything.

As enlightened men walk with their God they are in the process of being proved genuine. Faith is of no profit without being put to the test. This is the present distress that we find ourselves in now. We must be found worthy to enter into "that world" (Lu. 20:35). Does that sound strange to any?

The warfare within (cf. Romans 7) is the greatest battle ever fought on any soil. We are "daily" killing or mortifying our members and dying (cf. I Cor. 15:3 1). We must, by God's grace, overcome the old nature. And this is the very thing that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit provides for man: the needed focus and power to overcome when tempted. He provides the essential element: which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

We are all free, from the lowest of all men to the highest. God has made us in His image, and that entails being morally free. But with this freedom comes responsibility. God has limited his influence over men in that he cannot make up their minds for them. That they must do for themselves. Thus His influence over men is largely by means of incentives and warnings.

These promised incentives of God are "exceeding great and precious" and it is by the consideration and belief of them that men are being made "partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). They allow men to see beyond this realm and thus they give men power to overcome the flesh.

The warnings serve as the divine means to apprise every man of impending judgment and destruction. And in every man there is a desperate need to be reminded of this fact that all things will soon be burned up. The fact of this happening quickly and without further warning coupled with the fact that God loved you enough to make a way of escape from condemnation should be sufficient to constrain every man to repent and believe the gospel.

Forsake the foolish, and live!

Considerations Regarding Suffering. "When suffering lays its dark hand upon our lives, how prone we are to forget that immunity from sickness and pain and sorrow are never laid down in Scripture as proof of special divine favor, nor as a reward for our 'goodness,' or for our faith. Is it not conceivable that God's plan for our lives may include sickness, and that suffering, in some strange way, may be the gift of a loving God? Peter admonishes us, 'Let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well doing unto a faithful Creator' (I Pet. 4:19, ASV)." --Willie W. White, *What the Bible Says about Suffering*, College Press, 1984, p. 92. Used by permission.

"When God has an especially bright crown awaiting one of His saints, He frequently imparts an equally heavy cross. Longing for the crown, we do not weary of the cross." --Willie W. White, *What the Bible Says about Suffering*, College Press, 1984, p. 92. Used by permission.

God's Answer of Prayer. "It is altogether possible to read, somewhat casually, the Gethsemane narrative and thoughtlessly conclude, 'There is a prayer that was never answered.' Oh, but it was! [see Heb. 5:7; I Jn. 5:14-15]. What we should have said was that the petition was not granted. If the cup had been removed, think what would have resulted: no atoning Savior, no lifting of sin's burden, no newness of life, no indwelling Spirit, no assurance of a home in heaven. The answer is seen in the angel from heaven who was sent to strengthen Christ. If we will but have it so, there need be no Gethsemane without its consoling angel. There are two ways in which burdens may be removed from tired shoulders. They may be taken from us so that we are no longer required to bear them, or we may be given such strength that the burden is no longer a burden. The latter is far better" [see II Cor. 12:7-10]. --Willie W. White, *What the Bible Says about Suffering*, College Press, 1984, p. 92. Used by permission.

We are at war with every divergence from the will of God if we are in the Lord. --Fred O. Blakely

Those who are the Lord's constant guests will find that He will never suffer any to be injured within His gates. --C. H. Spurgeon

One act of obedience from the heart will teach us more than all the sages can. --Source Unknown

With regard to the trying of our faith, we must reason that this test came so that I might see God more clearly. --Given O. Blakely

Your regeneracy is in your faith, and faith has the ability to fail. --Fred O. Blakely

We are to be in pursuit of holiness! --Fred O. Blakely

If you have been called upon to live in an age that makes for much suffering, greater will be your reward in heaven. --Given O. Blakely

The most dangerous sin is false teaching. --Fred O. Blakely

Faith must grow in the soil of grace and peace. --Given O. Blakely

The only way to overcome this world is to be heavenly minded. --Fred O. Blakely

By being full of faith you become compatible with God. --Zack Waite

Adversity is the friend of the faithful. --Mike Blakely

The last Adam brought the whole natural order to an end, though it appears to continue on. We are on the verge of entering into a new order. --Dean Boelt

know God and walk with Him.

Delightful Aspects of the Situation. The severity of faith's mastery is not only mitigated, but completely neutralized in its wholehearted subjects. Instead, there comes a holy delight and an unspeakable joy in its dominion.

Under a system of law, the Israelites continually murmured against God. But under faith His people, although pressed harder, learn to "glory in tribulations," and to rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer for Christ (Rom. 5:2-5; cf. Acts 1:41; I Pet. 4:12-16). They "count it all joy" as they are constrained by their faith to present themselves as a living sacrifice to the will of God (Jas. 1:2-4; cf. Rom. 12:1-2).

"Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power," they are enabled to bear their burdens and perform their duties "with joyfulness" (Col. 1:17).

Its Manifestation in the Biblical Faithful. Such was clearly the sentiment and action of the biblical faithful. Moses, whose faith transcended his times in measure, counted "the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" (Heb. 11:24-27). Our Lord Jesus Himself, despite the inconceivable enormity of His sufferings for us, "rejoiced in the Spirit" (Lk. 10:21; cf. Jn. 15:11). In Him, indeed, was "the oil of gladness" to the superlative degree (Heb. 1:9; cf. Ps. 45:7). He indicated that both the obsession and delight of His soul was to yield unreservedly to the Father. "My food is to do the will of Him that send Me, and to accomplish His work" (Jn. 4:34).

Thus, Peter's carnally-minded desire to spare Him the anguish and humiliation of the cross constituted a vexing offense (Mt 16:21-23). Nay, it is not too much to say that Jesus' entire time of servitude under the yoke of faith was dominated by the joy that was at once "set before Him" and abode within Him (Heb. 12:2).

Among the Apostles and early saints, Paul's expression of his pleasure in the dominion of faith is dominant. "If I am offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you," he exclaimed to the Philippians (Phil. 2:15). To the Corinthians he declared, "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your" (II Cor. 12:15).

As his friends sought to dissuade him from subjecting himself to the "bonds and afflictions" that certainly awaited him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-23), he replied in classic form. "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:10-14).

The secret of such dedication appears in the Apostle's remark to the Ephesian elders. "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

It is further evident in his assertion to the Philippians. "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:7-11).

The Experience by Contemporaries. That heavenly joy in the service of Christ is not extinct. It is, or may be fully as much a part of the contemporary believer's experience as in centuries past. Those today who have the "same spirit of faith" (II Cor. 4:8-18) as God's heroes of scriptural record realize like joy and confidence in its possession.

Who, having known God by faith, would desire to revert to the "weak and beggarly" level of life in actual alienation from Him (Gal. 4:1-9)? Who that has "tasted that the Lord is gracious" (I Pet. 2:1-5) would turn from that heavenly fare to the carnal nations provided by a system of mere law? Who that has partaken of "the good Word of God" and has become partaker of the divine Nature and of "the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:1-6), would choose, because of the "afflictions" of the gospel, to go back to the utter poverty and weakness of life in the flesh?

Hence, although faith will require one to grovel in the dust before God, it will imbue him with a sense of great willingness and gladness in the obeisance. After it has exhausted itself in devotion to God, the only lament of the heart of faith is that it could not have done more for Him

who has been so divinely gracious to it. So is our Lord's yoke easy and His burden light (Mt. 11:28-30). And thus are His commandments "not grievous" (I Jn. 5:3).

Reasons for Delight. Reasons for delight in the paradoxical joy in the mastery of faith include these:

1. By faith the individual is given the mind and heart of God. "A new heart will I give you... I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh... I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes," is the promise (Ezek. 36:26-27).

In elaboration, it is said, "I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Heb. 8:7-12).

So fused with the Spirit of God is the individual mind possessed by faith that there is identity of view and attitude. Such a one would not have the fellowship and favor of God on any other terms than those imposed by God, if it were in his power to do so. With the Psalmist he can say, "I delight to do Thy will, O God. Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8; cf. Heb. 10:5-7).

2. The Possession of God's Presence. The Deity indwells one through one's faith (Eph. 3:17). Thus, by faith he is lifted from the status of a servant to that of a friend, and a son, and a companion of God.

So through faith is his own will and volition energized (Phil. 2:13). No longer is he coerced from without. In a sense, he becomes his own master, being driven from within by an authority and force that is integrally a part of himself and, hence, with which his mind is in absolute and hearty accord. Christ tabernacles within the citadel of his very being. Because of that the Lord's will is the believer's law; His preference and desire, the passion of his soul.

As Jesus' delight was to do the will of God, and to accomplish His work, so is that of the person of faith. Wonder of wonders, this transformation! A rebel is changed into a zealous adherent, and is unspeakably delighted in the experience.

3. The Retention of Individual Liberty. Although faith enslaves one, it does so with the wholehearted consent of the captivated one, and so preserves the essentials of personal freedom. Herein is a vital element of this delightful servitude. The joy of it is born of that "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1).

Faith makes of him who has it a more abject slave than the law ever did, or could do. At the same time, it makes Him happy in his slavery. Paradox of paradoxes! Mystery of mysteries! None but God could effect such an end. As there was demon possession, so there is a possession by God. The individual that is so indwelt can never experience drudgery in God's service, or gall under the press of the divine yoke.

4. The Illumination of the Way and the Goal. Law, because addressed to the flesh, stresses the burden of compliance. In contrast, faith, pervading the heart, spotlights the joy of serving Him whom we love and worship, and the recompense at the end of the way. It is not that the burdens are less, but that their press is overbalanced by the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which their endurance is to procure (II Cor. 4:16-18).

So, as it has well been said, "All the way to Heaven lies through heaven, and the path to Heaven is heaven." At least in a preliminary or firstfruit sense, that is the case. In the ultimate sense, of course, the joy of the Lord will be experienced only in Heaven.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the need of a word of caution is clearly evident. It is unwise and futile to seek to invoke faith's mastery -- "touch not, taste not, handle not" (Col. 2:21) -- over those who do not possess it. To do so would be as attempting to compel a blind man to walk as though he had vision, or a dead man to perform as if he were alive.

The natural man does not even comprehend God's law; much less is he able to subject himself to it (I Cor. 2:14; cf. Rom. 8:7-8). Fundamentally, his derelictions at this point are not a matter of the will. They stem from the lack of ability.

The servitude of faith, therefore, is for those who truly believe, and

(Tyranny, Continued on Page 14)

*****AVAILABLE BOOKS *****

“THE APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE”

By
Fred O. Blakely

A two Volume set focusing on the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and their implications. A valuable addition to the library of every serious student of God.

Cost per set, \$21.00
(Order from Fred O. Blakely, 15020 Clark Street,
Crown Point, IN 46307)

*****Also*****

“WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

By
Given O. Blakely

An in depth study of the nature and objectives of God’s Kingdom. Consisting of 460 pages, this volume will provide you with unusual insights into the Divine ways and manners.

Cost per volume, \$13.65
(Order from Given O. Blakely, 406 Sergeant,
Joplin, MO, 64801)

(Tyranny, Concluded From Page 13)

so are empowered for that service. The folly of expecting and demanding it from unbelievers is manifest. If continued, such an expectation cannot but result in frustration.

Those who do not have the faith of Abraham will neither do nor have pleasure in his works (Jn. 8:39). Such dominion, if imposed, will not be delightful but vexatious and obnoxious. In a state of alienation from God, the individual will never consent to it. This master must come from inward constraint, not by an outward compulsion imposed by men.

The better and only practical procedure, therefore, is to seek to produce faith in the individual. When faith comes, it will, through God’s word, impose its own dominion. And it is only then that this mastery can be a joyous experience.

Hope is central to the eternal purpose of God. --Gene Hutchcraft

We know about our separation from God in the past. Avoiding a return to that condition is the desire of every heart who loves the truth. -
-Gene Hutchcraft

Faith is the factor which joins us to the blood of the covenant. --Gene Hutchcraft

God gives us all that we need. The demonstration of His love for those made in His image is His grace. --Gene Hutchcraft

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit!

Some Results of Tribulations

By *Tina Cobb*

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (Jas. 1:2-4).

There are times in life when we feel tossed in the midst of a tempest that seems never to cease. During these times our first inclination may be to despair, or murmur and complain. However, it is of utmost importance that we cast down these vain thoughts.

If we are not careful, we may miss a lesson that the Lord is teaching us. Perhaps he is chastening or pruning us. Now we know that this does not seem to be joyful for the present, but at these times let us look to the end of this chastening.

The gold will continue to have impurities unless it yields to the heat of the furnace, to come forth purged of all its dross. Likewise, the grain is useless until the thresher beats and bruises it until it is fine enough to be used for baking. It does not appear that pruning a tree does it good. At first it looks bare, and the sap runs out of it. But, when the harvest comes, it produces more fruit than ever before because all of the unproductive parts have been taken away.

We, of course, don’t always realize what our impurities are, or when it is time for the threshing to cease, or what branches need to be pruned. This is why we must humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand. His desire is to perfect us and make us the dear children we were intended to be.

Only grain is threshed forever: only until it is usable for its intended purpose. As His servants, our desire should be to please our Master above all else. Let us be patient and humble in His hands. For, after He has tried us, we will bear fruit unto holiness. We will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). *(Editor’s note: I commend unto you our Sister Tina Cobb as she is a godly young woman who is full of insight into the manner of the kingdom and the ways of God. It is a rare thing in our day to find such devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ among young people, though it does not have to be, and it certainly ought not to be so.)*

The law of Moses, the only God ordained system of approach to Him, left all men in sin. Sin became to men utterly sinful by the knowledge of the law. --Gene Hutchcraft

Those who have the indwelling Presence of the Deity are attested to be the bona fide children of God. --Fred O. Blakely

Externals do not of themselves constitute true religion. They are a visible embodiment of it, but not its vital substance. --Fred O. Blakely

Love of the brethren, i.e., those who are indwelt by God as you are, is more of a spontaneous experience than one of coercion on the part of the redeemed. It takes the nature of a sign of bona fide quickening and illumination.--Fred O. Blakely

He who finds it difficult to pray, or who takes recourse unto the throne of grace only in times of desperation is not, to say the least, dominated by that gracious Personality, who has as an outstanding characteristic, the circumstance that He makes intercession for the saints “with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26-27). --Fred O. Blakely

Evil communications corrupt good manners!

Regarding Esau and Satan

By Michael Blakely

Unless any seem to be more sympathetic toward Esau than Jacob, a fresh assessment of their situations is in order. The end result of God's assessment is that Jacob is blessed and Esau is cursed forever, "as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Mal. 1: 2,3, Rom. 9:13). That is because, as we shall see, Esau was much like Satan in heart.

The Birthright's Significance. Consider the matter of Esau's birthright. In one respect, it was to be nothing more than a short blessing of words, but what great blessings those words promised to the one with the birthright! "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee., (Gen. 27:28,29). This wonderful blessing was the promise of God first given to Abraham. Of all the birthrights ever given, this was the most wonderful one, for it originated from God. Abraham did nothing to earn it, but God, in loving grace, freely promised it to him. That promise, that "he should be heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13), was received in faith, as it is written, "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20).

This wonderful birthright was then passed on to Isaac, Abraham's son. Before Abraham died, he "gave all that he had to Isaac" (Gen. 25:5). Isaac was not required to labor for the birthright nor prove himself either. He, too, received it in faith, being the heir of Abraham, and kept it in hope of passing it on to his firstborn.

The Folly of Esau. As Isaac was to Abraham, so Esau was to be to Isaac, the firstborn son to whom this great blessing was to be given. But unlike Abraham and Isaac, Esau was a fool. He traded the birthright to his brother Jacob for nothing more than a meal, because "he was faint" (Gen. 25:29). Why did he stay in the field until he was faint? Could he not have told Jacob, "No, I will not sell my birthright"? Could he not have traded something else for the meal? Could he not have gone to his mother Rebekah and asked her for food? The greatest birthright in the history of mankind was traded for "bread and pottage of lentiles" (Gen. 25:34)! Not even a fancy meal!

Esau did not have to labor for his birthright, nor prove himself to receive it. It was a gift to be given to him by his forefathers and originating from God. His inheritance was also to be all that his forefathers had labored for and fought to keep throughout their lives. It was to be all that God had blessed them with and also that which was yet to come. Esau was supposed to be the heir of the world like Abraham and Isaac, but he did not receive it in faith as his fathers did. Instead, "Esau despised his birthright" (Gen. 25:34). In fact, he thought so little of it that he did not even regret selling it. "And he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way" (Gen. 25:34). Nowhere do we read in the scriptures that he ever tried to buy it back from Jacob. Indeed, he was envious of his brother and hated him because he had received the better blessing, but he never repented that he had sold it, "though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:17). In this we see that Esau was a "profane person" (Heb. 12:17) like his "father the devil" (Jn. 8:44).

Ezekiel's Prophecy. To "the prince of Tyre," who also was a man with satanic attributes, it was said, "thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering," and "the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created" (Ezek. 28:13). This was spoken as though God were speaking to Satan himself. Satan, too, once had a glorious position given him by God. It was not one which was earned by him, but he was glorious because God made him that way. "Thou art anointed the cherub that covereth, and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God" (Ezek. 28:14). But in folly, like Esau, he traded it away, saying in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" and "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13,14). So then, because Satan sinned, God declared, "Therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the

stones of fire" (Ezek. 28:16).

So we see that the enmity between Jacob and Esau is the same enmity that is between "the woman" and "the serpent" recorded in Genesis 3:14 and 15. As Satan tried to destroy the woman, so Esau also promised to kill his brother Jacob (Gen. 27:41). Both were raised up by God to try the faith of Israel (at times, them who were of the circumcision "which is outward," but even more so now them that are of the circumcision which is "of the heart" (Rom. 2:28,29)). This was in order that God may be just in His adjudication of the wicked and the righteous. "For all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deut. 32:4).

From the day that Isaac blessed Jacob, even unto this day, Esau and his offspring have sought to torment and destroy Israel and rob her of the inheritance, even as it was foretold by Isaac, "when thou shalt have the dominion, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck" (Gen. 27:40). Likewise also, Satan, when he saw "that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:13,17).

The End of the Enmity. But let us hear the end of this matter. This enmity will soon cease and the "saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Dan. 7:18). Of Esau it is said, "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever". And "as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head" (Ob. 10,15). And of Satan it is said, "Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit." "But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet" (Isa. 14:15,19). But the end of Jacob is on this wise, "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame" (Ob. 17,18). "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). That is only if we, like Abraham, stagger not at the promise, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God.

The Conclusion of the Matter. We then, should be careful that we do not despise our birthright as Esau did, for "we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise" (Gal. 4:28). That same wonderful blessing has been promised us in Christ Jesus, "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance" (Eph. 1:11). We have not labored to earn it, nor will we ever prove ourselves worthy of it on our own merit, but like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we may receive it by faith, "giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). That is an inheritance which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:4,5). Let us not trade away our inheritance like Satan and Esau did for the worthless pleasures of this temporal life, but let us be like them who "declare plainly" that they "desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:14,16).

The commandments of God are outlets for the divine nature. --*Given O. Blakely*

The end time is not a time for sharing our faith so much as keeping it (cf. Mt. 25:9). --*Given O. Blakely*

The worst man knows a far greater morality than the best man practices. --*Alexander MacClaren*

Independence Hill Christian Church
2230 W. 78th Ave., Merrillville, IN 46410
Mailing Address Given Below
7903 Hendricks St., Merrillville, IN 46410

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 358
Gary, IN 464

The Parable of the Pounds. God, knowing the end from the beginning, knew that the investment that He was making in the ransoming of men from sin by Christ would, in the end, be worthwhile to Him. Consider that He started out with one man and one woman that sinned against Him, and yet in the ages to come, He shall end up with a multitude of saints for His own possession. It shall be a number which no man can number.

God would not have invested His pound, as it were, in the human enterprise (cf. Lu. 19:12-27), if He knew that He would end up with less than when He started. No, His pound shall be increased to Him in great abundance (cf. Rom. 5:14-21)! --*Gleaned from a men's fellowship discussion at this assembly.*

There is a real sense that the curse (Rev. 22:3), from which we are yet to be fully delivered in the world to come, is for us presently a blessing in disguise. In earth, things in general do not deliver that which they promise. Life is beset with disappointments, frustrations, and great sorrows. But we ought to give thanks that it is this way. For were this not the case, and if hopes and expectations were always satisfied here, we would soon be in danger of being turned away from the blessed things which God has prepared for them that love Him. --*Gleaned from a men's fellowship discussion at this assembly.*

The law was an instrument of death, ordained by the hand of God, to ready us for Christ. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Satan is rendered powerless by faith. --*Fred O. Blakely*

The Holy Spirit takes the reality from the Bible and gives it to you. This is what is meant by the word of the Apostle, where he said, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). --*Fred O. Blakely*

To "be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19) will make you to be a very odd person by the world's standard. --*Fred O. Blakely*

You cannot please God if your heart is fundamentally earthbound. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Those who are in Christ *have been delivered* from the wrath to come (cf. I Thess. 1:10). --*Fred O. Blakely*

Are the promises of God attractive to you? If not, you have not been made partakers of the divine nature (cf. II Pet. 1:4). --*Fred O. Blakely*

We are being conformed to His image because soon we are going to be with Him. --*Robert Cobb*

(SONSHIP, Continued from Page Four)

The Father, in fact, stands anxiously ready and eager to bestow them. And He is able to "do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"--that of the Spirit (Eph. 3:20-21).

Let us, then, ask and receive from Him this His seal of affiliation. So may we enjoy its power and assurance, and so glorify our God.

Miscellaneous Observations and Reflections

Sister Rubye Now Present with Christ!

On January 7, 1995 Sister Rubye W. Blakely put off her earthly tabernacle and made her departure to be with Christ. Her entire life, from her teenage years, was devoted to serving the Lord and Savior. She would have been 83 on February 20th of this year. Rubye was the faithful and loving wife of Fred O. Blakely, former editor of the Banner of Truth. They were married for nearly sixty-four years. Three godly offspring were left behind by her at her passing: Given O. Blakely, of Joplin, Missouri; E. Timothy Blakely, of Lake Oswego, Oregon; and Nelda Powers, of Crown Point, Indiana. Also, several of her grandchildren are devoted servants of God.

She was loved by many during the time of her sojourn here and she will be greatly missed now that she is departed. This was attested to by the many tearful and heartfelt expressions that were witnessed at both the visitation and the funeral service. We thank God for every remembrance of her and bid her a loving "Farewell" until Jesus shall come again with power and great glory. --*Editor*

Festival to Be Held in March

The next spiritual festival sponsored by the Christian Church meeting on West 78th Avenue in Merrillville will be held on Sunday, March 5th, 1995. We invite any of our readers who are able to attend.

The following is a list of the speakers who shall expound the latter part of the Book of Revelation.

First sermon: Overview: Albert G. Stoner, Jr.

Second sermon: Chapters 12-15: Dean E. Boelt

Third sermon: Chapters 16-18: Timothy McCulfor

Fourth sermon: Chapters 19-20: Dan Powers

Fifth sermon: Chapters 21-22: Robert Cobb

Much Appreciated Contributions. Lynda K. Ogg, Dexter, Iowa, \$40.00; Barney and Ruth Kubacki, Duluth, Georgia, \$25.00; David and Jill Maddack, Fredonia, Kansas, \$20.00; Joan Hemmerick, Quartz Hill, California, \$10.00; Alfred Morningstar, Munster, Indiana, \$10.00; Bill Paul, Seattle, WA, \$10.00; Lloyd and Elaine Larson, Lula, GA, \$10.00. There were a number of contributors who wished to remain anonymous.

During the days of His flesh, the rulers were set to destroy Jesus. They were set to destroy His influence, and His exposing of them and their wickedness. But they were not able to destroy Him ultimately, because He rose from the dead and now God has highly exalted Him.--*Dan Powers*

"I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (Jn. 10:9). Thus we go in by His mercy and out by reason of our foolishness, but there, praise His name, we "shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12). --*Dan Powers*

For centuries death reigned and the grave laughed at the thought of one rising from the dead. --*George Brewer*