

The background of the cover is a photograph of a valley at dawn. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and a bright light source, likely the sun, is visible on the right side, creating a warm glow. The mountains are silhouetted against the light sky, and the valley floor is covered in green grass. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

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November 2005

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A Time for Thanksgiving Abounding in Gratitude

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”
—*Colossians 2:6,7*

THIS SCRIPTURE WAS AD-ressed to the brethren at Colossae by the Apostle Paul. He urges those who have come to a knowledge and appreciation of our Savior, and the wonderful blessings that we have received through his ministry and sacrificial death, to become rooted, grounded and well-established in the Truth. Those

who do so will have developed hearts overflowing with love, and will always abound with thanksgiving to God for his great love and mercy.

Our offering of love and thanksgiving to God should become the ultimate desire of every well-rooted and established child of God. The word ‘thanksgiving,’ and the spirit in which it is used by Paul, points to the level of gratitude and thankfulness that the Lord’s people should have for all the

many rich blessings that we receive at the hand of our loving Heavenly Father. The apostle has further explained that this is done in the name and merit of our Lord Jesus who has made it all possible for us to have this special relationship with God.

Paul also addressed the brethren at Corinth with a message in which he used the same Greek word from which thanksgiving has been translated in our English Bibles, and which we find in our featured text. He encouraged them, “Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.”—II Cor. 9:11,12

The loving spirit of thankfulness within the fully consecrated followers of Jesus is received by God as sweet incense, and is a reflection of the growth and development of the one offering up that service. John the Revelator speaks of this incense in the vision of the opening of the seventh seal where he said, “Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.”—Rev. 8:3,4

ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH

The process of rooting and the establishing of faith largely takes place in the heart. It may, therefore, develop for a time under the surface and be largely undetected by others. In time, the results of

this process will more readily be seen when the outward manifestation of that faith has flourished with the fruits of righteousness and Truth. Once that faith has been firmly established, no wind of doctrine will be able to uproot that well-grounded faith that is the evidence of the Lord's grace and providential care for his people.—Eph.4:14

The sealing of the New Creature is the working and possession of the Holy Spirit, and is thus manifest by evidence of love and thanksgiving to God. It will be shown in our love for the brethren who have accepted the Gospel Age calling, and love also for the poor groaning creation. This sealing is made clearer by the apostle in his words to the Corinthian brethren. "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."—II Cor. 1:21,22

A DAY FOR THANKSGIVING

Each year, on the fourth Thursday of November, the citizens of the United States are invited to pause from their ordinary pursuits of everyday life and to enjoy a special day of thanksgiving. This day has been set aside for all Americans to turn their attention toward God, and give thanks to him for the bountiful blessings that they have received during the past year. In the hearts of many people there is doubtless a sincere feeling of appreciation to God for every good gift, and they are happy to have this special time for reflection and thanksgiving.

It is a special day that is generally marked by family gatherings, along with a bountiful meal which likely includes turkey as the centerpiece,

along with cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie, and all the trimmings. In earlier times, the day usually centered around some kind of religious service which included moments for Bible readings, reflection on the Scriptures, as well as time set aside for prayer, the singing of hymns, and offering thanksgiving to God for the season's harvest.

In more recent times, however, Thanksgiving Day has given way to having a longer weekend away from one's place of employment, or perhaps the day is consumed by watching parades, or sports events, on television. Because the holiday occurs at the very end of the month of November, it also serves to usher in the more extensive festive holiday season that soon follows. The origin, purpose, and meaning of having a special day of thanksgiving, therefore, has become somewhat obscured by many Americans because of increasing commercialism and widespread pleasure-seeking that has come to characterize our modern society.

THE PLYMOUTH COLONISTS

John Carver was a merchant and pilgrim leader who became the agent for the pilgrims in arranging financial support, and chartering the Mayflower ship for the trip to America in 1620. He had also organized the establishment of the Plymouth Colony in New England, and became its first governor. He and Massasoit, who was the native chief of the Wamponoag Indians, had signed a treaty of peace that provided the way for the new Plymouth Colony. Massasoit was the chief over what is now the greater part of the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The Puritans, because of religious persecution, were among those who joined the group in 1620. The early seventeenth century had seen a continuation of the great religious reformation and upheaval which had begun in Europe a century earlier. There were various separatist groups that had broken away from the established Church of England and the term 'Puritan' suggests their radical attempt to purify themselves by further removal from the church system's control. They thus prepared themselves for the 'holy pilgrimage' to America, and left England on the Mayflower from the port of Plymouth on September 16, 1620.

Nearly four hundred years have passed since land was sighted off what is now the coastline of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, after the Atlantic crossing in the autumn of 1620. It had proven to be an extremely difficult journey for the pilgrims who had left England sixty-six days earlier. For two months, about one hundred people had been wedged into what was then known as the 'tween-decks'—which was essentially a cargo area of the boat that had barely more than five feet of headroom. The passengers were mostly confined to their quarters for their own safety because of sudden storms that arose. After arriving in the New World, and with the bitter experiences that were encountered on their ocean crossing and first winter in America, the Plymouth settlers would hardly have survived except for the help given them by some of the local Indians.

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

William Bradford was also one of the organizers of the expedition of pilgrims to America, and while

aboard ship he had helped frame the Mayflower Compact, which became the governing foundation of the Plymouth Colony in the New World. He was chosen as the second governor of the new settlement in 1621, to succeed John Carver who had died suddenly, and he remained in office nearly all of the rest of his life.

In 1621, Governor Bradford proclaimed that a special day of thanksgiving be set aside after the autumn harvest so that the settlers could offer gratitude and prayer to God for their blessings and well-being. The event proved to be a blessing for the pilgrims and their Indian friends, and Chief Massasoit was among the guests. The idea of having a special day for thanksgiving was well received, and it soon spread to other parts of New England, as well as other settled areas of the New World; but at that time each region chose its own date for the occasion.

ESTABLISHING A DATE

When George Washington became the first president of the newly formed United States, he proclaimed November 26, 1789 as a day of national thanksgiving as well as to honor the new American constitution. But the different colonies and regions of the country still continued to set their own times for the event. During the 19th century, many new states joined to observe the annual celebration, but many carried on with the tradition of setting their own dates.

During the American Civil War in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln appointed the last Thursday of November for the occasion largely as a result of the untiring efforts of Sarah Hale, who was editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, and had worked diligently towards the establishment of a special date for Thanksgiving

Day. Lincoln, therefore, called on the whole people of America to unite together with one heart and with one purpose to observe a specific time, and urged prayer meetings to be held in the churches and that all should “express their heartfelt thanks to God for the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies.”

From that time forward, each succeeding president made similar proclamations until 1939, when President Franklin Roosevelt authorized the change to the third Thursday in November instead of the long-held fourth Thursday. But this change was not well accepted and, in 1941, Congress by joint resolution reestablished the fourth Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day, and it has remained a national holiday ever since.

OTHER OBSERVANCES

Because of the earlier harvest season, Canadians observe Thanksgiving Day on the second Monday in October, but there have been many changes throughout the years. Although there had been harvest celebrations held by some of the native peoples who were living in this area of North America before the white man came, the first documented Canadian Thanksgiving occurred in 1578, when Martin Frobisher proclaimed a formal day of thanksgiving in the settlement he had established in what is now Newfoundland. During this same period of time, French settlers arriving in Canada with Samuel de Champlain had formed what they called “The Order of Good Cheer,” in which they also gave thanks to God for their blessings and well-being in the New World.

In 1879, the Canadian Parliament declared November 6th as a national day of thanksgiving, but

the third Monday in October continued to be the more popular and accepted date. After World War I, both Armistice Day and Thanksgiving were celebrated on the Monday of the week in which November 11th occurred. This was the accepted time until, in 1931, the two days became separate holidays, and Armistice Day was renamed Remembrance Day. In 1957, Parliament declared the second Monday in October to be “A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed.”

THANKSGIVING EVERY DAY

To whatever extent the people of America may take the opportunity to offer thanks to God for their well-being, happiness, and the extensive freedom they enjoy by living in this great nation is, of course, commendable. The Lord’s people also receive and appreciate these same blessings. However, they daily reflect on his goodness toward them and, throughout their consecrated walk in life, they esteem every day as a special time for thanksgiving to God and not merely one day in the year.

The child of God is thankful for the temporal food they receive, but are most thankful for the spiritual food that has been provided for us—the “meat in due season.” (Matt. 24:45; Rev. 3:20) Eating of the spiritual food is how we become strengthened and enabled to grow as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

We, too, are thankful for our earthly families and friends, but especially appreciate those of “like precious faith” (II Pet. 4:1), and enjoy the wonderful circle of our larger spiritual family. We enjoy a higher calling and an association with other brethren who

also share as workers together with God. (II Cor. 6:1) As the sons of God, we are thus members of his spiritual family, and together we are blessed with a common bond of love, fellowship, and thanksgiving.

A MEDITATION OF THANKSGIVING

The psalmist wrote, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.” (Ps. 92:1) As we reflect on these words, we acknowledge that it is truly a ‘good thing’ to always give an offering of thanksgiving to our loving Heavenly Father every day during our consecrated walk in newness of life. It is a good thing to give thanks unto God because to not do so would be an indication of our lack of love and appreciation for all that he has done for us. It is a good thing, the psalmist also says, to sing praises unto the name of the most High. This is profitable therefore, for those who sing these praises, as well as for those who may hear them. The harmonious melody of singing praises to God fills our hearts, and the hearts of others, with loving-kindness and a spontaneous spirit of thanksgiving.

A VOW OF THANKSGIVING

One of the marks that identifies the consecrated child of God as having been rooted, built up in Christ, and well-established in the faith, is the level of commitment we desire to fulfill, and the evidence that this Spirit of Truth is our heart intention.

We often turn to the wonderful words that are recorded by the psalmist in which our attention is focused on our desire to offer a “sacrifice of thanksgiving” to God. “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and

call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. In the courts of the LORD's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD."—Ps. 116:12-19

THANKSGIVING IN THE KINGDOM

The great hope for the whole human family will be realized during the future thousand-year kingdom of our Lord. At that time, all will be given full opportunity to be uplifted from the miry pit of sin and death in which they continue to be condemned because of Adam's transgression. The psalmist, looking far down the stream of time, symbolically points to this time when mankind will bring offerings of thanksgiving to God. "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing."—Ps. 107:21,22

THE PRAISE OF THANKSGIVING

As we approach another annual observance of Thanksgiving Day, let us abound therein with heartfelt thanksgiving—"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."—Eph. 5:19,20, *New American Standard Version* ■

Encountering the Truth

Key Verse: *“Immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”*
—Acts 9:18

Selected Scripture:
Acts 9:3-18

PAUL, THE APOSTLE OF the Gentiles, was born of Hebrew parents, of the tribe of Benjamin, and given the Hebrew name of Saul. He was an inveterate enemy of Christianity, doing his utmost to root it out by persecuting all that embraced it, thinking he was doing God service.

“Breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” Saul “went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”—Acts 9:1,2

As Saul “came near Damascus: . . . suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks [goads]. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the

city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” (vss. 3-6) Saul not only saw the light from heaven but he also heard a voice.

“The men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.”—vss. 7-9

In Damascus, there was a disciple by the name of Ananias. The Lord told him in a dream to inquire at the house of Judas, on Straight Street, for a man named Saul from Tarsus. Ananias objected, responding that he heard this man had been given power and authority to arrest any and all those of the Christian faith. “The Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”—vss. 15,16

Ananias went to the house as the Lord had instructed him, and there he laid his hands upon Saul, and said to him, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”—vss. 17,18

Ananias was sent for this very purpose to heal him. It was an instantaneous recovery and beyond all question a miracle. When Saul was baptized, he immediately followed the example of many early converts. (Acts 2:41) Saul stayed for some time with the disciples at Damascus, and began at once to declare in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God. Those that heard him were amazed that he had been transformed from a persecutor to a believing disciple of Jesus Christ. ■

Offering of Oneself

Key Verse: “*When she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*”
—Acts 16:15

Selected Scripture:
Acts 16:6-15

Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” (Acts 16:9,10) Paul was thus convinced that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel there.

It is interesting to note that Paul’s vision was also an evidence that it was God’s long-term plan, and will, for the Gospel message to be spread toward the West—to Macedonia, Greece, Rome, and later to the rest of Europe—rather than to the East, through Asia Minor toward India and China.

TODAY’S LESSON OPENS

during the Apostle Paul’s second missionary journey. He is accompanied by Silas and Timothy, having just passed through the regions of Galatia and Mysia. They were forbidden from preaching the Gospel and not permitted by the Holy Spirit to enter Bithynia in Asia, but arrived at the city of Troas. Paul didn’t go where he desired, but determined he would go only where God had work for him to do. During the night he had a vision. “There stood a man of

“From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, continuing the next day on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.”—vss. 11,12, *New International Version*

“On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira.” (vss. 13,14, *NIV*) Like the apostle, she had sought out the place of prayer and now the Lord had rewarded her and answered her prayers by sending her the Truth for which she had hungered and thirsted. She was a devout woman who worshipped God according to the knowledge she had. When the Lord opened her heart, Lydia gave careful attention to Paul’s preaching and applied it to herself.

We are not told what Paul’s message was but we can be sure he had explained that Messiah had come, and had provided the ransom price for all the world as a sin offering and now, in addition, forgiveness, reconciliation to God, and a privilege of joint-heirship in the kingdom. All those who would accept the call and were faithful to it would be blessed, not only during the present time but they would also share in the future heavenly glory promised.

When Lydia and the members of her household were baptized, they told Paul and his friends that if they were convinced that she was a believer in the Lord, they should come and stay at her house. They did so, seeing that she desired an opportunity of receiving further scriptural instruction. In her own house she might not only hear their discussions, but could ask them questions; and she might have Paul and his friends to pray with her daily, and to bless her household. ■

Working Together in the Ministry

Key Verse: “*Because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.*”
—Acts 18:3

Selected Scripture:
Acts 18:1-4,24-28

Paul seeming to proclaim strange gods to a group of men gathered on Mars’ hill in Athens. As he spoke, he mentioned having observed a local altar bearing the words, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.” (Acts 17:23) Citing a contrary scripture, he continued, saying, “He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them.”—vss. 31-33

“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth.” (chap. 18:1) Here he found a Jew named Aquilla and his wife, Priscilla. Because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and they all worked together, ‘for by their occupation they were tentmakers.’ He preached in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade both Jews and Greeks. (vss. 2-4) When Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself

entirely to delivering the message to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

“But when they resisted and blasphemed . . . he said to them, Your blood be upon your head! I am pure; from this time I will go to the Gentiles.” (vs. 6, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) Paul was here alluding to his later statement of Acts 20:26-28. “I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own [Son, WED] blood.” Paul realized that his mission going forward was to be primarily toward the Gentiles, the Jews having, for the most part, now shut their ears to the Gospel message.

When Paul reached Ephesus on his third missionary journey he found some disciples there. “He said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers? No, they said, We never even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. How then were you baptized, he asked? With John’s baptism, they answered. John’s baptism was a baptism in token of repentance, said Paul, and he told the people to believe in him who was to follow him, that is, Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and when Paul laid his hands on them the Holy Spirit came on them.

“He went to the synagogue there, and for three months spoke confidently, holding discussions and trying to persuade them about the kingdom of God. But as some of them were obstinate and refused to believe, finding fault with that way before the people, he left them, and withdrew the disciples, and held daily discussions in the lecture room of Tyrannous. This went on for two years, so that everyone who lived in Asia, Greeks as well as Jews, heard the Lord’s message.”—Acts 19:1-10, *Goodspeed Translation* ■

Saying Good-bye

Key Verse: *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”*
—Acts 20:28

Selected Scripture:
Acts 20:17-38

for dead, but was raised to life again by the apostle. Afterward they broke bread and talked together until the break of day.—Acts 20:7-12

After several more hurried stops they reached Miletus, the seaport that lay near Ephesus. Since Paul was closely acquainted with the brethren at Ephesus he knew some would no doubt urge him to stay an extended time with them, and possibly delay his scheduled arrival at Jerusalem for Pentecost. For this reason, from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. When they were come to him, he said unto them, “Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with

IN TODAY’S LESSON, WE find Paul stopping briefly at Troas on his third missionary journey to join his disciples who were to accompany him to Jerusalem in time for the coming celebration of the Feast of Pentecost. The night before they were to depart, Paul preached a long farewell sermon far into the night to those gathered in an upper chamber. Eutychus, a young man seated in a high loft, sunk into a deep sleep and accidentally fell from a third story window. He was taken

you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews.”—vss. 17-19

Paul here pointed to the fact that by his faithfulness in teaching both Jews and also Greeks, “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 21), he didn’t know what would befall him except that in every town he visited, the Holy Spirit warned him that “bonds and afflictions” abided him.—vs. 23

“I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (vss. 26-28, read in *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*: “acquired by the blood of his own Son.”)

Paul’s mind was thinking of his responsibility as a steward of God to teach nothing but the words of God, as spoken by the prophet in Ezekiel 33:7-9, *New International Version*. “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.”

Paul’s good-bye to the brethren at Ephesus was truly an emotionally difficult experience for all gathered there. After Paul finished speaking, “he knelt down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.”—Acts 20:36-38 ■

Sinuing against the Holy Spirit

“I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”

**—Matthew 12:31,32,
New King James
Version**

THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT the Holy Spirit is the third person in a trinity of gods, of which the Father and the Son are the other two—and all coequal in power and authority—would have difficulty in explaining this statement by Jesus that while sin against himself would be forgiven, sin against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven. Certainly this disproves the absolute equality of the Holy Spirit and the Son of God. But there is no need to be concerned with an erroneous doctrine that has come down to us from the Dark

Ages. When we understand what the Holy Spirit is, and the circumstances under which these words of

the Master were spoken, all is clear, harmonious, logical, and satisfying.

First, let us take the context into consideration. Beginning with verse twenty-two, we are told of one of Jesus' miracles. A man was brought to him "possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw." (Matt. 12:22) The people generally who witnessed this miracle were properly "amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?" (vs. 23) To these Israelites, the 'son of David' was the promised Christ, and when they saw, through Jesus, the exercise of what they knew must have been Divine power, they were convinced that he was indeed the great One whom the God of Israel had promised to send. In their simplicity of mind and humbleness of heart, they were glad to acknowledge the truth when it was so conclusively demonstrated to them.

But it was not thus with the Pharisees. When they "heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils." (vs. 24) These Pharisees, in their hardness of heart, refused to accept the logical explanation of what they had witnessed. They had seen the power of God—the Holy Spirit of God—manifested in the casting out of a devil from this afflicted man, but were ready and willing to deny the facts, closing their minds to reality.

This was the background of Jesus' statement in our text. By it, the Master implies that the Pharisees, in denying the truth of what they had witnessed, had set themselves in opposition to the Holy Spirit of God. Indeed, as he said, they had

blasphemed against the Holy Spirit in that they had charged that its good work was in reality the work of the Devil. Such a sin, Jesus said, could not be forgiven, neither in this world, or age, nor in the age to come.

This account highlights the fact that the Holy Spirit is simply the holy power of God by which he accomplishes all his good purposes. In this instance, it was exercised through the Master in ridding this afflicted man of the 'devil' which was causing him to be blind and dumb, and restoring him to health. It was a miraculous demonstration of Divine power. The exercise of Divine power is always miraculous, in the sense that our finite minds are unable to understand it. However, to deny its accomplishments is a sin that God does not overlook.

Why is it that sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven? In a broad sense it is sin against light, against knowledge. In the case of the Pharisees, there was the chance that they could misunderstand Jesus' teachings. After all, while he spoke as "never man spake" (John 7:46), their conception of him had to be based upon his words. No fault could be found with Jesus' gracious words, but in their imperfection and prejudice they could nonetheless misunderstand the meaning of what he said. This, the Master indicated, could be forgiven. But to distort the meaning of the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit was not ignorantly done. It was a willful sin, so could not be forgiven. They had sinned against what they knew to be right.

The application of this principle is seen in God's dealings with Saul of Tarsus, who afterward became the great Apostle Paul. Saul was a bitter opponent

of the Christian cause. With what he supposed was a righteous hatred, he persecuted the early believers. But on the way to Damascus, on a mission of further persecution, he was struck down to earth by a blinding light, shining above the brightness of the sun at noonday, and heard a voice speak to him, saying "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4) The voice answered, "I am Jesus."—vs. 5

It was all in good conscience that Saul had been opposing Christ and the Christian cause, but now, given a demonstration of the power of God informing him that Jesus truly was the Christ of promise, it changed his whole outlook. Had he been like the Pharisees, he might have insisted that the Devil was trying to interfere with his work of stamping out the heresy of the Nazarene, Jesus, and continued on to Damascus to complete his mission of persecution. But Saul's heart was right. He accepted the logic of events, was convinced, and gladly entered into the service of the Messiah whom previously he had been persecuting.

The experience was a severe lesson to Saul, which, even as the great Apostle Paul, he did not forget. It served to keep him humble, and ever to realize how easy it is to be wrong. Writing about it later, he said, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."—I Tim. 1:12-14

Paul had been a ‘blasphemer,’ and a ‘persecutor.’ He had done great injury to the brethren of Christ, but he had not blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. His sin was against Christ, whom he did not know. He had sinned ‘ignorantly’ and in ‘unbelief,’ so mercy was extended to him—great mercy, indeed, for he was forgiven, and exalted to the high position of a special apostle in the church. The situation would have been different if, when that great demonstration of power, which he later characterized as a “vision,” was given to him on the Damascus road, he had been “disobedient” to it. This would have been an unforgivable sin.—Acts 26:19

A very illuminating episode is related in Acts 4:29-5:11. The religious rulers of Israel were much disturbed over the successful ministry of the apostles at Pentecost and later, so “they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.” (chap. 4:18) The apostles did not obey these instructions. Instead, they reported to their brethren, and held a prayer meeting. Their prayer concluded thus: “Now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.”—vss. 29,30

Immediately there was a miracle, where we read, “When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither

said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”—vss. 31-33

These were the miraculous circumstances that caused the believers to sell their houses and lands and turn over the proceeds to the apostles. Little wonder, in view of the Holy Spirit’s demonstration among them, that they were induced to take this drastic action. Then we are told that a “certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price,” his wife agreeing to it. (chap. 5:1,2) As Peter told Ananias, he had a right to do this, for he had not been commanded by the Lord to sell his land, or to give any part of the proceeds to the apostles to be used for the common support of the church. His sin was in the fact that he claimed he had turned in all the money when he had not.

Peter asked Ananias why Satan had filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. The meaning of this is apparent when we take into consideration the circumstances. The Holy Spirit had been working mightily in, and through, the apostles. The place where they held their special prayer meeting shook with its power. The sick were healed, and other signs were brought by the Spirit’s power. Filled with the Spirit, the apostles’ preaching was powerful. The entire company was convinced that God was in their midst, including Ananias and Sapphira. But these later were not sincere in the matter. They were willing that their relationship to the LORD, through Jesus, should cost them something,

but not all. Yet they wanted their brethren to think they had given all.

The brethren could have been misled in this. But one of the special powers of the Holy Spirit that had been given to Peter was the ability to read the mind and heart. Through the power of God, he discerned the deception. Peter said to Ananias, “Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” (vs. 4) What a lesson this is for all the LORD’s people! Let us remember that we stand or fall before the LORD, not before one another.

Sapphira, Peter said, had tempted the Holy Spirit of God; meaning that those, through whom the Spirit was operating, would be tempted not to call for the judgment upon her which the LORD required. But Peter exercised the authority given him by the Holy Spirit and they both perished. They had sinned against the Holy Spirit and it could not be forgiven them. It was not a sin of ignorance.

THOSE ONCE ENLIGHTENED

It is not necessary that the miraculous power of God—his Holy Spirit—be outwardly demonstrated in order to sin willfully against it. In Hebrews 6:4-8, another and different situation is brought to our attention in which it is possible for one to commit sin which cannot be forgiven. We quote: “It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.”

Here the apostle is discussing those in whose hearts and lives the Holy Spirit has operated through the written Word, and he makes it plain that in this situation also it is possible to sin against the Holy Spirit. They have been ‘enlightened,’ so they do not have ignorance as an excuse. They have ‘tasted of the heavenly gift.’ This evidently is a reference to Jesus, whom God gave to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world. They have tasted Jesus, which implies more than merely having heard of him.

They were made ‘partakers of the Holy Spirit.’ The work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, through the Word of Truth, has been too evident to put aside lightly. While not spectacular, as the power of the Spirit was demonstrated to the Pharisees, yet its power in the life of a believer is even more convincing. Who could come under the baptism of the Spirit, and the power of its anointing, the life-giving energy of its begetting, receive of its witness and seal, and be filled with its power for holiness, its peace, and its joy, without realizing that he has been enjoying the rich favor of God?

It is through the miracle-working power of the Spirit that the Word of God has reached us with all its enlightenment and inspiration. Those who have ‘tasted the good word of God,’ have been face to face with God, for the Word reveals him in his glory, outlining his wisdom, justice, love, and power. Millions

read the Bible just because they believe it is a good book, others for its historical value. Some read it simply out of curiosity. But those who have devoted themselves to do God's will, and read the Bible that they might know his will and receive encouragement to perform it, find that it is a power in their lives. It is the power of the Holy Spirit.

These also, Paul indicates, have tasted of the 'powers of the world to come.' *Strong's Bible Concordance* states that the Greek word here translated 'powers' means 'force (literal or figurative) specifically miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself.)' Much miracle-working power will be operative in the age to come, and the Hebrew Christians had already witnessed some of it. In chapter two, verses three and four, we read, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing witness, [the word 'them' is in italics, which means that it is not in the original], both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?"

From this, it is clear that the Hebrew brethren, in addition to being enlightened and given the Holy Spirit of Truth through the written Word, had witnessed some of the miracle-working power of the Spirit in the signs which were given to those early believers. Perhaps some of them had had bestowed upon them one or more of the miraculous 'gifts of the Spirit' mentioned in I Corinthians, chapter twelve. In this respect, then, they were in the same position as the Pharisees, and Ananias and Sapphira,

who had witnessed the miracles performed by the Holy Spirit. These were the powers of the world to come. As we know, in the age to come, all the sick will be restored to health, and all the dead will be awakened, the powers of regeneration then being in effect. How that will fill the earth with God's glory!

Thus the apostle informs us that those who fall away from their loyalty to God after having enjoyed all these marvelous favors from him, favors which we might say are summed up in the one word enlightenment, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. The falling away of such would be a matter of willfulness so gross that they would have no desire to repent. By having accepted Christ and enjoyed the merit of his shed blood on their behalf, and then rejecting him, they put him 'to open shame.' The enlightenment of these comes through God's only source of enlightenment which is the Holy Spirit of Truth, so, in falling away, they sin against the Holy Spirit, and cannot be forgiven. Because they cannot be forgiven, and there being no hope of their repenting, these die the "second death," as symbolized by the fire which destroys the briars and thistles of Hebrews six, verse eight.

A similar presentation of this general thought is found in Hebrews 10:26-29. We quote: "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of

God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" The Law given by Moses was typical. Those who died under its judgments will be awakened from death. But those who sin willfully in this age, after having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit of Truth, will go into oblivion forever.

DEGREES OF WILLFULNESS

We see no reason from the Scriptures to suppose that a single act of sin against the Holy Spirit results in eternal destruction. When Jesus said to the Pharisees that sin against the Holy Spirit could not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come, he implied that their sin in denying that his miracles were wrought by the power of God would not go unpunished. But this does not necessarily mean that the punishment would be what the Scriptures describe as the 'second death.'

In Luke 12:47,48, Jesus lays down a rule governing the punishment of those who sin that is understandable, practical, and just. We read, "That servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." In other words, the degree of enlightenment determines the extent of responsibility. Those mentioned by Paul in Hebrews 6:4-8 and 10:16-19 are indicated to be sufficiently enlightened, and their sin against light so persistent and continuous that there is no repentance, no

turning around. That is why their punishment is shown to be eternal death.

The principle set forth by Jesus is specifically said to apply to the LORD's servants. The unbelieving world, in its almost total ignorance of God, is not on probation now at all, but only the servants of God and those who profess to be his servants. This includes the Pharisees, who in Jesus' day claimed that they were the representatives of God. This made them responsible, especially when they denied the power of him whom they claimed to serve. They will be punished, and doubtless with many 'stripes,' but the Bible does not indicate that they necessarily died the second death.

THE "GREAT TRANSGRESSION"

It is apparent from the Scriptures that it is possible for those enlightened by the Holy Spirit of Truth, through the written Word, to fall away. Equally clear, however, is that such a calamity does not occur suddenly. There is a gradual encroachment of sin, beginning perhaps with but a slight degree of laxity, but finally ending in a complete denial of the Lord, the Truth, and the power of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

In Psalm 19:12,13, David traces this gradual development of sin, and in the fourteenth verse utters a touching prayer expressive of every true Christian's desire to please the LORD. He asks, "Who can understand his errors?" In the preceding verses the psalmist speaks of the power of God's Law, his testimony, and his statutes, his commandments "pure," to make his people "wise," and to "enlighten" them. "By them," David says, are *(Continued on page 35)*

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(Continued from page 31) the LORD's servants warned, "and in keeping of them there is great reward."—vss. 7-11

In asking the question, 'Who can understand his errors?' it would seem that David is implying that no one can, apart from the Word of God, enlighten, or reveal them. Then his prayer, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults"—faults that I do not realize I possess. Help me turn on myself the searchlight of thy Word that the beginnings of sin may be detected, and may the cleansing power of thy Truth make me clean and pure in thy sight.

David continues his prayer, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." 'Presumptuous sins' are willful sins, sins against light, against the Holy Spirit. Perhaps nearly all the LORD's people, at one time or another in their Christian life, are guilty of one or more presumptuous sins. These are not 'secret faults,' although they might be the outgrowth of a wrong condition of mind and heart of which one is not aware. But notice David's prayer—'Let them not have dominion over me.' In a moment of impetuosity, one might commit a presumptuous sin, a sin that cannot be forgiven, and a sin therefore that calls for stripes. But still it does not follow that such sins must necessarily have dominion over us.

For presumptuous sins to have dominion over one means that he has given up all effort to control his life in keeping with the directives of the Word. It would mean, as David continues, that such a one was guilty of the "great transgression" (vs. 13); that transgression so great, so willful, and so continuous, that the only suitable punishment would

be the second death. Such is the growth of sin if not checked.

The only safe course for any of the LORD's people lies in the attitude expressed by David, when in further prayer to God he pleaded, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." (Ps. 19:14) We can cooperate with the LORD in the answering of this prayer, through continued and earnest searching of his Word, that we might know the things that are acceptable to him, and pleasing in his sight. Thus we will be safeguarded from sinning against the Holy Spirit. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 3—"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."—Matthew 26:41 (Z. '01-80 Hymn 166)

NOVEMBER 10—"Love . . . rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."—I Corinthians 13:6 (Z. '03-57 Hymn 37)

NOVEMBER 17—"He shall give his angels [messengers] charge concerning thee, to guard thee in all thy ways."—Psalm 91:11, *Leeser Translation* (Z. '04-75 Hymn 361)

NOVEMBER 24—"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."—Acts 24:16 (Z. '00-360 Hymn 136)

Contending for the Faith

“Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”

—I Timothy 1:2,3

IN HIS FIRST EPISTLE TO

Timothy, the Apostle Paul, who considers Timothy to be his spiritual son, lovingly exhorts him to tolerate no alteration of the doctrines of ‘the faith.’ Paul, understanding the Greek fondness for philosophizing, urges him to steadfastly resist the subtle dangers of those meaningless intellectual exercises concerning the faith which would only elicit more questions and eventual doubt.

“Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. . . . According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the

ministry. . . . This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.”—I Tim. 1:4,11,12,18

In these verses, Paul, ever cognizant of the awesome privilege and responsibility of having the Gospel entrusted to his care, assigns, in turn, this same responsibility to the faithful who would continue after him in the work of keeping the Gospel message pure, as it was once delivered to the saints.

“I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.”—I Tim. 6:13-15

Our Lord gave such eloquent witness for his Father’s absolute Truth at Calvary. During the course of this Gospel Age there have been a faithful few willing, likewise, to give their very lives if necessary as a witness for that same Truth. These few have preached a faith untainted by the theories of men, a faith free of perverse creeds born of sectarian prejudices, a faith that tolerates no alteration of the Truth to mollify the unstable or the uninitiated.

PAUL, THE VETERAN

Paul, as an aging veteran of spiritual warfare, charged the younger Timothy with protecting this precious Truth by remaining faithful to its simplicity. “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and

oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee.”—I Tim. 6:20,21

There is urgency in Paul’s exhortations. His concern is particularly acute in reference to those who would be zealously protecting the present doctrines of Truth during the “last days” of the Gospel Age. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”—II Tim. 3:1

The same sense of urgency characterized Jude’s exhortation for his brethren to “contend for the faith.” “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Jude 3,4

Those ‘ungodly men’ who were ‘of old ordained to this condemnation’ were those spoken of by Enoch long before Jude’s day. “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince [convict] all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”—vss. 14,15

NEEDFUL EXHORTATION

Jude says that it was ‘needful’ that he write his beloved brethren and exhort them to ‘contend for

the faith which was once delivered to the saints' because, even in his time, there were those who were not holding to the doctrines of the faith.

Some have inferred the phrase 'contend for the faith' to be a license for confrontation in the service of the Truth; a license to take the fight to the collaborators; a license to quarrel over issues of exaggerated importance. That this was not Jude's intended message is made clear in verse three, "My friends, I was fully engaged in writing to you about our salvation—which is yours no less than ours—when it became urgently necessary to write at once and appeal to you to join the struggle in defence of the faith which God entrusted to his people once and for all."—*New English Bible*

Jude did not write to urge his brethren to contentiously struggle with each other in defense of the faith. Contention is something which ungodly men can exploit to cause divisions among the Lord's people. Jude identifies the ungodly men that Enoch spoke of as being those who cause divisions. "These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit."—Jude 16-19, *New International Version*

JOINING THE COMMITTED

Contending for the faith, then, is the joining with that committed minority of this age who defend the faith-stimulating sound doctrine. This minority grows ever smaller as the harvest draws on, while the assault of the Truth becomes ever more subtle and determined. The duty of this minority is to guard and defend the doctrinal truths that are based on what the Apostle Paul was determined to

defend, and know nothing beyond “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”—I Cor. 2:2

All the height, width, depth, and breadth of God’s plan of salvation reside in this simple, clear, and pure phrase. The faith once delivered to the saints is grounded, built, and completed in the doctrinal truths embedded in these five simple words. What eternal and universal weight they contain! Only the saints are privileged to know at this time the exact magnitude and import of these words. It is these five words and all they represent by way of hope for the church and all mankind that have been, now are, and will be for a time to come, under Satan’s relentless attack.

Severe tests of faith and endurance will come to those who have grown weary of advancing with the light, and who have become overly fond of, and complacent with, the dispensational truths of the past. Those who choose to rest, as many have done in the past as the doctrinal light moved along, inevitably fall prey to the wiles of the ungodly men written of by Jude.

Paul foresaw there would be those who would profess to be collaborators in God’s service but who would “not endure sound doctrine.” “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”—II Tim. 4:2-5

PETER ADDS HIS VOICE

The Apostle Peter joins the chorus of voices calling for a concerted and committed defense of the Truth as he specifies some of those 'things' mentioned by Paul to Timothy. "Therefore, I will be ready always to remind you of these things although you know and are established in the present truth."—II Pet. 1:12, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

Although one might know and be established in 'present truth,' Peter cautions, there are other vital things that must not be overlooked by those who would make their calling and election sure. The apostle lists those in verses five through seven, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

That present Truth must be supplemented with those character-building features for one to make one's calling and election sure, Peter left no doubt. However, Peter did not, by this, intend to minimize the importance of the doctrines of present Truth. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."—II Pet. 1:19

Peter would certainly have been in agreement with Paul's sentiments expressed in I Timothy 1:18,19. "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have

made shipwreck.” The clear inference being that without these doctrines which constitute present Truth at any given stage of the plan of God, one could not carry on the good fight, regardless of the attention given to character building.

PRESENT TRUTH

Prophecy, or doctrine, understood in its due time is ‘present Truth.’ It is, therefore, of great importance, particularly during the closing harvest period of the Gospel Age, that the Lord’s people be found advancing with the doctrinal light of what the Apostle Peter called present Truth. The charge to protect this present Truth has been passed from our Heavenly Father to our Lord, from our Lord to the apostles, from the apostles on to the early church, and on through the Gospel Age to those of us who are living in the present perilous last days of the harvest.

Paul said that some in his day (the beginning of the Gospel Age) had not maintained clear consciences toward the Gospel light and, as a result, had made shipwreck of the faith—no doubt their own as well as others. He added that, at the end of the Gospel Age, false teachers would multiply and gain influence, and overthrow the faith of all who do not maintain a clear conscience toward the Truth and study it without personal theory or prejudice.

The corruption of the Truth most often begins with seemingly insignificant compromises whose end is devastation—devastation to the Truth and to the faith that the Truth inspires. The Apostle Paul knew and wanted to impress upon Timothy that compromised Truth is a mere approximation of Truth. The apostle foreknew that centuries of

heathen, pagan, Gentile thought would eventually produce the perception that God has a relative scale of righteousness; that he hated some iniquity more than another.

RIGHTEOUSNESS NOT RELATIVE

Paul was most eager to have Timothy understand that our Heavenly Father does not exist in an indistinct realm of equivocation where issues of righteousness are relative. Paul wanted to impress upon Timothy, that God is absolute and his principles and laws are absolute; that his Truth is absolute and must be defended as such. Timothy was cautioned not to allow himself to be drawn into philosophic and semantic ‘babbling,’ the conclusions of which would inevitably lead to mere approximations of the Truth.

Nothing that is approximately the Truth is of God. There are no degrees of heathenism. One cannot be slightly heathen, somewhat pagan. There are various kinds of righteousness, but there are not various degrees of righteousness. There were not various degrees to which the Israelites could keep the Mosaic Law—the inflexible standard of God. One either kept the entire Law or one failed entirely!

One cannot be partially holy, partially harmless, partially undefiled, partially separate from sinners. A contrary belief is a God-dishonoring and dangerous perception of righteousness; God-dishonoring because it suggests he is more tolerant of certain evils than others; dangerous because such belief promotes equivocation, and equivocation eventually destroys moral clarity, making the identification of evil progressively more difficult.

NO HIERARCHY OF EVIL

There exists no hierarchy of evil with God. From the Divine perspective, an unkind word that wounds is equivalent to a literal sword thrust to the heart. Both are equally appalling to God. Both are equally condemned. “Thou shalt not kill.” (Exod. 20:13) “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. . . . But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”—Matt. 15:11,18,19

In a corrupt and disintegrating world, the duty and privilege of the consecrated is the same as Paul’s, Timothy’s, and Jude’s, viz. to help raise and defend the Divine standard, the one standard that will remain unshaken by the intense circumstances with which this Gospel Age ends.

Let us not be distracted from our charge by weariness, or worldly cares, remembering that this day will declare our work, of what sort it is. Let us not count it as of little consequence if we are encouraged to ignore present Truth as unimportant, or as an impediment to fellowship or unity. Let us ‘join the struggle in defense of the faith which God entrusted to his people once and for all’ as Jude so earnestly encourages us to do.

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.”—I Cor. 3:13 ■

Love Is Kind

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” —*I Corinthians 13:4*

THE WORD ‘CHARITY’ IN our text is a translation of the Greek word *agape*, a more comprehensive translation of which would be ‘love.’ Pure charity is the act of giving, or bestowing benefits upon those who are in no position to return the favor, or in any way compensate the giver. Charity, therefore, is one of the very important elements of the Divine quality of love. It was an outstanding act of charity on the part of God when he “gave” his beloved Son to be man’s Redeemer. That gift was for the benefit of those who were in no position to repay the giver. This gift was an act of love—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

Love is one of the great principles of God; however, it embodies all the qualities of unselfishness, and not alone that of charity. Love, therefore, as a controlling principle in the Christian’s life, will always manifest itself in ways calculated to result in the greatest possible blessing to all concerned. The Christian’s life should operate in harmony with the principle of Divine love, as set forth in

God's Word. This is not a matter of denying one's self only, but a positive doing of the Divine will.

One might set aside his self-seeking ambitions and activities but, instead of accepting the Divine will instead of his own, become motivated by the desire to do the will of another. Thus one may devote himself to forwarding the cause of an earthly leader, or some particular organization. Or, he might seek to please his father or mother, or some particularly dear friend. A husband might give up his own will for that of his wife's, or vice versa. Thus an individual might be quite unselfish, yet, if any other will except the Divine will has supplanted his own, he is not putting himself under the influence of Divine love.

Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," and the doing of this is the supreme test of true love. (John 14:15) Some of the cruelest events in history have been perpetrated in the name of love. But, upon analysis, it will be found that it was not for God that such offences were committed, but for friends, or church, or group, and, sometimes, merely to carry out their own ideas. But true Divine love is never cruel, abusive, rash, or sarcastic. It never supports friends against the Divine will, as revealed through the truth of God's Word. Where the necessity of the Divine will demands, it will take a firm stand for the right, and may be stern in its opposition to wrong, even though the wrong may be sponsored by one's dearest friends; but it will always be kind.

HUMAN LOVE SOMETIMES UNKIND

It is quite easy to confuse sentimental love with the great principle of Divine love. When this is

done, important issues of the Christian life are lost sight of. Thus, it is entirely possible for one to suppose that he is living in a very high state of Christian attainment along the lines of love, yet actually be dwelling in a sort of 'fool's paradise.' Each individual Christian must determine for himself whether or not this is true in his own case by applying a few simple tests.

Sentimental love will manifest itself in friendly, kindly ways towards one's friends; but frequently in unfriendly, hateful ways towards one's enemies. Thus monks living back in the Dark Ages could write eloquent phrases about the love of Jesus, and at the same time join in persecuting to the death those who did not agree with them. Human nature has not changed, and we all need to be on guard lest, while indulging in beautiful platitudes of love, we might not be secretly harboring resentment and hatred in our hearts; or possibly sarcastically expressing sentiments of ill will toward those who may not be believing, or doing, what we might prefer.

True love is kind; hence, if we discover that the spirit within us is not one of kindness, even toward our enemies, we can be sure that it is not the spirit of love. That it is possible to be deceived along this line is indicated by James, who says, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing [for our friends, and praise to God] and cursing [for our enemies]. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."—James 3:10

John says, "This is love, that we walk after his commandments." (II John 6) To ignore, or seek to sidestep any of the LORD's commandments, no matter how trivial the points involved may seem to us,

would mean that we would be failing just that much in fully exemplifying Divine love in our lives. All of the Divine commandments are designed to guide us in becoming godlike, and one of the outstanding elements of godlikeness is resoluteness against any degree of compromise with unrighteousness.

God's commands are exacting and far-reaching, and if love is to be fully expressed in our lives, we must be close and obedient students of his will. These commandments cover personal conduct as well as doctrinal matters. They deal with our own personal doctrinal standing, and also govern our attitude toward others who transgress along these lines. John informs us that if we bid Godspeed to one whose doctrines we consider to be erroneous, it is tantamount to accepting and promoting those doctrines ourselves.—II John 10,11

The particular doctrinal point here mentioned by the apostle is not a specially disputed one in the church today; but the principle he enunciates applies just the same. To many of us this might be construed to be a very narrow viewpoint, devoid of liberty and tolerance; but it is the inspired expression of how God weighs matters of this kind.

The same principles hold true with respect to the personal conduct of those with whom we are associated. All of us are imperfect; and Divine mercy and love demand that we look upon each other charitably. God has provided, through the merit of Christ, a covering robe, and is viewing us as being under that robe. Just so should we view each other.

Thus seen, love does not countenance wrong, doctrinally or otherwise; but love, when erected as a bulwark against wrong must, nevertheless, continue

to be kind. One might feel truly righteously indignant against obvious efforts to foster erroneous doctrines among the LORD's people, yet this would be no excuse for unkindness in calling the brethren's attention to the lurking dangers.

Unkindness in word or in deed is never a manifestation of love. Unkindness in word may be revealed by sarcasm, harshness, exaggerations, ridicule, untrue accusations, innuendoes, discounting what is good in that which we believe to be partially wrong. The apostle gives us this same general picture, saying, "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself [is not rash, *Marginal Translation*], is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth [literally, 'covereth'] all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."—I Cor. 13:4-7

KINDNESS MUCH NEEDED TODAY

We are living in a world that is increasingly being brought under the domination of unkindness and hate. The spirit of hate seems, at times, to almost permeate the air. There seems no limit to what human and satanic selfishness will stoop to do to further its own ends. Wholesale suffering and woe is inflicted—usually upon the innocent—in order to carry out the designs of selfishness. Bitter words of hatred, and death-dealing missiles of literal destruction, are alike the implements by which the attempt is made to push forward the battle of human selfishness to an inglorious victory.

But how refreshing, in contrast to all this, is the spirit of kindness, as that spirit is—or should be—manifested in the lives of the consecrated people of God! We, too, are engaged in a battle. It is the “good fight of faith.” (I Tim. 6:12) But, the “weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” (II Cor. 10:4) Our armor is the Truth, and our sword, the Word of God. (Eph. 6:17) This sword, in order to be effective, must be wielded in love. Its blows must fall in kindness and in mercy and in sympathy. It must never be used to injure another, but always to help and bless.

In II Corinthians 6, the apostle outlines the necessary scriptural background for Christian conduct to safeguard the “ministry” against blame. (vs. 3) Among the many important things mentioned in this lesson, is that our service of the Truth should be “by kindness.” (vs. 6) How much unnecessary blame has been heaped upon the ministry through failure of the LORD’s people to heed this admonition! In a misguided zeal we are often prone, in defending the Truth, to do it unkindly. This should not be!

Let us speak the Truth, and speak it with conviction and with clarity; but let us speak it kindly. The mighty power of the Truth itself will accomplish the Divine will in the lives of the truly consecrated; and it is not necessary for us to resort to worldly methods of handling the Truth in order, supposedly, to make it more powerful. Let us have full confidence in the LORD’s methods, believing that, if we adhere to them, the Divine ministry in that part of the ministry committed to us, will be fully carried out. Love is obedience, and if we fully obey its dictates, we will be kind.

The kindness of love should ever be operative in our lives: in the home, the office, the factory. It should influence our home life, and our associations with the brethren. At no time does love grant us the privilege of being unkind. Herein, therefore, is one of the vital tests of true love. Our fallen flesh might often wish to be unkind; and as long as we are in the flesh, we will never be able to be as kind as we should be. But we should never cease battling against the unkind tendencies of the flesh, and, as far as possible, endeavor to establish kindness as one of our habits of Christian living.

In the business and social world, kindness is often practiced as a policy; in which case it is very likely to be merely a veneer underneath which rankles the spirit of ill will and hatred. But Christian kindness is more than a veneer. It should become a deep-rooted rule of action in which we delight. Our delight in kindness should be based on the fact that we recognize it to be a part of that godlikeness which we are endeavoring to have worked out in our lives. David said, “[My] delight is in the law of the LORD.” (Ps. 1:2) It is a part of God’s law for us that we should be kind, hence we should delight in being kind, because love is kind. ■

*“For a small moment have I forsaken thee;
but with great mercies will I gather thee.*

*“In a little wrath I hid my face from thee
for a moment; but with everlasting kindness
will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy
Redeemer.”*

—Isaiah 54:7,8

Pilgrim Trip by
Russian & Moldovan
Brethren to Russia
& Siberia
March 2005

BRO. MATEI KAUSH and I (Adam Udod) agreed to visit our sisters in Siberia. To go empty-handed such a long distance did not feel right. We asked for help from the brethren in Canada, Moldova, and Russia; and made translations of several brochures from English into Russian.

Our trip was delayed until all the literature was printed. It takes more time in our country than in other countries to get the work done. At last, in the beginning of March, Bro. Matei informed me that the literature was complete, and we would soon begin our trip. Bro. Matei lives in Moldova, and I live in Russia. We planned, as our meeting point, the city of Taganrog of the Rostov.

Finally, on March 14, we met in Taganrog. What a pleasure to meet with brethren. We see each other very seldom and this was a very special occasion for us. Our visit went well into the night.

Bro. Matei told us about the complications he had endured at the Russian border. Custom inspectors found thousands of brochures that he had brought, and the officers demanded special documents that he did not have. To import religious literature into Russia is illegal. He explained his belief, but that did not matter. The affair was aggravated even more by the fact that the literature was imported by a citizen of another country. The chief of customs service was unshakable and demanded that Bro. Matei go to the city of Taganrog where the office of customs is located, and once there he would understand why it is illegal to bring Bible literature into this country. They seized the literature from Bro. Matei.

Bro. Matei was on the same train and continued on to the city of Taganrog. When he got off the train, he was met by his relatives who are in the Truth. Seeing the wonderful greeting Bro. Matei received, the customs chief took out the bag of literature from the car, and threw it at Bro. Matei, which left us speechless. The man said, "Ah, ah, God be with you." This is not a usual expression with worldly people and to us it was the proof that our Heavenly Father was with us. We had lost no literature. We were very thankful.

On March 15, we took the train to Moscow. We tried to start conversations with fellow travelers on Bible themes. Most were too serious, and none became interested. Though people in general are educated, and almost every passenger was reading something, only some took the brochures offered to them.

ARRIVAL IN SIBERIA

Sunday, March 20, we finally arrived in the city of Tulun, Siberia, at Sr. Julja and Sr. Tamara's house. They both live in the same house. We were accepted warmly and it was so good to be with someone of like precious faith. They were happy with the gift of literature we brought. The literature we brought was: *God and Reason, How God Answers Prayer, Day of Judgment, Spiritualism, Armageddon then World Peace, When Pastor Russell Died, Hope for a Fear-Filled World, Why God Permits Evil*, and many Russian Dawn magazines.

We stayed with Sr. Julja and after a rest we had a meeting with several sisters. After a prayer we read the *Manna*. The sisters then asked me to serve them with a discourse to express my beliefs and hopes. After this, Bro. Matei added a few words and the meeting ended with prayer. The sisters lingered to ask questions on various Bible topics. When the sisters left for home, we continued in fellowship with Sr. Julja and Sr. Tamara, discussing sweet memories of the convention and how dear brethren are worldwide.

Several sisters told us their experience in trying to show the film, *For This Cause*, in the House of Culture. Sr. Tamara, who organized the effort, told us that some claimed that she was breaking the law in showing the film, and that if she persisted, action could be taken against her. The sisters realize that there are other ways to witness if they are not allowed to show the film. They have some 1,700 brochures that they plan to distribute.

On Monday, March 21, we went to visit Sr. Arisha, the oldest sister in the ecclesia. On the way, we visited Sr. Tatyana Minakova from the Epiphany movement. We discussed various issues.

When we arrived at Sr. Arisha's home, we almost missed seeing her because the owner of the building was out and could not let us in, and Sr. Arisha could not hear the doorbell. We climbed an icy slope outside her window hoping that she would see us. She finally did, but it was questionable if she would be able to open the heavy door and let us in. We were finally let into her tiny room. One of us sat on the bed and the other on a dresser and we had a long conversation on the wonderful plan of God. Sr. Arisha, 95, has a remarkable memory, is quick-witted, and even reads without glasses. She related many experiences from her life and recited many scriptures from memory. We will long remember Sr. Arisha, with her kind smile and bright eyes, sitting in the twilight stroking her Bible.

FALSE FEARS

Upon returning, we met a young man who was seriously interested in our beliefs, but who is already under the influence of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Speaking with him was difficult. He is intimidated by false fears of Armageddon; thinking that the only rescue is through the Witnesses and that all others will be lost or exterminated. We left him a complete set of brochures, and advised him to carefully study them to verify that God has a plan for all mankind. He said that if these brochures were found by his instructors, they would order him to return them to us, or throw them out. He knows

this because he had an experience with the *Divine Plan of the Ages*, which the sisters had given him to read. His name is Sergey. He was very kind to us. Sergey wanted to treat us somehow. We thanked him and parted on good terms.

SONG AND SCRIPTURE STUDIES

Tuesday and Wednesday we had meetings with Sisters Stephanida and Elena. It is necessary to note that though the city is small, the sisters all live in different ends of the city, making it inconvenient to gather. Most of the sisters are older; therefore, the sisters take turns having meetings in their homes. We considered Matthew 24, Revelation 22:17, and I Corinthians 12:7-10. Everywhere we went, there was the spirit of unity with song and scripture studies. During our dinner hour, we constantly spoke of the wonderful truths in the Bible. We had conversations, discussions, and many questions. Some sisters had different thoughts, since they were from other groups, but we parted amicably. All of the friends were very kind one to another and we left as good friends and brethren.

It was very difficult for us to see the poor living conditions of these sisters, the small living quarters that most of them live in. Yet, they are very zealous, loving, never grumble, and are very reverential.

On Friday, March 26, we took the train to return home. This time the trip was not so tiring and monotonous, as we had many memories to share from our visit with these wonderful sisters.

In Moscow, Bro. Matei left to return to Moldova and I left for Rostov-on-Don. ■

Gospel of the Kingdom

—Internet Radio Station—

IN AUGUST 2005, the Orlando Bible Students established an internet radio station, *Gospel of the Kingdom Radio*. This was a class project undertaken to determine the feasibility, and effectiveness, of using internet radio for witnessing to the Truth.

Internet radio broadcasts over the internet rather than over traditional radio airways. It can be heard anywhere in the world on a computer with an internet connection. It works best with a high-speed internet connection (cable or DSL), but will also work with dial-up. There is advertising on the station, just as there is with any commercial radio or TV station. The Orlando Bible Students have blocked as many ads as they are allowed to, and still maintain the station. Other ads can be blocked by the user, if they so choose, by following certain steps, and paying a nominal fee. Also, once connected to the station, a user can minimize their screen so that they only hear audio, and never see any visual ads at all. The user can then do other work on their computer and simply listen to the station while they work, or leave their computer entirely and listen from another part of the room.

The Orlando station programming currently

includes: devotional reading, Frank and Ernest programs, Dawn magazine readings, readings from Studies in the Scriptures and Reprints, music, convention discourses, Christian Questions talk radio, Dawn booklet advertisements (21 different ads), and more programming being added each week. The station's audio library currently has over 20,000 minutes of sound. Each day features a fresh broadcast schedule which runs twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

The results of this witness effort have been very encouraging. During the first five weeks of operation, there have been:

- 1,880 visits to the station page
- 975 total listeners tuned in
- 600 hours of listenership, averaging 37 minutes per tune-in
- 45 listeners who have made the station a 'pre-set' on their computer
- Listeners from 36 states in the U.S., 24 countries, and 6 continents

In addition, the Dawn has already been contacted by interested listeners resulting from the station witness effort. Many e-mails also have been received from listeners. The overall response has been very positive.

For any who are interested in learning more about, or accessing, this station, simply go to the web address: www.live365.com/stations/gospel_kingdom. If you have questions about the station, or would like more information about the use of internet radio for broadcasting Bible Students material, you may e-mail your inquiry to: gospelofthekingdom@earthlink.net. ■

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

HELP FOR A TEACHER

Dawn Bible: This website has tremendously helped me as a new teacher. I am able to give my students supplemental information in addition to the Sunday school books.

I print the summaries from your website. This gives the students a general idea of what the lesson is talking about prior to class.

I thank God for people like you who are committed to discipleship.

I pray God's blessings upon your ministry.—D.B.

RECOVERY PROCESS

Dawn Publications: I want to thank you so much for being part of my life with your books, magazine, and on-line services.

I would really like to continue the subscription, but I am still on state welfare and can't

afford to purchase any literature.

You have had a great influence on my recovery process from drug addiction and my mental illnesses and have helped me through these past 2 years being on the hepatitis C treatment, and I am pleased to let you know that I am finally off the treatment and it has worked! Thank you so much for being there for me. Your Friend—CT

AD IN OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

Sirs: Just found your ad in last year's *Old Farmer's Almanac*. Is it still available? Price?

The earth used to seem a gorgeous planet, with 'bad' happenings off and on. Now it feels like perpetual 'bad' happenings, with beautiful periods, off and on!

Am I alone feeling like this? Thank you—L.W.

“HOPE” BOOKLET

Dear Ones: I received your booklet *Hope*, after my mother’s passing.

Although I am of a different faith [Jewish], I still appreciate your message and your thought behind it. Keep up the good work.—FL

BLESSING ON THE PHONE

Dawn People: Thank you so much for your encouragement and love.

It was such a blessing talking with your people on the phone when I called my order in.

Thank you again and God’s blessings to you all.—CT

RECEIVED BOOKLETS

Frank & Ernest: I write to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of 32 scripture books in response to my earlier letter.

Some of the books will be given to my children, friends, and coworkers.

Paul’s prayer is “that the God of our Lord Je-

sus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” (Amen.)

I am sincerely grateful for the books. Thanks and God bless you. (Amen.) Yours in Christ—
NIGERIA

READ EVERY WORD

Dear Ones: Thank you for recognizing the sorrow I am going through. I read every word in the pamphlet *Hope*. It is very inspiring.

I do not know how you learned of my wife’s passing, but appreciate your concern for my welfare. Yes! I considered suicide because I loved her with all my heart. We had been married for 38+ years.

But, that could never be the answer. I am blessed to have her daughter here to sustain me.

Please accept my thanks for your friendship and concern for me!—FL

“I Wish I Knew What To Do!”

HOW OFTEN WE hear this statement made by those who are zealous for making known the glad tidings of the kingdom. May we suggest one thing that practically all can do is to send one or more *Dawn* gift subscriptions to their friends. Just think, one gift subscription means that *The Dawn* magazine enters the home twelve times during the year as your messenger of Truth. Isn't this something worthwhile doing? Each subscription is only \$3.00, and you can have four names entered for just \$10.00! It is simple to do when you use the coupon below; phone us at 1-888-440-DAWN, or e-mail us at DawnBible@aol.com.

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DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, New Jersey 07073

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below, in cooperation with the Dawn, are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

M. J. Balko

New York, NY November 13

E. Kuenzli

New York, NY November 13

E. Blicharz

Atlanta, GA November 6

R. Sconyers

Louisville, AL November 13

B. Carnegie

San Diego, CA November 25-27

L. Wesol

St. Petersburg, FL November 13

R. Goodman

Jersey City, NJ November 19,20

A. Williams

San Diego, CA November 25-27

R. Gorecki

New Haven, CT November 6

OBITUARIES

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to their family and friends in the loss of these dear ones.

Sister Freda Tiemeyer, Alamitos, CA—August 21. Age, 91

Brother Leo Wawryk, Wakaw, SK, Canada—August 23. Age, 86

Sister Helene Roberts, Mt. Vernon, NY—September 12. Age, 88

Brother Jack Lamb, Huntsville, AL—September 20. Age ?

Sister Gladys Winans, Wilmington, DE—September 25. Age, 87

Sister Jeanette Weaver, Lewiston, ID—September 26. Age, 87

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 6—Italian American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. M. Suraci, 171 Johnson Road, Hamden, CT 06518. Phone: (203) 248-3793

JERSEY CITY PRE-THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, November 19,20—Loyalty Lodge, 1912 Morris Avenue, Union, NJ 07083. Phone: (908) 688-9842. Contact S. Koterba, 142-14 26th Avenue, #4H, Flushing, NY 11354. Phone: (718) 961-4437

SAN DIEGO THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, November 25,26,27—Doubletree Club Hotel, 1515 Hotel Circle South. Phone: (800) 489-9671 or (619) 881-6900. Contact D. Rice. Phone: (619) 589-1534

CHICAGO NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, December 31, January 1,2—Elk Grove High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. Contact R. Tabac 4N233 Norris Avenue, West Chicago, IL 60185 Phone: (630) 231-1874

PHOENIX NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, December 31, January 1,2—La Quinta Inn, 2510 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85203. Contact J. Porcolab, PO Box 5432, Sun City West, AZ 85376. Phone: (602) 363-3612



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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD—peculiarly “his workmanship;” that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people,” and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING, AND POLISHING of the consecrated believers in Christ’s atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God “tasted death for every man,” “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be a “partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet. 1:4

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35