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THE TEXASTERALD

VOL. 32, NO. 11

AUSTIN, TEXAS

NOVEMBER, 1981

AND NOT FAINT...

"MEN OUGHT - TO PRAY"

DID YOU PRAY?

by Mark Bullock
Ere you left your room this morning,
Did you kneel awhile to pray,
Asking Heaven's blessings
To attend your every way?

If you'll talk to God a moment When the day has just begun, You will have His care and guidance Till the setting of the sun.

In the early morning hours, If you'll ask Him for His aid, You will find His blessed presence Keeps your thoughts upon Him stayed.

He will be a strength and comfort
Through each moment of the day.
Ere you left your room this morning,
Did you kneel awhile to pray?
—Signs of The Times

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

-Isaiah 40:31

THE TEXA HERALD

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"The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63).

Good Stewards

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (I Pet. 4: 10)

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (I Cor. 4: 2-

When someone announces a talk or an article on "Stewardship," most people expect to hear about "Tithing." Stewardship and Tithing are often treated as one and the same thing.

But there is a vast difference between the two.

Tithing is God's standard for man's Giving in Old Testaent days.

Stewardship is God's standard for man's Living in New Testament days — and today.

Tithing was commanded under the law of Moses.

"And all of the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord.

"And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord." (Lev. 27: 30, 32)

YOUR LIFE TELLS

You tell on yourself by the friends you seek, By the very manner in which you speak; By the way you employ your leisure time, By the use you make of dollar and dime; You tell what you are by the things you wear, By the spirit in which your burdens bear, By the kind of things at which you laugh,

By the record you play on the phonograph; You tell what you are by the way you walk,

By the things of which you delight to talk;

By the manner in which you bear defeat,

By so simple a thing as how you eat;

By the books you choose from the well-filled shelf,

In these ways and more you tell on yourself; So there's really no particle of sense In an effort to keep up false pretense.

—Selected.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3: 10)

Jesus put his approval upon tithing.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matt. 23: 23)

Paul also mentioned tithing.

"And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." (Heb. 7.8)

The Tither is often likened to a farmer who is in business for himself but who rents the farm from a landlord and pays the owner rent. The tithe has been called "God's Rent."

The payment of the Tithe, plus offerings, was God's standard of Giving in Old Testament days. If a man paid his tithes, the other 90 per cent of his income was his own.

But nowhere in the New Testament is the giving of the Tithe named as God's Standard for the Christian.

In the Old Testament the important question might be called "WHO am I?" And the correct answer would have been, "I am a son of Abraham. I obey the Law. I pay the Tithe. I fast and pray. I am approved of God."

But in the New Testament era, in which we are living today, the question is not, "Who am I?, but WHOSE am I?" And the correct answer, by God's Word and His Redeeming Grace is, "I am Christ's. I am redeemed by his blood, shed at Calvary. I belong to Him. His righteousness is mine, his redemption mine. I expect to go to Heaven under his banner, His Name, not my own. I am His."

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Cor. 6: 19-20)

"For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3: 3)

Before Jesus saved us we were slaves of the devil, slaves of sin. He paid the purchase price for our redemption, and we became his bond-slaves, "bought with a price." We belong to Him. We are not "our own boss," if we are really born-again Christians. We are His.

In Bible days a man of property often picked out a wise and faithful slave or servant and put him in charge of his household or business. He was called a Steward. Often the Steward was given great power and authority and had dominion over much property. But it was not his property — it was his master's.

Joseph was such a Steward. Having been sold into slavery by his brothers, and carried into Egypt, he was bought by Potiphar, captain of King Pharaoh's guard. Potiphar found Joseph a faithful and wise servant and made him overseer over all his house.

"And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

"And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand . . .

"And he left all that he had in Joseph's hands; and he

knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat." (Gen. 39: 3, 4, 6)

Much property, much wealth, was in Joseph's hands. But it was not his property. It was Potiphar's. Joseph was the Steward of his master's goods.

Stewardship — not Tithing — is God's standard for Living for the New Testament Christian.

The Christian is not "in business for himself" — paying God rent of 10 per cent, and doing "as he pleases" with the other 90 per cent of his income — he is a "bondslave" to the Master, made a Steward over a part of God's wealth, and accountable to his Master for the life, the talents, the wealth, that God places in his hands.

Jesus spoke much about Stewards — faithful and unfaithful

"And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

"And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." (Luke 16: 1-2)

"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

"And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come . . .

"And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto them, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

"Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gain-

ed ten pounds.

"And he said unto him, Well, thou good and faithful servant; because thou has been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." (Luke 19, 12, 13, 15-17)

authority over ten cities." (Luke 19, 12, 13, 15-17)

"And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh

shall find so doing.'

"Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." (Luke 12: 42-44)

The early disciples recognized that what ever they had did

not belong to them, but to their Master.

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common . . .

"Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

"And laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."
(Acts 4: 32, 34, 35)

Paul considered himself a Steward of God's goods — not an independent owner.

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (I Cor. 4: 1-2)

Most Christians today want to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, their Redeemer, their Substitute on the Cross, but refuse to accept Him as their Lord, their Master.

For "Master" means that there must be servants, slaves. And we refuse that role.

We want to be "independent." We want to be "in busi-

ness for ourselves."

Many Christians will even accept Jesus Christ as their Baptizer, and yet reject Him as their Lord and Master.

But God's standard for Living, for the New Testament born-again Christian, is to be a good Steward. And a Steward is a servant — a bond-slave — whom the Master has found faithful and has put in charge of the Master's goods.

If you are a born-again Christian, you really own nothing

- though you may possess much.

Your are not your own — you have been bought with a price. Paul says your body and your spirit are God's. (I Cor. 6: 19-20)

Not only your body and your spirit, but everything else that you possess are His: lands, houses, car, clothes, business, bonds, cash, or check book — all are His.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." (Haggai 2: 8)

"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." (Psalm 50: 10)

That house you call "MY house" really belongs to God. That land you proudly point to as "MY farm" belongs to Him who made it. Someone else possessed it before you and someone else will possess it after you are gone from the earth.

That fine automobile you claim as "MY car" really is God's. His Grace permits you to possess and drive it; it is not yours, but His, if you are His.

Though Christians are Stewards of their Master's goods,

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Postoffice Box 2156 OF AUSTIN, TEXAS AUSTIN, TEXAS 78768 many Christians are not good and faithful stewards.

A Steward controls, cares for, spends the wealth in his possession, for the best interests of the owner, not himself. He looks after the Master's business, not his own.

But many Christians are, we might say, really embezzlers. They have appropriated the Master's goods and used them as though they were their own. They spend the money that comes into their hands, use the property they possess, as well as the talents, time, and intelligence the Master has entrusted to them, for their own interests, or profit, or pleasure; often without a "By your leave," or "Thank you," to the rightful owner.

"But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth

"But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming: and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink and be drunken (to act as though

he were the owner):

"The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." (Luke 12: 45-46)

Recognizing the truth that you are a Steward and not the Owner of what your Master may put in your hands, will trans-

form your entire life.

First, it will save you from covetousness, which is idolatry. (Col. 3: 5) Many Christians are guilty of this sin — whether they are rich or poor. Covetousness is coveting wealth — wanting wealth — whether you ever attain riches or not.

But when you honestly realize that nothing you have or may possess, will ever be YOURS — but God's — it will curb

that drive of "Me and Mine."

Second, it will deliver you from much temptation to "cut corners" and drive "sharp bargains" to make money. The Steward — the Trustee — handling another's wealth or man-

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and

CHRIST'S TRUE CHURCH

By J. A. Dennis

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WORDS OF LIFE, INC. Box 2156, Austin, Texas 78768 aging another's business, is not often tempted to scheme and cheat and lie to make his master richer, when it will not put any money into his own pocket.

Third, it will bring a great sense of rest and security. Your frenzied hurry and worry over making ends meet and meeting tomorrow's needs will roll off onto the Master's shoulders, whose business it is to see that his servants are sheltered and fed, and that his business has enough money in the bank to pay his bills.

For several years I managed a man's business. I had the responsibility of buying merchandise, purchasing supplies, depositing the money received, writing checks, etc.

I was the steward of my employer's goods. The items I bought were not mine, the money I deposited and then spent, was not mine. It was his.

It was not mine to worry whether his capital was sufficient to meet the obligations. That was his responsibility. If not, he must see that more capital is available.

It was my duty to faithfully and wisely and prudently take care of the business and the funds. I am to be a faithful Steward. I am to spend the money, handle the affairs of the business, for the best interests of the owner, not my own.

In a similar way, I am a Steward of God's Business — of the things of the Kingdom which He places in my hands. That includes any money, property, time, and talents, I may have been entrusted with.

Since the Old Testament commanded tithing and Jesus and Paul commended it, I feel that the Owner, my Master, would want me to take the first tenth of any money that comes to me in the form of wages, gifts, or profits, to His storehouse, the Church.

The other nine-tenths are to be spent as He advises or would wish, not as I might choose.

As His Steward, I know He expects me to have my liv-

ing expenses paid out of what comes into my hands.

"Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content: But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the truth, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (I Tim. 6: 8-10)

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 19)

Fourth, if Christians were good and faithful Stewards — instead of looking upon themselves as Owners — there would be no financial problems in His Church.

God's money would be spent the way He wants it spent, and given where He wants it given, if His Stewards were faithful in administering His weath, instead of spending it as though it were their own.

God owns all the land, all the silver and the gold, all the cattle on a thousand hills, and all the oil beneath the plains. If his Stewards only asked Him where He wanted His money spent and then obeyed His orders, every church which He thought necessary would have an abundance of funds with which to carry on its work. Those He did not approve or thought unnecessary would close up, or unite with some other group. Every missionary He sent out would have sufficient funds back of them.

There would be no need to "beg for money" from pulpit or radio.

You may not like to believe it, or wish to acknowledge it; but if you are a born-again Christian, you are a Steward

of God's goods — not the owner — of everything He places in your possession.

What you do with it, how you give or spend it, determines whether you are a good and faithful steward, or an unfaithful are

When the Owner returns, He will call his servants — Stewards — before Him, and ask them to give an accounting of how they have handled HIS goods. (Luke 19: 12-27)

How will you answer Him?

"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a

price." (I Cor. 6: 19-20)

"Seek'ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6: 33)

—J. A. DENNIS

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- 7. "Praise the Lord"
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The House of Prayer

(WRITTEN IN 1955) SPIRITUAL FRUIT

(Continued from last month)

Living by faith, as far as finances are concerned, was, however, not the most important aspect of the House of Prayer, though it perhaps was the most exciting. We "lived by faith" in other ways, too.

What, for example, was the reason back of the location of the House of Prayer? Why did the expected location fail and this one became available at the last moment?

First, the desired location was at a higher rental, a rate that experience showed our attendance would not support. Second, it turned out that the desired location would have been available for only a short time, as our agreement was to rent it by the month at a reduced rental until the owners secured a long time business lease. They secured such a lease within a few months.

Third, though at first I was not at all pleased with the location, it turned out that this was the place God wanted us to be. We soon met a lady who lived just across the alley from our back door. Her husband was an invalid and often times she could not leave him for long at a time. She was spiritually hungry and eager to go to church. She said, "I've been wanting to go to church. Now the Lord has put a church right in my own back yard!" She became one of our most faithful attendants and supporters.

Another lady soon came who lived just a block away. A shy Chinese lady, swamped with grief and worry, with children in Hongkong and some still behind the bamboo curtain in China. She grasped eagerly at the nightly inspiration of fellowship and Bible study at the "Prayer House," as she affectionately called it. She rarely missed a night unless she was away from the city.

The building was on the Main bus line and on a through trail. This brought to our door a number of "foot weary" derelicts, tossed along on life's restless seas. Occasionally one would slip in during the services and sit tentatively on a back seat, the scars of an unfriendly world and a cruel devil stamped on his face and figure.

Sometimes, the Lord would change the message to fit his apparent need. At the close of the service he would be invited to kneel for prayer. Perhaps what he needed was a meal or a clean shirt or a kind word. But most of all he needed to know Jesus as the giver of Life. We could tell him the story and read him the Word, pray with him and wish him God's blessing, and perhaps secure him a bed for the night.

One night a man staggered in during the benediction, then hastily withdrew. Hurrying to the door, I called him back. Soon he was on his knees crying out his story: drink, a quarrel with his wife, a broken home, broken heart, wife and babies gone.

After prayer he threw away his bottle, was accompanied to a cheap hotel. Next day he came for dinner and church; the next he had a job. In two weeks he had retrieved his self respect and his family.

But most of those attending the House of Prayer were of a different class. They came from good homes, good churches. But hungry for "soul food"; the unadultered Word of God: sincere, earnest prayer for mind, spirit or body.

They came to find love and understanding, to sing and pray and study God's Word where it was taught simply and without any denominational diluting or restraint.

They wanted to know about Divine Healing and, if true, they wanted it.

They wanted to know about the Holy Ghost, what the Bible said about it, if it was for them today, and if so, how to receive Him.

They wanted a place where they could come and pray, where they could FEEL a spirit of love and prayer. Where they could come and be prayed for if ill or tired or discouraged.

They seemed to find these things at the House of Prayer. So they came. And they told others. They brought their friends. They were our main source of advertising.

Some scoffed. Some called us "Apostolic" or "Pentecostal" or other things.

But they came: Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Christian Church, a few "Full Gospel" folks. A few Negroes, some Spanish, but mostly upper middle class, some from University circles, an occasional minister. Some testify to their healing, some to victory over fear and distress, some received jobs, others courage, a few the Holy Ghost.

Several times we asked a visiting evangelist to stay and preach a week or two. At other times the Lord sent in surprise speakers just before time for service.

The messages and Bible lessons had to come by faith, too. Especially was this true during the year that I was employed. With no time during the day to open my Bible or to pray except for a few brief moments each morning. I would arrive home at night tired out and just in time to eat and start services. I would sit down at my desk for a few minutes with my Bible (though I really wanted to go to bed) and say to the Lord: "Lord, if anything worthwhile is given tonight, you will have to give it to me, as I don't know a thing to say." Soon a text or a thought or a message would begin to grow in my heart, and when the people came in shortly, we would get up and "speak by faith" from His Word.

One tangible testimony among others that I recall was that of a young lady who came to the House of Prayer very much upset about a possible tragedy where she worked. It could, she thought, mean that someone might be killed. We prayed together, she and my wife and I She received peace and courage and went back to her place. The tragedy never happened.

Another lady testified to the saving of her home life. She was so torn up over conditions that she thought she could stand it no longer. She and a friend came. We talked and prayed over it. She went on her way. The Lord gave her a great victory over the situation and the home was saved.

Many brought prayer requests, asking us to pray for loved ones or relatives. Prayer was offered each evening for those on this list. Also, each morning when my wife and I, together with anyone else who might drop in, prayed for everyone on the list.

Friends brought clothing and shoes which we gave to those who came by in need.

Freda had a group of children come each Thursday afternoon after school for

Bible stories and prayer. Many of them were shy Spanish children.

Freda also led a ladies' prayer group each Friday morning.

Such, in brief, is the work of the House of Prayer.

Not all that we would have liked it to be, by any means. Not many served, no larger crowds, no great sucess.

We "arose and went into the city." We "prepared our victuals." We saw the Lord move, the Lord guide, the Lord provide. We lived by faith, we preached by faith, we slept by faith.

DIVINE PROTECTION

Several years before opening the House of Prayer I set out to take the Lord seriously and literally on His Word. This must include His promised protection.

If I were to believe and obey, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow" (Matt. 6: 34), I felt that I must give up insurance of all kinds, which I did.

If I were to believe, "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come night they dwelling" (Ps. 91: 10), then I must not fear any harm, nor be concerned about locks and bolted doors, by day or night.

The House of Prayer faced on a busy street near both Spanish and Negro sections. The back door opened onto an alley. During the time when we lived in the back of the House of Prayer, our bed was beside this back door, behind a curtain which separated our living quarters from the worship area. The front and back doors were left unlocked day and night, as evidence of our trust in Him.

The only man, to our knowledge, ever to "break in" was a policeman. One night soon after we had gone to bed, the front door flew open and in came a man. We jumped up and looked through the curtain. A policeman was shining his flashlight over chairs, cross, platform. Then he hastily backed out. We said nothing. We assumed he had been chasing a man who had eluded him, and thought he might have entered the building. We went back to bed, the doors still unlocked, and slept!

"For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Ps. 91: 11-12)

DIVINE HEALTH

Since, at the House of Prayer we taught from the Bible that God heals the sick, we felt it inconsistent to take any medicine, consult a doctor, or carry

health or accident or hospitalization insurance. In fact, we had discarded all these several years before. And for some eleven years (Now, in 1975, it has been 30 years) I have not missed a day's work on account of sickness. Praise His Name!

"And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." (Exod. 23: 25)

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." (Ps. 103: 2-3)

"By whose stripes ye were healed." (I Pet. 2: 24)

"Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." (Matt. 8: 17)

THE HOLY GHOST

Since, at the House of Prayer, we had announced our intention to "preach ALL that the Bible teaches, no more, no less," we felt we must know and preach the truth about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. For years we had been seeking information about this Baptism, and for at least two years had been seriously seeking the Baptism for ourselves. In fact, that was one of my major excuses for postponing the opening of the House of Prayer, or of coming to Austin to attempt its opening: that I "must have the Holy Ghost, so that I could preach with power." (Acts 1:8)

But the Lord kept saying to me, "Go thy way." He said that to the ten lepers when they came to him begging for him to heal them. "Go thy way." "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." (Luke 17: 14), "And . . . as they went, they were cleansed." (Luke 17: 14)

Jesus said that to the nobleman who came earnestly beseeching him to come down and heal his son. "Go thy way;

REPRINTS

We will send up to 10 Reprints of Gene Neill's Testimony—How God saved and Baptized him with the Holy Ghost in a prison cell, under a sentence of 50 years, then miraculously set him free after 2 years—Postpaid to anyone who will prayerfully distribute them for God's Glory and the Salvation of Souls.

WORDS OF LIFE, INC. Box 2156, Austin, Texas 78768 thy son liveth." (John 4: 50) And the nobleman believed, went his way and found his son healed. (John 4: 50-53)

"Go thy way"

The Lord showed me I must go as far as I could go and do what I could do. Whenever anything further was needed from Him, He was ready and well able to supply it, but He would not do it or He doesn't usually do it, until right at the time of need. TO REQUIRE ANY-THING IN ADVANCE OF ITS AC-TUAL NEED, IS NOT FAITH. It is unbelief. I was afraid that when I got the House of Prayer opened I wouldn't have the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, I wouldn't have the power to preach as I ought, and I would not be able to preach about the Holy Ghost that so many people are hungry to know about, because NO ONE CAN PREACH WITH AUTHORITY ABOUT ANY-THING HE HAS NOT HIMSELF EX-PERIENCED.

"Go thy way . . ." That's all the answer I got, so I went my way—into Austin. I knew I could rent a building, I could buy chairs, I could prepare a magazine announcement, I could advertise the opening, I could do that—but then I'd have to have help. But at present it was, "Go thy way".

But after we had opened the House of Prayer and I had preached to the few who came, or taught, or tried to—and it was as dry as it had ever been when I had preached at other places, I would go home at night and argue and plead with the Lord, "Lord, I've done what you told me to do. I've opened the House of Prayer. I've sold my car. I've quit my job. And its just like I thought it would be without the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, I think its time, Lord for you to do something about it!"

After a month had passed and nothing happened, I got desperate enough to go on a fast. We had a guest speaker for a while and so when I got too weak to navigate. I could stay home.

During the fast, nothing happened but soon after getting back a little strength, the Lord granted my request and Baptized me one night with His precious Holy Spirit.

I immediately had faith enough to announce a series of messages on the Holy Spirit and at the end of a week three in the group who attended these services also received the Holy Ghost.

(Continued next month)

—J. A. DENNIS

IT HAPPENED IN LIBERIA

By H. B. Garlock

Back in the early 1920's Mrs. Garlock and I went to labor among a cannibal tribe in Liberia—"the white man's grave."

At the time of this story the rains had set in and we were shut off from the outside world. We were both seriously ill after repeated attacks of malaria fever. For 17 days my wife was only semiconscious.

I tried to make up a caravan of men to go to the nearest mission station and on to a trading post to get the supplies we urgently needed.

Finally a group of carriers promised to make the trip. But they had not been gone half a day when the head man of the party appeared in the doorway of our little mud hut. I was about to reprimand him for not keeping his word when he told us his story.

There had recently been a feudal war between two sections of the tribe. The winning faction had captured and eaten a man from the other side. When my caravan attempted to pass through a village of the losing side someone recognized one of its members as belonging to the enemy. He was captured, beaten almost to death, and put in their prison house. The rest of the caravan was forbidden to continue its journey. It wasn't long, however, before the headman managed to escape to tell us about it. I tried to get him to return to the village and demand the release of the prisoner so they could continue on their journey. He said that under no circumstances would he return to the village without me.

We desperately needed supplies so I finally decided to try to rescue the unfortunate carrier and see what we could do about getting our caravan on its way. So I made up another small group and set out for this particular village arriving just before dark. We circled the stockade, a pole fence that surrounded the village, in order to get as close to the prison as possible without being detected. We could see the prison-house and the open yard where the tribe held courts.

My men assisted me over the stockade. I told them to hurry to my side when they saw me reach the hut. I confess that I was scared to death but I felt I should do my best to rescue the man. We desperately prayed that God would lead us.

I headed for the open clearing and

walked up to the hut. Two spearmen were guarding the door. I greeted them as if nothing was out of the ordinary and managed to cut the grass rope that held the little bamboo door in place. Inside, through the darkness of the windowless hut I saw the prisoner tied to the center post of the hut. I dragged him outside and from sheer exhaustion sat down on an old elephant skull. My men joined me.

Immediately the two guards spread the alarm, and the village drums began to roll. We were soon surrounded by a group of angry, blood-thirsty people armed with cutlasses, spears, bows and arrows, and cudgels. For a time it seemed we would be torn apart. We knew nothing but a few words of greeting in their language, but we understood enough to know they expected to kill us as well as the prisoner. We sat for what seemed like hours, while they screamed and yelled until they were hoarse. Finally the people sat down in a large circle and the witch doctor stood up with a wand in his hand. He came toward me, then suddenly dived at me, making horrible grimaces as if were trying to frighten me to death.

Well, he did a fairly good job at it. His hair was in long pigtails smeared down with cow dung and palm oil, and around his neck he wore a string of leopards' teeth. From his neck, shoulders, and waist hung pouches of jujus and fetish medicine.

COMMITMENT

by Gene Neill

We will send up to 10 Reprints of Gene Neill's Amazing Account of his three months in the Soviet Union — Witnessing for Jesus, Speaking to Underground Churches, Arrested three times, and the Total Commitment of Russian Christians—Postpaid to anyone who will prayerfully distribute them for God's Glory and the Salvation of Souls.

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Finally he turned away and began walking around in the circle, relating the warring history of his people. Then he came over to me and laid his wand down at my feet, as much as to say, "Here's your chance, your opportunity to defend yourself before we kill you and eat you."

I was really on the spot. I only knew a few words of greeting. The native Christian worker with me knew little more of the language than I did. When your life is at stake you hardly want to trust yourself to poor interpretation. So I sat there and prayed, "God in heaven if you ever helped us, please help us now. We don't know what to do but to trust in Your mercy." As I sat there I began to shake. I thought how awful it was to have these people see how frightened I was.

Then suddenly I realized that the Holy Spirit had come upon me. I thought of the words of Jesus in Mark 13:11, "Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do you premediate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost." I reached down, picked up the magic wand at my feet, and started in by saying, "Nihlay," which means, "I say," or "Hear ye." Then the Holy Ghost took control of my tongue and from my lips poured a torrent of words I had never learned.

It wasn't long before the witch doctor sent for a white fowl, wrung its neck, prostrated himself in front of me, and then smeared blood on my head and on the head of the wounded carrier. He also put blood on his own head and on the head of the village chief. Blood had to be shed, but the blood of a fowl was substituted for our blood. He said. "We see your God fights for you. Please tell us what to do to atone for our mistake. We will do what you want us to do." So they gave me two men to carry the wounded man back to our station; they fed my other carriers so they could continue their journey to get the supplies we needed.

Some years ago when we were pastoring in Kansas City, a doctor said to me, "Did you ever hear anybody speak in tongues?"

"Oh, yes," I said. "A good many times."

"Did it ever do you any good?" he asked. I then told him the story that I have just told you.—From Global Conquest.

THE BELIEVER AND POSITIVE CONFESSION

The Life of Faith

The Assemblies of God from its early days has recognized the importance of the life of faith. It has been given prominent emphasis because Scripture gives it prominence.

The writer to the Hebrews points out that without faith it is impossible to please God. Then he describes faith as believing two things—that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, (Hebrews 11:6).

All the blessings which God has for His people are received through faith. Salvation (Acts 16:31), baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15-17), divine preservation (1 Peter 1:5), inheritance of the promises which include healing and provision of material needs (Hebrews 6:12), and motivation for witnessing (2 Corinthians 4:13) are among the many provisions of God's grace.

Today, as in every generation, it is important for believers to be mindful of the example in Scripture of being strong in faith (Romans 4:20-24). They must be on guard against anything which would weaken or destroy faith. They need to pray for its increase (Luke 17:5) and constantly seek to cultivate it through reading the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

The life of faith is the life of victory (1 John 5:4).

Introduction

This statement on the believer and positive confession was approved as the official statement by the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God on August 19, 1980.

The Believer and Positive Confession

Occasionally throughout church history people have taken extreme positions concerning great Biblical truths. Sometimes teachers have advocated these extremes. On other occasions followers have gone beyond the teachings and reflected adversely on the cause of Christ.

Positive and negative confession are expressions which in recent years have received acceptance in an extreme form in some circles. Both the definition in writing and the pattern of usage give some insight into the implications of these terms

The fact that extremes are brought in-

to focus does not imply rejection of the doctrine of confession. It is an important truth. The Bible teaches people are to confess their sin (1 John 1:9). They are to confess Christ (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9, 10). They are to maintain a good confession (Hebrews 4:14; 10:23, ASV).

But when people, in emphasizing a doctrine, go beyond or contrary to the teaching of Scripture, they do not honor that doctrine. Conversely they bring reproach upon it and the work of the Lord. For this reason it is important to call attention to these excesses and show how they are in conflict with the Word of God.

Some positions of the positive confession teaching.

The positive confession teaching relies on an English dictionary definition of the word confess: "to acknowledge, or to own; to acknowledge faith in." Confession is also described as affirming something which is believed, testifying to something known, and witnessing for a truth which has been embraced.

This view goes a step further and divides confession into negative and positive aspects. The negative is acknowledging sin, sickness, poverty, or other undesirable situations. Positive confession is acknowledging or owning desirable situations.

While there are variations of interpretation and emphasis concerning this teaching, a conclusion seems to be that the unpleasant can be avoided by refraining from negative confessions. The pleasant can be enjoyed by making positive confessions.

According to this view, as expressed in various publications, the believer who refrains from acknowledging the negative and continues to affirm the positive will assure for himself pleasant circumstances. He will be able to rule over poverty, disease, and sickness. He will be sick only if he confesses he is sick. Some make a distinction between acknowledging the symptoms of an illness and the illness itself.

This view advocates that God wants believers to wear the best clothing, drive the best cars, and have the best of everything. Believers need not suffer financial setbacks. All they need to do is to tell Satan to take his hands off their money. The believer can have whatever he says whether the need is spiritual, physical, or financial. It is taught that faith compels God's action.

According to this position, what a person says determines what he will receive and what he will become. Thus people are instructed to start confessing even though what they want may not have been realized. If a person wants money, he is to confess he has it even if it is not true. If a person wants healing, he is to confess it even though it is obviously not the case. People are told they can have whatever they say, and for this reason great significance is attached to the spoken word. It is claimed the spoken word, if repeated often enough, will eventually result in faith which procures the desired blessing.

It is understandable that some people would like to accept the positive confession teaching. It promises a life free from problems, and its advocates seem to support it with passages of Scripture. Problems develop, however, when Bible statements are isolated from their context and from what the rest of Scripture has to say concerning the subject. Extremes result which distort truth and eventually hurt believers as individuals and the cause of Christ in general.

When believers study the life of faith and victory God has for His people, it is important, as in all doctrine, to seek for the balanced emphasis of Scripture. This will help to avoid the extremes which eventually frustrate rather than help believers in their walk with God.

Believers should consider the total teaching of Scripture.

The apostle Paul gave an important principle of interpreting Scripture which calls for "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13). The basic thrust of this principle is to consider everything God's Work has to say on a given subject in establishing doctrine. Only doctrine based on a holistic view of Scripture conforms to this Biblical rule of interpretation.

When the positive confession teaching indicates that to admit weakness is to accept defeat, to admit financial need is to accept poverty, and to admit sickness is to preclude healing, it is going beyond

and is contrary to the harmony of Scripture.

For instance, King Jehoshaphat admitted he had no might against an enemy alliance, but God gave him a marvelous victory (2 Chronicles 20). Paul admitted weakness and then stated that when he was weak, he was strong because God's strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

It was after the disciples recognized they did not have enough to feed the multitudes and admitted it that Christ marvelously provided a more than adequate supply (Luke 9:12, 13). It was after the disciples admitted they had caught no fish that Jesus directed them to a most successful endeavor (John 21:3-6).

These people were not told to replace negative confessions with positive confessions which were contrary to fact. They stated conditions exactly as they were rather than pretending they were something else. Yet God marvelously intervened even though they made what some would call negative confessions.

Comparing Scripture with Scripture makes it clear that positive verbal expressions do not always produce happy effects nor do negative statements always result in unhappy effects. To teach that leaders in the early days of the Church such as Paul, Stephen, and Trophimus did not live in a constant state of affluence and health because they did not have the light on this teaching is going beyond and contrary to the Word of God. Doctrine will be sound only as it is developed within the framework of the total teaching of Scripture.

The Greek word translated "confess" means "to speak the same thing." When people confess Christ, it is to say the same thing as Scripture does concerning Christ. When people confess sin, it is to say the same as Scripture does concerning sin. And when people confess some promise of Scripture, they must be sure they are saying the same thing about that promise as the total teaching of Scripture on that subject.

The words of Augustine are appropriate in this regard: "If you believe what you like in the gospel and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself."

Believers should consider adequately the will of God.

When the positive confession doctrine indicates a person can have whatever he says, it fails to emphasize adequately that God's will must be considered. David had the best intentions when he indicated

his desire to build a temple for the Lord, but it was not God's will (1 Chronicles 17:4). David was permitted to gather materials, but Solomon was to build the temple.

Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh might be removed, but it was not God's will. Instead of removing the thorn, God gave Paul sufficient grace (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God's will can be known and claimed by faith, but the desire of the heart is not always the criterion by which the will of God is determined. There are times when the enjoyable or pleasurable may not be the will of God. James alluded to this when he wrote, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:3). The word translated "lusts" does not refer to perverted desire but to pleasure or enjoyment; that which the heart desires. Several translations use the word "pleasure" rather than "lust."

In Gethsemane Jesus asked that if it were possible the cup might be removed. That was His desire, but in His prayer He recognized the will of God. He said, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

The Bible recognizes there will be times when a believer will not know what to pray for. He will not know what the will of God is. He may even be perplexed as Paul sometimes was (2 Corinthians 4:8). Then, rather than simply making a positive confession based on the desires of the heart, the believer needs to recognize the Holy Spirit makes intercession for him according to the will of God (Romans 8:26,27).

God's will always must have priority over the believer's plans or desires. The words of James should be kept constantly in view: "Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that" (James 4:15).

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Getting what the believer wants is not as simple as repeating a positive confession. Pleasant things might be out of the will of God; and, conversely, unpleasant things might be in the will of God. It is important for the believer to say as Paul's friends did, "The will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21:14)—more important than to demand a life free from suffering.

Believers should recognize the importance of importunate prayer.

When the positive confession view teaches that believers are to confess rather than to pray for things which God has promised, it overlooks the teaching of God's Word concerning importunate prayer. According to some who hold this view of positive confession, God's promises are in the area of material, physical, and spiritual blessings; believers are to claim or confess these blessings and not to pray for them.

The instruction not to pray for promised blessings is contrary to the teach ing of God's Word. Food is one of God's promised blessings, yet Jesus taught His disciples to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Wisdom is a promised blessing of God, yet Scripture states, if any man 'lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (James 1:5). Jesus called the Holy Spirit the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49), and yet He also taught that God would give the Holy Spirit to them that ask (Luke 11:13).

While there were times God told people not to pray, as in the case of Moses at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:15), there are many Scriptures reminding believers to pray, and that without ceasing (Romans 12:12; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessallonians 5:17).

Jesus emphasized the importance of importunity in prayer. The illustration of the persistent friend who came at midnight asking for bread to set before his guests became the basis for Christ's statement, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Luke 11:5-10). The parable of the widow and the unjust judge became the occasion for our Lord to emphasize importunity in prayer (Luke 18:1-8). These people were commended for importunity and not for prayerless positive confession.

While God's ways are above man's ways, and we cannot understand the reason for every command in Scripture, we do know that in His wisdom God has ordained prayer as a part of the process included in meeting a need. Rather than an indication of doubt, importunate pray-

er can be an indication of obedience and faith.

Believers should recognize they can expect suffering in this life.

The positive confession teaching advocates reigning as kings in this life. It teaches that believers are to dominate and not be dominated by circumstances. Poverty and sickness are usually mentioned among the circumstances over which believers are to have dominion.

If believers choose the kings of this world as models, it is true they will seek the trouble-free life (although even kings of this world are not free from problems). They will be more concerned with physical and material prosperity than with spiritual growth.

When believers choose the King of kings as their model, however, their desires will be completely different. They will be transformed by His teaching and example. They will recognize the truth of Romans 8:17 which is written concerning joint-heirs with Christ: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Paul even went so far as to glory in his infirmities instead of denying them (2 Corinthians 12:5-10).

Though Christ was rich, for our sakes He became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). He could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20).

While God in His providence has endowed some with the ability to accumulate greater wealth than others, something is tragically lacking if there is not a willingness to do the will of God and surrender all, if need be, including creature comforts.

Jesus never ceased to be God, and through the power of the Holy Spirit performed many miracles; yet He was not free from suffering. He knew He must suffer many things of the elders (Matthew 16:21; 17:12). He desired to eat the Passover with the disciples before He suffered (Luke 22:15). After His death, the disciples recognized that Christ's suffering was a fulfillment of prophecy (Luke 24: 25,26,32).

When believers realize that reigning as kings in this life is to take Christ as the model of a king, they will recognize suffering can be involved; that sometimes it is more kingly to stay with unpleasant circumstances than to try to make all circumstances pleasant.

Paul had been shown he would suffer (Acts 9:16). Later he rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossians. He saw his

sufferings as filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24).

God promises to supply the needs of believers, and He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation; but reigning in life as Christ did may also include suffering. The committed believer will accept this. He will not be disillusioned if life is not a continual series of pleasant experiences. He will not become cynical if he does not have all the desires of his heart.

He will recognize the servant is not greater than his Master. To follow Christ requires denying ourselves (Luke 9:23). This includes denying our selfish desires and may include admitting our problems.

Problems are not always an indication of lack of faith. To the contrary, they can be a tribute to faith. This is the great emphasis of Hebrews 11:32-40.

To hold that all suffering results from negative confessions and indicates a lack of faith contradicts the Scripture. Some heroes of faith suffered greatly, some even died through faith, and they were commended for it.

Believers should recognize the sovereignty of God.

The positive confession emphasis has

WAIT!

One of God's aged and disciplined servants gave the following golden advice: When trouble is brewing, keep still. When slander is getting on his legs, keep still. When your feelings are hurt, keep still until you recover from your agitation, at least. Things look different when seen through unagitated eyes. In a commotion, I once wrote a letter and sent it. How I wished later that I hadn't. The passing of the years, with their soulrefining and character-ennobling lessons, taught me some needed lessons. I had another commotion. I wrote a long letter, but I put it in my pocket. How glad I was I did! 'With the passing of the days, it seemed less and less necessary to send the letter. I was not sure it would do any hurt, but in my doubtfulness. I leaned to reticence, and eventually I destroved the letter. Time works wonders. Wait till you can speak calmly, and perhaps you will not need to speak. Silence is the most massive thing conceivable! It is strength shown in grandeur!" Gospel Herald.

a tendency to include statements which make it appear that man is sovereign and God is the servant. Statements are made about compelling God to act, implying He has surrendered His sovereignty; that He is no longer in a position to act according to His wisdom and purpose. Reference is made to true prosperity being the ability to use God's ability and power to meet needs regardless of what the needs are. This puts man in the position of using God rather than man surrendering himself to be used of God.

In this view there is very little consideration given to communion with God in order to discover His will. There is very little appeal to search the Scriptures for the framework of the will of God. There is little emphasis on the kind of discussion with fellow believers which results in two or three agreeing what the will of God might be. Instead, the desire of the heart is viewed as a binding mandate on God. It is seen as constituting the authority of the believer.

It is true, that Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). But Scripture also teaches that the asking must be in harmony with the will of God. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14,15).

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) is still an important injunction today. God is God. He will not surrender His glory or sovereignty to anyone. No one will compel God to action.

The authority of the believer exists only in the will of God, and it is the believer's responsibility to discover and conform to the will of the sovereign God even in the things he desires. Paul's words are still applicable: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17).

When believers recognize the sovereignty of God and properly become concerned with the will of God, they will not talk in terms of compelling God or using God's power. They will speak of becoming obedient servants. They will desire to become yielded instruments in the hands of God.

Believers should apply the practical test.

In reviewing the efforts of those who advocate this positive confession teaching it is evident that the basic appeal is to those who are already Christians living in an affluent society. They encourage a spiritual elitism in which adherents say, "We believe the same things you do. The difference is that we practice what we believe."

A practical test of belief is whether is has a universal application. Does the teaching have meaning only for those living in an affluent society? Or does it also work among the refugees of the world? What application does the teaching have for believers imprisoned for their faith by atheistic governments? Are those believers substandard who suffer martyrdom or grave physical injury at the hands of cruel, ruthless dictators?

The truth of God's Word has a universal application. It is as effective in the slums as in suburbia. It is as effective in the jungle as in the city. It is as effective in foreign countries as in our own nation. It is as effective among deprived nations as among the affluent. The test of fruit is still one way of determining whether a teacher or teaching is of God or of man. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

Believers should accurately deal with the word 'rhema.'

Because there is very little literature among those who espouse the positive confession teaching concerning the Greek work rhema, it is necessary to consider it as used primarily in oral communication.

A distinction is generally made by proponents of this view between the words logos and rhema. The first, it is claimed, refers to the written word. The second to that which is presently spoken by faith. According to this view, whatever is spoken by faith becomes inspired and takes on the creative power of God.

There are two major problems with this distinction. First, the distinction is not justified by usage either in the Greek New Testament or in the Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament). The words are used synonymously in both.

In the case of the Septuagint both rhema and logos are used to translate the one Hebrew word dabar which is used in various ways relative to communication. For instance, the word dabar (translated, word of God) is used in both Jeremiah 1:1 and 2. Yet in the Septuagint it is translated rhema in verse 1 and logos in verse 2.

In the New Testament the words rhema and logos are also used interchangeably. This can be seen in passages such as 1 Peter 1:23 and 25. In verse 23, it is "the logos of God which . . . abideth for ever." In verse 25, "the rhema of the Lord endureth for ever." Again in Ephesians 5:26 believers are cleansed "with the washing of water by the rhema." In John 15:3 believers are "clean through the logos."

The distinctions between logos and rhema cannot be sustained by Biblical evidence. The Word of God, whether referred to as logos or rhema, is inspired, eternal, dynamic, and miraculous. Whether the Word is written or spoken does not alter its essential character. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

A second problem also exists among those who make a distinction between the words logos and rhema. Passages of Scripture are sometimes selected without regard to context or analogy of faith which they claim to speak by faith. In this kind of application of the so-called rhema principle, adherents are more concerned with making the Word mean what they want it to mean than in becoming what the Word wants them to become. In some instances it becomes obvious they love God more for what He

does than for who He is.

It is important for believers to avoid any form of Christian existentialism which isolates passages of Scripture from the context or makes some passages eternal and other contemporary.

Conclusion

In considering any doctrine it is always necessary to ask whether it is in harmony with the total teaching of Scripture. Doctrine based on less than a holistic view of Biblical truth can only do harm to the cause of Christ. It can often be more detrimental than views which reject Scripture altogether. Some people will more likely accept something as truth if it is referred to in the Word of God, even if the teaching is an extreme emphasis or contradicts other principles of Scripture.

God's Word does teach great truths such as healing, provision for need, faith, and the authority of believers. The Bible does teach that a disciplined mind is an important factor in victorious living. But these truths must always be considered in the framework of the total teaching of Scripture.

When abuses occur, there is sometimes a temptation to draw back from these great truths of God's Word. In some cases people even lose out with God altogether when they discover that exaggerated emphases do not always meet their expectations or result in freedom from problems.

The fact that doctrinal aberrations develop, however, is not a reason for rejecting or remaining silent concerning them. The existence of differences of opinion is all the more reason why believers should continue diligently to search the Scriptures. It is why servants of God must faithfully declare the whole counsel of God.

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