Abstain From All Appearance of Evil!

by Sis. Lindsey Minix (15 years old)
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Through the first epistle of Paul the apostle, to the Thessalonians, God says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thessalonians 5:22). To truly understand the meaning of this verse, we must break it down into parts. Abstain means "to refrain from" (The Oxford Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus). Therefore, we are commanded by God to refrain from all appearance of evil. In other words, you don't have to be caught buying alcohol. But if you are seen pulling out of a bar's parking lot because you needed to turn around, then someone not knowing that would perceive it as you just bought some alcohol, or you were just drinking.

Just like a wise elder once said in his preaching, "It takes years to build a reputation, and a second to destroy it." Proverbs 22:1-5 speaks of the importance and value of a good name. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches…." (Proverbs 22:1). Ecclesiastes 7:1 also expresses the value of a good name: "A good name is better than precious ointment." If we want to have a good name, we must "abstain from all appearance of evil."

My decisions affect everyone close to me. If I decide to sin and act in an ungodly way, then not only will God chasten me, but my family and friends will hurt too. They will see the kind of hell I'll be going through as judgment from God, and they will be pained at seeing me hurting.

Some examples of ways I can abstain from all appearance of evil include not hanging around people who drink alcohol and use drugs, not being alone with a boy, not hanging around someone who talks, acts, or dresses inappropriately. By following these instructions, I can prevent spreading of rumors, make "better" friends, abstain from all appearance of evil, and prevent giving good people reasons not to like me. I will also be able to make people that matter respect me. This is what, "Abstaining from all appearance of evil" means to me.

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Clay Balls

A man was exploring caves by the Seashore. In one of the caves he found a canvas bag with a bunch of hardened clay balls. It was like someone had rolled clay balls and left them out in the sun to bake. They didn't look like much, but they intrigued the man, so he took the bag out of the cave with him. As he strolled along the beach, he would throw the clay balls one at a time out into the ocean as far as he could.

He thought little about it, until he dropped one of the clay balls and it cracked open on a rock . Inside was a beautiful, precious stone!

Excited, the man started breaking open the remaining clay balls. Each contained a similar treasure. He found thousands of dollars worth of jewels in the 20 or so clay balls he had left.

Then it struck him. He had been on the beach a long time. He had thrown maybe 50 or 60 of the clay balls with their hidden treasure into the ocean waves. Instead of thousands of dollars in treasure, he could have taken home tens of thousands, but he had just thrown it away!

It's like that with people. We look at someone, maybe even ourselves, and we see the external clay vessel. It doesn't look like much from the outside. It isn't always beautiful or sparkling, so we discount it.

We see that person as less important than someone more beautiful or stylish or well known or wealthy. But we have not taken the time to find the treasure hidden inside that person.

There is a treasure in each and every one of us. If we take the time to get to know that person, and if we ask God to show us that person the way He sees them, then the clay begins to peel away and the brilliant gem begins to shine forth.

May we not come to the end of our lives and find out that we have thrown away a fortune in friendships because the gems were hidden in bits of clay. May we see the people in our world as God sees them.

Aren't you glad your friends look beyond your clay vessel?

God Is Able To Open!

by Elder William M. Mullis
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We should all believe in the omnipotence of God. He is able to do anything that is right and good. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

Specifically in this study, I want us to consider God being able to open in ways that man is unable to open. We are all familiar with the Scripture: "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, **he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.** I know thy works: behold, **I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it:** for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:7,8). God had set an open door to those who had been faithful in the Church of Philadelphia. Only God could have opened that door! He can open that same door to us when we are faithful in our service to Him.

In the parable of the ten virgins, we read that the bridegroom (Jesus) **opened the door to the marriage** (kingdom of heaven - verse 1) to those who had kept their lights shining, but shut the door to those who let their lights go out! (See Matthew 25:1-13.) Only Jesus can open and close the doors to His kingdom! We also read about God performing a miracle and **opening the doors of the prison** for Paul and Silas (see Acts 16:23-28). Plus, we need to remember that only God can **open the mouths of preachers** and bless them to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and His kingdom (Ephesians 6:18,19; Colossians 4:3). We should all be praying for God to open preachers' mouths and bless them to really preach, to feed the flock of God with the word!

Do you remember on one occasion John was weeping because he saw a book that "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book"? But then we read, "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, **the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof"** (see Revelation 5:1-5). No man could open the book, but Jesus did!!!

Please look carefully at Luke 24, and consider all the things God opened in this chapter which no man could open in the same way. First, we see that **God opened the tomb** (Luke 24:1-3). Not only did He open the tomb of Jesus, but one day He is going to open all the tombs of all the children of God who have died! He is going to raise us from the dead, make us perfect, and take us Home to be with Him forever.

Next, we see God **"opened the memory"** of the women who went to the tomb: He is not here, but is risen: **remember how he spake unto you** when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they **remembered his words**" (Luke 24:6-8). Numerous times, we forget something God has told us until He "opens our memory!" Jesus promised His disciples that when the Comforter came, He would **"bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"** (John 14:26). What a great blessing when the Spirit of God **"opens our memory"** and reminds us of the word of God just when we need it most!

As Jesus walked with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, we read that the disciples did not know it was actually the risen Savior who was walking and talking with them. "Their eyes were holden that they should not know him." (Luke 24:16). BUT THEN we read, "And **their eyes were opened, and they knew him;** and he vanished out of their sight" (Luke 24:31). How many times has God opened your eyes to see the Lord in the Scriptures? How many times has He opened your eyes to behold the glory of the Lord in nature, or in His people? Only God can open our eyes to see the Lord and KNOW HIM!

Next, we read about God **"opening the Scriptures"** to the two disciples!

"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while **he opened to us the scriptures**?" (Luke 24:32). Only God can open up the Scriptures and bless us to be able to see the depth and beauty of His Holy Word!

Closely connected to the "opening of the Scriptures" is **"opening our understanding." "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures"** (Luke 24:45). How do you know who Jesus is? You understand who He is the same way Peter knew who He was: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: **for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven**" (Matthew 16:17). God has to reveal (open) the truth to you or you will never understand and know truth!

Another way the Lord opens like no one else can is to **open His hands with blessings** upon us! "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and **he lifted up his hands, and blessed them**" (Luke 24:50). Oh the joy of having Jesus to open up His hands and bless us! He opened His hands at Cal-

vary and blessed us! But He opens up His hands and pours out blessings on our lives every day! Sometimes, Him opening His hands of blessings are conditional on our obedience. Malachi 3:10 says, "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.**" Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

In I Peter 3:12, we read that God can even open **His ears to our prayers!**

Though we are not worthy, though we do not deserve to have Him hear our prayers, yet in His mercy and grace, **He opens His ears to the righteous.** But when we are sinning, He will shut His ears to our prayers! "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that **he will not hear**" (Isaiah 59:1,2).

One final "opening" that God did in the 24th chapter of Luke is found in verse 51: "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and **carried up into heaven**." **Heaven was opened** by God for Jesus to enter into His glory! Jesus also said to Nathaniel (see John 1:51), "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter **ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man**." Likewise, in the final resurrection, we will experience the last opening we will ever need! The graves will be opened, and Heaven will be opened for all the family of God! We shall be carried in, and we will forever be with the Lord!

Can you think of other things God can open that no one else can open?

Are you thankful for the things God has opened and shall open for you?

ARE THERE THINGS YOU NEED TO HAVE OPENED, BUT HAVE BEEN LOOKING TO THE WRONG ONE TO OPEN THEM?

Grow in Knowledge

1. "The righteous cry, and the Lord _____, and delivereth them out of all their troubles."

2. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a _____ man, which built his house upon a rock."

3. "A wise son heareth his father's _____: but a scorner heareth not rebuke."

4. "The Lord is far from the _____: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."

5. "Thus I was a man that heareth not, and in whose _____ are no reproofs."

6. "Seeing many things, but thou _____ not; opening the ears, but he heareth not."

7. "But he that received _____ into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it,...."

8. "He that _____ instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding."

9. "For the Lord heareth the poor, and _____ not his prisoners."

10. "So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him and he heareth the cry of the _____."

We can stand affliction better than we can stand prosperity,

for in prosperity we forget God.

D.L. Moody

Unraveling the Ordination

by Elder Jason S. Solomon
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(Written and distributed at his ordination March 21, 2009)

What is a Presbytery?

As the name implies, the presbytery is an assembly of presbyters or elders. Specifically, a presbytery is a group of elders called together to perform a particular task or to make decisions concerning some matter of Scripture (Acts 15:1-6). Presbyteries are used most often among Primitive Baptist churches to perform the work of ordaining a minister or deacon (1 Timothy 4:13-15). However, this does not preclude the formation of a presbytery to settle other spiritual matters.

What are the qualifications of a Minister?

As in all things, the Scriptures provide the definition of an ordained elder. Specifically, in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 the qualifications are clearly outlined by the Apostle Paul to two young ministers responsible for ordaining new ministers. To qualify for the office of elder or bishop, a man must be…

1. **Blameless.** The minister must have an upright Christian nature without egregious, wanton sin. (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6-7)

2. **Husband of one wife.** In accordance with the idea that the minister is to be an example, the minister is to marry only once and not to be divorced. As Christ so loves the church in a self-sacrificing way, the minister is to emulate Christ by being dedicated to only one wife. (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6)

3. **Vigilant.** The minister must be persistent and capable of focus on the work of the church without overt distraction. (I Timothy 3:2)

4. **Sober and temperate.** The minister must be of a sober mind not given to excesses of emotion. We might think of someone who is not easily excited or troubled knowing that God is in control. (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8)

5. **Of good behavior.** The minister must not be mischievous or give to constant willful sin. (I Timothy 3:2)

6. **Given to hospitality and a lover of good men.** Not surprisingly the minister should be welcoming and should provide the means to serve in their homes or wherever they find themselves. They should be approachable, loving good company. (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8)

7. **Apt to teach.** Pointing to their primary purpose, the minister should not only be able to teach but desirous to do so. (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9)

8. **Not given to wine.** The minister must not be given over to drinking or mind altering substances. Otherwise, their ability to serve would be greatly hampered and their example sullied. (I Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)

9. **No striker.** In line with the other qualification, the minister must not be one to resort to violence. The Gospel is received in Spirit, not by the sword. (I Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)

10. **Not greedy of filthy lucre.** The minister should never be motivated by money. As the Scriptures say, the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10, Titus 1:7).

11. **Patient and not soon angry.** As God is patient with the church, so too, the minister should exhibit that same loving patience. (I Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)

12. **Not a brawler.** Again, here tied to the qualifications of soberness in the sense of emotions and alcohol, as well as not being violent, the minister should not be one that is caught up in violent, drunken quarrels. The heavily Greco-Roman culture of the 1st century worshiped the fruit of the vine and often celebrated with excesses of wine leading to violent ends. (I Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6)

13. **Not covetous.** Simply put, the minister is not to envy others' goods, talents, or relationships. They are to be satisfied with what's given them be it great or small. (I Timothy 3:3)

14. **One that rules well his own house.** The minister should be able to oversee his home without issue with his children being obedient and respectful. (I Timothy 3:4-5, Titus 1:6)

15. **Not a novice, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught.** The minister should exhibit experience and knowledge ready for leadership responsibilities. Otherwise, they could be easily influenced by outside forces to the detriment of the church. They are supposed to act as a shepherd guiding and protecting the flock. (I Timothy 3:6, Titus1:9)

16. **Just.** The minister should love the justice of God and seek it at every turn seeking to right the wrong in the world starting with themselves. (Titus 1:8)

17. **Holy.** Seeking to please God and commune with Him, the minister should be holy in the sense that the church is holy, not of themselves, but through work of Christ and a life seeking conformity to the image of Christ. (Titus 1:8)

18. **Not self-willed.** As Christ, the Son of God sought and followed the will of the Father, the minister is to seek not his own will but that of God in the best interests of the church. (Titus 1:7)

19. **He must have a good report of them which are without.** In order for the minister to be an example in

the church, he must be able to guide them out in the world. If his reputation is damaged in the world in the sense that he is known to be a sinful, unrespectable person, then it would be difficult for the minister to lead the flock. (I Timothy 3:7)

Why do the ministers lay hands on the candidate?

The symbolic meaning behind the gesture of laying hands on the candidate goes back to before the early church. From ancient times, the laying on of hands is a sign of the conference of blessing or authority or both. Beginning very early in Scripture, the Old Testament gives many examples of this practice. In Genesis 27, Isaac lays his hands upon Jacob when conferring his blessing, and Jacob also lays hands upon his sons in Genesis 48, Jacob blesses Joseph's sons while laying his hands upon them. In Numbers 27, Moses lays hands on Joshua conferring his authority to the younger man. In the New Testament, Jesus and the disciples laid hands on the sick, healing them even though in other places Jesus heals without even looking upon the afflicted (Luke 4:14, 13:13; Matthew 8:5-13). Laying on hands is also demonstrated when ministers and deacons are ordained (Acts 6:6, 8:17, 13:3; I Timothy 4:14). Since the Time of the Apostles, the latter example is the most common form and purpose for laying on hands.

What is the significance of the Right Hand of Fellowship?

Extending the right hand of fellowship dates back to at least the early days of the church. In fact, the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 2:9, "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship." This passage illustrates the main purpose of the right hand of fellowship that the congregation, especially the church members, agree to the calling and work assigned to the one receiving the right hand. Additionally, the right hand is connected with strength, prominence and the greater blessing throughout Scripture (Genesis 48:8-19, Matthew 26:64, Hebrews 12:2). While it is just a hand shake (or a hug), it shows the recipient the love and approval of their brothers and sisters in Christ. The right hand of fellowship is usually offered upon receiving a new church member and at other times when a member takes on a new role such as deacon or minister (elder).

What is an Ordination?

Ordination is a process whereby men are set apart to a particular role in the church, namely the roles of minister or deacon (Mark 3:13-15; Acts 6:1-7, 14:21-24). The candidate is called by the church to be ordained and other ordained ministers are called upon to oversee the ordination process as a group called a presbytery. After examining the candidate to determine fitness and readiness for the position, the presbytery lays hands on the candidate confirming their qualifications and blessing the candidate in his new role, as well as asking God to bless the new minister or deacon in his duties (1 Timothy 4:13-15). After the work of the presbytery is complete, the church can confidently know that not only they, but the presiding elders find the candidate suitable to the significant responsibilities of the ministry.

What does it mean to be an ordained Minister?

An ordained minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a role of some men called by Christ to be servant leaders in the church. The Bible refers to ministers by a few names in the New Testament, namely elder and bishop. Both of these titles simply mean overseer. As the overseer appointed and called by God, the minister fulfills the responsibility appointed to the Apostle Peter when Jesus repeatedly instructed him to "Feed my sheep" in John 21:14-17. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, calls for men to shepherd His church in the earth as stewards of God (1 Corinthians 4:1-3, Titus 1:7). Chiefly ministers are responsible for the study, teaching, and preaching of the Gospel of Christ (Acts 6:1-3, 2 Timothy 4:1-3). Further, they are the spiritual guides for the church, exhorting and encouraging their fellow brothers and sisters to greater service in the Kingdom of God.

Why are Primitive Baptist ministers called elders?

The simple answer is Biblical preference. The term elder is used throughout Scripture to denote those men who were put in leadership positions. There were tribal elders and church elders. In both cases, these men were looked to for guidance, direction, and oversight. In the New Testament, ministers are called bishop, and elder (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1). These terms can be used interchangeably. Primitive Baptists use the title of elder for all ordained ministers of the Gospel. The title of bishop is not used among our churches because of the modern connotation of the word, but technically it could apply as well. We do not call our ministers reverend because only God is worthy of being called reverend (Psalm 111:9).

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Backsliding

by Elder McKinley Wright
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In Hebrews 6:4-6, three verses contain only one sentence. This sentence is, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." The main thought of the sentence is that **it is impossible** for the people described here if they fall away (whatever that means) to **renew them again unto repentance.**

There are some wrong lessons which are sometimes drawn from the sentence. This happens when the sentence is lifted out of the word of God and made to stand by itself without regard to its context. But we cannot use this method of studying the Bible. Using this technique one can make the Bible "prove" anything he wants it to say. We must always keep scripture passages in context!

One erroneous lesson that is sometimes drawn from this passage is that if a person departs from the teachings of the church, and the church because of this "falling away" finds it necessary to remove that person's name from the church roll, she (the church) cannot at some later time reinstate them. When I say that this is a wrong lesson, I do not want to be understood as saying that the Bible doesn't teach discipline. **The Bible does teach church discipline!** But that is not in this lesson in Hebrews 6:4-6. This sentence is in a paragraph which discusses the need for us to grow in knowledge and in our practice of religion. So, this passage does not teach that the church cannot reinstate members whose names she finds it necessary to remove for some reason. If a person sins against the church, the church can reinstate that person when she is satisfied with that person's demonstration of repentance. But when a person has had these hope-producing experiences, and "falls away" from them, the church cannot use her own judgment in the matter because such a person has sinned against God, and God is the only one who can forgive and restore him. If the church ignores the fact that he has sinned, **she becomes partaker with him in his evil deeds.** When she does this, she dishonors her head, the Lord, Jesus Christ. If the church "forgives" him before he has demonstrated by the manner of his life that God has forgiven him, the church is not being faithful to God! When the Pharisees came to be baptized by John the Baptist, John did not listen to their pious words. He told them to **show by the manner of their lives that they had repented.** The lives of those who "fall away" should be observed closely by the church and for a considerable time before she restores them to their prior places.

Another common teaching that is drawn from this sentence, which is wrong, is that if a person is saved (born Again) and falls away from that New Birth (comes into a state where he or she is no longer a child of God) he (or she) cannot have any second opportunity to get born again a second time. If we just look at the sentence by itself, this is what it seems to say. If one could fall out of the state of being born again, this would be a possible teaching of the sentence. But the Bible abundantly teaches that when one is born again, he cannot "fall away" from that state and condition. My wife and I have four children. They might be able to do something that would anger me to the point that I would cut them out of my will (that might hurt their feelings, but it would not hurt their pocketbooks), but they could not do anything that would make me able to say, "They are no longer my children." So it is with us and God. We are God's children! We will always be His children! There is nothing we can do that will cause us to stop being His children. Since it is impossible for one to "fall away" from being a child of God, that fact negates this particular teaching as being the meaning of this sentence.

Another erroneous teaching is that the lesson really teaches that the born again person cannot fall away from that condition. That is true, but this sentence does not prove it. The logic is that if one falls away he cannot be renewed unto repentance, but God is not going to lose any of His children, therefore a child of God cannot fall away from that state. But this logic removes the sentence from its context, and makes it say something that is completely foreign to that context.

If we adhere to the context, this sentence gives an entirely different lesson. The sixth chapter of Hebrews begins, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation..." It then names about six things that are in the foundation. Then it says, "This will we do, if God permit." So, the Apostle is saying that we should not put undue emphasis upon laying and building the foundation over and over again, but we should go on from that point. When he said, "This will we do, if God permit" he was saying, "We will go on and teach those things that ought to be built on the foundation." So, the whole sixth chapter is an exhortation for the child of God to grow spiritually; to not always be babes in Christ, but to grow in knowledge and understanding of the things of God and what He had done for us! The Apostle describes the goal of that growth in the eleventh and twelfth verses, "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." So, the Apostle is exhorting children of God to grow in understanding so that they can understand God's dealings with them, and can rejoice more fully in His blessings in their lives. If we understand verses four through six in this context, we see that the Apostle is not speaking of our being saved in the eternal sense. Neither is he speaking of falling away in the eternal sense, and being renewed in the eternal sense. He is talking

about "falling away" from the **teachings of God and being renewed to the teaching of God. He is talking about falling away from the condition of fellowship with God and being renewed to that condition of fellowship!**

I think that the most common error people make in studying this lesson is in thinking of it as being related to our eternal salvation. If we try to relate the sentence to our eternal salvation, the "pieces of the puzzle" just will not fit together! Some who apply the sentence in this way try to reconcile it with the doctrine of the Final Preservation of the Saints by saying that the people described here had only a superficial experience, that they had never been born again. But such an idea is most presumptuous! It does not agree with what the passage says. The people who fall away are described as people who were ONCE ENLIGHTENED. There is no hint of any incompleteness in their enlightenment. In fact, the passage admits the claim of full and complete enlightenment better than it does the claim of superficial enlightenment. The people in this sentence are described as having tasted of the heavenly gift (I understand this heavenly gift to be Christ.) But there is no such thing as a person tasting Christ but not tasting Him enough to receive whatever blessing to which such tasting leads. This language describes a people who were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. It also describes them as a people who **have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come.** It would seem that when they tasted the word of God they found it to be "good." **Nothing in this language suggests any superficiality of experience!**

This sentence says that these people were once enlightened. The only enlightenment that means anything as far as a child of God is concerned is the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit has never begun to enlighten someone without carrying that enlightenment through as much as is necessary to achieve its purpose. If we take the position occupied by many (that this was a superficial enlightenment to people not born again) we would have to conclude that the Holy Spirit sometimes gives non-elect people a limited enlightenment, generating a hope within them when the Holy Spirit knew all the time that they had not been and could not be born again. It is just not consistent for God to cause a false hope in anyone! I believe that if God ever gives a person any kind of hope, that person is one of His children. God had already made them His children. This interpretation is impossible because one cannot fall away from a place where he was not there immediately before the falling. It is impossible for anyone to be renewed to a place where he has not been and departed. Using this interpretation, the "pieces of the puzzle" do not fit together.

These people were once enlightened. They did not enlighten themselves. They did not have a part in becoming enlightened. It happened to them. In grammar, this is called "passive voice" where the subject does not act, but is acted upon. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost -something that happened to them, not something they did for themselves! Clearly, the people described here are children of God. In fact, as I evaluate my own experience, if I were to doubt that the people described here are children of God, I would have to doubt my own salvation because my enlightenment is not nearly as complete as what is described here. These people are described in five ways with no limit placed on their experience. They were enlightened. They had tasted the heavenly gift. They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. They had tasted the good word of God. And they had tasted of the power of the world to come. So, there are five phases of their experience upon which they can base a hope in Christ. If a person has had even one of these experiences, he or she has a basis for hope in Christ. Such a person can rejoice in his hope! But these are described as having had all of them! So, surely he is talking about children of God! And the Bible abundantly teaches in other places that children of God cannot "fall away" from that relationship. But we can "fall away" in the matter of growth from babes in Christ into a people who have understanding of the things of God. That is what the Apostle was speaking of in this passage!

It would be meaningless words for God to even mention such a thing to a people who could not fall away. I cannot help but breathe. It would be meaningless for someone to exhort me to breathe. This whole passage is an exhortation for them not to fall away! If these people could not fall away, it would be superfluous for God in His inspired word to exhort them to not do so. Are there any meaningless words in the Bible? I do not think there are! The very fact that He exhorts them not to fall away is an evidence that they could do so! We can "fall away" from the word, and teachings of God. This enlightenment of the Spirit, the partaking of the Holy Ghost, the tasting of the good word of God, the heavenly gift, and the power of the world to come is a gift that is within us. If we neglect that gift by not meditating upon it and its benefits, its meaning in our lives will decrease. Continued neglect of the gift within us can result in our "falling away" to the point that we are not even aware of the things of God. When we "fall away," it is not always to this level of degradation, but sometimes it is! The prodigal son did not remember his father's house until he was so hungry that he desired to eat with the swine. Possibly, someone else in the same situation might have remembered when the money ran out or when the darkness closed around them on the first night. The point is that we CAN fall away and such falling away is serious indeed. It is serious because when we fall away, we cannot be renewed again unto repentance!

The overall lesson is about the growth of the child of God into a mature individual who is entering fully into the business of serving God, and what he can expect when he falls away from that growth. The point of the cited verses is that if we fall away in this sense, it is impossible for us to be renewed again unto repentance. Does this mean that when a person has fallen away from the teachings of the word of God this person can never come back into those teachings?

No, it does not mean that. To the early church, the word "repentance" meant something different from what it means to us. Practically every sermon recorded in the New Testament closed with an exhortation directed to the person who has not previously known anything about God, but whose heart has been touched during the discourse, and who has gained understanding that he or she has not known before. That person is exhorted to lay hold on the promise that the gospel holds out to him. Such persons are

exhorted to repent; to express the sorrow that they feel for their sins by turning away from them to a new way of life. The word "repent" is used most of the time in the New Testament to refer to the experience of one who has just come to a little knowledge, the first knowledge of the things of God. The resolve to change the manner of their lives results in their souls being flooded with rejoicing. Most of us can remember our own experience in that connection. When we first saw a little glimpse of God and had a whispering of hope in our souls that Jesus had died for our sins, and when we repented of our old way of life (before we ever had such a glimpse and hope we were already born again), immediately we experienced the lifting away of our sins. God did not say, "You must live faithfully for a year, and then I will give you this experience of assurance." He did not set any certain penance for us to do in order to receive this assurance. It came as soon as we resolved to change our ways. In this lesson, the Apostle is saying that when we have had this initial experience of repentance and rejoicing, but we "fall away" from the teaching of God, it takes more than just saying "I'm sorry" to restore ourselves to the condition of fellowship. That is all that was required in our initial experience, but when we "fall away," we cannot be restored in that way.

When we repented and laid hold upon the promises made to us in Christ, and realized that He died for us, He was at that time crucified to us in our experience. That is what the Apostle meant when he said that it is impossible for one who has fallen away to go through that channel to become reinstated. He would be crucifying Christ to himself again. Having a second identical experience of grace dishonors God. If we have two identical experiences, it is certain that one of them is not real. Wondering which is not real could easily lead to the conclusion that possibly neither of them is real. We would have no basis for hope. When we have no reason for hope, we have no real hope, and our testimony and lives will surely dishonor Him. The Apostle here says that to have the same experience again would put Him to an open shame. So that is not the correct way to seek reinstatement.

The lesson in this passage is that when we have had an experience in Christ, we can fall away from obedience. We can fall away from faithfulness. **We can fall away from fellowship.** We **cannot fall away from sonship because we did not have anything to do with obtaining it in the first place. It was given to us. But our fellowship was dependent upon our repentance. We could not have fellowship without repentance.** But when we have fellowship, if we fall away from that fellowship, the only renewal is by penance, a penalty required because of our lack of faith.

Even then, our restoration is not usually to the same level we knew before. Most of the time, there will be something lacking. Moses was in the wilderness with the children of Israel. He became so angry at them that when God told him to speak to the rock and bring water from it, he smote the rock with his rod instead. Because he smote the rock, instead of speaking to it, he was not allowed to go into Canaan, the promised land. The Bible says that he sought with tears to complete the journey. But God insisted, "You cannot go." I feel sure in my own mind that Moses had a degree of fellowship with God and enjoyed God's blessings in his life as he walked with Israel through the wilderness from that time until he died. I feel sure that he felt God's approval in many of the things that he was doing. But as long as he lived, he knew that what he had done was wrong! He longed for Canaan, but his "falling away" robbed him of that joy. For almost forty years, he had looked forward with anticipation to being with Israel in Canaan. But now such a hope is gone. He knows that he will never be there. Oh, how much he lost by his disobedience! David, described in the Bible as a man after God's own heart, was on the roof of his castle. He looked over at the house next door and saw a woman bathing on the roof. His mind was so filled with lust that he took her unto himself and a child was born. God told him that the child was going to die. David begged for the child's life. When the child became sick, David fasted. In spite of his pleading, the child died! I have heard it said that the fact that Bathsheba later became the mother of Solomon shows that God approved of David's affair with her. But it doesn't! God has never approved of sin, and what David did was sin! God never approved of what David did, and David knew that God never approved of it. As long as David lived, he remembered that he had sinned against God! David received blessings from God after that, and felt the love of God after that. But he still knew that he had sinned. Much of the **joy** of his salvation was gone.

Here were two men who had walked with God. They knew God's way. They "fell" from that way. That is the kind of people described in this lesson: a people who know God's way, but fall from it. And the same thing can happen to us! When it happens to us, we cannot just come running to God and say, "I'm sorry, I won't do it any more" and be filled with joy immediately like we were in our first experience. It takes a degree not only of repentance, but a proving that we have turned from the old way. I think that is what this passage means. We are going to reap what we sow! May the Lord help us to think on these things, and to realize that God has certain requirements of us. When we know what His commandments are in our lives, and do not do them, we are falling away from His teachings. May He help us to examine ourselves, and to always endeavor to **walk in His way!**

Do not have your concert first and then tune your instrument afterwards.
Begin the day with the Word of God and prayer,
and go first of all into harmony with Him.

Husdson Taylor

We Stopped Loving Our Children!

by Bro. Clay Gill
Patterson, Georgia

We no longer love our children. It is a sad truth. We have failed them. We stopped loving them when we chose their friendship over discipline. We stopped loving them when we decided their happiness was determined by how well adjusted they are in comparison to their peers. We stopped loving them when we began to believe that our children shouldn't have to experience the hardships that we experienced as we were growing up. We became confused and instead of with love, we fill their time with sports, academics, video games, and peers. We stopped loving when we bought into the idea that they 'need' their cell phone and computers in order to 'survive' in today's world. We say, "arguing with them about their cell phone and text messaging is a minor issue, and I choose to focus on the bigger things." We sacrificed our own relationship with them for fear that they would be lonely and maladjusted in today's world. We stopped loving our children because we want them to be like the rest of the world!

Lies, it's all lies that we as parents choose to believe. No parent would willingly say, 'I don't love my child.' But they live it each and every time they, the parent, choose the child's friendship over discipline and instruction. They choose the child's destruction every time sports or academics are more important than boundaries and consequences. Parents are telling their children 'I don't love you' every time the parent stays out of the teens' "personal business."

Parents, wake up! We are destroying our children.

I believe it starts with a wrong view of the nature of man. We need to establish the true nature of children (man). Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, ***"The heart [of man] is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it."*** Romans 3:23 says, ***"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."*** Psalm 51:5 tells us, ***"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.***" What is the true nature of children? Sinfulness. A child's nature is sinful, it is desperately wicked. The temper tantrums of that 2-year old may be "cute" to you, but don't mistake it, that is his sinful nature being demonstrated. I never taught my child to lie, in fact I worked to teach him just the opposite. However, I have caught my child lying to me when he thinks he can get away with something he did. I didn't have to teach him to lie to me, that is his sinful nature. I am convinced, parents, that left to their own devices, children will grow up into teenagers who will choose sin over righteousness and will usually continue that pattern after becoming adults.

I am convinced, parents, that God has established the role of the parent to raise up the child in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). It can't be the desire of the parent to help the child be "well adjusted" in today's world. In fact, if that is your goal as a parent, I can guarantee you that you are training your child up to be sinful. The Bible is clear, if you love your child, you will discipline. If you love your child, you will keep them separate from the world. I have even heard some parents say, "we want our children to be exposed to the world so that we can teach them how God would want them to handle the world." I say to that parent, that is a lie from Satan. Exposing our children to the world is not a biblical concept. Sanctifying our children by keeping them separate from the world IS a biblical concept. We as parents have a clear mandate, to love our children by providing for them, disciplining them, and teaching them the Word of God.

Do you love your child enough to sacrifice their "love" of you? Do you love your child enough to say no? Do you love your child enough to allow hard consequences do the teaching? Do you love your child enough to teach them scripture? Do you love your child enough to teach them reverence of God rather than reverence of _____ (feel free to place in the blank anything else: cell phone, sports, academics, friends, boy/girl friend, Wii).

I am afraid that I have been failing my children and thus failing God. I am saddened because as I look around, I am not alone.

Below are a few Scriptures that I think are needful for parents to diligently study.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." (Proverbs 19:18)

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." (Proverbs 22:15)

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (Proverbs 23:13,14)

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Proverbs 29:15)

Homosexuality

by Bro. Brooks Strickland
(20 year-old student at Georgia Southern University)
Statesboro, Georgia

Homosexuality is a choice. Some people say people are born homosexual because they actually think it is true. The fact is that homosexuality is just another sin that some people choose to do. One of the things people say is, "Well, we're all born into sin." I want to take their statement and explain how it proves the truth that homosexuality is a wrong choice.

Just because we are born into sin doesn't mean we have to live in it. We have to constantly work against it. The Bible tells us to mortify the deeds of the flesh. The majority of all the different commandments in the Bible are telling us to go against our fleshly desires. We are told to think pure thoughts because we naturally think negative. We are told to be content because naturally we are never satisfied. We are reminded that faith without works is dead because things are so much easier said than done. Homosexuality is just another sin under the category of general sin. We are born into sin, but we choose specific sins to practice and commit in our lives. Homosexuality is a specific sin individuals choose to commit.

Just like alcoholism (drunkenness) or adultery, we are not born into either. We are born into sin, and then make decisions specifically to choose how we live. Many times people excuse homosexuality with the 'born with' excuse. People "excuse sin" by claiming it is in their genes. Others say there are physiological reasons they "have to" sin, such as chemical imbalances. Though a person may be "prone" to be a homosexual, drunkard, or adulterer because of genetics or environment, the individual has the ability to resist any tendency or temptation. Either way, the only trait that goes from generation to generation is sin. The song says "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love." Everyone is "prone" to sin. Homosexuality is no different. All of these are specific sins that we have to work against.

We are shown in Romans 6 that the wages of sin is death. Death means "separation." Physical death is separation of natural life from the body. Spiritual death or "soul death" can be a permanent or lengthy separation from fellowship with God. A child of God can experience a temporary separation of fellowship with God by not being fit for the kingdom of heaven, shut out of having "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." All these "deaths" are situations that involve consequences that are to be taken seriously!

Another way that we can see that homosexuality is just as forbidden as drunkenness and adultery is by looking at the death and destruction that results from homosexuality, and comparing it to the end results of these other sins. Some consequences for an individual who refuses to turn away from drunkenness are things like major marital, financial and physical problems. Most of these Individuals wind up putting their "love of alcohol" over their responsibilities at home. Major drunkenness throws out any kind of concept with time, resulting in problems with a job and other priorities. Then there are financial burdens because large amounts are blown on the "habit" and other habits that develop, as well as health problems. In the end, the individual who never pulled away from sin winds up with no family, no true friends, bad health, and many strained relations. Because in many cases they have previously ignored God's warnings, they have trouble finding Him at this point.

Adultery is similar. The "death of a family" is terrible! Adultery leads to families being "busted up," resulting in broken hearts, permanent scars on the minds of the children, permanent lack of trust on the spouse and children, and financial instability. The individual committing the sin of adultery then often finds out that the sinful relationship they committed themselves to does not even last.

For those who don't put homosexuality on this same level of seriousness, we can look at similar destruction to which it can lead. Like the previous cases, the sin of homosexuality leads to the individual being alone. Many cases lead to broken family ties, especially with parents. They become repulsive to people while castigating themselves from society. Much like adultery, the individual leaves something better only to find out he received worse, as friends and relationships don't last. Even worse, homosexuality is the leading cause of AIDS in the United States. As recent as 2007, the CDC reported that in 34 US states and 5 U.S. territories, areas that make up 66% of the US AIDS cases, 18,413 out of 35,935 cases were from homosexual activity between males. Unfortunately, many times people who have had a homosexual relationship wind up giving it to a heterosexual spouse or partner. Heterosexual contact accounted for another 11,000 cases, while injection drug use accounted for only 6,010. This is roughly 82% of AIDS cases that are definitely and potentially caused by homosexuality. Homosexuals don't only lead to their own destruction and death, but to many others as well.

With each one of these sins, the individual winds up alone or in a much

worse situation by not fighting against their "proneness" to sin. By not heeding to the warning of God, they often realize they lost the foundation to their life long before it fell. This is the end result of homosexuality, just as often as other major sins. May God help us to realize the wages of sin is death! May God open the eyes of His people to not excuse major sins as being normal, natural, and unavoidable. May God help us all to understand that no one is born into a specific sin in which they are excused for committing. Though we are born into sin in general, we are given the ability to not let sin reign in our mortal bodies (see Romans 6:11-23).

The Giving Tree

by Sis. Sarah D. Ledger
Bartow, Georgia

There is a beautiful children's book written by Shel Silverstein called "The Giving Tree." It was given to us many years ago and when our grandchildren were small, I read it to them often. Now that they are almost grown, it has been a long time since I have read it to them, but I still enjoy the book because it is such a sweet story.

The book is basically about a tree that loves a little boy. When the story starts, the boy is small and plays under the tree, eats the apples; and when he is tired, he naps under the tree. All of this makes the tree happy. But, of course, the boy grows up and he wants more! He doesn't want to play under the tree, but he wants to buy things. The tree offers its apples to be sold, so the boy can have money to buy things. The boy takes the apples, and again the story says that this makes the tree happy. This time the boy is gone for a long time, and when he comes back, he wants a house and a wife and children. The tree offers its branches for the wood for the boys house. The boy does indeed cut the branches and carry them away. Again, the story says the tree was happy. When the boy returns, he is old and sad and apparently wants to just "get away from it all" for this time he wants a boat. So the tree tells the boy to cut down its trunk to make a boat so he can sail away and be happy. And the boy does just that. This time the story says that the tree was happy, but not really. After a very long time, the boy comes back, but the tree feels that it has nothing left to give, since it is now just an old stump, but the boy doesn't actually need very much, since by this time he is a very old man. He just needs a place to sit and rest and an old stump is a good place for doing just that. At the end of the story, the boy is sitting on the old stump and the book ends by saying that the tree was happy.

I have known many "giving trees" in my life time, but my husband and I were blessed to know one special couple. My husband farmed with Mr. Johnny for many years. He and Miss Marie were conservative people, but they were also very generous. The thing that they were most generous with was their love. My parents and my husband's parents had long since departed this life, so Mr. Johnny and Miss Marie (who had no children of their own) were wonderful parents and grandparents. We spent a lot of time with them. In the summertime, we enjoyed their screened back porch, and in the fall and winter, their cozy den. After Mr. Johnny passed away, Miss Marie went to live in a personal care home. Sometimes I would go in and she and my husband would be sitting together just enjoying each other's company. I wondered if he was missing his own mother. I sat with her sometimes when I was missing mine really bad. Miss Marie's passing left a terrible void in our lives. We still miss her.

Our Heavenly Father is the perfect gift giver. He loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son, who actually died on a tree, that we might have eternal life. He is also the Giver of good gifts in this life. I know how good He has been to me. I have been married to a good man for fifty-one years! We have three children who love us and love each other, and four wonderful grandchildren. My husband and I are blessed with more material things than we could ever deserve. How good and how giving our God is!!

I have just read "The Giving Tree" again. I'll put it back in the bookcase to keep it safe. One day I may be reading it to my great-grandchildren.

Forgiveness ought to be like a canceled note
torn in two and burned up
so that it never can be shown against the man. Henry Ward Beecher

Pray For God's Help!

by Sis. Elizabeth Anderson
Thomaston, Georgia

I suppose the one thing I, and probably all of you, and many more Christians, have had on our minds recently is the condition of our country .We have a number of conditions going on right now, too! I don't totally understand the "political stuff' or the "economic stuff' but I have a pretty good understanding of "Godly stuff," and my main concern amidst all the things going on in our nation today is the condition of our country concerning **ungodliness**. It seems a feeling of evil permeates throughout the land.

Did you think we would ever see a time in America when we would not be allowed to pray anywhere and anytime we want to?

Did you think we would ever see a time when marriage would no longer be important in our society? Young couples would feel no shame to live together openly but unmarried, and, if a couple does marry, there would be no shame in divorcing no matter how trivial the reason? Who are we making those vows to when we marry? We are making them to the one we are marrying but we are also making them to the Lord God.

Did you think we would live to see the day when killing unborn babies is an accepted option for unwed mothers or those who do not wish to have babies?

Did you think we would see a time when young women and some adult women would dress similar to prostitutes of old? When you watch an old western movie the barmaids in the saloons were probably more covered than some women come into church today! We won't even mention how they look at the beach!

What about young men and women with tattoos all over their bodies and all dressed in black with skulls and unacceptable slogans on their shirts? What about all the body piercings?

Did you think, **in America**, we would read in the newspapers and hear on the evening news about parents killing their own children or standing by watching a live in boyfriend or stepfather do so? What about all the **old** people who are getting robbed and beaten or killed? Old people used to be treated with much respect and were given assistance even by strangers. Babies were wanted and protected and loved and were lovingly and gently taken care of.

Did you ever think you would see a time in America where people would think the answer to being in debt is to spend more money? Never worked for us as individuals: How can it possibly work for a country which is head over heels in debt? Never in 43 years of marriage have I heard Lavone Anderson say, “Sweetheart, we are having a little trouble making ends meet. You need to go out and spend more money.”

Another thing, if you borrow money isn’t it supposed to be paid back? If you owe taxes aren’t you supposed to pay taxes? Isn’t not doing so dishonest? Does being wealthy or in the political arena excuse a person from doing the right thing even if he may be smart enough to figure out how to get by with the dishonesty? Some of our leaders in America today seem to have forgotten that God is not a respecter of persons. He sees us all stripped of all our titles, wealth, and status. He sees us as His Children and He expects us all to follow the same laws.

Did you ever think those elected to govern our country would have close to no wisdom at all? I’m not talking about book learning; I’m talking about **GODLY Wisdom** -that wisdom which uneducated men can possess when they know the Bible, and they know and believe in God and depend upon Him to be their help.

Did you think there would be a time when churches would be closing their doors, or the ones who are "holding on" would only be half filled or less?

What about God? Is He so unimportant and the job of parenting so lax these days that the only way young people will attend church is if many recreational and fun activities are offered? What happened to those parents who said, "Get ready for church,” and there was not a question as to whether the children were going or not or whether it would be fun or not?

Now, before you think I am on a negative kick, let’s look at some positive, **very positive** things. Our God is **THE GOD** above all gods. He is all seeing, all powerful, and everlasting. Why is He not taking care of all these problems for us? He could, you know, but God does not always work that way. Perhaps we don’t realize how blessed we are that He is a long suffering, patient, loving Heavenly Father. God does not always take care of things for us because God has given **us** a work to do. It is for our good and the good of those around us.

We are to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Our children are not to rule over us. We are to teach them to do those things which are right and good. If it means a “hurting fanny” has to be a part of it, then so be it. I can’t say a spanking never hurt anybody because **it does hurt!** I remember, and I didn’t have to have too many to learn that I didn’t want too many!

I believe what’s wrong with the country today has nothing to do with the government, but the government is definitely being affected by it! What’s wrong with the country today is that a great number of people in America have gone astray and turned against God. There is no wisdom in America

because wisdom comes from God, and our nation is turning away from God. An ungodly nation cannot and will not have wisdom.

What can we do then? Are we to be as those who have no hope? At one time the Gentile people had no hope.

Ephesians 2:11-13 - Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

We have **hope** because of the work of Jesus Christ. Now where can we get wisdom?

Job 28:12-28 (Read from the Bible) Where does wisdom come from? **The fear of the Lord.**

So many in America today have no wisdom because they have turned away from God. They no longer **fear the Lord.** Does that mean that now we have no hope again? No, I don't think so. Remember the story of Sodom and Gomorrah? I believe God said if there could be found even 10 righteous people in those cities He would not destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

I don't know how many people lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, but the United states has 303,824,650 people living here now. What must we do then? All is not yet lost. We know there are still some people in the United States, and I would think definitely more than 10, who believe in God, trust in God, and have Godly wisdom. What is the next step? Isaiah 45:9 reads, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God and there is none like me."

We worship **THE GOD**! We must remember **HIM**. America has made some great and powerful weapons in the past and has been powerful in wartime. Who helped America? God did. We still have that power available to us. **GOD** is still **GOD**! He is our God and we need Him. We may feel that we need a mighty weapon to destroy the evil which is within America today, and the Good News is that we have one! It is **PRAYER**.

We need to pray! We need to pray alone, we need to pray with two or three others, we need to pray in great numbers. God can still bless our land and save it from destruction but he desires that we ask Him and He desires that we turn again unto Him. "If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (II Chronicles 7:14) Sometimes I think we forget that this is a conditional admonition from God. We must turn back to Him. We must earnestly teach our children and grandchildren about Him. We must obey Him.

Our land needs healing! It is rotting with sin and apathy. We must pray sincerely and we must pray now. There is still hope. There are still some good and decent, Godly people in America. May we unite with fervor and determination not to lose our Christian nation. We must believe God when He said in James 5:16 "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Do we really realize what fervent means? It means hot, burning, showing great warmth of feeling, intensely, earnest. If we are really honest with ourselves have we prayed a fervent prayer for our country? If not, let us do so, and may God bless America and heal our land.

Answers to Grow In Knowledge

1. Heareth - Psalm 34:17
2. Wise - Matthew 7:24
3. Instruction - Proverbs 13:1
4. Wicked - Proverbs 15:29
5. Mouth - Psalms 38:14
6. Observest - Isaiah 42:20
7. Seed - Matthew 13:23
8. Refuseth - Proverbs 15:32
9. Despiseth - Psalm 69:33
10. Afflicted - Job 34:28

The towers of your life must be deeply grounded in the foundations of eternal truth without adjustments for the times or accommodations for the trends.

A Good Start with Good Works

(Part Three)

by Sis. Christy Bond
Patterson, Georgia

In the last article, Part Two, we covered five good works that we should be striving towards. They were: **pray, repent and turn, read God's Word, help the poor/needy, and tithe**. In this article, I hope to add four more good works to our list. They are: **be submissive to authority, forgive, trust the Lord, and think on good things.** May God bless us to strive to live closer to Him each and every day.

Ephesians 6:5-8, **"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh…as unto Christ; doing the will of God from the heart…as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."** Hebrews 13:17a, **"Obey them that have the rule over you…"** Ephesians 6:1-3, **"Obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."** Exodus 20:12, **"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."** Proverbs 8:33, **"Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not."** Proverbs 10:1, **"A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."** Proverbs 13:1, "**A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke."** God has placed many earthly "masters" over us. We have parents, bosses, pastors…all of which give us instruction here on earth. We are to listen and be obedient as long as what they are asking is from the Word of God and not going against God's Word. We are to hear instruction and refuse it not. It hurts my heart to see adults disrespect their parents and openly rebel and sometimes even raise their voice at their parents! Even when you are grown, they are still your parents and deserve respect. It's even more hurtful to see parents allowing their young children to do the same! If you don't train your children when they are young to respect authority…then you and your children will have a lot of heartache as they get older! You are doing your children a great disservice if you don't teach them respect early because they will have trouble respecting ANY AUTHORITY…especially God's authority in their life!

Matthew 6:12, 14-15, **"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."** Matthew 18:15, 21-22, **"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained a brother. Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."** Forgiveness can be a hard thing, but it is a necessary thing. When you harbor ill will towards someone, it will eat you up. You must not let the sun go down on your wrath. We must have a forgiving heart! God forgives us when we forgive others. If we don't forgive others, then God will not forgive us and we will not have fellowship with Him. It is so much easier to sleep at night when you are at peace with others!

Psalms 46:1, **"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."** Proverbs 3:5-6, **"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."** Matthew 6:31-34, **"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."** I Peter 5:7, **"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."** We are to trust and obey. We aren't to worry and fear! God is our refuge…so we must cast our cares on Him and leave them with Him. When we are seeking the kingdom of God, then we are trusting Him and not worrying! I like the song, I Cast All My Cares Upon You. It says "I cast all my cares upon you. I lay all of my burdens…down at your feet. Anytime that I don't know what to do, I will cast all my cares upon you." We must trust the Lord with our whole heart and lean not on our own understanding.

Philippians 4:8, **"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."** Have you taken the Philippians 4:8 test lately? What do you allow yourself to concentrate on? We need to work on making each day pass the Philippians 4:8 test. We must

bring every thought into captivity and think only on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. When we focus on those things, then our mind will be filled with good things and evil will not find a lodging place in our life.

In conclusion, the following are 13 good works that have been listed in these three articles that will help us have a good year in 2009: **visit, be thankful, sing to the Lord, be in God's house (church), pray, repent and turn, read God's Word, help the poor/needy, tithe, be submissive to authority, forgive, trust the Lord, and think on good things.** That's easy, right? NO, but with God's help we can accomplish great things this year! May God bless each of us to not only start this year with good works, but continue with good works throughout the entire year.

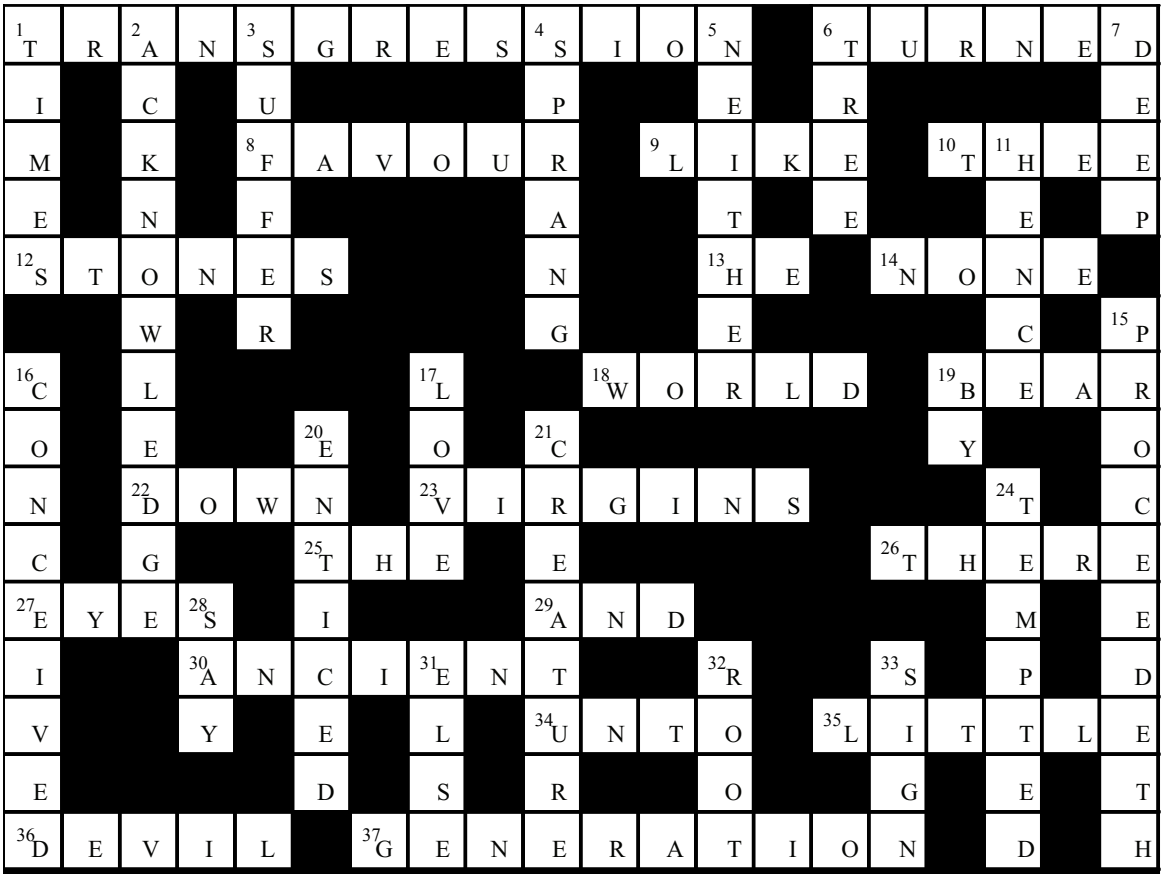
* * * \

Bible Reading Calendar for June

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
1	II Chr. 1,2,3	John 12:1-19
2	II Chr. 4,5,6	John 12:20-50
3	II Chr. 7,8,9	John 13:1-17
4	II Chr. 10,11,12	John 13:18-38
5	II Chr. 13-16	John 14
6	II Chr. 17,18,19	John 15
7	II Chr. 20,21,22	John 16:1-15
8	II Chr. 23,24,25	John 16:16-33
9	II Chr. 26,27,28	John 17
10	II Chr. 29,30,31	John 18:1-23
11	II Chr. 32,33	John 18:24-40
12	II Chr. 34,35,36	John 19:1-22
13	Ezra 1,2	John 19:23-42
14	Ezra 3,4,5	John 20
15	Ezra 6,7,8	John 21

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
16	Ezra 9,10	Acts 1
17	Neh. 1,2,3	Acts 2:1-13
18	Neh. 4,5,6	Acts 2:14-47
19	Neh. 7,8	Acts 3
20	Neh. 9,10,11	Acts 4:1-22
21	Neh. 12,13	Acts 4:23-37
22	Esther 1,2,3	Acts 5:1-16
23	Esther 4,5,6	Acts 5:17-42
24	Esther 7-10	Acts 6
25	Job 1,2,3	Acts 7:1-19
26	Job 4,5,6	Acts 7:20-43
27	Job 7,8,9	Acts 7:44-60
28	Job 10,11,12	Acts 8:1-25
29	Job 13,14,15	Acts 8:26-40
30	Job 16,17,18	Acts 9:1-22

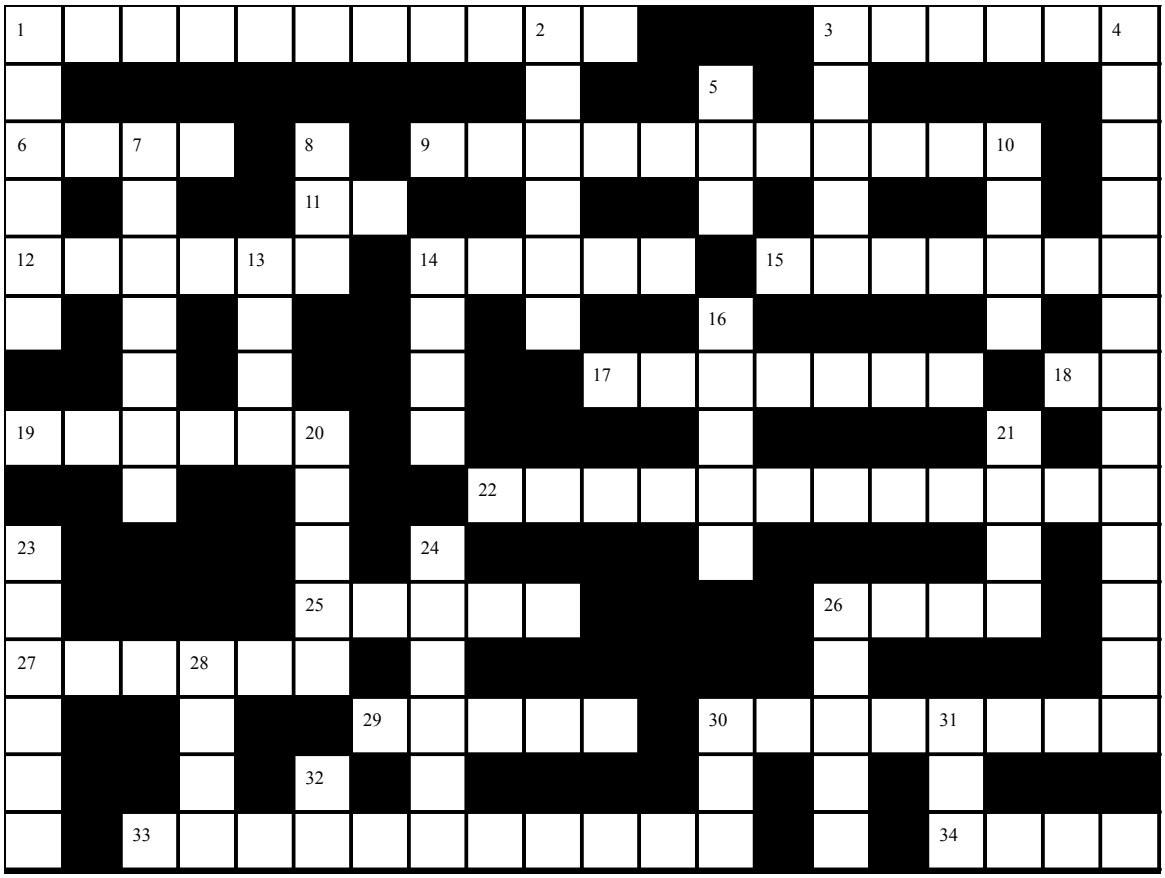
ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE MAY 09



Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. “My soul wait thou only upon God; for my _____ is from him.” 3. “For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his _____gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.” 6. “For the kingdom of God is not _____ and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” 9. “To an _____ incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” 11. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it _____ sin.” 12. “Set your affection on things above, not on ___ on the earth.” 14. “And the ____ passeth away, and the lust thereof:...” 15. “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had ____ unto the recompense of the reward.” 17. “For he that in these things ____ Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.” 18. “Leave there thy gift before the altar, and ____ thy way;...” 19. “...If any man love the world, the love of the ____ is not in him.” 22. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no _____, neither shadow of turning. 25. “...whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the _____of God.” 26. “...first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy _____.” 27. “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall _____ mercy.” 29. “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his _____:...” 30. “Many, 0’ Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy _____ which are to usward:...” 33. “His ____ was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.” 34 “For ye are _____ , and your life is hid with Christ in God.”



DOWN

1. “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, Know ye not that the friendship of the world is ____ with God? ...” 2. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of _____.” 3. “...Come, see the _____ where the Lord lay.” 4. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his _____; and all these things shall be added unto you.” 5. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so _____ their fathers to the false prophets.” 7. “...but he that doeth the will of God _____ for ever.” 8. “For we are _____ workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,...” 10. “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for _____.” 13. “Who _____ himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” 14. “If ye ____ of the world, the world would love his own:...” 16. “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the _____God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” 20. “He is not here: for he is ____, as he said:...” 21. “Who are ____ by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 23. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we _____ be called the sons of God:...” 24. “And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and _____ as dead men.” 26. “But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in _____ by Christ Jesus.” 28. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye _____ appear with him in glory.” 30. “And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of _____ mammon of unrighteousness;...” 31. “...and he that hath not the Son of ____ hath not life.” 32. “Love not the world, neither the things that are _____ the world...”

MESSAGE FROM A PASTOR IN AFRICA

Beloved in Christ,

Choice greetings in the mighty and wonderful name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith.

THE TRUMPET OF TRUTH is my best and favorite source of teaching other than the Bible. I am sharing it with the congregations which I lead. I am trying to teach the Churches in our area, but they are not very big in membership. Pray with us that the Lord may send more workers, for the harvest is great. I am also sending THE TRUMPET to our lay leaders. They like to read and prepare lessons from it. You have helped me so much on the subjects of election, justification, adoption, and predestination. I used to not teach and preach on these subjects, because I did not understand them. But with the help of THE TRUMPET, it is now clear, though I still need more study.

May God bless you to continue in this great work of spreading the truth of salvation by grace.

With Calvary love,

Pastor Leonard Mukoma

Zimbabwe, Africa

P.S. Following are some thoughts I have on **EXCUSES**:

We sometimes make excuses for not attending Church, Bible Study, and other important activities of worshipping and serving the Lord. Most of the excuses we use have no value. When it comes to watching our favorite team playing, or watching our favorite TV program, we do not make excuses.

In Luke 14, there is a parable of a great supper, and many were bidden.

The first said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." Let us not forget that they were invited for suppertime, which is an evening meal. Was the excuse of seeing the piece of land at suppertime genuine? "And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Proving the oxen was a good thing. But was he going to prove them at night? "And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Only God knows if he was telling the truth that he could not come.

Let's serve the Lord and stop giving excuses!