

**LIVING
THE
CHRISTIAN
LIFE**

VOLUME 1



BY WILLIAM R. HUNT

*Living the
Christian Life*

Volume 1

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Power Through Faith

There have always been power-hungry men. Some have lost their lives, others their position, in the struggle for this power. Germany was devastated in World War I, and politicians destroyed others with their disgraceful, senseless, twisted statements about them.

But not all men have accepted that philosophy. Some have found that faith is the true source of power. God has enabled some to have power to continue working while others sneer, mock, and laugh.

Consider one man whom God gave a task that he was still working on fifty years later. More than likely the statement was heard, "Old man, you have been working on that project for fifty years, and it looks like it will take another fifty. Why don't you quit?"

He may well have answered, "God told me to build the ark, and build it I will."

After another fifty years, some of the same things were being said, but the old man was still intent on finishing the project God had given him. His faith in God, and respect for His command, gave him power to continue. Noah persisted until the ark was completed.

Faith in God gave Job power to continue in the midst of overwhelming odds. Even while sitting on the ash heap, scratching his boils with scraps of pottery, and with three friends who were either silent or accusing, and not being able to find God on any side, still his trust was intact. He still had the faith-power to declare, “But [my God] knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Listen to Joseph responding to Potiphar’s wife’s seduction when he responded, “. . . How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). So saying, he fled from the house. Faith in God gave him power to do what needed to be done, even though it caused him to be thrown into the prison. But even there, faith in God gave him

grace to live and act right, and led to his eventual elevation as ruler of the land.

The three Hebrew children were commanded to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's huge golden god. They refused. Even threats to heat the furnace seven times hotter than normal, and to throw them in, did not daunt their faith-power or their obedience to their teachings to worship no other god. They believed that God was able to deliver them, but even if not, “. . . Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3:18). Although God does not always deliver like He did on that occasion, He will still give His people the power to stand for what is true, and will be with them in the storm.

We, too, can have power like Noah to stay at our post of duty, or like Job to keep trusting even when we don't see Him on any side. We can have the power, like Joseph, to stand against even the fiercest of temptations—and be overcomers. Or, like the three Hebrews, we can stand tall in the face of severe opposition.

Those who desire more power through faith, let the Lord control your ambitions, attitudes, desires, emotions, fears, motives, and passions. He will send the Holy Spirit to minister in every time of need.

Urgent: Praying Men and Women Needed

Today's church is better equipped than ever to spread the gospel. The church has more education, more committees, more seminars, and more wealth, but where is the church's power? God is the same as when Peter said to the man at the Temple gate, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

In America today, the church is facing crises it has never before faced. Open, blatant sin is being proclaimed as a normal way to live. People in powerful positions are discrediting fundamental, conservative Christians. Marriage, as ordained by God's Word, is being challenged. Situation ethics are considered morally right.

The church must have men and women who are willing to face the crises of our day;

people who study the passions of Christ and have learned the business of praying; people who are willing, like Jacob, to wrestle with the Lord in prayer until the Lord gives them power with God and man; people who will pray until opposing forces are defeated.

The world's analysis of the praying church of the first century was, "These . . . have turned the world upside down." Those who had turned the world upside down had an absolute transference of trust from themselves to Christ. They believed to have Christ commit the future of His church to them was the highest honor that could be conferred on them. Their chief business through prayer was the advancement of His kingdom. They made prayer a controlling factor in their lives.

God's appointments have always been people who placed Him first in their lives. They trusted the Lord with their lives rather than leaning to their own understanding; they were men of prayer. Moses interceded for Israel for forty days and forty nights after the Lord had said He would destroy the children of Israel; Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jeru-

salem; Jehoshaphat defended Judah against Moab and her allies; and David faced a lion, a bear, and a giant. These men knew God would come to their aid through prayer. These men, like Jeremiah, could say, “Ah Lord GOD, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.”

E. M. Bounds in his book, *The Weapons of Prayer*, wrote, “Jesus Christ was the divinely appointed Leader of God’s people, and no one thing in His life proves His eminent fitness for that office so fully as His habit of prayer. Nothing is more suggestive of thought than Christ’s continual praying, and nothing is more conspicuous about Him than prayer. His campaigns were arranged, His victories gained, in the struggles and communion of His all-night praying. His praying rent the heavens. Moses and Elijah and the Transfiguration glory waited on His praying. His miracles and His teaching had their force from the same source. Gethsemane’s praying crimsoned Calvary with serenity and glory. His prayer makes the history and hastens the triumphs of His church.”

Today's church has various needs both great and small, but the greatest need is leaders who know the value and power of prayer, and are willing to suffer hardship, to make whatever sacrifices necessary, whether it be pleasures or duties, to have their lives saturated with prayer. The torch of prayer, and the fortunes and destiny of the church, have all been handed down to us.

We can rest assured Christ is going to build His church with or without us, but His will is that we be coworkers with Him. E. M. Bounds also said, "It must never be forgotten that Almighty God rules this world. He is not an absentee God. His hand is ever on the throttle of human affairs. He is everywhere present in the concerns of time . . . He rules the world just as He rules the church: by prayer."

Bible Faith

The Bible speaks much about faith. Such terms as holy faith, little faith, great faith, no faith, full of faith, walk by faith, and unfeigned faith are often read with little thought. Many associate faith only with saving faith. But faith has a greater significance. The Scriptures tell us, “Without faith it is impossible to please him.” “The just shall live by faith.” “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” A logical question in the last days should be, “What is implied by faith?” Or, “What is faith?”

The Bible teaches that through the Word of God, faith is a grace given to the sinner by the Holy Spirit, enabling the sinner to have confidence in God, and to look to Christ for remission of sins. By faith, strength is given to enable that person to perform the duties God requires. Through this faith and the Word of God, after he has received Christ as his

only Saviour, he can encounter spiritual enemies and be the victor. Remember, God does not respect one person above another. If ever one person was victorious, all may be victorious. "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith . . ." (Heb. 11:36-39). It is plain to see that these heroes of faith were victors.

The Word of God reveals and furnishes life, power, protection, leadership, and direction for every situation. For example, if a person realizes he is weak in a certain area of his life, he may ask the Lord for help. In God's timing, the person finds a verse or passage of Scripture that especially speaks to his need. That person then realizes that help is available for his weakness. At that moment the Holy

Spirit begins helping the person to trust God's leadership. He begins to follow after a perfect heart toward God.

Some time later the same person may come across verses like these: "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." This time he senses direction from God, and may detect he needs a little adjustment in his direction. His delights have been good and proper, but a little out of focus. But now he understands that he is to delight himself in the Lord. By faith he fine-tunes his focus, and having also read, "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass," he makes that commitment. With joy, he trusts God's promise. More than ever he realizes God is now leading, directing, and protecting him.

Through the Word of God he begins building himself on his most holy faith. He realizes that the just walk by faith. He sees that a person can be full of faith and power. His heart longs to grow in faith. He sees there is a shield of faith for him.

Our Intercessor

In many areas of life we need someone to represent us. Several years ago a young man named Bill worked for a large company. He made a very expensive mistake, and was informed by the floor manager that he was terminated. John, one of Bill's superiors, said to Bill, "You sit down in my office until I talk with the owner of the company." To Bill's surprise, John went to stand in the presence of the owner, representing him, and he was not fired.

In courts of law, when men are in serious trouble they spend many dollars for lawyers to represent them in the presence of the judge, with no assurance that the judge will be sympathetic.

A young man of my acquaintance was in serious trouble with the law, but he had a relative who said to him, "The judge and I grew up together; as young boys we stayed all

night with each other. We raced horses and we went to school together. Let me go and talk to the judge.” The relative stood in the presence of the judge representing the young man. The judge heard the request, and gave a sentence that was both just and merciful.

In Hebrews 9:24 we read that we have a relative, a near-kinsman, in fact a brother, who is also a great high priest whose name is Jesus, who has entered into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us. There are three little words which are so precious in the verse: They are “Now . . . for us.” Now—not yesterday or tomorrow, but at this moment—Jesus is appearing in the presence of God for us. Praise His Holy Name!

Bill’s friend, John, could have failed. The lawyer in a court of law could lose the case. The young man’s relative might have failed to get the judge to listen. But the one who now stands in the presence of God for us can never fail, lose, or be unable to get God’s attention.

Jesus wanted to represent you in the presence of God so greatly that He not only

died the cruel death of the cross, but also ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father. However, He only represents those who are willing to repent, confess their sins, believe in their heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and willingly make Him the Lord of their life.

The Price of Deception

Deception is costly.

A number of years ago a young man purchased a 1942 Ford, one of the fastest cars on the road. It was beautiful, and he was extremely proud of it—until he changed the oil. It was very thick; in fact, it had cork dust in it to kill the sound of the knocks in the motor. The car soon had to be junked. He had been deceived.

A bank teller was very embarrassed that he had accepted a counterfeit one-hundred-dollar bill. Another teller noticed what he had missed. He had been deceived.

Not all deceivers and deceived are outside the realm of the church. Some are right among us. Jesus declared, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matt. 24:4b), and Paul warned, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked” (Gal. 6:7a).

In Matthew 25 Jesus gave three illustrations relating to deception in the last days.

The first was in the parable of the ten virgins. Relating the oil to religion, five of them were satisfied with a minimal amount. They were deceived, and came up short. At the last minute they sought more, but were too late, and were shut out of the celebration. Also, they heard the awful words, "I know you not." Their deception cost them dearly, but no more so than if we today are deceived into thinking we can get by with bare minimums of Christianity.

The second illustration is in the parable of the talents. A lesson to be learned here is not to be deceived into a state of unproductiveness. There are church members who rarely, if ever, do anything for God's cause. They come; they listen; but they don't really hear, and are barely involved. One of those in Jesus' story received a talent, but did nothing with it, other than keeping it. He was called a "wicked and slothful servant," and was cast into outer darkness. He had been deceived into thinking that all he needed to do was to return the talent given him. Are there not a multitude of folk around or in the church today that are doing the same thing? God

desires that we invest what He entrusted us with, and be profitable servants.

The third principle is found in the story of the sheep and the goats. The sheep are defined as those who ministered to the sick, visited those in jail, or helped the needy. The goats are those who simply failed to do these things. As for the goats, their minds were darkened, their spirits were not compassionate—they had been deceived. The priest and the Levite on their way to Jericho would have to be labeled as goats; the Good Samaritan as sheep. (See Luke 10:30-35.) The first are condemned, the latter praised. Which are you, a sheep or a goat?

Three challenges are to be drawn from these illustrations. The first is, do not be happy with minimal religion, but serve God with all of your soul, spirit, mind, and strength. Second, do not be content with unproductiveness. Third, in helpfulness and compassion be a sheep, not a goat.

Remember Jesus' words, "Take heed that no man deceive you." When you stand before the Judge of the world, you will be glad you took heed.

God's Manifestations in His People

The Apostle Paul, writing in 1 Corinthians 11:19, tells us there will be heresies among God's people. When this is combatted, it will cause God's powers to be manifested among His people. This statement leads to the question: What are some of God's manifested characteristics in His people?

The following list is not exhaustive, but may prove helpful in answering the above question:

1. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the person is dead to sin and self, and alive to God's will.

2. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the person keeps his mind stayed on things above.

3. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the person always gives God the benefit of the doubt when things are neither black nor white.

4. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the person is determined not to dishonor God in his conduct, speech, or attitude.

5. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the person has had a mind change. The person whose mind was once set on self-gratification with no regard for God, now, by the help of the Holy Spirit, has his mind set on God, and he has surrendered to God's will.

6. The person believes and appropriates the promises of the New Covenant for himself, such as the following: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36:25-27). (Please notice the seven "I wills." When we let God do His "I will," our struggles are removed.)

7. The person has a consciousness of his need of divine grace, and a confidence unsha-

ken in Christ's ability and willingness to supply that need.

8. The person has been transformed by the renewing of his mind, and his mind reposes with unwavering trust in Christ's ability and faithfulness to meet all his needs.

9. The person has surrendered to the Holy Spirit to be transformed into the image of Christ.

10. If we have love one to another, men will know we are His disciples.

What Do Your Tracks Reveal?

Almost everything leaves a track. Tracks are very revealing. They may show character, purpose, or direction. Animal tracks may show approximate age and gender. Some tracks may show culture or race. In this article we are considering people tracks.

My father enjoyed tracking people through the woods. With very few automobiles in the area where I grew up, neighbors walked wherever they went, and always took the shortest route. As a young lad, I watched my father discover tracks made as someone passed through some part of our 720 acres. Sometimes he would study a section of ground, and say, "I think we are following an older man." Then he would show me the sign or track he had used to reach his conclusion. As he continued to follow the tracks, he might say, "Son, why do you think this man is on our farm?" If I could not give Dad a good answer, he would say, "I showed you where

he sat on the stump. I showed you where he [walked around the old squirrel's tree. I showed you spots of dried blood. Son, that man was after a mess of squirrels. He won't bother anything."

Christians are leaving tracks. What type of tracks are we leaving? What conclusions do others reach as they follow our tracks? Where will our tracks lead others? Will they lead people to live a holy life, or an unstable life? Will our tracks lead to hell or heaven? One time a couple told me they had been married thirty plus years, and had watched my wife and I in our Christian walk since their dating years. That caused me to stop and ask myself, "What type of tracks am I leaving?"

Paul believed Christians should leave tracks that would lead others to heaven. In a number of his writings, he said his tracks would lead to heaven. Here is how he said it: "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (1 Cor. 4:16). "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (11:1). "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample"

(Phil. 3:17). “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (4:9). “For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you” (2 Thess. 3:7).

Paul was not the only person to say, “Follow me.” Jesus told the publican, the tax collector, the disciples, the young man with great possessions, Philip, and Peter after his denial of the Lord, and all, “Follow me.”

We have a great responsibility to Christ and our fellowman. Can we say, “Follow me; my tracks will lead you to Christ and to heaven”? Remember, others are following our tracks without our knowledge. How horrible would it be to find out at the great judgment that someone we loved dearly had followed our tracks and had become unstable, given up, and had missed heaven.

May each of us live a Christian life, and be able to say with Paul, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Where Is the Place of Safety?

In our changing world, new dangers surface each year in economics, health, ecology, and morals. Great sums of money are being channeled into research to make such things as safer toys, autos, planes, and washing machines. The consumer is bombarded with the question of safety, but he does not stand alone. The investor also is faced with the question of safety. What is a safe investment? Which institution is safe?

We all face questions about what is safe or dangerous for our health. Do we eat it or not? The appearance of new diseases creates the need for new medicines. Then the question arises as to whether or not the medicine is safe. Can everyone take it? Should it be limited to the old, or should its use with the young be restricted? What is safe?

In America, many of our streams are polluted to the point they are not safe for swim-

ming, nor is it safe to eat the fish caught in them. Rural areas are faced with the problem of safe drinking water. We do not know what new dangers lurk just beyond the horizon because we are disturbing the ozone layer. Wherever we live the questions face us, "What, and where, is safety?"

Some years ago I learned a great lesson on safety from one deer and a pack of hounds. Our family was camped out on a riverbank, and while fishing early one morning, I heard a pack of hounds chasing a deer. I cautioned the children to sit very still and be quiet, and perhaps we might see the deer and hounds. Shortly thereafter we heard the deer approaching. He came into sight, went into the river, then walked downstream about 150 yards, and stood quietly in the river. The hounds soon came to the river, crossed over, but could not find the tracks on the other side. After crossing back and forth a few times, and searching for the trail of the deer, the hounds gave up, and disappeared. All this time the deer stood perfectly still in the river. God had implanted in that deer an instinct for finding a

place of safety. Safety for him was not in his ability to run fast or jump high, but in standing in the river.

Whatever our danger may be, God, too, has made a place of safety for us. Paul tells us that “. . . we have access by faith into [God’s] grace wherein we stand” (Rom. 5:2a). Had the deer become impatient, and left the place of safety, he would no doubt have been killed, but he knew the place of safety in his time of peril. Like the deer, we, too, have a place to stand when surrounded by dangers.

Where is safety? It is not in our strength, nor our struggling, nor our anxieties, but by simply standing, not in a river, but in an ocean of God’s grace, and in letting God pour His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given to His children.

Wretched or Rejoicing— Which Will It Be?

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 7, graphically portrays a man who is without resources, power, or ability to perform according to his knowledge of the law. In Paul's picture, the man states the problem three times: "For we know" (v. 14a), "For I know" (v. 18a), "I find" (v. 21a). Three times he states the evidence of the miserable failures (vv. 15, 16, 18, 19, 23). Three times he gives his conclusion (vv. 17, 20, 24, 25).

As we look at this man who is without resources, power, or ability, let us first notice his statement, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (v. 14). He knows he is a creature of the flesh, and imprisoned by sin. King Sin had welded all the inner doors shut, then locked the outer gate. But King Sin did leave a small window whereby he could read a law that was spiritual.

Notice his proof of imprisonment, “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (v. 15). We see this powerless man unable to hinder what he disapproves. He cannot perform what he wants to do because he is imprisoned by King Sin. What a wretched condition for this man!

Finally, Paul gives his conclusion, “Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (v. 17). As Dr. W. H. Thomas clearly states, “The apostle’s purpose is not to excuse himself or to explain his failure. He is only showing his wretched thralldom that he finds a tyrant who compels him to act against his better self.”

This man is without resources, power, or ability and makes this statement, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (v. 24).

Is this a picture of your life? Are you powerless? Do you feel there are no resources to which you can turn? Do you find yourself hating evil, but unable to perform what is good? If so, the apostle has good news for

you. In chapter 5, Paul shows graphically what the blood of Christ can do. Let us take a look at that picture.

Here we see a man pardoned, acquitted, and regarded as righteous in Christ. He has been justified by faith. He has a new position—a new relationship. Once he was powerless and ungodly, a sinner and an enemy of God. He now is a son, and has resources unseen by the human eye. By faith he has access to God's grace, and he does not have to leave that blessed position. He may stand in that grace as long as he desires. There is no power that can pull, pry, or knock him out of that grace. Tribulation just makes him glory, and while he is glorying, he is rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God.

Listen to this man as he calls back to those who were once his cellmates, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [He is standing in grace up to his neck!] shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the

slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:35-39). This man is not powerless. He has resources that make him leap for joy. He is the son of a mighty King. No welded doors can hold him; his shackles have been removed. He now is a conqueror, not one of the conquered.

In chapter 7, the man was wretched. In chapter 5 we see a rejoicing man glorying in God. What is the difference between the two pictures which the apostle gives us? Chapter 7 depicts a man struggling in his own strength, and looking to the law. In chapter 5 we see the man who believes God’s grace is sufficient for him, though his own strength is weak. Yes, he believed God would justify him and give him grace for every need.

For the man in chapter 5, grace was not some abstract idea. He knew God’s grace was

the divine influence upon the heart, and experienced its reflection in his life. It also included God's benefits, favors, and gifts, and brought to him joy and thankfulness.

Wretchedness, or joy, which will it be?

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).

Choices and Their Consequences

Every person born into this world who has normal faculties is bombarded with choices. The kindergartner chooses with whom to eat; later whom to date; then whether or not to marry. When that person gets his or her own home, he is faced with more choices, like whether or not to answer the telephone, or invite in the person at the door.

Some choices are small, some are large, and some are difficult, but with each there is some kind of consequence. These results may be monetary, social, religious, or otherwise, but each will have some bearing on us or others.

There are many examples in the Bible where people faced choices, made decisions, and reaped either positive or negative results. Let us look at a few of these.

When Abraham and Lot, who each had great herds of animals, decided they must separate, Abraham told Lot to choose which

way he would go, and he would then go the other way. Lot chose the well-watered plains of Jordan, and pitched his tent toward Sodom while Abraham stayed in the more barren hill country.

Years later Lot was a wealthy man living in the wicked city of Sodom. One night visitors (angels) came to his door, and he invited them in. He may have felt good that he had a lovely home to invite them into, rather than the shepherd's tent of a few years before.

After having a meal and fellowship together, the situation changed drastically. A knock came at the door, and when Lot stepped out he suddenly came face to face with the consequences of his earlier choice. The men of the city desired homosexual relations with Lot's visitors. He may have pleaded, "Friends, don't do this wicked thing," but they paid no attention.

When they paid him no heed, he then made the awful suggestion that he give these wicked men his two virgin daughters to do with as they pleased. His earlier choice based on what was good for his herds was not good

for his daughters. Are not many people today putting temporary gain ahead of family interests? What awful consequences that will bring. In the end he lost his cattle, servants, wealth, and most of his family. What a tragic choice he made.

Note another example. Adam and Eve, in the most beautiful and favorable of conditions, made what seemed to be a small choice when they decided to eat the forbidden fruit. God did not instantly bring the full weight of judgment upon them, but payday was coming.

Two sons were born to them, whom they loved dearly. But when they were grown, and each had brought a sacrifice to God, Cain's was not accepted by God, so in anger he slew his brother. What distress and pain came to these parents, but they had sown the seed for this reaping when they ate of the forbidden fruit.

Joseph, his father's favorite, was not his brothers' favorite. They despised the fact that he was the idol of their father's eye, and longed for a time to come when they could get rid of him. That time arrived when he

brought provisions to them in the field far from home, when they sold him to some Ishmeelites on their way to Egypt. These men, in turn, sold Joseph to one of the Pharaoh's officers, Potiphar.

After being repeatedly tempted by Potiphar's wife, but each time refusing, she became so desperate she grabbed his clothing as he tried to flee. Turning then from lust for Joseph to hatred for him, to her husband she accused Joseph of seeking to humble her. This lie resulted in Joseph's being thrown into the prison. Because of Joseph's honorable behavior and proper decision, "But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Gen. 39:21). And because he continued to make the right choices, he was eventually taken from the prison, and made ruler of the land of Egypt.

Each of the illustrations pictures the consequences of right or wrong choices. We, likewise, are faced with basically the same type of choices these people faced. Are our choices made for God and right, or self and evil?

Our choices will bring either good or ill to us here; they will also greatly affect family or friends; and they will determine where we spend eternity.

May God help us to choose well.

Perversion Versus Truth

The world is full of twisted truths and outright lies. Hardly a week passes that we do not either read or hear about some type of fraud. Some are complex; others are simple. Some of the simple ones even a child could detect, yet many times they are successful because of near truths. Others are so complex, even lawyers are unable to untwist them.

There are many reasons why people are ensnared in fraudulent schemes, among which are greed, love of pleasure, prestige, loneliness, and ignorance. The list could go on and on. But whatever the reason, the end result is the same—there is a loss.

There is an old perversion that has been around since the Lord made man. Although it has come down to modern man in many forms, its basic premise has never changed. It goes something like this: “You don’t need God. He only wants to restrict you.” The devil, still telling the same story, says, “If you will

listen to me, I will tell you how you can become gods. Why, you will even be like God.” Then he suggests that you just disobey God. “Oh, don’t do anything wicked—just partake of what God has forbidden, and you will be free. God just wants to constrain you.”

Let us examine the results of this perverted lie. Adam and Eve believed this convincing story, and acting on the advice, they partook of the forbidden fruit. What happened? They felt guilt, shame, and fear, and became condemned people. They lost their home in the Garden, conflict came into the family, and murder resulted.

Were they free? Did they become like God? No. They paid an awful price for believing a lie—a price they could not afford.

The shame of this perversion is that people of every race and age are still believing this same twisted tale, and are still receiving the same wages: guilt, fear, shame, condemnation, family conflicts, separation, and murder. In reality, God is not trying to constrain them, but rather trying to keep them from

self-destruction and loss, and bring them into a joyful relationship with Himself.

Let me encourage you. Do not be one of the disobedient crowd, but instead be of those who seek the truth, for the truth will set you free. The truth is God's Word—read it, study it, meditate upon it, consume it, for “. . . Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).

God's Love for Mankind

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ paints a dismal picture of man in his fallen state. Man, without God, is without hope, and is driven through life by the need to gratify the cravings of his sinful nature. Sin is his master—who never leads man toward God. The old master, Satan, always represents God as man's enemy, suggesting that God is a legalist, wanting to confine him rather than liberate him.

The devil impels man to run and hide—behind anything. This could be fig leaves, trees, hypocrites in the church, or the excuses that Sunday is his only day to work at home, that the sermons at church are too long, too loud, or too soft, or a thousand and one other things he can hide behind. The sinner has no love for God, and is always creating new ways to avoid coming face to face with Him.

Furthermore, the unconverted is pictured as a walking dead man—dead in trespasses

and sins. The Bible pictures three different deaths: spiritual, physical, and eternal. In spiritual death, man is separated from God, but with a ray of hope; in physical death, the spirit and soul are separated from the body; and in eternal death, man is separated from God forever—with no hope ever of access to God's mercy.

The message of this article is to those so spiritually dead, to whom God indicates He is rich in mercy. These still have the ability to hear and respond to God's call for mercy, and they should rejoice in how rich in mercy our God is. The writer has at times desired to purchase some item, but discovered to his disappointment that he was not rich enough. At other times he desired to help his children who were in need, but could not because of limited resources. Other needs were not met because someone else had exhausted the supply ahead of him.

Although God is so rich in mercies that they will never cease, man may ignore them or abuse them. But on the other hand, he may gratefully accept them—with the full assur-

ance that there will be, if needed, new mercies for tomorrow. They are new every morning, and are never stale, tainted, nor tarnished. They are never deficient, exhausted, inadequate, insufficient, nor given sparingly. There is an overflowing, pure, and bountiful supply of God's mercy for every person who has ever lived or will ever be born.

Praise God that even though we were born with the dark, polluted carnal nature that caused each of us to fall into sin, yet the Holy Spirit is at work seeking to bestow His mercy on us. Man still has hope. God longs to show the riches of His mercy to all who are willing to repent. For those who do repent, He will cause them to be made alive in Christ, enabled to live victoriously in this life, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace through His mercy to those who were in sin.

The invitation is that any who have need may and should accept the challenge of letting God, through His Word and His Spirit, open eyes blinded to His mercies. The God who is rich in mercy is the same triune God

and the same Creator of the heavens and earth who delivered the Israelites from Egypt, and led them through the wilderness (see Psalm 136). This Psalm also contains praise for God's abundant mercy, which "endureth for ever."

Like the psalmist, you, too, may see God's never-ending mercy, and enjoy the fellowship of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I Jn. 1:9).

Man's Most Needed Ability

God has provided men with various abilities. There have been men with the ability to be great generals, like George Washington of the Revolutionary War; Ulysses Grant and Robert E. Lee of the Civil War; and generals Patton, Eisenhower, and MacArthur of World War II. The greatest ability man needs is not to become a great army general, though that ability may be very useful and needful.

In the past century Europe produced one of the world's greatest statesmen, Sir Winston Churchill. Though Winston Churchill could sway coal miners, army generals, presidents, kings, and governors around the world, yet the skill to be a great statesman is not man's most needed ability.

America has produced many great industrial giants: men like S. C. Johnson's great-grandfather, the founder of the famous Johnson Floor Wax; the United States' largest

retailer, Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores; and Henry Ross Perot, computer services magnate, who ran for president in 1992. The list could go on and on. The ability to accumulate vast amounts of wealth is a great ability, yet that is not man's most needed ability.

Men are born in the image of Adam, which becomes a self-lordship characteristic that causes many to say, "I don't need anyone to tell me what to do." "I can make my own decisions." "I am wise; I know what is best for me." "Keep your hands off my life." "Just leave me alone."

Men are not only born separated from God because of unbelief and self-lordship enthroned, but with deceitful desires. When Eve saw the beautiful fruit, she apparently said, "I *want* that fruit; I *need* that fruit. I *will have* that fruit, and be wise." She took it and ate it. Was she wise? No. She was deceived by its beauty and Satan's suggestion. It was deceitful fruit. It caused ruin and degradation in her life. Because of the deceitful fruit, Eve's progeny have suffered broken relation-

ships, lost estate, guilt, fear, condemnation, wrong desires, and, like her, have been unable to distinguish the deceitful from the genuine.

Man's most needed ability is to believe God. Believe His Word. Believe that God knows best for us in every detail of our lives. Oh, most of us believe in God—to a degree—some to a greater or lesser degree than others.

How is your ability to believe God's Word? You are invited to take this test. Are these Scriptures true in your life?

1. "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8a).

2. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Rom. 6:12a).

3. "Being then made free from sin" (Rom. 6:18a).

4. "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8).

5. "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (1 Tim. 2:9).

6. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25).

How did you score?

I challenge you to a new depth of faith in God. Believe that He knows what is best for your life; that He is concerned about every detail of your life. Believe all of His Word. Soon you will find you are the apple of His eye, the delight of His heart; His smile will be upon you. He will not only think good thoughts toward you, but your fellowship with Him will be abounding with peace, mercy, grace, and love.

What Does It Mean To Follow Christ?

In the late 1970s, the writer was staying on the ninth floor of one of Chicago's hotels overlooking some railroad tracks and brush. One evening while looking out the south window, he saw an old hound dog following a rabbit. Off and on for a period of a couple of hours, he watched the dog and the rabbit. At times the rabbit would follow the railroad tracks; at other times he would go through the thickest brush. The old hound moved slowly, but did not let anything hinder him from following the rabbit. He acted as though he had renounced all else, and set his mind on following the rabbit.

In Philippians 3, the Apostle Paul sets before us guidelines on how to be as *determined* in our pursuit to follow Christ as that old hound dog was in following the rabbit. He had renounced all to follow Christ. Listen as Paul declares that he was "circumcised the

eight day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee . . . touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” Yes! He had renounced earthly benefits to follow Christ.

Loyalty was another guideline Paul lived by and set before us. He wanted to know the power of Christ’s resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering. Suffering demands loyalty. We are living in a day when it requires very little conflict and suffering to cause us to turn elsewhere. The marriage and divorce statistics show America’s intolerance to suffering. A little conflict, a little suffering, and off to court married couples go so they may change partners. In a higher realm, God does not tolerate spiritual adultery. Let each of us accept the challenge to be loyal to Christ whether we are on the mountaintop with Elijah calling fire down from heaven, or suffering with Job on the ash heap.

Forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward, is another of Paul’s guide-

lines. The old hound following the rabbit never looked back. Many persons have made shipwreck of their faith because they looked back. Jesus warned us against looking back when He said, "Remember Lot's wife." Another time Christ said, ". . . No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62).

A friend recounted his conversion, and finished by saying he had stored much of his old, worldly music in boxes and drawers. Was he making provision for "looking back"? One of these days he will be tempted to dig out what he stored, and return to where he was when God saved him, perhaps convincing himself he has new light. The strong appearance is that he never forgot the things which were behind. My friend would have been better off to have followed the example set before us in Acts 19:19 where a bonfire was used to destroy the relics of the world, instead of storing them away.

Could we accept the challenge to let the old hound dog be our example in our pursuit?

Remember Paul's exhortations: renounce all hindrances, be loyal under all circumstances, never look back. Have the attitude of pressing ". . . toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Handling Our Circumstances

The circumstances in one's life change from one moment to the next. Some of these may be very harmful, while others are profitable. In trying to change circumstances, one may become frustrated, irritated, aggravated, annoyed, or even be driven to commit acts which may lead to regret.

Hebrews 11 is usually thought of as the faith chapter, but it also portrays the difficult circumstances of men's lives. Some of them suffered afflictions, others quenched the violence of fire, some waxed valiant, and others subdued kingdoms. There were many who were stoned, tempted, slain, mocked—the list goes on and on.

Yes, these men victoriously faced trying circumstances in their lives. Reading of these brings us to the question, "How should we handle our circumstances?"

Let us admit that circumstances could eventually master any person whose only idea

is to make his will rule those circumstances, as they are often created by factors which conflict with our wills and ideals. Therefore, one must first master himself enough to realize that his mission in this world is to be totally devoted to God.

One can get an excellent picture of total devotion in Exodus 21. There we see the picture of a Hebrew whose circumstances brought him into slavery. Eventually the day came when he could go free, but instead of accepting his freedom, he says, "I love my master [*Adoni*], my wife, and my children. I will not go free." At that point the master takes him to the door, and bores a hole through his ear with an awl. Now this slave is no longer an ordinary slave. He carries the mark of a love slave, which indicates complete possession on the part of the master, and complete submission on the part of the slave. In return, the master guarantees to that slave that he will provide shelter, food, water, and protection, and will endeavor to keep the slave in good physical condition. Now the master has become the master of the slave's circumstances.

Circumstances need never conquer anyone who purposes to allow God's will to rule the situation. However, it is only the love slave who is able to let God rule. The love slave must, with gratitude in his heart, look to Jesus as his Saviour. Also, with obedience born of love, he will look to Jesus as his Master, and will take Christ as his Example, imitating Him.

As a love slave, one is enabled to reflect Christ to others in times of temptation or difficulty, and in our common everyday life.

Oh, glory! We are no longer ruled by circumstances. Instead, we are ruled by the Master, and we let Him rule the circumstances.

Redeeming the Time

Many commodities may be lost in life, yet given time and opportunity they may be regained. For example, people may lose their homes, transportation, livestock, or farms, but given sufficient time they may be restored. There is one commodity, however, which, when lost, can not be redeemed—that is time. Many people show little concern about wasting time; thereby they lose something that is very valuable, with no chance of redeeming it.

In our society great demand is placed on our time. Some demands are legitimate; others are not. Today, people are living in a “now” world. Everything must have action now, yet let the computer in an airport control tower break down, and most activities around the airport come to an immediate halt. Time is lost. We see the same response on the freeway when some vehicle blocks one or more lanes. Traffic comes to a halt. Again, time is lost.

In Exodus 21:19 God placed value on time by requiring someone to pay for another's loss of time. The word "time" occurs 575 times in the Bible. We are expressly told by Paul (Eph. 5:16) to "[Redeem] the time, because the days are evil." The psalmist tells us that man's time is short. Upon close examination, we find that our time is not our own, for we have been bought with a price. We are to glorify God at all times.

People who use their time properly and in harmony with the will of God are honored by God. For example, John and Peter, at the time of prayer, were headed for the Temple when suddenly God through His providence said, "Men, I have a job for you. There are about 5,000 men who need to be converted today. You are the ones for the job." (See Acts chapters 3 and 4.)

In Acts 6 it is recorded that the apostles placed great value on time. After a problem arose, the apostles directed the people to pick seven men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom to be used to resolve the argument. The apostles felt they must give themselves continu-

ally to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. Once again God honored wise action, and “. . . the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (v. 7).

The great multiplication of disciples in Jerusalem, and the great company of priests who were obedient to the faith, were only part of the results. The church picked men who were full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom to resolve the problem, and out of the obedience of the church there appears to have come the conversion of Saul, whom we call Paul, the apostle. If we could add up Paul’s influence for God in his lifetime, plus the influence resulting from his writings, we would come up with a number that would stagger the imagination.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us accept the challenge of redeeming the time by following the pattern which the apostles set before us. Let us give ourselves continually to prayer, the ministry of the Word, and the other tasks God has assigned us.

Who knows? Perhaps there are thousands waiting to respond to God's call if we will redeem our time as patterned by the apostles. There may even be a Saul on the road to Damascus today. God is waiting for us to redeem our time properly and in harmony with His will.

Help for Seekers of Salvation

What does Jesus offer to ALL people?

Answer: Forgiveness from sins

To be saved, you must acknowledge that you are a sinner. You must believe you are created by God and have enough faith to believe God's Word. Forgiveness is for "who-soever" shall confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in his heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead. The Bible says *that* person "shall be saved" (Romans 10:9). St. John confirmed this when he said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "Whosoever believeth in him [Jesus] should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:15). The gospel of Jesus Christ is for you!

What does Jesus have to offer to the world?

Answer: Removal of sin

If a person travels straight north until he reaches the North Pole and then he keeps moving, he will begin going south. If a person travels straight east, though, he can continue indefinitely, never meeting the west. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). God will “subdue our iniquities” and cast all our sins “into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19b). God said, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). Not only does God remove sin and remember it no more, but God also said, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

What must I do to receive God's salvation?

Answer: Believe that God will forgive you of your sins when you ask Him.

Reader, you, too, can be saved and have a personal relationship with Christ. Here is a suggested prayer. "Lord, I know I am a sinner and need to be saved. Lord, I know Jesus arose from the dead and that His blood was shed for my sins. Lord, I'm asking You to forgive me of my sins and cleanse me. Lord, help me grow in Jesus and develop a love for Your Word. Lord, above everything, help me to keep my eyes focused on You and not on people. Lord, Your Word has confirmed that You would save me; I believe You *have* saved me. Please give me a witness from Your Spirit to my spirit that I am Your child. By faith I believe Your Word; still, my faith is weak. Lord, increase my faith. Amen."

Name and Date: _____

Scriptures for Times of Doubt

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

“As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39).

“. . . Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:20).

Scriptures for Times of Doubt

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Ephesians 1:4).

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

Scriptures for Times of Doubt

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

“And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (John 6:37-39).

“The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah” (Psalm 46:11).

“The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower” (Psalm 18:2).

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears” (Psalm 18:6).

“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock” (Psalm 27:5).

